



Regional Research

# ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Country Report: Kosovo

In partnership with the International Institute  
for Child Rights and Development, and Child Hub

Date: December 2020









## About the author

Bujar Gallopeni is a Lecturer and Head of the Public Administration & Welfare program at the International Business College Mitrovica.

He is conducting his doctoral studies at the University of Sheffield, UK. He received a Master of Science in Work and Organizational Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, at the University of Maastricht, the Netherlands. He also has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Prishtina.

b.gallopeni@ibcmitrovica.eu  
<https://www.ibcmitrovica.eu/>

## Acknowledgment

This study was made possible with the contributions of the following team members who supported data collection in the field: Shkendie Maxhuni, Child Protection Project Coordinator at the Terre des Hommes Office in Kosovo; Fjolla Ramadani, who facilitated the data collection with female child participants; and Leutrim Edipi, Nita Ymeri, and Ilmi Abdixhiki, who facilitated the note-taking process.

Researcher: Bujar Gallopeni

### Disclaimer & copyrights

The research has been produced in the framework of the Child Protection Hub project, supported by the Austrian Development Agency, Oak foundation and Terre des hommes. The research does not necessarily reflect the views of the donors

WITH FUNDING FROM  
 AUSTRIAN  
DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATION

  
OAK  
FOUNDATION

# Executive Summary



## Introduction

Violence among children has been considered one of the fundamental issues influencing optimal child development and education. Although this phenomenon is quite widespread in Kosovo, it is important to understand, in depth, the factors that affect it. Because of the complex nature of violence itself, to understand this phenomenon one must look at its roots within social, cultural and economic factors. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the social and gender norms impacting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), and the potential role of children in challenging these social norms. This study was conducted within a larger research initiative in South Eastern Europe, where, along with Kosovo, seven other countries were included: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Romania and Serbia. Child Hub Europe has partnered with Terre des hommes and the Institute for International Child Rights and Development to address this critical issue through this research.

## Methodology

The study adopted an inductive approach, using qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. A participatory approach, as a form of action research, was used at two sites in Kosovo to involve participants aged 13–18 years old, and adults representing mainly school personnel and parents. The data collection process took place in the form of workshops, with children using a range of data collection tools (explained in detail in Chapter 2).

## Key findings

Child violence in Kosovo is quite prevalent and appears in different forms, such as verbal/psychological, physical, sexual, bullying, exploitation and neglect.

- Psychological violence, exercised in the form of verbal abuse to offend and create an emotional impact on children, was present among both adolescent males and females. Included in verbal forms of violence are the labels given to children by teachers, especially those in primary and lower-secondary schools.
- Sexual violence, predominantly in the form of harassment, is experienced mainly by female adolescents, while in boys it was seemingly absent. This form of violence is exercised by male adolescents, who harass females on the way to school and within the school environment.
- Physical violence is a problem that both male and female adolescents encounter. Usually the aggressor is a peers or an adult, and the violence takes place domestically, especially in the form of corporal punishment.



- Bullying was defined among participants as a form of systematic insult, and is experienced by both male and female adolescents, primarily within the school environment, but also online (cyberbullying). Female adolescents reported a higher rate of cyberbullying than their male counterparts.
- Neglect was less understood and less obvious among child participants. However, participants indicated that it did happen in the form of underestimating students in school.
- Exploitation was reported more in street and family work, with participants reporting and normalizing the cultural element of feeling the need to supplement the family income.

## Conclusions & recommendations

- First, individuals, both children and adults, are both perpetrators and victims of violence. Therefore, certain actions need to be undertaken, such as systematic campaigns against violence in general, and child violence in particular, need to be designed and promoted from both authorities, schools, community-based organizations and so on. It is tremendously important that societal structures are aware of and committed to reporting violence in general, and child violence in particular, to relevant authorities when it is witnessed.
- Second, there are many policies in place that address child protection at various levels. However, since these policies are not yet fully operating, strengthening implementation mechanisms would be an immediate step from respective authorities. Furthermore, the respective authorities need to enforce legal provisions against perpetrators of violence, therefore contributing to the eradication of the phenomena.
- Third, since various forms of child violence have been found to happen within the school environment, there appears to be a lack of school-specific mechanisms for child protection in Kosovo. In actuality, teachers and school management should carry out this role, and in some schools, the school psychologist as well. However, child participants have reported that, although they noted the opportunity, there is a lack of substantial trust that such school structures can be of help when children face violence. Some countries, such as the UK for example, have created focal points for child protection within schools to build confidence and trust among children. The functions and responsibilities of these focal points are articulated in certain regulations issued from respective educational authorities as measures to be implemented in schools. This has also been recommended for development, installation and implementation in schools in Kosovo.
- Finally, both child and adult participants noted the importance of the role and availability of social protection and welfare mechanisms, such as centres for social work, community police, and other child protection actors. The collaboration among these structures with the school and community needs to be strengthened to become more operational.



# Table of contents

---

	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	04
	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	06
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	08
<b>2</b>	<b>METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW: OVERVIEW OF MULTI-COUNTRY STUDY</b>	09
2.1	Guiding Questions and Contextual Lens of Analysis	09
2.2	Research Methods and Approach	10
2.3	Ethical Considerations	12
<b>3</b>	<b>COUNTRY-LEVEL METHODOLOGY</b>	13
3.1	Research Team	13
3.2	Site Selection	13
3.3	Data collection procedure	14
3.4	Ethical Issues	15
3.5	Research Tools: Adaptations and Reflections on their Implementation	15
3.6	Limitations	15
<b>4</b>	<b>Violence Against Children in Schools in Kosovo</b>	16



<b>5</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1	Incidence, Type and Perpetrators of Violence Against Children in Kosovo	18
5.2	Social and Gender Norms Around Violence Against Children, including Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo	23
5.3	Protection from Violence and Promotion of Well-being	24
5.4	Children's Agency and their Responses to Violence	27
<b>6</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Key Recommendations</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>31</b>
	Appendix A: Key Definitions	31
	Appendix B: Ethical Protocols	34
	Informed Consent	37
	Limited Confidentiality	38
	Appendix C: Country-Level Consent Forms	41
	Appendix D: Royal Roads University Consent Form Forms	42
	Appendix E: Map of Research Sites	46



# 1

# Introduction

It is no longer possible to ignore the significant and widespread impact violence has on children. It influences children in the short and long term, and even across generations. Despite the three decades that have passed since the international community came together to launch the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Hollis, Marcy, Amboy and Kress (2016) found that over 1 billion, half of all children between the ages of 2 and 17, had experienced violence, abuse or neglect within the previous year. Violence against children happens in schools, homes, communities and across systems. In South East Europe, violence against children is pervasive.

Understanding that direct and indirect experiences of violence in childhood undermines our investments in children in health, education, and development, this research focuses on further understanding the social and gender norms impacting school-related (gender-based) violence (SRGBV), and the role of children in challenging these social norms.

For this research, Child Hub Europe partnered with Terre des hommes and the Institute for International Child Rights and Development to address this critical issue.



# Methodological Overview: Overview of multi-country study

This study was conducted in South Eastern Europe, specifically in **Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Serbia**.

The purpose of the research was: **to measure the social and gender norms impacting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), and the potential role of children in challenging these social norms (RFP Child Hub)**.

## Guiding Questions and Contextual Lens of Analysis

2.1

The following questions guided all aspects of the study, and were integrated into the study framework and relevant data collection instruments:

1. What do we know about the incidence and type of violence that children are facing in and around school in Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as the children that are most impacted by it?
2. What are the social and gender norms of school children, community members and school professionals related to violence against children?
3. What are the social and gender norms of school children, community members and school professionals related to gender-based violence against children?
4. What are the informal and formal mechanisms, child-led actions, community resources, values and services that protect children from violence and promote a child's well-being?
5. To what degree do children feel able to prevent or respond to violence (and GBV specifically) against themselves and their peers, and what ideas do they have for preventing and responding to violence?
6. How has children's experience of violence in and around school changed since COVID-19?

Note: due to measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was temporarily suspended until it could be resumed in accordance with national and local requirements to ensure the safety of participants and researchers.

To maintain the consistency and legitimacy of the data collection, the research questions remained the same, but additional contextual information provides clarity on data that refers to retrospective perspectives of what was occurring prior to pandemic policies and school closures, and any changes that have occurred as a result of lockdown measures. Some additional questions were added to explore the perception of the change in experiences of violence in schools and other educational experiences (including online, learning from home) that occurred as a result of COVID-19 measures.

