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*The Children Rights Protection of the RS Ombudsman*

## THEORETIC PART

### THE RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO PROTECTION FROM ALL FORMS OF ABUSE

The child needs a nonviolent environment in order to develop a maximum of his/hers capacities. Being aware of that, the experts defined Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child obliging the member states to act toward the systematic protection of children from abuse and negligence. By virtue of this article a member state, which ratified this document, has an obligation to establish the appropriate programs of prevention from abuse and treatment of victims of violence. Article 19 reads as follows: *"States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement."*

Our country is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, so that the process of harmonization of local legislation and this important international document, which has, for quite a while already, went beyond the limits of moral obligation and became a practice in democratically organized societies. Harmonization of regulations is a consequence of decisions made in the post-conflict period in which Bosnia and Herzegovina decided to follow the footprints of regulated human societies and join its neighbors in their path to the European Union. Given that this process is not simple in any way, a gap between the legislation and practice occurred very soon in our social context. Lack of readiness for an efficient implementation of newly adopted legal norms in different areas very often inspire experts in legal science to claim that the applicable legislation is well conceived and written, but unfortunately only a "letter on a paper".

Reformed was education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, so that during 2003 was adopted **Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education**, and during next year harmonization of laws on entity level took place. However, apart from harmonization of regulations, few steps were done to put in practice intentions to create an environment in which children would attain maximum of their intellectual, social, and emotional capacities. There are many obstacles in school environment and in our society in general, which pull backwards attempts to introduce contemporary education and upbringing, as well as the adequate socialization of children. Lack of specialized educational programs and systematic educational work with children are only some of aggravating circumstances in creating among students feeling of being safe during their stay in school and creation of feeling of belonging to their peer group. School needs to create and safeguard such conditions that would be motivating for children to study and in which every child's personality would be respected. Therefore, a safe environment for every child, free of abuse, intimidation, physical or any other form of personal humiliation is a foundation on which educational work of teachers can be build-up. Harmonious development is of primary importance for children and their further studies and

preparation for adult life, as emphasized in aims of education listed in the **Law on Primary School** ("Official Gazette of RS" No 38/04). In other words, development of spirituality, humanity, ethnic and religion tolerance, friendship and attitudes supporting the rights to be different, as well as attaining of nice manners in nonviolent communication are some of personality development components to which educational system should be focused. But, reality offers a completely different picture! Under burden of consequences of socio-economic crisis prevailing in our society, insufficiently cared of and insufficiently protected on micro and macro plan, in their family and society in general, they accumulate frustration and carry it with them everywhere including the school. School has a double role, to serve as a polygon to "discharge" frustration and to promote individual (or group) aggression or, in function of nursery, to amplify and nourish violent incidents. If children do not have limitations in form of punishment for a non-adequate behavior, patterns of violent behavior will be established in their development as an usual repertoire of communication with social environment. From the other side, if positive models are set out and rewards for nonviolent communication established, a completely opposite process will take place. Therefore, external incentives in form of criticism or appraisal of authority holders (adults or peers, although the first ones are more important in pre-adolescent period) are necessary in order for children to develop awareness on socially acceptable behavior and for sublimed aggression channeling. However, since so many things in the country are still unregulated, weakened or put aside, in the "second plan", the system of values became turbulent and violent elements and domination of incorrectness appeared on surface. Or shortly, egoism and concentration of personal benefit with the slogan "cause justifies means" is a scenario according to which many children grow up. Disharmony in family, overlooking of children development needs, insufficient control of contents offered by public media, poor organization of free time activities and lack of other creative socialization factors contribute affirmation of violent behavior and intolerance for differences. For that reason, reaction of the authorities is necessary, concretely the ministries responsible for relevant areas.

## **EXPERIENCE OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES SYSTEMATIC ACTION TO SUPPRESS VIOLENT BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN**

Children in our close neighborhood, Serbia and Croatia, have identified a problem of peer bullying and initiated series of programs to prevent it. In co-operation with the UNICEF, during 2003 and 2004, implemented were projects<sup>1</sup> in framework of which situation in schools was screened and level of peer bullying was assessed. In addition to this, these projects insisted on initiation of a public campaign in mass-media in order to raise public awareness of problem of violence in school. Hereinafter we shall list the main results of these projects in order to have more complex picture of peer bullying problem within school institutions.

Research conducted within the framework of the Project ***My school-school without violence***<sup>2</sup> has shown the existence of a large degree of violence and bullying in primary schools. On a total sample of 1984 pupils (82 classes in three Belgrade schools and one school in Sremska Mitrovica, ranging from III to VIII grade) a large majority of 80% of students claimed that at least once from the beginning of the school year during a three-

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<sup>1</sup> *My school-school without violence*, Project of the UNICEF Serbia Office

*For safe and enabling environment in schools*, Project of the UNICEF Croatia Office

<sup>2</sup> Popadić D. and Plut D. (2006): *Violence in schools-forms and frequency*, SUMMARY and Empiric research in psychology, Faculty of Arts, Psychology Institute, Belgrade

month period, they experienced some of eight suggested forms of bullying; more than one third of them continuously suffered from the same form of bullying, while 36% of pupils were bullied by adults in school. Not being subject to bullying at all claimed only 16% of the surveyed children. The most frequent form is a verbal violence, and the rarest one theft and destruction of private property. Results have shown that boys are more frequently victims to violence than girls and during the whole course of school. Frequency of peer violence was almost the same in the period from V to VIII grade, while some decrease was registered in the final, VIII grade. Results according to research concerning the frequency of peer bullying in particular grades is not in line with assessments of teaching staff, which was of the opinion that peer bullying culminates in the highest grades. It is interesting that four groups of students were segregated with regard to the kind of violence they were victims of and their direct participation in it. These categories are the following: pupils who neither perpetrated nor were victims of violence (58%); primary school students who were not perpetrators but they were victims of at least one form of violence (29%); students who perpetrated at least one form of violence, while themselves were never victims of other's bullying (5%) and those who perpetrated at least one form of violence, but at the same time they were victims of one form of violence (8%).

As described above, research was conducted also on a sample of adults: teachers, associates and administrative staff (total 221 persons), and it is interesting to show their opinion as well. Teachers<sup>3</sup> think that children mostly seek the assistance of adults (50%) when they witness violent incidents. In addition to that, they think that they are active in providing help to the pupils victims of violence and very highly appraise their competence in this field. Only 10% of teaching staff marked themselves by marks from 1 to 5 on a scale from 1 to 10. They assess their own ability to identify bullying very highly (average mark 8.5), while they assess the lowest, yet very high, the efficiency of measures taken (mark 7.8). However, such high opinion on teachers competence do not share pupils who think that only a fifth of interventions by the adults is successful. According to the teachers, the most useful means of prevention and treatment of peer bullying would be strengthening of co-operation between the parents and school, then development of nonviolent communication skills, interventions of pedagogue and psychologist, in addition to sanctioning of those pupils who encourage violence. So, the impression is that teachers rather lean on external factors in resolution of peer bullying problem within the school. One of reasons of their lack of readiness to act and get directly involved in prevention programs is that they see the cause of this problem in circumstances outside school: family, general system of values, influence of media and peer culture).

Pedagogic Association of Serbia<sup>4</sup> has also recognized need for systematic interventions in violence prevention field in educational institutions thus initiating series of projects in co-operation with Faculty of Defectology within the Belgrade University and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia. For example, the Project ***Program of education of school teams on prevention of delinquent behavior of pupils in school environment*** provided training for teams of experts associates and teaching staff in primary and secondary schools for prevention of socially deviant behavior of pupil population. Furthermore, the Project on ***Peer mediation*** in addition to series of

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<sup>3</sup> Popadić D. and Plut D. (2006): *Violence in schools-forms and frequency*, SUMMARY and Empiric research in psychology, Faculty of Arts, Psychology Institute, Belgrade

<sup>4</sup> [www.pedagog.org.yu](http://www.pedagog.org.yu)

seminars, teaching staff was trained for nonviolent communication programs, which is another link in a chain of activities aimed at prevention of violent behavior of children of school age.

In neighboring Croatia, at the end of 2003 and during 2004, UNICEF implemented awareness raising campaigns and provided training for students, teaching staff and other employees in educational institutions, in additions to local community representatives. First was initiated a media campaign on violence in schools, it was followed by intensive education in all the schools (in total 121 school) participating in the Project ***For safe and enabling environment in schools***<sup>5</sup>. This way teaching staff was trained for timely intervention and work with children on violence prevention. Apart from that, a network of experts of different profiles was set out in certain schools, which had defined roles in this network.

