Regional Research

ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Country Report: Romania

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AUSTRIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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Executive Summary

1. Romanian children experience school-related gender-based violence. Girls and boys experience different forms of violence, and also perceive and respond to violent circumstances differently. Girls experience more sexual violence — verbal, cyber or unwanted sexualized physical violence, such as grabbing. Boys, however, are more prone to physical violence.

2. Verbal violence and bullying are the most common forms of violence against children, boy and girls equally, at school, on the way to school, and in their communities.

3. When it comes to assessing the impact of different forms of violence against children, girls consider sexual violence the most harmful form of violence, whilst for boys it is psychological (humiliation).

4. Girls and boys report a different set of social norms impacting their behaviour in terms of violent circumstances. Girls fear criticism if they report or talk to adults about incidents of violence (verbal sexual harassment, physical or cyber), while boys feel stigmatized if they report being victims of any type of violence.

5. Adults naturalize violence against children (especially verbal and physical when the perpetrators are adults), and violence among children. The social norm considers this violence a human phenomenon which is unavoidable. This prevents adults from purposefully and creatively designing school and community-based programs to eliminate violence against children.

6. Romanian teenagers do not have access to specialized support services to share their experiences of violence, nor do they receive counselling or any other support to help them deal with violent circumstances.

7. Discrimination against Roma children remains a feature of the Romanian school environment. Discrimination influences SRGBV, but more research is needed to understand how ethnicity and gender work together in shaping the incidence of violence children are exposed to, their experiences with violence, as well as their responses.

8. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SRGBV taking place online grew exponentially. This phenomenon is particularly worrisome as adults seem to have little experience, expertise or control over children's online activity. Children from vulnerable families are at a higher risk as they lack access to adults who could guide them in these matters.

9. Children feel empowered in participatory research projects and are willing and able to co-create prevention programs for SRGBV. Successful SRGBV programming must be based on children's voices and experiences.

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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

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?

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.

Note, as the COVID-19 pandemic hit in the middle of data collection, research was initially paused. Changes were required to align with national and local physical distancing requirements, and to ensure the safety of the participants and researchers. To maintain the consistency and legitimacy of the data collection, the research questions have remained the same, but additional contextual information provides clarity on data that refers to retrospective perspectives of what was occurring prior to the pandemic policies and school closures, as well as any changes that occurred as a result of lockdown measures. Some additional questions were added to explore the children's perception of how experiences of violence in schools and other educational forms (including online, learning from home) changed as a result of COVID-19 measures.

2.2 Research Methods and Approach

This is a mixed methodology study with a "qualitatively driven approach" (Hesse-Bibber & 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.

Location

In Romania, this study was conducted at two research sites located in Southern Romania, in a rural community and a small urban community. Both communities are in Dolj County, one of the poorest counties in Romania, plagued with unemployment and serious rates of poverty. A total of 17 girls, 16 boys and 25 adults participated in this research.

Given the added complications associated with COVID-19 distancing protocols, the following sampling frame was used:

In Romania, the research team was able to conduct face-to-face research at the rural research site. A total of 9 girls (aged 14–17), 9 boys (aged 14–17) and 15 adults participated in the research activities. This research was conducted in February 2020, 2 weeks before the country entered a 2-month full lockdown that included online teaching for the rest of the 2019/2020 school year.
In September 2020, in-person schooling resumed for over a month, but with a ban on third-party access to school premises. Due to high rates of COVID-19 infections, schools returned to online teaching after October 15. In November 2020, the research team concluded online research activities at the urban site. The research team adapted all the participatory methods explained in the original methodology for online use. The entire research was conducted online, via Zoom. The research design included: a) a 2-hour session with adults; b) three 2-hour sessions conducted over three days with the girls' group; and c) three 2-hour sessions conducted over three days with the boys group.

Romania Sampling Details

At the rural site, the research was conducted 23–29 February 2020, at a general high school.

The research groups consisted of:
  A. a group of 9 girls, aged 14 to 17;

  B. a group of 9 boys, aged 14 to 17;

  C. a group of 15 teachers and parents, (5 men and 10 women), aged 33–55, from the high school, local kindergartens and primary school.

At the urban site, the research was conducted 12–18 November 2020, through the Zoom app, with students from a technical high school in the city.

 The research groups consisted of:
  A. a group of 8 girls, aged 15 to 17;

  B. a group of 7 boys, aged 15;

  C. a group of 10 teachers (9 women and 1 men), aged 35–55, from the technical school.

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.

3 Country-Level Methodology

3.1 Research Team

In Romania, the research team was headed by Irina Costache, lead researcher. Irina holds a PhD in Gender Studies from Central European University (CEU). She is an experienced researcher on gender equality and gender-based violence topics, and has a strong background in children's rights, which she gained as team leader of the research and advocacy department at Save the Children Romania. Irina has been an adjunct lecturer at the University of Bucharest, School of Political Science.

Simina Guga served as research assistant. Simina has an MA in Anthropology and an MA in Islamic Studies, both from the University of Bucharest. Simina has a strong background in conducting research with vulnerable groups, having been a researcher with the Centre for XYZ. Simina is also an experienced researcher on children's rights, especially pertaining to migrant children, having worked as team leader with Save the Children Romania on an association program focusing on migration.

Raluca Condrut was Terre des Hommes Romania's contact point, and in this capacity, Raluca facilitated the selection of the research sites as well as the researcher's access to both sites.

3.2 Site Selection

Tdh Romania Office facilitated access to the research sites. The main researcher proposed high schools in disadvantaged communities as relevant research sites. In Romania, children aged 14–19 attend high schools, thus respecting the age requirement for this research. Tdh Romania selected a school in a rural disadvantaged community, and a school in an urban disadvantaged community. Face-to-face research was conducted at the rural site, while online research was conducted at the urban site.