In order to gather information on the current status and practice of violence against children, as well as on social norms, attitudes, practices and knowledge around violence against children, this study explored educational settings in addition to the full context of children's lives within which violence takes place. This study focused on:

1. Girls' and boys' experiences and life stories (in general),
2. Educational settings (including formal and informal educational settings [in person, at a distance, online], for teachers, principals and fellow students),
3. The route to educational settings (including outdoor spaces, recreational areas, business areas, roads, etc.),
4. Formal and informal support services (including social services, state care and the judicial system)
5. Cultural values, beliefs and norms that shape children and adults' social and gender norms with respect to violence against children.
6. Children in exceptionally difficult circumstances, such as children with disabilities, children living on the street, migrant children, ethnic or religious groups, etc.

## 2.2 Research Methods and Approach

This is a mixed methodology study with a "qualitatively driven approach" (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). It is both inductive and deductive, as well as exploratory, drawing on participatory methods. Using a variety of research instruments with groups of children and adults (see the table below), the researchers' understanding of children's lived realities gradually deepened. Further exploration of children's lives will yield stronger indications of social norms and practices, and will enable clearer direction for future programming and policy, rather than a process that reaches larger numbers of participants with less depth.

Within the participatory methodology, the focus of the instruments was to provide children and adults with a framework in which they could explore the violence that is taking place in children's lives. Rather than asking closed questions, researchers created the space for children to name what they perceive



as violence, explain its prevalence and its impact on their daily lives, discuss their attitudes towards violence as well as the attitudes of their peers, parents and the broader community, and the impact of these attitudes. In addition, attention was given to creating space for children to identify strategies for prevention and support services, as well as for social change.

Researchers in each project country identified the most appropriate sites based on the sampling frame.

The sampling frame aimed to include the following:

- Children aged 13–18 (approximately 30 children/site [2 groups of 10–15 children, one boy group and one girl group], in approximately 2–4 sites)
- Adults, including: parents, teachers, principals, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers and community members (approximately 15 people/site)

However, given the added complications associated with COVID-19 distancing protocols, the sampling frame was adapted according to health and safety specifications.

#### Methods conducted with Children and Adults

Children	Adults
Tool 1: Social Mapping- Part 1	Tool 7: Vignettes
Tool 2: Vignettes	Tool 8: Focus Group
Tool 3: Participative Ranking Methodology	
Tool 4: Social Mapping-Part 2 (Optional)	
Tool 5: Social Network Mapping	
Tool 6: Focus Group	

*Note: due to COVID-related measures introduced during data collection, tools were adapted to fit one or both of the following formats:*

**Method 1: In person, respecting physical distancing**

**Method 2: Via smartphone or computer with internet connection, or remote participation**

If it is not possible to safely bring together a small group of children while physically distancing, consider the following adaptations:

**Online Video-Conferencing:** in groups with Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx, GoToMeeting, etc.

**WhatsApp/Phone Calls:** If children are unable to connect to a video-call app, consider using WhatsApp or audio-based group calls and/or individual calls to chat about maps.

Online via Zoom, Jam Board, Miro or other visual collaboration software

**No internet and unable to meet in person:** Co-create activity packages with children and adults that can be mailed to or safely dropped off at children's homes (with postage for them to return it, or a convenient drop-off location).

*All efforts were made to conduct research in person to avoid the ethical complications of conducting distance-based research with children on violence.*

## 2.3 Ethical Considerations

Research on sensitive subjects, such as violence against children, can cause unintended harm to participants, for example, if confidentiality is breached, informed consent is not obtained, or a group of people is stigmatized. Researchers need to be careful not to raise expectations, which can lead to mistrust of outsiders and disillusionment. Researchers also need to be cautious not to increase power imbalances that may cause a particular group to become vulnerable.

The research on violence may ask children and adults, even without direct questions concerning personal experience, to re-live painful and difficult trauma. For researchers working with children who may have suffered from violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, there is a critical responsibility to "do no harm" in their interactions with children and youth.

The researchers in this study were trained to watch for signs of distress (both verbal and non-verbal) among children. They ensured that the environment within the activities remained respectful and supportive, and took time to speak with children who may have needed extra support outside of the activity. The name and contact details of a support worker, as well as emergency numbers and local reporting protocol, were listed on a flipchart at all times, enabling children to reach out for additional support on their own. Where a flipchart was not practical, handouts were given to young participants before each session. When, for example, a researcher saw that a young person required support, they were able to discuss this with the child and call a support person to request a personal visit be made to the community. The researcher was then able to follow-up with both the child and the support worker using appropriate child safeguarding protocol, as per the TdH Child Safeguarding Policy and national legislation.

**Please see Appendix B for more on Ethical Research Protocols**, including further ethical guidelines, recommendations and practices for working with children, informed consent and limited confidentiality procedures and considerations.

# Country-Level Methodology

## Research Team

### 3.1

The research team in Kosovo was composed of five individuals: one lead researcher, one research facilitator for data collection, and three research assistants who took notes during the data collection process.

The lead researcher, a male, was responsible for ensuring the overall research methodology was adapted and implemented, and for facilitating and overseeing the data collection process, as well as processing and analysing the collected data, and writing the research report. He also led data collection sessions with male children. The research facilitator, a female, was responsible for facilitating data collection with female child participants at both sites, and with data processing — particularly transcribing the recorded discussions in various sessions with children. The three research assistants, two male and one female, were responsible for taking notes during the discussion sessions, accordingly with male and female groups of children, and filling-in note-taking forms (A & B).

## Site Selection

### 3.2

As COVID-related measures were introduced in Kosovo during the data collection stage, efforts were made to conduct the research in person, as there were added ethical complications to conducting distance-based research with children on violence.

Data collection with participants at the Prishtina site took place in the first half of March 2020. Due to the pandemic, data collection at the Ferizaj site was postponed until the end of September 2020, just after schools reopened for in-school classes. The two sites were selected due to Terre des Hommes collaboration with educational authorities at both locations. Both sites included children and families coming from vulnerable groups, such as children with low socio-economic status, and children coming from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.





**Fig. no. 1.** Data Collection Sites in Kosovo

## 3.3 Data collection procedure

The sampling frame in Kosovo included the following:

- Participants were selected from two sites: Prishtina, Kosovo's capital, located in the northeast of the country; and Ferizaj, located in the southeast part of the country.
- There were two research population groups:
  - 42 children aged 13–18, divided in two groups: one male (22 participants) and one female (20 participants).
  - Adults, including: parents, teachers, principals, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers and community members (20 participants in total, of which 16 were female).
- At the Prishtina site, child participants were selected from two schools: a primary and lower-secondary school (students aged 13–15), and an upper-secondary school (students aged 16–18), which included children from both rural and urban areas. Similarly, adult participants came from the same school neighbourhoods.
- At the Ferizaj site, two schools were chosen with the same characteristics as the Prishtina site, both for child and adult participants.

### Data Analysis

With child participants, the administrative process of data collection included workshops with six sessions (one session per data collection tool) over a period of two days. During the sessions, children worked in either a male or female

group. This gender-based divide was organized to ensure that participants would feel comfortable speaking about sensitive topics in group discussions related to gender-based violence. In addition, the workshop sessions were led by a researcher identifying with that same gender group.

## Ethical Issues

3.4

For this study, a previous collaboration agreement that Terre des Hommes had enacted with central and local authorities ensured ethical procedures would be used when accessing the schools and working with children in research-based activities. In addition, letters of consent were prepared and signed by child participants and their respective parents. This process was completed before researchers started collecting data. With adult participants, a consent form was completed at the beginning of the focus group discussion; they were informed and agreed to be part of group discussions.

## Research Tools: Adaptations and Reflections on their Implementation

3.5

All data collection tools listed in the methodology section table of this report were used while collecting data with participants in Kosovo:

- Tool 1: Social Mapping – Part 1
- Tool 2: Vignettes
- Tool 3: Participative Ranking Methodology
- Tool 4: Social Mapping – Part 2 (Optional)
- Tool 5: Social Network Mapping
- Tool 6: Focus Group
- Tool 7: Vignettes
- Tool 8: Focus Group

Since data collection in Kosovo took place in the physical presence of participants, the data collection forms were adapted accordingly. The key questions of these tools were translated into Albanian, using a double independent translation approach, and one final version was adapted.

## Limitations

3.6

It was difficult to maintain the gender balance of child participants, although efforts were made to achieve this undertaking. At both selected sites, an equal number of female and male child participants were invited (10 girls and 10 boys per site), which was more than the optimal 15 children required. However, the final number of participants varied at both sites. Nevertheless, enough male and female children participated in the data collection process to ensure a meaningful reflection on gender perspectives of child violence.

# 4 Violence Against Children in Schools in Kosovo

Child violence in Kosovo is quite widespread. It appears in many forms, such as psychological, physical, sexual, etc., and in various places, such as at school, home, in the street, and so on. Physical violence against children in schools appears to be quite prevalent, whether as a form of discipline or as a form of children solving problems between themselves. School and educational institutions are the premises where children often experience violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). It is indicated that nine out of ten students have experienced physical violence in schools at least once (Mustafa, 2018). Violence is implemented by both peers and teachers; in Kosovo, 34% of students are exposed to violence by their teachers (Thaci, 2018).

