

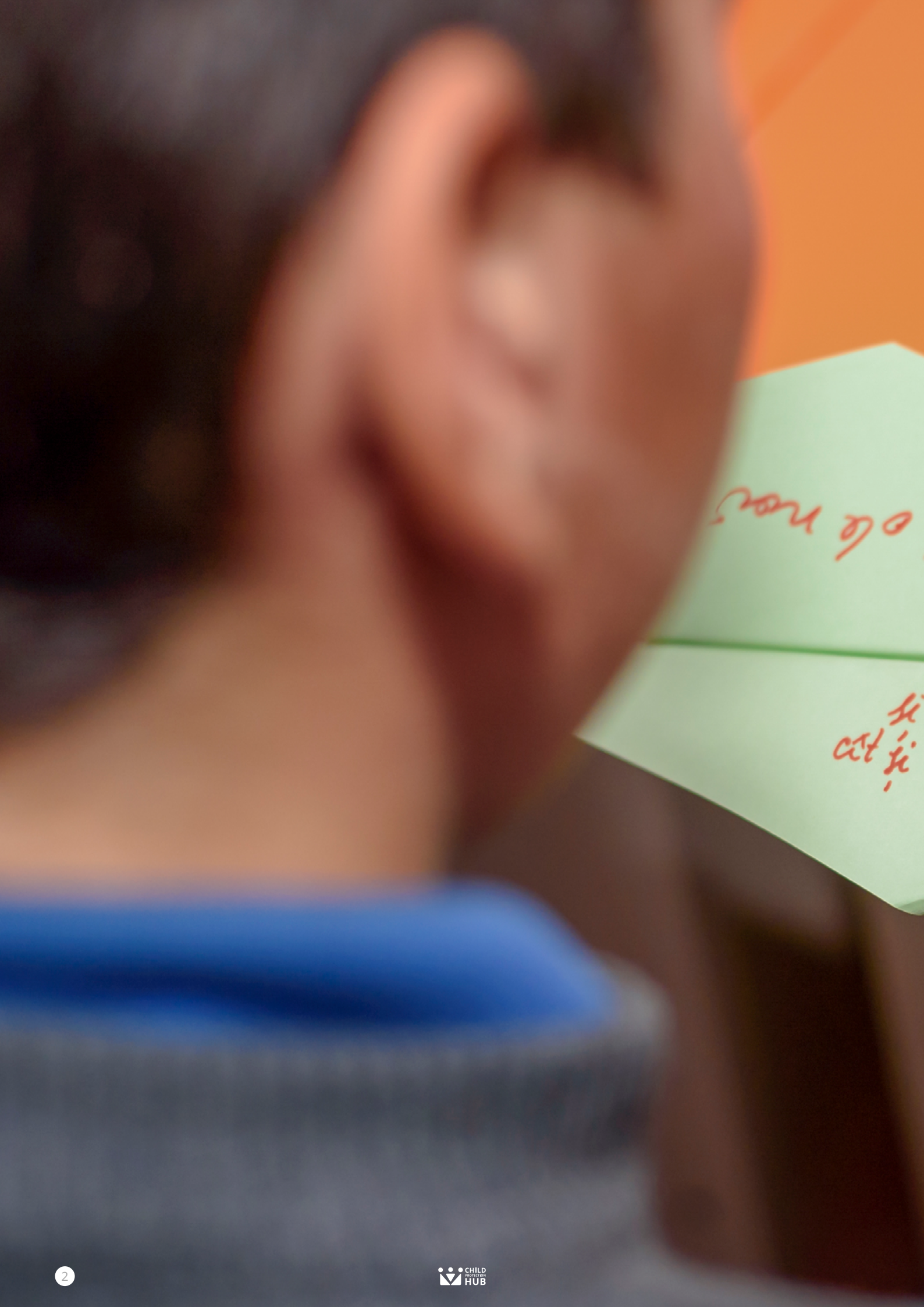
Regional Research

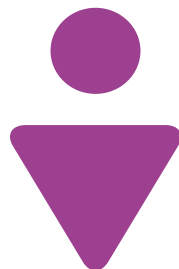
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Country Report: Republic of Moldova

In partnership with: International Institute for Child Rights
and Development & Child Hub

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Executive Summary



The aim of this report is to scrutinize gendered social norms, attitudes and behaviours, and children's experiences regarding violence in schools in South Eastern Europe. In addition to the economic, religious, political, legal and technological factors affecting the traditional model of child education, the social environment and schools are crucial for understanding critical social norms that factor into the prevention or perpetration of violence against children.

Key Findings

- Children and adults equally confirmed that some types of violence against children are more frequent than others, like physical and verbal abuse in classrooms, in the corridors and outside of schools (especially on the way home). Nevertheless, both groups admitted that children aged 13–15 are more likely to be involved as victims and perpetrators of physical forms of violence, while children aged 15–18 are more often involved in “verbal violence”, bullying, nicknaming and “online harassment”.
- Adults do not take bullying seriously, and children are left to deal with the situation on their own. The stereotype that a “strong” child does not report bullying is deeply, socially embedded among children. Children who are repeatedly abused and neglected by their parents avoid disclosing to parents, develop mental health issues (like self-harm behaviours, depression and anxiety disorder), run away from home or get involved in “street gangs”.
- Children said that parents avoid getting involved in solving conflicts between peers. They advise their children to defend themselves. Therefore, most children are left to face their perpetrator alone, and only disclose abuse to a parent (usually a mother) in extreme situations.
- The main strategies children use to tackle physical or verbal abuse are:
 - Report the aggressor to an older child
 - Gather close friends to confront/punish the abuser
 - Join a sport like boxing (“it is very good for boys to be able to protect themselves”)
 - Accept and do not react
 - Drop out or change schools
- It seems that violence among peers is a source of obtaining popularity and social acceptance — a way of increasing one's status or social capital. In addition, violence is used as a way to fit in, to be part of a group, to gain a sense of belonging, or to secure one's position in a hierarchy. In order to gain the respect of their peers, boys have to impose their masculinity through

violence, and girls by showing off their womanhood in highly sexualized ways (wearing certain clothes or make-up). Although the gender stereotypes are changing rapidly, there remains some traditional models of interaction between girls and boys.

