



**MEN AND BOYS AS PARTNERS IN PROMOTING GENDER
EQUALITY AND PREVENTION OF YOUTH EXTREMISM
AND VIOLENCE IN THE BALKANS**

- SUMMARY OF THE ENDLINE ASSESSMENT REPORT -

June, 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Purpose of the Endline Assessment

The *Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and Prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans* or the Young Men's Initiative II (YMI II) project is a follow-up to CARE's comprehensive and programmatic effort to fight interpersonal and gender-based violence (GBV), as well as to improve gender equality in the region and address preventative issues related to youth extremism and violence.

The Endline Assessment was carried out to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the overall project progress, focusing on changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to gender-based violence, gender equality, healthy lifestyles amongst young men and young women from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo* who participated in 'Program Y' in target schools in the period 2018-2020. The endline assessment examined the effects of project activities on: views regarding gender relations; health of young men and women, including mental health, use of psychoactive substances; knowledge about sexual reproductive health; experience of young people who suffered and perpetrated violence.

Study Design

Methods included self-administered quantitative surveys completed by participants before and after the intervention program. In 2018, the first phase of the research was conducted – the baseline study. In the second stage, most of the young men and women took part in the educational (intervention) program – Program Y, which included group experiential workshops in schools and campaign activities organized by 'Be a Man' clubs. In the third phase, in May 2020, the final endline survey was conducted. The endline survey was conducted as an online survey due to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research respondents were young men and women, ages from 15 to 18, from four locations – Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgrade in Serbia, Pristina in Kosovo*, Tirana in Albania. A total of 1201 participants took part in the baseline study (689 young men and 512 young women). In the endline research, 679 participants (265 young men and 414 young women), from all project target schools where there was intervention, filled in the survey. In the endline research, the number of respondents was lower due to several reasons, the main

reason being the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the closure of schools which lead to the decision that the endline survey will be implemented online. In addition, in the period between the two surveys a number of students dropped out of school.

Results

We can conclude that several positive things have been identified in the endline research. In all cities, the results of the endline research show a greater level of participation of young men and young women in different daily household chores. Results show that in all cities the most progress has been achieved with respect to attitudes towards gender relations. However, attitudes towards gender equality, including homophobia and violence, are burdened with stereotypes, so further work with young people regarding this issue is needed.

In the majority of cases, the perception of violence and forms of violence was more mature and deeper in the endline research than it was the baseline. In addition, in most of the cities, physical and gender-based violence was less expressed in the endline research than at the beginning of the program. In the endline research, the majority of young men and young women felt capable, and more ready and empowered to prevent possible violent behavior in an intimate relationship.

Young women's and young men's knowledge about sexual and reproductive health topics was average in all the cities, but significantly higher in the endline phase than at the beginning. This data is useful as it shows that preventive programs can have significant impact on the lifestyles of young people.

We have not observed progress or consistent changes with regard to consumption of psychoactive substances and mental health. An attempt should be made through future implementation of Program Y to try to prevent these trends as much as possible.

The concept of work in this program gives good results and should be supported in the future and further developed. We expect that the program will provoke responsible state educational institutions and schools to more actively work on establishing sustainable mechanism, i.e. a regular curriculum, which would lead to the improvement of the lifestyles of young people.

INTRODUCTION

The *Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and Prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans* or Young Men Initiative II (YMI II) project follows up on CARE's comprehensive and programmatic effort to fight interpersonal and gender-based violence, as well as to improve gender equality in the region and address preventative issues related to youth extremism and violence. The project's specific objective is to improve youth NGOs and government capacities to integrate Program Youth – Life Skills Educational Curriculum in current educational and youth policy strategies and strengthen governmental and civil society efforts related to the inclusion of youth vulnerable to extremism. This project aims at scaling up and mainstreaming earlier achievements related to the implementation of the Gender Transformative Life Skills program, in short *Program Y*, via targeted advocacy and close cooperation with relevant stakeholders through the support of movement/coalition building. The project is a follow up to 15 years of continuous work by CARE and its local partners, during which several 3-year cycle preventive programs had been implemented. These programs entailed baseline assessment at the beginning of the program, and after three years of preventive work with young people in schools an endline research was repeated in order to measure the effects of the work.

