



**DETERMINANTS  
AND FACTORS  
OF VIOLENCE  
AFFECTING  
CHILDREN  
IN SERBIA  
A SNAPSHOT  
OF FINDINGS**

# DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AFFECTING CHILDREN IN SERBIA: A SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

equal opportunities for education, healthcare or employment, hunger, poverty, racism, gender inequality, and other institutionalized forms of injustice that harm children and prevent their development.

## Research to Policy and Practice Process (R3P)

**RESEARCH TO POLICY AND PRACTICE PROCESS (R3P)** is an approach designed by the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti that aims to build an evidence base upon which to ground interventions designed to prevent and respond to violence against children, with a focus on the underlying determinants and factors of violence. Serbia is one of the countries that initiated this process under the coordination of SeConS Development Initiative Group, and with the expert support of Zurich University of Teacher Education. It was financially supported by the UNICEF Swiss National Committee. **The aim of this process is to better understand what drives different forms of violence against children in different settings and to provide good evidence as a basis for improving the system of preventing and protecting children from violence.** During the initial stage of the R3P process, the national study on determinants and factors of violence against children in Serbia was produced.<sup>3</sup> As in other countries, the results are powerful and they confront policymakers with questions such as: “What is driving this?” and “How can we address it?”, thus providing a better starting point for the planning of national policies for preventing and protecting children from violence.\*

### The Process

Countries engaging in the Research to Policy and Practice Process demonstrate a desire to understand why violence is happening and how it might be addressed. Prevalence and incidence surveys capture a static understanding of the scale of the problem but do not provide all the necessary evidence for better prevention and programming. Unpacking the determinants and factors of violence and how they interact with the risk or protective factors that children face on a daily basis tends to explain the complexities of this phenomenon, as well as to provide the potential solutions that would contribute to violence prevention and protection.\*

The R3P process in Serbia has so far lasted for over one year and involved many stakeholders. It was initiated at the request of relevant government ministries and supported by a technical group comprised of leading experts and practitioners. The process was organized through several stages:

- ▮ adjustment of methodology to the national context;
- ▮ extensive literature review of studies and reports on violence against children;
- ▮ mapping of interventions in the area of preventing and protecting children from violence; and
- ▮ consultations with diverse stakeholders in order to validate findings and propose recommendations for the next policy cycle.

\* This publication is based on Maternowska, M. C., Potts, A., & Fry, D. (2016). *The multi-country study on the drivers of violence affecting children: A cross-country snapshot of findings*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti and adjusted to the Serbia R3P Study. All parts that are taken from The multi-country study are marked with an asterisk.

## Key terms and definitions

**V**iolence affecting children (VAC) manifests differently in every society. Violent acts are not merely an interaction between a child and one or more individuals, but rather a much more complex social phenomenon. Harmful acts and practices that endanger children’s survival, undermine their well-being, and prevent their development are the consequence of numerous determinants and factors. These factors come from multiple levels — individual characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and the communities in which people live — and constantly interact with institutional and structural drivers, which are closely related with the cultural context. These multiple factors determine the risks of violence and vary across gender, age and other status markers, creating the circumstances within which violent acts occur.<sup>1</sup>

### Violence can be:<sup>2</sup>

**Physical** — the intentional use of physical force against a child that may result in harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity.

**Emotional** — acts that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development of a child, including but not limited to restricting a child’s movements, ridicule, threats and intimidation, rejection and other non-physical forms of hostile treatment.

**Sexual** — the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or which the child is not developmentally prepared for, or which otherwise violates the laws or social taboos of society.

**Neglect** — failure to meet a child’s basic needs — physical, psychological, needs related to the process of socialization — in an extent, duration and manner likely to result in serious impairment of the child’s health or development.

**Exploitation** — harmful use of a child for the purpose of profit, labour, or sexual or other activity that results in cruel or harmful treatment and prevents child development and well-being.

**Child trafficking** — a crime involving the movement of children for the purpose of their exploitation.

**Child labour** — the employment of children in any work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children.

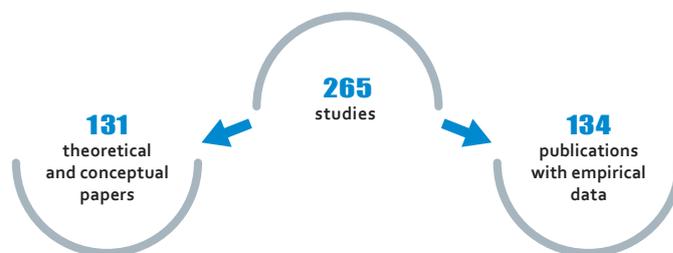
**Child marriage** — forcing a child into a marital union, formal or informal.

**Structural violence** — indirect violence embedded in social structures that are characterized by inequality and discrimination, including un-

## What has been done?

### Literature review

The analysis of determinants and factors of violence against children in Serbia encompassed 265 studies, including 131 non-empirical studies (theoretical and conceptual papers) and 134 texts containing empirical data about violence against children.



### Mapping interventions

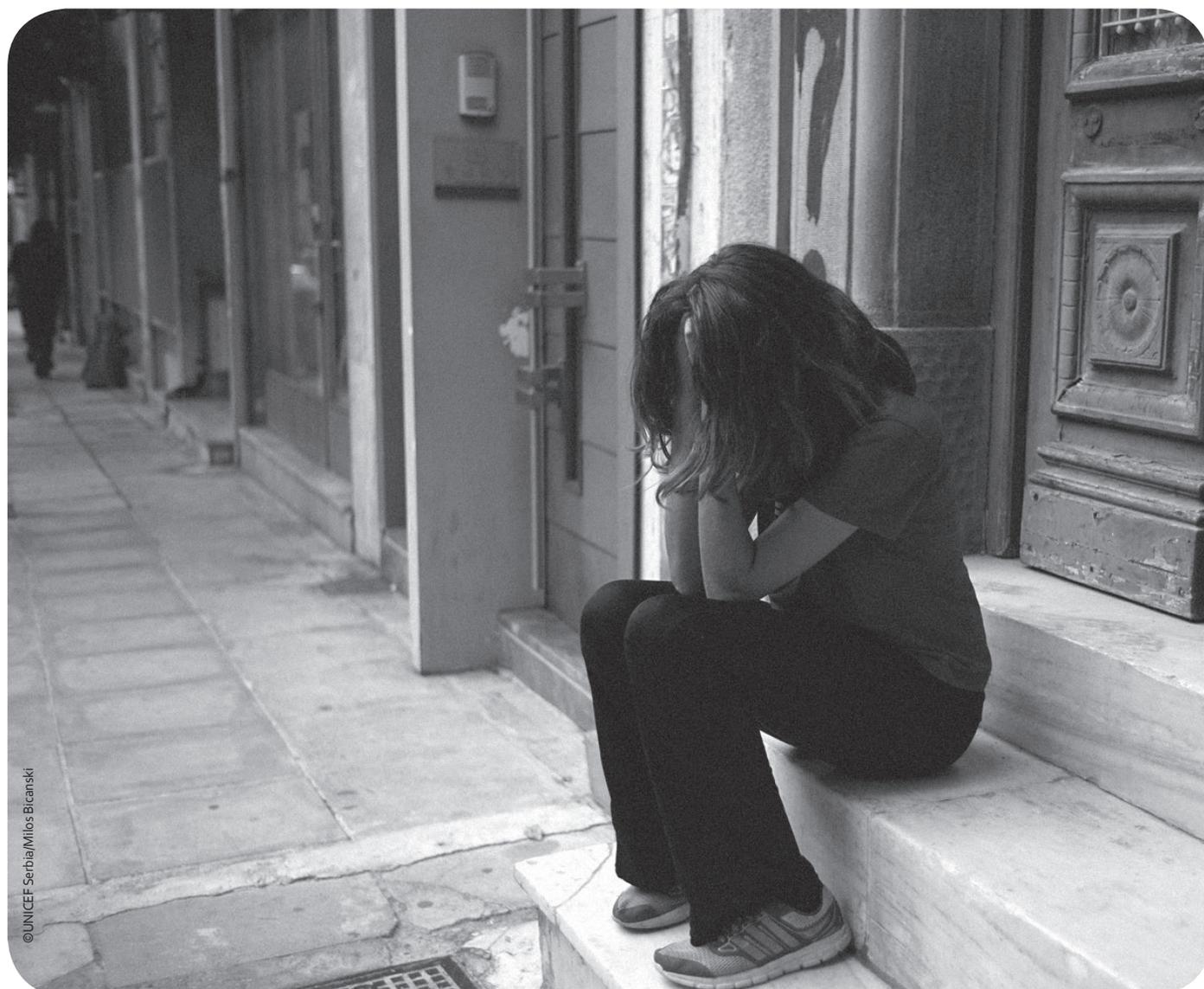
An intervention is understood as a specific action or set of actions aimed at causing the desired changes. In the broadest sense, interventions encompass laws and policies, but since such a definition would be too broad of a task, analysis was restricted mainly to programmes and actions. Three categories of interventions were identified, depending on the target of the intervention and the means used to produce change:

