

IMPACT



Good Practices in Preventing and
Combating Violence against Children

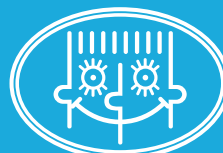
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INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and children is still a topical issue in most countries, including the Republic of Moldova. Due to the lack of an effective reporting system for cases of suspected child abuse, the official data do not reflect the actual size of this phenomenon. However, in recent years, the incidence of crimes committed against children has considerably increased. In this context, in 2009, within the concluding observations on the Report of the Republic of Moldova with regard to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed the concern that **child abuse and neglect remain to be widespread**.

In recent years, the state's response to the problem of violence against children has been shown particularly by developing legal framework for the prevention of child abuse and exploitation. The actions taken in this respect include: ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2011); adoption of toughened sanctions for sex crimes committed against children, child pornography, child trafficking; provision of special conditions for the hearing of children victims of sexual offenses by amending the Code of Criminal Procedure (2012); adoption of the Law on the protection of children against the negative impact of information and of the Law on special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents (2013).

Despite these efforts, hundreds of children from the Republic of Moldova continue to be exposed to maltreatment. One of the reasons is the insufficiency of systemic public awareness programs aimed to change people's attitudes towards violence against children, encourage them to adopt and promote positive alternatives in children's education. Moreover, there are no programs that would help parents develop positive parenting skills and would promote the benefits of educating children without violence. On the other hand, mechanisms by means of which children could report cases when their rights are violated are also missing. We can mention as well that the specialists responsible for child protection, who interact with both children victims of violence and their families, lack professionalism and a number of skills.

The publication presents the experience gained between 2011 – 2014 by the National Centre for Child Abuse Prevention and the Child Rights Information Centre, **while implementing a model of integrated educational and social services to ensure a more efficient prevention of risks,**

identification, reference and protection of vulnerable children, including children affected by abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The program aimed to help enhance the capacity of various fields (social work, education, health, public order, etc.) to timely identify child victims or potential victims of violence, to respond constructively and meet complex needs of their families. This was the background for the application of multi-level interventions on the one hand: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of child abuse phenomenon. On the other hand, the gained experience resulted in changes produced at the level of central public authorities although most of the activities were conducted at the local and district level.

This was possible thanks to the development and promotion of inter-sectoral mechanism for cooperation in the **identification, assessment, reference, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking**. Due to the joint efforts of central government, local authorities and civil society the mechanism was approved by Government decision in April, 2014.

The program was implemented in Leova and Orhei districts, in partnership with the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, District Councils of Leova and Orhei, with the support of UNICEF Moldova and OAK Foundation.

The experience gained during the development of programs and tools for preventing violence, monitoring and assisting child victims of abuse and neglect led to the willingness of the implementation team to share best practices and acquired knowledge with other professionals, in order to encourage them to act effectively for preventing and combating all forms of abuse against children.

The practices presented in this publication have had a real impact on the quality of life of children and adults in the communities where they were used. We believe that these practices can be replicated successfully, as they rely on creating the right attitudes towards violence against children and capacity building of local actors to prevent and combat this phenomenon.

The implementation of programs presented here taught us that long-term solutions to the problem of violence against children include enhancing of social responsibility and involvement of stakeholders in addressing it, along with social workers, teachers, doctors, police, and all members of the community.

ADOPTION OF INTER-SECTORAL COOPERATION MECHANISM

for identification, assessment, reference, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking

Based on the need to develop an effective system of child protection in the Republic of Moldova, NCCAP (National Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse) and CRIC (Child Rights Information Centre) have developed a program to build the capacities of professionals in social, education, health and public order sectors to implement an effective inter-sectoral mechanism of prevention, identification, reference, assessment, support and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking.

In this context, the process of development and systematization of the legal child protection framework in order to adjust child abuse prevention and combating policies at national level and enhance the efficiency of child protection system to meet children's needs was initiated.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 19:

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.

