



Research to Policy  
and Practice Process

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA

Determinants, Factors  
and Interventions

*A NATIONAL REPORT*

RESEARCH TO POLICY  
AND PRACTICE PROCESS

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DETERMINANTS,  
FACTORS AND  
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A NATIONAL REPORT

*Publisher*  
UNICEF in Serbia

*For the publisher*  
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Representative

*Design*  
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*Cover photo*  
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ISBN 978-86-80902-01-2

Published in 2017

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA

## DETERMINANTS, FACTORS AND INTERVENTIONS



## Acknowledgements

This study on determinants, factors and interventions of violence in Serbia has been carried out as part of a wider process — the Research to Policy and Practice Process (R3P), conceptualised by the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti. It is the result of collaboration among many individuals and institutions, which we would like to acknowledge here. UNICEF in Serbia thanks all who gave their time, expertise and energy, in particular:

Mary Catherine Maternowska of the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti for her vision and guidance on this effort.

The SeConS development initiative group, and notably Professor Marija Babović, Professor Veronika Išpanović and Jovana Obradović, MA, for their contribution to analyzing the literature, mapping the interventions and writing the report.

Professor Judith Hollenweger Haskell from the Zurich University of Teacher Education for providing mentoring support during the key phases of the process.

An invaluable contribution was provided by each member of the Ministerial Committee. Important inputs were given by the Technical Group, an informal advisory body consisting of experts from different fields — social protection specialists, psychologists, anthropologists, experts from the education system, etc., who also peer reviewed the study.

Thanks also go to a number of stakeholders who participated in four regional and one national consultative meeting and helped improve the study — child protection professionals, academic researchers, civil society representatives, and government and local authority stakeholders.

Finally, the study would not have been possible without the financial support of the Swiss National Committee for UNICEF.

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>BECAN</b>	Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CSW</b>	Centre for social work
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>IAN</b>	International Aid Network
<b>ITC</b>	Incest Trauma Center
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
<b>MoI</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NISP</b>	National Institute for Social Protection
<b>R3P</b>	Research to Policy and Practice Process
<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied or separated children
<b>UNHCR</b>	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Refugee Agency)
<b>UNICEF</b>	The United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VAC</b>	Violence against children
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against children (VAC) in Serbia has many forms and it occurs in different settings — in the intimate atmosphere of family, in schools, in institutions where children are placed for the purpose of protection, in digital space and the community. Preventing and protecting children from violence has been set as one of the key priorities in national policies for more than a decade. In 2017, a new policy cycle in preventing and protecting children from VAC has been initiated, and this study has the purpose of providing solid evidence for aspects of violence that heretofore have not been in the focus of policies — determinants and factors that drive violence. Evidence provided in this study is based on a specific approach of the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti (Research to Policy and Practice Process [R3P]), which requires a comprehensive review of available knowledge on violence and broad participation of a large number of stakeholders in reviewing policy interventions and formulating recommendations for the next policy cycle.<sup>1</sup>

## A snapshot of violence against children in Serbia

Research evidence indicates that violence against children in Serbia is widespread in different forms. It appears as direct, interpersonal, physical, psychological, or sexual violence; as neglect that deprives a child from needs satisfaction and prevents its development; and also in less direct and more complex forms, as structural violence that appears in different forms, such as child marriage, child labour or other types of exploitation, or multifaceted social exclusion. Manifestations of violence also vary according to other features: who the perpetrator is, how severely the child is harmed, what the short-term and long-term consequences are, in which context it occurs and which institutional responses are available for the protection of child.

**The family**, which is supposed to be a safety zone for children, an environment fostering their development, is not so for many children. The exposure of children to violence in the family is widespread, regardless of whether children are direct objects of violence or witnesses of a violent act. Despite the fact that corporal punishment is classified as violence against children (Council of Europe, 2006) and proscribed as it humiliates the child, and leads to bodily harm and serious damage to health, it is still widespread in Serbia, underpinned by certain values and norms. According to these norms, corporal punishment is considered a legitimate and even advisable<sup>2</sup> practice in child-rearing. Use of violent disciplining methods (corporal punishment, psychological aggression, severe physical punishment) in families has been on the decline during last decade, but a significant share of children continue to be raised using these methods. Small children (age 1–4 years) are particularly

- 1 In line with this methodology, the process included several components: (1) review of available literature on VAC, and domestic and international data sets; (2) mapping interventions within the public system and civil society; and (3) consultations with diverse stakeholders engaged with the system of prevention of and protection from VAC, such as experts, researchers, professionals providing services, public servants and policymakers.
- 2 As evidenced by many traditional sayings often used in everyday practice, such as “Beating comes straight from Heaven”, “Spare the rod and spoil the child”, etc.

at high risk, exposed more often to physical violence than older children (age 5–14) (47% vs. 42%). Gendered patterns of violence against children in the family appear in more frequent exposure of girls to severe physical punishment than boys, although a relatively small share of children are exposed to such a disciplining method (1.8% of girls vs. 0.5% of boys) (Babovic, 2015). Children are also exposed to violence when they witness domestic violence against their mothers. Research with women who experienced domestic violence indicated that in three fourths of cases children witnessed that violence and in almost half of the cases were directly aggressed by the father during that incident (Ignjatovic, 2015).

Exposure to violence in the family hinders the successful psychological, emotional and cognitive development of the child. The consequences of exposure to violence include physical disorders (disability, somatic disorders), emotional disorders, a distorted perception of self (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 such as 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) (Stefanović, 2014; Išpanović Radojković & Ignjatović, 2011; Milosavljević-Đukić et al., 2011; Stevković, 2006; Stevković, 2013 a). A study on adverse childhood experiences conducted among the student population in Serbia indicated strong links between violence and health-risk behaviours. Respondents who had been exposed to physical violence were 1.5 times more likely to become active smokers, twice as likely to use illicit drugs and 4.2 times more likely to attempt suicide (Paunovic et al., 2015).

**School** should be a safe place devoted to learning, youth socialization and norms transfer. However, research on violence in this setting has documented a high prevalence of violence. In 2013,<sup>3</sup> 44% of students reported that they were exposed to peer-to-peer violence in the three-month period preceding the survey. Among them, 45.8% experienced verbal abuse, 33% physical violence, another 33% social violence (plotting, manipulative relations, etc.), while 21% of children perpetrated violence. Boys were slightly more likely to declare themselves as bullies than girls and were more often exposed to violence by peers and adults. A quarter of the students in 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school were victims of bullying by a teacher, 15% of them said that they had been hit by a teacher, while 5% were threatened by a teacher (Popadić, Plut et al., 2014). Gender-based violence is widespread in schools, as 69% of primary school students and 74% of secondary school students reported they had been exposed to at least one form of gender-based violence. Boys, more often than girls, express views justifying gender-based violence against women (Ćeriman et al., 2015).

**Residential institutions for the social protection of children** in Serbia (institutions for children without parental care, institutions for children and youth with disabilities, institutions for children and youth in conflict with the law) are another setting in which children are exposed to violence. During research with developmentally challenged children from 11 institutions of social protection (including certain healthcare institutions where children remain for an extended period of time for treatment or

<sup>3</sup> Research within the project "School without Violence — Towards a Safe and Supportive Environment for Children" was carried out by the Institute of Psychology of the University of Belgrade with the support of UNICEF. It was conducted in several instances in the period 2005–2013 (Popadić & Plut, 2007; Popadić et al., 2014).

recovery), 62% of children reported they witnessed cases of violence against other children by staff (Savic, Radivojević, & Vasić, 1998). Physical restrictions and separation from the group are used in residential institutions for children with disabilities as measures in cases of self-mutilation by children, which is believed to be the consequence of inadequate care for children that have been long placed in institutions without sufficient human contact, stimulation or care (Ćirić et al., 2012). Research on children living in institutions for children without parental care indicate a high prevalence of peer-to-peer violence as reported by children (in 76% of cases), while it is denied by the majority of staff (83%) (Plut & Popadić, 2007).

**Digital space** is an increasingly significant space in which children face violent experiences. Violence from school and the community is often transferred to digital space, but new threats and forms of violence are also lurking on the Internet and social media. Almost two thirds (62%) of primary school and 84% of secondary school students were exposed at least once to an Internet risk during the year preceding the survey (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2013).

**Violence against children in the community** exists in various forms. Some are based on ethnic affiliation (e.g. violence against Roma children, between Serbian and Hungarian youth in Vojvodina), political affiliation (e.g. the LGBT movement attacked by right wing groups), sport fan club affiliation, etc. Instead of being a zone of promotion of healthy lifestyles, sport clubs are an arena of violent experiences. Among children involved in sports, 51% of them said they had experienced some form of violence by their teammates, and 41% by their opponents; as many as 61% of them experienced violence by their coaches (Popadić, Bačanac et al., 2011: 73).

**Child labour abuse<sup>4</sup>** is more prevalent in poor families and rural areas. In the latter, 15% of children are involved in child labour (mainly in agriculture), which is much more than the average in Serbia (4%). Boys most often work in economic activities, while girls are predominantly active in household work (UNICEF, 2015).

**Child marriage** is a form of violence mostly faced by girls living in Roma settlements. According to the findings of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) study, in the general population of women between 20 and 49 years of age, 7% were married before the age of 18, while among the girls living in Roma settlements up to 17% were married before the age of 15 and more than one half before turning 18. Early marriage almost completely shatters the chances for these girls to obtain a secondary or post-secondary education degree, and to participate in the labour market and provide a better quality of life (Babović, 2015).

**Multiple forms of violence**, from structural to direct, affect children from one of the most vulnerable social groups — **children living on the street**. These children become victims of exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation (Djordjević et al., 2011), and are at high risk of being victims of human trafficking (ASTRA, 2012; Kuzmanović et al., 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Defined as the engagement of children in hazardous labour or economic activities above a certain age-recommended threshold, which is harmful for child well-being and development.

## Social and policy context in which violence against children occurs

Violence does not occur in a vacuum: it is embedded in a particular socio-economic and historical context and shaped by various social, economic, institutional and cultural determinants. Years of war in the region, violent political discourses and widespread social conflicts have increased tolerance to violence and created an atmosphere in which new generations of children and young people are adjusted to perceive violence as legitimate means to an end. The socio-economic context is marked by problems in achieving stable positive growth, increasing inequality and widespread risk of poverty, which reflects on children's well-being and produces frustrations among adults that are expressed through violent treatment of children. A significant share of children remains outside of the system of early education. Children from marginalized groups (poor families, Roma settlements, rural areas) have poorer educational achievements and leave school earlier (UNICEF, 2015). Poverty risks of children are higher than average (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2015). Gender inequality and patriarchal gender regimes influence gender-based violence and harmful practices related to girls (i.e. child marriage present among girls living in Roma settlements).

The relevant policy context is marked by significant efforts to improve the system's response to violence against children. Since the mid-2000s in Serbia the prevention and suppression of violence against children and protection of children from violence have been identified as an important state priority. The general framework for policies related to children for the period 2004–2015 was defined by the National Plan of Action for Children. As part of this framework, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect in 2005. The purpose of the protocol was to provide a framework for the establishment of an effective, operational multi-sector network for the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. In addition to the general protocol, special sectoral protocols were adopted that defined specific roles and procedures in protecting children from abuse and neglect within each relevant sector in the system of protection (education, healthcare, the police, social protection and the judiciary).

In 2008 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the National Strategy for Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence,<sup>5</sup> and in 2010 the action plan for its implementation.<sup>6</sup> Parallel to the policy reforms, laws were improved to better address violence against children (changes in the Family Law, Juvenile Justice Law, Law on Police, Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Law on Misdemeanours, Law on the Foundations of the Education System, Law on Prevention of Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events, Law on the Prevention of Violence in the Family).

Serbia opened Chapter 23 of the EU integration process in July 2016, and as part of its obligations in this area it is expected that implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23<sup>7</sup> will be one of the government's priorities. This plan envisages the development of a new Multi-annual Strategic

<sup>5</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 122/2008.

<sup>6</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 15/10.

<sup>7</sup> Available at <http://www.mpravde.gov.rs/tekst/9849/finalna-verzija-akcionog-plana-za-pregovaranje-poglavlja-23-koja-je-usaglasena-sa-poslednjim-preporukama-i-potvrdjena-od-strane-evropske-komisije-u-briselu-.php>

Framework for Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence in 2017 and places revision of soft-law regulations (general and sectoral protocols) on the agenda.

## What drives violence against children and why this is important?

A snapshot of violence provides a bleak picture of the everyday life of many children in Serbia. Children are surrounded by violence from family to schools, digital space to the wider community. They are surrounded by a gallery of perpetrators, from parents, through peers, to professionals who should be providing support in the children's development (teachers, coaches, etc.). If we want to develop a system that goes beyond protection of children experiencing violence, if we want to eliminate violence in its diverse forms and from various settings, then we have to intervene at its root causes.

Determinants and factors that influence and trigger violence against children are numerous. They appear at different levels of society. At the macro level they appear as broader socio-economic, cultural or institutional determinants that create conditions that increase risk of violence, such as economic underdevelopment or instability, poverty, social conflicts, absent or inadequate legal regulations, etc. At the meso level they appear as socio-economic, cultural or institutional factors specific for a certain local community or region, or factors related to the specific part of the system for protection (e.g. the network of centres for social work, primary healthcare institutions, the system of education, etc.). At the micro level are factors related to the family (socio-economic position, dysfunctional relations, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.), or individual institutions that create a specific environment in which factors are present that increase (or decrease in the case of positive conditions) risk of violence. In addition to these factors, there are certain factors related to individuals that increase risk of exposure to violence, such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or some characteristics of behaviour (aggressive behaviour, conflict with legal norms, etc.).

**Macro-level determinants.** Comprehensive analysis of the literature on violence against children in Serbia points to the effects of economic development, the wars during the 1990s, social conflicts, migration and multidimensional social exclusion on violence against children. For example, social exclusion is considered a major determinant of neglecting the developmental potentials of children living in Roma settlements. Regional factors are recognized and research shows that peer-to-peer violence occurs more in urban than rural areas, while violence against children in families is less frequent in Belgrade than in other regions of Serbia.

Relevant laws and strategies (e.g. the Law on Family, the Strategy for Protection of Children from Violence and Neglect) aim to impact the incidence of violence by defining institutional responses and introducing norms in perception and practices in which violence occurs. When they are absent or weak and ineffective, violence remains unaddressed and children inadequately protected. Cultural determinants appear as a high tolerance of violence resulting from war, crisis and social unrest. The role of the media in "normalizing" violence by reporting about violence without a critical approach has been recognized as a factor contributing to the aggressiveness of children and youth in the short and long run.

Discriminatory attitudes, in particular against children from the Roma population and children with disabilities, are also highlighted as major factors of violence in school, while gender stereotypes and norms and values related to the understanding of gender roles and relations are recognized as major determinants of gender-based violence in schools, family and community.

**Meso-level determinants and factors.** Various institutional factors are emphasized by researchers at this level: effectiveness of mechanisms of identification and referral of cases of violence; effectiveness of implementation of general and specific protocols and coordination of institutions; adequacy of legislation and policies related to the placement of children in residential institutions; and effectiveness of the processes of deinstitutionalization. When these institutional mechanisms are ineffective, slow or selective in response, the context is more favourable for violence to occur. Improvement of existing institutional mechanisms and responses, as well as the introduction of new mechanisms, contributes to preventing and protecting violence. Examples of new mechanisms address the protection of children witnessing violence in the family within judicial procedures; development of capacities of professionals in the system of protection to identify and address cases of violence; and protection specific for schools and other institutions within the education system. Meanwhile, gaps in the institutional landscape leave violence unaddressed, as documented in research by pointing to the ineffectiveness of centres for social work in addressing violence in the family and other settings; the lack of an information system tracking violence, particularly in digital space, or in cases of sexual violence and child pornography; and scarce institutional mechanisms for protection of children living and working on the street.

Cultural determinants and factors related to VAC at the meso level mainly include specific sets of norms, values and attitudes related to child-rearing practices and legitimate methods of disciplining children, as well as norms, values and attitudes related to the specific forms of violence or specific setting in which violence occurs. Attitudes of experts on parenting methods, messages sent through the media, as well as attitudes of the general public, influence the extent and characteristics of violence against children in society. Although most experts in Serbia consider corporal punishment to be a gross violation of the child's rights and advocate a full legal ban on corporal punishment of children, there are still experts who maintain that reasonable corporal punishment of children is an inalienable right of parents and should not be equated to physical violence and maltreatment. This can explain why corporal punishment is on the decline, but still significantly present in families.

Attitudes about sexual abuse have proven to be an important determinant of the prevalence and characteristic of sexual violence. An analysis of public opinion in Serbia revealed a very low awareness of sexual violence in the general public, but also among experts, university students and professionals working with children with developmental problems.

**Micro-level determinants and factors.** Family factors include various socio-economic characteristics of the family: social status, education level and employment of parents, poverty, and material deprivation. Poor economic status, poverty and deprivation increase frustration in the family and, consequently, the probability of violence against children. Material deprivation and poverty of families living in Roma settlements create favourable ground for neglect of children, because parents lack the resources necessary for needs satisfaction and early development of their children. A lower education level of parents increases the risk of violence against children, as do factors such as dysfunctional family

relations, drug or alcohol abuse by parents, domestic violence, and participation of family members in the wars during the 1990s. Research indicates a lower incidence of violence in larger, multigenerational families, while single parents, due to their heavier burden and frustration, are more at risk of using violent disciplining methods. Weak social networks for support and reliance on welfare support services also increase risks of violence. Cultural factors are mainly present in the form of norms and attitudes towards child-rearing practices among parents and other adult household members. The children whose parents approve violent disciplining methods are more exposed to corporal punishment.

Family factors are not sufficiently taken into account in studies on violence in other settings — school, community, digital space or residential institutions.

Institutional factors at the micro level are usually related to the individual institution or a small group of related residential institutions. Typical institutional factors are insufficient capacity, due to which children are placed together with adults or children of different age groups; insufficient human resources in terms of an inadequate number of professionals relative to the number of children in the institution; as well as inadequate qualifications and skills of the employees and lack of awareness and sensitivity for certain forms of violence. No less important are unfavourable physical conditions in the institutions in terms of hygiene, accommodation, food and higher-degree needs (educational, social, leisure/recreational, etc.), due to which children in such institutions are deprived, and their needs severely neglected. The absence of complaint mechanisms within these institutions and the lack of mechanisms for monitoring, inspection and supervision contribute to the perpetuation of violence.

**Personal factors.** Risks of being exposed to violence are connected to certain characteristics of the child, such as gender, age, disability or other 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 that cultural norms defining legitimate or desirable parenting and disciplining methods determine the gendered patterns of violence. Likewise, if children with disabilities are more often exposed to violence in school, this is not because they are disabled but because in that small community discriminatory norms and values prevail, or because institutional mechanisms are weak to prevent and sanction violence. The youngest children (1–4 years) are more often exposed to corporal punishment than older children. Research is inconclusive on gender differences in violence in the family, as some point to a higher prevalence of certain forms among boys or girls, while others do not find significant differences. Studies on violence in schools indicate boys as more frequent perpetrators of violence and studies on sexual violence point to girls as more frequent victims of this form of violence. Several studies pointed to the link between disability and increased risk of violence in school, institutions and the wider community. The personality traits that are associated with peer violence are neuroticism, aggressiveness, low conscientiousness and low extroversion.

## What has been done to prevent violence and protect children from violence?

The intervention mapping conducted for the purpose of this study was not “conventional”. It was guided by the objective not only to create an “inventory” of interventions, but also to identify how much these interventions targeted determinants and factors of violence against children, intervening at its roots. We focused on interventions implemented since 2000, and the analysis excluded interventions in legislation.

**Macro-level interventions.** Although it is not the aim of interventions addressing VAC to deal with economic or broader social factors, they should be taken into account in two ways: as contextual determinants shaping the environment in which VAC is addressed, and tackling VAC as a cross-cutting issue that intersects different policy areas (social protection, education, healthcare, gender equality). However, intervention mapping did not indicate such connections between interventions addressing VAC and broader socio-economic determinants or other policy areas, which represents an important gap in the previous system of policy interventions.

The main intervention logic at the macro level was to establish a system for top-down preventing and protecting children from VAC by developing a legal framework and mechanisms for law enforcement, general and special protocols, mechanisms of multi-sectoral cooperation, and operational teams in local communities consisting of trained and coordinated professionals. On the national level, important bodies were set up at the very top of the legislative and executive branches, as well as independent bodies for monitoring children’s rights: the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Council for Child Rights, and the Deputy Protector of Citizens for Children’s Rights and Gender Equality. A series of interventions were targeted at improving the records, databases and reporting on violence against children. However, mapping results indicate that the Council for Child Rights was ineffective in coordinating, monitoring and evaluating effects of the implementation of the main action plan and a unified records system has still not been established. Interventions targeting cultural determinants included various general and nationwide campaigns for raising awareness about VAC, prohibiting corporal punishment, and promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and gender equality. However, the effects of these campaigns were not evaluated.

**Meso-level interventions.** Interventions at the meso level were mostly directed at institutional mechanisms and cultural factors, primarily concerning attitudes, values and norms related to the tolerance of violence or specific forms of violence, and awareness of particular forms of violence (e.g. sexual, trafficking). Institutional determinants were mainly the object of interventions in the area of school violence, institutional violence and, to smaller extent, digital violence. Many of these interventions were aimed at adoption and better implementation of protocols, mechanisms for coordination, collaboration among institutions, strengthening competencies of professionals, etc. Interventions in the area of digital violence are relatively new and therefore have not yet been sufficiently developed. At the same time, there is a noticeable absence of, or poor focus on, interventions on institutional mechanisms related to the determinants and factors of violence in the family. Even when interventions target institutional factors related to violence in the family, they are mostly limited to families that are already facing severe problems and dysfunction resulting in child neglect and abuse. Services in

support to families that are not marked by severe forms of dysfunction, which are important for the prevention of VAC, are not well developed or widely available in Serbia.

New mechanisms boosting the institutional response to violence were established, especially in the school system (a school constable, peer prevention and intervention team, group for protection against violence and discrimination with the Ministry of Education, and coordinators from the group in school districts) and in the judiciary (the unit for supporting child victims of violence in criminal proceedings).

Mapping revealed that many interventions at this level were implemented in the form of various trainings that were meant to increase capacities of professionals to recognize and respond to violence. In the absence of systematic evaluations of these interventions it is hard to estimate how effective they were. However, bearing in mind that in some parts of the system certain problems still remain (such as poor sectoral collaboration and coordination among service providers, poorly developed monitoring and compliant mechanisms, gaps in financing preventive services, etc.) (SeConS & UNICEF, 2012; Išpanović-Radojković et al., 2012), it is valid to assume that the focus on training was not sufficient. One of the successful examples, the School without Violence programme, shows that a holistic approach is needed that simultaneously implements interventions at all levels (from the Ministry of Education to individual schools), in various aspects (education, development of mechanisms, awareness-raising), and with various stakeholders (students, teachers, school staff, parents, local governments, and other institutions from the system for protection).

Several large campaigns were implemented (although not evaluated) on the meso level — some targeted norms, values and attitudes related to specific forms of violence, while others were more limited in scope in terms of geographic/administrative locality: massive awareness campaigns about sexual abuse of children and the introduction of content that contributes to the recognition, prevention and protection in cases of sexual abuse of children in curricula and textbooks; nationwide campaigns on the risks of human trafficking among children; series of campaigns for raising awareness of digital violence in schools, etc.

Compared to interventions directed at improving institutional and organizational mechanisms, and those targeting changing attitudes, values and awareness, there were significantly fewer interventions in the area of prevention and development/improvement of direct child protection services. Removing children from families and placing them with institutions seems to be the main strategy of the state in cases of violence against children or their neglect in the family. There are numerous protocols for protecting children from violence, and yet it remains unclear which activities are being undertaken to do so, apart from removal from their families, and which forms of support and counselling are provided for families. However, some of the existing services for direct support have been improved to include identification and referral of VAC cases, such as paediatric support or patronage nursing service.

**Micro-level interventions.** Interventions directed at family factors are few and limited. The impression based on mapping is that issues such as economic status and parents' education were not considered as targets for activities related to protection from violence. There is a division in family care, with financial problems being passed on to the financial benefits welfare system. Combined support (financial and psycho-social) is provided mostly to families that enter the social

welfare system being both impoverished and having evident violence present. No interventions were recorded for families outside this relatively limited category: those that may face financial hardship but are above the social assistance threshold and do not qualify for financial benefits, although their children grow up surrounded by deprivation and violence. Interventions focusing on other types of family dysfunction, such as systematic work with perpetrators who have problems with alcohol or drug abuse, or have psychological consequences due to participation in the wars, were not found during mapping. Prevention programmes for families and young parents who do not belong to any of the above-mentioned risk groups yet who may experience various types of parental frustration are also not available, with the exception of one helpline.