Key recommendations:

1. Conducting Anti-bullying initiatives
2. Supporting and boosting the main changes in social norms that have already occurred at a societal level
3. Involving state and civil society to develop and apply specific strategies on VAC in schools by targeting vulnerable children and their families
4. Strengthening children's well-being through institutionalized mechanisms and curricula; provide assistance and social services for mental health issues
5. Providing support and guidelines for parents/carers and teachers about VAC, alternative parenting approaches and social norms that maintain violence, gender-based differences and social exclusion.



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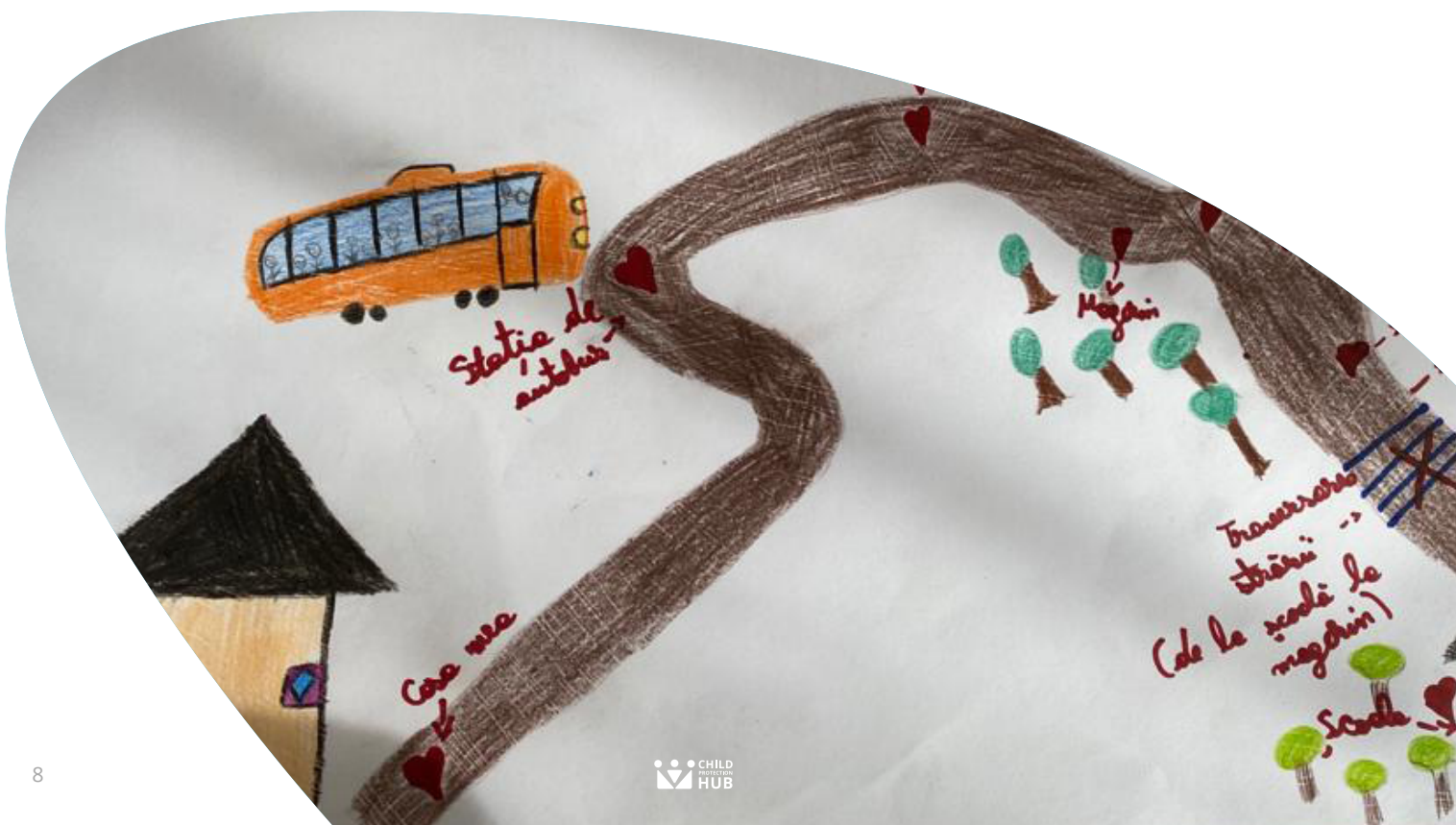
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Introduction

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 in Moldova included the following:

- Children age 13–18 (approximately 20 children/site [groups of 10–15 children, with 2 groups, in 2 sites: one village and one city site, one site in the north and one site in the centre of the country])
- Adults, including parents, teachers, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers, local police representatives, community members (13 people/site)

Methods conducted with Children and Adults

Children	Adults
Tool 1: Social Mapping- Part 1 (no drawings)	Tool 7: Focus Group (via online meeting and an online questionnaire on Google drive)
Tool 2: Vignettes	
Tool 3: Participative Ranking Methodology	
Tool 4: Social Mapping-Part 2 (no drawings)	
Tool 5: Social Network Mapping	
Tool 6: Focus Group	

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit during data collection, the tools were adapted to be used in an online format, specifically Online Video Conferencing on Zoom, and one adapted questionnaire for Adults was sent via the Google Drive application. All children and adults were informed about the ethical considerations of the research.

Ethical Considerations

2.3

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 was conducted by Daniela Terzi-Barbaroșie (key researcher), Veronica Pelivan and Olga Pinzari (Tdh Moldova staff members responsible for organization and logistics of the meetings).

Site Selection

3.2

On 11 March 2020, Moldovan authorities closed all schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 434,000 students from academic institutions at all levels were asked to stay home, and schools were mandated to provide distance-learning opportunities. With internet penetration in Moldova standing around 79.9% in 2019 (considerably lower than the EU rate of 90% in 2019), remote learning proved to be a tall order for the 16,000 students (4.8% of the total), and 3,000 teachers (10.6% of the total) without access to ICT technology (a laptop, tablet or internet access). This made it impossible to deliver or receive instruction (let alone organize lessons and monitor/assess learning progress) for a substantial number of students and teachers. Potentially, the most affected families were: those with school-aged children living in areas where internet connectivity rates are lower (74.5% of rural households are connected to the internet compared to 86.1% in urban areas); families with less education (64.7% of people with an incomplete secondary education are connected to the internet, compared to 94% of those with higher education); and households with low income levels (56.7% internet connectivity for those with an income under 3,000 lei/month, compared to 96.5% in households with over 6,000 lei/month).