In this regard, the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is to create:

- „an integrated, cohesive, interdisciplinary and coordinated system, which shall embed all the measures referred to in paragraph 1 Article 19”
- „national coherent data collection system and reliable with regard to violence against children to ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation systems (impact analysis), services, programs and outcomes based on indicators aligned to universal standards, adapted and guided by goals and objectives set locally”

First, national partnerships were established with the key stakeholders, based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in November, 2011 by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Internal Affairs. The main goal of this document was to coordinate the organization of further activities and an effective multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration involving central government, local public authorities, Non-Governmental Organizations, with the support of international donors, such as UNICEF Moldova, OAK Foundation and others.

Under this partnership, draft Instructions on the mechanism for inter-sectoral cooperation for identification, reference, assessment, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking have been developed and piloted.

These activities were implemented in several stages:

- I. Development and participatory consultations of the draft Instructions on inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism (6 months);
- II. Piloting of the inter-sectoral mechanism in 10 locations from Leova and Orhei districts, based on the decision of the Social Projects Steering Committee of the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, as well as on the decisions of the district councils of Leova and Orhei (6 months);
- III. Analysis of the results of the inter-sectoral mechanism application (4 months);
- IV. Extension of inter-sectoral mechanism at district level, based on the decision of the district councils in which the project was piloted, and extension at the national level by Government Decision No. 270 of April 8, 2014 (12 months).

Stage I. The inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism was developed in a participatory process with active involvement of public authorities and civil society. The draft document aimed to define the role and responsibilities of different authorities, as well as the intra and inter-sectoral collaboration procedures for the prevention and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking of children, with particular emphasis on interventions of the 1st level local public authorities.

A new element of inter-sectoral mechanism involves the application of some specific tools that improve the efficiency of timely response to all cases of suspected abuse and application of special protection and assistance measures to ensure a protective environment for all children and meet their needs. These tools include:

- *Referral form of suspected case of violence against children* – a document used for registration, reference and tracking of suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking, in a single format for all institutions responsible for child protection. The referral form is filled out by the specialist who identified the suspected case of violence against the child and is sent to all the relevant professionals within 24 hours.
- *Child protection interview* – the first discussion with the child, during which the professional identifies the immediate needs of the child, the level of security, the child's trusted person/ persons and during which the professional informs the child about his/her rights, about the available support services and the protective measures to be applied.

Stage II. During the piloting period of the inter-sectoral mechanism, carried out on the basis of decisions of District Councils, the local level multidisciplinary team professionals - mayors, community social workers, police, doctors/ nurses, teachers – have benefited from a complex program of capacity consolidation, such as:

- *Long-term training course* on children's needs and rights; recognition of violence against children and the efficient response to the identified cases; application of sectoral and inter-sectoral procedures and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking.

- *Individual and group advice* provided locally by national consultants with experience in assisting child victims of abuse in order to guide members of multidisciplinary teams in application of procedures of inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism.
- *Sectoral workshops for experience exchange*, with the participation of all professionals involved in the piloting process and representatives of partner ministries, including exchange of experience in implementation of the inter-sectoral mechanism, presentation of piloting results and identification of challenges. The professionals shared their experience of overcoming the faced problems, being guided by representatives of ministries in identification of the best solutions. Participants also provided recommendations to improve this mechanism, in particular, and the child protection system in general.
- *Equipping professionals with methodological materials* such as a compilation of national and international regulations, publications for professionals on the intervention in various cases of abuse, guidelines on how to implement the instructions for inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism for identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking.

Subject themes for training modules for professionals on implementation of inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism:

- Understanding children's needs and rights (24 hours)
- Recognizing child abuse and providing a professional response to identified cases (24 hours)
- Applying inter-sectoral procedures in assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking (16 hours)
- Applying sectoral procedures in assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking (8 hours)

Stage III. An independent assessment of the piloting of the Instructions on inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism was carried out. The instructions were adapted according to the results of the assessment.