Short Description of Research Site 1
The rural community is in one of the poorest counties in Romania. The community itself is comprised of three villages, and has a total population of roughly 5,600, of which 1,200 are school-aged. According to the last census, about 22.5% of its inhabitants are Roma.

Children in this community can attend preschool from 3–6 years old, followed by primary school, and later gymnasium or high school. The community has two preschools, two primary schools, a gymnasium and a high school. The nearest city is 30 km away, but the closest university is 50 km away, and has a well-known medical school.

Roma children tend to go to preschool and primary school in just one of the three villages. For secondary education, all children attend classes at the high school, which offers two academic tracks: a theoretical track (with more subjects, and a theoretical BAC), and a vocational training track (where students can obtain a certification for a certain professional qualification).

This research involved children attending high school on the theoretical track, while the majority of Roma students attend the vocational track. The teachers who participated in this research taught at the local high school (both tracks), or at the two primary and secondary schools in the community.

The research team (Irina Costache and Simina Guga) made audio recordings of most of the activities after receiving consent from the participants.

Short Description of Research Site 2

The urban community is also in one of the poorest counties in Romania. The city has a total population of nearly 17,000 people, most of whom are ethnic Romanians, and 5% of whom are ethnic Roma. The city administration includes seven rural settlements along the city's outskirts. The technical high school is the only secondary education institution, but there are 6 kindergartens (for children aged 3–6), and 5 primary and middle schools. Our research showed that a significant number of children leave the city once they reach high school and move to another city 30km away where there are several secondary education institutions and a university.

An industrial city during the communist regime, this site has yet to regain its economic stability since the change; economic opportunities are scarce, with agriculture and retail being the main areas of employment. Much of the city's adult population either commutes to other cities for meaningful employment or works abroad in low-skilled jobs. In the past three decades, the city suffered massive depopulation; between 2000 and 2010, it lost over 3,000 inhabitants and trends show a continuous decline due to migration and death. The large number of parents who migrated to other EU countries and left their children behind in the care of other family members has had an impact on education and on children. Participants claimed this a key social problem plaguing their community, for which they receive little to no support.

The high school has a student population of approximately 1,200 students aged 14–19. The average student-to-teacher ratio is 11.97, which means quite a strong deficit of teachers in the community. During our interviews, many adults complained about this, saying it is caused by teachers who commute to the nearby bigger city to work.

It is also worth mentioning that the community experienced the AH1N1 flu in 2009, during which the local gymnasium (not our research site), became a hotspot when 15 people (both teachers and students) were diagnosed with the virus. During this time, the schools in the community were under closure orders, not unlike our current COVID-19 measures. Inhabitants' movements were restricted, and strict medical protocols were put in place. This experience improved the teachers' response to COVID-19 in the sense that they were more familiar with the sanitary measures required. Nonetheless, it left them unprepared to teach solely online.

The research team (Irina Costache and Simina Guga) videotaped most of the activities at this site after receiving consent from the participants.

Schooling during COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 15 March 2020, the Romanian government declared a state of emergency for 60 days. Severe restrictions on movement and public gatherings were announced, with only a few exceptions for leaving the house. During the state of emergency, all schools suspended face-to-face teaching, with schools and kindergartens closed throughout the country; all schools (primary, gymnasiums and high schools) switched to online teaching. After the state of emergency was lifted in mid-May 2020, in-person teaching remained suspended for the rest of the academic year.

In September 2020, a new academic year kicked off among growing numbers of COVID-19 infections. By September 2020, the number of new daily cases plateaued in Romania at around 5,000 cases a day. Under these circumstances, schools reopened for in-person teaching with strict rules on social distancing, temperature checks for students and teachers, strict hygiene, restricted access to school premises, and three action plans for dealing with COVID-19 in schools.

As the daily numbers of infections continued to grow, the Romanian government decided on 9 November 2020, to suspend all in-person teaching and switch to online instruction. From 15 September to 9 November, the school system struggled with uncertainty. On the one hand, guidance from the Ministry of Education was vague and under constant revision, on the other hand, parents, children and teachers were uncertain of the dangers of contacting the virus. These shifting grounds took their toll on students at the urban site. These children reported anxiety concerning their academic future — they felt disconnected from the school community (some had started their first year and did not have a chance to get to know their colleagues and teachers very well in the 6 weeks of face-to-face interaction). All of the participating children said that they felt unmotivated to do their school tasks and homework, and even demotivated to participate in online classes.

Participants

Participants included the following:

- Children aged 14–17 (16 girls and 15 boys), high school students at two research sites,
- Adults aged 33–55: parents, teachers, principals, other school professionals, (15 participants at one site and 10 participants at the second site; 6 men and 19 women)
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Locations:
At the rural location, for each activity, the research team worked with 3 groups: 2 groups of approximately 10 children (10 girls and 9 boys), and a group of 15 adults over the course of 3 days.
At the urban location, the research team worked with 3 groups: one group of 8 girls, one group of 7 boys, and one group of 10 adults. The activities took place online, via Zoom. The researchers held a 2-hour session with the adults, and on 3 occasions had 2-hour long sessions with each group of children over the course of 2 weeks.

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

Given the gendered nature of experiences of violence, there needed to be an almost equal number of participants of both genders. Children on the gender-spectrum had the opportunity to choose to participate in the group they most closely identify with. Whenever possible, sensitivity to the gender of the group was matched with the gender of the researchers.

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, the researchers worked with 2 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).

Sampling

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 draws 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 also included 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 higher perceived rates of violence or concerning gender-based issues.

What is important to note, is 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. So, the same group of children moved through all 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 to inform them of the research. Based on the sampling frame provided above, national researchers identified schools and invited them to participate.