Schoolyards and toilets are considered the most unsafe places in schools, and most violence occurs during class breaks or on a child's way home (UNDP, 2018). Physical violence encountered in schools reportedly includes pushing, pinching, strangling, hitting, etc. Physical violence is justified by children themselves, who consider it a legitimate form of discipline (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). This same source reports that school bullying can result in long-term trauma and anxiety among child victims.

Amongst the general population, children tend to experience physical violence from the ages of 1 to 13. In minority groups, such as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, however, children are exposed to physical violence until marriage (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017), with 43% of children within these communities married by the age of 18.

In Kosovo, 59% of school children suffered psychological violence, mainly in the form of damage and destruction to personal property (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). Sexual violence against students also occurs in school settings. For instance, UNICEF reported that students experience sexual violence in the form of various unwarranted touching in schools and institutions of education (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). Girls were the main victims of psychological violence because they were considered physically weak and therefore more vulnerable to bullying and





various psychological pressures (Mustafa, 2018). Girls generally experience more neglect and psychological violence, while boys experience more physical violence. Furthermore, other studies suggest that children of both genders are almost equally affected by sexual violence (Mustafa, 2016).

Evidence shows that violence against children in schools and at home is considered a social norm and is accepted by society (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017). Physical violence or punishment is considered a valid method of providing education or child discipline, which is also applied by teachers in schools (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017).

Children lack trust in the efficiency, justice and complaint mechanisms of school systems to address violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). The UNDP (2018) suggests that girls prefer to report violence to their class teacher, while boys seek help from their friends to address these issues. Consequently, girls are mostly against using corporal punishment in schools, and prefer to either dropout or change schools (UNDP, 2018). And yet, according to UNICEF Kosovo (2017), most violence against children in Kosovo goes unnoticed by the general public due to social beliefs and norms.



# 5 Findings

## 5.1 Incidence, Type and Perpetrators of Violence Against Children in Kosovo

### 5.1.1 Perception and views of violence by adolescents

Child violence is a phenomenon that is quite widespread in Kosovo, and thus is one of the main preoccupations among children; children have quite a lot of information about it, and define it in many forms according to their level of perception and the experiences of violence that either they have had or witnessed.

During the data collection workshop, child participants were asked what violence meant to them, and how they distinguish different forms of violence. The results are tremendously diverse; children have defined violence in various forms — representing it as action, consequence, the level of negative impact they perceived about it, and the way it should be treated as a phenomenon. The quadrant table below (no. 1) highlights some extracted definitions that children provided during the workshop:

As an action towards others	As a consequence to victims
"Violence means when the other is hurt both physically and mentally."	"When we face this term we immediately think of physical violence, but violence is even broader. We can then use physical, verbal or psychological violence, i.e., all of these are part of violence."
"Violence is the mistreatment of a person both physically and mentally."	"Violence is usually caused by those who are stronger, and divides those who do not have the strength to face it."
"Violence, according to me, is when one bullies another, both physically and mentally."	"Violence is the mistreatment of another person, only that he has more power than the other person."
"This phenomenon has been, is and will always remain, that the strong is above the weak."	"Violence should not be used on children because it can cause psychological harm."
"Violence usually occurs in different environments such as school, where students cause violence against others."	"Violence is human harassment, there is physical and psychological violence."
"Violence can occur from various confrontations."	"Psychological violence is more severe (worse) I think."
"Violence is a gesture that is very common nowadays."	"From violence there are people who still have consequences".
"Violence is a rude phenomenon, which develops in certain persons."	"The greatest violence is done to children because they cannot bear to face the other person."
"Violence is the exercise and use of physical force against someone."	
"Violence is physical, psychological, institutional harassment, etc. to another person."	
"...the use of physical means, may also be the use of inappropriate words against a person."	
"Violence occurs between the same sexes but there are also cases of different genders."	

As negative outcome	As a way to be treated
"Violence can destroy a person's future."	"Violence must be prohibited by law."
"The most dangerous violence is psychological."	"The consequences of violence against children must be reported to the police."
"Violence is the use of physical force on children."	"Violence in every aspect is unforgivable."
"I think violence is a very bad action because one can get hurt or get some bad consequences"	
"Violence against children is the use of physical force (punch, slap) against a minor."	
"Sometimes psychological violence can be worse than physical violence."	

**Table no. 1.** Adolescents' definitions of violence

Children meet and face forms of violence differently, based on the places and circumstances they find themselves in. The type and severity of violence also impacts children differently. Child participants in this study were asked to rank types of violence on various premises according to how they perceived and experienced it. Their ranking starts with the most prevalent form of violence, followed by decreasingly prevalent ones. The table below presents the ranking of types of violence, presented separately for males and females, according to commonly-agreed upon definitions of violence:

Most common types of violence in general			
Prishtina Site		Ferizaj Site	
Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Psychological	1. Sexual	1. Psychological	1. Emotional (psychological)
2. Verbal	2. Insult	2. Bullying	2. Cyberbullying
3. Physical	3. Hate	3. Physical	3. Sexual
4. Sexual	4. Cyberbullying	4. Sexual	4. Physical
5. Towards gender	5. Physical (pushing, beating)	5. Exploitation	5. Trafficking (exploitation)
6. Towards age		6. Neglect	
7. Neglect			
8. Racial			



Most common types of violence in school			
Prishtina Site		Ferizaj Site	
Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Verbal	1. Insult	1. Psychological	1. Emotional (psychological)
2. Psychological	2. Sexual	2. Bullying	2. Physical
3. Physical	3. Hate	3. Physical	3. Sexual
4. Neglect	4. Cyberbullying	4. Sexual	4. Cyberbullying
5. Towards age	5. Physical (pushing, beating)	5. Exploitation	5. Trafficking (exploitation)
6. Sexual		6. Neglect	
7. Racial			
8. Towards gender			

Most common types of violence on route to school			
Prishtina Site		Ferizaj Site	
Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Physical	1. Sexual	1. Psychological	1. Emotional (psychological)
2. Verbal	2. Insult	2. Bullying	2. Sexual
3. Neglect	3. Hate	3. Physical	3. Physical
4. Sexual	4. Physical (pushing, beating)	4. Exploitation	4. Trafficking (exploitation)
5. Towards age	5. Cyberbullying	5. Neglect	5. Cyberbullying
6. Racial		6. Sexual	
7. Psychological			
8. Towards gender			

Most impactful type of violence			
Prishtina Site		Ferizaj Site	
Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Psychological	1. Sexual	1. Psychological	1. Emotional (psychological)
2. Verbal	2. Insult	2. Bullying	2. Sexual
3. Physical	3. Physical (pushing, beating)	3. Neglect	3. Cyberbullying
4. Sexual	4. Cyberbullying	4. Exploitation	4. Physical
5. Towards gender	5. Hate	5. Sexual	5. Trafficking (exploitation)
6. Towards age			
7. Neglect			
8. Racial			

**Table no. 2.** Ranking of child violence and its impact on children

It seems that psychological violence, including verbal abuse, insults and emotional violence, is the most common and highly-ranked type of violence that children face in school, on the way to school and in general. Among female adolescents, sexual violence in the form of harassment is considerably present, and is mainly encountered during their daily commute to and from school. The perpetrators of female sexual harassment are mainly their male peer counterparts, who do not attend their school.

Within schools, psychological violence is ranked highest among both sexes, followed by physical violence and bullying among male adolescents, and sexual violence and bullying among female adolescents.

Specific types of violence have a different impact on adolescents. Among female adolescents, sexual harassment is ranked highest among the types of violence impacting them on a regular basis, followed by psychological/emotional violence through verbal insults, and finally cyberbullying. Among male adolescents, psychological violence in the form of verbal abuse and insults is ranked the highest, followed by bullying and physical forms of violence.

### **5.1.2 Forms of violence the children experienced**

In Kosovo, child violence seems to take many forms depending on the various circumstances the child faces within their life, school and social circle. The main types of violence that children face in Kosovo were reported as bullying, physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence.

Among the children aged 13–18, bullying was reported to be the most common type of violence they faced “outside of school” and “within school”.