The report on assessment of the piloting of inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism found the following:

- Implementation of the inter-sectoral mechanism in the pilot districts facilitated a systemic approach in preventing of child abuse both within each sector responsible for child protection and all sectors together.
- The inter-sectoral mechanism established a unique and comprehensive record of cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking of children registered by experts from all involved sectors. Authorities in those two districts have statistical information on violence against children, identified in their territory, but also on how the referral system is functioning.
- Thanks to the piloting of the inter-sectoral mechanism, the capacities of the professionals to work in multidisciplinary teams at all stages of assistance in cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking have been developed.
- An efficient and uniform application of the inter-sectoral mechanism by professionals can be achieved only on the basis of training and guidance/ supervision thereof.
- The piloting of the inter-sectoral mechanism demonstrated its efficiency and created a platform for its expansion nationwide.

Stage IV. Based on the piloting results, district councils have decided to extend inter-sectoral mechanism in the whole district. The extension and monitoring plans were approved. About 500 professionals from different fields have benefitted of training and group supervision. District departments of social assistance and family protection received support in collecting and managing databases on the incidences of cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking at the district level as well as on the referred cases, in order to assess and support them.

Another important step in the cooperation with key leaders, established under the Memorandum, is the initiative of the Ministry of Education to set up a framework for organizing activities to prevent violence against children and regulate the intervention of of the educational system employees when concerns about violence against children occur.

The Ministry started this initiative in February 2013 with adoption of *the procedure for institutional organization and intervention of those employed in the educational institutions in cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking of children*, along with the suspected child abuse referral form.

This working tool allows the education system employees to provide a prompt, consistent, complete, standardized reference for all cases of violence and neglect, as well as a disaggregated record by types of abuse, referral sources, age of the child etc.

The district/municipal education, youth and sport departments have designated coordinators of abuse prevention activities, whose task is to monitor the application of the Procedure in secondary education institutions, provide methodological assistance to the local coordinators on prevention and assistance in cases of abuse and to draw up a quarterly report on cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking.

As a result of the experience gained in the process described above, which was regularly discussed and analyzed within inter-ministerial working groups, national and international forums, the **Instructions on inter-sectoral mechanism of cooperation for identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking** have been completed. The Instructions were approved on April 8, 2014 by the Government of the Republic of Moldova's Decision No.270 as a mechanism for implementation of the Law on the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents, which entered into force on 14.01.2014.

Program's products:

- Procedure of institutional organization and intervention of educational institutions employees in cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking of children, approved by Order of the Ministry of Education № 77 on 22 February 2013.
- The instructions on inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking, approved by the Government Decision № 270 on 8 April 2014.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

on child abuse prevention

The child abuse prevention community campaign aimed to raise awareness among children, parents, professionals about the phenomenon of violence against children and encourage child protection specialists at community level to report suspected child abuse and exploitation cases.

The campaign was carried out in a number of communities in the pilot districts as a component of implementation of the inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking (see the chapter above).

The objectives of the campaign were:

- Informing the community members, including professionals responsible for child protection, about consequences of violence against children, particularly for children themselves;
- Raising awareness of the community members on the need to report cases of child abuse to agencies/ professionals responsible for child protection and informing them about the reporting methods;
- Raising awareness of specialists responsible for child protection at local level regarding the need for prompt and specific response to any reported case of child abuse;
- Informing children about forms of violence and empowering them to report any suspected case of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation or trafficking.

Various communication tools were used in the campaign, helping change the attitudes toward violence and reporting cases of violence against children.

Another dimension of the campaign focused on **changing the attitudes of the population towards the phenomenon of violence for ZERO tolerance to any act of child abuse, exploitation or neglect.** For this purpose, various information materials were distributed.

Tools for communication with the public, widely used in the campaign:

- **Publications (brochures, guides).** Information materials were developed and distributed to various groups (parents, children, teachers, etc.), with the aim to explain, sensitize, present and offer alternatives to violence.
- **Promotional materials.** Posters, leaflets, stickers were published and distributed to the public, with the intention to draw attention to key messages on combating all forms of violence.
- **Presentations of the social performance „House M” (Casa M)** were organized. It is a documentary-style performance about domestic violence based on true stories collected through interviews which reflects the real lives of some women and children from the Republic of Moldova.