The YMI II project is implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Serbia and targets young people, especially young men, vulnerable to violence and anti-social behaviors, and strengthens key skills, knowledge, attitudes that help improve behavior related to gender equitable norms and non-violence. The project is financed with the support of Austrian Development Cooperation and Oak Foundation and is being implemented by CARE International Balkans and local partner organizations in respective countries: “Perpetuum Mobile – Institute for Youth and Community Development” from Banja Luka, “Center for Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles – Center E8” from Belgrade, “Center for Counseling, Social Services, and Research (SIT)” and “George Williams Youth Association in Kosovo” (YMCA) from Pristina, and “ACT For SOCIETY Center (AfS)” from Tirana.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The Purpose of the Endline Assessment

The Endline Assessment was carried out to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the overall project progress, focusing on changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to gender-based violence, gender equality, healthy lifestyles amongst young men and young women from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo*, participating in the Program Y - Youth – Innovative Approaches in GBV Prevention and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion for Young Men and Women in target schools in the period 2018-2020. It assessed whether there are differences in attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of young men and women before and after the completion of project activities in high schools. The endline assessment examined the effects of project activities for the following areas of young people's lives:

- Views of young men and women regarding gender roles and attitudes;
- Health of young men and women, including alcohol use, smoking, substance abuse;
- Experience of young men and women with suffered and perpetrated violence;
- Level of mental health of young men and women;
- Knowledge of young men and women about sexual reproductive health, contraception, sexually transmitted infections;
- Participation and satisfaction with different project activities.

METHOD

As already mentioned, the main purpose of the research was to determine whether there was a change in attitudes and behavior of young men and young women compared to 2018 when the baseline research was conducted. Methods included self-administered quantitative surveys completed by participants before and after the intervention program. The survey was conducted in several stages. In 2018, the first phase of the research was conducted – the baseline study. Participants filled in the questionnaires (pen-paper method). In the second stage, most of the young men and women took part in the educational (intervention) program – Program Y. In the third phase, in May 2020, the final endline survey was conducted. The endline research was conducted as an online survey due to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research respondents in all four locations (Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgrade in Serbia, Pristina in Kosovo*, Tirana in Albania) were similar in terms of sex and age. All respondents were young male and female high school students ages 15-18. In Banja Luka, the

survey was conducted in the School of Hospitality, Trading and Tourism and the Agricultural School; in Belgrade, in two grammar schools, the X Gymnasium and Gymnasium “Saint Sava”; in Pristina, in the School of Electrical Engineering “Gjin Gazulli”; and in Tirana, in the High School “Ismail Qemali”.

In the endline research, the number of respondents was lower in almost every city. There were multiple reasons for this. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of schools and so adjustments had to be made, which led to the decision that the endline survey be implemented online. Because of the closure of schools, the teachers did not have direct and personal contact with the students, so they were unable to influence students’ participation in the endline survey. Moreover, around 20% of the students in some cities did not have access to internet at home. In addition, in the period between the two surveys a number of students dropped out of school. All the above-mentioned contributed to the decrease in the number of participants in the endline research. Overall, 689 young men and 512 young women took part in the baseline study. The total number of participants in the baseline was 1201. In the endline research, 265 young men and 414 young women, i.e. 679 in total, participated from all project target schools where intervention was implemented.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections in order to provide general background information and gather information for the evaluation about: the views on men and women; attitudes and experience with peer violence and gender-based violence; mental health; use of alcohol and psychoactive substances; knowledge about sexual and reproductive health; participation in program intervention activities.

The intervention program implemented between two research stages included group experiential workshops from the “Program Y” manual and campaign activities. Workshops addressed multiple topics, including What is This “Gender”; Expressing Emotions; Labeling; What is Sexual Violence; Anger Management; From Violence to Respect in Intimate Relationships; Sexual Health; Drugs and Alcohol Use; Peer Violence and Violence Against Women, etc.

Some of the implemented campaigns were “Are Y OK”, “Be a Man”, “React as a Human”, and a number of campaigns organized around significant days (Celebrating 16 Days of Activism; Celebrating 8th of March; Celebrating 12th of August – International Youth Day). Campaigns were implemented with the support of “Be a Man” clubs in all target schools. “Be a Man” clubs were established as high school clubs for students, engaged in a creative way in the design and

implementation of school and community based campaigns and activities, as complementary activities to “Program Y” workshops. These clubs include both young men and women, with the goal of building healthy lifestyles for all of them.

