

# Montenegro

## RESEARCH OUTLINE

In the period from 2005 to 2012 several research projects connected to school violence were conducted in Montenegro.

### **A) Basic information on the research carried out**

**School without violence – towards a safe and encouraging environment for children** ([http://www.unicef.org/montenegro/SBN\\_za\\_web\\_final.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/montenegro/SBN_za_web_final.pdf))

The most extensive and complex project was the project ***School without Violence - towards a safe and stimulating environment for children*** (How to prevent violence in schools - a program of prevention of violence amongst children in school). The program was implemented through cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Sports, Bureau of Education Services and the UNICEF Office in Montenegro.

The project was launched in 2005/2006 in two primary schools and in the years to follow it was extended to six schools, so that last year 40 elementary schools took part in the project.

**In the course of project realization, three research projects were carried out:**

1. The first participatory research of attitudes toward violence was conducted in 2005 in order to observe the problem of violence in school and understanding of this phenomenon by the students, teachers and parents. The pilot sample included students from two schools. The research included eight focus groups of children in each school, as well as separate focus groups of teachers and parents.
2. Another study was conducted from 2006 to 2008. The research was conducted on a sample of about 6300 children from eight primary schools in Montenegro, from the second to eighth grade.
3. During the school year 2010/2011 comparative research was conducted on the effects of implementation of the project and guidance was received for continuation of the

project "School without violence - towards a safe and stimulating environment for all children." This research was carried out in four schools, two within the framework of the experimental group and two as a part of the control group. The study involved: students (2249), teachers (237), non-teaching staff (44) and parents (268).

The research shed the light on the perception of violence and its forms in the selected schools: perceived attitudes towards bullying, ways to respond to violence from the perspectives of the child victim, perpetrators and witnesses, as well as attitudes of teachers and non-teaching staff and parents towards this phenomenon.

Some of the research results:

- 48% of children experienced peer violence in the months prior to research (Pilot survey 2006-2008)
- 70% of students, 93% of teachers, 78% of the employed outside of teaching believe that violence is present in the schools participants.
- 48% of parents felt that their children were exposed to bullying during the school year. (Comparative study of 2010/2011)

**In addition to the research part, the project School without Violence implies the implementation of the Action Plan.** The action plan consists of seven steps:

1. Increasing the awareness and the knowledge level about bullying of students, parents, teachers and other school staff.
2. Defining and establishing values and rules that will be respected and implemented, i.e. how to build the so-called safety net.
3. The third step shows how this network can become operational.
4. The fourth step introduces a system of cooperation with other services and procedures of referring the cases of violence to these services.
5. The fifth step elaborates on how to train students to know, by complying with the agreed values and rules, exactly when, why and whom to contact in school.

6. The sixth step describes how, when and on the basis of what it is determined whether schools provide adequate response to students' needs.
7. Within the seventh step indicators are given on the basis of which the school can be considered a safe environment for children.

For the purpose of implementing the action plan a Manual was drafted which provides an overview of educational workshops for intervention and prevention, peer education, activities for parents, as well as treatment protocols within the school and beyond. The manual also provides guidelines for fostering a culture of non-violence and promoting an atmosphere of a safe environment for every child.

### 1. **Violence against children** ([www.ombudsman.co.me/djeca](http://www.ombudsman.co.me/djeca))

The study on violence against children from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school was conducted in 2009. The survey was conducted by the institution the *Protector of the Rights of the Child and Save the Children Norway*, a regional Office for South-East Europe.

The results of this study suggest a significant share of emotional violence that is especially prevalent amongst children of primary school age. This form of violence is aimed at causing shame, sadness or feelings of inferiority amongst victims. Based on the obtained data, every second child has been exposed to this form of violence. Blackmail, threats and intimidation, as a form of emotional abuse are aimed at causing concern and fear amongst victims, as well as the apprehension of what would happen to him/her. The fact that 16.25% of children are exposed to this type of violence indicates that blackmailing and intimidation often happen both inside the family and outside of it.

The fact that 419 children, which constitutes 34.92% of the total sample, did not approach anybody for assistance indicates that children try to solve this problem by themselves or they suppress it, accepting violence as their everyday life.

The results of the research conducted in 2009 by the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro show low awareness of violence and the lack of readiness of children to talk about it openly.

### 2. **Peer violence in primary and high schools**

The survey was conducted by the organization Civitas Montenegro center in 2010. The aim of the program was to identify bullying amongst the children 12-17 years of age (types, method of manifestation, degree of presence, intensity of expression and the like).

Analyzing the responses of students, their parents, teachers, psychologists, pedagogues and directors, it was found that peer behavior occurs often (based on the participants' responses as many as 82 students experienced some kind of violence the week before the survey) and that there are various forms of violent behavior – from physical violence, derogatory names, insults via SMS and Facebook. Children are quite honest, so even 77 responses reveal that the respondents themselves have shown violent behavior towards their peers.