**1** interventions aimed at improving institutional/organizational mechanisms (e.g. the adoption and application of protocols, setting up appropriate working groups and bodies implementing protocols);

**2** interventions aimed at changing values, attitudes, and awareness (e.g. education and training, awareness campaigns); and

**3** interventions aimed at prevention and protection (various support services for children at risk of or exposed to violence).

These types of interventions were observed at different levels (macro, meso, and micro), as well as within different systems (education, healthcare, social protection, police, judiciary) and implemented by different actors: public and civil society.

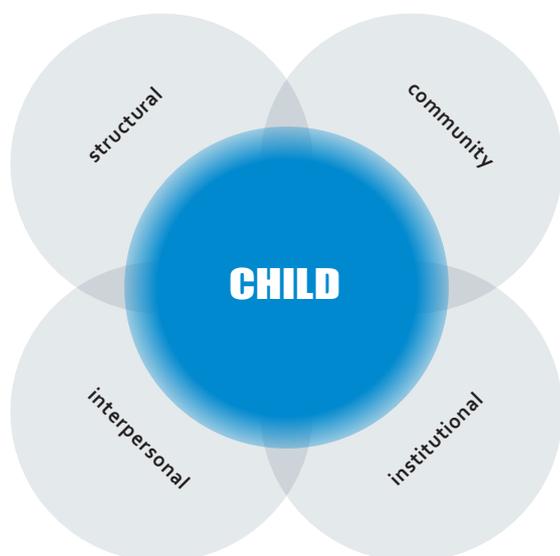


# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AFFECTING CHILDREN

## The socio-ecological framework

The socio-ecological framework is a critical tool for understanding how factors that influence a child's likelihood of experiencing violence interact within and between a number of social and ecological "levels". For example, a parent's behaviour is influenced by their financial security and/or level of education, the family's connections to formal and non-formal support systems in their community, and prevailing beliefs concerning the discipline and supervision of children within the society where the family lives. The way these factors interact can be affected by more distal yet important factors such as living within an institutionalized caste system, or in a country where many adults or children migrate in search of work.<sup>4</sup>

**Determinants** refer to factors at the institutional and structural levels that create the conditions in which violence is more or less likely to occur. **Risk and protective factors** reflect the likelihood of violence to occur due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels.



Identifying and mapping these factors both within and between the levels of the socio-ecological framework can help policymakers, professionals and practitioners to better support children and reduce the likelihood of their becoming perpetrators or victims of violence, now and in the future. It is equally important to bolster protective factors to reinforce the resilience of children, families and communities. Interventions targeting multiple factors (at the intersection areas of the graph) are the most cost-effective, providing higher returns on investments.\*

## STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS

- ▶ Economic underdevelopment is found to be an important determinant of violence against children on an international scale. As the study on child marriage of Roma girls in Serbia finds, this practice is more frequent in low and middle income countries.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Social exclusion, poverty and inequality are forms of indirect, structural violence but they also drive interpersonal violence in diverse ways — increasing the risks of neglect of children, preventing their development, or creating frustration among parents that manifests through violence against children.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ Wars and social conflicts themselves represent forms of violence that affect children living in these areas, but they are also determinants that influence other forms of interpersonal violence even long after the conflicts have ceased, whether through cultural factors (such as increased tolerance to violence) or family and individual factors (war trauma and frustrations reflected in violence in the family).<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Migrations, particularly those which are forced and poorly managed, increase risks of various forms of violence against children, especially when they are not accompanied by adults.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Gender regimes based on asymmetrical power and rooted in patriarchal values provide ground for gender based violence and violence against women and children in the family.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ Cultural factors appear in different forms: as high tolerance for violence resulting from wars, crisis, and social unrest; as discriminatory attitudes towards minorities; and as norms and values related to gender roles and relations.<sup>10</sup>
- ▶ Digitalization, development of information and communication technologies, Internet, and social media are linked with new forms of violence against children using new technologies as a means of violence.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ *Discriminatory attitudes towards children with disabilities are more widespread in rural than urban areas. While in urban areas 40% of respondents in the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) expressed positive attitudes towards children with physical and sensory disabilities, in rural areas such positive attitudes were found among 30% of respondents.*<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ *A higher prevalence of early marriage is found in rural areas, in the poorest households, and in households with the highest number of household members. Among women living in Roma settlements (aged 20–49), 17% were married before the age of 15 and 57% before the age of 18. In the general population the prevalence of child marriage is much lower (0.8% before age of 15 and 6.8% before age of 18).*<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ *Only some 20 years after the devastating civil war in the ex-Yugoslavia, the Balkan region was again faced with a massive influx of refugees and migrants during 2015, mostly from Syria, but also from Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly 100,000 unaccompanied or separated children moved along the so-called Balkan Route towards the EU. Although the number of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans after the EU-Turkey deal has significantly dropped, it is estimated that about one third of the thousands still passing through the region are unaccompanied or separated children. These children are exposed to high risks of violence traveling with smugglers, being exposed to physical or sexual abuse or exploitation.*<sup>8</sup>

- High school male students show more gender-biased attitudes than female students. Half of all male students think that looking after the family and household is the primary responsibility of women, while 39% of female students agree. At the same time, 21% of male students agree that sometimes it is acceptable for a man to slap his girlfriend, while only 4% of girls agree with this statement.<sup>14</sup>

Determinants and factors listed are based on the national study's literature review and are supported by at least one study in a peer-reviewed journal. Determinants and factors are placed, by level, according to how the studies' authors characterized them.

## INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS

- Ineffective instruments of coordination, identification and treatment in cases of violence.<sup>15</sup>
- Weak system of support to the family, which is important for prevention; a dominant focus on foster care and removal of children from the family.<sup>16</sup>
- Weak mechanisms related to the protection of children witnessing family violence within the judicial procedures.<sup>17</sup>
- Ineffectiveness of centres for social welfare in addressing violence in the family and other settings.<sup>18</sup>
- Absence of complaint mechanisms and surveillance of residential institutions for social protection of children where violence is present.<sup>19</sup>
- Inadequate human resources, low capacities of professionals.<sup>20</sup>

*The architecture of the system for preventing and protecting children from VAC*

*The system of preventing and protecting children from violence in Serbia is a top-down system in which the roles of institutions and procedures are defined by laws, by-laws, strategies, and general and specialized protocols.*

## COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

- Attitudes about corporal punishment, legitimacy of violent disciplining methods, and parenting methods.<sup>20</sup>
- Regional factors that impact the prevalence of various types of violence, such as more prevalent child labour in agriculture in rural areas, or higher prevalence of peer-to-peer violence in schools in urban areas.<sup>21</sup>
- Weak informal networks for social support, low social capital in the community.<sup>22</sup>
- Low awareness and taboo on sexual violence and exploitation of children.<sup>23</sup>

*In Serbian culture, corporal punishment of children as a method of discipline is a widespread and deep-rooted practice, as suggested by many folk sayings: "Beating has come straight down from Heaven"; "Spare the rod and spoil the child"; "Not beaten, not taught"; "A child not beaten is badly brought up", and many others.<sup>24</sup>*

## INTERPERSONAL RISK FACTORS

- Frustration in the family due to unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion increases risks of physical abuse in the family, and risks of child labour exploitation.<sup>25</sup>

- Family dysfunction, drug and alcohol abuse, family members with psychological problems due to the participation in wars<sup>26</sup>, family composition (e.g. single-parent families)<sup>27</sup>
- Low educational achievements of parents.<sup>28</sup>
- Experience of violence, witnessing domestic violence against mothers.<sup>29</sup>
- Gender relations among peers nested in patriarchal gender regimes.<sup>30</sup>
- Norms and values creating a specific "school culture/atmosphere" in regard to violence.<sup>31</sup>
- Inadequate facilities and insufficient resources in residential institutions, which lead to deprivation of children's needs and neglect.<sup>32</sup>
- Competences and attitudes that legitimize violent disciplining methods among professionals from institutions and organizations working with children — schools, residential institutions for social protection, sports clubs, etc.<sup>33</sup>

### Evidence from research

- In research on violence in schools (2013), 44% of students reported that they had been exposed to peer-to-peer violence in the three-month period preceding the survey. Every fifth child perpetrated violence, more frequently boys than girls.<sup>34</sup>*
- During research with children with intellectual disabilities from 11 institutions for social protection, 62% of children reported they had witnessed cases of violence against other children by staff.<sup>35</sup>*

## INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

Studies show exposure to violence is connected to certain characteristics of the child, such as gender, age, disability or other form of vulnerability. However, these personal factors are not "real" factors of violence. If girls (or boys) are more exposed to violence in the family, this is not due to the fact that they are girls (or boys), but rather the fact that cultural norms defining legitimate or desirable child-rearing and disciplining methods determine the gendered patterns of violence.

- Children at 2 years of age are at the highest risk of violent discipline.<sup>36</sup>*
- According to the testimonies of parents, 47% of children with disabilities experienced some form of violence outside of the family (in a preschool institution, at school, at day care, in gathering places).<sup>37</sup>*

## Age and gender

Age and gender are also central to this study. A child's vulnerability and ability to protect him/herself from violence changes over time with his/her evolving capacities. It is important to recognize how girls and boys may develop differently especially as they move through childhood and into adolescence.

There is no global consensus around categorizing children's and young people's stages of life, and regional or sub-regional variations may also be expected.

# EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE AFFECTING CHILDREN

## What is emotional violence?

Emotional or psychological abuse includes isolated incidents but also a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment to her/his child. Acts in this category may have a high probability of damaging the child's physical or mental health or his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Abuse of this type includes rejecting, degrading, blaming, threatening, frightening, terrorizing, isolating, corrupting, discriminating against or ridiculing, exploiting and non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment. It also includes denying emotional responsiveness. The long-term consequences of psychological abuse and neglect can sometimes be more negative than exposure to physical or sexual abuse.<sup>38</sup>

### Prevalence of psychological aggression as a disciplining method in families in Serbia

The Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey conducted in Serbia on a national sample and sample of population living in Roma settlements indicates a high prevalence of psychological aggression as part of disciplining practices. Findings indicate that younger children (2–4) are more often exposed to psychological aggression than older children (5–14), children living in Roma settlements more often than children in general population and children from urban areas more often than children from rural areas.

### Percentage of children age 1–14 exposed to psychological aggression — general population and Roma settlements, 2014.

Age	General population		Roma settlements	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2-4	43%	43%	60%	69%
5-14	38%	40%	64%	68%

Source: MICS Serbia and Roma Settlements, 2014.

### Percentage of children age 1–14 exposed to psychological aggression, by living area, 2014.

Living area	Percentage
Urban	41%
Non-urban	36%

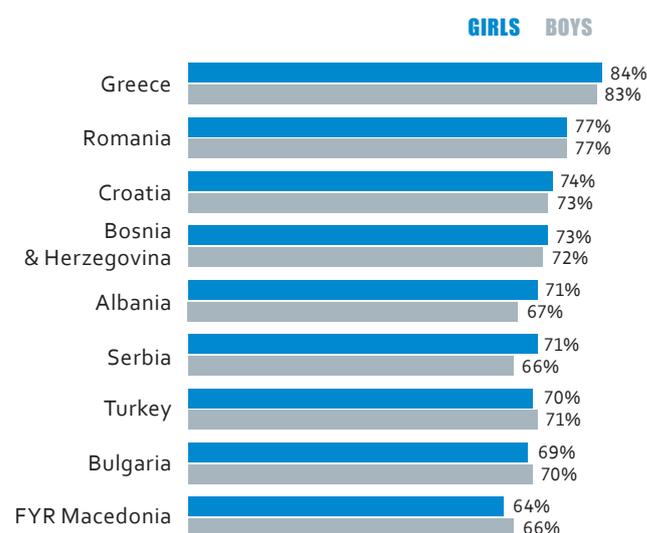
Source: MICS Serbia and Roma Settlements, 2014.

## Serbia in comparative perspective

The Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect (BECAN) found a high prevalence of life-time experience of psychological aggression among first grade university students across the Balkan countries. The prevalence ranged from approximately 65% in Macedonia to around 84% in Greece. The prevalence in Serbia was 71% among girls and 66% among boys.

A study on adverse childhood experiences conducted among the student population in Serbia found that more than one third of respondents (36.7%) were exposed to psychological abuse at least once or twice in their life and the prevalence was significantly higher in boys, compared to girls (20% versus 15.6%). Psychological neglect was reported by 15.7% of participants, with higher prevalence in girls (16.3% versus 14.7%) and in respondents who had grown up in rural surroundings, compared to those from urban areas (18.2% versus 14.6%).

### Percentage of children reporting having experienced at least 1 behavior that is classified as psychological violence during their entire life time, by gender



### Measuring violence

Prevalence of violence is very sensitive to the number of indicators used to measure it. Differences in prevalence of psychological aggression between different surveys do not come only from different samples but also from the use of different instruments. While in MICS psychological aggression is registered by 2–3 items related to child disciplining, in the BECAN study the number of items is much higher (17–19) and therefore more diverse experiences may be recognized as psychological aggression.

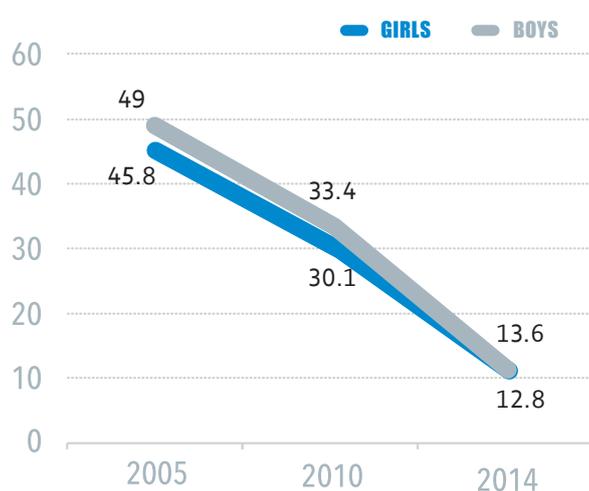
### Consequences of emotional violence

A study on adverse childhood experiences conducted among the student population in Serbia indicated strong links between violence and health-risk behaviours. Psychological neglect slightly increased the chances of smoking (Odds ratio-OR=1.30) and almost doubled the potential for illicit drug use (OR=1.73), but raised the possibility of drunk-driving (OR=2.26) and running away from home (OR=2.38) by more than double and attempting suicide by more than 3.5 times (OR=3.66). Each was of high statistical significance except smoking.<sup>38</sup>

# PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Use of physical violence in disciplining children has significantly decreased in Serbia during 2005–2014. A part of this trend could be attributed to the intensive and broad campaign against corporal punishment, and discussions on legal changes that prohibit such a practice.