Another good example of local authorities' care of children is the action of the Polyclinic for Children Protection of the City of Zagreb. During 2003, this medical institution surveyed primary school pupils in 25 primary schools in 13 cities of the Republic of Croatia (Zagreb, Osijek, Vukovar, Varaždin, Split, Zadar, Šibenik, Drniš, Rijeka, Poreč, Petrinja, Sisak, Bregana) in order to obtain data on incidence of peer violence and bullying in different age groups. Main results showed that more than 20% of children was bullied 2 to 3 times a month or more frequently. As a comparison, let us mention that this percentage in European countries is up to 15%. Having analyzed these indicators, the Government of Croatia adopted a ***Program activities for the prevention of violence among children and youth***<sup>6</sup> containing short and long-term measures for combating violent behavior of children and youth. The Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergeneration Solidarity was coordinating all the activities while the relevant state bodies provided necessary funds. This is a good example of a professional attitude toward such an issue and determination of priorities in sense of protection of the most vulnerable population component, that is, children and youth, which need a safe physical and social environment in process of growing up and development of individual capacities. Ministries of science, education, sport, health and social protection, family, information, local government and self-government, Office of the Ombudsman and other relevant institutions, on state and local level participated in this program, which is a genuine inter-disciplinary and systematic approach. On of the products of this program is a ***Protocol on activities in cases of violence among children and youth***<sup>7</sup>

## **DOMESTIC CONTEXT OF SUPPRESSION OF PEER BULLYING IN SCHOOLS**

Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot praise with similar experience. Comparing to its neighbor countries (Republika Srbija, Hrvatska i Slovenija<sup>8</sup>) governments of which have an active attitude toward peer bullying and violence in schools, in Bosnia and Herzegovina this problem has not been analyzed and treated. Non-governmental organization first turned public attention to incidence of bullying in schools. A layer covering up the occurrence of socially deviant behavior among students population was definitely stripped off when results of research in this field were revealed. First workshops on nonviolent communication were held following that. However, all these activities were not synchronized, and interlinked with similar programs of the non-

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<sup>5</sup> [www.unicef.hr](http://www.unicef.hr)

<sup>6</sup> February 2004 [www.pravobraniteljzadjecu.hr](http://www.pravobraniteljzadjecu.hr)

<sup>7</sup> [www.pravobraniteljzadjecu.hr](http://www.pravobraniteljzadjecu.hr)

<sup>8</sup> *Stop violence against children-Act now!* Conference on violence against children, Ljubljana, July 2005.

governmental organizations, or were planned for short-term and in the beginning not supported by the relevant ministry. NGO sector launched some relevant programs in accordance with their project plans but very often they faced lack of logistic and material support of the ministries. This was partially originating from insufficiently open attitude and confidence of some governmental officials toward work of the non-governmental organizations in Republika Srpska. This was the situation retrospectively throughout some eight years ago. However, in the last three years, the situation changed and system institutions became more open for this type of co-operation, which is also resulting from some legislative changes in this field, in addition to increased confidence in work of NGOs.

Hereby we would like to mention only some basic results of research done as a part of preparations for the *Alternative report on children situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which was prepared by the NGO sector in the framework of regular reporting to the UN Committee for Children. This research included questions on mutual relations of pupils, and since it was methodologically founded on basic statistical principles, it could be considered as relevant and useful for consideration of empiric indicators of peer bullying. According to J. Savić and associates<sup>9</sup>, relations between pupils were bad (each fifth examinee on a sample of 1244 students in 10 RS municipalities in the age from 11 to 18, it was during 2003). In addition to that, more than a half of examinees (56%) thought that bad communication problems were *partially present*, which did not indicate that situation was alarming, but it pointed out to the presence of violence in schools. Statistically significant differences were not registered in answers of boys and girls, or children from urban and rural areas. The authors used these indicators to emphasize need to activate upbringing role of school and to call the authorities to include educative programs on nonviolent communication in educational reform programs.

The mentioned research was not focused to the issue of peer bullying and violence in school, so it did not go deeper into this problem, yet it pointed toward the need for a comprehensive analysis of this issue. This was the reason why the Project team of the RS Ombudsman's Project on Protection of Children Rights (hereinafter PCR of the RS Ombudsman) organized an empiric research results of which are presented in this report. Introduction into more detailed analysis of peer bullying among school students population emerged through the realization of the international Project *Right to be heard* implemented by the Swedish Children Ombudsman<sup>10</sup> in which the Project team on Protection of Children Rights of the RS Ombudsman took part. Very ambitiously prepared questionnaire was disseminated among 1137 primary school pupils in 10 RS municipalities, through which information on children's perception of their life, development and growing up were collected. Based on that a database was developed, which then served to compare the level of satisfaction with their life of children in different countries that participated according the similar methodology in this unique international project. Results of this Project related to the RS that were presented in the publication *How do you feel?*<sup>11</sup> showed that in the part related to personal safety, fear from physical violence of peers in the school existed among the examined children, since each fifth child had intense fear from physical abuse by the peers in school, while

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<sup>9</sup> Savić J., Dimitrijević S., Uletilović N., Stanić S., Štrbac A. (2005): *Children about themselves-research on position of children within the family, school and social environment*, NGO «Hi, neighbor», Banja Luka

<sup>10</sup> [www.bo.se](http://www.bo.se)

<sup>11</sup> Project team Protection of Children's Rights (2004): *How do you feel?-self-perception of children on degree of satisfaction with their life*, RS Ombudsman

each tenth child claimed to be relatively frightened. Slightly intimidated from bullying was 15% of the surveyed children, and more than a half (52%) expressed no fear from being bullied by their peers. Motivated by these empiric indicators and inertness of the official institutions to systematically explore the problem of peer bullying and school violence in order to ensure achievement of goals set out in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the education sector, we organized this research in which directly participated both those who are subject to education and socialization (students population) and those who provide education and socialization (teaching staff). Methodology and results will be presented in next chapters of this report in more details.

Neither the RS Ministry of Education and Culture, nor the RS Government did initiate similar thematic programs dedicated specifically to the prevention of peer bullying in school and to sensibelize citizens for the activities aimed at amortization of violent behavior of children and youth. Such initiatives in the previous period failed to gain the status of priority concern matters, so to say. However, in order to avoid creation of the impression that the relevant ministry has an autistic attitude toward the issue, it is necessary to mention that the work schedule of the class association (endorsed by the Ministry of Education)<sup>12</sup> provide for an interactive work with students promoting and enabling a nonviolent communication. Schools are lately increasingly open for programs of NGOs to compensate for lack of upbringing component in their own work schedule. But, this is not enough! It is necessary in a planned manner, systematically, multi-disciplinary and continuously implement certain measures and “wake-up” all responsible stakeholders within the community. This is possible only when there is a political will and professional capacity, as we could see from examples of neighboring countries.

## **CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Verbal, psychological or physical violence have social conflict elements. Conflicts are our reality and we have it almost daily, be it for small or huge reasons. In any case it is not pleasant and as a rule it represents weighing up the strength of the sides involved. Such situations take place when somebody cannot reach a goal because of some other person, which is seen as an impediment. Then this person is perceived as an opponent and usually the bigger is the goal, the more this other person obstructs.

In conflict situations people thing in *win* or *loose* relations. In this situation all the energy becomes directed against the person perceived as an impediment instead to the problem resolution! This is how the conflict grows. Solution satisfactory for both sides becomes further and less easy to attain. Complexity of solution finding depends on the conflict depth and personal structures of the persons involved and seeking the way out of the unpleasant situation. One thing is certain; there is no solution without a good discussion! And readiness to discuss does not mean weakness and giving away one's own opinion, as people mostly think. No! It is an indicator of tolerance and readiness to seek the situation satisfactory for both sides.