Apart from the family outreach worker service, which is in the pilot phase, the mapping did not identify interventions focused on the family as a system, a community where children are brought up, and where they may be exposed to violence or neglect. The impression is that, except for the social work centres, there are no other direct support services to families at risk of violence against children that are part of the protection system and nationwide in scope. Moreover, the most common intervention, when speaking about families at risk and interventions undertaken by social work centres, is removing the child from his/her family. Separation of children from their families due to violence, without taking other protective measures, is considered an inappropriate intervention unless it is in the best interest of the child.

Interventions targeting direct support to child victims of violence have not always been clearly aimed at the factors. Many represent merely an open door to the system of protection (hotlines, platforms for reporting violence). Furthermore, some interventions are only aimed at remedying the consequences (urgent, temporary accommodation, etc.). Naturally, such services are very important and represent examples of good practice, but they are not sufficient when the mission is to eliminate violence, and besides, they are not available to all children because they are not geographically distributed in an appropriate manner.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play an important role in providing direct support to abused and neglected children, especially organizations implementing support programmes for children from vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities, Roma children, children living and working on the street, human trafficking victims, refugees and displaced persons. Some of the support services represent examples of good practice, striving to affect the factors and roots of violence faced by children: the International Aid Network (IAN) Telecentre, where children with behavioural problems are empowered in multiple ways, thus creating the conditions for their social inclusion; and the Club for Healthy Changes in Children and Youth with Disabilities, empowering at-risk children to resist violence. Except for the shelter for children living and working on the street, the remaining interventions registered by the mapping process are not aimed at socio-economic determinants.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Main weaknesses of the system for preventing and protecting children from violence

Mapping intervention and consultations with diverse stakeholders during the Research to Policy and Practice Process identified weaknesses of the system for preventing and protecting children from violence that should be addressed by the next generation of policy interventions:

- ▶ There is no functional, effective central body responsible for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of effects of policies and measures for prevention and protection; regular reporting about achievements and gaps; and coordination of stakeholders, ideas and innovations that will be introduced in the new policy cycles.
- ▶ There is no standardized, coherent methodology for monitoring the implementation of existing general and specialized protocols. Methodology exists in the police sector (MUP), and the Republic Institute for Social Protection recently (2016) developed a methodology for monitoring implementation of protocols in the social protection system, activating the process of monitoring, but this methodology does not exist for other systems or at the level of inter-system cooperation.
- ▶ 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 and planning policy interventions.
- ▶ Monitoring and evaluation of interventions (laws, policies, measures, programmes and services) are rare and unsystematic. These processes, which are the precondition and the basis for (re)defining policies and measures, have not adequately been incorporated into the system for prevention and protection.
- ▶ Interventions do not always take into account the broader socio-economic context, 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.
- ▶ The system is more focused on response and protection than prevention. Prevention programmes are rare, neither regular nor systematic, and usually without a large scope of coverage. The preschool system is excluded from prevention programmes.
- ▶ Parenting programmes and family support is weak or absent beyond multiple-risk families that are beneficiaries of social protection support. There are not enough services, especially at the local level, for providing parenting support during times of hardship or in tackling specific problems.
- ▶ 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. Emergency foster care has not been sufficiently legally regulated, nor its consistent implementation in practice encouraged.
- ▶ Deinstitutionalization is not happening fast enough; a significant number of children still remain in large residential institutions where conditions are not conducive to their development and quality of life.

- ▶ Institutions and organizations working to protect children from violence do not have adequate 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.

## What are key priorities for next stage of policy interventions?

As an outcome of our research, mapping and consultations with key stakeholders engaged with the system for preventing and protecting children from VAC (researchers, experts, professionals, activists, service providers from the civil sector, public servants and policymakers), we have defined a list of nine key priorities for the next stage of policy interventions. These priorities should be considered as guidelines for further improvement of the system for prevention and protection, which will take into greater account the impact of determinants and factors, and which will intervene more in the roots of violence.

- 1 **Better contextualisation of interventions and policy interlinks.** It is recommended that structural determinants and broader socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors be more systematically and consistently taken into account in the new strategic framework, and that VAC policies be more consistently linked to other relevant policies that more directly target these determinants of violence. These include: anti-poverty and social inclusion policies, both general and those specifically aimed at improving the inclusion of specific groups (Roma, people with disabilities, gender equality, youth, etc.); as well as 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 key institutional mechanisms.** It is recommended that the main central mechanism for coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of VAC policies be strengthened. The Council for Child Rights, if it remains as that key national body, should be strengthened with an executive body.
- 3 **A firmer and more regular monitoring system.** It is recommended that the monitoring of the implementation of protocols, the effectiveness of multi-sectoral teams in local communities, and functioning of all parts of the system vertically with regards to VAC be strengthened, and an early warning system systematically developed and implemented with clear indicators and alert mechanisms.
- 4 **Strengthening the local level of the protection system.** It is recommended that local action plans and distribution of local budgets be developed and good local practices scaled up to the regional or national level.
- 5 **Continuation of awareness-raising and changing social norms, values, and attitudes.** It is recommended that campaigns for zero tolerance to violence, promotion of non-violent communication, prohibition of violent disciplining of children, and promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination be continued.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 6 Family support package.** It is recommended that support to families be developed and include a diversity of measures and services that will enable prevention, early detection, and response before a situation reaches severe forms of dysfunction, including: the family outreach worker service, which proved to be very beneficial during the pilot phase; an early warning system through the paediatric and patronage nursing service; monitoring in the education system; prevention programmes that will strengthen parental skills; and programmes for treatment to perpetrators.
- 7 Development of prevention and direct support services to particularly vulnerable children.** This includes: child labour, child marriages, support to children in migration, and particularly unaccompanied minors. It is recommended that systems of identification and early warning be developed in these areas, and existing services expanded (e.g. day centres for children living on the street or for children in conflict with the law) and scaled up.
- 8 Acceleration of deinstitutionalization, but with concomitant strengthening of surveillance of residential institutions.** Until the deinstitutionalization process is completed, it is recommended that the surveillance of residential institutions be made more regular and effective, and also implemented regularly in regard to VAC in foster care.
- 9 Securing and strengthening funding for the VAC prevention and protection system and related programmes.** The state has a responsibility to maintain its commitment to this cause and it is recommended that public funds be provided in order to make that commitment effective. It is also recommended that the government more effectively use partnerships and cooperation with international donors to distribute available funds towards these programmes.

The listed priorities are certainly not exhaustive. There are many other interventions needed for further development of the system for prevention and protection. However, these priorities are recognized as the minimum, without which further development is not possible. A more detailed list of recommendations, developed on the basis of analysis and consultations with key stakeholders, is presented in chapter 6.1 of the National Report.

# INTRODUCTION

The prevention and elimination of violence against children (VAC), as well as the protection of children that are at risk of or exposed to violence, have been recognized as a priority in national policies and are subject to considerable efforts invested by the government and state institutions, as well as stakeholders from the field of academic and applied research and civil society activists and organizations. This study — initiated by UNICEF and implemented by SeConS, with the mentorship of an expert team from the Zurich University of Teacher Education and the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti, is part of these efforts to advance policies and mechanisms aimed to prevent and suppress violence against children and protect children from violence.

The report is based on a study conducted according to a specific approach developed and applied on an international scale by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. This approach is known as the Research to Policy and Practice Process (R3P), distinguished by its emphasis on strong links between research and policy practice. The approach places determinants and factors of VAC at the central focus of research, enabling policies for preventing and protecting children from violence to more effectively address the roots of violence. This way, the approach provides ground for more competent public policies in this area and better-designed institutional responses, as it foregrounds knowledge on strengths and weaknesses, gaps and good practices that should be disseminated and scaled-up.

In line with the R3P principles, the processes of research, report drafting, and development of recommendations for further research and policy were highly participatory. Throughout the process the research team was supported by a technical group that included leading experts from various disciplines, as well as representatives of relevant institutions. Furthermore, the validation of findings and consultations about the recommendations for further improvement of the system of prevention and protection involved many stakeholders at the national and local level, such as representatives of ministries, institutions of the system for preventing and protecting children from violence, the academic community and the non-governmental sector. In this way, the process extracted the best knowledge and richest experience in this area so as to provide a quality basis for the next phase of policies for preventing and protecting children from violence.

## Purpose, objectives and scope of research

The national report has a twofold purpose. The primary purpose is to contribute to the next policy cycle with its findings on the determinants and factors of VAC, and by mapping institutional responses indicating which were targeting the causes of violence, which were effective, and where the gaps are in the system of prevention and protection. Since the previous National Strategy for Preventing and Protecting Children Against Violence<sup>8</sup> expired and the drafting of a new one is prescribed by the Action

<sup>8</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 122/2008.

Plan for Chapter 23<sup>9</sup> in the EU accession negotiations, this study aims at proposing recommendations for solutions in the new cycle of planning policies and measures for improving the system of preventing and protecting children against violence.

The second purpose of this report is to contribute to the international initiative lead by the Innocenti Research Centre. Findings about the state of affairs in Serbia need to be joined to the already existing pool of knowledge about the situation in other countries. This will contribute to the global knowledge on violence against children and responses to it, and it will make the specific situation and solutions in Serbia visible at a global level. Including Serbia in the pool of countries already committed to the R3P process will enrich the exchange of experiences between countries.

**The main objective** of the process of research and consultations based on which this report was drafted is to gather systematic insight into the determinants and factors of violence against children, as well as into the interventions aimed at preventing and suppressing such violence, and supporting adequately children at risk of, or exposed to violence.

**The specific objectives are:**

- 1 to identify the **key determinants and factors of violence against children in various settings**, such as the family, school, an institution, cyberspace or the wider community;
- 2 to identify **gaps in the knowledge about specific determinants** and the need for further research in specific areas that will contribute to a better understanding of the factors and conditions where violence against children happens;
- 3 to establish **in which way the existing interventions** aimed at preventing or suppressing violence against children and protecting them **impact the recognized determinants and factors** of violence;
- 4 to establish **to what extent it is at all possible to assess** if, how and to what degree the existing interventions affect the determinants and factors of violence based on the available evaluations and assessments of the effects of policies and measures;
- 5 to identify the **gaps in the system of prevention and protection**, namely establish which determinants and factors remain outside the effect of the interventions; and
- 6 to propose, based on previous insights, **specific recommendations** that indicate which **new interventions** would be needed in order to have more direct influence on the determinants and factors of violence and not on the consequences, that is, in which way **the already existing interventions need to be altered** in order to have a greater influence on these specific determinants and factors of violence.

The process that fulfilled the aforementioned objectives involved two main components: research and consultations aimed at defining the best possible methodology, validating the findings and drafting the recommendations (all stages and organization of the process are presented in Annex 1).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mpravde.gov.rs/tekst/9849/finalna-verzija-akcionog-plana-za-pregovaranje-poglavlja-23-koja-je-usaglasena-sa-poslednjim-preporukama-i-potvrdjena-od-strane-evropske-komisije-u-briselu-.php>

The survey was conducted through two components: a review of the relevant literature and intervention mapping.

**The overall scope of the research** was defined in terms of target group, geographic coverage, the period covered by the research and forms of violence (defined by two main criteria: harm inflicted on the child and the setting in which the violence occurs). **The target group** of the research covered children of all age categories (0–18 years). Regarding the criteria of **geographic coverage**, the study's primary focus is on the Republic of Serbia; in certain aspects it focuses on narrower territorial/administrative units, while in others Serbia is viewed in a wider, international, comparative context. As regards coverage in terms of **types of violence**, defined by **type of injury** inflicted on the child, they include: physical, psychological, sexual, neglect, exploitation, and child marriage. **Based on settings** in which children are exposed to violence, the study covers: the family, schools, institutions, digital environments, and the community. The **time span** covered by the literature review is slightly different from the one covered by the interventions mapping. The literature included in the review of determinants and factors was published from 1996 to date, with only international, highly relevant studies included from the pre-1996 period. Mapping of interventions for prevention, suppression of violence and protection of children covers the period after 2000.

## Conceptual framework

The conceptual and analytical framework provides the basis for the definition of key notions: violence and its different forms, determinants and factors, as well as institutional responses and interventions aiming at improvement of these responses.<sup>10</sup>

### *Definition of violence*

The research was grounded in a complex notion of violence proposed in the late 1960s by Galtung (1969), which enabled the phenomenon to be observed more comprehensively than with reductionist approaches that defined violence mainly as direct and mostly physical/somatic harm. A more comprehensive definition of violence includes structural forms as well, because “violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (Galtung, 1969: 168). By defining violence in this manner, Galtung says that research about violence must not be restricted only to direct bodily consequences of physical violence, but rather observed as a restriction against people in their daily lives and of the possibility for them to attain their potentials (which brings this approach closer to Sen’s concept of human development) (Babović, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> The conceptual framework was developed through a participatory process during a two-day workshop. In addition to the core research team and team of mentors from the University of Zurich, participants were experts with diverse expertise — in sociology, psychiatry, psychology, social work and political science — and coming from various settings — academic, NGO, government and public service.

Applied definitions of violence, which serve as a basis for monitoring the phenomenon, as well as drafting and monitoring policies, include to a greater or lesser extent this more comprehensive understating of violence. The World Health Organisation defines violence as “the intentional use of physical *force or power*, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (WHO, 2002, cited in Babović, 2015).

According to the definition contained in Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, violence includes “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” (UNICEF, n.d.).

The National Strategy for Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence, as well as national legislation, applies the WHO definition stating “child abuse or neglect includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power” (WHO, 1999).

### **Types of violence**

Types of violence against children are defined by two dimensions: **type of harm** suffered by the child and the **setting** in which the violence takes place. Types of violence based on the first dimension are defined in line with the UN World Report on Violence against Children<sup>11</sup> and include:

-  physical
-  psychological/emotional
-  sexual
-  neglect
-  exploitation
-  child (forced) marriage<sup>12</sup>
-  structural violence.

**Physical abuse** of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust (WHO, 1999).

**Psychological maltreatment** is defined as repeated acting or failure to act by a parent/guardian or peer that can result in serious and long-lasting behavioural, cognitive and affective consequences.

<sup>11</sup> UN World Report on Violence against Children, available at [https://www.crin.org/en/docs/UNVAC\\_World\\_Report\\_on\\_Violence\\_against\\_Children.pdf](https://www.crin.org/en/docs/UNVAC_World_Report_on_Violence_against_Children.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence use term “forced marriage”, while UNICEF uses the term “child marriage”. In this study the term child marriage will be used, but with an awareness that child marriage is overtly or implicitly (through socialization and adoption of norms) forced.

Psychological maltreatment includes denigration, scapegoating, threats and intimidation, restricting a child's movement, discrimination, mockery or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment with a child (Helfer, Kempe, & Krugman, 1997). Emotional abuse is a broader term because it includes, in addition to psychological maltreatment, the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies with others. Emotional abuse refers to a relationship between the primary caregiver and the child where the interactions are actually or potentially harmful to the child, and includes: exposure to confusing or traumatic events and interactions; using the child for the fulfilment of the caregiver's psychological needs; and actively corrupting the child or failing to promote the child's social adaptation. This form of abuse does not require physical contact between the caregiver and the child (Išpanović-Radojković, 2011).

**Sexual abuse** of a child encompasses a wide range of behaviours: contact activities such as rape, forcing a child to have sexual intercourse, touching, and using a child for an adult's masturbation, as well as non-contact activities involved in voyeurism or exhibitionism in front of a child. It can range from an isolated incident perpetrated by a stranger to constant abuse by a relative or family member over the course of many years, to rape and/or exploitation through prostitution and pornography. (Mršević, 1996, 1998; Išpanović-Radojković & Ignjatović, 2011; Bogavac & Otašević, 2015).

**Neglect** is defined as the failure to meet a child's basic needs, both physical and psychological (emotional, cognitive) and needs in the field of socialization, in an extent, duration and manner likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect also includes a parent failing to protect a child from physical harm and danger, and ensure adequate supervision, medical care, and schooling (Išpanović Radojković & Ignjatović, 2011). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) differentiate between child abuse and neglect by defining the first as "**acts of commission**" (words or overt actions that cause harm, potential harm or threat of harm), and the second as "**acts of omission**" (failure to provide needs or to protect from harm or potential harm).<sup>13</sup>

**Child exploitation** is the harmful use of a child for the purpose of profit, labour, sexual or other activity that results in cruel or harmful treatment and prevents child development and well-being. The exploitation takes different forms; our research focused on child labour, child trafficking (for various purposes — labour, begging, sexual exploitation), and child marriage (explicitly or implicitly forced).

**Child labour** is defined as the employment of children in any work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children.<sup>14</sup> Child labour exploitation includes cases when a child works in extremely difficult conditions, when he/she is low-paid or unpaid, when hours of work are long and when work is performed in an unhealthy environment. The most extreme forms of child labour include slavery, begging and prostitution (Vujović et al., 2006). **Child trafficking** is a crime involving the movement of children for the purpose of their exploitation,<sup>15</sup> while **child marriage** is entering formal or informal marital union before the age of 18.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> CDC definitions are available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/definitions.html>

<sup>14</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, C182, 17 June 1999.

<sup>15</sup> See UNICEF definition produced in cooperation with ILO, IOM and UNODC, [https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF\\_pressrelease\\_notetrafficking.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_pressrelease_notetrafficking.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> See more at [https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929\\_58008.html](https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html)

Unlike direct violence that is often seen as a form of behaviour, **structural violence** is embedded in social structures that are characterized by inequality. Cases of this type of violence can range from unequal opportunities for education, healthcare and employment, to racial inequality, hunger and poverty, as a result of economic violence, gender inequality, etc. These are institutionalized forms of injustice and include wider social relations, such as class (exploitation), gender (sexism), ethnicity (nationalism, ethnocentrism), and the like (Babović, 2015).

According to the **second criteria**, types of violence differ depending on the setting in which violence takes place:

- ▀ violence in the family (domestic violence)
- ▀ violence in the school
- ▀ violence in institutions
- ▀ violence in digital space
- ▀ violence in the community

Violence against a child **in the family** includes all forms of violence that the child is exposed to in the household and/or by family members and relatives, including witnessing violence between adults. Violence **in the school** covers all forms of violence that take place between children — so-called peer-to-peer violence — and violence against children by adults (teaching or non-teaching staff). Violence **in institutions** includes all forms of violence that take place towards children accommodated in residential institutions for child care and includes both peer and adult violence against children. **Digital violence** represents all forms of violence that take place through electronic means of communication and on the Internet. Violence **in the community** includes various forms of direct violence against children by unknown persons or acquaintances, and also the structural forms of violence that manifest themselves as social exclusion and discrimination. According to some definitions, it covers all forms of violence that children experience outside the home, schools and other institutions: it is violence occurring on the streets, sports fields and other places where children gather and socialize.

### ***Concept of determinants and factors***

The research used the terms of determinants<sup>17</sup> and factors. **Determinants** are indirect or direct conditions that have an effect on the occurrence of violence. These can also correlate positively or negatively with violence, i.e. can increase or decrease risk from violence (e.g. poor institutional mechanisms for protection may increase the risk of violence, while strong and efficient mechanisms may mitigate these risks). **Factors** are elements that are directly correlated with violence and can be measured more precisely. In the literature it is common to distinguish between risk and protective factors. **Risk factors** are those elements that directly induce, trigger or directly affect the occurrence of violence, while **protective factors** are elements that are negatively correlated with violence — their presence decreases the probability of violence to occur.

<sup>17</sup> According to the principles of R3P methodology, the usual term used instead of "determinants" is "drivers". Since that term is not customary in our language, it was decided to use the word "determinant".

This differentiation between determinants and factors and further between risk and protective factors is very important in scientific research. However, in this kind of study it can create an excessive burden in terms of precision, and complicate the framework of the analysis and interpretation of findings. Moreover, this kind of differentiation would not be fully possible, as the research is not profiled as robust scientific research, nor were statistical methods for the causal analysis used. Therefore, we will use the terms determinants and factors interchangeably throughout the study, without strict differentiation.

Based on a review of local and international reference literature, the endeavour to create a systematic overview of key determinants and factors of violence against children in various circumstances relies on threefold classification criteria: differentiating between **systemic factors** and **personal factors**, the level at which a given factor manifests (macro, meso and micro), and the type of factor related to the specific sub-system areas (social, economic, cultural, institutional, etc.).

According to this typology, factors and determinants were primarily viewed from a perspective of systemic conditions. Personal factors are those that increase or decrease the impact of systemic factors, and most often indicate ways in which systemic factors affect individuals (or groups of individuals) with specific individual characteristics. For example, the gender or disability of the child may increase the risk of violence. However, these are not genuine factors, but rather conditions that affect the likelihood of violence being perpetrated against children with these characteristics. Behind these are real factors for violence, such as discriminatory attitudes, norms and values, etc. Therefore, in order to analyse and develop interventions, it is very important to recognize these differences and the ways they interact, using precise methods to target both specific groups of children and real (sometimes concealed) factors that in fact originate from certain macro, meso or micro systems.

There are three different levels at which factors and determinants are observed: macro, meso or micro. At the **macro level**, various factors characterizing the broader socio-economic and cultural context create conditions for violence against children within various types of circumstances. At the **meso level**, factors can be viewed either from the geographical/administrative perspective or systemic-sectoral perspective. The former focuses primarily on factors defining specific conditions in the **local community** (economic, social, demographic, cultural, institutional). In the second perspective, factors stem from a **specific sector** or come from **part of the multi-sector system** for prevention and protection from violence but on the **national scale** (i.e. specific institutional mechanisms for social protection, protocols, networks of institutions for residential care, etc.). Factors that are inherent to a **micro community**, such as the family or individual institutions, are considered as factors at the **micro level**.

Determinants and factors were grouped into distinct types: **economic, social, institutional** and **cultural**, and are differentiated according to the level at which they appear. Thus, for example, economic determinants at the macro level are economic development conditions in the broadest sense, such as the employment status of the population and the prevalence of poverty; at the meso level, they are expressed as availability of funds for developing the system for protection, education, and institutional mechanisms for eliminating violence in the local community; while at the micro level these include the financial status of a family or household, or budget of individual institutions (e.g. residential institution for children without parental care, or a single school).

Personal characteristics recognized in literature as being factors linked to risk from violence are the age of child, gender, vulnerability (developmental problems, disability), etc.

**Table 1** TYPOLOGY OF DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS USED IN RESEARCH

SYSTEMIC			
MACRO LEVEL	<b>Economic:</b> development, (un)employment, poverty, financial (in)stability, economic inequalities		
	<b>Social:</b> presence and type of social conflicts, prevalence of crime, patterns of social exclusion, types of dominant gender regimes, regional inequalities, migration		
	<b>Institutional:</b> existence of laws and efficiency in their implementation, presence of policies relevant for preventing violence against children, density and quality of institutional infrastructure for preventing and eliminating violence against children and protection of children		
	<b>Cultural:</b> dominant values and norms that govern preferred relationship patterns, orders, and understanding of society and regulate relationships (values and norms related to accepting tradition or modernity, equality or inequality, patriarchal or liberal, democratic or authoritarian standards, etc.), especially norms and values that regulate gender relationships and inter-generational relationships, or that regulate tolerance towards violence, discrimination of different groups, etc.		
MESO LEVEL	<b>Economic:</b> level of development of the local community, employment, poverty, economic inequalities, resources available (including local budgets and other resources) for relevant systems — education, healthcare, social protection		
	<b>Social:</b> local population characteristics (demographic characteristics and trends), distinctively local social exclusion traits, local social conflict characteristics, crime, local gender regimes		
	<b>Institutional:</b> presence of relevant local policies (for preventing violence against children, policies intended for children and youth, etc.), presence and effectiveness of the implementation of protocols for acting in cases of violence, prevention programmes, availability and effectiveness of general and specialized support and protection services, availability of professional staff in relevant services, level of training and competency of staff (competency of professionals to recognize and report violence, take preventive action and provide protection in cases of violence, in keeping with their roles defined by protocols or other legislation)		
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes towards disciplining children, gender roles, children from vulnerable population categories, and violence; preferred models of intervention for eliminating violence and protecting children		
MICRO LEVEL	<b>FAMILY FACTORS</b>		
	<b>Economic:</b> employment status of parents, poverty, financial deprivation of family		
	<b>Social:</b> education level of parents or head of household, type of area, availability of informal social networks, family dysfunctions, divorce, conflict in the family/household, abuse of alcohol or narcotics, presence of gravely ill persons, persons with disabilities, participation of family members in the wars during the 1990s, parenting styles and practices		
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes towards disciplining children; awareness and openness to recognizing and addressing sexual violence, exploitation, etc.		
	<b>INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS</b>		
	<b>Economic:</b> Financial resources and capacities, material resources (e.g. size of premises, availability of hygienic facilities, dining and living space, number of persons per room, etc.)		
	<b>Social:</b> hierarchy, authority, relations among personnel, between personnel and beneficiaries, communication with parents, cooperation with other stakeholders in the community, facilitating inclusion of beneficiaries in the community, other services (e.g. education, social participation)		
	<b>Organizational:</b> quality of human resources, effectiveness of procedures, monitoring of performance, evaluation of staff, quality of protection services, etc.		
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes of employees in regard to beneficiary group(s) (e.g. discrimination, stereotypes, stigmatization), attitudes towards violence, gender-related norms and values guiding relations with male and female beneficiaries, specific “institutional culture”		
	<b>PERSONAL FACTORS</b>		
Age	Gender	Vulnerability	Personality traits

## Concept and types of interventions

An intervention is a specific action or set of actions aimed at causing the desired changes. In the broadest sense, interventions are conceived so as to encompass all the laws and policies that are directly or indirectly reflected on the situation in the field of violence against children. Since such a definition would be too broad of a task, and due to the need recognized during the process of consultations to direct attention primarily towards programmes and actions, this analysis does not include legislative solutions and changes, nor national strategies. With that restriction in mind, the interventions were mapped within three categories, depending on the target of the intervention and the type of means used to produce a 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).<sup>18</sup>

The above types of interventions may be observed at different levels (macro, meso and micro), as well as in the scope of different systems (education, healthcare, social protection, police, judiciary).