## Percentage of boys and girls exposed to physical punishment, Serbia, 2005, 2010, 2014.



Source: MICS Serbia, 2005, 2010, 2014.

It is a worrying fact that small children at the age of 2 are much more exposed to physical punishment than children of other ages. Studies on violence against children in Serbia shed little light on violence in the family against small children (0–4). This age group is also mostly 'below the radar' of the public system for protection. Therefore, the last decade saw efforts to improve the system for early recognition of risks or indicators of violence, including strengthening the capacities of patronage nursing services and pediatric surveillance.

## Percentage of children exposed to physical punishment, by age, Serbia, 2014.

Age	Percentage
1	21%
2	29%
3–4	27%
5–9	18%
10–14	8%

Source: MICS Serbia, 2014.

Although there are generally no significant differences between boys and girls in the prevalence of physical punishment as a disciplining practice, when severe physical aggression is in the focus, a difference appears in the form of higher exposure of girls to this form of violence in family.<sup>39</sup>

According to the results of the first National study on the social problem of child sexual abuse in Serbia, 10.8% of children aged 10 to 18 years reported experiencing sexual violence, and 10.6% of children know someone who experienced sexual abuse. The authors of this survey believe that this is likely to be the case when the respondents say they know someone who experienced sexual violence, they talk about personal experience. The rate of personally experienced sexual violence is higher among girls (12.6%) than among boys (8.6%), and it increases with age.<sup>40</sup>

## Consequences of violence in the family

Exposure to violence in the family hinders the successful psychological, emotional and cognitive development of the child. The consequences can be physical (disability, somatic disorders), emotional disorders, a distorted perception of oneself (depression, anxiety, aggressiveness, anger, hostile attitude, low self-confidence, guilt, shame, post-traumatic stress), cognitive disorders (impaired development of cognitive functions as a generalised disorder, e.g. delayed mental development and selective disorders such as developmental disharmony, intellectual inhibition, concentration problems), and impaired social functioning (anti-social and criminal behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse, underage pregnancy, repeat victimization). Children exposed to violence have difficulties in achieving social relations, they socialize less with their peers, they exhibit violent behavior toward peers or are victims of abuse by their peers.<sup>41</sup>

It should be taken into account that sexual violence can be especially difficult to measure and likely to be underestimated in surveys due to strong social stigma/culture of silence in reporting, the lack of support services or inefficiency of existing ones, the likelihood that children will blame themselves.



# VIOLENCE THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

## Transfer of violence between contexts

Violence against children occurs in different settings: family, school, digital space, specific institutions, even those whose primary function is to protect children (such as residential institutions for protection of children without parental care, or children with disabilities), and the wider community. The effects of violence affecting children in one context often spill over into another context.

### Transfer of violence through time — through life course and between generations

Violence experienced in childhood affects social relations and behavior at a later stage of life and it is transferred from one generation to another. Research found that exposure to violence in the family during early childhood increases the probability of violent criminal behavior in later life and violent behavior in intimate partner relationships.<sup>48</sup>

*Violence is 'contagious' — it is transferred from one context to another and through time (generations).*

### From community to family

The effects of war conflicts in the region and social unrest influence violence in family. According to research on domestic violence, participation in wars during the 1990s of one family member increases the chances of violence against women by 1.2 times.<sup>42</sup> Data from a survey with women exposed to domestic violence reveal that in 76.5% of cases, children witnessed violence against their mothers. The most common reaction of children was physical or verbal confrontation with the father or other perpetrator (42.9%) (which exposes children to the risk of direct violence), hiding (39.4%), and calling for help (24.7%).<sup>43</sup>

### From family to school

Family factors and the effects of exposure to violence in the family impacts children's relations in school and the incidence of peer-to-peer violence. Children from larger families and single-parent families are at a greater risk of behaving violently<sup>44</sup>. Domestic violence that children witness, violent disciplining methods to which they are exposed but also cold, strict upbringing practices are linked with higher risks of violent behaviour towards peers, in physical form, as well as in the form of manipulative social abuse.<sup>45</sup>

## COMMUNITY

### From school and community to cyber space

New information and communication technologies opened room for violence to expand from the school yard to cyber space. In digital space violence takes many specific forms: harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, stalking, etc. Research identifies new types of cyberspace bullies, such as vengeful angel, power-hungry, revenge of the nerd, etc.<sup>46</sup> During 2012 one fifth of lower primary school students (1–4 grade), 1/3 of senior primary school students (5–8 grade) and 2/3 of secondary school students were exposed to digital violence.<sup>47</sup>

# SPECIFIC FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA

## Violence that affects girls to a greater extent

Some forms of violence against children affect girls more than boys: child marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Every year, thousands of children in Serbia are forced into marriage before the age of 18, notwithstanding the fact that such practice is prohibited by the law and constitutes a gross violation of the child's rights. The practice of child marriages in Serbia is commonly associated with the Roma population and, to a lesser extent, also the Vlach population; it is more common among girls than among boys. In the Roma population, most of these marriages involve bride-buying. Marriage is justified by customs, but these customs are often just an excuse for abuse, coercion, violence or some other gross violation of a child's rights. The laws which outlaw underage marriage are not adequately enforced and the responsible services, including in particular the police and centres for social welfare, tend to turn a blind eye towards underage marriages of Roma children, believing it to be a tradition and deeply-rooted custom in the Roma population.<sup>49</sup>

Girls are more often victims of sexual violence than boys. According to the first national study on sexual violence against children, 11% of children reported experiencing sexual violence. Sexual violence is more prevalent among girls than boys (12.6% vs. 8.6%), and increases with age. Girls also experienced more diverse forms of sexual violence.<sup>50</sup> Based on the national study, a broad campaign for awareness raising on sexual violence was implemented.

### Excluded and isolated

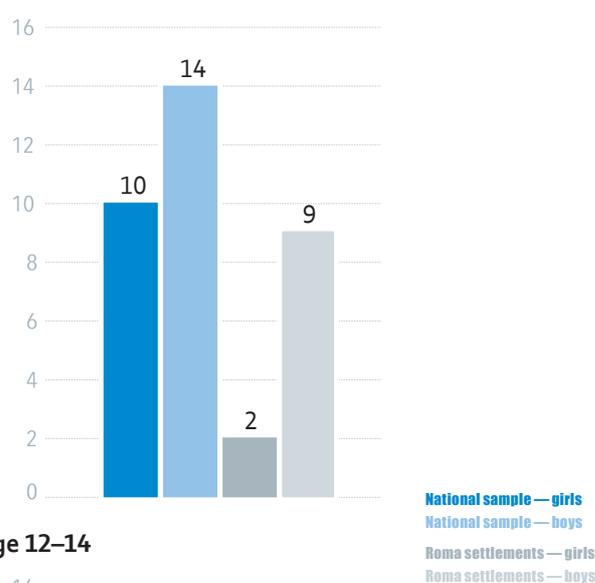
Two groups of children are particularly exposed to risks of violence: children living and working on the street and children living in residential institutions for protection. Multiple forms of violence, from structural to direct ones, affect children living and working on the street. There are no accurate data about the size of this group, but according to the records of the Shelter for Children Living on the Streets, established by the Centre for Youth Integration, the shelter has helped 513 children since 2007. These children become victims of exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation and risk being involved in human trafficking.<sup>51</sup> Despite processes of deinstitutionalization, many children are still placed in big residential institutions for social protection, such as institutions for children without parental care, for children and youth with disabilities and for children and youth in conflict with the law. A study on the neglect, deprivation, violence and abuse of children with disabilities placed in these institutions revealed that 62% of children had witnessed cases of violence against children by staff, including insults, cursing, intentional disregard, slapping, pushing and pulling, throwing objects at children, beating with objects, deprivation of food and sleep.<sup>52</sup>