The survey, including the intervention program, was conducted by four engaged local partner NGOs: “Perpetuum Mobile – Institute for Youth and Community Development” from Banja Luka, “Center for Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles – Center E8” from Belgrade, “Center for Counseling, Social Services, and Research (SIT)” and “George Williams Youth Association in Kosovo (YMCA)” from Pristina, and “ACT for SOCIETY Center” from Tirana.

RESULTS

Gender Relations

In all cities, results of the endline research show a greater level of participation of young men and women in different daily household chores (cooking, washing, cleaning, etc.). Progress was usually in the range of 10%, and is most evident in Tirana (up to 60%).

Research results show progress regarding attitudes towards gender relations in all cities. In the endline research, respondents were more open-minded about gender roles, gender norms, and homosexuals. As for young men, the endline research showed that 10-15% of the respondents had a more open-minded and egalitarian attitude toward gender roles and norms. The most open-minded were respondents from Belgrade, while the most significant progress compared to the baseline assessment was in Pristina and Tirana.

Young women, expectedly, had more gender equal and open-minded attitudes than young men. In the endline research, they were even more open minded than in the baseline. The progress varied, but in the majority of cases it was between 10-20%. The participants from Belgrade and Tirana were the most tolerant, while the greatest positive changes between the two researches were noted in Banja Luka (up to 32.8%) and Pristina (up to 52.7%).

However, it is a positive fact that endline research results show that both young men and young women are more tolerant towards homosexuals. In average, 15-20% of the participants have demonstrated progress, and for some attitudes it goes even up to 30%.

Despite the progress, the results show that more work is needed in order to reduce gender stereotypes and intolerance. In the endline research, up to 40% of young men adhered to traditional gender roles and norms, and preferred social distance from homosexuals. Among the young women, up to 30% had stereotypical views on gender roles, and up to 20% held to traditional gender norms.

Health

In the endline phase, the highest smoking rate was found among young men and women from Banja Luka and Pristina, around 23-31%. The participants from Tirana smoked the least. As expected, marijuana use was less common than smoking, up to 17.6% in Belgrade and in other groups between 2.3-9.7%.

As for alcohol use, it was most common among young men and women from Belgrade and Banja Luka. One in two young men from Belgrade and Banja Luka, and one in three from Tirana drank alcohol, while in Pristina one in ten young men drank alcohol once a month or more.

The rate of smoking, marijuana use, and alcohol use was higher during the endline survey. This was probably a consequence of emancipation in adolescence, when young people start experimenting with various opiates.

Among indicators of mental health in the last month, the dominant feelings were that of happiness (58%-91% of young men and 47%-69% of young women) and tranquility (51%-80% of young men and 33%-58% of young women). Between 30%-50% of young women had periods during which they felt nervous, and 8%-38% had periods during which nothing could cheer them up. Compared to the baseline survey, consistent changes in mental health were not observed in the endline survey.

As for knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, baseline results showed a low rate of knowledge about these issues, which improved in the endline survey. In percentage terms 50% of the questions in the endline survey were answered correctly by the participants. This data is useful as it shows that preventive programs can have a significant impact on the lifestyles of young people.

Violence

In the majority of cases the perception of violence in the endline research was more mature than in the baseline. Awareness on the meaning and forms of violence was more developed. This progress is more evident among young men, especially young men from Banja Luka. In the endline study, between 30-41% of young men and 9-23% of young women participated in perpetrating verbal and psychological violence during the prior three months. Physical violence was perpetrated by 18-25% of young men and 7-12% of young women. It was more common among young men than young women. If we compare psychological violence from the baseline and endline researches, no major consistent changes can be observed, except for Tirana where it is significantly lower in the endline survey (4% less violence among young men, and 12% less violence among young women). At the end of the program, we can see some positive signs related to physical violence, which is less present in all the cities than at the beginning of the program. The progress among young men is between 7%-21% (the greatest progress is in Pristina), and among young women between 3%-8% (the greatest progress is in Banja Luka).

In the endline survey, both young men and young women from all cities expressed negative attitudes toward gender-based violence, which is a positive and affirmative thing. It can be observed that most of the young men, and especially young women, condemn gender-based violence. Progress in attitudes on gender-based violence, in comparison to the baseline survey, was 5-10% in most cases. The biggest positive change in attitudes was registered in Pristina (progress in some attitudes went up to 32%).