Each school included 2 groups of 10–15 children. Groups of 15 boys and 15 girls, aged 14–17, who were selected by the school administration were invited to participate in the research.

Sampling Adults

A group of approximately 8–15 adults, both men and women, comprised of mothers, fathers, caregivers, and educators (teachers and principals) was included at each research site.

Data Analysis

The Romanian research team used the data analysis forms provided by the IICRD (Form A and Form B) as well as an excel table to compile the information gathered through the research activities with participants. The researcher and note-taker worked together to accurately fill-in FORM A and FORM B data sheets, as well as participant quote tables, based on their field notes and recordings of the research sessions. At the end of each data collection stage, the researcher provided TDH Romania with an extended field research report that included the main findings, as well as photos from the session and of the children's drawings.

This report is based on that data analysis.

Ethical Issues

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

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

1. Consent Process

At each location, the research team asked children and their parents/guardians to sign the project consent form. In addition, Tdh Romania worked with school administrators at each research site to conclude a formal partnership agreement to conduct research within each school. The research team asked participants (including children and their guardians) to sign GDPR compliance consent forms. These consent forms are required for any personal data collection and processing according to EU and national regulations.

The research team also made sure to discuss and obtain verbal consent from children at each stage of the data collection process and at the beginning of each research activity. This consent has been audio or video-recorded. Children were also reassured that researchers will not present data, photos or information that would divulge their identity.

2. Ethical Issues

As research reports will show, we found a strong anti-Roma bias both among children and adults at both research sites. The research team noted the discriminatory bias, and as participants referred to the Roma population as "gypsies", the researchers used some of the research activity time to discuss the correct terminology and the importance of showing respect to other ethnic communities.

At the second research location, children expressed their frustration and anxiety in relation to online schooling. We also had a short follow-up session with the school counsellor (who took part in the research activity for adults) to inform her about the children's distress. The school counsellor requested information materials and support from Tdh Romania.

Research Tools: Adaptations and Reflections on their Implementation

At both research sites, all of the research tools provided to the IICRD team were used with minor adjustments. During the collection process at the rural site, the research team adapted follow-up questions from the research tool vignette and research tool focus group to avoid repetitions and ensure a smooth transition from one topic to another.

At the second research site, the urban school, the entire research design had to be adapted for an online research setting. The research team, together with the contact person for the field research, agreed that the most accessible online video conferencing tool would be Zoom. The research team then developed a research agenda (attached) and a PPT to guide the participants through the research activities. We conducted 3 two-hour sessions for each group of children (boys and girls) and 1 two-hour session with the adults using the research tools.

The most significant adaptations were made to the social mapping tool and the participatory ranking tool. For social mapping, the research team asked students to draw their maps while on Zoom and post the final result on the research WhatsApp group. The researchers then asked children to present their drawings individually. This was followed by a moderated group discussion on the topic of violence against children (and its gendered nature) on the way to and from school.

In order to be able to create/redesign the participatory ranking exercise, we first asked the children (both girls and boys) to explain what they understand as violence, what types of violence they experience in their communities, and we, the researchers, helped clarify terms and facilitated common and shared definitions of different types of violence against children. This exercise was conducted during our first 2-hour session. After we identified the most relevant forms of violence for this particular community, we used these types of violence to create a poll/ google form for the ranking exercise. A researcher sent each question, one-by-one, to the children, who were asked to vote individually. The researcher then returned to the group to share the vote tally with the participants and to facilitate a group discussion on the vote result. During the discussion, the note-taker wrote down the most important points raised, as well as the final voting outcome, as in some cases, the children changed their vote during the group discussion.

In more concrete terms, the group was asked to rank 5 forms of violence (physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and bullying) on the following criteria: 1) most common 2) most common on the way to school 3) most common in school 4) most impactful 5) and the most common during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children were asked to fill in a Google form as a voting procedure for each form of violence. The results were recorded and shared with the group for another session of group discussion. The children were then asked whether they would like to make any changes to their initial vote.

Critical Reflections on the Research Tools Used
Children participating in the face-to-face research activities responded positively to all of the research tools. They were engaged and stayed alert throughout the sessions and enjoyed the activities. The children who participated in the online research activities, however, were less enthusiastic about the research activities and found them less interactive.

Limitations

3.7

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a major delay in conducting research at the second research site, the urban school. It was impossible to carry out face-to-face research activities with children. The sampling requirements created a limitation in that the children were all from the same country; we have reason to believe that the responses would not have differed greatly in any poor or vulnerable community in this country.

The participatory research tools were particularly well-received by children during in-person sessions, but a larger number of children would have added more nuance to the overall research results. Many **children were curious and interested to discuss intimate partner violence (or intimate partner controlling behaviour)** and, with few exceptions this has not been an issue addressed explicitly by the research tools. This can be a very productive avenue for future research. One additional area of research that was not addressed in this research design has to do with school violence perpetrated against LGBTQI students. Studies **from 2015 and 2020 show that LGBTQI students face extreme violence from their fellow students in Romanian high schools, and this is a type of school-related gender-based violence.**

4 Violence Against Children in Schools in Romania

(Literature review)

Violence against Children in Romanian schools is a topic of concern for government officials and NGOs focused on education. The limited research on this topic focuses on bullying. School bullying is the most studied form of in-school violence against children. With little exception, the gender dimension of school bullying or school violence is rarely captured. Other forms of violence that children experience in Romanian schools remain understudied.

According to a Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC)[1] study, Romania fares very poorly when it comes to school bullying. Of the 42 countries studied in the report, Romanian students are amongst the top 5 countries when it comes to the prevalence of bullying (HBSC, 2014). A total of 15% of Romanian boys and 9% of Romanian girls report being victims of bullying and harassment by colleagues in school. Romania is similar to countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova. The social norms framework is not used in conducting research related to violence against children. Moreover, the gender dimension of violence against children is rarely noted, there have been no clear studies released on the topic as of yet.