Process of a constructive conflict resolution is not easy but it is possible. Experts have been trying for years to develop and practically improve methods of nonviolent conflict

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<sup>12</sup> Vujić M. and the Program team (2002): *Curriculum and lessons plan for primary school*, Republika Srpska, Ministry of Education, Textbooks and Teaching Accessories Institute, East Sarajevo

resolution. In this chapter we shall illustrate some basic principles of it. According to DijaniaPlut and Ljiljani Marinković<sup>13</sup> basic steps to an intelligent conflict resolution are:

1. **Problem definition** – relates to concentrating to a problem or contemplating on real cause of the conflict and segregation of important and unimportant;
2. **Avoiding the irrevocable requests** – it is important to distinguish positions from realistic needs and emotions of the parties in conflict. Positions are the first «irrevocable» requests set before others, firm opinions and justifications of determined limits. A large number of conflicts seem irresolvable because the people talk from the aspect of their positions, and not their realistic needs, just like warriors, dug out into their trenches. Any statement from a position aspect is full of threats, oaths, aggression, and conditioning, which leaves to the other side nothing but freedom to accept or reject what is offered. To talk otherwise, to reveal own realistic needs to the other party in conflict has never been easy. It demands an amount of honesty and bilateral understanding in which, at the same time, necessary degree of dignity need to be preserved. Emphasis is on showing the importance of what both sides care of;
3. **Consideration of realistic needs** – problem being here is to recognize realistic needs which is not simple, even with one's own needs. For this is necessary to analyze wishes, wants and expectations. It is possible for someone who have an honest standpoint toward himself and the others, and with somebody's assistance. A trustworthy person can help to objectively identify the needs;
4. **Conflict map preparation** – it is good to prepare a conflict map in order to preserve a «cool head» in conflict. It is a good way to prevent being overwhelmed by emotions and the opportunity to put on paper words that describe emotions the best. Problem goes to the center and around it are parties to the conflict with their needs and fears. It is useful if somebody else could hear the story on conflict and help to get more objective insight into the situation;
5. **Seeking the solution** – there are many ways to reach the solution: **solution beneficial for both sides** (the most ideal way of conflict solution, but problem is that it demands a lot of time, patience, smart moves, conscience, accountability and experience), **compromise** (characteristic is that both sides loosen up the edge of their demands, share the loss, and take the gain; swift and just way to keep the dignity, but with a small doze of discontent on both sides), **hazard game** (if a compromise is not reached, a method of a "chance game" could be applies either by throwing the coin, drawing straws or any other way letting force majeure to decide, but without afterward regrets; method applicable only for minor problems not requiring major trouble), **giving up to the other party** (in situation when it is more important to avoid conflict for preservation of good relations with the other party's sake, than to achieve what was intended by the conflict, giving up is also reasonable when the opponent is more powerful, and in general when it is reasonable to loose up), **false conflicts** (after discussion the parties realize that there was no conflict but misunderstanding);
6. **Implementation of the solution** – when the solution is reached during discussion it is necessary to realize it. It means to comply with the agreed upon.

In order to successfully co-operate in conflict resolution, it is necessary to define and agree upon some basic "fair fight" rules, some of it being as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> Plut D. and Marinković LJ. (1994): *Conflicts and how to deal with it*, Creative Center, Belgrade

- Discuss the problem;
- Act peacefully;
- Attack the problem, not the person;
- Concentrate on what is currently important;
- Respect feelings of others;
- Take responsibility for your actions.

## **GENDER STEREOTYPES**

Basis for theoretic definition of the difference between the sex and gender was offered by Margaret Mead, who defined sex as a biological category, and gender as a social construct. After her, Kate Millet and Shulamit Firestone developed this theoretical concept. These two theoretics, and many other feminists opposed to the dominant approach which was prevailing until 70-ies of the last century, according to which all the differences between men and women were linked to their biological differences. Everything what was imposed as "natural" was in fact resulting from a social coercion and conditioning during the socialization. One of basic categories of gender theory is a notion of gender role, which can be defined in various ways, and according to Jarić Isidora<sup>14</sup> it is "an aggregate of expectations of the community/society related to behavior of the individual and actions they practice, which are determined by content of gender identities interiorized during the socialization process." Gender identity makes part of personal identity and is related to personal perception of the individual on his/hers belonging to the biological sex. As such, it has two segments: individual and social. On individual plan it is oriented by biological sex, but also personal wishes and preferences, while on social segment it is a part of a wider social reality (economic, cultural, sub-cultural, political, sexual...). Gender roles are determined by social rules. The less developed is society, the bigger is probability that these social rules attain power of a law and that sanctions be foreseen for behavior in contravention with socially defined gender roles. From the other side, modern societies have developed variations of two basic gender role types (male and female) and decrease level of necessity to accept the dominant normative gender role's model and thus related behavior.

Socialization of the individual is important for the successful adoption of determined gender roles and identity as well as fitting into a wider social regime of gender relations. Upbringing and education process of the individual is of primary importance in the life-long socialization. Basic assumptions of gender identities have been adopted through the primary and secondary socialization. Basic contest of primary socialization is accommodated in the family, and of secondary one in the school. These two contexts have been interlinked and complemented for quite a while, so it is not necessary to think which one has more primary role. According to many authors, patriarchal upbringing of male and female children vary in the different cultures, but sexual stratification starts in the moment when the girl be dressed in rose and the boy in blue, that is, in early childhood. Maja Kandido-Jakšić<sup>15</sup>, for instance, reminds that socialization runs by constant emphasizing of what suits boys and does not suits girls and vice versa. This

<sup>14</sup> Jarić I. (2002): *Gender stereotypes, Nova srpska politička misao-Special Edition 2 Sex stereotypes*, Belgrade

<sup>15</sup> Kandido-Jakšić M. (2002): *Social-psychological and political contest of gender stereotypes, Nova srpska politička misao-Special Edition 2 Sex stereotypes*, Belgrade

way girls develop interests closely linked to the current stereotypes on gender roles and attributes. All of us witness buying the different toys for boys and girls, through which the social environment prepares them for different occupations, responsibilities and jobs. In addition to this, children showing bigger inclination toward the other sex's roles are often pronounced by the environment for children with deviant sexual identity. Social pressure is less on girls who play typical boys games and adopt male patterns, than to boys who show feminized reactions.

Socialization contents at the pre-school level have often a direct impact to the individual's development. Inclusion of children into regular school system is a completely new situation since primary school education is mandatory in most countries and it can have impact on the adoption of gender roles in a long-term. Besides, school syllabi and lessons plans are controlled by the government and formulated in accordance with social needs of particular community. The impression is that our education system has been retrogradous when it comes to promoting of equal placement of gender roles principles. It is overload by stereotypic patriarchal relations and behavior matrices leaving not much place for openness to decentralized gender roles construction.

Gender stereotypes are statements excessively emphasizing real gender differences, often rather insisting on its genetic (biologic) than social origin. These perceptions was caused by different prejudices, incomplete generalizations, emotions, interests and other psychological complex components. There are different cultural and personal gender stereotypes depending on social dimension accepting them. They can hardly change and when they do, it takes time, but they are an important instrument in socialization process. In early age children get in contacts with demands pertaining to the culture they grow within and already then they are surrounded by various stereotypes through which they get acquainted with their social environment. In our context the most common gender stereotypes are the following: *women are emotional and men rational beings* (men do not have right to tears and expression of any form of weakness, they have to be rational and ashamed when they are emotional); *aggressiveness is a «masculine» feature; courage is a «masculine» feature; authority and discipline belong to «men»; empathy and goodness are «feminine attributes»; beauty and submissiveness are typical «female» attributes; success belongs to «male» world.*

## **DOMESTIC CONTEXT OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN EDUCATION**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has going through the process of accession to the EU and is a member of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe set out some conditions for promoting of gender equality based on the Framework strategy of the EU for gender equality. This strategy is related to the different aspects in community regarding the gender equality in economic, social and civil life. The main goal is promotion and acquiring of good practices in the area of gender equality, increased understanding of gender based discrimination and provision of help to the relevant institutions and individuals in removal of gender inequality. Since the Constitution of BH and entity constitutions include the equality between men and women in the list of basic human rights, definition of discrimination makes part of **the BaH Law on Gender Equality** ("BH Official Gazette" 16/03). This new law was intended to ease practical recognition of situation in which different persons are treated differently on gender grounds only, apart from other characteristics and capabilities. In chapter **IV Education** of the BH Law on gender equality deals with the matter forbidding gender based discrimination and guaranties the same opportunities to men and women in education process. Articles 5

and 6 of the BH Law on gender equality define the education as an area which, together with CEDAW document, Article 10 and Beijing declaration served as a basis for determination of **Strategy for introduction of gender component in educational process** at all levels and all educational means and textbooks. Activities linked to the strategy have been realized since the beginning of the school year 2004/05 in both entities and coordinators of the process are Gender centers of the BH Government and the RS Government<sup>16</sup> (expert services of the entity governments are responsible for introduction of gender equality in all programs, policy and all areas of life and work) and the Agency for gender equality (gender mechanism on the state level).

Gender Center the RS Government (hereinafter GC RS Government) has formed a working group that developed a strategy of gender component introduction into the education process in the RS<sup>17</sup> and this plan was related to the following segments:

- Integrating of gender component in class master hours in primary and secondary schools;
- Identification of subjects and areas within the subjects in which this gender component can be included in order to eliminate gender discrimination from the teaching process;
- Development of methodology for gender implementation in identified matters and areas;
- Training of teachers of the selected subjects; work of working groups by areas (analysis of textbooks for all education levels).