Children in rural areas, where internet and broadband access is reportedly more limited, are another vulnerable group. Rural households with more than one child, especially those with several children enrolled in school, were potentially more affected than their urban counterparts as these households spend less on communication (telephone and internet), have less disposable income, and are unlikely to have access to multiple IT devices. These children would invariably be unable to simultaneously follow their classes, do homework or regularly interact with their teachers. This is also relevant for children from the Roma community, who already have high drop-out rates in Moldova. For them, the lack of adequate equipment, like a computer or connection to the internet, and high rates of illiteracy among their parents, creates additional obstacles to distance learning. Schools were functioning with small groups that had one week of in-person classes

followed by one week online when we conducted our research. Taking into account all of the peculiarities of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to gather conclusive data on violence, we decided to form a group of children and a group of adults in a small city in the north of Moldova, and an adult and child group in a village in the centre of the country. Both sites included participants from the Roma population.

3.3 Participants

The following individuals were included as participants:

- Children aged 13–18 (22 children/site [groups of 10–15 children, with 2 groups at 2 sites: one village and one city; one in the north and one in the centre of the country])
- 34 Adults, including: parents, teachers, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers, local police representatives and community members (13 people/site)

We worked with two groups of children and two groups of adults in two different locations in Moldova (the north and centre parts of the country). One of the children's group consisted of pupils aged 13–15, and the other was made up of children aged 15–18 years old. Both groups included at least 2–3 people from different ethnic minorities (Roma, Ukrainian).

Before the Zoom meetings, all children were asked if they would prefer to work in groups divided by gender or mixed groups. Surprisingly, all of them said they would prefer to work in mixed groups, so we merged the groups. At one site we had 4 boys and 10 girls, and at the other, 4 boys and 4 girls. In total, there were 22 children involved in the research (8 boys and 14 girls).

We had a total of 34 adults participate, including parents and teachers, 1–2 community leaders, one local police representative and NGO representatives.

Locations:

- In each country, researchers worked with children and adults in 1–2 locations. These locations were selected based on:
 - An area that is specifically compelling in your country based on social norms, gender-based issues and violence.

We selected our locations for different geographical points of view, and to ensure the inclusion of participants from different minorities and with different economic backgrounds.

Given the nature of the research, children aged 13–18 were selected as they represent an age group that has reached a developmental stage that can understand the complexities of violence and the systems that influence it. Given the gendered

nature of experiences of violence, there also needed to be an almost equal number of participants from both genders. Children on the gender-spectrum had the opportunity to choose to participate in the group they most closely identified with.

Group size was determined by engaging the largest number of participants without compromising the depth of the research for a team of 1–2 researchers. At each research site, researchers worked with 2 separate gender-specific groups of children, and 1 separate group of adults, for a maximum total of 30 children from each site (ideally equal numbers of girls and boys), and a maximum number of 15 adults from each site (ideally equal numbers of men and women). **This means a maximum of 30–60 children and 15–30 adults were engaged per country. And for the total project the maximum sample size is 240–480 children and 120–240 adults.**

Whenever possible, sensitivity to the gender of the group was matched with the gender of the researchers.

Sampling

3.4

The target population was children aged 13–18 years old in school in South and Eastern Europe. Choosing the appropriate school was limited by numerous pragmatic and sampling constraints. The research is exploratory in nature and the sampling strategy will draw on convenience sampling, allowing researchers to choose schools that are accessible to them and the opportunity for schools to identify children who meet the criteria for inclusion in the study. Therefore, the schools were identified via convenience and purposive sampling, in order to select specific populations representing a diverse range of children in a diverse range of settings. This was set collaboratively by national researchers, but may include schools representing urban or rural contexts, or schools with a high percentage of indigenous, migrant, or various ethnic groups, and low-income families. Schools could also be chosen on the basis of perceived high rates of gender-based violence.

It is important to note that we worked closely with schools, community organisations and local government to ensure that we could conduct the research with the same children and adults over the course of the research; the same group of children moved through all of the research tools identified, allowing researchers and participants to deepen their understanding as each tool progressed.

Sampling Children

Working with local partners, secondary schools and community organizations were contacted in advance concerning the research. Based on the sampling frame provided above, national researchers identified schools and invited them to participate. Each country included one or two schools or community organisations.

We had one group of children at each site: one with a group of 14 pupils aged 13–15 (4 boys and 10 girls); and one with 8 children (4 boys and 4 girls), who were purposively selected by the school administration and invited to participate in the research.

Sampling Adults

For adults, including parents (only one father in one group of adults), caregivers, educators and teachers, community leaders (community and religious leaders, social service providers, and NGOs representatives) and one local police representative (one man in the first group and one woman in another group). We had a mixed gender group of 14 persons at each research site.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was completed based on recordings of the Zoom meetings, data collection forms for specific tools and notes taken by the researchers during the online meetings.

Perceptions and opinions can be ambiguous, and they are subject to modification and instrumental manipulation. Therefore, the researcher transcribed all of the data in Romanian to depict the truthful attitudes and behaviours existing in society with regard to VAC.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Please see Appendix B for more details on the Ethical Protocol.

Special note during COVID-19: As each local context changed rapidly during COVID-19 for both children and project staff (for example, governmental restrictions on physical distancing were suddenly relaxed), it was clear that ethical protocols needed to be examined at each point of change.

Before the Zoom meeting, each local coordinator in the school was informed about the research process and the consent forms which the children and adults signed. The Tdh office in Moldova sent copies of these forms to the local coordinators prior to the Zoom meeting, and the researcher specifically asked each person in the meeting if they knew the procedure, if they agreed to recording the meeting, and all ethical procedures and possible concerns were explained.

The research was conducted with integrity and respect for the children and all those involved, carefully considering their personal views and the local culture. In order to prevent any potential harm to the children and the parents and teachers involved, the researchers showed an interest in and deep awareness of their views, avoiding any judgmental comments.