The HBSC Study[2] – Romania Report 2014

HBSC is a pioneer cross-national study focusing on young people's well-being, health behaviours and their social context. This research collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe is conducted every 4 years in 49 countries and regions across Europe and North America. The survey is based on a standardized research methodology. A summary of the findings related to bullying in Romania:

- Over 20% of boys and 11% of girls report that they engaged in bullying or harassment of other peers in the past 2 months.

- 15% of boys and 9% of girls report being victims of bullying and harassment by peers in school.

- The percentage of those who have been bullied via text messages or photos is 3.5% among boys and 2.5% among girls, and drops with age regardless of gender.

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[1] Health behaviours among adolescents in Romania: Health Behaviour in School-agedChildren (HBSC) study 2014, retrived from http://insp.gov.ro/sites/1/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Raport-HBSC-Romania-bun.pdf

[2] Health behaviours among adolescents in Romania: Health Behaviour in School-agedChildren (HBSC) study 2014, WHO, retrieved from http://insp.gov.ro/sites/1/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Raport-HBSC-Romania-bun.pdf

- As compared to data from 2006, there was a noticeable decrease in bullying behaviour for both genders in 2014.

- Girls from a higher socio-economic background are more frequently victims of bullying.

- Students whose parents (mother or father) work abroad or who are in the care of grandparents are twice as likely to act as bullies. The same risk appears among children who lack sound communication with their families (especially with their father).

- Children with negative attitudes towards school, who smoke tobacco, consume alcohol, or use cannabis are 3 times more likely to engage in bullying behaviour.

- Students who report being victims of bullying are twice as likely to report feeling alone, to report poor health, to use medication and to have a medically-diagnosed illness.

As compared to HBSC international data, the prevalence of bullying behaviour among Romanian students is worrisome among all three age groups (11, 13 and 15 year olds) and for both genders.

Bullying Among School Children - National Sociological Study 2016 (Save the Children Romania, 2016)

This was a research report produced in-house by Save the Children Romania (2016). It is a national study that covers both rural and urban areas, and that targets children and their parents. The study looks at the prevalence of bullying and harassment among children in Romanian schools, but also aims to connect certain socio-economic indicators and prior experience of violence within the family with the bullying behaviour. Key quantitative research findings include:

- 18–28% of children interviewed in the study say that they have initiated the exclusion of a child from a group.

- 22% of children said that they threatened another child with a "beating", 19% said that they humiliated another child, and 25% said that they have spread rumours about a child they didn't like.

- 13% of children who participated in the study said that they have destroyed another child's belongings, while 16% said that they have beaten another child, and 30% said that they hit another child lightly.

- 84% of children said that they have witnessed situations when a child threatened another child; 80% witnessed a child being humiliated, and 78% of children witnessed mild physical aggressions (pushing, mild hitting). Almost 69% of children witnessed 2 children fighting.

- 23% of children said that they were threatened with exclusion from a group, 31% were excluded, and 39% said that they witnessed how a child was asked not to play or not to talk to a child.

- 29% of children said that they were threatened by other children with physical violence, 24% said that they have been humiliated among their peers, and 37% said that rumours were spread about them.

- 40% of parents admit that it is possible that their child would marginalize another child. Almost 25% of Romanian parents acknowledge that their sons or daughters might physically abuse another child.

- 53% of parents say that it is likely that their child could be in a situation where other children would push him/her.

- 66% of parents say that it is plausible that their child might end up being mildly hit or beaten by another child at school.

Findings

Incidence, Type and Perpetrators of Violence Against Children

General Overview and Incidence

Girls' Group

When asked to provide their own definitions of violence, the girls' groups were active and insightful, and stressed that violence was very present in their school environment in all its forms. The participants said that girls seem more prone to engage in conflicts — verbal violence, criticism, bullying or even forms of physical violence — than boys, but when boys do engage in violent behaviour, their conflicts tend to be more serious. *"Girls are more prone to start a fight, usually without a real reason, such as someone who talked about someone else and so on… […] Verbal fights can become physical fights and girls are fighting much more. Girls fight over boys, but it doesn't happen the other way around."* (Girl, urban school, 15)

"Many times, there are fights between girls in the school. They often beat each other up. Sometimes the police were called to separate them." (Girl, rural school, 16)

The girls agreed that the most widespread form of violence in their community is verbal abuse, a behaviour that most children engage in, as well as the adults around them (teachers or parents). Psychological violence and bullying are types of violence mostly perpetrated by children towards other children. Girls mentioned that adults are usually the perpetrators of physical violence against children: *"Children are being beaten by parents, teachers and lovers."* (Girl, rural school, 15)

Boys' Group

All participants in the boys group said that violence was present in their school. Boys gave examples of physical fights between colleagues, and instances when those involved were expelled: *"There was a case in our school when a simple joke led to a real fight. A teacher intervened and he was hit as well. One of the aggressors was dismissed from school and the others were punished. The teachers wanted to transfer those boys to other classes and even to other schools. In such cases, they do not really have other solutions."* (Boy, rural school, 16)

They believe that some children are just violent, and they enjoy being aggressive towards others.

Boys try to avoid conflict as they don't feel prepared to defend themselves in all situations. Most importantly, boys don't really know what to do to ask for support.

Adults' Group

At both research sites, adults said that violence against children happens quite frequently. Many Romanian families still use verbal and physical violence as a means of disciplining children. Conflict between parents and children are often connected with school tasks. By high-school age, the adults said that parents use physical violence less often, but that children become aggressive among themselves. In both communities, the adults said that a formal and effective response to violence against children is lacking. There was one school counsellor who formally could help children or staff deal with the outcomes of violent incidents against children at that school, but this was not considered enough for the needs of the community. Most of the participants were teachers who reported that they often take it upon themselves to mediate violent incidents, to combat bullying and to offer support to children who are victims of violence, either at home or at school. All adults repeatedly emphasized that their communities don't have a social service system that can provide adequate support to young people.