Outside-of-school bullying seems to be more prevalent and was reported to take place mainly on the way to and from school. The exact places reported were in the school area, such as shops, lanes, a bakery, on the street, etc. In several cases among female children, bullying is accompanied by sexual harassment from adolescent boys. *“There are 3 boys near a cake shop. ‘Charlie’ always bullies us. I don’t think it’s nice. They say things like: ‘you’re looking so good’, or ‘take your jacket off’,”* reported a girl aged 16–18, who walks to school from the bus station. Another girl of that age who takes the same route reports: *“Here you go to the circle, there are some people there every morning. They say some words like ‘heart’, ‘chicken’, ‘take your clothes off’, ‘I will come to search for your hand’ (to ask her family’s permission to marry her), and so on.”*

Male child participants reported outside-of-school bullying in spots related to substance abuse, and perpetrators are reported to be substance abusers (mainly drug users). *“It is a place called Llesna, where a lot of people sell and consume narcotics and bully others,”* reported an adolescent male of the 16–18 year-old age group. Similarly, another boy of the same age indicated: *“I do not feel safe because there are many fights between people, as well as people who consume narcotics.”*

Outside-of-school bullying was also reported by both male and female child participants in relation to psychological harassment. *"Near a street stand people who consume narcotics. They have verbally harassed me..."*, reported a female child participant. Additionally, a boy participant said: "Here is a street where some older children sit and tease children on the route." Similarly, another boy of the same age indicated: *"On the route to school, an old man usually harassed the children while they were passing by."*

Mild to moderately severe within-school bullying was reported by both male and female child participants. Within the school environment, bullying was reported more in association with psychological violence, mainly in the form of "labelling" that some children put on others. *"In our class, they especially say things like: you are big, you are small, you are thin, you have glasses, you have four eyes, like this, but they do not think that words can hurt,"* a female adolescent participant reported. Similarly, a male participant reported: "Students give each other nicknames." While another boy reported: *"During the break (between classes), the students in the hall tease each other."*

Cyberbullying also occurred within school, although not often, and mainly in the form of online publishing of private or intimate information about a child. In this context, a young adolescent male participant reported: *"In our school there was a case where a girl's private photos were published."* Cyberbullying was more frequently reported during periods of limited physical contact, during the Covid-19 pandemic measures.

The level of bullying risk was mainly perceived by child participants as mild to moderate, and though rare, in some cases even severe (causing severe damage to participants, such as self-harm and suicide). *"I know a child in my country that committed suicide because of bullying,"* reported one boy.

In the context of neglect, children with special needs are often seen as the target of psychological violence in schools. Participants perceive that psychological violence carries serious consequences, such as: *"I lose self-confidence", "fear", "low academic success", "I feel bad", "I am more shy",* etc.

**Physical violence was** the second-most reported type of violence experienced by children. It was reported, as witnessed happening to others or having experienced it themselves, to happen within school, outside of school and at home. In some cases the violence was quite severe, such as a case reported by two different female child participants: *"In my class, two boys were beaten, and all the boys from different classes were involved (in the fight)."* *"Four years ago, I was here and there was physical violence between the two classes, and they had cold weap [sharp tools such as knives, razors, etc.]..."*. While male participants reported physical violence happening outside of school, mainly at the bus station, where they wait for busses taking them home from school. *"On the road I take to school is the bus station where most physical violence occurs,"* reported a male adolescent participant. Physical violence also takes place at home, as a form of corporal punishment for various child (mis)behaviours, as was explained by a female child participant: *"For some students, if they do not arrive home on time, they will be punished by their parents"*.



**Sexual violence**, either in the form of bullying or in other forms, was reported by the child participants. It was mainly related to girls, while it was absent and imperceptible among boys. Girls also reported experiencing sexual violence from school personnel (in this case, a teacher): *“Sexual violence has occurred in primary school, from teacher to student”*. However, this type of violence (school personnel to children) was not prevalent among the reports.

### **5.1.3 Perceptions and perspectives of adults about child violence**

Adult participants also provided in-depth insight regarding child violence, mainly in regards to types and circumstances of violence in and outside of school. For example, school personnel (both management and teachers), reported that physical violence in school among children is often a consequence of play or the perception of rivalry. School personnel and parents participating in focus groups reported corporal physical violence in the home, mostly from parents towards their children. This is related to the traditional corporal punishment of children. For example, one school director reported cases when school personnel were approached by parents who asked them to physically punish their child to make them obey at school and home. Participants further noted that this form of corporal punishment is considerably tolerated by adults, as it is perceived as a form of disciplining the child.

In addition, adult participants also reported psychological violence occurring in schools in the form of verbal abuse, exercised mainly by school personnel and teachers towards the children in the form of verbal insults, such as giving children names or labels. The same participants also recounted that schoolchildren sometimes, though rarely, offend school personnel with verbal insults.

The adult participants indicated the presence of cyberbullying through social media, although, according to school personnel, it mostly happens between children of different schools, and less among children of the same school. This seems to be explained by the fact that cyberbullies can retain their anonymity by avoiding activity within their own school, and hence face less risk of punishment.

## **Social and Gender Norms Around Violence Against Children, including Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo**

## **5.2**

It is generally believed that, to a great extent, sociocultural norms shape the behaviour of individuals, communities and society in general. Similarly, they also shape perceptions and attitudes towards the appearance, manifestation and development of violence among children in a given context. In Kosovo, the social and cultural norms and beliefs seem to have a considerable impact on how violence is seen and treated among segments of society. This phenomenon can be clearly seen in the conversations with the children included in this study.

For example, the children in this study concurred that children are expected to be punished when their behaviour does not meet their parent's expectations: *"My dad gets mad when I make a lot of noise", or "when my dad has a bad day at work, he sometimes hits me"*, reported one girl. This indicates an occurrence of physical and psychological violence in the form of corporal punishment, which is perceived among the perpetrators as a "deserved" consequence for non-compliant behaviour. Child victims of corporal violence also receive consequential reactions from their peers, as one girl explained: *"I often hear on the street 'Hey fool, go faster', because my parents will shout at me if I do not get home on time"*.

There are also noted gender differences in social norms that influence behaviour, especially the role boys and girls are expected to play in family and society. In this context, girls are expected to provide more of a "spiritual" type of support, specifically in terms of care, while boys are expected to provide financial support to help meet the family's needs. *"If you were a boy, in this case, I don't think you would take better care of your parents than their daughters"*, stated a girl. Moreover, societal perceptions suggest that some type of behaviours, particularly those connected with private intimacy, are more acceptable for boys to engage in than girls. *"If the case of 'Lorik' [a character in a vignette whose private photos were published] would have happened to a girl, society would have judged her more"*, declared another girl, further indicating the social differences in gender expectations. Similarly, a third girl reported that *"It would not be acceptable if that case happened to a girl, because she would be judged for her actions, but it is acceptable for boys"*.

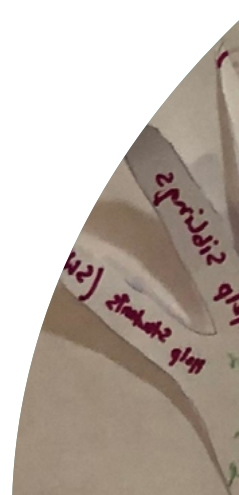
Physical violence, on the other hand, was more frequently perceived and expected to happen among boys than girls. One girl stated: *"It makes no sense for girls to engage in physical violence"*.

Furthermore, according to the Ashkali community, they themselves are frequently harassed.

Regarding the use of children for family work, participants report a cultural element, where supporting income generation for the family is seen as normal.

## 5.3 Protection from Violence and Promotion of Well-being

Children and adolescents react differently when they face and experience different types of violence. As shown in the table below (table 3), when facing almost all types of violence, both boys and girls first seek support from close family members, particularly parents. Boys tend to rely more on the support of their friends when facing physical violence, exploitation and/or trafficking. Girls, on the other hand, rely more on their friends' support when facing psychological and sexual violence and bullying. It is strangely interesting that when facing sexual violence, girls greatly rely on the support of their friends, while this does not happen with boys