The respondents were free to avoid unwanted questions and to leave the online meeting at any time they wished, but nobody did so. Children and adults were not forced to respond against their will. For sensitive questions, or self-disclosure of a participant, the researcher was aware of the emotional involvement and discreetly avoided putting any child or adult on the spot or embarrassing them. The data collected was securely stored and protected.

Research Tools: Adaptations and Reflections on their Implementation

3.6

Based on the translation of the methodology, the researcher, in cooperation with Tdh local staff, adapted the tools for easy application during our online Zoom meeting.

The first online meeting with adults was more difficult (people seemed reluctant or tired), so we sent an online questionnaire via Google drive, and the receptivity of this instrument was quite impressive.

Limitations

3.7

The online meetings posed a slight limitation to the context of the research. For example, during the Social Mapping Tool with the first group of children, it was difficult to see their drawings. Going forward we skipped this step, and instead asked them to imagine the road to and from school and describe it verbally.

4

Violence Against Children in Schools in Moldova

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention) in 2011. The Committee of the Parties to the Convention, also known as the Lanzarote Committee, is charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto provide a robust legal framework to ensure children's protection from bullying, and to address the challenges associated with online abuse. Guided by Article 19 of the Convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its General Comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, addressed bullying and hazing by adults or other children, including through the use of ICTs. Despite the adoption of many international instruments on child protection against violence, statistical data elucidate different problems in the field.

Multiple studies show that violence affecting children is prevalent in all societies. In Moldova, important research has taken place, including some supported by UNICEF, which provides a general background on violence against children. According to UNICEF, approximately 75% of children experienced various forms of physical or psychological violence, and one in three children have been involved in a fight with their peers. In addition, both boys and girls experience violence in childhood, although the nature of the violence carried out by the perpetrator and that experienced by the victim differs (Landers, 2013; UNICEF, 2014).

The "Violence against Children in the Republic of Moldova Study", developed by UNICEF in 2007, shows that for violence against children by teachers:

- One-third of children declare that teachers verbally attack them. An increased incidence of this phenomenon is associated with low-income situations and lack of parental figures.
- Four out of ten parents know teachers who verbally attack children.
- 13% of children say that teachers either always or sometimes physically abuse them.
- Two out of ten parents know teachers who threaten children with beatings or slap them.
- 24% of children report that they feel that their teachers discriminate against them. The rate is higher for children who identify as being from a family of low socioeconomic standing.
- One out of ten parents know teachers that have harassed or sexually abused children.

- Girls tend to suffer more from violence, especially physical violence, in school.
- In addition, almost 50% of Moldovan children think that some students are victims of physical violence by teachers during class. Approximately the same proportion of children say that they know of particular cases of such abuse.

As for different types of violence:

- 56% of children think that teachers discriminate against at least some students in school.
- 54% of children know at least one child in a similar situation.
- 24% of children say that, at least sometimes, they find themselves in a situation where their teacher discriminates against them for no reason or accuses them of something that is not true.
- 66% of children think that there are at least a few students who suffer verbal violence.
- 64% of children know at least one student in a similar situation.
- 34% of students say that they at least sometimes find themselves in a situation where teachers yell at them.
- 42% of children think that there are at least some students who suffer from physical violence by a teacher.
- 44% of children know at least one student in a similar situation.
- 14% of students identify themselves, at least partially, with the situation in which a teacher slaps a student.

At the same time, interviewed parents supported the perception that teachers use violent educational practices.

This study also shows that children who suffer from all three types of violence at school, unsurprisingly, report a low level of adaptation at school. Since the data in this study was collected at the same time, no conclusion can be drawn about causality, i.e., whether poor adaptation determines the experience of violence or vice versa. Correlation analysis shows that children often suffer from more than one type of violence at school. The closest relationships between types of violence are the relationships between verbal and physical violence, and between discrimination and verbal violence. If a child experiences one type of violence, it is likely that the child will also experience the other. The data also shows that girls tend to suffer more from violence at school, especially physical violence.

UNICEF in Moldova reported concerns about bullying, with almost 60% of adolescents participating at least once in a fight in the last year and/or stating that they have been harassed at least once in the last few months. More than one-third of Moldovan students aged 13–15 say they have participated at least once in a fight in the last year or have been harassed at least once in the last few months. During the academic year 2016–2017, almost 11,000 cases of abuse or violence against children were reported by teachers and school managers. In 2017, more than 1,400 cases of child abuse were registered by the police, including more than 300 cases of sexual abuse. Unfortunately, there is no statistical data on violence against children that happens to and from school, violence against children in the community or on the incidence of violence among children in schools.

Moldovan society is now a combination of a patriarchal society and a society undergoing serious socio-economic changes (economic transition, international migration, influence of the Internet and new mass media). Therefore, alongside pinning down the traditional social norms which maintain violence against children, the study identified the factors and mechanisms that influence and challenge the existing social norms about violence and VAC in particular.

5.1 Incidence, Type and Perpetrators of Violence Against Children

Children and adults equally confirmed that there are some types of violence against children that are more frequent than others, like physical and verbal abuse in classroom, in school corridors and outside of school (especially on the way home from school). Nevertheless, both groups admitted that children aged 13–15 are more likely to be involved as victims and perpetrators of physical forms of violence, while children aged 15–18 are more often involved in “verbal violence”, bullying, nicknaming and “online harassment”. Both adults and children report that verbal taunting and nickname usage is the most pervasive form of verbal abuse used among peers.

Pupils said they quite often witness physical altercations in school, especially among boys, and verbal abuse among female peers. Both adults and students said that children abused at home are more likely to bully others.

Many circumstances could lead to a fight among peers in the school or community. The main reasons for picking a fight among boys include perceiving someone as: stronger/bigger/richer or weaker/ smaller/ poorer, “complaining to adults [parents, teachers, relatives]”, or belonging to other groups/gangs/minorities. The main motivators of verbal abuse among girls are: gossip (“talking badly about others”), jealousy (“if you like the same boy”), online competitiveness (“if someone writes messages on the phone/Facebook/Instagram about others, or posts photos”) and envy (“if someone is more beautiful and others uglier”).

In some contexts, a gendered conflict starts between boys and girls. And in some situations, a violent episode begins based on migration or family status (“some have parents abroad and others do not”, “some are raised by a single mother/ alcoholic mother/father etc.”).