In terms of reporting incidents of violence, teachers said they tend to solve the problems internally. Teachers get involved in mediating violent incidents in their class, but they lack an institutional strategy that would provide them with a unitary and systematic response to such incidents, or the tools to adequately support perpetrators/victims. Teachers mentioned that very few children take matters into their own hands, and either go talk to the school's director or complain to the school inspectorate.

Types of Violence Against Children in School Settings

Girls reported the following types of violence taking place in/around school:

- Verbal violence: screaming, shouting, swearing, using negative labels and belittling others. Such behaviours happen among classmates. Teachers are also verbally violent towards students, especially towards students whom they perceive to be challenging their authority.

- Physical violence (beatings, abuse, touching someone without their consent etc.). Parents and teachers can be violent with children.

- Psychological violence and body shaming (scaring people, threatening people, belittling, criticizing peers for their appearance, body shaming, shaming, manipulating, blackmail, exclusion/marginalization). The girls believe that manipulative and intimidating behaviour often can lead to bullying. Girls have talked about criticism and are especially exposed to body shaming.

  "Girls are more criticized in general, in comparison to the boys. They are being judged more than the others, the society, the boys and other girls. [...] Women are generally associated with beauty, sensitivity and weakness. Boys are not seen like that, and their gestures are not judged as much." (Girl, urban school, 15)

- Sexual violence (face-to-face and online) was mentioned by the girls in terms of sexual harassment and humiliation from former partners.

  "Some boys are making girls fall in love with them and are asking them for different sexual favours; they later make public or tell/show this to their friends." (Girl, rural school, 16)

- Verbal sexual harassment is also present, and in some circumstances, the child participants claim that this behaviour is even encouraged by some girls; verbal sexual harassment is perceived as validation, flirting and positive attention from boys/others.

"Boys are slapping girls' assess as a greeting. [...] Some girls seem to like it and some boys think that it's cool to do that." (Girl, rural school, 16)

"Because some girls consider a slap on the ass as a form of appreciation, some boys think this is a universal gesture that pleases all girls. They started doing it to all of us, although we don't like it, we don't appreciate it and we don't want to be touched without our consent." (Girl, urban school, 16)

- Everyday school bullying ranges from "jokes" that belittle a classmate, to public humiliation, to group exclusion. Girls also mentioned a gender-specific aspect of bullying connected with physical appearance.

- Body Shaming was something that several participants discussed: being ridiculed for being either "too fat" or "too skinny". The participants also mentioned that these remarks are damaging to their self-confidence, and shape how they feel about returning to in-person classes.

Boys
Boys reported the following types of violence in and around school:

- **Verbal violence** (swearing, threats) *"Verbal violence is very present in school because children swear and offend each other a lot."* (Boy, rural school, 16)

- **Physical violence** (aggression, beating, hitting), *"Physical violence is very obvious; you can easily see it. When you do something to someone, that person threatens to beat you up."* (Boy, urban school, 15)

- **Bullying** (spitting, "jokes", humiliation)

- **Sexual violence** (touching girls without their consent, rape, harassment) and online sexual violence. *"It happened that some gay man tried to talk to me, and he just did not leave me alone. He started talking to me online after some classmates added this 30-year-old man to our group. This man was on the group for a few weeks while he was displaying images of gay men on his Facebook account. After a party, some girls sent pictures with them kissing to the group and the man posted them on his Facebook page. Together with a classmate of mine, I tried to talk to him and tell him not to post pictures from our group on his Facebook page. After that he did not leave me alone, so I had to block him."* (Boy, urban school, 15)

- **Extortion** - "There was a boy staying in front of the school's toilet asking other children to pay 1 RON to use the toilet." (Boy, urban school,15)

- Discrimination against Roma children. One participant disclosed that he was mistreated (called "stupid" and "thief") by other children and teachers because he is Roma. (Boy, urban school, 15)

- **Animal cruelty** *"We saw many videos with beatings on the internet. Also, some with violence against animals...extreme cruelty against animals. I don't know what the purpose of all this is."* (Boy, rural school, 16)

- **Gang Violence** *"There are fights between clans in our community (gang violence) …sometimes it gets really bad. If one is hit, they all jump on the attacker. All for one and one for all. This is how it is."* (Boy, rural school, 17).

Adults

Adults reported the following types of violence happening in and around school:

- **Verbal Violence** — Both adults and children are verbally violent towards other children. Teachers claimed that verbal violence is even more widespread in Roma communities, where adults use foul language when speaking to children.

- Emotional/Psychological Violence — this is the second most widespread form of violence against children. The adults stressed the lack of family bonds and the lack of emotional support that children experience within their families due to many parents working abroad. The adults also said that parents do not have the necessary skills to maintain a healthy and emotionally warm relationship with their children during adolescence. There is a lack of community activities that could involve children after school to help them develop emotionally, or where they could create bonds among themselves based on shared interests and shared activities.

- **Physical violence** — this is the third-most widespread form of violence against children. The adults said that they sometimes use physical violence/corporal punishment against children in cases of extreme disorder. The teachers in the focus group also mentioned that in some families, children are routinely disciplined through corporal punishment and the effects of that violence are visible in the classroom: *"you can see with the naked eye that children are traumatized"*. (teacher, rural school)

  In the rural high school, teachers say that physical fights sometimes break out between children, the most dangerous being those between students who participate in the regular high school program and those enrolled in the vocational-training track. The latter are more likely to be Roma, and to have very low academic achievements. They are also sometimes older than the other children (for example, some of the girls are married and/or have children). Aside from these rather rare, but violent incidents, the teachers said that boys are likely to engage in mild physical violence with other boys, or are sometimes violent towards girls, but this is less common and usually involves unwanted touching.