In many segments, the responses of parents and children coincide, especially when it comes to assessment of those situations a child is most bothered by and that can serve as encouragement to violent acts. It was noted that the children of this age group are more prone to react by verbal counter-attacks than by physical violence, and this is particularly evident when it comes to girls.

### **3. *The position of students in school (safety aspects of students in school)***

( <http://www.zzs.gov.me/biblioteka/nasaskola>)

The quality of school environment and protecting students from violence was one segment of the research whose main goal was to examine how students perceive their position and their role in school. The survey was conducted by the Bureau of Education Services in 2012. The aim of the research was to determine how often it happened that, while in school, pupils were treated by their teachers in one of the following ways: insulted or belittled, for instance by being given derogatory names; physically punished, for example pulled by their hair or slapped; sent away from class; punished by a poor mark for misbehaving. Further, the research looked into how often it is the case that students are treated by other students in the following ways: exposed to gossip and avoidance; insulted or belittled, for instance, by being given derogatory names; exposed to physical violence, for instance, by being physically abused and beaten. Finally, how often it was the case that in school or in the school yard students were: offered a

cigarette; were offered alcohol; were offered drugs; were invited to gambling; invited to participate in a fight; were invited to play truant from school.

It was determined that 22.8% of students were personally exposed to some sort of violent actions of other students in school. The most common forms of bullying are gossip and insult. About 50% of students claimed that these forms of behaviour were present often or very often in school and about 20% claimed that they were sometimes present. Every other student claimed that physical violence by their peers was present in school (a quarter of students claimed that physical abuse in school happened often or very often). It was determined that 17.2% of students were personally exposed to some sort of violent actions from other students in school, whether they were talked of and shunned, insulted or physically abused. The most common forms of bullying were gossip and insult. About 60% of students said that these forms of behaviour in school were present often or very often, and another 20% said they were sometimes present. 40% of the students claimed that physical violence by their peers was present in school (20% of students claimed that it was present often or very often).

## **1. Objectives**

The principal objectives of the research were:

- Identifying the types of violence, manner of manifestation, prevalence and intensity
- Perceiving the attitudes to violence in schools
- Identifying the most common reactions of children who are victims or witnesses of violence
- Raising the level of awareness and knowledge about the occurrence of peer violence at school, definition and functioning of safety networks as a school-wide response to peer bullying as well as connecting schools and local communities in order to improve the sustainability of the planned activities in school.

## **2. Methods**

The research method mostly utilized was the method of description, while the techniques applied were interviewing techniques and interviews. Respondents were students, teachers and parents. Besides these techniques, the technique of focus groups was also used in the project *School without Violence*. The instruments used were surveys and monitoring protocols for interviews. The project *School without Violence* was simultaneously an action plan while other projects were purely applied.

### **3. Theoretical approach**

The study used an interdisciplinary approach. In the project *School without violence*, school violence is viewed as a phenomenon that can occur in peer interaction amongst children, in adult interaction with children as well as amongst adults, if the essence of the violent relationship is connected with the school life. The focus of the program *School without Violence* is bullying. The English loanword bullying (which in the last ten years is more and more in use in our region) is often used when it comes to peer violence. Its translation has several meanings - bullying, abuse, violence and harassment. In our language there is no word whose meaning essentially coincides with the word bullying. This term means "aggression of the stronger towards the weaker wherein the aggressor and the attacked party can be an individual or a group."

In the study *Violence against children*, violence is defined as follows: there are many definitions of violence against children and all of them have one thing in common - they imply any physical or psychological abusive behaviour directed against children (by the UN Convention, a child is any person under 18 years of age) by individuals or institutions, which endangers or prevents normal development, personal integrity, or meeting the children's needs.

### **4. Basic conclusions/results**

- The research carried out shows that bullying is a common phenomenon in our schools
- Types of violent behaviour are diverse: physical violence, emotional violence (derogatory nicknames, slander, gossip, blackmail, threats, intimidation, insults via SMS and Facebook), social isolation

- The most common form of violence is emotional violence, especially present amongst children of primary school age
- Lack of awareness about violence and children's lack of readiness to talk about it openly

## 5. Reflexive comment

- The occurrence of violence in our schools should be seriously and systematically dealt with.
- Research shows that violence is a common occurrence in school, but the less visible forms of violence are under researched, as well as a deeper understanding of all the ways children suffer and perceive violence.
- Existing research offers a fairly clear picture of the prevalence, forms and attitudes of children and adults to violence and to a lesser extent it studies the causes of violence (whether the frequency of violence is based on the disturbed **system of values in a society**- violence as a socially acceptable form of behaviour, whether the cause is to be found in the **personality** itself – insufficiently developed life skills, lack of empathy, tolerance, respect ... Or else are causes to be found in the immediate **environment** in which the child grows up?). Hence, the lack of action plans and strategies developed based on the perceived causes.
- Education and schools have a unique potential to generate a positive environment, where attitudes towards violence can be changed and where non-violence can be learned. School is also a fertile ground for developing and practicing life skills. Therefore, it is important to take advantage of all the resources in the creation of action plans.