Young Men Initiative Program (YMI)

To address the fact boys and men are largely left out from the discussion on gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV), CARE International developed the YMI project. Implemented since 2006 in BiH, Serbia, Croatia, Albania and Kosovo, YMI aims to promote gender equality, non-violence and healthy lifestyles, with a special focus on working with boys and men.

Why boys and men?

When asked what emotion they show the least, surveyed high-school boys said fear. This is based on the patriarchal societies’ expectations in the Balkan region, where boys and men are thought to be tough, masculine, dominating and fearless. Showing emotions like affection, love, or fear makes you “less of a man”, as well as taking care of your children and sharing household work. Many men and especially young boys find coping with this kind of pressure very difficult, leading to depression, alcohol and substance abuse and increased level of violence.

YMI approach to reducing GBV

The core of YMI are educational programs for high-schools which include a series of workshops and student-led campaigns. The aim is to provide an opportunity for pupils to reflect upon and discuss gender, masculinities and health, focusing on violence prevention.

Tools for teachers, school workers and educators:

- Educational toolkit – a comprehensive guide to implement YMI methodology and activities
- Program Y Youth – Innovative Approaches in GBV, Prevention and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion for Young Women & Men
- Program M Training manual for working with men & boys
- Program P Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving, and Maternal and Child Health

Community interventions

YMI carries out numerous activities outside schools as well, providing opportunities to discuss about the importance of working with men to reduce GBV and promote gender equality. Those activities include community actions, theatre plays, TV and radio shows, forums, round tables, conferences.

Here is Besnik Leka, Project Coordinator for YMI program in Albania and Kosovo explaining some of YMI campaigns!

YMI campaigns generated a lot of media interest, but also revealed flaws in media reporting on GBV. For this purpose YMI developed the Gender sensitization manual on media reporting on GBV. Listen here about one of the instances when media got it all wrong!

Results:

- 2016 – 1st Ron Kovic Peace Prize at My Hero International Film Festival for the film “Post War Machismo: Be a Man”
- 2017 – Innovation Award Winner – by Global Education Network Europe
- Program accredited in Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo
- Program mandatory part of head teachers’ class in three cantons in BiH!

The whole webinar with Mr. Leka is available here!