## Methodology

The research methodology is defined by the basic protocol of the R3P approach. Basically, the research was implemented through two key components: systematic and comprehensive literature review, and interventions mapping.

### *Methodology of literature review*

The literature review covered 265 literature units about violence against children in Serbia (the list of all reviewed studies is presented in Annex 2). The review included scientific literature, as well as “grey literature”, namely unpublished doctoral dissertations and master’s theses, reports of governmental and non-governmental organizations, etc. Bearing in mind that the picture of VAC in Serbia is created by this literature, and knowledge on determinants and factors on VAC in Serbia limited to the insights provided by this literature, it was necessary to go one step further. In order to identify which determinants and factors are missing in domestic literature, and to recommend further research, most international reference literature was reviewed as well. This way, even if there was no literature on a

<sup>18</sup> The manner in which interventions are defined and the types formulated thereof was agreed upon between different actors involved in the process — SeConS experts, UNICEF representatives, the Zurich team and members of the technical support group.

particular determinant or factor in Serbia, if international literature identifies the determinant/factor as being of proven importance in the occurrence of VAC or its features (prevalence, incidence, severity, type, etc.), the determinant/factor was listed in the analytical matrix. The review involved domestic literature published since 1996, while the time restriction did not apply to the international reference literature.

The analytical tool used to conduct the literature review was an analysis matrix<sup>19</sup> comprising several key segments: technical information on the literature; information on the subject matter of the literature with a focus on determinants and factors of violence against children; quality assurance assessment of the theoretical and methodological quality of the study and respect for ethical principles in the research and publication of results; and information on interventions implemented to prevent and suppress violence and protect children from violence. The process of selection and review of literature units, as well as the methodology applied, are described in detail in Annex 3 and in a separate report (UNICEF, 2016a). It should be mentioned here that the search was defined in line with Innocenti methodology by combining key words, and it covered various relevant databases, such as PubMed/Medline, PsycINFO (EBSCOhost), CINAHL-ebSCO, ERIC, EmBase, Kobson and Cobiss.rs, as well as some of the relevant international magazines (such as *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *Child Maltreatment*, *Child Abuse Review*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* and *Childhood*). In an effort to collect publications that are not scientific, the research team contacted a large number of relevant domestic and international institutions and organizations. The Zotero programme was used to store and manage literature and information, while the SPSS programme was used in the analysis. Despite the implementation of these thorough research methods, it is likely that some publications were nevertheless omitted; still, it can be estimated that most relevant literature was covered thanks to such a complex search methodology. It is important to note that this valuable resource will not be wasted after the completion of the study: it will be stored on a web platform specifically designed for this purpose. This way, researchers and other stakeholders interested in the area will have the opportunity to easily access the literature, the National Study and other publications that were produced during preparation of the National Study or as advocacy documents afterwards. This also includes recommendations for further research that can provide guidelines based on knowledge gaps discovered through this literature review.

### ***Interventions mapping methodology***

The main aim of the interventions mapping methodology was to establish to what extent existing interventions targeted determinants and factors of violence in different settings where violence occurs (family, school, institutions of residential accommodation, digital space or the community), and, where possible, their effects and outcomes. Therefore, the methodology relied on a specific analytical model that takes into account the logic of the systemic approach, but also the activity theory that focuses on what is happening in practice. According to this model, the analysis should pay attention to:

<sup>19</sup> The analytical matrix and methodology of literature review are based on principles and standards of the methodology used by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, which is presented in detail in the research guide (UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti, 2015).

- ▶ **the subject of intervention** — relevant actors who carry out activities within the intervention;
- ▶ **the objectives of the intervention** — to prevent, sanction, protect;
- ▶ **the target of intervention**, which can be a group of persons, a community, institutions, procedures, and social or even physical structures that the intervention intends to change, eliminate or establish;
- ▶ **the method or strategy** applied in order to achieve objectives upon a selected target of intervention; and
- ▶ **the context**, in the sense of a broader social or physical setting in which the intervention is situated.

Bearing in mind the key objectives of this study, the aim of intervention mapping was to identify to what extent implemented interventions targeted all determinants and factors of VAC and, if possible, to estimate with what effectiveness.

Part of the intervention mapping was conducted within the literature review process. However, in the domestic literature, only a very limited number of interventions were mentioned or analysed. Therefore, we needed to develop a mapping methodology that would allow for insights into different parts of the system. This was done by a twofold process. The first component included mapping of interventions within the public system, and the task was assigned to the experts working in the sectors of education, social protection and healthcare. The second component included mapping of interventions outside of the public system, and an online questionnaire was disseminated among NGOs engaged in child rights, VAC or the provision of various forms of services to children. Mapping included interventions from 2000 to date. The interventions mapping methodology is presented in more detail in Annex 4 and in a separate report (UNICEF, 2016b).

## The structure of the study

The study is organized around several chapters. The **second chapter** presents the most important characteristics of the Serbian context. This includes socio-economic conditions that are relevant for understanding the phenomenon of violence against children; the scope, prevalence and features of various forms of VAC in different settings; as well as the institutions and policies of preventing and protecting children against violence. The **third chapter** contains the findings on determinants and factors of violence against children taking place in different settings based on the literature review (domestic as well as international reference). The **fourth chapter** describes the findings related to the interventions mapping, focussing on the relation between interventions and determinants and factors of violence. The **final chapter** sums up the main findings and notable gaps that need to be covered by interventions in future processes. Based on these findings, the last chapter presents the recommendations to be taken into account when defining the new strategic framework for preventing and protecting children against violence in Serbia.

# THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND RELEVANT POLICIES

In order to understand what the determinants and factors of violence in Serbia are and how they were targeted by interventions during the period of intensive reforms after 2000, it is important to reveal a broader picture of the society in which VAC occurs, as well as to describe the scope and features of violence that create an immediate framework for such an objective. It is also important to become familiar with the most relevant legal, policy and institutional framework, as this creates the setting in which the link between interventions and determinants/factors of violence will be explored. In order to provide insight into this broader context, this chapter starts by presenting key socio-economic conditions in Serbia, which are specific and marked by a troubled post-socialist transformation and postponed reforms. After this, a picture of VAC in different settings in Serbia is presented based on most of the reference research. The final section is dedicated to the legal, policy and institutional framework that sets the scene for analysing interventions.

## Social-economic conditions in Serbia

Serbia has experienced a difficult path after the dismantling of socialism. During the 1990s, the authoritarian rule of Milosevic's regime postponed reforms, and the violent breakup of Yugoslavia was accompanied by a pre-existing deep economic decline, the destruction of all institutions, and the rise of an informal economy and other informal institutions that had to replace the destroyed ones (e.g. financial institutions were replaced by a financial black market for currency exchange and borrowing, the social protection system was replaced by informal safety networks, etc.). The isolation from the international community additionally contributed to the overall decline, a consequence of which was the massive impoverishment of the population. Violent conflicts in the region lead to a large number of refugees from former Yugoslav republics (particularly Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and an internally displaced population (from Kosovo).

After the fall of the Milosevic regime in 2000, a phase of intensive reforms commenced. However, these reforms had to start from a much worse foundation than at the end of socialist period, with a GDP that was only 46% of the GDP in 1989 (European Commission, 2008). During the period 2001–2008, reforms brought relative improvement to the economic situation and standard of living, but the world economic crisis had a strong impact on Serbia in 2009 and revealed all the weaknesses of its late and incomplete transition. Since then, Serbia has struggled to achieve a stable and regular positive growth, complete economic restructuring, increase employment and decrease unemployment, and generate new processes of development that can improve the population's well-being. Austerity measures reduced opportunities

**Table 2** VARIOUS INDICATORS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN SERBIA

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS <sup>20</sup>	
Population 2016	7,076,372
Share of children (0–17 years old) in the overall population in 2015	17.3%
Dependency rate of young population <sup>21</sup>	21.5%
SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS	
GDP per capita in US dollars 2016 <sup>22</sup>	USD 5,333
Employment rate (population 15+), 2016 <sup>23</sup>	45.5%
Unemployment rate (population 15+), 2016 <sup>24</sup>	13%
Inactivity rate (population 15+), 2016 <sup>25</sup>	47.7%
Informal employment rate, 2016 <sup>26</sup>	20.9%
Average salary without taxes and contributions, 2017 <sup>27</sup>	RSD 64,847
Gini coefficient <sup>28</sup>	38.2
Poverty risk rate <sup>29</sup>	25.9%
Child poverty risk rate (0–17 years) <sup>30</sup>	29.9%
Poverty risk rate of households with children <sup>31</sup>	28.2%
EDUCATION	
Persons aged 25–64 with a low education level <sup>32</sup>	20.2%
Share of highly educated persons (persons with a university degree) in total population <sup>33</sup>	10.6%
Preschool education coverage of children (0–3 years old) <sup>34</sup>	22.2%
Preschool education coverage of children from 3 years of age until preparatory preschool programme <sup>35</sup>	39.5%
Coverage of children by mandatory preschool preparatory programmes <sup>36</sup>	95.1%
Primary school dropout rate <sup>37</sup>	0.6%
Secondary school dropout rate <sup>38</sup>	1.3%
SOCIAL PROTECTION	
Rate of financial welfare beneficiaries <sup>39</sup>	3.6%
Rate of child allowance beneficiaries <sup>40</sup>	23.3%
Share of people with disabilities <sup>41</sup>	7.9%

for social policies and social investments that could bring new impetus for development.

<sup>20</sup> Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Share of the population younger than 15 in the working-age population (15–64), 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RZS), Statistics of national accounts, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RZS), Labour Force Survey, IV Quarter 2016, available at <http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/PageView.aspx?pKey=26>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Statistics of Employment and Earnings, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality. It is a measure of statistical dispersion in income or wealth distribution. Lower values indicate lower inequalities. Source of the value: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Income and Living Conditions Survey, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Income and Living Conditions Survey, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Persons with primary school educational attainment or less — represents the share of persons (25–64 of age) with a low level of education, in the total population of the same age. Source: Labour Force Survey, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2011 Population Census.

<sup>34</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, DevInfo, Education Statistics, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Share of financial welfare beneficiaries in the total population. Source: DevInfo (Information System of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and Statistical Office — Vital Statistics), 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Share of child allowance in the overall population of children. Source: DevInfo (Information System of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and Statistical Office — Vital Statistics), 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2011 Population Census.

The current period is profoundly marked by numerous issues that may be affecting the prevalence of violence against children. First, economic inequality is growing (the Gini coefficient was 38.2 in 2015), and the employment rate of the population is low (see Table 2). The risk of poverty is widespread, with children being the most affected.

Second, living conditions of children determine their chances to enjoy unhindered development and realize their potentials. As shown in Table 2, a significant share of children remain outside of the system of early education. Children from marginalized groups (poor families, Roma settlements, rural areas) have poorer educational achievement and leave school earlier (UNICEF, 2015). The situation is particularly difficult for children from the migrant population. A history of war has brought a large number of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (totalling over 600,000 during the 1990s), and displaced a segment of the population from Kosovo (over 200,000). For two decades, the integration of children from these groups into the education system and access to social services was an important issue. During last several years, and particularly after the huge migration flows crossing through Serbia on their way to the EU along the so-called Balkan Route, a new chapter has opened on the issue of children from migrant populations. After the closure of the Balkan Route, use of irregular migration channels prevents insight into the exact number of children, and particularly unaccompanied minors, who are in an extremely vulnerable situation. According to UNHCR in 2016 almost a third of persons who arrived in Serbia were children (27%) and over a quarter of them were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC).<sup>42</sup>

Third, gender inequalities are high in Serbia in various aspects: in the areas of political participation, economic activity, possession and access to assets and resources, and economic power, but also in the division of responsibilities related to taking care of the family and the household. An extreme form of such inequality is expressed as gender-based violence against women. The mapping of domestic violence against women in Central Serbia has shown that half of the women have been exposed to some kind of domestic violence after the age of 15, with psychological violence being the predominant form, and former or current partners of women being the main perpetrators (Babović, Ginić & Vuković, 2010). These gender inequalities are based on a patriarchal culture, which is still very present in Serbia. As recently as 2012, a majority of the population in Serbia (62.8%) expressed patriarchal orientation (Petrović, 2013: 383).

<sup>42</sup> UNHCR (2016) *Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe — January to December 2017*, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/52696>

## Scope and characteristics of violence against children

Taking into consideration the findings of different surveys<sup>43</sup>, the main impression is that children in Serbia are exposed to violence to a major extent and in different forms and settings.

### *Violence in the family*

The family, which is supposed to be a safety zone for children, an environment fostering their development, is not that for many children. The specificity of the family as a small, intimate community where everything that happens is considered a private matter, as well as the shame of social condemnation, make it very difficult to estimate precisely the prevalence and characteristics of violence against children in that context (Mihčić, 2002; Žegarac, 2004; Spasić & Radovanović, 2009; Hanak et al., 2013). Therefore, the available data on violence against children in the family should be taken with caution, especially data on sexual violence, which is particularly taboo.

The exposure of children to violence in the family is widespread, regardless of whether children are direct objects of violence or witnesses of a violent act. Data from surveys on violence against women (Ignjatovic, 2015) indicated that in three quarters of cases of violence (76.5%) children witnessed violence against their mothers. According to the same source, half of the children (45.9%) were exposed to direct violence by their fathers. The most common reaction of children in a situation of violence against their mothers was physical or verbal confrontation to the perpetrator (42.9%) (which exposes children to the risk of direct violence), hiding (39.4%), and calling for help (24.7%); reactions were associated with the age of children (Ignjatović, 2015).

Corporal punishment of children is widespread in Serbia, underpinned by certain values and views estimating that such a form of punishment is legitimate and even advisable<sup>44</sup> (Srna & Stevanović, 2010; Trebješanić, 2008; Spasić, 2012). However, the Council of Europe (2007) considers corporal punishment for the purpose of correction or control of a child's behaviour to be violence against children, since it demonstrates power and domination, humiliates the child, and often leads to bodily harm and serious damage to health. It is also ineffective in bringing about desired positive behaviours, and leads to increased aggressiveness of the child and an intergenerational cycle of renewed violent behaviour (Srna & Stevanović, 2010; Išpanović Radojković & Žegarac, 2011).

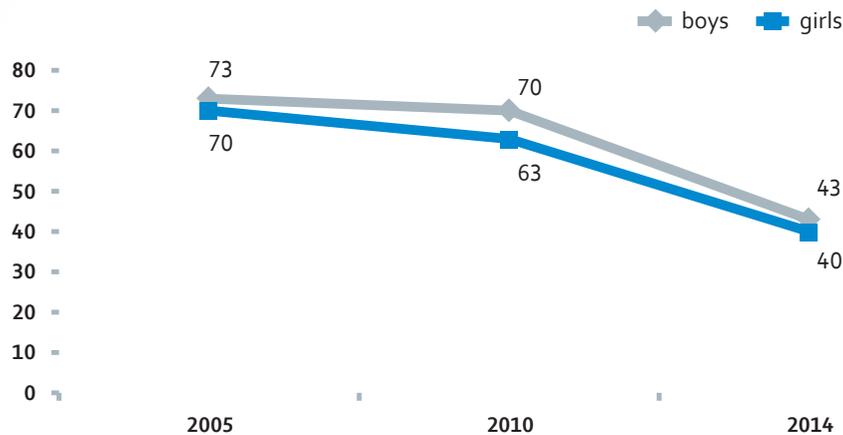
According to the findings of the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) that UNICEF has conducted in Serbia several times, the prevalence of violent disciplining methods (according to self-reporting by an adult member of the household) decreased in the period 2005–2014; nevertheless, a significant number of children remain exposed to such disciplining methods, particularly small children (1–4 years old). Almost half of boys and girls of this age group in the general population were exposed to some

<sup>43</sup> Some of the key studies focused on violence in the family, with surveys conducted on representative samples, are Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) and Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect. There are also some other studies, smaller in range, covering this topic, which have been reviewed in the previous phases of this project (all reviewed units of literature will be listed in the Annex of this study).

<sup>44</sup> As evidenced by many popular folk sayings often used in everyday practices, such as "Beating comes straight from Heaven", "Spare the rod and spoil the child", etc.

form of violent disciplining methods, while the percentage is higher among boys and girls living in Roma settlements (65% and 58% respectively) (Babović, 2015).

**Figure 1** PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGED 5–14 YEARS EXPOSED TO ANY VIOLENT DISCIPLINARY METHOD DURING THE PREVIOUS MONTH, MICS SERBIA 2005, 2010, 2014



Source: Babović, 2016.

Although the overall violent disciplining of children from the general population is decreasing with age, the gender gap is increasing. While the gender gap in the general population is absent among children aged 1–4 years, it reaches 3.2 percentage points among children aged 5–14 years. Girls are more frequently exposed to severe physical punishment than boys (Babović, 2015).

According to the findings of the Balkans Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse & Neglect (BECAN),<sup>45</sup> almost 70% of children experienced at least one case of psychological or physical violence at home in while growing up. Over a quarter of children felt neglected at least once. Over 8% of children experienced sexual abuse at least once and 38% of children witnessed violence between adults in the family (Išpanović Radojković et al., 2012; Hanak et al., 2013).

Data on child neglect in Serbia are lacking. According to the findings of the BECAN, more than a quarter (28.8%) of children of 11–16 years old said they had had a subjective feeling of being neglected at least once in their life (Hanak et al., 2013). Cases of child neglect make it to the institutions (chiefly a centre for social work) only when they reach dramatic proportions (Centre for the Rights of the Child, 1999; Obretković & Žegarac, 1998). Among 6,520 cases of violence against children reported to centres for social work, 44.3% were cases of neglect in the family (far more frequent in biological ones — 98% of the cases). Other forms of violence are significantly less

<sup>45</sup> The study was simultaneously conducted in nine Balkan countries (Albania, BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey), on a representative sample of children aged 11, 13 and 16 years.

registered by centres for social work: physical abuse (27.2%), psychological abuse (23%) and sexual abuse (1.8%).<sup>46</sup>

Children with disabilities or developmental problems are exposed to a high risk of domestic violence (MNRO — the Alliance of Organisations Supporting Persons with Mental Disabilities & UNICEF Serbia, 2013). The findings of a survey with the parents of such children indicate that some parents are aware of the fact that inadequate parenting practices represent a specific form of neglecting the child's needs and one kind of abuse. Inadequate parenting practices also include too low or too high expectations of parents from such children, overprotection of the child, exclusion of the child from the community due to fears for its safety or shame, etc.

Fathers are more frequently identified as perpetrators than mothers in studies on violence against children in the family. The parents are the most frequent perpetrators of violence with a fatal outcome. In 32 of 46 registered cases (69.9%) of murdered children (0–14 years), the perpetrator is one of the parents, slightly more frequently the mother (Baralić et al., 2010). However, studies of judicial practice, and family–legal and criminal–legal protection from domestic violence clearly confirm that men are by far the most frequent perpetrators of violence in the family (Petrušić & Konstatinović Vilić, 2010; Macanović, 2012). As survey data indicate, the vast majority of court cases (88.2%) were in protection of women as victims of violence in the family, and perpetrators were mostly men (90.6%). In the surveyed sample (287 civil cases) it was reported that minor children witnessed violence in 48.4% cases. The percentage of children witnessing violence against their mothers was much higher in the Belgrade sub-sample — 63.4% of cases. Only a small number of children (24.2%) achieved the right to express their opinion, in relation to the total number of cases in which the couples have minor children. The most common protective measure was a harassment restraining order, while an order for the eviction of the accused from his flat/house was issued in only 14% of cases (Petrušić & Konstatinović Vilić, 2010).

Exposure to violence in the family hinders the successful psychological, emotional and cognitive development of the child. The consequences of exposure to violence include physical consequences (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) (Stefanović, 2014; Išpanović Radojković & Ignjatović, 2011; Milosavljević-Đukić et al., 2011; Stevković, 2006; Stevković, 2013a). Children have difficulties in achieving social relations due to domestic violence. They socialize less with their peers; mothers report that some children exhibit violent behaviour toward peers (13.5%), other behavioural problems (10.6%) or are victims of abuse by their peers (7.1%). Among children between the ages of 15 and 18 years, to the knowledge of their mothers, one in ten has a problem of violence in their early partner relationship (Ignjatović, 2013). Data confirm that long-term exposure of children to violence leaves a greater number of adverse effects on children's development. Older children that are exposed to direct physical violence react more with counter-aggression (physical and verbal), and feel

<sup>46</sup> Report of the National Institute for Social Protection of the Republic of Serbia, 2015.

rage and anger. Younger children react more by retreating, being afraid and anxious. Survey findings did not indicate significant differences between girls and boys in the reaction to violence (Ignjatović, 2013).

A study on adverse childhood experiences conducted among the student population in Serbia indicated strong links between violence and health-risk behaviours. Respondents who had been exposed to physical violence were 1.5 times more likely to become active smokers, twice as likely to use illicit drugs and 4.2 times more likely to attempt suicide. Psychological and sexual violence are also correlated with higher risks of unhealthy behaviour. Although the sample of this WHO research is not representative of the general population, the survey results can serve as evidence of the detrimental consequences of violence experienced in childhood (Paunović et al., 2015).

### ***Violence in the school***

School violence was the most researched of all settings in Serbia (UNICEF, 2016a). According to the findings of one of the most extensive surveys of school violence, which was carried out as part of the project “School without Violence — Towards a Safe and Supportive Environment for Children”<sup>47</sup> in 2013,<sup>48</sup> 44% of students were exposed to peer-to-peer violence in the three-month period preceding the survey. Among them, 45.8% experienced verbal abuse and 33% physical violence, another 33% experienced social violence, i.e. violence in relationships, while 21% of children perpetrated violence. Boys were slightly more likely to declare themselves as bullies than girls and were more often exposed to violence by peers and adults (Popadić, Plut et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a quarter of the students in the 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school said they had been victims of bullying by a teacher, 15% of them said that they had been hit by a teacher, while 5% were threatened by a teacher. However, the survey also revealed widespread violence of students against teaching staff: 43% of students said they witnessed situations involving students insulting or threatening a teacher, while 9% reported having witnessed physical attacks on teachers (Popadić et al., 2014).

According to the same survey, peer violence is slightly more often present in special schools for children with disabilities, where 58% of children were involved in violent incidents (28% as victims, 7% as bullies and 23% as both victims and bullies). A second survey about violence against children also pointed to a high incidence of violence against children from this group. According to the testimonies by 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). The most frequent forms of violence these children face are psychological violence and social exclusion, while the perpetrators are most often their peers (MNRO & UNICEF, 2013).