Respecta-mă, ca să pot respecta și eu pe alții.
Iartă-mă, ca să pot ierta și eu.
Asculta-mă, ca să pot asculta și eu pe alții.
Nu mă lovi, ca să nu lovesc nici eu pe alții.
Nu mă umili, ca să nu umilesc nici eu pe alții.
Vorbeste cu mine, ca să pot și eu vorbi cu alții.
Nu-ți bate joc de mine.
Nu mă ofensa.
Nu mă ignora.
Iubeste-mă, ca să pot iubi și eu pe alții.
Iuait ca este viața dă la tine.

EDUCĂ-ȚI COPILUL FĂRĂ VIOLENȚĂ ȘI EL VA CREȘTE LIBER, PUTERNIC ȘI PROTEJAT

McCANN ERICKSON
OAK FOUNDATION
unicef
CIDDC
CN PAC
Ministerul Educației
Ministerul Muncii, Protecției Sociale și Familiei
Ministerul Sănătății
Ministerul Afacerilor Interne
Comisia Națională pentru Copii

The materials were designed for specific groups, such as parents and professionals, but also for more general use, for the whole community. They were displayed in public places (town halls, shops, public transport stations, health centers, educational institutions, police stations, etc.) to increase their accessibility.

Multidisciplinary teams played an active role in the campaign developed in pilot localities. They established local partnerships and organized various events. As well, they distributed materials in order to help the community members to understand what is child abuse and exploitation, what are its consequences and indicators. They also provided examples and models of non-violent parenting and communication with children aimed at convincing the concerned persons to abandon violence against children.

A successful collaboration in this context has been the partnership with Art Centre „Coliseum”, which promoted violence prevention messages through „House M” show. The performances were attended by about 1500 persons in ten communities. This part of the campaign had a wide coverage both in the local and national media.

The show designed for adult audience was attended by families facing the problem of domestic violence, representatives of local public institutions (kindergarten, school, health Centre, culture Centre, city hall, community centers, police, NGOs) and other community members. Only persons over the age of 16 were allowed to the show because of its explicit scenes of various forms of violence.

Viewers were encouraged to participate in open discussions on domestic violence after the performance. They were moderated by professional psychologists, specialists in child and family protection, and members of local multidisciplinary teams. These discussions helped to understand the message, and served also as a good opportunity for the local multidisciplinary teams members (the mayor, doctor, social worker, deputy director of a (high) school, policeman) to introduce their roles and responsibilities in child protection.

The massive shows attendance was due to the involvement of local authorities in the organization of event, both in terms of logistics and promotion. Thus, in order to promote the event there were distributed 500 posters and 2,000 invitations, some of them being sent personally by the social workers from the community to the families at risk.

Publications developed in order to inform and motivate the society to give up all forms of abuse and neglect:

Brochures for children

1. How to recognize a case of abuse? Book for children
2. How to recognize a case of abuse? Book for teens
3. Teen labour, booklet for teens

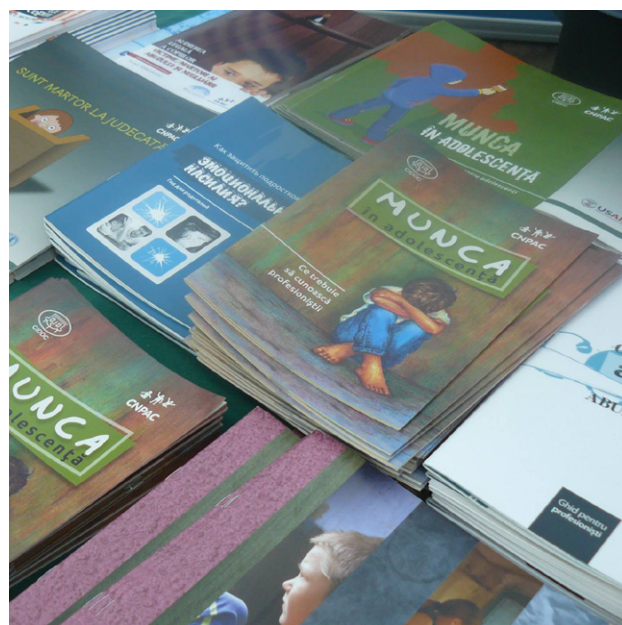
Brochures for parents

4. How to protect children from sexual abuse?
5. How to protect adolescents from emotional abuse?
6. Without slaps and abuse