## Male specific forms of violence against children

Forms of violence affecting boys more than girls include child labour and physical violence among peers. Child labour is more prevalent among boys than girls, in rural more than urban areas and among the poorest households. The share of children working under hazardous conditions is highest among boys aged 12–14 in the general population and among boys living in Roma settlements who are 5–11 years old. A major part of child labour is related to agriculture.<sup>53</sup>

### Child labour by sex and age groups, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014.

#### Age: 5–11



#### Age 12–14

Source: MICS Serbia, 2014.

A comparative study conducted in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Belgrade and Pristina as part of the 'Be a Man' initiative has shown that young men are surrounded by high levels of violence, regardless of whether they are perpetrators, victims or witnesses. Of concern is the fact that 41–59% of male students said they had committed some form of violence against another boy/man during their lifetime. In the same vein, of extreme concern is the fact that 15–31% of young men in the region said that they forced their girlfriends/ex-girlfriends to engage in sexual intercourse against their will or when they were under the influence of alcohol, thus being unable to consent to such an act. Half of the young men involved in the study agreed with the use of violence as a legitimate method of disciplining children.<sup>54</sup>

# TOWARDS BETTER PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

Key priorities and recommendations for improving the system of preventing and protecting children from violence were primarily formulated in a way so as to direct interventions according to determinants and factors of violence. A large number of actors involved in the system for prevention and protection, from both the government and the non-government sector, from the central and local levels, participated in the process of defining priorities and recommendations.

## Key priorities for the next stage of policy interventions based on R3P results

As an outcome of the research, mapping, and consultations with key stakeholders, nine key priorities were identified:

- 1 Better contextualization of interventions and policy interlinks, particularly with anti-poverty and social inclusion policies, strategies that design the development of certain areas (e.g. rural development), or certain sectors (e.g. social protection, employment, education, public health, etc.).
- 2 Strengthening the key institutional mechanisms, especially the central/national mechanism for coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of VAC policies.
- 3 Establishing a regular monitoring system of the implementation of protocols for preventing and protecting children from violence, the effectiveness of multi-sectoral teams in local communities, and functioning of all parts of the system as well as an early warning system.
- 4 Strengthening the system of protection at the local level through adoption of local action plans and accompanying local budgets' allocations for their implementation.
- 5 Continuation of awareness-raising and changing social norms, values, and attitudes, particularly for zero tolerance to violence, prohibition of violent disciplining of children, and promotion of gender equality and nondiscrimination.
- 6 Development of family support package with diverse measures that will enable prevention, early detection, and response before a situation reaches severe forms of dysfunction, including the expansion of availability and

ensuring the sustainability of the family worker service, strengthening capacities of the healthcare early warning system (the pediatric and patronage nursing service); programmes for treatment to perpetrators, etc.

- 7 Development of prevention and direct support services to particularly vulnerable children in regard to child labour, child marriages, support to children in migration, and particularly unaccompanied minors.
- 8 Acceleration of deinstitutionalization, but with concomitant strengthening of surveillance of residential institutions.
- 9 Securing and strengthening funding for the programmes for prevention and protection of children from violence.

*Recommended strategies for responding to and preventing violence against children and adolescents by 10 global agencies are available in INSPIRE. INSPIRE is an evidence-based resource that presents seven strategies to help countries and communities intensify their focus on prevention programs and services with the greatest potential to reduce violence against children.<sup>55</sup>*

## Recommendations for improving the system for preventing and protecting children from violence

Recommendations are presented in two sets: the first involves proposals for improving the system, while the second points to areas of further research and building evidence for the better design of interventions and monitoring of their effects.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SYSTEM FOR PREVENTING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

This set of recommendations is grouped according to type of intervention and the way they were defined for mapping, and a set of general recommendations is given separately, i.e. recommendations that pertain to different types of interventions.

#### *Recommendations for improving institutional and organizational aspects of the system for prevention and protection*

##### **Finding:**

There is no functioning, effective government body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the effects of policies and measures for prevention and protection, report, and guide new cycles of these policies.

##### **Recommendations:**

- ▮ It is necessary to establish a single unit/body within the Government of the Republic of Serbia that would be in charge of coordinating and monitoring policies on preventing and protecting children from violence in various contexts. This unit needs to be connected to

the Deputy Prime Minister. It should employ permanent staff and primarily organize records that are not compatible among different parts of the system, monitor the situation with regard to violence against children in various contexts, and propose measures for prevention and protection as well as their improvements.

- Many good models of services or innovative practices have not been integrated into the system at a higher level or larger scale. Such scaling-up or transfer of practices reduces the costs of innovation and decreases risks of failure. A central coordination body could be responsible for coordination of such efforts, as presently this depends on the initiatives of local stakeholders or the NGO sector alone.

#### Finding:

There are no centralized administrative records for all relevant systems that would allow various interested parties (including NGOs and the research community) simple and reliable access to information, whether for providing protection in practice or for the purposes of analysis.

#### Recommendations:

- It is necessary to make legislative changes to allow the establishment of a single centralized administrative records office.
- It is necessary to provide publicly accessible reports based on administrative records from all relevant systems in order for various interested parties to be able to monitor and analyse information without filing special applications.

#### Finding:

Monitoring and evaluation of interventions (laws, policies, measures, programmes and services) are infrequent and non-systematic. These processes, which are the precondition and the basis for (re)defining policies and measures, have not been adequately incorporated into the system for prevention and protection.

#### Recommendations:

- Evaluation (monitoring and evaluation of impacts of each intervention) must be incorporated into the system in the form of regular, systematic internal evaluation based on clear and precise indicators. Every intervention should, therefore, have its own methodology and mechanisms for evaluation, as well as dedicated resources (time, finances and staff).
- The new strategy should entail a sound and robust monitoring and evaluation methodology.
- External (independent) evaluation should be initiated and accepted for systemic and project interventions.
- It is first necessary to evaluate the impact of existing interventions in order to implement those that work well; those that do not work could then be improved or replaced with more adequate ones.
- Collaboration with institutes and faculties should be established to conduct research in areas where information is lacking, as well as to include them in the research on evaluating success of specific interventions.

- Collaboration should also be established with specialized civil society organizations to conduct research and evaluate the impact of interventions, especially when they concern specific target groups.

#### Finding:

A methodology for the systematic monitoring of the implementation of existing protocols has not been developed, either at the level of the majority of specific sectors in the protection system, or in the form of protocols that manage inter-sectoral cooperation. A methodology exists in the police sector, and recently (2016) the National Institute for Social Protection developed a methodology for monitoring implementation of protocols in the social protection system.

#### Recommendations:

- It is necessary to conduct regular evaluations of implementation of protocols and identify the weaknesses in the multi-sectoral protection system that need strengthening. It is also necessary to develop a standardized methodology for this type of evaluation for different parts of the protection system that lack such methodology, as well as for the multi-sectoral level.
- Different protocols and laws should be synchronized and interconnected. Due to the presence of various protocols for violence against women, violence against children, and violence in general as well as specific forms of violence, there is a certain degree of confusion among professionals — this should be made clearer and more consistent.