Sexual violence is the only type of violence that was not specifically mentioned by children involved in the research; it was discussed as “dirty gossip and inappropriate photos” in the discussion on cyberbullying.

5.1.1 Main factors that maintain social norms about VAC and children's experience in regard to violence

At an individual level

- Gender (girls are more likely to be involved in “dirty gossip and inappropriate photos sharing” while boys are more often involved in physical altercations in schools)
- Age (usually older children bully younger ones; children aged 13–15 are more likely to be involved as victims and perpetrators of physical forms of violence, while children aged 15–18 are more often involved in “verbal violence”, bullying, nicknaming and “online harassment”)
- Disability or other visible peculiarity (children with disabilities continue to experience greater adversity and are more exposed to violence in schools)
- Personal skills, academic achievements (“Some children are considered stronger/ bigger/smarter and others are weaker/ smaller/ more stupid.”)
- Personal well-being and resilience (high sensitivity, empathy and other psychological traits are seen by peers as signs of lack of confidence, fear, submissive behaviour and thus, somehow justify violence against them)
- Welfare and goods, including technical devices (children and teens from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in violent situations, both as perpetrators and as victims)
- Online self-image, accounts and networks
- Offline and online popularity and social capital (Violence is seen as a means to obtain popularity and social acceptance, a way of increasing one's status, and to gain more social capital.)

At the family level

- Family structure (complete/incomplete families [missing mothers and/or fathers], presence of siblings, grandparents, other relatives)
- Family status in the community (One girl told us, with pain in her voice, that she is bullied because her parents are not natives of the village where they now live; the whole community calls them “outsiders”, “aliens”.)
- The quality of their relationship with their parents (Children involved in this research said that most parents advise their children to defend themselves, therefore, they are left alone to face their perpetrator, and only disclose their problems to a parent [usually a mother] in extreme situations.)
- Family values and traditions
- Domestic violence and other dysfunctional patterns
- Access to the Internet (lack or unlimited, lack of parent control, influence of YouTube)
- Gender stereotypes in family routines (there are differences in what is acceptable for boys and girls: it is generally accepted that a girl should pay more attention to the way she dresses and be “obedient”, while boys must be “brave” and defend themselves.)

At the community level

- Living in deprived areas/communities
- Economic struggles
- Influence of Internet and mass media
- Lack of jobs, under employment, unemployment
- High international migration and children left behind
- Lack of coherent policies and social policies for child protection, lack of implementation mechanism of existing laws
- Compulsive consumerism and false needs
- Social, economic and regional disparities
- Independence from USSR and links with Europe and Romania
- Tensions among ethnic groups
- Tensions among pro-Europe and pro-Russia supporters
- Poverty, discrimination and social exclusion

At the school level

- Quality of relationships with peers and teachers
- Unfair behaviour of teachers
- Discrimination based on ethnic, gender and socio-economic backgrounds
- Lack of institutions and facilities
- Unclear responsibilities at an institutional level and lack of implementation mechanisms with regards to VAC prevention and intervention at the school level, according to Ministry guidelines and regulations
- Lack of peer cohesion and presence of peer pressure (gang culture)

5.2 Social and Gender Norms Around Violence Against Children, including Gender-Based Violence in Moldova

Nickname use is a traditional norm strongly embedded in the culture, especially in rural areas, where even some transgenerational nicknames appear. Usually older children bully younger children, and some children bully those perceived as having weaknesses, children with disabilities, children with higher academic achievements, or those who belong to other ethnic groups.

Nicknaming is quite “inoffensive” to adults (*“Children get upset when they are called by their nicknames, but it doesn’t seem so horrible to me.”*), but students are very uncomfortable with it.

The diversity and differences between students can produce clusters that may exclude or discriminate against some children. Some common factors for exclusion include:

- Learning abilities: children with good results exclude those with poorer results.
- Non-cognitive skills: children with more life experience exclude those less experienced.
- Family situation: children who are orphans or temporarily estranged from their parents, parents who are migrants or temporarily unemployed, families dealing with financial hardship, etc.
- Health criterion: children without disabilities exclude children with physical impairments or disabilities.

At the community level, there is an interesting phenomenon specific to villages called “the street”: the symbolic place of socialization where children share and negotiate their values, influence each other, and strengthen their character and resilience. Both teachers and other adults observed that they have a limited influence upon children since there are other “social institutions” that shape their values and goals. Children also admitted that their family members and other adults do not shape their values, beliefs and decisions. *“Nowadays it is the street that influences our children, not family, like in old times. The children are educated by the internet and ‘influencers’, ‘Youtubers’ more than by the parents and school.”*

From an early age, physical confrontations are very common among boys. Their development is mainly organized through physical interactions, perceived sometimes as a game, culminating with legitimizing violence and social hierarchies.

Bullying is not taken seriously by adults, and children are left to deal with the situation on their own. The stereotype that a strong child doesn't report bullying is deeply, socially embedded among peers. This has become a social norm. Furthermore, children who are repeatedly abused and neglected by their parents avoid disclosing information to them. These children develop mental health issues like self-harm behaviour, depression and anxiety disorders. They are also more likely to run away from home or get involved in “street gangs”.

Significantly more boys than girls react aggressively when someone denigrates them or beats them, but they also tend to intervene more in conflicts. Both adults and children noted that more boys than girls use bad language with teachers and other children, and laugh at other children. Furthermore, more boys than girls are pulled by their hair/ears.

Children admitted that more girls than boys ask teachers and family for help, and discuss their problems with their friends, parents and teachers.

Children complained that it is considered “normal” for girls to do their homework on a regular basis, be “obedient” to adults and not fight, while boys are perceived as being “lazy”, “unorganized” about their homework, and are “allowed” to make “dirty jokes” or “tweak” girls if they “like” her.

There are some differences in what is acceptable for boys and girls: it is generally accepted that a girl should pay more attention to the way she dresses, and compare herself to or compete with others in this respect. “Clothes make a difference among girls; nicer clothes seem to attract boys.”

5.2.1 Pandemic context

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children prefer screen-to-screen relations rather than face-to-face relationships. “Kids don’t go out. Now you do not see any children in the village. We stay at home on the Internet, doing our lessons, class time or chatting among us”.

Most children have a smartphone, and all of them have at least one social media account. They spend long hours on their devices.