RS laws on primary and secondary school regulate the area of gender equality, so that for instance, education goals as set out in **Article 2 of the Law on Primary School** ("Official Gazette of RS" No 38/04) and among other things it provides that school need to secure the following: «...*education for democratic, human and cultural relations among people and respect for human rights irrespective of sex, race, religion, nationality and personal beliefs*». A consulting group was established and together with the Republic Pedagogic Institute with co-ordination of the GC of the RS Government achieved significant results in realization of gender equality strategy in education. Here are some of these measures: syllabi and lesson plans for primary and secondary school included the issue of gender discrimination; published were brochures and journals for pedagogic work with children; in several occasions teaching staff received training on gender principles implementation in teaching process and pedagogic work with children; process of gender analysis of textbooks has started. However, one of the recommendations in the report of the mentioned working group<sup>18</sup> was to establish empiric analysis of the different gender discrimination segments in school environment in for getting the better insight into this social phenomenon and methods of its suppression. One of provocative issues was assessment of prevalence of gender stereotypes in students population included in research. Besides, one of basic principles set out in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** is **nondiscrimination**, which provides, under Article 2, protection of children from all kinds of discrimination including gender-based discrimination. This research was partly aimed at turning attention of the public to this important obligation of the member states.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.gc.vladars.net](http://www.gc.vladars.net)

<sup>17</sup> Group of authors (2005): *Codex of gender approaches in educative-upbringing process*

<sup>18</sup> Working group of Gender project of UNDP BaH, 2005

## METHODOLOGIC PART

### **Definition of peer bullying**

There are many definitions of peer bullying all of them by bullying meaning any physical or psychological violent behavior directed against children (under UN Convention the child is every person below 18 years) committed by their peers with the intention of inflicting them injuries and which includes recurrence of the same pattern and which reflects an unequal power ratio characteristic in two dimensions: the strong against the weak or the group against the individual. Each of such willful actions can vary in form, severity, intensity and duration.

Violent behavior of children, also known as bullying differs from short incidents and quarrels including children. The main difference is in the intention to inflict harm to the other child, reiteration of the action after certain period and domination of power on individual or group plan. Violence relates to two kinds of behavior: verbal (humiliation, heckle, threats etc.), social (ignoring, gossiping and scheme-making, chitchat and like), psychological (theft, threatening looks, chasing and tagging along, property damaging etc.) and physical/corporal (blows, pushing, knocking down etc.)

### **Definition of gender stereotypes**

For purposes of this research used was definition of gender stereotypes taken from the paper *Gender stereotypes* by Jarić Isidora (Jarić, 2002), according to which they are: “*statements excessively emphasizing real gender differences, often rather insisting on its genetic (biologic) than social origin. These perceptions was caused by different prejudices, incomplete generalizations, emotions, interests, as well as the tendency of psychological sparing which manifests through simplification of rich and diverse reality and its reduction to only a couple of categories for better orientation of the individual within the complex reality surrounding him/her.*”

### **Basic goals of research**

Research on peer bullying in school environment was an explorative type research which provides data necessary to getting familiar to this phenomenon in its natural context. So, observation of the situation in the field in this case in schools, from the teaching staff's angle and the pupil population's angle was the basis from which conclusions could be drawn on type, degree, prevalence and priority activities for control and prevention of violent acts of the students in schools. In addition to this, research was based on exploration of gender stereotypes among teaching staff and students.

Specific aim of the empiric study were the following:

- To identify types and situations of children bullying in school;
- To assess degree of incidence of peer bullying in school environment;
- Establish range of most common reactions of children bullied in school;
- Assess range of most common reactions of children witnessing peer violence;
- Establish percentage of children constantly suffering from peer bullying in school;
- To collect proposals for the activities preventing peer bullying in schools;
- Increase level of awareness of the employees in educational institutions on problem of peer bullying of students in schools;
- Initiate preventive measures to protect children from bullying in school;

- Assess degree of prejudice in acceptance of gender roles among students and teachers
- Sensibilizing teachers and pupils to accept gender role in upbringing – educative process and to maintain it in work with children;
- Establish prevalence of statistically significant differences in opinions of boys and girls on the peer bullying issue;
- To establish presence of significant differences between boys and girls in gender stereotypes acceptance degree.

### **Data collection instruments**

Perceptions on peer bullying and gender stereotypes collected from the questionnaire created in accordance with the research goals. Two versions of a questionnaire were created and applied, one for teaching staff and the other for students. Both versions consist of questions, mostly of closed type and 4 question in the form of assessment scale. In addition to questions related directly to the problem, the questionnaire also included questions pertaining the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample.

### **Statistic data processing**

Data were statistically processed in SPSS.11 program. Implemented were descriptive statistic methods, t-test and variance analysis. Answers' significance was regarded on levels  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ .

### **Research course**

Research was drafted and other methodology related details worked out during February and March 2006. After that a network of associates in primary schools selected for research was established and survey started in April. During the whole course of research activities management in schools was open for co-operation and aware of importance of the issues subject to poll. In addition to this it was visible that teachers and students are very motivated to answer the questionnaire. It is worth mentioning that all our associates showed very professional attitude in their engagement.

Students were questioned in small groups, in classrooms with specific sitting patterns (each pupil would sit alone in a bench) in order to provide intimacy and discretion. Namely, for sensitivity of the subject matter we thought that the child's privacy need to be emphasized by application of such sitting pattern.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

Research included 100 teachers<sup>19</sup> in ten primary schools in Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Doboj, Foča, Kalinovik, Trebinje and Gacko. As it could be seen from tables, teachers of urban and suburban schools in five regions of Republika Srpska were equally represented, and principle of equal gender representation was met as well.

Slightly more than a half of the examinees were teaching staff holding positions of teachers, one fifth were class teachers and one tenth were class masters. Besides, expert associates and principals were represented in almost equal number (*table 5*). As

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<sup>19</sup> Sample was created based on information presented in *Statistic bulletin for primary education* Republic Statistic Institute ([www.rzs.rs.ba](http://www.rzs.rs.ba))

for the work experience of the sample, those with more than 25 years of experience were represented in the highest percentage (42%), then those with 7 to 15 years of experience (19%) and then from 15 to 25 years (17%). So, teachers with respectable work experience had the opportunity to express their opinion on peer bullying, which contributes to the objectivity of research and its results and completion of the analysis.

**Table 1. Gender of examinees**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	50	49.5
Female	51	50.5
Total	101	100.0

**Table 2. Primary schools**

<b>Primary schools</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Aleksa Santic	10	9.9
Jovan Ducic	10	9.9
Knez Ivo od Semberije	10	9.9
Sveti Sava Crnjelovo	10	9.9
Vuk Stef. Karadzic	10	9.9
Ozren	10	9.9
Sveti Sava Foca	10	9.9
Ljutica Bogdan	11	10.9
Jovan J. Zmaj	10	9.9
Sveti Sava Gacko	10	9.9
Total	101	100.0

**Table 3. Place of residence**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Banja Luka	20	19.8
Doboj	20	19.8
Bijeljina	20	19.8
Foca	21	20.8
Trebinje	20	19.8
Total	101	100.0

**Table 4. Work experience**

<b>Experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No answer	3	3
Up to 3 years	7	6.9
From 3 to 7 years	13	12.9
From 7 to 15 years	19	18.8
From 15 to 25 years	17	16.8
More than 25 years	42	41.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 5. Position withing the school**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No answer	1	1
Class teacher	21	20.8
Class master	10	9.9
Teacher	58	57.4
Pedagogue	4	4
Psychologist	2	2
Director	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Research included male and female students of 10 primary schools in Republika Srpska. A total number of the examined students was 910, out of which 469 were girls (51.5%) and 441 boys (48.5%). Detailed presentation of the sample was given in *table 6*. What needs to be emphasized is that students from suburban and urban schools were represented in the sample. While creating the sample the Team used information of the Republic Statistic Institute following the criterion of selection of one urban against one suburban school in five regions: Banja Luka, Doboј, Bijeljina, Foča and Trebinje, as presented in *table 8*. Besides, the classes encompassed by the research had an average mean mark so that both successful and less successful students had an opportunity to contribute to attaining of research goals. In other words, associates in this research (teachers holding positions of expert associates or class teachers included into the sample) surveyed 23% of excellent pupils, 35% of very good ones, 27% of good ones, 1% of those with pass and 13% of not sufficient success (*table 9*). Variable *school success* related to the success achieved on mid-term of the school year 2005./06.