#### Finding:

Local coordination mechanisms for protection of children from VAC are not effective, and individual institutions or parts of the system for protection of children from VAC (social protection, education, healthcare) are not effective internally, which results in a weak foundation for effective multi-sectoral cooperation.

#### Recommendations:

- Local communities should become stronger loci of policies and mechanisms preventing and protecting from VAC.
- In keeping with the General Protocol and Special Protocols on Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect, more attention should be paid to healthcare facilities and educational institutions at the local level in Serbia, and internal teams for prevention of violence and protection of children from violence should be introduced wherever they have not yet been established.
- In maintaining and developing local services, priority should be given to already existing services that are struggling to survive; at the same time, local authorities should remain open to new services.
- Attention should also be focused on the social protection system (centres for social work and institutions for social protection), since the implementation of protocols and especially cooperation with the healthcare and educational systems are problematic almost in the entire country. In order to do so, actors from each part of the system should become fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of others.

- ▶ In educational institutions in particular, supervision and mentoring — monitoring and professional support for staff — should be introduced. This kind of support is critical for all other sectors, including a continuous peer exchange of experiences and information.
- ▶ In the course of monitoring, particular attention should be paid to models of discrimination, which should be the target of interventions.
- ▶ Special support to the educational system is also required with regard to violence against children committed by adults inside and outside the institution. Schools can manage to deal with peer violence, but can hardly ever handle domestic violence and violence in the community.

#### Finding:

Many local communities do not have sufficient funds to maintain or develop an effective system for protection from VAC; consequently, public services are weak and the civil sector is not supported or stimulated to perform its role in the system for prevention and protection. Due to the lack of funds and uneven distribution of services and lack of initiatives to transfer good models from one local community to others, the effect of reforms of the system for prevention and protection are much lower.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ Local communities that are underdeveloped and eligible for transfers of financial means from the national level should use this opportunity to invest in social protection of children, particularly in their protection from VAC in different contexts.
- ▶ National-level authorities should attach the development of services in the area of VAC prevention and protection to financial transfers within the programmes of financing as a strategic priority.
- ▶ Local authorities should stimulate and support the civil sector to become more active in providing prevention and protection services independently or in cooperation with public service providers.
- ▶ Local authorities should exchange good models and practices and invest in transferring adequate solutions from other communities. This reduces the costs of establishing a new service or innovation of an existing service and reduces the risks of failure.

#### Finding:

Human resources in institutions for protection of children are insufficient, and institutions of the protection system are inadequately connected to the university.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to examine the existing scope and impact of collaboration with faculties and institutes and develop guidelines for improving cooperation on this basis.
- ▶ It is necessary to achieve a greater degree of connection among institutions for protection.
- ▶ It is necessary to achieve a greater degree of connection between institutions for protection and specialized civil society organizations.

- ▶ Institutions need to be connected to universities in order to employ final-year students as interns, allowing them to gain experience, and also to provide better care for children in institutions (this can also be considered as a measure for strengthening the capacities of centres for social work, which perform complex tasks with insufficient resources of every kind).
- ▶ The experiences that some institutions already have with this type of collaboration are positive, such as the Special Hospital for Addictions in Belgrade, which cooperates with numerous faculties and medical schools.

#### Finding:

The corrective monitoring of parents is a measure that has not been sufficiently evaluated, and conclusions on the actual impacts of this intervention are missing.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to research and conduct an evaluation of the measure of corrective monitoring of parents and, based on the results, increase monitoring or improve custody.
- ▶ Analysis is required on whether centres for social work impose corrective monitoring of parents for victims as well as perpetrators of violence. It should be taken into account that victims of domestic violence (mainly mothers) cannot be expected to attend programmes for strengthening parenting capacities together with perpetrators of violence, which is a common practice of CSWs, and contravenes Article 48 of the Council of Europe Convention on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
- ▶ Programmes need to be developed that will be available to parents where the CSW can refer them and compel them to use support as part of corrective supervision.

#### Finding:

Institutions and organizations working to protect children from violence do not have enough human resources or funding, and this makes it difficult to ensure the sustainability of various programmes and activities in the area of preventing and protecting children from violence.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to secure sustainable sources of financing for activities and programmes that various institutions and organizations in the support system implement for preventing and protecting children from violence, and this requires certain systemic changes and a redefinition of priorities.

#### *Recommendations for improving attitudes and values and raising awareness*

#### Finding:

The attitude of professionals and the general public, and especially the media, towards the problem of violence against children is particularly important. Although many anti-violence campaigns have been implemented within various systems, there is certainly

a need for new, different types of training and activities targeting changes in attitudes.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ Various types of education/training on the harm violence causes and the need to prevent and mitigate violence should be organized, and should be specifically created for different target groups (professionals, the media and the general public).
- ▮ Regular education for paediatric doctors and nurses should entail curricula on VAC in order to enable them to recognize and act in line with regulations.
- ▮ Specific training for the media should be organized, based on content analysis and evaluation of the impact of such content on different types of violence against children. On the basis of these findings, workshops would then be held to raise awareness, as well as workshops for understanding and handling content relevant to violence against children.
- ▮ Education of teaching and non-teaching staff should be provided in educational institutions on stereotypical attitudes and prejudices, on recognizing discrimination as a phenomenon that may precede violence and on protection from discrimination.
- ▮ Education of students should be provided on stereotypes, prejudices, tolerance and equality. As discrimination is a factor impacting violence against children, stereotypical attitudes about certain vulnerable groups should also be addressed.
- ▮ Campaigns for raising awareness among the general public should be organized, in order to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices on violent methods of education, and to eradicate discriminatory attitudes that are the basis for violence against different groups.
- ▮ In order to improve efforts of multi-sectoral teams in the process of protection it is necessary to organize training on inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration, to be attended by representatives from all systems; such training would encourage, strengthen and promote the work of interdisciplinary teams for protecting children from abuse and neglect in all the towns and municipalities where they exist.

#### **Recommendations for improving prevention and protection services**

##### Finding:

There are no systematic preventive programmes for parenting education and strengthening parenting competences, nor for preparatory parenting programmes. Programmes for strengthening parenting skills and competences have not been prevalent in specific protection programmes so far, and they don't focus consistently on non-violent parenting methods.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ Parenting competences should be strengthened by introducing a parenting support programme that would be widely available from a very early stage, implemented simultaneously with preparatory programmes for giving birth. Educational materials for strengthening parenting skills and the significance of non-violent methods of parenting could be distributed through the antenatal

healthcare system at maternity wards, paediatric services and primary healthcare centres, and through the work of visiting nurses.

- ▮ It is necessary to ensure that these programmes are available in all municipalities, in various communities (villages/towns) and accessible to marginalized groups (e.g. Roma settlements).
- ▮ Manuals for parents should be prepared according to children's age and distributed in preschools and schools (parents' councils, parent meetings), civil society organizations dedicated to education of parents (such as the Coalition for Monitoring of Inclusive Education), etc.
- ▮ In addition to programmes for parents, a range of programmes, measures and services needs to be developed, from universal to specialized ones supporting the family and parenting, as well as those that target other actors, since excessive allocation of responsibility to parents (which has already entered public discourse) is not justified and cannot provide good results. Programmes should be much more inclusive, diverse, and supportive towards the family, friendly towards parents and child-centred, and should be evaluated according to these criteria.