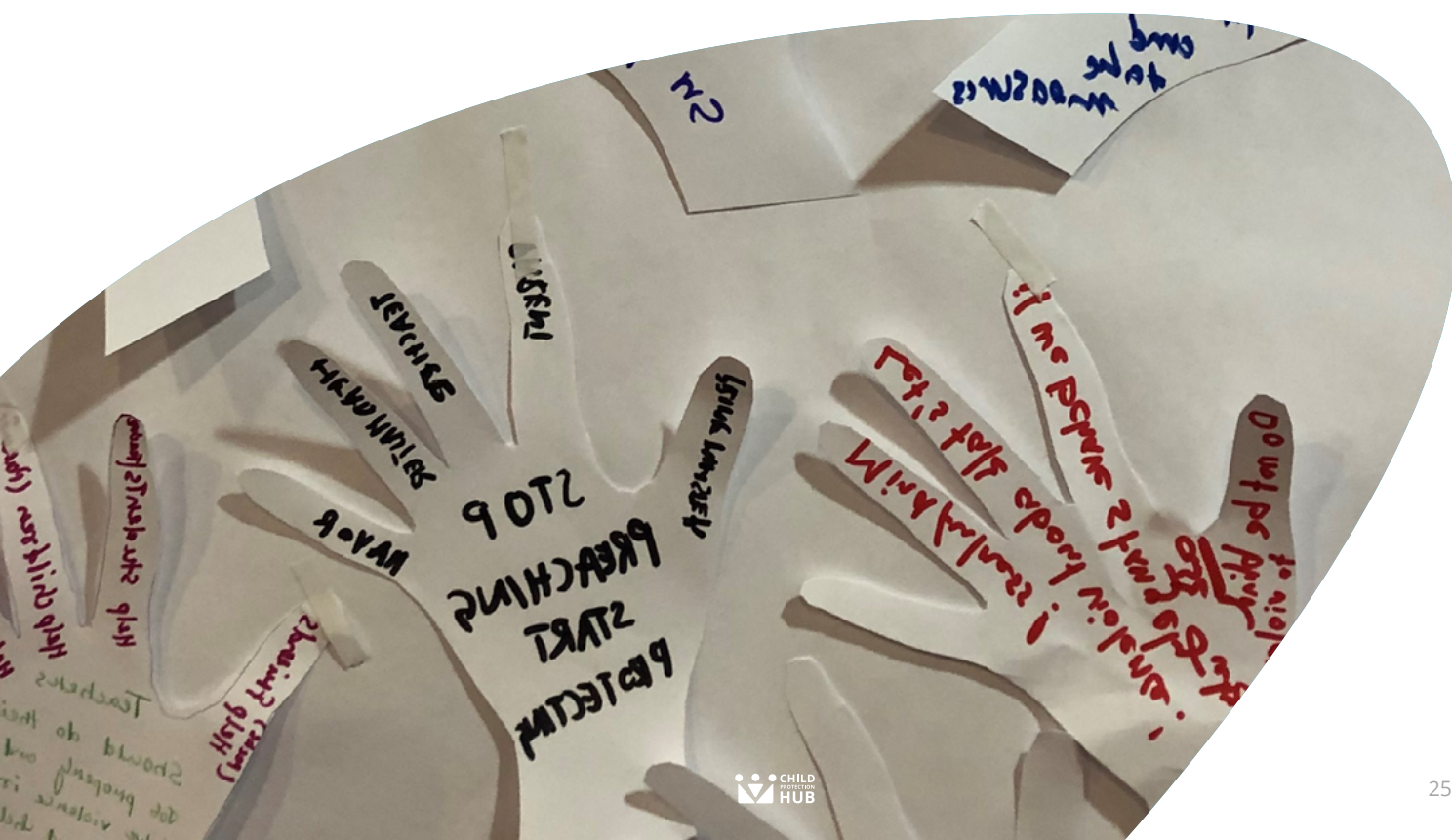
at all. Extended family, mainly uncles and aunts and their close families, play an important role for Kosovar adolescents seeking support when facing all forms of violence.

Children reported having a low-level of trust in school support; it is third in rank for places/people adolescents would rely on for support in handling violent situations. In cases where violence took place outside of school premises, participants stated that the school should not be included as a source of support or assistance. However, in cases where violence occurs in school, participants noted many cases when, even if they spoke to a teacher, they were not taken seriously. In terms of getting help or advice from school psychologists, participants said that students who decide to go to a psychologist are insulted and ridiculed, which makes them avoid this form of help.

Respective authorities, particularly police, have been ranked average to quite high (when facing exploitation and/or trafficking) by adolescents seeking support from violent situations.

The adults who participated explained the protection mechanisms for children and services such as social centres: *“There is protection and social centres, but the school must be notified”*. It is stated that these centres are accessible and schools use them. However, the adults said that an organization or association focused solely on protecting children from violence should be formed alongside it. Furthermore, the participants said that parents have a key role in protecting children in schools, but teachers should equally be involved. At both study sites, adult participants considered the role of collaboration between parents and schools, as well as between the school and the authorities in tackling the child violence. They noted this poses a key challenge as coordination mechanisms and operability among these structures is lacking.

Finally, adult participants expressed the belief that violence likely increased with online schooling, as in their view, the pandemic made people more aggressive.



type of violece	Ask support from	Rank: 1=least important, to 5=very important	
		Boys (avarage)	Girls (avarage)
Physical	Parents (incl. also brothers, sisters, grandpa/ma)	4,5	4,75
	Extended family (uncles, aunts, etc)	4	3,5
	Friends	4,4	2,7
	School (management, teachers, psychologist, etc)	3,5	3,3
	Authorities (police, CSW, court, etc)	3	3,25
Psychological	Parents (incl. also brothers, sisters, grandpa/ma)	5	4,5
	Extended family (uncles, aunts, etc)	3,5	3
	Friends	3,8	4,25
	School (management, teachers, psychologist, etc)	3,8	3
	Authorities (police, CSW, court, etc)	2,7	1,5
Sexual	Parents (incl. also brothers, sisters, grandpa/ma)	4,8	4,6
	Extended family (uncles, aunts, etc)	4,5	3,5
	Friends	0	3,8
	School (management, teachers, psychologist, etc)	3	2,75
	Authorities (police, CSW, court, etc)	4,5	3,4
Neglect	Parents (incl. also brothers, sisters, grandpa/ma)	4,75	0
	Extended family (uncles, aunts, etc)	3,5	0
	Friends	4	0
	School (management, teachers, psychologist, etc)	4,5	0
	Authorities (police, CSW, court, etc)	5	0
Exploitation / trafficking	Parents (incl. also brothers, sisters, grandpa/ma)	4,3	4,4
	Extended family (uncles, aunts, etc)	4	3
	Friends	4,3	2,7
	School (management, teachers, psychologist, etc)	3,7	2,75
	Authorities (police, CSW, court, etc)	4	4,4
Bullying	Parents (incl. also brothers, sisters, grandpa/ma)	4,8	4,9
	Extended family (uncles, aunts, etc)	4	2
	Friends	3,75	4,2
	School (management, teachers, psychologist, etc)	4,2	3,4
	Authorities (police, CSW, court, etc)	3	2,5
	Other (society, etc)	4	0

**Table no. 3.** Ranking of protection mechanisms that children get support from when facing different types of violence.



## Children's Agency and their Responses to Violence

## 5.4

In Kosovo, the mandated authorities for child protection are centres for social work (CSW), under the authority of Municipal Directorates for Social Welfare. A social worker chairs the municipal roundtable for child protection<sup>1</sup>. The roundtable is a multidisciplinary team which includes community police, a prosecutor, a representative of the Municipal Educational Directorate, a school director and other relevant actors. This mechanism is responsible for evaluating the risk level of child violence and undertaking proper legal measures to protect the child.

Child participants, particularly female participants, were partially aware of the role of the CSW in protecting their rights. They estimated the CSW's services in relation to providing psychosocial support. For example, one young girl said: *"The more social centres there are, the more psychologists, I believe that children are treated better". While other children see the importance of the school itself having their own mechanisms/child protection measures: "...would be better if school itself had an organization", declared one girl. They also value awareness initiatives, particularly those initiated by the school, such as, in the words of one participant: "To create a greater and more effective understanding and cooperation between peers as well as between students and teachers". They even seem to have possible classroom mechanisms for such support: "I think that the whole class should be together supporting the victim". Other children see the importance of collaboration with community-based organizations active in town to address child violence: "Support from children's rights organizations would help prevent or respond to violence".*

In every municipality in Kosovo, there is at least one CSW, meaning a total of 43 in the country. In the capital, Prishtina, the large number of inhabitants creates a greater demand for social care and welfare services. Hence, there are three CSWs located in different zones and covering all districts in the capital. There is also a considerable number of community-based organizations that provide support services for gender-based violence, and particularly for child protection. Since the majority of these organizations are located in the capital, and only a few have partial branches in other regions, there are scarce non-public services for child protection outside of Prishtina. Furthermore, public-supported mechanisms lack sufficient resources and capacity to cover the demands for social care and welfare services.

<sup>1</sup>Law on Child Protection (06/L-084). <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=20844>

Child violence in Kosovo is quite prevalent, and appears in different forms, such as verbal/psychological, physical, sexual, bullying, exploitation and neglect.

- Psychological violence was exercised in the form of verbal abuse and insults, with an emotional impact on children, among both adolescent males and females. Included among the verbal forms of violence were the labels given by teachers, especially in the primary and lower-secondary schools.
- Sexual violence, was demonstrated predominantly as a type of harassment experienced mainly by female adolescents, while in boys it was absent and imperceptible. It is exercised by male adolescents, mainly on the route to school, and also within the school environment.
- Physical violence was faced by both male and female adolescents, either from their peers, or from adults, mainly domestically in the form of corporal punishment.
- Bullying was defined among participants as a form of systematic insult, and is experienced by both male and female adolescents, more within the school environment, and also through the internet (cyberbullying). Female adolescents reported a higher rate of cyberbullying experiences than their male counterparts.
- Neglect was less understood and less obvious among child participants. However, participants indicated that it happens in the form of underestimating students in school.
- Exploitation was reported more in street and family work, for which participants normalize the cultural element of supporting the family's income.