According to findings from the survey on gender-based violence in schools (Ćeriman et al., 2015), this is also a widespread form of violence in schools in Serbia. During the first three months of the 2013/14 school year, as many as 69% of surveyed primary school students and 74% of secondary

<sup>47</sup> The study was carried out by the Institute of Psychology at the University of Belgrade with the support of UNICEF. It was conducted in several instances in the period 2005–2013 (Popadić & Plut, 2007; Popadić et al., 2014).

<sup>48</sup> In the scope of this cycle, the survey involved 109,151 students (including 537 students of schools for children with special needs) and 7,680 employees in schools.

school students experienced at least one form of gender-based violence. Boys are more often the perpetrators of violence, and exposure to gender-based violence increases with age. The research also showed that boys, more often than girls, express views justifying gender-based violence against women; the percentage of boys who express these views increases with age, whereas the percentage of girls decreases with age. Evidence was found of violence committed by school personnel: in 27 out of 50 schools from the sample there were reported cases of violence committed by school staff (in 20 schools physical violence and in seven schools sexual violence) (Ćeriman et al., 2015).

Information about violence against children in preschool institutions is not available and the sparse literature is either theoretical in nature or dates back to the period prior to the one covered by this study.

### ***Violence in institutions***

Institutions for social protection of children in Serbia include: residential institutions for children without parental care (13), residential institutions for children and youth with disabilities (five), and institutions for children and youth in conflict with the law (three). Despite processes of deinstitutionalization, a significant number of children remain accommodated in these institutions.

According to the *World Report on Violence Against Children* (Pinheiro, 2006), children placed in institutions are at a major risk of violence either by their peers placed in the same institutions or by adults (institution employees). Remaining in institutions increases the risk of violence in various forms, including structural ones, which are the consequence of poor material conditions and the lack of adequate professional capacities.

According to findings of the study *From Neglect and Deprivation to Abuse and Violence — The Developmentally Challenged Child*, one survey<sup>49</sup> found that 62% of the children covered had witnessed cases of violence against children by staff. The most common forms of violence that children experienced or witnessed were insults (51%), cursing (43%), intentional disregard (42%), slapping (41%), pushing and pulling (24%), throwing objects at children (23%), beating with objects (10%), deprivation of food and sleep (7%), threatening a child with a gun (4%) and threats with other weapons (2%). As opposed to the children, the staff often minimized the magnitude and prevalence of violence against children: 44% of them reported that they had never witnessed any violent behaviour against a child in their respective institution, 30% of them said they had rarely or occasionally witnessed it, while 23% was not sure whether the behaviour they witnessed was considered violence (Savic et al., 1998).

Physical restrictions and separation from the group are used in the residential institutions for children with disabilities as measures in cases of self-mutilation by the children. This phenomenon is believed to be the consequence of inadequate care for children that have been placed in institutions for a long period of time without sufficient human contact, stimulation or care. Staff that is unable to provide individual attention to such children uses fixation as a method to prevent self-harm, but it further

<sup>49</sup> The study involved developmentally challenged children and staff of 11 institutions of social protection, including certain healthcare institutions where children remain for an extended period of time for treatment or recovery.

exacerbates the child's self-harm, and so creates a vicious circle of violence (Ćirić et al., 2012). Children and young people with disabilities placed in residential care institutions, apart from chronic neglect of their basic physical and emotional needs, have limited access to education. The vast majority of them are not enrolled in schools, and if they are, they attend special schools for children with disabilities and they are further segregated or isolated (Janjić & Beker, 2016).

Studies of violence against children living in institutions for children without parental care show that violence is also widespread in this setting (Plut & Popadić, 2007). A survey conducted in 2007 among children aged 10–18 years placed in such institutions showed that virtually none of the children were safe from violence during their stay at the institution: only 2.6% of children stated that they had not experienced any of the listed forms of violence. Two thirds of the interviewed children (76%) were subjected to at least one form of violence several times. The most frequent forms of violence were verbal, psychological and physical violence, and the main actors of all forms of violence were other children in the institution, although staff is also identified as perpetrators. It is very striking that staff in these institutions in most cases (83%) denied that violence in residential care institutions is a serious issue, or denied the existence of violence of adults against children.

### ***Violence in digital space***

Studies of exposure of children to digital violence are relatively new and scarce in Serbia. The first systematic survey was carried out in 2012<sup>50</sup> and it showed that 62% of primary school students and 84% of secondary school students had been exposed at least once to an Internet risk in the past year (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2013). In a recent survey<sup>51</sup> (Kuzmanović et al., 2016) 64% of parents/caregivers of children aged 8–17 years said that their children had had unpleasant and disturbing Internet experiences.

Development of new technologies is followed by the appearance of new forms of violence and new terms that label them. "Sexting" is word coined to describe relatively new forms of violence that consist of sending and distributing messages containing the content of sexual abuse or publishing pornographic pictures through text messages. There is still no research conducted on this phenomenon in Serbia.

Data on child pornography is extremely rare. The literature review revealed that in 2010, there were 21 charges filed for child pornography offences under Article 185 of the Criminal Code, and only three persons were convicted (Tanjević, 2012).

### ***Violence in the community***

Violence against children in the community exists in various forms. In recent decades, different kinds of violence among children and youth have been a focus of public attention. Some of them were based on ethnic affiliation (e.g. violence against Roma children, between Serbian and Hungarian youth in

<sup>50</sup> Survey conducted on a sample of 3,786 students, 3,078 parents and 1,379 teachers (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2013).

<sup>51</sup> Survey conducted on a sample of 614 parents from 141 Serbian municipalities by means of telephone interview.

Vojvodina), political affiliation (e.g. LGBT movement attacked by right-wing groups), sports fan club affiliation, etc. Unfortunately, there have been no studies on violence against children with refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) status. The years of war in the region, violent political discourse and widespread social conflicts have increased tolerance to violence and created an atmosphere in which new generations of children and young people are adjusted to perceive violence as a legitimate means. Literature on these forms of violence and their roots in the troubled transition and wars is scarce.

Gendered patterns of violence are grounded in a still-prevailing patriarchal culture and masculine and feminine identities of young people. 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 (International Centre for Women Research, 2013). Another survey conducted in 2014 across the region within the Young Men Initiative indicated that the endangered health and well-being of boys and young men in the Balkans, and the implication it brings for women and girls, requires systematic changes to the education and health systems (Barker & Pawlak, 2014). One comprehensive study on youth in Serbia showed a high level of intolerance. Young people have the highest level of social distance towards several social groups — homosexuals, asylum seekers, people from Croatia and Roma people; in many cases, they expressed that they would not like to have them in their neighbourhoods. The results of the analysis showed that two out of five young persons would not be happy if a homosexual couple moved into their neighbourhoods. Also, every sixth young person in Serbia would not be happy if a family from the USA or China moved into their neighbourhood (Tomanovic & Stanojevic, 2015).

Sport clubs and sport competitions were also identified as a setting in which violence commonly occurs. Among children involved in sports, 51% of them said they had experienced violence by their teammates, and 41% by their opponents; as many as 61% of them had experienced violence by their coaches (Popadić et al., 2011).

In this study the attention is focused on several specific forms of VAC in the community: abuse of child labour, child trafficking for the purpose of labour or sexual exploitation, (forced) child marriage or risks of violence due to a vulnerable situation (e.g. related to migration status), and risks of violence among children living and working on the street.

When it comes to child labour, the findings of the MICS study from 2014 showed that child labour is more prevalent in poor families and rural areas. In the latter, 15% of children are involved in child labour, which is much more than average for Serbia (4%). Boys most often work in economic activities, while girls are predominantly active in household work (UNICEF, 2014).

Child marriage is a form of violence mostly faced by girls from Roma settlements. According to the findings of the MICS study, in the general population of women between 20 and 49 years of age, 7% were married before the age of 18; among the girls living in Roma settlements, however, up to 17% were married before the age of 15 and more than one half before turning 18. Early marriage almost completely shatters the chances for these girls to obtain a secondary or post-secondary education degree, and to participate in the labour market and provide a better quality of life (Babović, 2015).

Multiple forms of violence, from structural to direct ones, affect children from one of the most vulnerable social groups — children living 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 (Djordjević et al., 2011) and risk being involved in human trafficking (ASTRA, 2012; Kuzmanović et al., 2013).

## Policies for prevention, elimination of violence against children and protection of children from violence

Since the mid-2000s in Serbia, the prevention and suppression of violence against children and protection of children from violence have been identified as an important state priority.

In August 2005 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect, compiled by a working group formed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy. The purpose of the adoption of this protocol was to provide a framework for the establishment of an effective, operational, multi-sector network for the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, which was one of the specific objectives of the National Plan of Action for Children from 2004, which defined the general policy of the country towards children until 2015. In addition to the General Protocol, during the period from 2006 to 2009 special sectoral protocols were adopted, which defined specific roles and procedures in protecting children from abuse and neglect within each relevant sector in the system of protection – social welfare, education, police, healthcare and judicial.

In 2008 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a National Strategy for Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence,<sup>52</sup> and in 2010 the action plan for its implementation.<sup>53</sup> This strategic document defined two goals: to “[d]evelop a safe and secure environment in which the right of all children to be protected from violence will be respected”, and “[e]stablish a national system for preventing and protecting children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation”. These were implemented through 12 specific objectives, measures and activities in the period from 2009 to 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 122/2008.

<sup>53</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 15/10.

A series of laws and other strategic documents adopted in the last period may be singled out:

- ▶ The **Family Law**,<sup>54</sup> adopted in 2005, for the first time classifies domestic violence as a criminal offence and regulates family-legal protection of children in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ▶ The **Law on Social Protection**<sup>55</sup> adopted in 2011 defines child protection services, including those related to the protection from violence and neglect.
- ▶ The **Juvenile Justice Law (Law on Juvenile Offenders and Protection of Minors in Criminal Justice Proceedings)**,<sup>56</sup> which came into effect in 1 January 2006, contains specific provisions on protection of minors as victims in criminal procedures.
- ▶ The **Law on Police** from 2005<sup>57</sup> introduced for the first time a special provision on the exercise of power towards minors, and a new Law on Police from 2016 further elaborates this provision by providing for the adoption of a by-law that will further regulate actions in this area.
- ▶ The amended **Criminal Code**<sup>58</sup> contains a relief measure — a restraining order and ban of communication with the defendant. This code introduces new criminal offences regarding protection of minors from sexual exploitation and use and abuse of narcotics, and additionally tightens criminal sanctions for the crime of human trafficking, if it is committed against a minor.
- ▶ The amended **Criminal Procedure Code**<sup>59</sup> provides the opportunity for a minor to gain protected witness status, and ensures taking measures to protect his/her integrity, i.e. protect him against secondary victimization.
- ▶ The amended **Law on Misdemeanours**<sup>60</sup> contains provisions on minors. Among other things, this law stipulates that a person under 14 years of age cannot be held tortuously liable, and that a person of this age who appears in misdemeanour proceedings as a witness or a defendant cannot be confronted with the offender.
- ▶ The **Law on the Foundations of the Education System**<sup>61</sup> for the first time prohibits physical abuse and personal insults to children at school, i.e. it guarantees the child's right to protection from discrimination and violence.
- ▶ The **Law on Prevention of Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events**<sup>62</sup> prescribes that at high-risk sports events persons younger than 16 years of age may enter the venue only under the supervision of a parent or a legal guardian.

<sup>54</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 18/2005, 72/2011 — other law and 6/2015.

<sup>55</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 24/2011.

<sup>56</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 85/2005.

<sup>57</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 101/2005 and 63/2009 — decision of the Constitutional Court.

<sup>58</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 85/2005, 88/2005-corr., 107/2005, 72/2009, 111/09, 121/2012, 104/2013 and 108/2014.

<sup>59</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 72/2011, 101/2011, 121/2012, 32/2013, 45/2013 and 55/2014.

<sup>60</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 65/2013 and 13/2016.

<sup>61</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 72/2009, 52/2011, 55/2013, 35/2015 — authentic interpretation, 68/2015 and 62/2016.

<sup>62</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 67/2003, 101/2005 — other law, 90/2007, 72/2009 — authentic interpretation, 68/2015 and 62/2016. other law, 111/2009 and 104/2013 — other law.

- ▶ The **Social Protection Development Strategy**,<sup>63</sup> within its strategic goal “Transformation of Residential Institution for Children”, envisages the creation of conditions and support for care for children in the family environment (biological or foster-care) rather than in institutions.

Within the EU accession process of Serbia, Chapter 23 has been opened, which includes areas relevant for protection of children from violence. In order to more effectively fulfil the conditions in these areas, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has drafted an action plan that outlines strategic priorities in judicial reform and fundamental rights. The action plan envisages the development of the new Multi-annual Strategic Framework for Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence in 2017 and plans for the revision of soft-law regulations (general and sectoral protocols) that outline how cross-sector cooperation takes place between systems at the local level to protect children from abuse and neglect.

A national dialogue on VAC facilitated by UNICEF and held in April 2015 resulted in cross-ministerial consensus — namely of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as from CSO partners — to advance the protection of children from violence. There was consensus among all stakeholders that many pieces of evidence located in studies and analyses completed over the years, as well as in official and other databases, contain a wealth of unexplored data and information on violence against children. A better understanding of the drivers of violence and its determinants, through analysis of such data sources, could help Serbia identify priorities for shaping its new national strategy and action plan. These considerations were the basis for initiation of this research.

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63 *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 108/2005.

# DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA

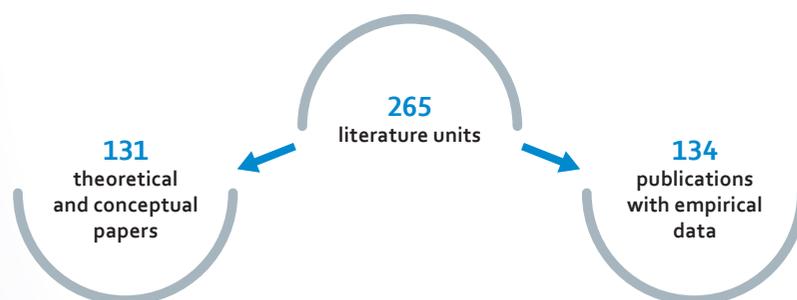
## 4

### DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA

#### Technical information about the reviewed literature

The analysis of determinants and risk and protective factors of violence against children in Serbia encompassed 265 literature units, including 131 non-empirical studies (theoretical and conceptual papers) and 134 texts containing empirical data about violence against children, whereas some also contained data on certain forms of interventions. While it is possible to find out more about the technical aspects of the overview of literature on which the findings herein are based in a separate report (UNICEF, 2016a), only key information will be outlined here.

**Figure 2** TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW



Of the total number of reviewed studies, 221 were exclusively dedicated to the phenomenon of violence against children, while the remaining studies included it as one of the topics. In the empirical studies, the target group of the analysis was often defined quite precisely in terms of age, gender or other characteristics. The review found that the most lacking literature and insights are those about the youngest children (0–5 years), while the age group 12–14 years is the most commonly discussed.

The literature also varies in terms of geographical coverage. While a majority of the studies focused on the territory of Serbia, the empirical data sometimes concern the entire territory/population, other times a region or individual local communities, while in fewer (21) studies Serbia is involved in a regional or international comparative analysis. After having examined this aspect of literature, it is clear that the rural areas and villages have been relatively “disregarded” compared to urban areas.

In terms of the representation of various groups of children at risk of violence, the analysis focused on: children with disabilities, children from minority ethnic communities (in particular Roma children), children living/working on the street, victims of human trafficking and children from migrant groups (from the population of refugees, IDPs, returnees, asylum seekers).

The pool of literature included articles and other publications thematically focused on various types of violence: physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, neglect, exploitation (sexual or labour), and child marriages, as well as poverty, discrimination and social exclusion as structural forms of violence. However, the most frequently analysed type of violence was physical violence (present in 45% of studies), followed by psychological (in 41%) and sexual violence (in 39%). Other forms of violence were much less often in the focus of the analysis — neglect in 11% of studies, exploitation and structural violence in 3%, and child marriages in 2%. As regards the setting in which violence occurs, the analysis most frequently focused on violence in schools (44%), then family (29%), and to a much lesser extent the community (9%), digital space (6%) and institutions for social protection of children (6%).

The number of empirical studies based on nationally representative samples is very limited (e.g. UNICEF MICS, BECAN), so it is not easy to compare representation of various types of violence in the literature with their prevalence and incidence rates. While national-level studies indicate psychological violence as the most prevalent form, followed by physical violence, neglect and sexual violence, in the literature, a stronger focus on physical and sexual violence is evident.

In the literature, the most commonly identified perpetrators of violence are parents and peers (33% each) and family members (6%), while 8% of literature units focused on fathers as perpetrators of violence. The studies often do not focus sufficiently on accurate identification of perpetrators of violence (15%), while other perpetrators, such as strangers or staff in institutions, appear in a small number of cases. Also, a small number of studies (3%) deal primarily with forms of violence that can be labelled as structural violence (in line with Galtung's definition presented earlier), where poverty, inequality, social exclusion, or discrimination can be considered "perpetrators" that prevent children's development and well-being.

With regard to the consequences of violence, the reviewed literature most commonly identifies bodily harm and various psychological and emotional consequences, such as a sense of uncertainty or lack of self-confidence. In addition to the consequences that occur immediately after exposure to a violence, in many cases the subject of analysis were consequences that develop later ("delayed" consequences), and which can be thoroughly detrimental to a child's overall development.

The quality of studies was assessed during the literature review based on multidimensional criteria.<sup>64</sup> According to the assessment 34% were evaluated as highest-quality studies, 46% were evaluated as average quality, while the rest were of below-average quality. It was found that in 82% of empirical

<sup>64</sup> Criteria taken into account in the quality evaluation include whether the studies contained notice of any limiting factors, whether they included a chapter with key findings and a discussion chapter, whether the studies were peer reviewed and whether the source of funding was clearly stated if the paper included findings of research. Observance of *ethical principles* was considered primarily in the analysis of papers based on empirical research, especially those that involved children. The criteria taken into account in this regard included: respect for privacy and integrity of respondents and use of specific procedures to ensure a sound ethical approach — e.g. requiring consent for the research and voluntary participation in the research.

studies ethical principles were respected and noted in the study, while in the remaining studies ethical standards were somewhat lower.

## Overview of determinants and factors represented in literature about violence against children

As already noted in the description of the methodology, the list of determinants and factors was defined not only based on domestic literature, but also on the basis of referenced international work. The reason was to start from the comprehensive “list” of determinants and factors proven as significant on the international scale and then to compare which of these are present in domestic literature. This should reveal gaps in research and help explain determinants and factors of different forms of violence against children that occurs in various settings.

The following table contains the list of determinants and factors that influence VAC on different levels: macro, meso and micro. The **macro** level represents the society of Serbia; the **meso** level represents a particular middle-range level that can be either:

- ▶ a particular geographical/administrative area (region, local community, or small group of local communities); or
- ▶ a particular part of the system (education, social protection, healthcare, specific mechanism of multi-sectoral cooperation) on national or sub-national levels.

The **micro** level includes very small systems, or communities, such as the family or an individual institution. In addition to the three systemic levels, there is fourth group of factors comprising individual, personal factors. These include age, gender, ethnicity, disability or other vulnerability, and other characteristics. It should be remembered that these are separate from systemic levels as they are not considered “real” factors, but characteristics related to specific risks of violence.

Within each level of the system determinants and factors are differentiated according to the following types: **economic, social, institutional/organizational** and **cultural**. At the micro level these factors appear in different forms when two micro institutions are compared: **family** and **residential institutions** for the care of children. For example, economic factors appear in the family as employment of parents or heads of the household, living standard, poverty, and material deprivation, while in the institution they are presented as annual budget, material resources, and similar. Bearing in mind the differences between the two micro systems, factors are presented separately within the analytical model.

The presence of determinants/factors differentiated in this twofold (level and type) process was assessed in regard to their presence and importance in the literature on violence against children in different **contexts**. The results are presented in Table 3.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that borders between system levels are often fluid and some factors can cut across different levels of the system.

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**Table 3 IDENTIFICATION OF REPRESENTATION OF DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF SPECIFIC TYPE IN THE ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN THAT OCCUR IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS**

Determinants and factors		Setting where violence occurs				
		Family	School	Institution	Digital space	Community
<b>SYSTEMIC</b>						
<b>MACRO LEVEL</b>	<b>Economic:</b> development, (un)employment, poverty, financial (in)stability, economic inequalities					
	<b>Social:</b> presence and type of social conflicts, prevalence of crime, patterns of social exclusion, types of dominant gender regimes, regional inequalities, migration					
	<b>Institutional:</b> existence of laws and efficiency in their implementation, presence of policies relevant for preventing violence against children, density and quality of institutional infrastructure for preventing and eliminating violence against children and protection of children					
	<b>Cultural:</b> dominant values and norms that govern preferred relationship patterns, orders, and understanding of society and regulate relationships (values and norms related to accepting tradition or modernity, equality or inequality, patriarchal or liberal, democratic or authoritarian standards, etc.), especially norms and values that regulate gender relationships and inter-generational relationships, or that regulate tolerance towards violence, discrimination of different groups, etc.					
<b>MESO LEVEL</b>	<b>Economic:</b> level of development of the local community, employment, poverty, economic inequalities, resources available (including local budgets and other resources) for relevant systems — education, healthcare, social protection					
	<b>Social:</b> local population characteristics (demographic characteristics and trends), distinctively local social exclusion traits, local social conflict characteristics, crime, local gender regimes					
	<b>Institutional:</b> presence of relevant local policies (for preventing violence against children, policies intended for children and youth, etc.), presence and effectiveness of the implementation of protocols for acting in cases of violence, prevention programmes, availability and effectiveness of general and specialized support and protection services, availability of professional staff in relevant services, level of training and competency of staff (competency of professionals to recognize and report violence, take preventive action and provide protection in cases of violence, in keeping with their roles defined by protocols or other legislation)					
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes towards disciplining children, gender roles, children from vulnerable population categories, and violence; preferred models of intervention for mitigating violence and protecting children.					

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**DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA**

		FAMILY FACTORS				
MICRO LEVEL	<b>Economic:</b> employment status of parents, poverty, financial deprivation of family					
	<b>Social:</b> education level of parents or head of household, type of living area, availability of informal social networks, family dysfunctions, divorce, conflict in the family/ household, abuse of alcohol or narcotics, presence of gravely ill persons, persons with disabilities, participation of family members in the wars during the 1990s, parenting styles and practices					
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes towards disciplining children; awareness and openness to recognizing and addressing sexual violence, exploitation, etc.					
	INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS					
	<b>Economic:</b> Financial resources and capacities, material resources (e.g. size of premises, availability of hygienic facilities, dining and living space, number of persons per room, etc.)					
	<b>Social:</b> hierarchy, authority, relations among personnel, between personnel and beneficiaries, communication with parents, cooperation with other stakeholders in the community, facilitating inclusion of beneficiaries in the community, other services (e.g. education, social participation)					
	<b>Organizational:</b> quality of human resources, effectiveness of procedures, monitoring of performance, evaluation of staff, quality of protection services, etc.					
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes of employees in regard to beneficiary group(s) (e.g. discrimination, stereotypes, stigmatization), attitudes towards violence, gender-related norms and values guiding relations with male and female beneficiaries, specific "institutional culture"					
	PERSONAL FACTORS					
	Age					
Gender						
Vulnerability						
Personality traits						

**Legend**

- Factors present and prominent in literature
- Factors poorly present in literature
- Factors not present

## Determinants and factors at the macro level

### *Economic and social*

Wider socio-economic conditions are often not mentioned, nor elaborated in the literature on violence against children, which is why the phenomenon of violence and its mechanisms, dynamics and other characteristics are not sufficiently contextualized and analysed as part of the wider society. The literature review indicated that attention is more often paid to cultural than socio-economic conditions. However, variations can be noticed in the literature focusing on violence in different settings. Generally, we observed that research on violence in schools provides a more holistic and comprehensive picture on determinants of violence, including macro socio-economic conditions, than research focused on VAC in other settings. In particular, studies focused on violence in digital space and in institutions for residential care have a visible tendency to neglect wider socio-economic determinants.

It is important to note that there is a significant body of research in Serbia about various forms of structural violence against children. This includes studies on poverty and material deprivation of children (UNICEF, 2004; UNICEF, 2015), social exclusion, and inadequate access to resources (e.g. housing) and social services (education, healthcare, extracurricular activities, etc.) (SeConS & UNICEF, 2012) — particularly among children from rural areas, minorities (Roma children) (UNICEF, 2011; UNICEF, 2015) and migrant populations (refugees and IDPs) (Galonja, Moraca et al, 2013). However, this research is based on a fundamentally different conceptual framework and it is usually not considered in the pool of knowledge on violence against children.