- **Bullying** — the adults didn't think bullying happens very often in their schools. They say that children ganging up on another child is quite rare, or only happens for a short time. As this is a small community, generally these types of behaviours come to the surface and teachers and parents intervene to change the situation. Teachers say that shy, quiet children are more likely to fall prey to bullying.

- **Sexual Violence** is the least present form of violence in the community. Teachers tend to minimize or reduce the definition of sexual violence to rape. Their discussion highlighted the Roma community and poor non-Roma families, where there is a higher number of teen pregnancies and teen marriages. While some of the incidents described amount to statutory rape, the teachers did not consider early marriage as a form of sexual violence.

- **Cyber violence** — Teachers mentioned that children in their community have been increasingly exposed to online violence. They said this is quite a recent phenomenon, starting 4–6 years ago when some families could get smartphones and Internet broadband. Teachers worry about the lack of adult control over what children do/access online. There was one case of cyber sexual violence, when a 12-year-old girl shared nude pictures online and the alleged boyfriend redistributed the pictures to the wider community.

- **Discrimination** — According to these adults, Roma children face widespread discrimination.

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

Girls' Groups

The research tools shed light on a few gender and social norms that help perpetuate violence against children in school-related areas. From the interactions with the girl's group, the following social and gender norms were the most apparent:

- Girls' sexuality is a source of risk, fear and possible stigmatization. Overall, human sexuality is a taboo topic in the Romanian school system. Children do not have access to sex education classes. A draft bill introduced last year to bring science-based sex education to Romanian schools was dismissed after conservative and religious political forces expressed strong opposition to it. In our discussions, the girls said that their communities stigmatize sexually active girls. Girls are afraid of being pressured into having sex in a romantic relationship. They are also afraid that boys will manipulate them into having a relationship solely to have sex.

- Girls must have a good reputation within their community. Their behaviour must meet the accepted norms, like not fighting, not swearing, studying hard and getting good grades. For the girls we spoke to, a good reputation also refers to having a body that fits within certain standards of beauty and strict grooming discipline: clean hair, use of deodorant and make-up, or wearing certain clothes and having a variety of items (certain mobile phone, bag, etc.). When these norms are breached, those found uncompliant are punished by other girls through criticism, marginalisation and exclusion.

- Roma children are perceived as violent and a threat to the school community. Girls at both research sites spoke negatively about Roma children, some of whom were their classmates. The bias against Roma children was more pronounced at the rural site, where there is a larger Roma community. Girls reinforced a general stereotype that Roma children are violent. They also expressed prejudice against Roma children: that Roma children are dirty, unintelligent or uninterested in school performance.

- Early marriages and teen pregnancies are believed to be a Roma issue. At both research sites, the girls mentioned the topic of early marriages and teen pregnancies. This was more present at the rural site, where girls reported that several students in their school had children. The girls considered teen pregnancy a Roma issue in general, and believed it could be connected with Roma values and family traditions. Statistical data and the adults' testimony contradicted this stereotype; the adults' participants said that teen pregnancies also affect non-Roma girls.

- Domestic violence and parental violence against children remain a normalized reality in the two communities. The girls' group talked about families in their community where domestic violence takes place. They do not think domestic violence is a wide-scale problem, however the community can do very little for those families where it does happen. Girls believe that domestic violence is *"a situation that only the adults involved in can solve"* and that *"even if other people intervene, the couple rarely splits up because of lack of money"* (Girl, rural school, 16).

  Girls also mentioned that some parents use corporal punishment to discipline their children. They said that physical violence is used more on younger children (under 14), but that there are instances where even children their age are slapped by a parent.

- Some boys tend to use sexualized behaviour to get a girls' attention. The girls mentioned that boys use sexualized violence (unwanted touching or lifting their skirts) to get their attention or show off in front of other boys. This type of behaviour is routine in both of the schools. The girls perceive it as common, a daily reality and unpleasant, but they would not consider reporting this behaviour to an adult.

- Empathy is not a shared value among teens. In the vignette exercise, the girls said that most children are not empathetic and would not understand Valentina's situation; instead of supporting her, they would further criticize her. Even some of those who said they understood her situation would not show empathy, but instead prefer to look tough, cool and insensitive. "Some of them would not empathize because their families did not show them empathy." (Girl, urban school, 15)

Boys' Groups

From the interactions with the boys' groups, the following social and gender norms were the most apparent.

- The community stigmatizes boys who are victims of violence. When discussing the vignette with Martin, these participants reported that boys are likely to be stigmatized if they present themselves as victims of violence. Boys think that a boy who is a victim of a violent incident was not intelligent or strong enough to prevent the violence from happening. Moreover, the boys said that the community would marginalize and ridicule a boy if he felt like a victim to a similar incident. Some boys even claimed that a boy who has suffered violence could potentially be revictimized by other members of the community.

- In order to be accepted by their peers, boys engage in risky behaviours, such as the use of force against their classmates and the consumption of violent social media content. The boys said that it is common for them to use physical force or share violent social media content among their group of peers. They said this is how they prove their masculinity, and show courage and toughness among other boys. The boys from the rural site who reported gang violence in their community said that boys have to take sides and participate in gang fights if a close friend or a family member requires them to do so. This is a way to build a reputation within the community and prove their reliability among their peers.

- Delinquent behaviour by boys is less stigmatized by the community. Boys reported that underage boys consume alcohol and drive without a license (this is a criminal offense). The boys reported that this behaviour, while frowned upon, is not really stigmatized by the community because it is considered normal. One participant added, *"boys will be boys"* (Boy, rural school, 17).