# Key Recommendations

7

The findings of this study reveal certain gaps in the system which aims to protect children against child violence. These gaps have been identified at the level of individual, family, school, community and among the protective system itself under management of respective authorities.

Individuals, both child and adult, are both perpetrators and victims of violence. Therefore, certain actions need to be undertaken. A more systematic campaign against violence in general, and child violence in particular, needs to be designed and promoted by authorities, schools, community-based organizations and others. It is tremendously important that the societal structures are aware and committed to reporting violence in general, and child violence in particular, to the relevant authorities when they witness it.

There are good policies in place that address child protection at various levels. However, since these policies are not yet operating in an optimal manner, strengthening the implementation mechanisms would be an immediate step from respective authorities. Furthermore, the respective authorities need to enforce more legal provisions against perpetrators of violence, and therefore contribute to the eradication of the phenomena.

Furthermore, since various forms of child violence have been found to happen within the school environment, there appears to be a lack of school-specific mechanisms for child protection. In actuality, teachers and school management should play this role, and in some schools, the school psychologist as well. However, child participants noted that although they are aware of the opportunity, they lack substantial trust in school structures of support when facing violence. Some countries have already established focal points for child protection in order to build full confidence and trust among children. The functions and responsibilities of these focal points are articulated in certain regulations issued from the respective educational authorities as measures to be implemented in schools. It is recommended that this practice be developed, installed and implemented in schools in Kosovo.

Finally, the importance of the role and availability of social protection and welfare mechanisms, such as centres for social work, community police, and other actors towards child protection measures were noted by both child and adult participants. The collaboration among these structures with the school and community needs to be strengthened to become more operational.

# 8 References

- Hesse-Biber, S., & Johnson, B. (Eds.). (2015). *The Oxford Handbook of Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research Inquiry* (Oxford Library of Psychology). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- KOMF & UNICEF. (2017). *Childhood Free of Violence: A Fundamental Rights*. Kosovo: UNICEF.
- Mustafa, A. (2018). Investigation of Violence Against Children in Schools with Types and Related Variables: Kosovo Sample. *Journal of Family, Counselling, and Education*, 3(1), 45–55.
- Thaci, B. (2018). Violence in Schools in Kosovo. *The Meriç Journal*, 2(3), 43–59.
- The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. Law No. 06/L-084 on Child Protection. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo / No. 14 / 17 July 2019*. Prishtina.
- UNDP. (2018). *Action Paper on Violence and Security in Public Schools of the Municipality of Prishtina*. Kosovo: UNDP.
- UNICEF Kosovo (2017). *The Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo*. Prishtina: UNICEF.



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Key Definitions

**Violence Against Children:** *“All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”*(UNCRC, Art 19)

**Sexual violence:** An umbrella term used to refer to all forms of sexual victimization of adult women, men and children, including different forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation. *“Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”*(Kewkes, Sen, Garcia-Moreno, 2002, p.149)

**Child sexual abuse:** *“Engaging in sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities (this does not apply to consensual sexual activities between minors), and engaging in sexual activities with a child where use is made of coercion, force or threats; or abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child.”*(UNICEF, 2017, p.6)

**Types of Violence Against Children** (Adapted from Dawes, Bray, & Van Der Merwe, 2007)

Particular types of violence against children are elaborated below:

**Physical Violence:** Intentionally inflicting injury or death on a child.

**Emotional Violence:** Exposing a child to or inflicting psychological or emotional harm on a child.

**Sexual Violence:** Sexual activities, with or without the child’s consent, where the perpetrator is older or in a position of authority. (This may also involve force or trickery.)

**Neglect:** Lack of care provided by caregivers, usually over a longer period of time that results in physical or psychological harm to a child.

**Exploitation:** Broader term usually referring to the use of a child for another person’s gains, that has a negative impact on the child, such as harmful child labour, early marriage, child trafficking, child prostitution or pornography, etc.

# Categories of Violence Against Children CRIN (n.d.)

## Categories of Violence Against Children CRIN (n.d.)

- Abduction
- Bullying
- Death Penalty
- Domestic Violence
- Extra-judicial Execution
- Gang Violence
- Harmful Traditional Practices
- Honour Killings
- Infanticide
- Judicial use of Physical Punishment
- Kidnapping
- Physical Abuse
- Physical Punishment
- Psychological Abuse
- Psychological Punishment
- State Violence
- Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment



### Neglect:

- Abandonment
- Dangerous, Harmful or Hazardous Work
- Deprivation
- State Neglect

### Exploitation:

- Pornography
- Sex Tourism
- Sexual Exploitation
- Slavery
- Trafficking
- Violence at Work

**Child:** The Convention defines a “child” as a person below the age of 18, unless relevant laws recognize an earlier age of majority.

**Child Protection:** UNICEF’s definition of child protection is the *“strengthening of country environments, capacities and responses to prevent and protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and the effects of conflict.”* (UNICEF, 2008)

**Child Participation:** *“Participation is the term used to encapsulate activities that ensure a child’s right to participate in matters that affect them are adhered to. This draws on the concept that ‘children are not merely passive recipients, entitled to adult protective care’. Rather, they are subjects of rights who are entitled to be involved, in accordance with their evolving capacities, in decisions that affect them, and are entitled to exercise growing responsibility for decisions they are competent to make for themselves.”* (Lansdowne & O’Kane, 2014, p. 3)

**Child Well-being:** *“Child well-being is a dynamic, subjective and objective state of physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social health in which children:*

- *are safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.*
- *meet their basic needs, including survival and development.*
- *are connected to and cared for by primary caregivers.*
- *have the opportunity for supportive relationships with relatives, peers, teachers, community members and society at large; and*
- *have the opportunity and elements required to exercise their agency based on their emerging capacities.”* (ACPHA, 2019, p.10) Please see Appendix F: Tdh Conceptual Framework on Well-being Pillars.

**Child Safeguarding:** *“The responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work, are reported.”* (Keeping Children Safe, 2014, p.3)

**Social Norms:** *“The full range of these definitions includes a constellation of social rules ranging from mere etiquette to the most fundamental moral duties [13, 14, 37, 38]. In their simplest definition, social norms are the informal, mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory actions in a given group or society.”* (Cislaghi & Heise, 2018)

**Gender Norms:** *A simple definition suggests, “gender norms are the social rules and expectations that keep the gender system intact.”* (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019, p.4) However, a more nuanced and complex definition suggests that *“gender norms are social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society. They are embedded in formal and informal institutions, nested in the mind, and produced and reproduced through social interaction. They play a role in shaping women and men’s (often unequal) access to resources and freedoms, thus affecting their voice, power and sense of self.”* (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019, pp.9–10)

## Appendix B: Ethical Protocols

In addition to the information contained in **section 2.3**, the following ethical protocols were considered.

Research on sensitive subjects, such as violence against children, can cause unintended harm to participants. For example, if confidentiality is breached, informed consent is not obtained, or a group of people is stigmatized. Researchers need to be careful not to raise expectations, which can lead to mistrust of outsiders and disillusionment. Researchers also need to be cautious not to increase power imbalances that may cause a particular group to be vulnerable.

Given the timing of the research with the COVID-19 pandemic, protocols will be more stringent for online interactions. It is strongly recommended that remote violence against children (VAC) data collection does not take place with children while lockdown measures are in place (Bhatia, Peterman & Guedes 2020). Where it is deemed appropriate for research to continue, adaptations will take into consideration the kinds of questions being asked and the level of privacy afforded participants in the setting where they are joining. Given the potential for heightened levels of violence experienced by children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in keeping with recommendations by UNICEF-IRC 2020, no direct questions will be asked about participants' experiences of violence, but rather their understanding of violence occurring in their communities.

Research on violence may ask children and adults, even without direct questions concerning personal experience, to re-live painful and difficult experiences. As researchers working with children who may have suffered from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, there is a critical responsibility to "do no harm" in our interactions with children and youth.

Researchers will be trained to watch for signs of children expressing distress (both verbal and non-verbal). Researchers will ensure that the environment within the activities remains respectful and supportive, and will take time to speak with children who may need extra support outside of the activity, from a safe distance. The name and contact details of a support worker, as well as emergency numbers and local reporting protocol, will be listed on a flipchart at all times, enabling children to reach out on their own for additional support (for example, the psychosocial service of the school and Child Protection Unity in Albania). Where a flipchart is not practical, handouts will be made to give to young people before each session. Should a researcher see that a young person requires support, the researcher will discuss this with the young person and call the support person to request a personal visit to the community. The researcher will follow-up with both the child and the support worker using appropriate child safeguarding protocol, as per the TdH Child Safeguarding Policy and national legislation.