In the literature that is considered the main body of literature on VAC, the above-mentioned macro socio-economic determinants are rarely analysed. Determinants that are taken into account in the study on VAC in various settings include:

- ▀ effects of economic development
- ▀ effects of war and social conflicts
- ▀ effects of regions defined in terms of degree of urbanization
- ▀ effects of multidimensional social exclusion.

When economic factors at the macro level are mentioned in literature, they are treated in a very general manner. For example, an article on child marriages of Roma girls in Serbia only mentions that an international study found this practice more frequent in low- and middle-income countries (Hotchkiss et al., 2016). Very rarely, broader social factors are among core issues in the focus of a study, such in the case of a study dealing with new approaches to promoting resilience among children affected by the war in Kosovo (Gerber et al., 2014).

The effects of the regions defined in terms of degree of urbanization (Stanojević, 2015) are seldom analysed and described, and usually only in studies on VAC in the school and family. For example, studies about violence in school find that peer violence happens more in urban environments than rural

(Đurišić, 2015b). According to the findings from the MICS study, there are no major differences in the prevalence of violence against children in families living in urban and rural areas. However, significant differences in the prevalence of violent disciplining methods are found between regions. Namely, the prevalence of violent disciplining methods is lower in Belgrade than in other regions of Serbia (UNICEF, 2015).

Surveys especially point to the multidimensional social exclusion of children from the Roma population, which is considered a major determinant of neglect of children's developmental potentials. Life in irregular settlements, material deprivation due to poverty and discrimination in the form of exclusion from the preschool education system are considered important determinants of neglect of children in this population group (UNICEF, 2015).

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#### *Institutional/organizational*

Institutional factors on the macro level are not very frequently mentioned or elaborated in the literature on VAC in different settings. Institutional determinants at the macro level include basic laws and policies (e.g. the Law on Family, the Strategy for Protection of Children from Violence and Neglect), as well as key national-level institutional mechanisms (e.g. the Council for Child Rights). If these determinants are mentioned at all, it is mostly only in order to describe the relevant context of a particular research, rather than to build an explanation related to the determinants of VAC. Macro institutional factors are present slightly more in the research on VAC in schools and residential institutions. Taking into account all the reviewed literature, we observe that institutional factors included in the analysis and discussion are more often those from the meso than the macro level.

#### *Cultural*

Cultural determinants and factors are more often present in the analysis of VAC in different contexts than other macro-level determinants (socio-economic and institutional). Not only are cultural factors more frequently presented and discussed, but — unlike socio-economic factors often used to describe context — cultural factors are more related to VAC.

The main cultural determinants at the macro level that are found in the literature include:

- ▮ high tolerance for violence resulting from the wars, crisis and social unrest, including the role of media in “normalizing” violence;
- ▮ discriminatory attitudes towards minorities, particularly children from the Roma population; and
- ▮ norms, values and attitudes related to gender roles and relations.

Cultural factors in the wider community are considered particularly important in analysing VAC in schools, and slightly less in studying VAC in the family, than in the community and in digital space, while they are absent from studies on VAC in residential institutions for the care of children.

Studies focusing on school violence have observed that, under the influence of a wider social culture marked by a high tolerance for violence resulting from the wars, crisis and social unrest, a distinct culture of violence in schools has emerged (Popadić, 2007). The role of the media in “normalizing” violence by reporting about/broadcasting violence without a critical approach has been identified as a factor contributing to the aggressiveness of children and youth in the short and long term.

Discriminatory attitudes, in particular against children from the Roma population and children with disabilities, are also highlighted as major factors of violence in school. Discriminatory attitudes and behaviours reinforce stereotypes and prejudice against children from these groups and result in their stigmatization and social exclusion (Janjić & Beker, 2016).

Gender stereotypes and norms and values related to the understanding of gender roles and relations are recognized as major determinants of gender-based violence in schools (Duhaček 2014; Grujić, 2015), as well as in certain studies on gender-based violence in the family, whose victims are also children (Ignjatović, 2015).

## Determinants and factors at the meso level

### *Economic and social*

Economic and social determinants/factors are neglected even more at the meso level than at the macro level. There are, however several exceptions. Studies on violence against Roma children, particularly those that are focused on children living in Roma settlements, tend to take into account broader economic and social determinants influencing the quality of life in this type of settlement and the social inclusion of children living in them (Janevic et al., 2010).

Interestingly, even studies that focus on a particular region or local community usually do not pay attention to the specific economic and social conditions in that community (meso level), but rather bring broader socio-economic determinants into their explanation. One example of this is a study analysing trends of child homicide that found no links between political, social and economic disturbances in Serbia during the 1990s on child homicide. However, specific factors related to the Belgrade region, which was the study’s focus, were not taken into account or analysed (Baralić et al., 2010). Similarly, a study about street children in Novi Sad does not bring into analysis any social or economic conditions characteristic to this city (Stojadinovic et al., 2015).

### *Institutional/organizational*

Institutional and organizational determinants include regulations, procedures, mechanisms for implementation of laws and policies and their monitoring and evaluation, protocols, material and human resources (quality of competences of professionals, etc.). Institutional determinants should not be confused with institutions. To illustrate, training programmes that increase competences and capacities of the professionals in the system for social protection is one of the factors of preventing

and protecting children from violence. This is a meso-level factor and it can be related to violence in the family (enabling professionals from centres for social work to provide better protection), school (building capacities of teaching staff), or network of residential institutions for protection of children without parental care (sensitizing staff and defining non-violent standards of communication with beneficiaries).

However, the fact is that in the reviewed literature, institutional factors are most often present in studies dealing with violence against children in residential institutions, and less so in surveys on violence in the school, family and community.

Meso-level institutional factors that are found in the literature include:

- ▮ legislation and policies related to the placement of children in residential institutions, care in institutions and processes of deinstitutionalization;
- ▮ mechanisms of identification and referral of cases of violence, general and specific protocols and coordination of institutions;
- ▮ instruments related to the protection of children witnessing family violence within the judicial procedures;
- ▮ capacities of professionals in the system of protection to identify and address cases of violence;
- ▮ mechanisms for protection specific to schools and other institutions within the education system;
- ▮ ineffectiveness of centres for social work in addressing violence in the family and other settings;
- ▮ lack of an information system tracking violence, particularly digital violence, sexual violence and child pornography; and
- ▮ the inadequacy of institutional mechanisms for protection of children living and working on the street.

The influence of legislation and policies governing the processes of placing children in institutions has primarily been emphasized (Pinheiro, 2006), namely those governing the processes of deinstitutionalization. A weak system of support to families was recognized as an important determinant contributing to the exposure of children to violence in the family (Žegarac, 2014; Kovačević, 2005; Aleksić, 2015; Išpanović-Radojković et al., 2012; Srna, 2001). Some studies particularly emphasize the fact that one of the key deficiencies in the reform of the child protection system is the exclusive focus on foster care and deinstitutionalization, without giving priority to support services for the families and services preventing the separation of children from the family. It is pointed out that the link between various support and protection services and measures at the disposal of children and families are still lacking in the Republic of Serbia (Žegarac, 2014).

Research and analysis of judicial practice show that children are relatively rarely recognized as victims of domestic violence, resulting in a small number of registered judicial proceedings for their protection. Thus, a survey that covered 606 prosecutorial and judicial cases showed that minors were recognized as direct victims of domestic violence in only 47 cases (7.8%). Of the total number of perpetrators who had minor children (252), in only 12.7% of cases were the children recognized as direct victims of violence.

From a total of 695 direct victims of the criminal offence of domestic violence, 59 were minors (8.5%) (Macanović, 2012).

A part of the literature addresses the effects of ineffective instruments of coordination, identification and treatment in cases of violence. Some publications indicate a clear lack of a standardized and mutually harmonized system of identifying, registering and reporting abuse and neglect of children between different service providers (SeConS & UNICEF, 2012; Išpanović-Radojković et al., 2012).

Institutional and organizational factors were also highlighted in several studies about school violence, as well as in research about violence in digital space. School size, lack of capacities among teachers and other professional school staff to identify and address cases of violence, and a lack of standardized procedures and mechanisms were perceived as factors contributing to the high prevalence of violence in schools (Popadić, Plut et al, 2014).

The ineffectiveness of centres for social work and schools in identifying children at risk of exploitation and reacting in such situations were identified as major institutional factors affecting the unsuccessful prevention and suppression of child labour and sexual exploitation, as well as of other forms of abuse (Kuzmanović et al., 2013; Jovanović et al., 2009). The inadequacy of institutional mechanisms was particularly stressed in the context of children living and working on the street, with studies indicating that the cause lies not only in the insufficient capacities of specific institutions, but also in the inadequate inter-sectoral cooperation between different parts of the system of protection (Stevanović & Golić, 2012).

The lack of awareness of risks in digital space, insufficiently trained professionals from the system of protection, an underdeveloped system for the protection of children from exploitation in pornography, and a poor information system for identifying and tracking the latter phenomenon, are some of the major institutional factors identified in the context of violence against children (Tanjević, 2012).

## ***Cultural***

Cultural determinants and factors related to VAC at the meso level mainly include specific sets of norms, values and attitudes related to parenting practices and legitimate methods of disciplining children, or norms, values and attitudes related to the specific forms of violence or specific setting in which violence occurs.

In general, three sets of factors (norms, values and attitudes) at the meso level are included in the literature on VAC:

- ▀ attitudes about violence against children, legitimacy of violent disciplining methods and parenting methods;
- ▀ awareness and attitudes related to sexual violence and exploitation; and
- ▀ norms and values creating a specific institutional culture, e.g. a “school culture/atmosphere” in regard to violence.

General attitudes about violence against children, disciplining methods and parenting methods, including attitudes of experts, messages conveyed by the media, and attitudes of the general public, influence the extent and characteristics of violence against children in society. Most experts in Serbia (based on the literature reviewed) consider corporal punishment to be a gross violation of the child's rights and advocate a full legal ban on corporal punishment of children (Stevanović & Srna, 2010; Marković, 2014). They highlight the pivotal role of experts in addressing the issue of corporal punishment of children. However, there are experts who maintain that reasonable corporal punishment of children is an inalienable right of parents that should not be equated with physical violence and maltreatment, because it constitutes a part of child-rearing (Milivojević, 2011).

Awareness about violence, the capacity to recognize violence, awareness about the risks of exposure to violence and familiarity with the system of protection are important factors highlighted by studies on violence against children in both digital (Tanjević, 2012) and conventional space.

Attitudes about sexual abuse have proven to be an important determinant of the prevalence and characteristic of sexual violence. An analysis of public opinion in Serbia revealed a very low awareness of sexual violence not only in the general public, but also among experts, university students and professionals working with children with developmental problems (Petković et al., 2010). Poor awareness of the risks of sexual exploitation and child trafficking was underscored as a major factor increasing the risk of these forms of violence against children (ASTRA, 2012).

The cultural and institutional environment created at the level of a school (both as a type of institution at the meso level and as particular individual institutions at the micro level) represents a key influence on the emergence of violence. Researchers point to the fact that in schools with a prevailing culture of zero tolerance for violence, and which also have programmes for working with children prone to violence (such as anger management, learning social skills, learning conflict management skills), cases of violence and perpetrators of violence appear as isolated incidents and not as a prevailing or widespread model of relations. In schools where aggressiveness in human relations is accepted and tolerated, even amid the existence of the same or similar programmes for potential or actual perpetrators, such programmes are not effective and violence is more present (Popadić, 2007).

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## Determinants and factors at the micro level

At the micro level there are two distinctive sets of determinants/factors that are differentiated due to the different nature of micro systems — family and institutions. While family is an intimate micro-community, institutions (whether public or private) are settings that are public by nature and relations among actors are mediated by institutional formal (and informal) rules. For this reason they are separated.

### *Family*

Family factors identified in studies about violence against children include several sets, as in meso- and macro-level systems: economic, social, institutional/organizational, and cultural.

**Economic** factors present in the literature mostly include employment status of parents or heads of household, living standard, material deprivation and poverty. Unemployment and poverty are linked to greater risks of domestic physical abuse in the family (Žegarac & Brkić, 1998), as well as risks of child labour exploitation (Vujović et al., 2006; Kuzmanović et al., 2013; Jovanović et al., 2009). Material deprivation and poverty of families living in Roma settlements create a favourable ground for child neglect, because parents lack the resources necessary for the needs satisfaction and early development of children (UNICEF, 2015).

**Social** family factors include educational achievements of parents or head of household, type of living area, availability of informal social networks, family dysfunctions, divorce, conflicts in the family/household, abuse of alcohol or narcotics, presence of gravely ill persons, persons with disabilities, participation of family members in the wars of the 1990s, etc., as well as parenting styles and practices.

The literature review indicates that alcoholism was the most frequently linked factor to VAC in the family, and it is considered one of the key factors of violence against children. Alcoholism exponentially increases the risk of conflicts in the family, family dysfunctionality, physical violence against women and children, and other forms of violence against children (Žegarac & Brkić, 1998; Vujović et al., 2006; Čupić, Martić, & Jovančić, 2011). One older, but comprehensive study showed that quarrels in the family have been found to be far more frequent in the families where alcoholism is present (25%) than in non-alcoholic ones (4.6%). In families affected by alcoholism, frequent physical fights between parents occur in 9.4% of all cases, while occasional physical fights occur in 28.1% of cases. Physical violence is particularly common if the alcoholic parent displays a proclivity for aggressive behavior when drunk. In the surveyed families of the so-called “aggressive alcoholics”, physical violence in the family occurred in 76.9% of cases, as opposed to the so-called “peaceful alcoholics”, where physical violence between parents occurred in 12.3% of all cases (Žegarac & Brkić, 1998).

In addition to alcoholism, research conducted in the Special Hospital for Addictions in Belgrade examined the link between the consumption of psychoactive substances (drugs) and domestic violence. Apart from this, various forms of dysfunctionality and family problems — especially prostitution, drug abuse, and dysfunctional relations — are related to a higher risk of violence against children in the family

(Vujović et al., 2006). Violence against women in the family is also one of the most significant family factors of violence that children experience. Mapping of domestic violence against women in Central Serbia indicated that over half of women have experienced domestic violence since age 15 (Babović, Ginić, & Vuiković, 2010). According to research conducted with women victims of domestic violence, children witnessed violence against their mothers in 76.5% of cases and were direct victims of such violence in 45.9% of cases (Ignjatović, 2013).

Low educational achievements of parents are also related to an increased incidence of corporal punishment of children. According to the findings of the MICS study, corporal punishment is twice as prevalent in families where the parents have low qualifications (UNICEF, 2014). Moreover, this study pointed to a marked influence of the education level of the mother on corporal punishment, whereas the risk that the child will be physically punished decreases if the mother has completed at least secondary school (UNICEF, 2015).

Family structure is also related to the risks of violence. Children from single-parent families are more exposed to violence in the family (Žegarac, 2004), while the risks in extended families is lower than in other types of families (UNICEF, 2015). Studies of single-parent families show that these families face a number of difficulties, such as poverty and material deprivation, housing deprivation, frustrations and stress caused by the change of family structure in the case of divorce or death of one parent, condemnation and contempt from their surroundings, the burden of difficulties in coordinating parental and professional roles due to the inability to share responsibilities with other parent, etc. (Tomanović, Ljubičić, & Stanojević, 2014).

The insufficient development of informal support networks (family, relatives, friends), especially in stressful situations when families face grave difficulties (e.g. divorce, death of a family member, etc.), and longstanding reliance on the support of welfare services are also linked to increased risk of violence against children in the family (Žegarac, 2004).

Cultural factors are mainly present in the form of norms and attitudes towards child-rearing practices. According to available research, the attitudes of parents towards corporal punishment proved to be extremely important for the prevalence of such practices in families. The findings of the MICS study pointed to this link, since the children whose parents approve such methods are also more exposed to corporal punishment (UNICEF, 2015). However, international studies where Serbia was a part of the sample of countries show that such attitudes among parents in Serbia are fairly rare compared to other countries (Akmatov, 2011).

#### **Family factors analysed in other contexts**

Family factors are mostly analysed within the contexts of VAC in the family, and much less in other contexts, despite their significance. Sometimes, in other contexts the same factors have a different impact according to studies. This is, for example, the case with the type of family structure. As previously noted, studies on VAC in the family indicate that children living in extended families are less exposed to violence than children in smaller families, and particularly single-parent families. Research on violence in schools indicate that children from larger families are at a greater risk of behaving violently,

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as well as children living in single-parent families (Đurišić, 2015b). Furthermore, other family factors are highlighted, such as the domestic violence children witness, as well as the violent punishment methods to which they are exposed. Some surveys have found that children exposed to direct violent methods of punishment or cold, strict upbringings are more prone to direct violence, while children exposed to indirect violence are more prone to manipulative and relational forms of abusing their peers (Nedimović & Bureau, 2011). In a study of domestic violence conducted by the Autonomous Women's Centre (AWC), mothers said that children who witnessed violence exhibit violent behaviour towards their peers in 13.5% of cases (Ignjatović, 2013).

### ***Institutions***

At the micro level, institutional factors are usually related to the individual institution or a small group of related institutions. For example, this is found in studies related to a single residential institution for the protection of children without parental care, a few institutions for the protection of children with disabilities, individual schools, individual support service, etc.

**Economic** factors include material resources in the institutions, financial means, and institutional budgets. **Social** factors include hierarchy, authority, relations among personnel, relations between personnel and beneficiaries, communication with parents, cooperation with other stakeholders in the community, facilitating inclusion of beneficiaries in the community, and other services (e.g. education, social participation). These factors are more often analysed in the research of residential institutions and less in studies on schools.

Typical institutional factors include insufficient capacities, due to which children are placed together with adults or children of different age groups placed together, and insufficient human capacities in terms of an inadequate number of expert personnel relative to the number of children in the institution, as well as inadequate qualifications and skills of the employees, and lack of awareness and sensitivity about certain forms of violence. No less important are unfavourable physical conditions in the institutions in terms of hygiene, accommodation, food and higher-degree needs (educational, social, leisure/recreation, etc.), due to which children in such institutions are deprived, namely their main developmental and existential needs are severely neglected. In addition, the absence of complaint mechanisms within these institutions is mentioned, as is the lack of mechanisms for monitoring, inspection and supervision (Išpanović, Radojković, & Murko, 2010).

Cultural factors at the micro institutional level are only present in studies related to VAC in schools and neglected in studies of other institutions. Studies on violence in school show that cultural determinants, such as the "atmosphere" in the school, group norms, and the ways in which students and teachers perceive violence in particular school, as well as the strategies to suppress it, are more important than the individual characteristics of children, regardless of whether they are the victims or the perpetrators (Popadić, 2007; Despotović, Stanarević, & Veselinović, 2008; Đorić, 2009).

## Personal factors

Analyses show exposure to violence to be connected to certain characteristics of the child, such as gender, age, disability or other 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 due to the fact that cultural norms defining legitimate or desirable child-rearing and disciplining methods determine the gendered patterns of violence. Or, in another instance, if children with disabilities are more often exposed to violence in the school, this is not because they have disability but because in that small community discriminatory norms and values prevail, or because institutional mechanisms are weak to prevent and sanction violence.

Various studies show the differences in risks of experiencing violence based on gender and age. Due to differences in methodologies and samples, findings on the exposure of children of different ages and sex to violence in the family are not unequivocal. Physical violence is used more often as a disciplining method among small children (1–4 years old) than older children (5–14). According to nationally representative studies (MICS and BECAN), there are no significant differences in the exposure of boys and girls to physical violence; however, other surveys (e.g. Coalition of Youth, 2008) have found boys to be exposed to physical violence more often than girls (28% compared to 9%). The BECAN study showed girls to be more exposed to other forms of violence — psychological and sexual violence and neglect (Hanak et al., 2013). Studies about school violence revealed that boys are more often the perpetrators of violence than girls, but they are also more often the victims of violence. Research and analysis of judicial practice show that among younger children (under 14 years) the number of boy and girl victims of violence in the family is almost the same, but between the ages of 14 to 18 years there are twice as many girls as boys among victims (Macanović, 2012).

The BECAN study also showed that age is related to the prevalence and incidence of sexual violence: older girls and boys are more often exposed to this form of violence in schools. The study also indicated the importance of gender for this type of violence, since it is more often directed at girls than boys, which empirically confirms the gender basis of peer violence in schools (Hanak et al., 2013).

Several studies pointed to the link of disability with increased risk of violence in school, institutions and the wider community. Due to the fact that children with disabilities are often excluded, isolated or have difficulties in communicating, they become an easier target for bullies (Golić Ružić, 2016). Certain authors also emphasized that some forms of developmental difficulties — especially mental difficulties — are related to outbursts of physical and verbally aggressive behaviour and anger, due to which such children may become targets of violence (Đurišić, 2015b). Studies about violence against children placed in institutions indicate that children with disabilities in residential institutions are severely neglected due to an insufficient staff with inadequate skills. This results in low capacities of children to communicate (Išpanović, Radojković, & Murko, 2010).

Some studies stressed the impact of social cognitive skills on violence risks (Popadić, 2007; Dedaj & Joković, 2014). The personality traits associated with peer violence are neuroticism, aggressiveness, low conscientiousness and low extroversion (Čolović et al., 2014).

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# INTERVENTIONS FOR PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

The main strategic goal of the National Strategy for Preventing and Protecting Children against Violence guiding the interventions in this field in the period 2009–2015 was to establish a national system of preventing and protecting children against all types of violence, neglect and exploitation. According to what the policymakers envisaged, that goal was supposed to be realized through several specific goals: (1) to ensure the commitment, preparedness and responsibility of policymakers at the national level in the process of establishing and implementing policies of preventing and protecting children against violence; (2) to establish an inclusive national legislative framework for the protection of children against abuse, neglect and exploitation; (3) to develop efficient multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary networks for preventing and protecting children against violence; (4) to develop agencies and services for supporting victims of violence and work with perpetrators of violence; (5) to help all parties involved in the work on preventing and protecting children against violence to gain new knowledge and skills required for these tasks; and (6) to improve the system of data collection and reporting about cases of violence against children.

The task of interventions mapping was to identify several elements:

- ▀ subjects who were initiating, leading or implementing interventions;
- ▀ determinants and factors as targets of different types of intervention defined in terms of:
  - ▀ means and methods applied to produce a change
  - ▀ settings/context in which interventions were implemented; and
- ▀ results of interventions.

With regard to the objectives of research aimed at determinants and risk factors of violence against children, the central place in the mapping model is the focus of interventions on the determinants and factors of violence against children, identifying whether and to what extent existing interventions act on the determinants and causes of violence.

## Subjects of interventions

Mapping of interventions showed that a large number of various actors, from the national to the local level, in both the public and the civic sector, have been involved in developing and improving the system for preventing and protecting children from violence in the reference period (since 2000).

### Ministries and institutions at the central level

Activities of ministries and government bodies on the development of the system were significant. Key ministries that participated in the development of the system for prevention and protection, and development of general and specialized protocols are the Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Justice; and Ministry of Health. Apart from the relevant ministries, a significant contribution was made by the Ombudsman, the Council for Child Rights, national institutions and others. In designing and implementing interventions, government bodies often cooperated with international organizations, local NGOs, universities and research institutes. Various relevant departments developed their own protocols and rulebooks to implement the law within their respective mandates. State institutions not only implemented policies, but also developed manuals, established working groups and organized training. State institutions accredited training programmes for the development of professional staff in the system of prevention and protection. The Council for Child Rights was involved in numerous activities, including the adoption of laws, preparation of manuals, organization of training, improvement of inter-sectoral cooperation, and coordination of reporting from various sectors.

### State institutions at the regional level

Bearing in mind the administrative organization in Serbia, organizations, institutions or networks at the mid, regional level are not particularly developed. There are some mechanisms in specific systems, such as regional teams for the implementation of specific protocols and a system of registration of cases of suspected violence in the healthcare system. However, there are no evaluations of the extent to which such formations of state mechanisms at the mid, regional level — which could expedite the connection of systems from the national and local level — bring better coordination and improvement of the system for preventing and protecting children from violence.

### Local institutions

Local authorities bear a great responsibility in preventing and protecting children from violence, primarily through the sectors of education, healthcare and social protection. Some local self-governments have adopted local action plans to prevent and combat violence against children, as well as strategies for improving security in the local community. Local self-governments act in multiple manners, from developing local networks and mechanisms, through establishing inter-sectoral teams and improving inter-sectoral cooperation, to establishing new services for protecting children, such as shelters. A large responsibility in the system of protection lies in social work centres, which are key actors in identifying cases of violence and acting in accordance with their legal mandate to decide on further treatment. Experts at social work centres are also trained to act in emergencies, and to displace

children from institutions. By implementing the School without Violence programme, schools have become important institutions where initiatives to combat violence and introduce new mechanisms are realized, such as a school police officer, teams for protection of children from violence in schools and health institutions, and mechanisms for prevention.