**Table 6. Primary school**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Procenti</i>
PS «Aleksa Santic»	100	11
PS «Jovan Ducic»	100	11
PS «Knez Ivo od Semberije»	100	11
PS «Sveti Sava»	100	11
PS «Vuk Stef. Karadzic»	100	11
PS «Ozren»	80	8.8
PS «Sveti Sava»	100	11
PS «Ljutica Bogdan»	50	5.5
PS «Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj»	100	11
PS «Sveti Sava»	80	8.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 7. Sample according to gender**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Boys	441	48.5
Girls	469	51.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 8. Place of residence**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Banja Luka	200	22
Doboj	180	19.8
Bijeljina	200	22
Foca	150	16.5
Trebinje	180	19.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 9. Mid-term success**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Failed	120	13.2
Pass	12	1.3
Good	241	26.5
Very good	318	34.9
Excelent	212	23.3
No answer	7	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>100</b>

## CONCLUSIONS

### Teaching staff sample

- According to the answers of more than two thirds of the surveyed teachers in schools verbal bullying of children is spread in schools. Significant number of verbally unpleasant situations in pupils population is based on mocking about the pupils family origin. As much as every second teacher confirmed that children in school practice this type of ridicule, while 29% denied such practice.
- Not only origin, buy also physical appearance is subject to peer comments and reason for inventing and directing of unpleasant jokes. A half of examined teachers is absolutely certain that children with excessive weight are subject to mock of their peers, but also thin children are not spare of such "juicy" comments.
- According to the almost two thirds of teachers, pupils in school often analyze physical characteristics of their peers, where girls more often give comments on it. Participation of pupils according to gender in commenting of physical appearance, according to the teaching school staff is 43%:28% for girls.
- Teaching staff rather confirm (32%), than deny (27%) that children often fabricate false stories about the other children in school. However, it seems that majority of teachers does not have an insight into this kind of communication among the pupils, since 42% of the surveyed teachers has not been positive about the presence of such an occurrence. It is interesting that those teachers who rather confirm fabricating of false stories among children, they think that boys and girls have the same share in such an activity.
- According to majority of surveyed teachers (51%) children in school do not mock their poor peers. This, of course, does not mean that such situations do not exist, but it could be concluded that it is rare since 20% of answers partly or completely confirm verbal harassment based on the economic status.
- Teaching staff rather disagree (57%) with the opinion according to which *Boys rather than girls offend poor children*, which indicate to a slight domination of girls in such activities. Every fourth examined teacher, expert associate of school principal think that contacts among pupils are blocked between richer and poor children. However, every second teacher has the opposite opinion which partially alleviates the picture on avoidance of contacts between the children from different economic positions.
- Every third teacher confirms a significant presence of peer bullying in school environment, which is very worrying. So, such an empiric indicator directly shows the higher level of aggressiveness among the students population and potentially threatening situation facing the children in school.
- It often happens in school that a group of children mistreat another group, although the opinion of teachers on permanent aggressiveness among children

divided since we registered almost the same percentage of agreeing (42%) and disagreeing (40%). Similar situation is with the assessment of the sporadic influence of this type of behavior since 36% of teachers confirm, while 33% deny this incidence.

- According to teachers, children rather direct their aggressiveness toward those children who are provocative. Namely, 44% of teachers confirm, while 36% of them deny that subject to peer beatings are mostly provocative children.
- Organizing of students for theft purposes is rare in school, although it happens. The teachers think, in 60% of answers deny such incidences, while 16% confirm it. It is registered that jewelry and money be stolen by the students, but not to larger extent (14%) as it could be seen from the *graph 20*.
- In addition to peer bullying, bullying in relations teacher-student has also been registered, to which indicate 11% of teachers. Registered perception of teachers with regard to the experience of violent behavior of teachers toward students although they deny it in significantly larger extent (68%) than they confirm it, alarms to this unacceptable form of communication jeopardizing the child's normal development until they reach their full capacity. Such experience is most probably sporadic since the answer to a statement *I have noticed that some teachers regularly beat the children in school*, was containing an outstanding degree of disagreement (92%).
- Verbal harassment of students by the teachers is more present in schools than physical violence. To such conclusion indicate the answers to a statement *It happens in my school that teachers make inappropriate jokes about the pupils and make ridicule of them*. Teachers disagree with this in 70% of answers, while in 20% of answers they confirm it.
- The most frequent locations in which verbal peer bullying takes place are: the school yard (57%), the classroom (30%), the school corridors (23%) and the dressing room next to the gymnasium (5%). In addition to this, this kind of violence occurs in the relation school – house, according to 28% of answers. As expected, these places not monitored by the adults proved to be suitable scenes for violence.
- Insulting of students has not always been sanctioned in school as it indicate answers of each tenth teacher. The most frequent sanction is the class master's reproach (55%), much rarely the class council's reproach (3%) or the school council's reproach (1%). Almost one fifth of teachers (19%) do not know precisely what sanctions are foreseen in such situations.
- Each other teacher did not answer to a question if they were in situation that a student complains to them of being a victim to peer bullying, which proves that their not being sensibilized for such experiences. 18% of them reported that once, a while ago, they were in situation that a student, victim to peer bullying approached them complaining about it, while a double less percent of teachers had such a situation more often recently. Also, 6% of teachers answered that a couple of times during the last month, and 3% a couple of times during the last week listened complaints of a pupil who complained to be bullied in school. In

order to complete a picture of the answers to this question, we need to say that 18% of teachers have never had such experience, which speaks about lack of trust and openness in communication of teachers and students and domination of educative over the upbringing role of school.

- According to the opinion of teachers the most frequent motives for verbal harassment of students are the following: poor primary, domestic upbringing, lack of manners originating from the family (36%), need to self-exposing (14%) and jealousy (11%). After then, the series of inappropriate comments triggers continues with: lack of tolerance (10%), different interests and wishes (7%), and wish to make other people laugh (5%) and imitating the adults (2%).
- According to the reasons of verbal bullying and abuse, the teachers propose the following preventive measures: realization of educative activities in schools (61%), different ways of co-operation between the school and the parents (17%) and consistent sanctioning (11%). Shortly, raising of awareness on negative consequences of violent communication, affirming of tolerant reactions in conflicts and the appropriate sanctions are the possible choices. However, 16% of professionals in school think that no prevention cannot be successful.
- According to the assessment of one third of the surveyed teachers, fights are frequent in school, and location of them is the following: school yards (58%), relation home - school (45%), classrooms (21%) when teachers are away, school corridors (8%) and other. Children choose locations in which lacks an efficient control of teachers.
- The fact that every tenth teacher claims that violent attacks remain unpunished is very worrying. Teaching staff should not turn the blind eye and tolerate and ignore such behavior. The most frequent way of punishment is sentencing the class master's reproach (55%) and the class council's reproach (11%), then the teachers council's reproach (7%) and the principal's reproach (1%).
- According to the opinion of almost one third of teachers, pupils almost never or rarely try to stop peer bullying, 41% of teachers think that it happens sometimes, while 27% of them think that it happens often or almost always.
- The most frequent motives for endangering of other students is the following: bad manners originating from home (28%), wish to dominate (19%), reaction to primary provocation (14%), lack of satisfaction (11%), temper (9%) and generation's transmission (4%).
- According to the opinion of two third of teachers, schools do organize some preventive activities, although rather sporadic (45%) than in a regular manner (20%). Preventive contents have been realized through the class community's classes (61%), which certainly has not been enough. Only 1% of teachers report that their school has a specific program created by the experienced professionals in order to develop adequate reactions in conflict situations. The impression is that preventive role of the school has been reduced to the role of class master and class teacher, which is not the best solution possible since they do not have always sufficient professional skills and capacities for such programs. Their engagement is necessary but is not sufficient.

- Suggestions for the prevention of peer bullying in primary school are as follows: educative activities earmarked to the pupils (49%), sanctioning of individuals provoking the violence, in addition to discussions with the parents (24%), educative programs for parents (11%). So, the attention of teachers in seeking of suitable methods to prevent physical violence in schools was concentrated to the education (of children and parents) and the adequate sanctioning, with mandatory inclusion of parents and counseling discussions with them.
- Teachers rather think in the direction of non-endorsement of the educative influence of physical violence and the different procedure based on coercion, although each fifth teacher totally or partially approves application of physical coercion in resolution of interpersonal conflicts!
- Stereotype on aggressiveness of male children as a natural matter, has not been supported by majority of surveyed professionals in primary schools. More precisely, 70% of teachers do not approve this stereotype, while 19% of them do approve it. So, each fifth teacher explains and justifies aggressive communication between the students by their being boys, which is not a neglectable percentage of teachers.
- Although one fifth of the surveyed teachers have a positive attitude toward the statement which is a popular folks saying *A stick came out from the paradise*, very few of them actually think that the use of physical force is justified in education of children (5%).
- Teachers mostly think that conflict can be resolved in a non-violent manner since 95% of them agree with folk's saying *A nice word opens even the iron door*, and 89% of them with the statement that *Problems cannot be resolved by fight*.
- Teachers are aware of adverse consequences of verbal harassment or abuse in children population. Furthermore, they highly respect kindness and sincerity in human relations, which is expressed in their acceptance of statements such as *Short legs has a lie* and *It pays of to be kind*.
- **Perception of teachers on different forms of violence**, analyzed on previous pages, were subject to analysis from **gender aspect**. Statistic analysis revealed that there is a significant difference only with regard to a statement that *Calling names can harm the other person*. Although the percentage of acceptance of this statement in the whole sample was high(96%) it is interesting that female teachers agreed to larger extent than their male colleagues, i.e. 96%:86%. This result indicate higher sensibility of women employed in education area to verbal harassment than that of their male colleagues from work.
- Teachers deny (68%) more than they confirm a stereotype on necessity to nice behavior of girls in public places comparing to boys. However, somewhat higher than one fourth (28%) of teachers express the opinion that pressure of the community is stronger toward women than toward men.
- Stereotype on men being entitled to higher degree of freedom in emotional relations has mostly not been approved among the teachers population. Majority of them (80%) mostly disagree with the statement *In emotional relations boys*

*need to have more freedom than girls.* Only 12% approve this statement. Tolerance toward “free” behavior of men in emotional relations, which includes a higher doze of intimacy with other girls is less that tolerance toward a rude behavior in public places.