Adults admitted that there are no clear boundaries between real life and “fake life”: “Nowadays a conflict could rise from posting something online that could be solved by discussing it in person”.

The penetration of new devices and technologies deeply distorted the internal dynamics of the family. The amount of time that children spend on the computer/ phone is subject to a constant negotiation between children and parents because of chores, neglect, aggression and lack of communication. Sometimes parents confiscate their children’s devices as they are scared that their children will develop a digital addiction.

The Generalized Report on Violence against Children for the Semester 2021/2021 shows that there were 3586 cases of VAC (girls involved in 1161 cases, and boys involved in 2425 cases). Of these, 1442 were physical forms of violence, 1008 were psychological, 17 were sexual, 1090 were negligent treatment, and 30 cases were violence by labor exploitation.

5.3 Protection from Violence and Promotion of Well-being

Children said that parents avoid getting involved in solving conflicts between peers. They advise their children to defend themselves. Children are encouraged by parents to solve their peer fights and verbal confrontations by themselves, while teachers and other school professionals get involved in mediating conflicts among children, especially up to the age of 15. When a conflict escalates, the principal calls the local police and invites the parents to the school.

The parents consider the “little” conflicts that occur among children insignificant, and they either avoid getting involved or encourage their children to respond in the same way: *“Some parents encourage their children to beat other children”*.

Unfortunately, most children are left alone to face their perpetrator, and only disclose to a parent (most frequently the mother) that they are suffering abuse in extreme situations.

"If it's very hard for me and I suffered a long time already, I could tell my mom, but still, I would prefer to solve it by myself."

"My parents would say that it is my fault."

Some girls said that being sad and crying all the time would signal a problem in school to their mothers, but that if their mother asked what was going on, only a few would tell the truth.

The main strategies children use to tackle physical or verbal abuse are to call good friends and to confront the abuser (*"If the teacher doesn't react, we girls get together and beat the boy who beat us"*), to report the perpetrator to an older child, or to accept it and not defend themselves.

In some cases, children aged 15–18 have more cohesion if they are in the same sport clubs, come from the same neighbourhoods or if they are romantically involved.

While dealing with cyberbullying, children also tend to solve online disputes on their own, without engaging adults: *"If our parents ask for passwords, I don't disclose them"; "I deleted all my messages. My parents would be very upset if they saw what they called me."*

There are a few strategies children use in order to react when someone is bullied online, ranging from mild rejection (not giving a "like", posting a "compromised"/ugly photo of the person), to extreme dismissal of the abuser (unfollow, reject, block or even report). A girl said that she was bullied online, and even if she described herself as being "strong" and "resilient to stressful situations", she decided to change schools in order to avoid daily confrontation with her bully.

More children said that they feel protected within the family, but they admit that occasionally there are some unpleasant and/or violent situations in the community (rarely) and at school (often) that make them feel unsafe.

Children's Agency and their Responses to Violence

5.4

Children between the ages of 13 and 18 agreed that "strong children" solve their problems on their own, without asking teachers and parents for help, although for all of them, there is at least one person they can turn to for help. Girls are more likely to speak with their parents and ask for help. At the same time, they would prefer not to talk to their parents if they are exposed to cyberbullying.

Adults said that children know where to ask for help if any trouble occurs, while children said that they would ask for help from a community representative only in extreme cases.

The main strategies children use to tackle physical or verbal abuse are:

- Report the aggressor to an older child:
- Gather good friends and confront/punish the abuser
- Join a sport like boxing ("It is very good for boys to be able to protect themselves.")
- Accept and do not react to the violence
- Drop out of or change schools



Discussion

The recurring messages collected from adults and children involved in this research were aggregated around a few main themes:

- There is a lack of state and civil society support for both adults and children (state institutions, charities, churches, care and mental health institutions) to deal with different types of violence against children and its consequences
- There is a decline in adults' authority in relation to their children
- There is an increasing divergence in values, beliefs and behaviours between adults and children
- There is a generational gap: adults feel unprepared to acknowledge the challenges their children have to face (especially in relation to new technologies and addiction to games and the Internet), and children feel misunderstood by adults in regards to their preferences and ways of spending time, communication, behaving, etc.
- There is societal tension: children are empowered (have more rights), while adults are overwhelmed and unequipped to face new challenges.

It seems that violence among peers is a source of obtaining popularity and social acceptance, a way of increasing one's status and social capital. In addition, violence is used as a way to fit in, to be part of a group, to gain a sense of belonging, and to secure one's position in a hierarchy. Most perpetrators are pupils from disorganized families with a high risk of domestic violence. In most cases, insufficient material resources and goods are compensated by aggressive behaviour and a tendency to dominate others by maintaining a daily bullying routine. There is, in a certain sense, a culture of proving one's masculinity by being "tough". Unfortunately, in order to gain the respect of their peers, boys have to impose their masculinity through violence, and girls by showing off their womanhood in highly sexualized ways (via clothes and make-up, etc.) Although gender stereotypes are rapidly changing, there are traces of traditional models of interaction between girls and boys.

Key Recommendations

1. Conduct anti-bullying initiatives focusing on:
 - information and awareness-raising campaigns to deepen understandings of what is bullying behaviour, its associated risks and consequences;
 - promote and advocate for respect for human rights and safety in school and online;
 - raise children’s awareness on how to protect themselves, how to enhance their resilience and how to avoid situations where their image, honour and reputation may be compromised.
2. Support and boost the main changes in social norms that have already occurred at the societal level through:
 - Public campaigns for complete eradication of any form of violence against children
 - Public campaigns for children’s human right to physical and moral integrity and dignity
3. Involve state and civil society to develop and apply specific strategies on VAC in schools by targeting vulnerable children and their families.
4. Strengthen children’s well-being through institutionalized mechanisms, curricula to develop their decision-making skills and build values, resilient beliefs and life skills, including taking responsibility for their actions towards others. Provide assistance and social services for mental health issues.
5. Provide support and guidelines for parents/carers and teachers about VAC, on alternative parenting approaches and social norms that maintain violence, gender-based differences and social exclusion. Emphasise the importance of healthy relations between adults and children for the well-being of each family member.

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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.)