### International, national and local organizations

International organizations, foreign donors, and also local non-governmental organizations have an important role in building and advancing the system for protecting children from violence. UNICEF is one of the most important international organizations and it implements its multiannual support to the development of the protection system through various programmes aimed at different parts of the system for protection and types of violence. UNICEF implements these initiatives in partnership with ministries, non-governmental organizations and research institutes; one of the most successful examples of such cooperation is the School without Violence project. Cooperation between international donors and state institutions has not always been satisfactorily visible, but mapping indicates that a significant number of initiatives were driven by national development agencies of European countries, and that these initiatives were then implemented in partnership with state and local organizations. Local NGOs are an important part of the system of prevention and protection, and their involvement is multifold — from influence on legal arrangements and policies, through monitoring and advocacy, to advancing the system at various levels and direct involvement in the activities of prevention or care services.

## Determinants and factors as intervention targets

The aim of this chapter is to provide a systematic overview of interventions implemented since 2000 at different levels (macro, meso and micro) and in different settings in which violence occurs (family, school, institutions, digital space and community). The objective is **to identify in which way existing interventions targeted determinants and factors of violence**, and with what **results**. At the same time, this kind of analysis sheds light on the **gaps in the interventions**, revealing which ones were unaddressed by interventions. The findings of the mapping indicate that interventions can be divided into **three main groups**, depending on objects and methods of intervention. The first group includes interventions targeting institutional determinants, the second group covers interventions aimed at influencing cultural determinants/factors, and the third group of interventions aims at providing prevention and direct support services. It is not always possible to differentiate between interventions at the macro, meso and micro levels, as they can simultaneously induce changes on various levels. For example, a campaign against corporal punishment of children can be nationwide and produce changes in norms and values related to the disciplining methods at the meso level, at the same time changing patterns of discipline within the family at the micro level. Or, in the case of interventions directed towards institutional determinants, at the meso level this can be a measure related to the introduction of change on the level of all centres for social work in Serbia, while at the micro level it can be observed and assessed as a measure introduced in particular, individual CSW — but this is a reflection of a meso-level intervention that acquired some specific features due to its implementation in one specific CSW.

It is important to note that interventions mapping could not encompass all interventions carried out in the last 16 years in Serbia at all levels. Nonetheless, owing to the cooperation of relevant ministries and other stakeholders from the government, public services and non-governmental sector who participated in the mapping, a high number of interventions were included. Based on this overview of interventions, Table 4 summarizes the findings of the mapping that indicate which determinants and factors were targeted by corresponding interventions within different settings. The findings in the table are qualitative in nature and are presented in this way to provide summary insight into existing interventions aimed at determinants and causes of violence, as well as to establish weaknesses, cracks in the system in terms of absence of impact on determinants, and causes of violence. Finally, it should be kept in mind that only a few interventions were evaluated and therefore it is hard to assess with what effectiveness their implementation affected VAC at its roots.

**Table 4 DETERMINANTS AND FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AS TARGETS OF INTERVENTIONS**

Determinants and factors		Setting where violence occurs				
		Family	School	Institution	Digital space	Community
<b>SYSTEMIC</b>						
<b>MACRO LEVEL</b>	<b>Economic:</b> underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty, financial instability, economic inequalities, budget constraints for spending on prevention and protection					
	<b>Social:</b> social conflicts, prevalence of crime, patterns of social exclusion, unequal gender regimes, regional inequalities, migration					
	<b>Institutional:</b> inadequate laws, ineffective implementation of laws, conflict between different laws, lack of policies relevant for preventing violence against children or their ineffective implementation, low density and quality of institutional infrastructure for preventing and eliminating violence against children and protection of children					
	<b>Cultural:</b> dominant values and norms that govern preferred relationship patterns, orders, and understanding of society and regulate relationships (values and norms related to accepting tradition or modernity, equality or inequality, patriarchal or liberal, democratic or authoritarian standards, etc.), especially norms and values that regulate gender relationships and inter-generational relationships, or that regulate tolerance towards violence, discrimination of different groups, etc.					

**Legend**

- Factors targeted by interventions
- Factors poorly or partially targeted by interventions
- Factors not targeted by interventions

MESO LEVEL	<b>Economic:</b> local underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty and deprivation, local budget constraints on spending for the system of prevention and protection					
	<b>Social:</b> local population characteristics (demographic characteristics and trends), distinctively local social exclusion traits, local social conflict characteristics, crime, local gender regimes					
	<b>Institutional:</b> lack or ineffectiveness of relevant local policies (for preventing violence against children, for children and youth, etc.), lack or ineffectiveness of the implementation of protocols for acting in cases of violence, lack or low coverage or inadequacy of prevention programmes, lack, low outreach or inadequacy of general and specialized support and protection services, lack of professional staff or unskilled professional staff, low competencies of staff (competency of professionals to recognize and report violence, take preventive action or provide protection in cases of violence, in keeping with their roles defined by protocols or other legislation), lack of training programmes, etc.					
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes in favour of violent disciplining methods, overly rigid or cold child-rearing practices, patriarchal attitudes towards gender roles, discriminatory attitudes towards children from vulnerable population categories, high tolerance towards violence, etc.					
<b>FAMILY</b>						
MICRO LEVEL	<b>Economic:</b> unemployment of parents, poverty, material deprivation of family, poor housing conditions					
	<b>Social:</b> low education level of parents or head of household, poor neighbourhood, low availability of informal social networks, family dysfunctions, divorce, conflict in the family/ household, abuse of alcohol or narcotics, presence of gravely ill persons, persons with disabilities, presence of persons who participated in the wars during the 1990s					
	<b>Cultural:</b> attitudes legitimizing violent disciplining methods of children, overly rigid or cold child-rearing practices, patriarchal norms underpinning gender inequality in the family and household, etc.					
	<b>CAPACITIES AND RESOURCES OF INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PROVIDERS</b>					
	Low financial resources and capacities					
	Poor quality of human resources (inadequate number, skills)					
	Low availability, low outreach					
	Poor quality of prevention and protection services, lack of standards					
	Lack of cooperation and coordination with other relevant institutions and actors					
<b>PERSONAL FACTORS</b>						
	Age					
	Gender					
	Vulnerability					
	Personality traits such as aggression					

## Macro-level interventions

It is evident from Table 4 that interventions related to macro-level determinants are mostly focused on institutional and cultural determinants. While it is certainly not the aim of interventions addressing VAC to deal with economic or broader social factors, they should be taken into account in two ways. Firstly, they are contextual determinants and they cannot be neglected in planning interventions related to VAC. Secondly, VAC is often a cross-cutting issue that links different policy areas (e.g. social protection, education, healthcare, gender equality). However, intervention mapping did not indicate such connections between interventions addressing VAC and broader socio-economic determinants or other policy areas addressing those determinants more directly.

### Interventions targeting institutional determinants

A large number of interventions carried out by the state were aimed at developing a legal framework and mechanisms for law enforcement. The main logic was to develop a top-down system, from creating a legal framework and policies operationalized in the action plan, through adopting general and special protocols and developing capacities of each sector to act in their mandate, to mechanisms of multi-sectoral collaboration and establishment of operational teams in local communities consisting of trained and coordinated professionals from different parts of the system. In this institutional development of the system of prevention and protection, significant institutional capacities for preventing and protecting children from violence in Serbia have been developed at different levels.

On the national level, important bodies were set up at the very top of the legislative and executive branches, as well as independent bodies for monitoring children's rights. The **Committee on the Rights of the Child** was established by the National Assembly of Serbia in 2010, with the task of monitoring the compliance of laws and strategies with child protection policies and assessing how various laws and policies affect the position of children and their families.<sup>65</sup> The **Council for Child Rights** was established in 2002 as a counselling body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, mandated to initiate measures in the field of children and youth policies, ensure the compliance of such policies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and accompanying protocols, and monitor the application of policies and laws and the protection of the rights of the child in Serbia. The **Deputy Protector of Citizens for Children's Rights and Gender Equality** is tasked with monitoring the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with the Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia, and the same institutional mechanism exists in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in the office of the provincial ombudsman.

The adoption of the **General Protocol and Special Protocols** (for sectors of police, healthcare, social protection, education and judiciary) **for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect** established an important set of interventions in the field of building institutional capacities for preventing and protecting children against violence. Many interventions in the observed period were aimed at **training** professionals from all sectors involved in the system of protection in recognizing violence, application of the general protocol and special protocols, as well as specific knowledge and

<sup>65</sup> The committee particularly monitors the Family Law and the Law on the Foundations of the Education System.

skills in terms of responsibility and expertise. In addition to this, interventions were directed towards establishment of teams, procedures, data collection and other organizational aspects.

Mapping results indicated that centralized institutional coordination of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results of the implementation of the action plan failed. According to the initial idea, the Council for Child Rights was the body tasked with coordinating, monitoring and evaluating effects of the implementation of the action plan, but this did not materialize in practice. This could be an indication of the lack of capacity of state institutions and government bodies to provide effective synchronization of activities at the national level and to develop strategies and methods that can be effectively implemented in various sectors (social protection, education, healthcare, judiciary) and at various levels as well (national, regional, local).

A series of interventions were targeted at **improving the records, databases and reporting** about violence against children. The results of the mapping also indicate that despite these interventions a unified records system is still underdeveloped. Different sectors and teams collect data and store them in different forms, and the lack of a system for synchronized records on cases of violence against children among various sectors still seems to be creating obstacles for joint action of different institutions within the system for protection. Synchronized databases are important not only for recording cases, but also for better coordination of departments, managing cases and planning services, and all this should be taken into consideration when improving databases.

#### **Interventions targeting cultural determinants**

Activities aimed at changing attitudes, values, awareness and competences were present during the reference period. Mapping identified the following large programmes and campaigns targeting norms, values and attitudes on a national scale:

- ▀ a nationwide campaign to prohibit corporal punishment of children;
- ▀ a national campaign against the statute of limitations of VAC in the Criminal Code;
- ▀ informational and educational activities of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for increasing the safety of children in schools, on the Internet, in the family, at sports events and in the general community;
- ▀ the Be a Man programme, aiming at changing fundamental norms and values related to masculine identities, gender roles and relations among youth, which was general in topic but limited in scope; and
- ▀ awareness campaigns on gender equality and gender-based violence implemented by the Autonomous Women's Center.

The campaign to prohibit corporal punishment of children was launched in 2007 by the joint efforts of 18 non-governmental organizations, led by the Save the Children Fund from the UK, with the support of the UNICEF office in Serbia. Many CSOs joined this campaign, as did various government departments and organizations. With varying intensity and with the support of different funds, the campaign lasted several years. Conferences were organized, as well as workshops and media campaigns, and a preliminary Draft Law on Child Rights was prepared, which was, however, not adopted. Draft

amendments to the Family Law, which would prohibit corporal punishment of children, are currently being drafted.

Concerning campaigns by the MoI, they were carried out as part of various programmes and projects and often in partnership with other stakeholders. Campaigns such as “My School, a Safe School”, “Drugs Zero, Life One”, “Safe Childhood — Developing a Safety Culture among Youth” and “Sports-School-Police” aimed to advance awareness of violence and various risks children and youth face, as well as change attitudes towards violence and eradicate tolerance of violence. Some campaigns were of a more general character, while others were specialized for certain contexts (such as sports-related violence and violence in clubs and at matches, or protection from exploitation in the pornography industry, etc.).

The Be a Man programme, aiming at changing fundamental norms and values related to masculine identities, targeted macro-level determinants (basic gender norms, values, identities), but it was not implemented on a national scale. Rather, it represents part of a wider regional programme in the Western Balkans, and in Serbia was implemented by the Center E8 NGO. This is a component of the “Programme M” (male) implemented in many Serbian cities. The key target group of this programme are young men aged 14–19 years, because they are exposed to numerous risks and threats, leading to different forms of violent behaviour. In order to change the existing values and attitudes regarding the understanding of masculinity and perception of what it means to be male, this programme includes education and interactive workshops with young scholars. In the period from 2015 to 2016 alone, 18 cities in Serbia organized numerous educational and training sessions with young men related to violence prevention and gender equality. Each young man who passes through this kind of training becomes a member of the Be a Man club in his local community and receives support to continue this kind of education in schools, in cooperation with a youth organization.

Awareness campaigns on gender inequalities and gender-based violence among children or against children existed, but were not numerous. AWC conducted, independently and in partnership with the Provincial Secretariat for economy, employment and gender equality of AP Vojvodina, a series of peer education sessions titled “Start from Yourself — Recognizing Violence in Intimate Relationships”.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Interventions targeting meso-level determinants and factors***

The mapping findings do not indicate that interventions are significantly connected to social and economic determinants of the local community, which might make them insufficiently contextualized. For example, there is no evidence that modification of activities depends on the urbanization level, specific patterns of social exclusion of children from certain groups, etc. The main impression based on the mapping results is that interventions at the meso level were mostly directed at institutional mechanisms and cultural factors, primarily concerning attitudes, values and norms related to the tolerance of violence or specific forms of violence, and awareness of particular forms of violence.

<sup>66</sup> Educational sessions are still being organized with the support of UNTF.

### Interventions targeting institutional determinants

Institutional determinants were mainly the object of interventions in the area of school violence, institutional violence, and to smaller extent digital violence. Many of these interventions were aimed at the adoption and better implementation of protocols, mechanisms for coordination, collaboration among institutions, strengthening competencies of professionals, etc. Interventions in the area of digital violence are relatively new and have therefore not yet been sufficiently developed. At the same time, there is a noticeable absence or poor focus of interventions on institutional mechanisms related to the determinants and factors connected with violence in the family. Even when interventions target institutional factors related to violence in the family, they are mostly limited to families that already face severe problems and dysfunction resulting in child neglect and abuse.

Mapping identified the following interventions aiming at institutional determinants and factors in the area of VAC in family, school, residential institutions, digital space and community:

- ▀ local action plans for preventing and protecting children from violence, and local strategies for improvement of safety in the local community;
- ▀ establishment of mechanisms for detection, protection, reporting and in some cases prevention of violence that are part of each institution that implements protocols (police, education, healthcare, social protection, judiciary); this included establishment of internal teams, procedures, various internal systems for reporting, and for preventing violence against children;
- ▀ establishment and improvement of coordination of multi-sectoral teams for preventing and protecting children from violence in local communities;
- ▀ improvement of registers and evidence of different sectors involved in protection;
- ▀ complex School without Violence programme;
- ▀ establishment of an institutional mechanism — the Group for Protection from Violence and Discrimination within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development;
- ▀ School Police Officer programme;
- ▀ development and implementation of programmes for intervention in crisis situations in cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit);
- ▀ accredited training programmes for professionals in all sectors engaged in the system for protection of children from violence aiming at increasing capacities for recognizing violence and acting in line with general and specialized protocols; and
- ▀ a project for strengthening capacities of the healthcare system for preventing and protecting children from violence, implemented by the Institute for Mental Health and the Institute for Public Health with the support of the Ministry of Health and UNICEF.

The main logic with regard to interventions in the development of an institutional system entailed developing this top-down system, by adopting one general protocol and subsequently special protocols, manuals to provide guidelines for professionals from relevant sectors. The most common

method for improving capacities was **training** for developing professional skills and capacities of staff in the protection system (seminars, training sessions, workshops), which was often implemented at the regional level. Manuals often evolved from these training sessions. Projects were mostly implemented with the financial and professional support of international organizations, foreign development agencies and local non-governmental organizations. Sometimes training was implemented with the support of the coordination body of the relevant ministry. For example, for the School without Violence project, a unit was set up at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development to lead activities of prevention and protection from VAC in the education system. This unit also supported the project "Development and Implementation of Intervening in Crises" for training coordinators in all school districts as well as representatives from institutions. Bearing in mind the success of interventions targeting the school system, it would be significant to analyse factors of this success and among them the leading role of the ministry, which made effective implementation of activities and measures possible.

It is very difficult to evaluate the results of numerous training and educational activities, particularly in light of the lack of systematic evaluation and monitoring of trends of violence in various contexts, methods of the protection system and experiences acquired in supporting the protection system, which would demonstrate the effects of these interventions. Mapping interventions did not show that there was much training of professional staff specifically for working in multi-sectoral teams; on the other hand, staff were required to participate in such teams. It can also be noted that training individuals may not be the most adequate solution when the system requires cooperation among teams and working in inter-sectoral teams. Improving capacities of teamwork and inter-sectoral cooperation would require professionals attending trainings as individuals to use different methods, primarily because teamwork requires establishing a common language and accepting joint procedures, and not merely understanding the task. In this regard, teams and institutions rather than individuals need to be strengthened.

In addition, mapping did not determine the scope of training, nor whether all professional staff in all sectors involved in the protection system at all levels was reached. It remains unknown whether professionals from all institutions have a clear understanding of the competencies necessary to manage cases within their jurisdiction.

As described in the previous chapter on interventions aiming at macro-level determinants, a centralized unified registry of VAC has not been effectively established. This has its roots in the unsynchronized **data recording systems** within the sectors (social protection, police, education, healthcare), as well as in uneven capacities of regional and local units within these sectors. Reporting on cases of violence is primarily under the jurisdiction of centres for social work. Keeping records and reporting on cases of violence is not coordinated between the centres across Serbia. These incompatible records may have partly been caused by imbalanced capacities of centres to perform multiple roles that, in addition to keeping records, also entail management of cases, cooperation with other institutions, etc. Mapping did not show how much effort was made through interventions to improve the capacities of CSW staff to keep records of cases as well as manage data and provide reports for national records. A centralized registry of cases of abuse and neglect of children in social protection institutions is being maintained by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, in the Department for Family Care and Social Protection, but information was not made available for mapping interventions.

There is also a **national system for reporting cases** of suspected abuse and neglect of children within the **healthcare system**, which is under the jurisdiction of the Public Health Institute. A model of the central database for the national level was established recently, which should consolidate various formats of data, and so far covers 77 healthcare facilities. However, in 2014, reports were submitted by only 37 institutions and in 2015 by even fewer, which indicates insufficient efficiency in the implementation of the system for registering cases. The Mol collects data on criminal acts committed by underage persons, on peer violence and domestic violence. Information on security incidents in schools and the education system is collected as part of the School Police Officer programme. In addition, a helpline is available for reporting cases of violence, and indicators have been developed for identifying human trafficking victims. Data on various types of violence is therefore collected in various parts of the system, but coordination, compatibility and availability of information in the system is uncertain. The findings of the interventions mapping indicate that, in terms of keeping records and registering cases, efforts are exclusively directed at recording cases of violence that have already occurred. There are no indications, however, that any indicators are being developed that could provide ways of obtaining information that may be used for prevention. Such information would allow for the improvement of responses by the system for protection of children, not only in identifying and acting in cases of violence, but in their prevention as well.

**New institutions and mechanisms for preventing and protecting children against violence** were set up. With the goal of enhancing security in schools, the School Police Officer programme was introduced; a group for the protection against violence and discrimination was established in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, with coordinators appointed in every school district; a hotline was introduced for reporting cases of violence and a unit for the support to child witnesses in criminal cases in the framework of the justice system, accompanied by the relevant manual. The Mol has also introduced mechanisms for reporting digital violence and particularly risks from the exploitation of children online and from online paedophiles.

The Ministry of Education formed the Working Group for Coordination of Activities on Prevention of Violence in Educational Institutions. The working group was made up of representatives from relevant sectors, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, international organizations and NGOs. The working group was tasked with coordinating activities on planning, improving, monitoring and evaluating system solutions for preventing and protecting children from violence in educational institutions. This working group prepared the General Action Plan for Preventing and Protecting Children/Students from Violence in the Educational System of the Republic of Serbia.

Many local communities, especially the largest towns, established multi-sectoral teams and groups for coordination within the education system, as well as coordinators for prevention that were appointed in all school districts. The programme was implemented with success, mainly at the meso level, which is usually not strong enough to ensure a network that cuts across policy sectors and individual institutions/services/schools. Considering the effects of the programme, manifested by dropping rates of peer violence in schools, this is an additional value.

Much has been done to eliminate peer violence and to create a safe and motivating environment in schools through the **School without Violence project**. School without Violence was one of the rare

programmes that was thoroughly evaluated, and it was assessed that the programme achieved significant advances in recognizing and reducing peer violence in schools. As opposed to other institutions in the system for prevention and protection, which address violence as an “external” phenomenon in relation to the institution, the school is an institution that has been able to address the problem of violence from the “inside”, within its borders, bringing together all relevant actors: professionals, students, perpetrators and victims, parents and representatives of other sectors in the protection system. One indicator of the success of this programme is that the results of a repeated survey on violence in schools show a significant drop in the prevalence of peer violence in schools.

The key beneficial aspects of the programme that are behind its success are the following:

- ▶ There were multiple subjects, i.e. intervention leaders — the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, UNICEF as the donor and provider of professional support, schools, non-governmental organizations and research institutes. However, in this complex array of actors implementing various activities, the chief coordinating role of the ministry stands out as being extremely important for the effective implementation and monitoring of the programme.
- ▶ Characteristics of the intervention were also positive, as they combined various methods (education, internal and external cooperation mechanisms, work with peers, changes in attitudes, manuals for parents, working with families on parenting practices, etc.), targeting different groups (staff, students, parents), as well as creating an environment conducive to the implementation of the programme (establishing an internal network for protection from violence, positive attitudes towards project activities, motivation of participants, etc.).
- ▶ Results are evident, showing a drop in the prevalence and frequency of violence in schools, documented by empirical research.

The project for strengthening the healthcare system’s capacities for preventing and protecting children from violence, implemented by the Institute for Mental Health and Dr. Milan Jovanovic Batut Institute for Public Health, with the support of the Ministry of Health and UNICEF. The project had two key objectives: building capacities of professionals to address violence in line with a specialized protocol, and improving evidence and reporting within the sector. Training programmes included healthcare professionals from the primary, secondary and tertiary level of healthcare. A working group was established for the implementation of the specialized protocol in the healthcare system. The project has significantly contributed to the more competent and effective response of healthcare professionals in cases of VAC.

#### **Interventions targeting cultural determinants**

It should be taken into account that campaigns conducted at the macro level were also relevant for the meso level, as they reached professionals in the various parts of the protection system, local communities, schools and other institutions. In addition to this, mapping identified several large campaigns that were implemented on the meso level either targeting norms, values and attitudes related to specific forms of violence or limited in scope in terms of geographic/administrative locality:

- ▶ campaigns and educational activities carried out in the scope of the large-scale School without Violence programme with the goal of raising the awareness and capacities of all stakeholders in the educational system to recognize and react to violence, as well as of promoting non-violent methods of communication among students and building resistance to violence;
- ▶ massive awareness campaigns about sexual abuse of children and the introduction of content that contributes to the recognition, prevention and protection in cases of sexual abuse of children in the curricula and textbooks;
- ▶ nationwide campaigns on risks of human trafficking among children; and
- ▶ a series of campaigns for raising awareness about digital violence in schools.

The School without Violence programme, which has been implemented by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF since 2005, included various activities aimed to increase awareness of various stakeholders in the education system about the accountability they have in school life in terms of preventing and responding to violence; the stakeholders include teaching staff and students, parents and other school employees. A number of media and promotional, informative and educational activities throughout Serbia were implemented as part of the “Let’s Stop Violence Together” campaign. This programme also included numerous campaigns of different civil society organizations. The “You the Man” campaign promoted non-violent values and behaviour during sports and other activities. The manual *What Happened at School Today* — intended primarily for parents, but also for teachers and education professionals in schools — was developed with the aim of increasing the capability to recognize violence, as well as encouraging change in parenting methods in the family.

The period 2007–2015 saw massive campaigns to raise awareness about sexual violence against children. These included the “I, Whom Nobody Knows” and “1 in 5” campaigns, as well as a series of other campaigns and activities, with the goal of increasing the visibility of the problem, mobilizing different stakeholders in the system of protection and prevention, and raising parents’ and children’s awareness about this type of violence. One of the campaigns concerned the initiative to revoke the statute of limitations for sexual crimes against children; it had a successful outcome, and Serbia became the second country in Europe (after the UK) to revoke the statute of limitations for that criminal offense.