Similar is with assessment of freedom for going out at night, since 84% of teachers opposes higher degree of freedom for going out at night for men, while 11% approves that.

- Stereotype on economic supremacy of men comparing to women is supported by a fourth of examined teachers.
- Primary school teachers do not accept (86% of disagreement) a stereotype on stronger engagement of the father in supporting of development of the child’s intellectual abilities. Similar is with evaluation of a stereotype on the superior role of the father in children’s education. Besides, teachers deny (83%) more than they approve (13%) a stereotype on more important, mandatory role of the mother to take care of the sick child, which fits into the modern trends and convictions on equal participation of both parents in the child’s upbringing.
- Teachers deny (83%), more that they confirm (14%) a stereotype on a decision-making position of the husband toward his wife in the matrimonial relations. Also, they reject much more than they accept the importance of “the voice of the husband” for a good quality marriage.
- Teachers deny (83%) more that they confirm (12%) a stereotype on a natural relation between the men and policy. Also, they rather deny (87%) than confirm (7%) a statement that *Women managers cannot be as successful as men managers*. In addition to that, it is unacceptable for them in a large percentage (93%) an opinion according to which men need education more than women since he needs to provide for the family.
- A stereotype on a *male policeman* is present among one fourth of the surveyed teachers, while almost two thirds (62%) ignored it. A stereotype on a *male president* was ignored by 77%, and accepted by 14% of the examinees, while a stereotype on a *male mayor* 87% of the polled teachers reject, while 7% of them accept this stereotype.
- **Gender related** analysis distinguished three situations in which there are differences among male and female teachers in school when we evaluate gender positions and behavior: higher or lower degree of freedom in emotional relations, work in the police and deciding in marriage. The mentioned stereotypes provoke much larger disagreement between male and female teachers. Resistance of male teachers, expert associates and principals to equalization of the roles of men and women in emotional relations is understandable as it is very difficult to reject privileges acquired under patriarchal cultural patterns. At the same time, the female teachers strengthen their capacity to resist such stereotypes.
- The only more significant statistical differences with a view to their professional experience and opinions on coercion illustrated by statements such as: *The stick went out from the paradise* or *Restless children need to be beaten in order to get better*. In both cases the most tolerant were the teachers with 25. It is interesting

that the teachers with the shortest experience have the most rigid standpoint. They have more reserves toward any perspective improvement of the situation, although they do not approve use of force in general.

- Perceptions of gender stereotypes show significant differences among the teachers with different work experience. For instance, a statement that *The father rather than the mother need to help the child to make their homework*, was met with the highest degree of disagreement and the least degree of a stereotype on the unequal role of the parents when it comes to assisting the child in studying among those having more than 25 years of work experience. Then, statistically significant differences were observed about a statement *The father rather than the mother need to have more important role in the child's education*, where teachers having 7-15 years of work experience turned to be the most tolerant, and then those with more than 25 years.
- Statistically significant differences between those with more experience and those with less appeared also about a statement that *Women managers cannot be as successful as men managers*. Teachers having the shortest work experience are the least tolerant with a view to the equal abilities of both sexes for managing positions. The last significant difference was about a statement that *Men more than women need education since they have to earn money and provide for the family* where the youngest members of the collective showed the most rigid attitude.

### **Students sample**

- Students assess that their peers are mostly inclining to verbal harassment. Namely, some more than three quarters of the surveyed pupils attending the primary school (79%) agree with a statement *In my school some children offend some other children and call them names*, while 13% has the opposite opinion.
- Verbal harassment/abuse is based mostly on giving comments about the origin or the physical appearance of their peers. Almost double degree of agreement (53%) than disagreement (28%) children express about a statement *Some children in my school mock the other children and make jokes about their origin*. Children with excessive weight are not spared as well, according to answers of two thirds of the surveyed students. Children are more "cruel" toward those who suffer from excessive weight than those whose socio-economic status is bad. Given that the surveyed students are mostly in puberty when physical appearance is one of the most interesting points, then this result seems very clear.  
Somewhat different perception has been formed toward thin children and children who wear glasses. In these cases disagreement is higher than agreement with statements that these factors are subject to jokes. For instance, 43% of students expressed disagreement, and 37% agreement with a statement *Children wearing glasses are often subject to jokes of other students*. Similar is with a statement *Too thin children are often exposed to mockery of other students*, with which almost one third of polled students agree (31%), while almost a half disagree with such a standpoint (47%).

- In general, physical appearance is often a subject to inappropriate jokes of primary school students, since two thirds of them agree with that claim, while almost one fifth (18%) disagree.
- Boys, according to pupils, pay more attention to physical appearance than girls and more often give inappropriate comments on it. It should be kept in mind that directing of attention to somebody's physical features has a latent and manifest level. The first, latent level is less aggressive and is something in what the girls participate most for sure. However, on a manifest level, a ready comments verbalize directly and direct to the others, which is more characteristic for boys in our context. Again a stereotype! This time about men's being rude as a natural fact. This further means that such a direct communication has been associated with self-confidence in reactions, which is leaned to a "masculine", aggressive style. Given all this, then it seems obvious why such results on comments being spread among boys more than among girls. So, this is on this, manifest segment.
- Opinions of students about the range of plotting and making false stories about the other children in school is divided since the percentage of those who confirm it and those who deny it has been almost the same.
- According to the pupils (43% agree and 35% disagree) girls are more involved in plotting than boys.
- Occasional making fun of children with less favorable economic status is present in school, where the girls are more involved. Namely, some less than a half of the polled students (48%) reject, and some more than a fourth (27%) accept a statement that *Boys more than girls offend children who are poor*. In addition to verbal harassment of their peers with less favorable economic status, some children avoid informal contacts with them and maintaining of friendly relations (28% of students confirm this, while 52% deny). In other words, each fourth students avoid to maintain more permanent social relations with poor children which is a worrying indicator.
- In addition to verbal abuse, the physical violence is also present in school, according to testimony of 61% of the polled primary school students. Bullying has been committed by specifically organized groups of students who enjoy to be seen as "tough guys", according to each second answer.
- Rude children attract their peers inclining to violent reactions. Each second answer illustrate that subject of peer bullying are often rude children whose careless behavior motivate their peers with inclination to the use of violence to take justice in their hands and sanction violence in a violent way.
- In the opinion of students, it happens that a group of students repeatedly bully the same student over a time period! Perception on presence of such unfair behavior is such that almost same percentage of students (31%) disagree with occurrence of it or they are not sure if it exists (again 31%), while 37% confirm such situation in their school.
- Theft is present in primary schools, although not to some larger extent. Students deny more (a half) than confirm (about a quarter) such an incidence.