Brochures for professionals

7. How to help sexually abused children?
8. Teen Labour, booklet for professionals
9. Child-victim of sexual abuse: multidisciplinary interventions

Another dimension of the campaign was the **continuous information of the public on the child abuse phenomenon**. In this respect, the information materials have been developed and distributed to children of different ages, parents and professionals. The main target of the campaign was to consolidate the impact of the message in order to change the attitudes regarding this phenomenon.



The final stage of the campaign was synchronized with the local adoption of the sectoral mechanism for the prevention, identification, referral, assessment, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking. It was aimed **at encouraging the community members to report cases of abuse.**

In this regard, the emphasis was on informing actively the professionals and distributing information materials promoting the need to report suspected cases of abuse to professionals/institutions responsible for child protection. A video spot was also developed and promoted, accompanied by leaflets informing about how and where to report suspected cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking of children and displaying contacts of the responsible institutions or professionals.

The awareness campaign contributed to the population's information on violence against children at the community level. It also made it possible for the primary prevention of violence against children to become a common and continuous effort of the community. Children and adults have henceforth become more aware of the forms and consequences of violence against children and of how concerns should be reported. The campaign also had positive effect on professionals responsible for child protection, helping to enhance their capacity to organize prevention activities and intervene in cases of child abuse and exploitation. The awareness of community members has led to increased rates of identified children at risk and child victims of violence and exploitation.



Anunță imediat autoritățile dacă cunoști un copil abuzat

Ai putea fi unica persoană care îl poate ajuta!



Campanie de prevenire a violenței asupra copiilor
Protejează-mi copilăria

IMPLICĂ-TE!

Dacă cunoști un copil care este supus abuzului fizic, psihologic, sexual, exploatării prin muncă sau neglijării – anunță imediat autoritățile!

DE CE TREBUIE SĂ INTERVII?

- Copilul abuzat se află în pericol, iar abuzatorul îi poate pune viața în primejdie în orice moment;
- Dacă agresorul nu va fi oprit el poate abuza și alți copii.

CINE POATE SĂ RAPORTEZE?

Orice persoană care cunoaște cazuri de violență sau suspectează că un copil este abuzat/neglijat are obligația să raporteze.

UNDE POȚI RAPORTA?

Este important ca orice caz de abuz/neglijare a copilului să fie anunțat instituțiilor/persoanelor responsabile de protecția copilului.

Te poți adresa :

- Asistentului social comunitar;
- Primarului;
- Educatorului, profesorului, psihologului sau directorului școlii/grădiniței;
- Medicului de familie sau asistentului medical;
- Poliștilor;
- Specialiștilor Direcției de Asistență socială /Direcției pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului.

CUM POȚI RAPORTA?

- ▶ Comunică **direct** despre cazul de abuz specialiștilor responsabili de protecția copilului din localitate;
- ▶ **Telefonează** sau **expediază o sesizare** la adresa instituțiilor responsabile de protecția copiilor;
- ▶ În situațiile de urgență apelează serviciul 902 – Poliția sau 903 – Serviciul medical de urgență;
- ▶ **Expediază** un mesaj la adresa electronică: ajutauncopil@cnpc.org.md

ESTE IMPORTANT SĂ ȘTII!

Asistența copiilor abuzați/ neglijăți este garantată de stat și se oferă gratuit! Specialiștii care cunoaște despre un caz de abuz/ neglijare este obligat să oprească imediat abuzul și să anunțe instituțiile care vor acționa până când COPILUL va fi în siguranță / PROTEJAT!