When working with participants, researchers will pay close attention to the following ethical guidelines, recommendations and practices:



## Confidentiality:

- Inform children that you will be collecting quotes and stories, but no names will be attached, only gender, age and community.
- Ensure that you obtain children's written permission as well as the written permission of their parents or caregivers. In some cases, permission might need to be gained from the Ministry of Education in each country. Please see Appendix A for a sample Consent Form.
- Ensure that you obtain the written permission of adults as well. Please see Appendix B.
- Remember, informed consent is an ongoing process. Participants should be regularly reminded of their options. No child should be made to feel that they must participate.
- If you plan to use a recording device, be sure to inform children of this and obtain their consent. Explain how the recordings will be used and what will happen to the recordings at the end of the project.
- If attending virtually, request that participants have a place that offers some privacy, and where this is not possible, that they share who else is in the room and when with the group (as noted below).

## Voluntary informed Assent/Consent Conversations

**Special note during COVID-19:** As the local context may change rapidly during COVID-19 for both children and project staff (for example, if governmental restrictions on physical distancing are suddenly relaxed), it is recommended to regularly address voluntary informed consent (at each point of change). It is useful to think of consent as an ongoing conversation that you have with children (and their parents/carers). You can document consent by asking children/parents to sign consent forms, and you can digitally record their verbal consent if physical distancing is required, or if children and/or their parents/carers have low levels of literacy. Signed consent forms or recordings of consent should be kept securely. It may be useful to use a "script" or checklist when having a consent conversation to ensure that you do not forget anything.

Make sure participants are comfortable and fully informed:

- Select a suitable location where children feel comfortable and at ease.
- Be open and honest with children.
- Explain the entire process, including how the tools could affect young participants.
- Don't raise expectations. Be clear about what can and cannot be achieved through the research.
- Privacy and confidentiality are extremely important, but cannot be guaranteed due to the involvement of the group of participants in the research. Make sure that limited confidentiality is clearly communicated before the start.
- Let children know that they can always ask questions: No question is a bad question.

#### Know yourself:

- Learn about and be reflective of your lived experiences, biases, assumptions, and trigger points.
- Be comfortable with the uncomfortable. Change can often include feelings of discomfort and confusion. Recognize and pause during these moments.
- Be emotionally present and available to engage with children and listen effectively.
- Communicate genuinely and honestly.

#### Develop an understanding of the local culture, context and understanding of children and youth:

- Understand the local culture and context you are working in.
- Remember child protection factors differ across gender, age, race, culture, socio-economic status, ability, and other factors.
- Learn about local power dynamics as they may undermine genuine participation.
- Be open to learning. Inquire and ask questions to seek understanding.

#### Build relationships:

- Build relationships with organizations, communities, families, children and youth.
- Learn from and with children, youth, families and communities.
- Work in partnership, not opposition. Exercise humility.

#### Be prepared:

- Remember that children may be resilient in one area of their lives but not in others due to their social-ecological framework.
- Remember that talking about one's experiences can be harmful in some contexts.
- Make sure to identify someone to provide follow-up support for those who may need help or want to have a more in-depth conversation.

#### Be inclusive:

- Be inclusive and involve the most vulnerable populations.
- Remember that most victimized children and youth do not receive services.

#### Support the group:

- Be flexible and adaptable. Situations and circumstances change, and sometimes things do not work out as planned.
- Hold people accountable. Do not be afraid to hold people accountable for their actions. Be firm but respectful and create an opportunity outside the group to talk through any issues.

Build from strengths and bolster resilience:

- Build from the strengths in people (e.g., positive behaviours, coping techniques), cultures and systems.
- Build capacity. Nurture innate self-healing and protection capacities.
- Recognize people's agency and capacity. See people as experts and survivors and not as victims.

Follow-up:

- Follow-up with participants afterwards to make sure they are doing okay. For example, you might want to check in with them at the end of the session.
- Leave participants the phone number of someone they can talk to, and with information on how to access helpful resources.
- Remember, if you hear about violence or abuse, you have a responsibility to connect that young person with a support person, and to report it the appropriate organization following local protocol.

## Informed Consent

**(Adapted from Columbia Group for Children in Adversity [2011])**

Participation in research must be voluntary, and people must be free to decline or end participation without any negative consequences. The decision to participate should be informed by an understanding of the purpose of the research, how and what information will be collected, how the information will be used, and potential risks and benefits to participants. When participants are children, informed consent must be obtained from the children themselves and from their parents or guardians.

Obtaining informed consent is inherently difficult for many reasons, such as the power imbalance between researchers and participants, the pervasive expectations that participation will bring material improvements now or at a later point in time, and the prevailing norms of hospitality, among others. Obtaining written consent may not be feasible because of low literacy levels and/or prospective participants' fears that written documents will be used against them. Because of this, it is important to treat informed consent as an ongoing process rather than a one-off action.

Specific steps to ensure informed consent:

- Use a child-friendly approach in explaining to children the purpose of the research, what and how information will be used, and their right to say "No" without negative consequences.
- If the participant is a child under the age of 18, obtain the informed consent of both the child and his or her parent or caretaker.
- Tailor the approach to obtaining informed consent to local circumstances.

Where appropriate, use the forms provided in the Appendices and request signatures to indicate voluntary and informed consent.

- The process of obtaining informed consent must be implemented for each individual participant.
- Avoid the subtle coercion that can occur. For example, if a parent tells a child “you should participate” or if a village leader says, “we should welcome the researchers and answer their questions”, explain informed consent to the person in power and ask them to explain to others that they are free not to participate, and that there will be no disadvantages or penalties for people who decide not to participate.
- Manage expectations by explaining in simple, clear language that no material benefits will come from participating in the research. Add, however, that the information collected will be fed back to communities and countries, which may find the information useful in taking stock of and improving community-based mechanisms of child protection.
- Explain that, should someone begin to participate and decide that they are not comfortable, they can always leave the research without any penalty.

## Limited Confidentiality

### **(Adapted from Columbia Group for Children in Adversity [2011])**

Research participants will be informed that the information they provide is confidential, unless they share anything that puts themselves or others at risk. If there is an incident, suspicion, or disclosure of current violence or abuse, the researcher will work with the child or adult to follow up and explore appropriate services of support using the TdH Child Safeguarding Policy, Research Ethics Protocol of the local University research partner, and the legal protocol in the country. The researchers will not publicly share any personal information such as names that could be used to identify specific individuals or sources of information. Where identity information is collected, it will be maintained in a separate, locked file, and will be made available only to people who have a legitimate need to know. Pseudonyms will be used when data is being quoted. Specific steps to ensure confidentiality include:

- Conduct discussions in a private setting. When conducting interviews with young people, ensure that there is always a minimum of three people present (either two children or two adults) and if not, there is a third person within vision for child safeguarding purposes. If there are departures from privacy, make sure all participants know who else is present and listening or observing, and get their informed consent to continue.
- Keep any records of names and other identifying information in a safe, locked place that is not open for public access.
- Do not leave confidential files open on a desk or computer. Always close them and put them out of public access, even if you leave your desk only for a minute or two.



- Use general descriptors (e.g., 13-year-old girl) rather than a specific name or other identifying information in writing up your data and reports.
- Share information from your field notes, including identifiers, with members of the research team, but not with people outside the research team.
- Hold information about specific cases of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect in strict confidence, sharing information only with the Lead National Researcher or the UNICEF Focal Point.

Please note: It is important to be clear with participants, that they should only share information in the activities that they want the group to know; you cannot guarantee that other participants will keep the information they hear confidential, though you will strongly encourage it. Participants are welcome to speak with you after the activity in private, should they want to share additional information.

**Remote adaptations:** Restrictions in meeting children face-to-face due to the COVID-19 pandemic means that online interactions and participatory activities via devices, such as smartphones and computers, are likely to increase. This increases risks to children that are specific to the online environment, such as increasing the likelihood that family members will be present, through to more significant risks like the dissemination of false information, exposure to violent extremist messaging, or surveillance and censorship. For the former, transparency and good communication allows participants to be clear on the level of privacy they are able to maintain within their physical environment (as noted above). For the latter, digital applications, platforms and services need to be safe, secure and should not result in inappropriate or unethical capture and/or use of data on children. Safeguarding considerations for online communication and interaction fall into three key areas:

## Safe behaviour online

- Guidelines are developed for users of digital platforms and products. These explain expectations regarding posting, speaking, commenting on the site or platform, and establish consequences for misuse.
- Build relational safety by having regular “safety” check-ins with children at the beginning or end of virtual sessions, where a key worker listens carefully and responds sensitively to the child.
- All websites, phone lines and platforms where children are commenting or sharing information, photos and stories are moderated by staff to maximise safety and privacy and minimise risks. Where concerns of harm or abuse are identified, reporting procedures are followed.
- Procedures for reporting and responding to harm or abuse exist for each digital platform or product. These take into account local laws, cultural norms and the availability of protection services.