##### Finding:

There are not enough services, especially at the local level, for providing parenting support and support to the family by offering useful advice or other forms of support that would guide parents' behaviour in concrete situations or assist a family in coping with crises.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ It is necessary to evaluate the Parenting Helpline service (availability, accessibility and effectiveness) and on the basis of the evaluation, improve the telephone service, which was introduced recently to provide advice and support to parents with dilemmas, frustrations, etc.
- ▮ Some existing services for support should be strengthened, such as community nursing and paediatric home support, which can be organized with higher frequency of visits. This should also require changes in the by-laws defining the standards of the scale and content of services provided during home visits.
- ▮ Community nursing and paediatric services should be particularly prepared to recognize the risks of violence in families with children with disabilities and other vulnerable children.
- ▮ The pilot family outreach programme should be introduced as a regular service in support to families. For this purpose the current service needs to be expanded (from 16 professionals to 72). A cost-benefit analysis should be conducted in order to successfully scale-up this service. Adequate support should be provided for single-parent families, to include appropriate institutional support for children (day care and preschool programmes that operate throughout the day, at night and on weekends; extended stay in schools), as well as appropriate welfare benefits and financial aid.
- ▮ It is necessary to introduce programmes providing concrete help to families and parents which go beyond merely offering advice. A full set of support to family should be developed, including day-care centres, kindergartens, etc.

- ▮ Services specialized in support to child victims of sexual violence should be developed.
- ▮ An early warning system that relies on a clearly defined set of indicators, similar to the warning system for trafficking, should be developed and introduced, and professionals from different parts of the system trained to use it during risk assessment.
- ▮ An early warning system should also be used to assess risk of child marriage, and cooperation with Roma women's organizations in the prevention and protection from child marriage should be strengthened.
- ▮ In order to improve support to Roma children it is important to evaluate and assess the service of Roma mediators and, based on the assessment, improve and expand the model.
- ▮ It is necessary to influence society to create an environment that supports parenting. Parents should not be the sole actors raising children in a hostile environment with weak institutional mechanisms, negative media content promoting violent social relations, and values and models that are not beneficial to the development of children.
- ▮ It is necessary to introduce programmes for treating violent parents at the system level.

#### Finding:

Outreach to children from vulnerable groups and specific services in their support and protection from VAC should be improved.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ Capacities of protection of children with disabilities within inclusive education should be evaluated and the system improved in order to better protect these children from violence in schools.
- ▮ Pedagogical assistants should be trained to detect violence against children in the family, school and digital space, and to act in line with requirements.
- ▮ The service of healthcare mediators should be strengthened.
- ▮ Services of personal assistants to children with disabilities should be strengthened and expanded.
- ▮ Children from migrant groups, particularly unaccompanied minors, should be better reached by the system for protection, and the institution of legal guardians should be more effectively implemented.
- ▮ Labour exploitation of children in residential institutions should be closely monitored, as labour therapy sometimes becomes labour exploitation.
- ▮ Similarly, labour exploitation should be monitored in foster care families.
- ▮ Mechanisms of external monitoring of the residential institutions that do not report on violence should be regularly implemented. Former beneficiaries of these institutions, who are familiar with their internal dynamics, should be engaged in these monitoring mechanisms.
- ▮ The NGO sector should be more engaged in work with children in residential institutions, as new programmes and activities are needed and staff is overburdened by basic care activities.

- ▮ Development and financing of prevention should be prioritized, including intensive family support services for families where children are at significant risk of harm.

#### Finding:

Violence prevention programmes are uncommon in preschools.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ Prevention programmes should be introduced into preschools, so that the awareness of the risks of violence can be instilled in children at the earliest age.
- ▮ In addition, working with parents of very young children is especially important, as research shows that these parents are more open to influence and support from the system, and yet this target group is offered significantly less at the early stage than is available later (once children reach school age).
- ▮ Particular attention should be focused on the connection between violence and discrimination in preschools.

#### Finding:

There is no evaluation of the effects of removing children from their families or assessment of potential alternative types of protection before the application of this measure.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ Comprehensive analysis needs to be conducted to investigate interventions that involve removing children from their families, as well as the measures and services that follow the removal of children, since previous experience and certain findings show that the social protection system does not always react in a timely or appropriate manner

#### Finding:

Emergency foster care has not been legally regulated, nor has it been evaluated in terms of the impact on child victims of violence being placed with foster families, and there is no systematic record of this service and its users.

#### Recommendations:

- ▮ It is necessary to legally improve this mechanism for protection (adopt a rulebook to regulate this area of protection).
- ▮ The functioning of emergency foster care and foster care for children exposed to violence should be evaluated and records on this type of service should be improved; based on findings, measures to improve this type of intervention should be adopted.
- ▮ It is necessary to provide extended support for children who experienced violence, in the foster home as well. It cannot be expected that the "encouraging environment" in the foster family will spontaneously eliminate consequences of trauma caused by violence.
- ▮ In addition, it should be explored to what extent conditions in foster homes are, in fact, "encouraging" in terms of overcoming effects of violence and avoiding new forms of exposure to violence in the new environment.

- It is especially necessary to evaluate emergency foster care for children who are at risk of substance abuse.

#### Finding:

Deinstitutionalization is not happening fast enough, and a significant number of children still remain in large residential institutions where conditions are not conducive to their development and quality of life.

#### Recommendations:

- It is necessary to speed up the deinstitutionalization processes and develop community services that are important for protecting children who live in institutions from violence or those who have been removed from institutions but live with consequences of violence.
- The general attitude that children are safe from violence in institutions and they should be placed there when faced with neglect and abuse in families should be changed based on evidence from VAC in institutions.
- It is essential to provide age-appropriate psychosocial support for children exposed to violence.

### *General set of recommendations for interventions*

#### Finding:

Interventions do not always take into account the circumstances, i.e. broader socio-economic conditions, which is why they cannot be equally efficient in different environments — rural and urban, more developed and less developed, in the presence of stronger or weaker institutional mechanisms, etc.

#### Recommendations:

- Regardless of what they target, interventions should take into consideration specific local conditions, particular socio-economic conditions, the local culture and the need for social protection, and pay attention to the distinctive characteristics of target groups whose needs they respond to.

#### Finding:

Interventions do not cut across relevant policy areas, and VAC policies remain isolated from poverty reduction and social inclusion, gender equality, improvement of public health, and similar policies.

#### Recommendations:

- National and sub-national policies for preventing and protecting children from VAC should be connected with policies for social inclusion and poverty reduction, gender equality, social protection and even development, since important socio-economic determinants cannot be directly targeted by VAC policies.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE OF DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND OF THE SYSTEM OF PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

#### Finding:

Insufficient attention is paid to examining determinants and factors of violence. When researching violence against children, factors of violence are often not investigated, or at least not in an explicit manner. When factors are discussed, they are often mentioned in passing and enumerated; there are very few precise, methodologically robust investigations of the impact of factors on violence and its features.

#### Recommendations:

- Factors and determinants of domestic violence, institutional violence and community violence need to be more thoroughly examined. Attention in research should be particularly focused on investigating the following:
  - the impact of environmental factors in the local community (development level, presence of conflict, crime) on the prevalence of various forms of violence against children in various circumstances;
  - the impact of the media on the perception of violence by children and youth, as well as models of behaviour in social relations with peers and adults within and outside the family;
  - the impact of gender regimes and attitudes towards gender roles on gender violence in the family, in schools, on the Internet, in institutions and in the community; and
  - the occurrence of violence under multiple discrimination conditions, i.e. in situations when the child is exposed to discrimination on multiple grounds and is therefore at greater risk of violence.
- Attention should be paid to the multiple conditions of the phenomenon and connection between different forms of violence (e.g. violence against women and violence against children), in order to avoid the wrong conclusions on gender aspects of violence, gender of perpetrators of violence against children, gender of victims of violence, and structure/type of family as a risk factor.

#### Finding:

It is evident that domestic violence is often investigated as a phenomenon occurring in an “ivory tower”, without systematic and explicit positioning of the family into a broader social environment, where the family itself can be a victim of structural violence and then replicate this violence towards children in more direct forms. Structural and cultural factors are often neglected in analysis of violence against children. Although they do not have to be in the foreground, they still provide a way to better contextualize and understand the particular type of violence.