Comunitatea mea are grijă de copii



Toți copiii trebuie să crească într-o comunitate în care se simt protejați.

Dacă și un coleg sau prieten care este în pericol și are nevoie de ajutor, vorbește cu:

Coordonatorul pentru protecția copilului
Psihologul școlii
Asistentul social
Primarul
Medicul de familie
Polițistul
Centrul comunitar
Alteve:



Child Abuse Prevention Program

„A GRAIN OF SAND”

The „Grain of Sand” program targets teenagers (12-18 years of age) and implies a group discussion, moderated by an adult, based on video projections. Its purpose is to help teenagers to form attitudes that would help them to protect themselves from various forms of violence. Putting teenagers in a position to anticipate their reactions in a series of risk situations, this program assists them to find strategies and resource persons who can provide support to overcome difficulties.

„Grain of Sand” has been used by teachers as a means to approach key issues related to violence during the civic education classes. It was also used by social workers to assist graduates of boarding schools (schools within residential institutions) and children who benefit temporarily or permanently from different types of social services. Although the program has been designed especially for work with young people, it can be adapted for parents/ caregivers.

The program has the following objectives:

- To encourage teenagers’ reflections on their own personality and experience;
- To help teenagers identify various forms of violence and their manifestations;
- To provide a safe and confidential environment for thinking , taking attitudes and discussing issues with regard to various aspects of violence;
- To help children/ young people identify internal and external resources, strategies to act for overcoming difficult life situations, especially those involving violence;
- To support teenagers in identifying adults responsible for protecting children and young people in their community, whom they can report their concerns and ask for assistance;
- To encourage teenagers to seek professional assistance and ask for help from trusted adults in any situation of violence.

“Grain of sand” is an innovative interactive child abuse prevention method designed for professionals working with children and young people. This method was developed in the 90s by the French organization ALC (Accompagnement, Lieux d’accueil, Carrefour Educatif et Social) under several European programs to fights against abuse.



The program addresses violence against children and youth as a complex phenomenon that goes beyond easily identifiable forms of abuse, and is linked to many social problems. The video produced in Moldova contains stories inspired by the lives of children and young people. It deals not only with the forms of violence experienced by adolescents, but also with various risk factors such as group pressure, lack of self-confidence, lack of communication in the family, changes occurring in adolescence, poverty, migration of parents, underdeveloped skills to overcome unpleasant emotional states, to act constructively in some difficult situations and settle the disagreements peacefully, etc.

Watching a film consisting of scenes that depict situations of violence experienced, observed or committed by teenagers, helps teachers to facilitate a discussion and young people to reflect

on many aspects of violence - to form a broader view of a difficult situation, to identify factors that have a specific role in a potentially violent situation and therefore could be influenced to prevent or overcome difficulties, to distinguish the constructive behavior of the characters involved in a problem, propose alternative actions for characters to overcome difficulties.

With a strong emphasis on children, youth and their experience, the program involves also adults. Parents, professionals and other community members that appear in films have either legal obligation to take measures to protect children at risk, or willingness to provide emotional support and information. Teenagers must be supported to find such resource persons in their environment and encouraged to turn to them whenever they face a situation of abuse.

The „Grain of sand“ method should be applied in two steps: watching films one by one and discussions after each film. Watching is only the starting point and its role is also to set the tone. The discussion that follows has however the central role.

The films are based on the realities of young people's lives, showing fragments of school life and family situations, gang activities etc. By means of stories shown in the film, the perpetrators, witnesses and victims of violence in different times/situations of their lives and the young people watching the film are helped to verbalize difficult, unexpected or dilemma situations, going through which seems impossible. Films produce an effect of identification with the characters and situations, and the discussion provides a platform for reflecting, becoming more aware, share experiences, draw conclusions and lessons learned. A methodological guide has been developed and made available to help professionals facilitate the discussions. It contains reference questions, practical recommendations to conduct the discussions and principles to ensure the protection of participating children.