Physical and Psychological Violence

- 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

FORMULAR DE CONSIMȚĂMÂNT – ADULȚI

Introducere

Am dori să facem împreună cu voi o serie de activități și să purtăm discuții având ca temă siguranța și bunăstarea copiilor și tinerilor în școli. Terre des Hommes și Daniela Terzi-Barbaroșie, psihologă, cercetătoare angajată de Terre des Hommes Moldova.

Această cercetare este regională și se desfășoară în Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croația, Kosovo, Moldova, România, și Serbia. Scopul acestei cercetări este de a analiza normele sociale și de gen care influențează violența de gen față de copii în școli și rolul potențial pe care îl pot avea elevii în schimbarea acestor norme. Studiul este realizat de către Institutul Internațional pentru Dezvoltare și Drepturile Copiilor (în engl. International Institute for Child Rights and Development) cu sediul în Canada and Organizația Child Hub din Budapesta (Ungaria).

Scopul întâlnirii noastre online

Vrem să aflăm care este opinia adulților despre violența în școală, care credeți că sunt factorii care îi determină pe copii și pe tineri să se simtă în siguranță la școală, precum și tipurile de violență din școală care credeți că există în școlile din Moldova. De asemenea, dorim să aflăm părerea dumneavoastră despre modalitățile prin care violența asupra copiilor ar putea fi prevenită, precum și despre felul în care putem gestiona situațiile de violență în școli.

Ce presupune implicarea dvs. în acest proiect de cercetare?

Dacă sunteți de acord să vă implicați la acest proiect, prin semnătura dvs. de mai jos veți confirma disponibilitatea dvs. de a participa la ședințele online și de a răspunde la chestionarul online. Sunt însă câteva lucruri pe care este bine să le cunoașteți, iar dumneavoastră veți avea ocazia să decideți dacă doriți sau nu să participați. Durata activităților va fi de aproximativ 2 ore. Pe parcursul discuției, vom face pauze, dacă veți simți nevoia. De asemenea, puteți oricând să vă retrageți din discuție sau să nu răspundeți la întrebările adresate de către cercetătoare. Participarea dvs. în acest proiect este anonimă și nimeni niciodată nu va afla detalii cu privire la implicarea dvs.

Confidențialitate

Lucrurile pe care le discutăm aici, precum și informațiile pe care le notăm nu vor fi asociate cu numele dumneavoastră. Cercetătorii nu vor lăsa pe nimeni altcineva să vadă răspunsurile oferite sau orice alte informații despre dumneavoastră. Discuția noastră va fi înregistrată audio, iar datele vor fi folosite de către cercetătoare pentru a completa un raport național care va fi expediat echipei de cercetare de la Institutul din Canada.

Vă rugăm să semnați acest formular dacă sunteți de acord

Nume și prenume

Semnătură

Pentru orice întrebări sau nelămuriri, puteți să mă contactați la tel: 06914691 sau email: dterzibarbarosie@gmail.com

ACORD DE CONSIMȚĂMÂNT

Bine ați venit la cercetarea privind violența în școli derulată de organizația Terre des Hommes Moldova.

Introducere

Terre des Hommes Moldova este o organizație neguvernamentală care aduce o contribuție importantă la îmbunătățirea sistemului de protecție a copilului, la reforma asistenței sociale și la desfășurarea de activități psiho-sociale cu copiii, promovând incluziunea socială, participarea copiilor și dezvoltarea comunitară. Anul acesta Terre des Hommes Moldova derulează o cercetare privind violența pe care o întâmpină copiii în școli și în comunitate. Pentru a obține informații cât mai relevante dorim să facem împreună cu copiii, o serie de activități bazate pe joc și artă, având ca temă siguranța și bunăstarea copiilor și tinerilor în școli.

CINE SUNTEM?

Terre des Hommes Moldova și Daniela Terzi-Barbaroșie, psihologă și cercetătoare angajată de TdH Moldova pentru acest proiect de cercetare.

DE CE FACEM ACEST PROIECT?

Vrem să aflăm ce îi face pe copii să se simtă în siguranță la școală, dar vrem să aflăm și de la ei ce tip de violență întâmpină la școală și îi sperie sau îi neliniștește atunci când sunt în drum spre școală sau după ce au trecut de porțile liceului. De asemenea, dorim să aflăm părerea lor despre cum violența poate fi prevenită, precum și despre cum pot reacționa copiii și adulții la violență.

CE PRESUPUNE IMPLICAREA ÎN ACEST PROIECT DE CERCETARE?

Să participe la activitățile de cercetare participativă care vor dura 2 ore. Pe parcursul acestora vom desena, vom discuta, dar vom face și pauze dacă va fi necesar.

CARE SUNT AVANTAJELE ȘI DEZAVANTAJELE PARTICIPĂRII LA ACEST PROIECT?

Ceea ce vom afla în acest proiect de la copii va fi folosit pentru a sprijini viitoarele programe și politici pentru copii și tineri. În orice moment, pot exista aspecte care nu îi fac pe copii să se simtă confortabil, iar în acest caz, ei pot să nu participe la respectivele activități.

DACĂ ACCEPT SĂ FAC PARTE DIN PROIECT, TREBUIE SĂ RĂSPUND LA TOATE ÎNTREBĂRILE?

Dacă vom adresa întrebări la care nu se dorește să se răspundă, vor putea să ne anunțe, sau nu vor răspunde deloc. Dacă vă rugăm să facă lucruri pe care nu îşi doresc să le facă, atunci îi rugăm să ne anunțe. Pot alege să participe decât la acele activități ce le fac plăcere.

CINE VA ȘTI CĂ AM PARTICIPAT LA ACEASTĂ ACTIVITATE?

Lucrurile pe care le discutăm în cadrul cercetării, precum și informațiile pe care le notăm nu vor fi asociate cu numele copiilor, așa că nimeni nu va ști că acestea sunt răspunsurile lor sau lucrurile pe care le-au făcut. Cercetătorii nu vor lăsa pe nimeni altcineva (profesori, părinți, membrii ai comunității etc.) să vadă răspunsurile lor sau orice altă informații despre ei. Ceilalți colegi care participă la activitate vor auzi ce spun, dar li se va cere să nu discute aceste lucruri mai departe. Pentru siguranța copiilor nu vom include numele lor în niciun raport de cercetare.