The Canadian Women's Foundation developed the following hand signals for people who want to safely disclose violence in the home while on a video-call.



### **Ethical access to and use of children's data**

- Children using digital platforms must be given the opportunity to agree to a specified use of their personal data. This consent should not be assumed based on their consent for other activities (e.g., for their photo to be used in media activities).
- Active consent must be captured in a way so that consent is not the default option.
- A written agreement is in place to control and authorise the release of information on children (data, images) to partner organisations, the Internet, the public domain or any third party. Consent conversations with children (see above) should include an assessment of the need/benefit of sharing information that is balanced against potential risks, before consent is given by children for use of their data.

### **Responding online to disclosures and allegations of child abuse during COVID-19**

If a case of abuse is reported or disclosed when physical distancing restrictions are in place the following issues will need to be addressed for responding online:

- Seek the views of the child victim/survivor (where it is possible to establish safe, direct contact) on their situation that will inform a risk assessment for responding to the report of abuse. It may be useful to connect to child helplines to identify services that might support the child victim/survivor.
- Conducting remote interviews, focus groups and other participative activities (e.g., via Zoom or WhatsApp): Outline the process in advance to participants. Make sure they can safely participate online and are able to use the software.

If it is not safe to do so (e.g., a child is in the same room as a violent parent/carer) do NOT conduct the process. Establish the identity of the participant and ensure you are communicating with the person you are intending to speak to. Provide information on local support services at the end of every interview.

- Ensure privacy and manage confidentiality: participants should use a computer that is private or isolated, make use of headphones and limit the use of identifying information (i.e., agree to refer to Mr. Smith as Mr. X). Check there is no one else in the room or nearby and record interviews if possible.

## Appendix C: Country-Level Consent Forms

### Fletëpëlqim

Të dashur nxënës, të nderuar prindër,

Ju falënderojmë shumë që keni pranuar të jeni pjesë e hulumtimit ndaj dhunës së fëmijëve në shkolla. Ky hulumtim ka për qëllim të nxjerrë informata rreth përceptimeve, vlerave e normave sociale që ndikojnë në shfaqjen e dhunës ndaj nxënësve.

Ju lutem lexojeni tekstin në vijim me kujdes dhe shenjoni secilën kuti nëse pajtoheni me deklaratat e më poshtme. Kjo formë duhet të nënshkruhet nga ju dhe prindi apo kujdestari ligjor i juaj. Ju akoma mund të merrni pjesë në aktivitet nëse vendosni që mos të fotografojmë aktivitetin tuaj, apo mos të regjistrojmë zërin tuaj.

☐ E kuptoj qëllimin e këtij aktiviteti

☐ E kuptoj rolin tim në këtë aktivitet dhe kohëzgjatjen e aktivitetit

☐ Kam pasur mundësi të parashtrojë pyetje lidhur me aktivitetin

☐ Jam i informuar se mund të tërhiqem nga aktiviteti në çfarëdo kohe

☐ Pajtohem që të realizohen fotografi të aktivitetit tim në këtë hulumtim dhe se mund të regjistrohet zëri im (fotot të ftyrës nuk do të bëhen)

☐ Pajtohem që të marrë pjesë në këtë aktivitet

Shrkuani emrin tuaj: \_\_\_\_\_ Data: \_\_\_\_\_

Nënshkrimi: \_\_\_\_\_ Data: \_\_\_\_\_

Emri i prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: \_\_\_\_\_

Nënshkrimi i prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: \_\_\_\_\_

Numri i telefonit të prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: \_\_\_\_\_

Email adresa e prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix D: Royal Roads University Consent Form

## Child Informed Consent

---

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSENT LETTER

### WELCOME TO THE DISCUSSION ON VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

#### INTRODUCTION

We would like to lead play and art-based activities about children and young people's safety and well-being in schools.

#### WHO AM I?

My name is [INSERT YOUTH FRIENDLY SENTENCE ABOUT RESEARCHER LEADING]

#### WHY ARE WE DOING THIS PROJECT?

We want to find out what makes children and young people feel safe in schools, and what type of violence is occurring that makes them feel sad and/or bad. We also want to hear your ideas on how violence and abuse can be prevented and responded to.

#### WHAT DOES BEING IN THIS RESEARCH INVOLVE?

If you decide to take part in this study, there are some different things we will ask you to join in. You will have the opportunity to decide if you do or do not want to participate. I will ask you and your peers to join in on participatory research activities that will take you 1.25 days. We will have refreshments and meals during the day.

#### HOW MUCH TIME WILL THE ACTIVITY TAKE?

Our engaging activities will take 1.25 days. We will work with adults in your life to make sure they take place after school hours or on the weekend so as to not disrupt your studies. We will ask you what hours work best for you.

#### ARE THERE GOOD THINGS AND BAD THINGS ABOUT BEING PART OF THE PROJECT?

What we learn in this project from you and your peers will be used to support future programs and policies for children and young people. In any experience there may be parts you do not enjoy. If there are, you do not have to join in.

#### IF I SAY YES TO BEING IN THE PROJECT DO I HAVE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS?

If I ask you questions that you do not want to answer, then please tell us you do not want to answer those questions or simply abstain. If we ask you to do things you do not want to do, then tell us that you do not want to do them. You can say no and choose not to participate at any time.

#### WHO WILL KNOW I WAS PART OF THIS ACTIVITY?

The things you say and any information we write about you will not have your name with it, so no one will know they are your answers or the things that you did. The researchers will not let anyone other than themselves see your answers or any other information about you. Your teachers, parents, community members will never see the answers you gave or the information we wrote about you. Your peers who are in the same activity will hear what you say but they will be asked to keep it confidential. For your safety, we will not include your name in any research reports.

#### DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

NO! You do not have to be in this activity. No one will get angry or upset with you if you don't want to do this. And remember, if you decide to be in the project and later change your mind, you can tell us you do not want to be in the study anymore.

#### QUESTIONS?

You can ask questions at any time. You can ask now, or you can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to someone else at any time during the study. You can reach me at [insert local phone numbers where applicable] or by email at [INSERT RESEARCHERS EMAIL]. If you want to speak to someone else involved in the project, you can also contact [INSERT TERRES DES HOMMES DETAILS]

Look forward to learning from you!

Best,

#### CHILD AND YOUTH CONSENT FORM

- ☐ I understand what the activity is about
- ☐ I know what my part will be in the activity and I know how long it will take
- ☐ I have had the chance to ask questions about the activity
- ☐ I know that I can say I do not want to participate at any time and stop taking part
- ☐ I agree to having photos taken of the things I make in the research, and my voice recorded (no photos of my face will be taken)
- ☐ I agree to be part of this project



If you want to be a part of this project, please print and sign your name below and ask your parent or guardian to print and sign their name below too. You can still be a part of this study if you do not want your photo taken, voice recorded, or video taken.

Your name, printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Informed Consent Form – Adults

**Purpose of the project:** This project aims to

**Researcher:** My name is BLANK, and I am [INSERT TWO SENTENCES FOR EACH RESEARCHER]

**For any questions or concerns, you can contact me and/or a member of my team at:** INSERT EMAILS

**Benefits of being a part of this project:** What we learn in this project from you and your peers will be used to. We will provide refreshments.

**Procedure:** Participation will include engaging in BLANK activities over one day. All foreseeable risks and discomforts: The study will ask questions involving violence in and around schools for children and young people in your community. Some questions may cause some discomfort if you by chance reflect upon an unpleasant memory. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in time you may choose not to answer a research question, and/or discontinue your participation temporarily or permanently. You can also choose to request that all your previous answers are not used in the project. If you are triggered and/or want follow up support we will provide contact information for support services and follow up with you to find support.

**Confidentiality:** Your confidentiality will be maintained, and your name will not be referred to in this research project if you do not want it to be. If you have any concerns after your participation, you can request to review the notes from our discussions. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. If you share anything that puts yourself or others at harm, we will need to work together to follow up to find supports and report the situation.

**Length of time involved:** You are asked to contribute 0.5 day for the activities.

**Recording and Transcription:** Our discussion will be recorded and written out.

**Agreement:** Please sign this form for your consent.

---

Name of Participant, printed

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

## Appendix E: Map of Research Sites





Regional Research  
**ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN  
IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

Country Report: Kosovo

In partnership with the International Institute  
for Child Rights and Development, and Child Hub

Researcher: Bujar Galloopeni  
Date: December 2020