#### Recommendations:

- Socio-economic and cultural factors of violence against children in the family need to be more thoroughly examined, i.e. domestic violence needs to be more contextualized in terms of socio-

economic and cultural conditions in the local community and the broader society.

- ▶ It should be considered that the impact of socio-economic and cultural factors is reflected differently, depending on the sex/gender of perpetrators and victims of violence.
- ▶ There should be more thorough examination of the impact of family factors caused by socio-economic hardship (financial deprivation, poverty, unemployment of parents) on violence against children in the family and the probability of children behaving violently in their social relationships in school, in the community or on the Internet.
- ▶ The impact of family factors resulting from attitudes, values and norms of parents and other adult household members on raising and disciplining children, and the prevalence of parenting practices and violent methods of discipline should be investigated in more detail. Particular attention should be paid to stereotypes and prejudice, which are at the root of violence and discrimination.
- ▶ The manner in which parents form their attitudes and models for parenting practices, as well as issues that shape their parental competences and styles (the media; politics; experts, or those who present themselves as such in public; tradition; and models adopted from the primary family) should also be explored.
- ▶ Determinants connected to the “historical heritage” of the 1990s (social disorder, institutional vacuum, deprivation, fear of war and conflict, international isolation, widespread crime, etc.), which shaped today’s generations of parents, should be explored, as should lessons on ways to handle this heritage when creating measures for combating violence.
- ▶ Factors related to the participation of parents or other adult household members in the wars of the 1990s should be examined in the context of violence against children in the family.
- ▶ Parenting styles of parents who are addicted to alcohol or narcotics should be investigated, as well as their children, and these styles should be researched with regard to type of addiction.
- ▶ Effectiveness of institutional responses to the pervasiveness of violence against children in the family should be researched (e.g. by comparative analysis of local communities that have more efficient institutional mechanisms, more cases of violence subjected to timely protection measures, etc.).
- ▶ The impact of the effect of working with perpetrators and families on repeated violence in families involved in support programmes should be researched.

#### Finding:

Research of violence against children with regard to dynamics, complex forms of interactions and mechanisms of violence are either imprecise (violence against the child is discussed in general), or violence is limited to direct violent methods of discipline. Exposure of children to violence as witnesses to violence against their mothers, between adults or against elderly people has not been investigated sufficiently, and may have negative impacts equivalent to their direct exposure.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to further explore domestic violence against children, and not only in the two-sided perpetrator–child dimension, but

also including complex dynamics of violence occurring in family relationships (partner violence, violence against elderly people or family members with disabilities, etc.), and where children become exposed to various types of violence, either as direct subjects of violence, or as witnesses of violence against their mother or other household member.

- ▶ Gender-sensitive research of this phenomenon is necessary to compare the effects created by violence and lack of safety options.
- ▶ It is necessary to understand gender differences in the circumstances where violence happens, as well as in the frequency, manner and consequences of violence, particularly when analysing violence perpetrated by parents against children.
- ▶ It is also necessary to conduct research about non-violent parents, and use the findings of this research to produce materials for developing programmes on preventing domestic violence.

#### Finding:

Mechanisms of intergenerational reproduction of violence in the family have not been adequately elucidated, although there is research indicating that exposure to violence in childhood may be an important factor in adopting violence as an acceptable behaviour.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to shed more light on exposure to violence during childhood as a factor/determinant of violence that individuals perpetrate, or of which they become a victim later in life. Particular attention should be paid to mechanisms for reproducing domestic violence and violence against children, and mechanisms of intergenerational transfer of violence as a model for relationships and parenting.
- ▶ Findings on the impact that violence against children has on their subsequent models of relationships and behaviour should be researched with regard to mechanisms for protection and victim support (for both adults and children) — their availability, effectiveness, specificity and comprehensiveness.
- ▶ Risks of violent behaviour of children whose parents are addicted to psychoactive substances should be examined.

#### Finding:

Certain groups of children, and the youngest children in particular (aged 0–6), remain particularly inadequately covered by research on domestic violence.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to shed light on the exposure of very young children (aged 0–6) to domestic violence.
- ▶ Particular attention should be paid to children who live in families where parents or other adult household members are addicted to psychoactive substances.

#### Finding:

Sufficient attention has not been paid to gender aspects of violence, especially considering that gender-based violence is widespread among the adult population and represents an important factor

contributing to reproduction of violence in new generations (children who witness violence are victims of violence).

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ Gender aspects of violence need to be examined in more detail, to establish whether and in what way gender-specific models of violent behaviour of children of different sexes are introduced and reproduced, and how these models are reflected in subsequent exposure to violence or violent behaviour towards children in the family.
- ▶ Likewise, gender aspects of violence towards children in schools, in the community and on the Internet need to be researched.
- ▶ Gender aspects of violence in early partner relationships (children aged 15–18) also need to be explored.

#### Finding:

Institutional factors at various levels have not been researched sufficiently, especially in the context of domestic violence. The reach, level of sensitivity, impact and efficiency of activities of institutions for protection, as well as users' trust, experiences and evaluations of these institutions, are not available for researching domestic violence against children, and therefore the impact of the system for protection on prevalence and frequency of domestic violence against children cannot be assessed.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ The role of institutional factors on domestic violence needs to be explored in more detail through research on experiences with institutions, trust in institutions and satisfaction with protection provided to users (assessment of the usefulness of provided support, the manner in which support affected solving the problem of violence), or through case studies, to identify gaps in the system for responding to violence.
- ▶ With regard to the above, it is necessary to explore separately children's perception of and experiences with the protection system, the way they experience various types of support and procedures, and how protected they feel.
- ▶ It is necessary to monitor and analyse the situation, based on records of institutional interventions on implementation of the law and legal instruments in protection from violence.
- ▶ All protection programmes and support services should be analysed with regard to reach/availability nationwide, and in each region (district) and municipality, and not to be analysed/presented as examples of "good practices" or project activities.

#### Finding:

Not enough light has been shed on violence against children in residential institutions, although there is research that indicates that these children are exposed to multiple types of violence.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ Violence in different types of institutions needs to be investigated further, partly by conducting research based on various methodologies (in-depth, qualitative, case studies, systematic

observation, etc.), and partly through systematic evaluation of protection services in residential institutions.

- ▶ Research on violence against children in residential institutions should be conducted for the population of children who have left these institutions relatively recently in order to obtain reliable information, honest perceptions and experiences.
- ▶ It is necessary to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of residential institutions for children using methods that identify different forms of violence against children.

#### Finding:

Not enough is known about certain types of violence, and therefore factors that are connected to these types of violence are also not well known. This concerns violence against children who live and work in the street, girl victims of underage marriage, and child victims of labour exploitation and sex abuse.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to further investigate factors and characteristics of violence in specific forms, affecting distinctive social groups of children, primarily children who live and work in the street, children (mainly girls) who are victims of underage marriage, and child victims of labour exploitation and sex abuse.
- ▶ It is necessary to research forms of violence against psychoactive substances addicts.

#### Finding:

Attention to the interconnectivity of factors is also more a rarity than a rule in researching violence, and only a few research projects barely scratched the surface of some form of "spillover" of violence from one context into another. For example, children who are placed in care at residential institutions have already experienced domestic violence, and the ways that these family and institutional factors are connected have not been investigated sufficiently. Spillover of violence from the family into schools or from schools to the cyber space has been somewhat more extensively explored.

#### Recommendations:

- ▶ It is necessary to stimulate research that investigates relations between determinants, factors and forms of violence in various circumstances (e.g. ways domestic violence is connected to violence in schools, violence in institutions connected to violence in schools and the community), and how this "immersion" in violence impacts the development and welfare of children.

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