Campaigns related to the prevention of child trafficking were carried out by the Mol and non-governmental organizations specialized in the prevention and support to victims of this type of violence. The Mol produced handbooks for children and teenagers informing them in a practical way about the risks of trafficking. The non-governmental organizations Beosuport and ASTRA organized many awareness campaigns about the risks and mechanisms of protection from child trafficking.

Awareness campaigns and campaigns for the prevention of digital bullying were carried out by different entities: the Digital Agenda Directorate of the Republic of Serbia; the Mol; the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications; NGOs; and international donors. In addition to campaigns and educational activities, the “Click Safely” project set up an online course for pupils/students, with the goal of familiarizing them with the risks of the Internet and teaching them how to be safe in digital space. The “Stop Digital Bullying” programme was implemented in 2012 in a partnership between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, UNICEF and Telenor. Apart from

educational and awareness-raising activities, an SOS online application was activated for reporting digital violence. The “Empowering Educators for Supporting Schools in Protecting Students from Digital Bullying” project was implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Pedagogic Society of Serbia and UNICEF. The activities were aimed at informing students and teachers about this form of violence.

### Interventions for prevention and direct protection of children

Compared to interventions directed at improving institutional and organizational mechanisms and those targeting changing attitudes, values and awareness, there were significantly fewer interventions aiming to prevent violence against children and to directly protect children exposed to violence. Removing children from families and placing them with institutions seems to be the main strategy of the state in these cases. There are numerous protocols for protecting children from violence, and yet it remains unclear which activities are being undertaken to protect children, apart from removal from their families, and which forms of support and counselling are provided for families.

Basically, at the meso level — which means either that some complex intervention is implemented in one local community, in a small group of local communities, or nationwide but limited to one branch of the protection system — mapping indicated the following interventions:

- ▮ improvement of support services provided by the national network of centres for social work in addressing violence in the family;
- ▮ intensive family support services provided for children living in multiple deprivation and at risk of being placed into care due to neglect or other forms of violence;
- ▮ the measure of removal of children from the family applied by CSW in cases of abuse and neglect;
- ▮ a patronage nursing service, part of the expert teams in primary healthcare centres (PHCs) with a role of recognizing risks and referring cases of violence;
- ▮ paediatric support, part of the expert teams in PHCs with a primary role of recognizing and referring cases of violence, and, to a lesser extent, counselling; and
- ▮ establishment of a unit for support to children witnessing violence in criminal trials, and production of manual.

The review of analysis and evaluation of the system for preventing and protecting children from violence show that experts agree that significant progress has been made in improving the system for protection of children from violence, but that the system is still not sufficiently functional (Žegarac, 2004; Plut & Popadić, 2007; Žegarac, 2014; Išpanović Radojković, 2011; Stakić, 2011; SeConS & UNICEF, 2012; Stevanović & Golić, 2012; Popadić et al., 2014; Jovanović-Madžar, 2014; Milosavljević-Đukić, 2015; Stevanović, 2015; Kuzmanović et al., 2016).

Centres for social work are key institutions tasked with bringing an end to violence against children. They have the mandate and legal authority to remove children from families, especially if both parents are perpetrators of violence. Before doing so, and through their case management work, centres for

social work are mandated to take measures to reduce domestic violence in families, including through family mediation and referral, as well as measures such as “heightened oversight of guardianship authority” over parenting. However, due to lack of evaluation, it remains unclear whether centres for social work are capable of providing adequate support for families before abuse and neglect of children occurs, as well as when it happens, and what the effects are of working with families. What is evident from the 2015 Report of the Institute for Social Protection (ISP) is that the number of children’s reports of violence increased compared to previous years (from 3,396 cases in 2011 to 6,520 cases in 2015). This increase is the result of various circumstances — a more proactive approach to the problem of violence against children and domestic violence by the police, a more active approach by actors in local communities, resulting from the signed Agreements on the Cooperation of Actors at the Local Level and changes in professional methods in centres for social work themselves (National Institute for Social Protection, 2015). However, based on information presented in the same report, effectiveness of CSW activities is extremely poor, considering that CSW reacted by filing legal proceedings against perpetrators in only 10% of cases of violence, 338 children were removed from their homes, and the number of procedures for protecting child victims of domestic violence that CSW filed with courts *ex officio* even dropped slightly compared to the previous year (NISP Report, 2015: 21–22).

Intensive family support services are envisaged by the Law on Social Protection in an effort to prevent family separation if there is violence in the family, but where removal of the child from the family would not be “in the best interest of the child”. These services are also provided to families where there is a higher risk of placement in care, such as for families that are living under the poverty line (and in addition experiencing other forms of marginalization, such as families with children with disability or families from an ethnic minority group). Such services have been piloted in different forms, including the Family Outreach Worker Service (piloted by UNICEF as part of pre-accession assistance funds), the Strengthening Families Programme (piloted by the SOS Children’s Villages Residential Care home and SOS Children’s Villages Foundation) and Family Bridges (piloted by the NGO Ideas). Existing evidence shows that such services contribute to a reduction in violence within the household as well as an improvement in a number of child well-being indicators, such as school achievement/attendance, better health indicators and better child–parent relationships.

Healthcare workers by law and relevant protocols need to recognize and report VAC, and support children and their families in line with their mandates. Healthcare facilities that deal with children, as per the special protocol, should form an expert team to assess and confirm the suspicion of the individual health professional who first recognized the violence, and record, report and respond in cases of suspected violence, as required by the protocol (within the health system and in co-operation with the centre for social work). Information obtained from mapping indicated that the above-mentioned project for strengthening capacities of the healthcare system (implemented by institutes for mental and public health) has significantly contributed to the more competent and effective reaction of healthcare professionals in cases of VAC. VAC expert teams were formed in 80% of primary healthcare centres; however, the response from secondary and tertiary health institutions has yet to be reinforced.

In terms of interventions directed at institutional mechanisms dealing with various forms of violence in the community, such as underage marriage, abuse of child labour, or protection of children who live and work in the street, development of institutional mechanisms significantly lags behind other

areas. These types of violence have also been neglected in terms of interventions aimed at changing attitudes, values and norms. Forced underage marriages, abuse of child labour and, to some extent, protection of children who live and work in the street (organizations and individuals involved in launching the Drop-in Shelter made an effort to raise awareness of this problem) represent forms of violence against children in the community that mostly remain out of reach of campaigns, training and similar activities intended to raise awareness and increase competencies of professionals to deal with these forms of violence.

The Institute for Public Health of the city of Belgrade, jointly with the Association of Paediatricians of Serbia, and with support of the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, implemented a project for support to early development and social inclusion of children through a community outreach nursing service. The aim of this service was to improve knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of families in various aspects, including fostering a safe environment for child-rearing and non-violent disciplining styles. Nurses and paediatricians also could gain insights into the safety of children during their earliest days, and alert the system for protection in case they detect risks of violence and neglect. The service was implemented for families with children age 0–6 in ten selected municipalities of Serbia. For work with Roma families, the programme included Roma mediators. The project brought benefits to 15,000 children, among whom are more than 5,000 Roma children, and included 80 paediatricians and 90 visiting nurses in nine PHCs. It has a preventive role and protocols and procedures developed in these PHCs and capacities of professionals ensure sustainability of this work to continue.

The protection of child victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings has significantly been improved through implementation of the project “Strengthening the Justice and Social Welfare Systems to Advance the Rights of the Child”, funded by the European Union and implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; and the MoI. In 2015, 15 informative sessions were held with the aim of improving the competence of judges, public prosecutors, social welfare officers and police officers for juveniles as injured parties in the pre-trial and criminal proceedings. As part of the same project, Units for the Support of Children in Criminal Proceedings were formed in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Nis and Novi Sad, and Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims and Witnesses from Secondary Victimization were developed. The units were formed as part of the process of transforming children’s homes and now they provide services in the community and intervene in cases where vulnerable groups of children and their families require additional and specific support.

### ***Interventions targeting micro-level determinants and factors***

Interventions targeting micro-level determinants and factors are not only those implemented at the micro level. It is evident that various interventions implemented at the meso level targeted institutional capacities of specific institutions simultaneously. This is, for example, the case with the School without Violence programme, where new mechanisms, campaigns and other activities strengthened capacities of specific schools for protection from violence. Similarly, interventions related to strengthening capacities by increasing competences, cooperation and implementation of protocols “spilled over” from the meso level down to individual institutions — centres for social work, healthcare facilities, the police, etc. Concrete organizations and services, such as shelters, protection for human trafficking victims, the

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centre for digital violence, etc., were established or strengthened. Micro-level interventions are usually single target projects implemented on a small scale, individual services for protection on limited, local outreach, or small-scale campaigns.

As mentioned earlier, interventions directed at family factors are few and limited. Taking into consideration the findings of the mapping, the impression is that issues such as economic status and parents' education were not considered targets for activities related to protection from violence. It seems that there is a kind of division in family care, with financial problems being passed on to the financial benefits welfare system. Some joint activity (financial and psycho-social support) is limited to families that entered the social welfare system both impoverished and having evident violence present. No interventions were recorded for families outside this relatively limited category — those which may face financial hardship but are above the threshold and do not qualify for financial benefits, although their children grow up surrounded by deprivation and violence. Also, data on interventions focusing on other types of family dysfunction, systematic work with perpetrators in cases involving persons with problems such as alcohol abuse or dependence on narcotics, consequences of participating in wars, etc., were not recorded by mapping. Finally, prevention programmes for families and young parents who do not belong to any of the above-mentioned risk groups, yet who may experience various types of parental frustration, are very scarce, with the exception of one helpline.

#### **Interventions targeting institutional determinants**

With regard to strengthening institutional capacities at the micro level, the mapping found the following interventions:

- enhanced capacities of the MoI to protect children from digital violence — establishment of a mechanism for reporting digital violence, risks of child exploitation on the Internet and paedophilia on the Internet;
- Click Safely — an online course for students about risks on the Internet;
- the Stop Digital Violence programme with an SOS application for reporting digital violence;
- establishment of an SOS telephone line for missing children;
- NADEL — a national child helpline established by the Centre for Infants, Children and Youth from Belgrade, with the support of HRH Crown Princess Katherine Foundation; and
- the Parenting Helpline.

The *Klikni Bezbedno* (Click Safely) campaign was launched in 2009 by the Directorate for the Digital Agenda of the Republic of Serbia, operating within the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society at the time. The campaign was part of the Safer Internet Programme of the European Commission launched in 1999 and being implemented in most European countries, with the goal of empowering and protecting children and adolescents on the Internet by launching initiatives for raising awareness of the safe use of ICT, as well as fighting against illicit and harmful content and behaviour on the Internet. Within the project, a website and online quiz were launched, and the Click Safely Safer Internet Centre was established in January 2013. The centre is being managed, funded and supported

by the B92 Fund; the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications of the Republic of Serbia; and the MoI. All activities of the centre are directed and developed by the Advisory Committee and the Children's Committee, to ensure the participation of children.

The Stop Digital Bullying programme was launched by the Violence Prevention Unit of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, in collaboration with UNICEF and Telenor, in November 2012. An active SOS online app for reporting violence was also set up in collaboration with UNICEF, Telenor and the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade.

Institutional capacities were also developed by the establishment of **new cooperation mechanisms**, both between stakeholders in the public sectors from different elements of the system of protection and between the public and the civil sector. Hence, through the cooperation of the MoI and the NGO ASTRA in 2014, a hotline for missing children was introduced; cooperation between the B92 Foundation, MoI and Ministry of Trade and Telecommunications set up the Safer Internet Centre in 2013; and cooperation between the MoI and Save the Children has resulted in an agreement on the cooperation for the improvement of the institutional protection of children living and working on the street.

NADEL is a telephone counselling service that provides all Serbian children with 24-hour counselling and support for free if they find themselves in a situation involving compromised rights, or in any other situation when they have a need for talk with a competent and confidential person. The target groups include all preschool and school children in Serbia, particularly those with family problems (divorce, separation, chronic conflicts), abused children (physically, sexually, emotionally, etc.), children exposed to peer violence, children with problems involving suicidal ideation and attempts, etc. In 2014, there were 116,007 calls.

Another telephone service has been recently introduced: the Parenting Helpline, which provides support to parents through cooperation with the Association of Professionals for Children and Family Support (FICE Serbia) and the Centre for Protection of Infants, Children and Youth. Operating between 5pm and 8pm, the service is meant to provide support to parents with their dilemmas in child-rearing, frustrations caused by difficulties in parenting, etc.

Apart from the family outreach worker service, which is in the pilot phase and more focused on direct support, the mapping did not identify interventions focused on the family as a system, a community where children are exposed to violence or neglect. The impression is that except for the centres for social work, which are mandated to work with the police, there are no other direct support services to families at risk of violence against children. Also, the most common intervention, when speaking about families at risk and interventions undertaken by centres for social work, is removing the child from its family. Separation of children from their families due to violence, without taking other protective measures, is considered an inappropriate intervention (Ignjatović, 2014). Appropriate support, such as age-appropriate psychological counselling for child witnesses of domestic violence, in keeping with the obligations under the Council of Europe's Convention on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Article 26), which Serbia ratified in 2013, has not been established yet.

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INTERVENTIONS FOR PREVENTING  
AND ELIMINATING VIOLENCE  
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### Interventions targeting cultural determinants

Interventions targeting cultural determinants were implemented at the meso and macro levels, but their effect should be manifested at the micro level, in families and individual institutions. Several of the campaigns presented above targeted parents in particular, and aimed at raising awareness of the damage of violent disciplining styles and promoting non-violent child-rearing practices.

### Interventions for prevention and direct protection of children

The provision of direct support to children who are at risk or are victims of violence is an obligation of all the systems in the Republic of Serbia (social protection, healthcare, police, education, judiciary). The competencies and obligations of these institutions are provided for by laws and by-laws. In practice, however, the scope and type of support provided by specific institutions of the system varies depending on organizational capacities, including financial and human resources ([in]sufficient funds, [lack of] professional staff, [low] capacities of professionals to address violence, etc.). CSOs play an important role in providing direct support to abused and neglected children, especially organizations implementing support programmes for children from vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities, Roma children, children living and working on the street, human trafficking victims, and refugees or displaced persons.

Interventions that emerged at the micro level aiming at direct support to children include:

- ▶ Shelter for Urgent Protection of Abused Children set up by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy;
- ▶ Children's Drop-In Centre — a shelter for children living and working on the street set up by the Centre for Youth Integration;
- ▶ direct support services to child victims of human trafficking provided by the Centre for Protecting Victims of Human Trafficking, institutions within the social protection systems, and the NGOs Atina and ASTRA;
- ▶ a day care centre programme for children and young people with behavioural problems set up by the IAN Telecentre;
- ▶ Healthy Changes Club for empowering children with disabilities exposed to violence and neglect set up by the Child Rights Centre with the support of the international charity organization LUMOS; and
- ▶ Incest Trauma Centre (ITC), which provides support to children who are victims of sexual violence.

The Shelter for Urgent Protection of Abused Children was established as a project activity of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy in December 2002, following the recognition of the need for the urgent removal of child victims of violence from the threatening environment and a short-term treatment to recover from such traumatic experience. The shelter operates in the premises of the Jovan Jovanović Zmaj home for children without parental care, and in the period from its establishment to September 2016, 612 children aged 7–18 were placed in its care (379 girls and 233 boys).

The Children's Drop-In Centre was established as an innovative service by the Centre for Youth Integration, a non-governmental organization, in 2004. These children, who are exposed to the multiple exclusions and difficult conditions of life on the street, and in particular great risks of different types of violence, can satisfy basic needs in the Drop-In Centre, get help to access other services and acquire basic life skills as a step towards social inclusion. Since the end of 2011, 653 minors have received help in the Drop-In Centre. On average, 30 children visit the Drop-In Centre per day, and that number can go up to 70 children in the winter. According to the Centre for Youth Integration's information, on average 70% of children who drop-in are boys and the greatest number of children are aged between 10 and 14. Meanwhile, these centres have been also established in other Serbian cities (Nis and Novi Sad), and one day centre for children working and living on the street has been established in the municipality of New Belgrade.

Direct support to child victims of human trafficking and sexual or labour exploitation is provided by two non-governmental organizations, namely ASTRA and Atina; the Centre for Protecting Children from Violence; and institutions within the social protection system. In 2015, the support covered 67 child victims of human trafficking, 11 boys and 56 girls. Within the state social protection system, child victims of trafficking are placed in foster families and within other accommodation capacities of social protection institutions. Financial support services to the family and children are provided through a system of financial benefits under the social protection system. The Centre for Protecting Victims of Human Trafficking provides medical care for victims; purchase of clothing, footwear, food and hygiene items; purchase of school supplies; payment of fees for obtaining documents; and purchase of tickets for transport, under direct support. Where necessary, the centre provides the services of therapists, while lawyers and professionals from the centre provide assistance in proceedings in trials of human trafficking (person of trust), etc. Atina's programmes, apart from direct support to children, also focus on providing support to families, and within the shelter for victims of human trafficking, implement empowerment programmes. ASTRA also manages a hotline for missing children.

The IAN Telecentre's support to children and young people with behavioural problems has been available since 2012 in the form of a day centre. Behavioural problems are mostly a consequence of experience with violence, and the majority of children involved in the day centre are victims of violence in the family and discrimination in school and among peers, which exacerbates their conflict with norms and often with the law. In the day centre, these children are empowered by learning skills (use of computers and Internet, computer maintenance, active job searches, writing resumes, etc.), as well as psychological empowerment and re-socialization through a club that includes creative and psychological workshops, learning assistance, excursions, sports activities, visits to the cinema and theatre, etc.

The Healthy Changes Club was established in 2012 as part of the project "Empowering Children/ Young People with Disabilities to Improve Responses to Child Abuse and Neglect". The project was implemented by the Child Rights Centre with the support of the international charity organization LUMOS and the European Commission. The club is intended for children and young people with disabilities, those placed in institutional care or foster care, children using supported housing services, and other young people who need support in everyday functioning.

The Incest Trauma Centre (ITC) is a women's non-governmental organization, a service specialized in the sexual assault issue. The professionals who work in this organization were originally trained

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INTERVENTIONS FOR PREVENTING  
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AGAINST CHILDREN...

in the sphere of health and mental health. The ITC provides psychological assistance to child and adult survivors of sexual violence. Within ITC's Sexual Assault Prevention Center, 8,713 children and adolescents completed a ten-week "Healthy Choices for Kids" prevention programme for teachers, parents and kids. Also, within the ITC, the Sexual Assault Prevention Peer Team has the Sexual Assault Prevention Club — schoolchildren aged 12 to 18 run the club assisted by ITC's volunteers aged 19 to 25.<sup>67</sup>

### ***Personal factors as targets of interventions***

Finally, with regard to factors relating to personality, the mapping indicated that there is insufficient sensitivity of interventions to the age of children. It was noted that there are no interventions specifically tailored to younger children, who remain furthest from reach of the system, hidden in the privacy of family relationships. Also, gender characteristics of violence have only partially been the object of interventions related to schools without violence, but in the context of domestic, institutional and community violence, they remain outside the focus of interventions. Certain vulnerable groups of children were supported through various interventions, especially children with disabilities, children who live and work in the street and children in trouble with the law.

Some specialized services for support to children with vulnerabilities have already been described in previous sections: the children's Drop-in Centre, a shelter for children living and working on the street; the IAN Telecentre for children with behavioural problems; the Healthy Changes Club for empowerment of children with disabilities; and paediatric and community nursing services aiming to reach the youngest children in Roma families.

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<sup>67</sup> Incest Trauma Centre's website: <http://www.incestraucentar.org.rs/index.php/en/we-are/background-and-mission>

# CONCLUSIONS

The research (conducted through literature review, secondary data analysis and interventions mapping) pointed to an uneven and fairly complex representation of determinants and factors of violence against children taking place in different forms and in various settings, as well as uneven targeting of these determinants by the interventions. Knowledge of determinants and factors of violence is generally scarce in domestic literature, thus limiting the scope of evidence needed for better-profiled interventions that address VAC at its roots. Violence is often approached in a descriptive manner, without a search for determinants and factors causing or influencing it. Based on the available national literature, determinants and factors were most thoroughly researched in the context of school violence, followed by violence in the family, but significantly less in other settings. Intervention results cannot be accurately presented and assessed, primarily because systematic monitoring and evaluation was scarce, apart from a few exceptions. These are limitations that should be taken into account within the presentation of research findings, main conclusions and research gaps.

## *Research findings*

At the **macro level**, determinants that were in the focus of literature were mainly cultural and to a lesser extent institutional, while social and particularly economic were evidently neglected. When socio-economic factors at the macro level are mentioned in the literature, they are treated in a very general manner and mostly only to describe context. Social determinants are present as multidimensional social exclusion, particularly in the studies of violence in deprived and marginalized groups (Roma, street children, children with disabilities). The effects of regions and areas defined in terms of degree of urbanization are seldom analysed and described. Cultural factors are mostly found in the form of a high tolerance towards violence resulting from the wars of the 1990s; widespread attitudes that discriminate various groups based on minority status, vulnerability or other factor; as well as norms and values related to gender roles and relations.

It may be concluded that the studies about school violence have best recognized and underlined socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors at different levels. In these studies, cultural factors are recognized through a more general value-based and normative framework, expressed in attitudes towards violence in general and gender roles; through discriminatory views about social groups defined by different social and demographic features (gender, ethnicity, age, social status, sexual orientation, etc.); and through an awareness about different types of risks from violence, recognizing violence and familiarity with the system of protection against violence. All the aforementioned factors are much less present in studies on violence against children in the family — in these studies attitudes towards the disciplining of children, namely views about parenting styles, also represent an important factor. In the context of institutional violence these factors are barely mentioned, except for in the very narrow sense of an awareness of the risks of violence, recognizing violence and the system of protection. This type of cultural factor is also more present in studies about digital violence, along with the less-represented factor of the general tolerance of violence as an acceptable behaviour. In studies about violence in the community, cultural factors are less present, addressed in the form of general attitudes towards the

tolerance of violence, discriminatory values and views, as well as the ability to recognize violence and the system of protection.

The **meso-level** determinants that were mainly in the focus of the literature were primarily institutional factors, followed by cultural. Again, socio-economic factors were neglected. Even when studies are focused on a specific region or local community, attention is not paid to specific socio-economic conditions. In the context of school violence, however, all the aforementioned socio-economic factors were encompassed, with the greatest importance attributed to economic factors and mechanisms of social exclusion, and slightly less to spatial factors, ethnic and other conflicts in the community, crime and gender inequality. **Socio-economic factors** and mechanisms of social exclusion were also emphasized in studies about community violence, in particular against children living and working on the street, but also related to various forms of exploitation and child marriage. **Institutional determinants** at the meso level that were found in the literature include legislation and policies related to the placement of children in residential institutions, mechanisms of identification, referral of cases of violence; multi-sectoral coordination; instruments for the protection of child witnesses of family violence within judicial processes; and capacities of professionals and providers of support, particularly in the network of centres for social work, education and healthcare protection.

**Micro-level** determinants and factors that were found in the literature mainly belong to the corpus of family factors and much less institutional ones. In the case of violence in the family, the most cited **socio-economic factors** are those related to the economic position of the family and the household such as employment, standard of living and poverty, while the relevance of spatial/regional factors, as well as that of the mechanisms of exclusion from various spheres of society (education, access to personal documents, right to healthcare, social protection, etc.) was far less analysed.

Family factors are most often analysed and most explicitly underlined in studies about violence in the family, and partially in those about violence in schools and the community. Among family factors, the most frequently cited are low education attainment of parents, dysfunctional family relations and alcohol abuse by the parents or other family members. Meanwhile, the effect of support of informal networks and the effect of stressful events remain much less underscored. In the context of violence in schools, the most commonly mentioned family-related factor is the education of the parents, followed by dysfunctional family relations and domestic violence. Family factors are almost non-existent in studies about violence in institutions and digital space.

Personal factors related to risks of violence are present in studies about violence in the family and violence in schools and institutions. Apart from gender and age, disability is particularly underscored and said to increase a child's risk of exposure to violence as well as behavioural problems, which increase the risks of violence in the role of both perpetrator and victim.