When it comes to violence in relationships, we noticed that this type of violence is more prevalent among young men. Psychological violence is present among 6-26% of young men and 9-19% of young women. Physical violence is differently represented. It varies between 1.6-20% among young men and 2.4%-14.4% among young women. Physical violence (in a relationship) by young men and young women is more prevalent in Banja Luka and Belgrade than in other cities. Sexual violence in a relationship is less present and varies up to 4%. If we compare results in the baseline and endline survey, we can observe progress in Pristina and Tirana, where violence in relationships has gone down (and now goes up to 16%).

In the endline research, 56-70% of young men and women from Belgrade, Banja Luka, and Tirana felt capable and ready to prevent possible violent behavior in intimate relationships, while the percentage is lower in Pristina (38-49%). In the endline research, participants said they felt more ready and empowered. The majority of respondents (71-94%) in the endline

survey did not experience violence in intimate relationships. One positive finding of the endline research was that the number of those who suffered violence in intimate relationships was lower than in the period of the baseline research. The majority of those who had this negative experience in both phases of the research managed to successfully solve the problem.

Additional positive finding on bystander intervention is that a vast majority of young men and especially young women stress that they would try to stop violence if they saw it happening in their surroundings. When we compare results from the baseline and endline research, we can observe that the results are similar and that there is no significant difference between them.

The Situation, Specificities, and Priorities in Individual Cities

Some cities share the same characteristics. There has been progress in developing a more open-minded attitude toward gender equality in all cities (especially in Pristina). Still, gender stereotypes, including homophobia, can still be observed in all cities and will need to be dealt with in the future. Endline results show that the percentage of respondents using alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana has increased in all cities. Knowledge of young women and young men about sexual and reproductive health is at an average level in all cities, with some progress in the endline phase. Participants from Belgrade showed the highest level of knowledge, followed by young people from Banja Luka and Pristina. Results showed that 20%-40% of young people from all the cities have a wrong perception of what violence is. In the endline survey, perpetrated physical violence and gender-based violence had decreased in all cities in comparison to the baseline survey. As for other types of violence, we can conclude that there was no significant change in any of the cities. Likewise, the majority of participants from all cities aim to constructively act and resolve conflicts if they arise.

Besides similar characteristics, specific problems were noticed in certain cities. Physical violence in intimate relationships, both among young men and young women, was more prevalent in Banja Luka and Belgrade than in other cities. Alcohol use was more prevalent in Banja Luka than in other cities. Marijuana and alcohol use increased in Belgrade. In Pristina and Tirana, unlike other cities, mental health had somewhat worsened by the end of the project. One positive thing is that a lower level of violence within intimate relationships was recorded in these two cities in the endline research. Group violence among young men was more prevalent in Pristina. Pristina recorded the highest positive change in the attitude toward gender-based violence. However, participants from Pristina felt the least ready to stop violence within a relationship than young people from other cities.

The problems and priorities shared by all cities, as well their mentioned specificities, can be useful in determining issues and problems that need to be addressed in future work. Obviously, in all cities, future projects should continue to focus on achieving gender equality, and especially on improving mental health and preventing the consumption of psychoactive substances.

CONCLUSION

The research was implemented on a significant sample of high school students from several cities in the Western Balkans. The overall conclusion of the endline research is that positive changes have been identified in several segments of the intervention. There were lower rates of physical violence, and views on violence and gender based-violence became more mature and deeper. There has been progress in developing gender equality attitudes and the participation of young people in household chores in all cities. The youngsters gained a higher level of knowledge about sexual and reproductive health after the intervention program. The majority of young participants felt ready to prevent violence in a relationship. No progress or consistent changes have been observed when it comes to the consumption of psychoactive substances and mental health.

In general, the majority of participants were satisfied with the different aspects of project activities. Participants from almost all cities highly valued the work of the trainers and peer educators, communication and socializing, as well as methods used during the work. The majority of participants highly valued and expressed satisfaction with the project as a whole.

This program has demonstrated that different ways of engaging with young people (“Be a Man” clubs, campaigns, workshops) can improve the lifestyles of young men and women, and the greatest influence has been on those who had participated in several parts of the program. The concept of working in this program gives good results and should be supported in the future and further developed. Additionally, it is necessary to obtain systematic support from institutions for establishing mechanisms to help young people who have some problem or need. We expect that the program will provoke responsible state educational institutions and schools to more actively work on establishing sustainable mechanism, i.e. a regular curriculum that would lead to the improvement of the lifestyles of young people. We hope that CARE International, in cooperation with its donors and local partners, will continue its work which has thus far showed improvement in school environments and created better conditions for a healthy development of young men and women in the Balkans.