The Adults' Groups

From the interactions with the adult groups, the following social and gender norms were the most apparent.

- Violence among children is a naturalized behaviour. Overall, the adults present in our research groups considered that violence among children is a natural, perpetual phenomenon that cannot be fully eliminated and that adults can only manage the children's violent behaviours. The adults said that there is little that the school can do in order to prevent violent behaviours among children, and that teachers see their role as that of "firepersons"; they feel that they can only intervene in cases of extreme violence. The adults, most of whom are teachers, said that the disciplinary measures that they take against children who are violent should work as examples for sanctioning such behaviour, but they feel that they are unsuccessful. As one teacher reported, *"violence among children will exist as long as children will be human and there is very little that we can say and do"* (Man, rural site).

Protection from Violence and Promotion of Well-being   5.3

Girls' Groups

The girls agreed that neither local institutions nor the authorities are active in preventing and combating violence against children in their community. Support services for victims (ex. psychological services, shelters, etc.) are not available in either of the two communities. One school has a counsellor who is overwhelmed with requests, and who usually focuses on educational difficulties rather than behavioural problems. The girls at the urban site (where there is a school counsellor) reported that children are shy and don't seek the counsellor's help. The girls did not consider the police an institution that protects children. "The police don't intervene. They come look, and they leave without doing anything." (Girl, urban school, 16)

When asked who could help or support children in situations of violence, girls mentioned the following:

- Teachers can help children, but are usually not proactive in noticing or taking action against violence that happens outside of the classroom.

- Friends/classmates can help a child in need. A friend can protect the victim from the potential aggressor and defend him/her from verbal abuse or criticism by taking her/his side. Girls mentioned feeling safer when they are joined by their classmates on the way to school, in school, and when using the schools' bathrooms. Some girls would offer moral support by listening to the victim, talking to teachers, and trying to protect their friend.

- Parents sometimes can understand a child's problems, but in most cases they just tell the child to avoid conflicts, not to respond, to take care of themselves or to avoid places where violence occurs.

Boys' Groups

The boys agreed that there are very few institutions and people who can help child victims or perpetrators of violence. The main people identified as potential sources of support are parents and other significant family members, such as cousins or uncles. In both communities, there is an absolute lack of social and psychological services for children, as was also noted by the girls' groups. The boys generally tend to distrust most local authorities and public institutions in their community, such as the police or the church. These institutions rarely interact with children and the boys don't perceive them as being interested in the well-being of children.

The boys also said that school teachers sometimes talk to children about violence, but they feel that teachers offer them little information and practical support on how to handle violent situations.

Furthermore, they mentioned the lack of experience and information that both teachers and parents have in relation to online safety. The boys said that adults in their community know very little about what their children do online, of the dangers that children can face online and have very few skills that could be useful in protecting children who fall victim to cyber violence. Most adults simply try to reduce the amount of time children spend online, but without actually knowing what children do when they use the Internet.

5.4 Children's Agency and their Responses to Violence

Girls' Groups

The girls discussed what children, community leaders and key institutions could do in order to make this community safer. The girls believe that an institutional response (other than that of their own school) will be difficult to get in the near future. The police were nominated as the only other institution, apart from the school, which has an influence and an impact on diminishing violence against children in the community. However, the girls said that the police only help out in extreme cases of violence.

The girls proposed several strategies that children could help co-create in order to reduce violence against children:

- Bring self-defence instructors into the community to teach girls how to protect themselves.

- Work with specialists to teach children how to increase their empathy levels;

- Ask the school counsellor to talk to children about positive behaviours, to do activities with children to develop balance, calmness, non-violent response and conflict management.

The girls also suggested that parents might need to learn such techniques, and proposed a school to teach parents how to raise their children to stop being violent. They suggested that teachers should promote and encourage children to behave with more empathy towards others, and that public authorities (police, social assistants, etc.) come and talk to children about violence.

Finally, the girls discussed what children, community leaders and key institutions could do to make the community safer. All of the participants agreed that children should live in a safer world where perpetrators are immediately removed from the community. Some girls said that schools should teach them how to avoid becoming victims of violence, or how to negotiate conflicts and threatening situations. They also said that boys should learn more about gender equality in order to change their behaviours towards girls and show more respect to women.

Boys

The boys discussed what children, community leaders and key institutions could do to make this community safer. Boys complained about the lack of services and support persons that could help children facing violence. They said that teachers should provide more information on violence to children and should talk about prevention and protection with children.

Some of the boys mentioned that an important part of reducing violence in the community would be punishing perpetrators and informing the community about the punishment. Furthermore, they said that there should be more interaction between teachers, the school principal and children on the topic of violence. Children themselves could come up with a strategy to prevent and act in cases of violence.

The boys thought parents could get more involved in providing appropriate education to their children. They could be harsher when their children display violent behaviours. Parents could talk about violence among themselves and pressure the authorities to protect children from violence. They could also address the topic during parent-teacher meetings (since schools have closed, such meetings have been suspended).

Some children mentioned that they are fervent supporters of anti-violence — believing that violence is never a solution, but rather a path that does not lead anywhere. They are involved in mediating conflicts and preventing violence, and they came up with the idea of being ambassadors for non-violent behaviour in their school. Other boys want to be police officers or prosecutors when they grow up so that they can help support other children in a non-violent life and environment.

6 Key Recommendations

1. Children experience violence, especially SRGBV, in the two communities that we researched. In order to efficiently prevent and combat SRGBV, programming must take into account children's experiences, their voices, as well as their practical strategies for navigating violent circumstances. Children's voices and experiences must be a starting point for any local-level anti-violence awareness campaign or intervention, and must involve children as co-creators of content. The delivery of SRGBV prevention must also involve children as they have the capacities and flexibility of changing the social norms that fuel SRGBV.