- Non-professional attitude of teachers in sense of the occasional use of physical violence toward children has been identified by a third of the polled students. A statement that *It happens in my school that a teacher hit a student sometimes* was met with disagreement of 55% of students, while 32% partially or fully agrees.  
On the fact that communication between students and teachers has been far from the ideal speaks the percentage of those who agree, that is 37% of the surveyed students, while 50% of them reject a statement according to which *It happens in my school that teachers make inappropriate jokes and ridicule some students*.
- According to each second student, the school yard is a scene of the inappropriate verbal comments. Each fourth answer indicates that it happens in the classroom, and then the school corridors, the school gymnasium or relation between the school and the house.
- Repertoire of children's reactions to verbal violence/abuse has been reduced to ignoring of this situation, comforting or defense of their school mate. Answers are almost with mathematical precision grouped so that each reaction has one third of answers. Beside, one fifth of students say that they do not react as they are afraid that the aggressiveness of the perpetrator would transfer to them, while some others seek for the help of adults: class masters (3%) or teachers (2%).
- Repertoire of potential reaction has been changed if we transfer it from the general to the personal level and when we put in focus of verbal harassment a child from the same class. In such situations boys mostly defend their group's member (40%), or comfort them (25%) or ask the adults for help, and in 9% of cases children claim to be inert out of fear to attract the attention of the perpetrator.
- Pupils think that the child being verbally harassed can say it to the class master (42%), a friend (27%), the school psychologist/pedagogue (18%) or a teacher they trust (9%). Which is good in this distribution of answers is that one third of the polled students (69%) have confidence into the adults that is that in traumatic situations children do not hesitate to ask their teachers to help them.
- Each fourth student think that children offending their peers have not been punished in school. If punished, this is mostly by the class master's warning, which is the lowest grade in the available punishments scale.
- Each second student have experienced inappropriate comments addressing their personal identity. In other words they were victims in such situation, the most frequently *once, a while ago*, as suggested in each third answer.  
What is indicative in the obtained answers is that each tenth student a couple of times during the last month experienced verbal abuse, while each twentieth claim to be an usual victim, a "victim on duty" every day! In addition to that, 4% was in the near past, during the last month or week (polling took place in the end of April and the beginning of May) was exposed to such traumatic situation. These indicators witness the presence of verbal harassment in school as they signalize presence of a chronic negative pressure of their peers to the same children!

- Specifics of the continuous verbal harassment are that children victims were in situation to suffer from the following forms of it: 38% were in situation to be exposed to *calling names, ridicule and teasing in a painful way*. Such experience, although more sporadic than frequent, speak about an incorrect communication of the peers in the school environment. Inappropriate comments about somebody's origin are more rare, since every fifth child confirmed the statement related to it; perception of children (in 38% confirmative) indicate that gossiping is present to a large extent; then a direct isolation of children, which turned to be experienced by each fifth child (more in category *rare* than *often*).
- Repertoire of children's answers to a constant verbal provocation directed to them is various, but mostly it is a passive reaction or confessing to the adults – teachers or the parents/guardians. More precisely, one third of the answers is in category of ignoring of provocations and waiting for this to pass, while almost three times less (12%) answers indicate to seeking help from the adults in school, mostly the class master. Each tenth student react in a way to reply the same way to verbal abuse and return an adequate verbal answer. Almost the same percentage of students claim that they confess to the parents in such situation (8%) or to a friend (7%). It is interesting that a very few students choose to go to the school pedagogue/psychologist (2%) and try to find solution for this awkward situation.
- According to the pupils, motives for verbal harassment are related to: the need to prove themselves (22%), incompatibility of wishes and interests (16%), creating a comic atmosphere (15%), outbreaks of jealousy/envies (13%) and poor manners originating from the family (8%).
- Suggestions for the prevention of verbal harassment/abuse: almost a half of the surveyed students (43%) pointed out punishment, while the rest in smaller percentages mentioned education on non-violent, tolerant communication (8%), individual counseling and discussions of the experts and violent children (6%), exclusion of violent kids from school (5%) or intervention of the class master (4%) and like. What is in the opinion of the students priority is the reaction in sense of timely sanctioning which leads to the conclusion on degree of condemnation and anger toward children committing the verbal violence.
- Location in which physical settling up of the students mostly take place are the locations which are not monitored by the adults, such as the school yard (almost two thirds of answers), classrooms (18%), relation between the school and the house (one tenth of answers).
- In situations when they witness physical bullying of a child, the surveyed students mostly try to defend that child or ignore it considering it not their business. Each third answer suggests defending of a child – victim from the perpetrator, while each fifth claim that they would be retreating and ignoring. In addition to that, almost the same percentage of children try to support and comfort the child who had suffered from bullying (12%) or, ignore the situation in order to prevent the abuser to transfer the attention to themselves (10%). In such circumstances 17% of the polled pupils seek for the intervention by the adults, first of all the

class master (9%), then teachers (4%) and finally expert associates (2%) and parents (2%).

- Should a classmate be subject to physical abuse, then percentage of those who intervene and defend the victim increases (46%), while the number of passive observers thinking that it does not concern them decreases significantly (8%). Therefore, reaction is more frequent when the abused child happens to be a friend or a member of the intimate collective than in case of the unknown child or not sufficiently known child. In such situations fear from the potential shift of focus is less present (6%). In addition to the above mentioned, each 12% either offers their psychological support or turn to the class master for help.
- Persons of trust to whom the victims of violence and bullied children can turn to are: class masters (43%), their peers (22%) and expert associates (18%).
- According to the answers of 80% of pupils children provoking the physical violence related incidents have been sanctioned in school. However, each fifth student denies it. The highest percentage of students (39%) has not been acquainted with types of sanctions applied for physical abuse and bullying in school, while one third mentioned a class master's reproach. In addition to that children perpetrators of physical violence and who bully others get a teachers council's reproach (6%) or class council's reproach (5%) or the principal's reproach (4%).
- Students react passively rather than actively to physical violence when they witness bullying over another child.
- Each fourth was a victim to the peer bullying in form of beating. However, this experience is linked to some period *a while ago*. However, 3% of student claims that during a couple of last months they were subject to such an awkward situation, while 1% of students reports such an occurrence in a closer time perspective including a couple of times during the last week or on a daily basis. So, a small percentage of students (5%) were victims of peer bullying continuously. This registered parameter is not to be neglected or underestimated since it is very significant as we talk about something as serious as bullying and physical abuse of children in school.
- Children who had suffered from physical abuse mostly reacted the same way (13%), or turned to the class master for help (11%) or waited for violent reactions to stop (11%).
- Children have the following perception of reasons for physical abuse: each third student mention the need for domination, while each tenth see it as a reaction to violent provocations. In addition to that, present is the need for making fun and comic atmosphere (9%), jealousy (8%), bad manners originating from home (6%), lack of satisfaction caused by personal frustrations (6%) and temper related features (4%).
- According to the students in order to prevent such behavior and suppress peer bullying, it would be useful to sanction such incidents (each third answer), combination of sanctions and counseling of the parents (14%), individual

counseling of the violent child and the expert (6%), expedition from school (6%), realization of educative programs on non-violent communication (5%) and establishment of some kind of control of school behavior in school (something similar to a «pilot patrol», 3%).

- Students find labeling of children inappropriate, as well as calling ugly names. Registered is a high percentage of condemnation, even 94% of such behavior. The same is with fabricating of false stories about the other children.
- Majority of the surveyed pupils showed in their answers that they are aware of consequences of false stories. Three fourth of the polled students claimed their agreement with the folks saying *Short legs has a lye*, while somewhat more than a fifth thought it not to be true.
- Children are aware of positive effects of being kind in social relationships. As much as four fifths (81%) confirmed their agreeing with a statement *It pays to be nice*, while one tenth rejected it claiming that they do not agree. Pupils also have awareness of traumatic consequences for some children caused by verbal harassment. As much as 86% of the surveyed children claimed that they do know that consequences of verbal harassment can be traumatic for some children.
- A part of the students population (one third of the examined pupils) supports prejudices on desirable aggressive reactions of boys, although the opposite opinion according to which such reactions are to be condemned is predominant. In addition to that, standpoints denying that use of force has been justified in resolution of conflicts since 70% of students subject to survey do not see it justified, while 21% of them confirm an opinion according to which it is justified to use force for conflict resolution purposes.
- Surveyed students express their disagreement with a stereotype on unequal degree of freedoms of men and women in emotional relationships. Distribution of answers is such that 46% of it is in category of disagreement, and we registered 34% of agreement with such a stereotype reflected in a statement *In love relationship the boy is entitled to a higher degree of freedom than the girl*. The situation is even more tense about a statement *The boy has to pay the bill whenever he goes out to dinner with his girlfriend, regardless to whom initiated going out*. In such a situation 72% of students participating in this poll agreed (totally or partly), while there was an equal percentage of those who disagreed and could not decide (14% each), which indicates to a wide-spread acceptance of this stereotype on economic supremacy of men in emotional relations.
- Children mostly support a stereotype on higher degree of freedom for men than women when it comes to going out at night. Distribution of answers is such that such a prejudice has not been accepted by each second student, while it has been accepted by each third.
- Two thirds of the surveyed think that *On the street and in other public places girls have to behave more politely than boys* is true, while one fifth have the opposite opinion. Thus we may conclude that degree of tolerance for impolite behavior of

girls has been lower than tolerance to similar behavior of boys. This is, of course, a consequence of the wide-spread gender stereotypes.