## Research gaps

Based on the aforementioned findings, the following gaps in researching the determinants and factors of violence may be identified:

- ▶ Investigation of the factors is insufficient. Studies about violence against children often stopped short of examining factors of violence at all, or at least not explicitly. When referring to the factors, they are often merely itemized, with very little precise, methodologically robust analysis of the effect of factors on the occurrence and characteristics of violence.
- ▶ Socio-economic factors are often neglected in analyses of violence against children. Although they are not necessarily highlighted as primary drivers, they enable violence to be better contextualized and understood. It is notable that domestic violence is often analysed as a phenomenon taking place inside an “ivory tower”, without systematically and explicitly putting the family in a wider social context, where it can itself be a victim of structural violence and reflect such violence on its progeny in more direct forms. The limited view especially may become a trap when the analysis focuses on children and families from vulnerable groups, such as those living in Roma settlements, poor families faced with multiple exclusion and discrimination. Structural factors are significantly neglected in the otherwise rare studies about violence in institutions and digital space. Certain structural determinants are mentioned extremely rarely in literature (except in studies about violence in schools), such as ethnic and other conflicts in the community, crime, uneven gender regimes, etc.
- ▶ Institutional factors were analysed to a satisfactory extent, but such a state of affairs is to a great degree caused by the absence of systemic evaluations of various institutional mechanisms and services, and the examination of the effectiveness thereof. Findings about the effects of institutional factors consist mainly of general remarks about the poor implementation of laws, protocols and strategies; ineffective prevention programmes; poor capacity of institutions, etc. Rare studies on the implementation of laws and other legal instruments confirm the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of measures for protecting children from violence.
- ▶ 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 seniors has not been investigated sufficiently, and may have negative impacts equivalent to their direct exposure.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Factors related to the traits of the child are in fact most often not genuine factors of violence. The greater prevalence of violence among children of a specific age or gender does not mean that the characteristic itself causes violence to happen more often, but rather that certain attitudes, values and norms among perpetrators act in such a way that they harass more children with certain characteristics. So far the literature has not clearly stated and explained this, and therefore one may get the impression that the child’s characteristics themselves may “cause” violence on their

own, which places the blame on the victim. Certain groups of children remain poorly covered by research, such as small children (0–5 years of age) in the family or in preschools. Nor are gender aspects of violence sufficiently analysed, especially considering that they are widespread in the adult population and constitute a major factor contributing to the reproduction of violence among the new generations (children witnessing violence are victims of violence).

- ▶ Certain forms of violence remain sparsely known, as do the factors related to such violence. This concerns violence faced by children living and working on the street, female victims of child marriage, and children forced into child labour and sexual exploitation.
- ▶ Attention to the interconnectedness of factors is also rather an exception than a rule in studies about violence, and very few works have touched upon some forms of spillover of violence from one context to another. For example, children placed for care in residential institutions have already experienced domestic violence, and the way in which these family-related and institutional factors are interconnected is not sufficiently analysed. The spillover of violence from the family into the school setting is somewhat more extensively examined, as is spillover from the school environment into digital space. Being surrounded by violence in multiple contexts creates very difficult living conditions for children and disturbs their development. Consequently, it is very important to analyse these interconnected and converging factors.

### ***Findings based on mapping interventions***

**The findings on interventions** and their direction at determinants and factors of violence point to the following conclusions:

- ▶ At the **macro level** it is evident that most interventions undertaken by the state aimed at development and implementation of the legal framework and key institutions, as well as raising awareness of VAC. The main logic was to develop a top-down system, by adopting one general protocol and subsequently special protocols — manuals to provide guidelines for professionals from relevant sectors. However, centralized institutional coordination of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results of the implementation of the action plan failed. The Council for Child Rights was ineffective in coordinating, monitoring and evaluating effects of the implementation of the main action plan. Interventions targeting cultural determinants included various general and nationwide campaigns for raising awareness about VAC; prohibiting corporal punishment; and promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and gender equality. However, the effects of these campaigns were not evaluated.
- ▶ At the **meso level** interventions were mainly focused on establishing, enhancing and improving institutional responses, and then on campaigns aimed at changing knowledge and attitudes about different forms of violence against children. The system and mechanisms driven by the legal framework and institutional change were mainly focused on recognizing violence, reporting, referring and planning response through case management; meanwhile, addressing risk/vulnerability factors (thus preventing violence from occurring in the first place) was limited, as was development of a network of services for protection of the child. The findings indicate that dislocating a child from its family is the main functioning mechanism, while other forms of support

and action (provided for the child, and mother/father as supporter or violent parent) are insufficient. Many local communities, especially the largest towns, established multi-sectoral teams and groups for coordination within the education system, as well as coordinators for prevention that were appointed in all school districts. Most interventions that aimed to advance institutional and organizational capacities were targeted at training stakeholders in different systems of protection on the implementation of protocols, recognizing violence and responding in accordance with the roles and responsibilities defined in laws and protocols. Interventions aimed at institutional and organizational frameworks have led to the establishment of certain **new mechanisms** boosting the institutional response to violence, especially in the school system (school police officer; school violence prevention teams, whose role was to make the annual plan for prevention and protection; peer prevention and intervention teams; a group for protection against violence and discrimination within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, with coordinators in school districts), and in the judiciary (a unit for supporting child witnesses in criminal proceedings). However, bearing in mind the interventions recognized in the scope of the mapping process, there are very few new or strengthened mechanisms for working with families on preventing and protecting children from violence. Despite some new mechanisms, such as a patronage nursing service and intensive family support services that were still piloting and on a smaller scale, the main intervention was reduced to the activities of the centres for social work, which focused on families where the problems are already severe. Particularly intensive were the campaigns for raising the awareness of and motivation for suppressing violence in school, as well as awareness about a major taboo — sexual violence against children. Many campaigns were targeted at institutional factors, striving to raise awareness and boost capacities for recognizing and reacting against violence in various parts of the system of protection. Many trainings and workshops have been held and manuals released with the aim of increasing professionals' awareness of and sensitivity to violence.

At the **micro level**, interventions targeting direct support to child victims of violence have not always been clearly aimed at the factors. Many represent merely an open door to the system of protection (various hotlines, platforms for reporting violence). Furthermore, some interventions are only aimed at remedying the consequences (urgent, temporary accommodation, etc.). Naturally, such services are very important and represent examples of good practice, but they are not available and geographically distributed in an appropriate manner, therefore the coverage of children who are in need of these services is small. Apart from this, their continuous funding and maintenance is key for the quality of the protection system. Examples of good practice that also strives to affect factors and roots of violence faced by children beyond existing state mechanisms are: the IAN Telecentre, where children with behavioural problems are empowered in multiple ways, thus creating the conditions for their social inclusion; and the Club for Healthy Changes in Children and Youth with Disabilities, empowering these children to resist violence. Except for the shelter for children living and working on the street, the remaining interventions registered by the mapping process are not aimed at socio-economic determinants. This should not come as a surprise, since the policies and measures for preventing and protecting children against violence may not target, for example, the reduction of poverty, development of rural areas, removal of ethnic or other conflicts, crime reduction in the community or fostering gender equality. By contrast, interventions, regardless of their aim, should take these structural determinants more into account

and be better contextualized. This means, for example, that a “school without violence” should be equipped with programmes that are better suited to the needs and backgrounds of children and more equipped to deal with a child’s vulnerability to violence due to family circumstances, ethnicity, gender, living in a remote rural area, etc. This should be taken into account during the planning of individual support, but also at the level of the school or community.

### ***Gaps and weaknesses in the interventions***

Based on the above findings, the following **weaknesses** in the system for preventing and protecting children from violence can be identified:

- ▶ There is no functioning, effective government body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to coordinate, monitor and evaluate effects of policies and measures for prevention and protection; report; and guide new cycles of policies.
- ▶ A methodology for the systematic monitoring of the implementation of existing protocols has not been developed, either at the level of all specific sectors in the protection system, or in the form of protocols that manage inter-sectoral cooperation. Methodology is present in the police sector (MUP), and recently (2016) the National Institute for Social Protection NISP developed a methodology for monitoring implementation of protocols in the social protection system, activating the process of monitoring; however, this methodology does not exist for other systems or at the level of inter-system cooperation.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Healthcare facilities, educational institutions and centres for social work at the local level need support in order to act in accordance with existing protocols and provide an efficient response to violence against children. Research revealed the lack of knowledge among professionals about roles and responsibilities of other systems and particularly of health and education or social welfare measures. This complicates coordination and response as expectations are very different and referral is the main strategy, instead of cooperation (SeConS & UNICEF, 2012).

- ▶ The disconnection between violence against women and violence against children in the family represents a significant gap in the system for protection, which mainly treats them separately.
- ▶ In the education system the response to children's needs and vulnerabilities is very scattered across certain teams — such as the violence prevention team, inclusion team, and drop-out prevention team — while the children that the teams target might be the same, and need an integrated response to the risks and vulnerabilities they encounter. In addition, they should be acted upon as early as possible and, with other sectors, address the family as well.
- ▶ We also learnt that the health system is still the most reluctant to report violence (despite all the efforts invested) and that it does not necessarily engage to provide any protection services — counselling, etc. — except in mental health clinics.
- ▶ There are no systematic preventive programmes for education and strengthening parenting competences, preparatory parenting programmes or other programmes from a set of intensive family support services. Programmes for strengthening parenting skills and competences, focusing particularly on non-violent parenting methods, have not been prevalent in specific protection programmes so far. They are mostly small-scale or pilot projects.
- ▶ There are not enough services, especially at the local level, for providing parenting support by offering useful advice that would guide parents' behaviour in concrete situations.
- ▶ Violence prevention programmes are not common in preschools.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Deinstitutionalization is not happening fast enough: a significant number of children still remain in large residential institutions where conditions are not conducive to their development and quality of life.
- ▶ Human resources in institutions for protection of children are insufficient and institutions of the protection system are inadequately connected to the university.
- ▶ The corrective monitoring of parents is a measure that has not been sufficiently evaluated, and conclusions on actual impacts of this intervention are missing.
- ▶ 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 were implemented within various systems, there is certainly a need for new, different types of training and activities targeting changes in attitudes.
- ▶ 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 FOR IMPROVING THE SYSTEM FOR PREVENTING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

Recommendations for improving the system of preventing and protecting children from violence were primarily formulated in a way that should 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 development of recommendations.<sup>68</sup> 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 policies.

<sup>68</sup> Workshops where the findings of the study on determinants and factors of violence against children were validated and recommendations developed were held in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Niš. In addition, representatives from various national and local institutions and organizations were given the opportunity to submit written comments and recommendations, which were included in the national report.

**Recommendations:**

- ▶ It is necessary to establish a single unit/body within the Government of the Republic of Serbia (either as inter-departmental or similar to the SIPRU) 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, small-scale practices have not been scaled-up, and they remain isolated cases instead of being 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).

- ▀ A new strategy should entail 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.

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#### **Finding:**

A methodology for the systematic monitoring of the implementation of existing protocols has not been developed, either at the level of all specific sectors in the protection system, or in the form of protocols that manage inter-sectoral cooperation. Methodology is present in the police sector (MUP), and recently (2016) the NISP developed a methodology for monitoring implementation of protocols in the social protection system, activating the process of monitoring; however, this methodology does not exist for other systems or at the level of inter-system cooperation.

#### **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 general and specialized violence, there is a degree of confusion among professionals — this should be made clearer and more consistent.

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#### **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 implementation of protocols and especially cooperation with the healthcare and educational systems are problematic in almost 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 should be introduced — monitoring and professional support for staff in facing the problem of violence against children and providing an adequate response. Mentoring and peer exchange are critical for the education, health and social protection sectors.
- 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, 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 development of services to financial transfers within the programmes of financing as a strategic priority development of social services in the area of VAC prevention and protection.
  -  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 experiences with good models and practices and invest in transferring adequate solutions from other communities. This reduces costs of the establishment of a new service or innovation of an existing service and dampens the risks of failure.
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#### **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 be also considered 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.
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#### **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 (for which the only means of penalizing noncompliance is limiting and terminating parental rights), and, based on the results, increase monitoring or custody. In fact, this should be monitored and revised accordingly, on the basis of findings.

- ▶ It should be analysed 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.

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**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 realize for preventing and protecting children from violence, and this requires certain systemic changes and a redefinition of priorities.

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***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.

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### ***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, focusing particularly on non-violent parenting methods, have not been prevalent in specific protection programmes so far.

#### **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 piloting 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.

7

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SYSTEM FOR PREVENTING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN...

- ▀ 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.
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#### **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 this.
  - ▀ Roma 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.
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**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.

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**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 (this always shows that the social protection system does not react in a timely or appropriate manner, i.e. it only reacts in extreme cases).

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**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 regulate emergency fostering and 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.

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**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.

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***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.

## 7

## 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.

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#### 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. Socio-economic 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.

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#### 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 seniors 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 seniors 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 research non-violent parents, and use the findings of this research to produce materials for developing programmes for preventing domestic violence.

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#### 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 narcotics should be examined.
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**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 narcotics.
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**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.
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**Finding:**

Institutional factors at various levels have not been researched sufficiently, especially in the context of domestic violence. The reach, level of sensitivity, impacts 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.

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**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 narcotics addicts.

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**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 Internet 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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# ANNEX 1

## KEY STAGES AND ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research of the main determinants, factors and interventions of violence against children in Serbia was a very comprehensive process and involved several key stages:

- 1** Initial stage: as a part of a wider R3P process, the research on determinants, factors and interventions of violence against children in Serbia was initiated by a Ministerial Committee (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Youth and Sports; and Ministry of Justice) in 2015.
- 2** Organization of consultative meetings between all stakeholders in the research process: UNICEF team members, SeConS — Development Initiative Group, representatives of the Zurich University of Teacher Education, members of the Technical Group.
- 3** Review of the existing literature: this stage involved the process of collecting and analysing relevant literature on violence against children in Serbia, as well as relevant international literature.
- 4** Intervention mapping: at this stage, which took place in parallel with the literature analysis, the aim was to identify interventions that have been implemented so far in the field of preventing and protecting children from violence in Serbia and their effects.
- 5** Verification of findings: the aim of this stage was to present the findings of the previous stages to stakeholders in roundtable discussions, which were held in several cities in Serbia and fostered a public debate about those findings.
- 6** National report on drivers and determinants of violence against children in Serbia: all findings of the previous research stages were consolidated in a comprehensive national report that summarized the current situation and provided recommendations for improving the mechanisms for preventing and protecting children from violence in Serbia. The aim of this report is also to provide a significant contribution to the development of the new National Strategy and Action Plan on Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence in the period 2016–2020.
- 7** Promotion of research findings: publication of the National Report will be followed by a process of public presentation and promotion of research findings through different communication channels, including social networks and press articles.

# ANNEX 2

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# ANNEX 3

## METHODOLOGY OF THE LITERATURE ANALYSIS

### The overall scope of the literature analysis

The overall scope of the literature review of the R3P study in Serbia derives from the range of the whole research process. The literature review targeted all age categories of children (0 to 18 years), with a special focus on young adolescents (10 to 14 years). Although the primary focus of the literature review was on violence affecting children in Serbia (including national, regional and local levels), key information on violence against children in the international literature was also taken into account. The time scope of the literature analysis covered relevant studies published from 1996 to date, with only certain highly relevant studies included from the pre-1996 period. For the international literature, only certain key studies were taken into account as reference literature, without any restrictions in terms of their date. Finally, it is important to mention that the literature review covered different types of violence against children (physical, psychological, sexual, neglect, exploitation, forced marriage), as well as different contexts in which children are exposed to violence (family, school, institutions, cyberspace, community), key perpetrators and consequences of violence.

### The matrix for the literature analysis

The process of defining the methodology for the literature analysis was highly participatory and relied heavily on the methodology used by the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti.<sup>69</sup> The outcome was a matrix used in the literature analysis process. The development of this matrix also relied to a large extent on the recommendations provided in the Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Preliminary Research around What Drives Violence (UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti, 2015).

The literature analysis matrix consists of several key segments: the first one contains technical information on the literature units covered by the analysis, the second provides important information on the subject matter of the study, the third focuses on the quality assessment of the study and respect for ethical principles in the process of conducting the research (in the case of research papers), while the last segment covers those literature units that present an intervention implemented to protect children from violence.

<sup>69</sup> The research preparation stage included a two-day workshop held in Belgrade in March 2016, which defined the methodology for literature analysis and intervention mapping. The workshop was facilitated by Professor Judith Hollenweger Haskell and Dr. Martin Retzl of the Zurich University of Teacher Education, who had a mentoring role in the implementation of the entire process. The workshop was attended by representatives of UNICEF Serbia, SeConS — Development Initiative Group and the Technical Group comprised of experts in different fields.

### **Technical information**

Technical information on the literature units contained in the first part of the analysis matrix includes: details of the author(s) (full name), study title, year of publication, details of the publisher, language of publication, type of study, period covered by the study, the time of completion of research in the case of research papers, geographic coverage of the study and the study's disciplinary focus.<sup>70</sup>

With regard to the type of study, a distinction was made between empirical and non-empirical studies. Non-empirical studies include different theoretical or conceptual works, as well as systematic literature reviews. With regard to empirical studies, those that related to implemented interventions were covered separately. To obtain as accurate information as possible about the study type, details of research papers also include information on the methodology used — whether it was a quantitative method, a qualitative method or a combined research method. In addition, the technical part also provides information on the policy space covered by the paper (healthcare, education, social protection, legal protection), as well as the policy level (local, national, regional or international).

### **Information on study content**

In terms of the content of the reviewed literature, the first step was to determine whether violence against children was the key topic or just one of the topics covered. In the case of research papers it was important to determine the size of the research sample and the basic socio-demographic data, such as the age and gender of the children covered by the research.

Differentiation was made between four age categories of children:

- ▀ children of the youngest age, up to 4 years,
- ▀ children aged 5 to 11 years,
- ▀ children aged 12 to 14 years,
- ▀ the eldest group — children aged 15 to 18 years.

It was also important to see whether the children covered by the research were members of a specific social group based on their cultural and ethnic background, their socioeconomic status and the specific nature of the region in which they live. It was particularly important to determine whether the children on whom a study focused belonged to a vulnerable group. Several such groups were identified: children who are involved in life and/or work on the street, children with disabilities, children without parental care (placed in care institutions), members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) population, drug users, forced migrants, victims of human trafficking and ethnic minorities (especially members of the Roma population).

<sup>70</sup> Disciplinary focus was determined according to the typology set out in *OECD Frascati Manual 2015 — Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development* (OECD, 2015:59).

Another analytical category was based on whether the reviewed papers focused on other groups, such as family members, peer group members, the wider community, etc. It was also relevant to identify whether violence affecting children was more common in urban or in rural areas.

As for the content of the studies, crucially important categories that are at the focus of the analysis, included: types of violence against children, the key contexts in which violence occurs, the most common perpetrators of violence, the determinants and factors of violence against children and, finally, the consequences that violence against children may have.

### ***Quality of papers and observance of ethical principles***

One segment of the analysis included an assessment of the quality of the studies and the extent to which they adhered to certain ethical principles. Criteria taken into account in the quality evaluation included whether the studies contained notice of any limiting factors, whether they included a chapter with key findings and a discussion chapter, whether the studies were peer reviewed, and whether the source of funding was clearly stated if the paper included research findings. The observance of ethical principles was considered primarily in the analysis of papers based on empirical research, especially those that involved children. The criteria taken into account in this regard included respect for the privacy and integrity of respondents, and use of specific procedures to ensure a sound ethical approach — e.g. requiring consent for the research and voluntary participation in the research.

An effort was made to assess the quality and ethical standards of all studies by members of the team for literature analysis. However, in an estimated one quarter of cases the researchers experienced difficulty in making precise assessments about ethical standards due to a lack of information provided within the available study.

### ***Available information on interventions***

As the literature analysis also covered papers relating to interventions conducted in the field of protection of children from violence, the analysis matrix also included a number of categories specific to the analysis of such papers: the type of intervention, the type of agent of the intervention, the target group of the intervention, the type of implementation method, the context of its implementation and the source of funding for the activities involved in the intervention.

## **Selection process and limitations**

The process of obtaining and processing literature was comprised of several key stages: forming a literature analysis team, obtaining literature units relevant for the analysis (by searching different databases and contacting relevant organizations, institutions and individuals), and storing and processing the obtained literature. The literature analysis team was formed in late March 2016 and initially had four members. Over time this number was expanded and in subsequent stages the

literature analysis team was comprised of six members — four doctoral students at the University of Belgrade and two social scientists with a wealth of experience in various projects — as well as an expert on protection of children from violence, whose task was to validate the literature list and make suggestions if a particularly relevant study had been omitted from the analysis.

The process of searching for and selecting literature units followed the instructions set out in the Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Preliminary Research around What Drives Violence, especially during the initial stages. By combining the key words contained in this guide,<sup>71</sup> the team members searched relevant international databases, such as *PubMed/Medline*, *PsycINFO (EBSCOhost)*, *CINAHL-ebSCO*, *ERIC* and *EmBase*, as well as some of the relevant international journals, including *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *Child Maltreatment*, *Child Abuse Review*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* and *Childhood*. As the number of papers obtained at this initial stage was not sufficient, especially due to the fact that the literature available in those databases and magazines was in English, the team members also searched two more databases — *Kobson* and *Cobiss.rs*. Since the focus was not only on obtaining scientific studies and articles, the analysis also attempted to cover the relevant literature units (publications, reports) issued by national and international organizations, as well as doctoral theses that, although not published, contributed significantly to the scope of the research.

In order to cover as many literature units as possible on certain aspects of violence against children in Serbia, invitations were sent to a large number of relevant institutions, national and international organizations, and individuals to contribute and send their publications. A number of literature units that were reviewed and included in the analysis were obtained in this way. The selected literature units were stored using *Zotero* and *Dropbox* software, especially in the first stage of obtaining literature. Based on the literature review template, questionnaires that the members of the literature analysis team used when reviewing the studies were made. The data obtained in this way was collected and entered into an *SPSS* database, which was used for data processing.

It is important to emphasize that the process of literature selection, collection and analysis had certain limitations. The first limitation was the inability to access certain international databases (*EmBase*, *CINAHL*). However, the Zurich team provided assistance in accessing the databases that could not be accessed by the literature analysis team. Another important fact in this regard is that the search of international databases retrieved relatively few literature units relevant for the analysis, as there are not many studies and articles pertaining to violence against children in Serbia or certain aspects of it. As a result, identical studies were retrieved from multiple databases we consulted.

It should also be noted that the list of studies covered by this analysis is certainly not exhaustive and does not include all existing studies related to different aspects of violence against children in Serbia. It should reasonably be assumed there are studies that the researchers could not access. Another factor to be taken into account was the time frame in which the studies were selected and analysed. Due to these limitations, the process involved experts whose role was, among other things, to determine whether the analysis covered all literature units that should be covered by this kind of analysis.

<sup>71</sup> The search queries used a combination of three key components: studied population (children, adolescents, youth, teenagers, etc.), country (in this case Serbia) and a designation of a specific type of violence.

# ANNEX 4

## METHODOLOGY OF THE INTERVENTION MAPPING

The process of defining the methodology for mapping interventions implemented in the area of preventing and protecting children from violence was highly participatory and was defined in close collaboration between UNICEF, a team from the Zurich University of Teacher Education, the SeConS team, and members of the Technical Group comprised of experts from various fields, and relied heavily on the methodology used by the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti (UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti, 2015).

### Mapping interventions in literature reviewed

The mapping of implemented interventions was initially supposed to have mostly relied on information obtained from the review of literature on violence against children in Serbia. The literature review matrix contained a special section about interventions and should have helped to identify all units of literature covered by the review that related to any of the implemented interventions. The categories included in this matrix were: the type of intervention, the type of agent of the intervention, the target group of the intervention, the type of implementation method, the context of its implementation and the source of funding for the activities involved in the intervention. The literature analysis covered 265 literature units, including 131 non-empirical studies and 134 empirical papers. Only 39 units of literature were, to a certain degree, related to some type of intervention — in most cases to interventions focused on the establishment and improvement of institutional/organizational mechanisms (for example, different manuals). Unfortunately, this was not enough to gain insight into interventions that have been implemented in the field of child protection in Serbia, and the research strategy had to be changed.

### Mapping interventions within various systems

Considering the fact that in the reviewed literature interventions were mapped to a very limited extent, it was necessary to find a good way of identifying interventions for preventing and protecting children from exposure to violence implemented in Serbia after 2000. Accordingly, a team was established to map interventions and was composed of experts from various protection systems who were tasked to map all important interventions in their own system.

Implemented interventions were mapped in the following systems: the social protection system, education system, healthcare system, police, and judicial system. In each of these systems, the experts tried to identify all three groups of interventions — interventions to establish or advance institutional/

organizational mechanisms; interventions directed at changing standards, values and attitudes; and interventions focused on direct support and protection.

All experts, from each of the mentioned sectors, delivered reports on implemented interventions, which served as the key basis for the analysis of existing interventions in the area of preventing and protecting children from violence.





# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SERBIA

Determinants,  
Factors and  
Interventions