2. Programs that address school-related violence against children must have a gender dimension in order to account for the specific and different needs and experiences that boys and girls have with violence.

3. Teachers seem to lack an awareness of their role in preventing and combating SRGBV, and overall, they lack adequate knowledge on topics such as gender equality, gender norms, gender-based violence, gender stereotypes and gender roles. A gender-aware curricula for teachers, with practical examples of how to counter and prevent SRGBV, can be a useful tool for changing the existing situation, particularly in vulnerable communities where little specialized support for children exists.

4. In order to prevent SRGBV, Romanian children would benefit from science-based, comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education in schools. Sexual violence, sexual harassment and cyber sexual harassment are still taboo topics among adults and children in the two communities. This taboo prevents children from disclosing incidents of sexual violence as they perceive these incidents as shameful.

5. School books and other pedagogical materials should contain content that promotes values, such as gender equality, non-violence and empathy. This type of content can be impactful for children around the country.

6. The research showed that children from the most vulnerable communities do not have access to social and psychological services, despite most needing support and help with the numerous forms of violence they face throughout their lives.

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.)

Neglect:

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

Exploitation:

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

Physical/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

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.

THE VIOLENCE AT HOME SIGNAL FOR HELP

- 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

CHILD PROTECTION HUB

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

Anexa A: Consimțământul copiilor

Acord de consimțământ

Bine ați venit la cercetarea privind violența în școli derulata de organizatia Terre des hommes Romania.

INTRODUCERE

Terre des hommes Romania este o organizatie neguvernamentala care aduce o contribuţie importantă la îmbunătăţirea sistemului de protecţie a copilului, la reforma asistenţei sociale şi la desfăşurarea de activităţi psiho-sociale cu copiii, promovând incluziunea socială, participarea copiilor şi dezvoltarea comunitară.

Anul acesta Terre des hommes Romania deruleaza o cercetare privind violenta pe care o intampina copiii in scoli si in comunitate. Pentru a obtine informatii cat mai relevante dorim sa facem impreuna cu copiii, o serie de activități bazate pe joc și artă, avînd ca temă siguranța și bunăstarea copiilor și tinerilor în școli.

CINE SUNTEM?

Numele noastre sunt Irina Costache si Simina Guga si suntem doua cercetatoare contractate de Terre des hommes Romania pentru a realiza aceasta cercetare pentru ca avem experienta de lucru pe tema violentei si pentru ca ne place sa lucram impreuna cu copiii.

DE CE FACEM ACEST PROIECT?

Vrem să aflăm ce îi face pe copii să se simtă în siguranță la școală, dar vrem sa aflam si de la ei ce tip de violență intampina la scoala si ii sperie sau ii nelinisteste atunci cand sunt in drum spre scoala sau dupa ce au trecut de portile liceului.

De asemenea, dorim să aflăm părerea lor despre cum violența poate fi prevenită, precum și despre cum pot reacționa copiii si adultii la violență.

CE PRESUPUNE IMPLICAREA ÎN ACEST PROIECT DE CERCETARE?

Să participe la activitățile de cercetare participativă care vor dura 1 zi.

Pe parcursul zilei, vom desena, vom discuta dar vom face si pauze și vom avea si o masă de prânz.

CÂT DE MULT VOR DURA ACTIVITĂȚILE?

Activitățile vor dura 1 zi (sambata sau duminica) astfel incat sa nu se suprapuna cu programul școlar.

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 ii fac pe copii sa se simta confortabil, iar în acest caz, ei pot sa 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 doreste să se răspunda, vor putea sa ne anunte, sau nu vor raspunde deloc.

Dacă vă rugăm să faca lucruri pe care nu isi doresc să le faca, atunci ii rugăm să ne anunte. Pot alege să participe decât la acele activitati ce le fac plăcere.

CINE VA STI CĂ AM PARTICIPAT LA ACEASTĂ ACTIVITATE?

Lucrurile pe care le discutăm in cadrul cercetarii, 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 alta informații despre ei. Ceilalti colegi care participă la activitate vor auzi ce spun, dar li se va cere să nu discute aceste lucruri mai departe.

Pentru siguranța copiillor nu vom include numele lor în niciun raport de cercetare.
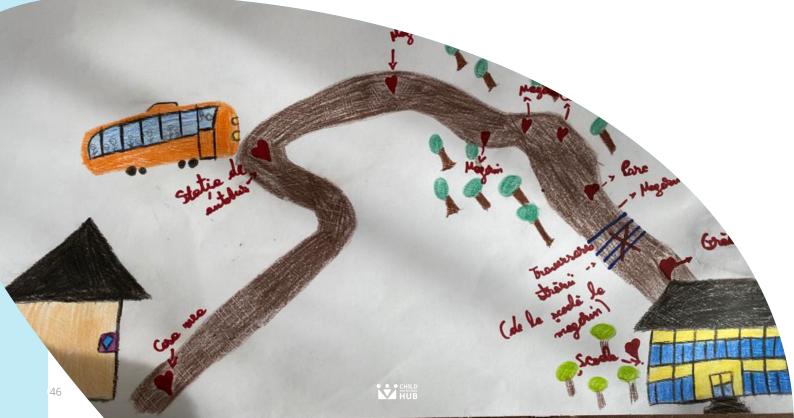
TREBUIE SĂ SPUN DA?

NU! Nu trebuie să ia 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 se va razgandi, 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 Raluca Condrut, Manager de proiect la telefon 0721 299 974 și pe email la raluca.condrut@Tdh.ch.

Va multumim,
Irina Costache și Simina Guga

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,

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 (please print)

_____   _____
        Signature of Participant   Date

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

Country Report: Romania