TREBUIE SĂ SPUN DA?

NU! Nu trebuie să luați parte la activitate și nimeni nu se va supăra dacă decideți astfel. De asemenea, dacă inițial se decide să participe în proiect și mai târziu vă razgandiți, atunci ne puteți spune acest lucru.

ÎNTREBĂRI?

Puteți pune întrebări în orice moment. Puteți întreba acum sau puteți întreba mai târziu. Puteți vorbi cu noi sau cu altcineva, oricând pe parcursul activității.

Dacă doriți să vorbiți cu Terre des Hommes, organizația care coordonează proiectul, o puteți contacta pe Veronica PELIVAN, Manager de proiect la telefon..... și pe email veronica.pelivan@tdh.ch.

Dacă doriți să luați legătura cu persoana care a realizat activitățile, o puteți contacta la telefon pe Daniela Terzi-Barbarosie, la numărul 069146891 sau pe email: dterzibarbarosie@gmail.com.

Va mulțumim!

FORMULAR DE CONSIMȚĂMÂNT PENTRU COPII ȘI TINERET

Înțeleg despre ce este vorba în cadrul acestor activități. Știu care va fi implicarea mea în activități și știu cât vor dura. Am avut ocazia de a pune întrebări suplimentare despre activitate. Știu că pot spune că nu vreau/ nu mai vreau să particip în orice moment. Sunt de acord să fac fotografii cu lucrurile pe care le fac pe parcursul activităților și sunt de acord ca activitățile să fie înregistrate audio. Sunt de acord să particip la acest proiect.

Dacă doriți să faceți parte din acest proiect, vă rugăm să scrieți numele vostru și să semnați mai jos. De asemenea, rugați-vă unul dintre părinți sau reprezentantul legal să semneze acest formular.

Numele și prenumele _____

Data: _____

Semnătura: _____

Numele părintelui/tutorelui: _____

Semnătura părintelui/tutorelui tău: _____

Numărul de telefon al părintelui/tutorelui: _____

Adresa de e-mail a părintelui/tutorelui tău (daca este cazul): _____

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.

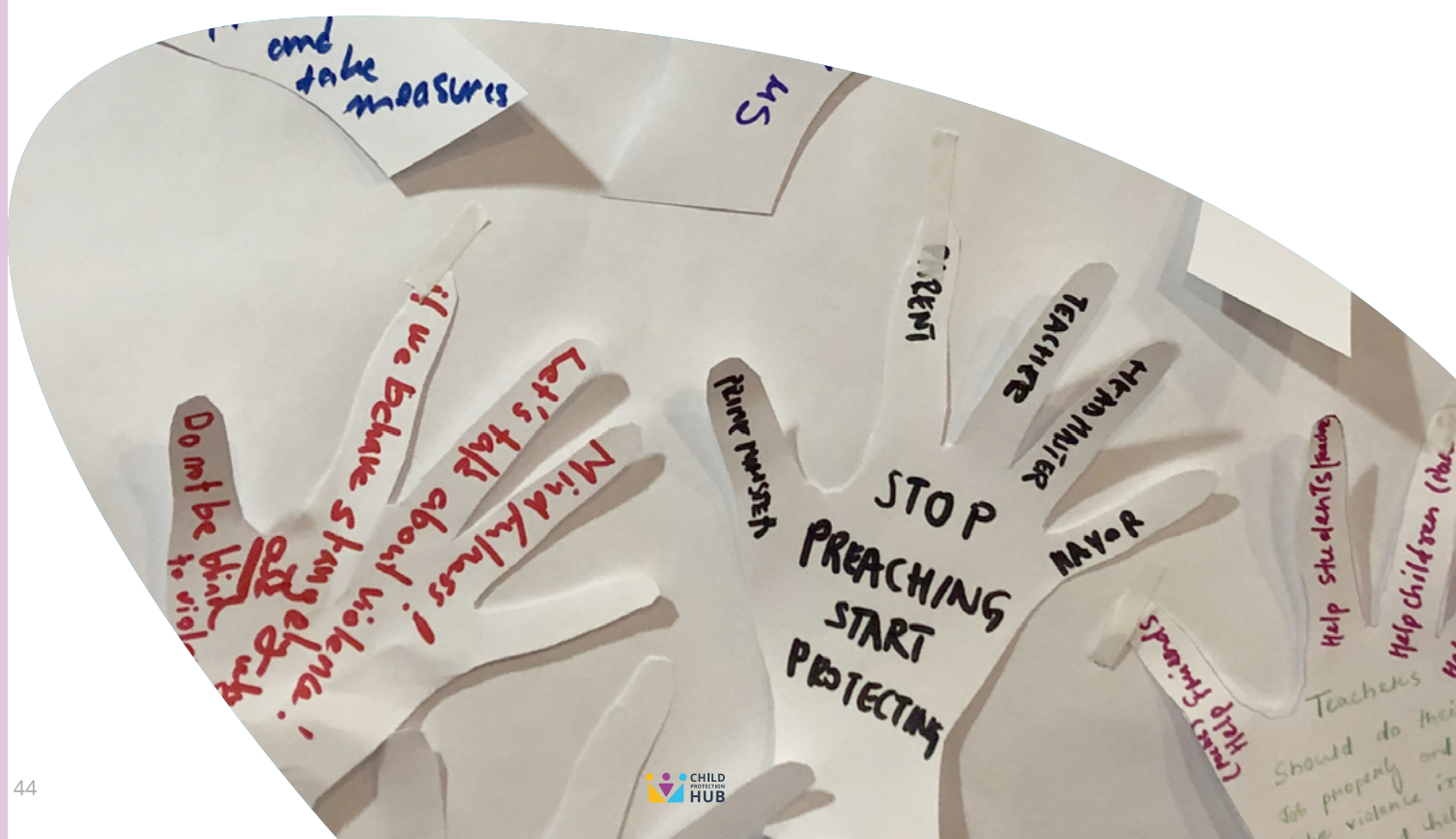
IF I SAY YES TO BEING IN THE PROJECT DO I HAVE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS?

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.

Best,



INSERT RESEARCHERS NAME

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



Regional Research

ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Country Report: Republic of Moldova

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

Researcher: Daniela Terzi-Barbarosie, Veronica Pelivan, Olga Pinzari
Date: November 2020