- Opinion of the surveyed students on equal capabilities of men and women for work in the police has been divided, so that there is almost equal percentage of acceptance for such a stereotype (45%) and denial (41%). Situation is somewhat different when it comes to treatment of men and women on positions such as the president of the state. Children mostly think that this position has been exclusively reserved for men.
- Opinion of pupils is divided in relation to whom need to be the major, a man or a woman, although somewhat more children oppose the requirement to have exclusively men in such positions (44%) than they accept it (40%).
- Children do not perceive the father as more important figure than the mother in giving them help in studying or in upbringing process in general and by that they do not support this stereotype. Students accept (46%) rather than reject (36%) a stereotype about higher degree of the mother's engagement about the sick child. Besides, each second student think that a statement that *In a good marital relation man should have "a final decision"* is true, while each third thinks the opposite. This is a disappointing result, however it is not surprising given the psycho-social context in which these children grow up so that plasticity of their opinions has been in a large portion a copy of their parents' convictions.
- Standpoints of the students who participated in this poll about the equal engagement of men and women in policy was divided, as it was registered that the percentage of acceptance and rejection were the same (41% each). Somewhat different situation was about the assessment of successfulness of women and men on a position of a manager. With a statement illustrating this stereotype of higher degree of success of men in such functions, registered was rather disagreement that is in (56%) of answers and agreement in (29%) of answers, which is an excellent result with a view of mitigation of gender stereotypes. The similar situation was registered with perception of a statement according to which *Education is more necessary for men than for women since they have to earn money and provide for their families*. Each second answer was rejecting and each third accepting such circumstances.

### **Difference between boys and girls in answers**

- Girl students indicate to incidence of verbal harassment in schools more than their male colleagues. The same is with other categories of children who also suffer (divergence is registered only in category of children wearing glasses where boys (49%) disagree more than girls (36%) with harassment based on this fact.
- Female students (73%) more than male students (57%) emphasize that physical appearance has been motif of inappropriate comments of their schoolmates. They think that boys rather than girls give inappropriate comments on physical

appearance of their peers. So that it could be concluded that girls are a little bit more sensibilized than boys to verbal harassment of their peers.

- Girls also manifested larger disagreement (42%) than the agreement (35%) with a statement that *Girls disseminate false stories about the other children more than boys* and in general they denied fabrication of false stories more than boys. This could be explained from the aspect of their need to preserve a good picture on themselves on principle of identification with their gender group
- Each third female student and each fourth male student think that children avoid socializing with poor children (*graph 110.*). Therefore, girls identify bad economic situation as a barrier to inter-generational relations better than boys. This could be resulting from the projectable mechanisms of girls that is copying of the same criteria which they establish as relevant in forming of friendship bonds and relationships.
- Boys (34%) rather than girls (24%) oppose to a claim that the same group of children in school abuse and bully other children. From the other side, girls have more doubts on how to assess veracity of such a claim. It is possible that they are more sincere, and that boys try to mitigate the impression of imposition of a group of violators since these groups mostly consist of boys.
- When assessing the occasional outbreaks and violent incidents committed by the same group of children, situation is such that boys (42%) rather than girls (33%) agree with that statement. So, they are more sensibilized and better recognize situation of occasional physical incidents perpetrated by the same group of children in school.
- Girls (39%) more than boys (25%) express an opinion that teachers incline to occasional physical punishment of children. They also perceive situations that some of the teachers regularly physically abuse pupils to be true.
- Under circumstances in which children almost daily witness verbal mocking of children, girls appear to be more protective than boys. They mostly defend the child subject to ridicule (27%) or give them psychological support (29%), while boys rather ignore such situations thinking of it as not their business and having nothing to do with them (32%) or avoiding to attract attention to themselves and direct these inappropriate reactions to themselves (21%). Girls leaved the impression of brave persons who do not “turn the blind eye” before other people’s problems.  
If we shift those perceptions to more intimate level and watch reactions of children witnessing situations in which those who have been insulted are children from their class, then the “position of forces” become somewhat different, yet the girls appear to be more aggressive and sacrificing, but both have lower tolerance threshold in such case.
- When assessing the confidence into adults in school, boys (46%) more than girls (37%) believe their class masters and teachers (12%:7%), while girls trust expert associates more.

- Boys claimed to be in position of the child suffering because of their peers ridicule. This ration has for 3% higher among boys in category *once a while ago*, and for 4% in category *a couple of times during the last months*. In addition to that, boys are more often than girls in situation to be subject to inappropriate comments on a daily basis.
- Creators of plotting and fabricating of false stories are girls in higher percentage than boys, while positions are opposite when it comes to verbal and physical endangering with sexual connotations.
- In position of a victim of verbal harassment boys and girls reported different reactions. Boys rather than girls reported that they had been patient and waited for it to pass, while girls claimed that they reacted violently to violence of others. Girls also canalize their discontent through discussions with the parents and their friends.
- Perception of motivation for verbal harassment of their peers are for girls negative emotions jealousy and envy more than for boys(16%:10%) and lack of good manners and communication skills, also more in the perception of girls than boys (10%:7%). In perception of other motives there are no significant difference with regard to the sex of the examinees.
- Girls had more suggestions than boys with regard to possible prevention of verbal harassment in school. Suggestions with regard to the sex differ in assessment of usefulness of engagement of the class master, realization of counseling with violent children and sanctioning of such behavior by expelling from school. Female students rather than male students insist on the class master's reaction and individual discussions between the violent child and the experts , while boys prefer expedition from school.
- Boys rather than girls “offer help” to the child physically abused by the other children. From the other side, girls more frequently ask their class masters for help, or “turn the blind eye” in order to avoid situation to become victims themselves.
- Boys and girls have different reactions to situations when they witness violent situations in which their classmate has been bullied. Boys (51%) more than girls (41%) directly take side of the victim and they demonstrate force, while girls prefer psychological help to the child who suffered bullying and inclusion of the class master into the conflict resolution.
- When it comes to assessment of possible mediators in conflict resolution, boys have perception of the class masters (45%), friends (24%) and teachers (9%) as potential mediators, while girls see the school pedagogues and psychologists in that role more (23%).
- Boys and girls were once, a while ago, subject to physical violence, but boys almost four times more than girls witness such a situation. Result according to which each third boy experienced physical violence of his peers is not surprising, however it is in contravention with the usual peer dynamics that each tenth girl was in such a position!

- Children react differently to situations in which their personality has been in danger, so that boys (20%) rather than girls (7%) react violently to violence against themselves, or ignore this manifestation and wait for the passions to calm down (16%:6%) or ask for help of the school master (13%:
- If we analyze opinions of children on motives for physical abuse, it can be observed that girls more emphasize that it is about the need to demonstrate domination, lack of general culture, jealousy and having fun in such situation. Basically, the differences are only related to degree of the motif being emphasized, not its content.
- As for the prevention of physical violence in school, the students give different proposals. Girls and boys put consistent and appropriate punishment into the first plan, where girls more emphasize combination of sanctions and the parents engagement that is the co-operation of the school and the parents in treatment of a violent child. In addition to that, girls more than boys think that counseling and individual discussions of an expert and a violent child can be useful, as well as educative programs on non-violent communication and constructive resolution of conflict situations. All in all, girls are more sensibilized for prevention and participation in preventive programs than boys..
- Opinions of boys and girls on different forms of violence are such that tolerance to violence is higher among boys than the girls when it comes to verbal harassment situations. However, in order to avoid leaving a wrong impression, it is necessary to say that both boys and girls express a negative attitude toward verbal harassment of other children and such kind of personal abuse.
- Similar to verbal bullying, boys express more tolerant attitude toward physical abuse. Although the attitude toward the application of coercion has been negative among the surveyed boys and girls, it is interesting that boys show less rejection of the situations in which physical force has been used in educative purposes or in resolution of internal conflicts among the school mates. Specially worrisome is that 42% of boys see the physical settling up as a natural fact and they approve coercion as a legitimate tool to "calm down" the restless children.
- Girls more than boys disagree with a stereotype that men are allowed to have much freedom in relationship than women. This disagreement is double higher among the girls (63%) than among the boys (27%), which indicates a nucleus of the viewpoint on equal gender treatment in the emotional relationship.
- Girls also, less than boys accept economic supremacy of men in emotional relations. They reject more situation that the boy is always expected to bear expenses of their mutual going out.
- Boys, in their answers agree three times more (47%) than girls (16%) with a statement that *Boys are entitled to go out more than girls*, which also indicate on more prevailing acceptance of traditionally established gender positions among the boys population than among the girls.

- They are also closer than girls to the opinion that the role of the father is more important than the role of the mother in children's upbringing, that is, they are express components of the adopted social roles patterns according to which the father traditionally stands on the top of the family pyramid. In the other opinions describing inter-family communication and family relations boys also express standpoints supporting the patriarchal distribution of gender roles.
- Prejudice such as that policy has exclusively reserved for men, or that managerial jobs are better and more efficient performed by men than women, or that men need education more in order to provide for their families, are more prevalent among boys. Also, according to the boys, men are more capable for work in police, and positions like the president of the state or the major.

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