„Grain of sand“ is a proactive method, based on anticipation and analysis of risks posed by certain situations or actions, identification of protective behavior and finding of constructive solutions to various problems.

„Here You can express Your opinion, it is something new for me and not boring“ (boy)

“This activity helps children to express their opinions. You become stronger when you say what you think“(girl)

The program offers an opportunity to children to exchange their experiences of how they understand the relationships that they build with others and develop skills to deal with different risks. All these aspects are extremely important because of their contribution in the process of planning educational activities based on children's and young people's real needs.

„Even if it seems to us so that it is not like this, I noticed that all pupils make conclusions from these activities, because actually each person learns in his own way and gets involved in discussion in a different way“ (teacher)

„I was surprised that the film can approach so many issues, I could teach the civic education without the manual“ (teacher)

The assessment of the program showed that it was effective in developing skills that help children and young people to protect themselves. Their abilities to recognize different forms of abuse increase and they become more aware of their own emotional experiences, internal resources and skills to develop positive relationships. Exploring attitudes of children towards violence helps them to review their value system, to show respect for the values of others, to empathize with colleagues. Participants in the program are empowered to seek in the community the assistance of people and services that can provide the necessary help.

„We helped children to solve some problems, to get out of difficult situations and to turn to reliable people“ (form teacher)

Besides, teachers trained to apply this method benefited from an innovative tool for a better understanding of children, including knowledge about persons trusted by children, in order to identify children's needs, evaluate the effectiveness of educational activities and design activities to meet the needs of teenagers.

„I realized I need to pay attention to abused children and those with parents abroad“ (form teacher)

The assessment also found that the program had contributed to the development of a relationship based on trust between teacher and children, with a positive effect on learning in school.

The minimal requirements for child protection during discussions:

Rule 1. Every child/ adolescent may talk about personal experiences as he/she feels free, without reference to others (colleagues, neighbours etc.) who have a problem similar to the one reflected in the film.

Rule 2. Personal stories shared during the discussions should be kept confidential.

Rule 3. Any irony, mocking, prosecution, adjudication, should be stopped and the discussion redirected towards constructive solutions.

Rule 4. The moderator has the duty to make aware the specialists in the community with regard to the situation of victim or potential victim of a participant at the discussions.

Rule 5. Moderator should make sure that by the end of the discussion all participants are in a secure emotional state.

Rule 6. Willingness to allot time and support to teenagers who will address specific topics outside the group discussions or will require the support of the teacher in a particular issue.

Children discuss and learn about community services and their effectiveness, and their views may be useful in promoting initiatives to improve services for children and youth.

This program could be developed and used in other contexts. To ensure its effectiveness the following requirements should be met:

- Films must reflect typical situations for the country, involving community leaders, and take into account the local cultural particularities, including in the shooting environment, the decor etc.
- The methodological guidelines for the application of the program should be developed with the contribution of children and adult-moderators. The guidelines should be explicit, especially with respect to matters relating to the protection of the child.
- Communication and facilitation skills of adults are crucial for effectiveness of the method; the facilitator should provide a space for expression to children without labeling, judgments and imposed views.

- Adult facilitators require knowledge of the legal and institutional framework on child rights, including the referral system.
- The program cannot be viewed as a single activity, but rather as a component of a long term process based on a relationship of trust and respect. Combining the method with the development of life and social skills ensures sustainability of its impact.
- Drawing on our experience and results, we recommend its application to professionals working directly with children and young people.

Implementation of the „Grain of sand“ requires fulfilment of the following conditions:

- An adult facilitator trained in the following areas:
 - Animation techniques and facilitation of group discussions with young people, taking into account ethical issues when addressing sensitive topics, keeping the attitude of respect for everyone’s experience and solution-based approach to problem situations;
 - Forms of violence against children and young people manifestations, signs of identification of abuse cases and situations at risk of abuse;
 - Knowledge of the Procedure for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the responsible institutions.
- A room spacious enough for the size of the group, but not too big, so that the viewers can focus on images and sound of the videos, and can form a circle or semicircle for discussion.
- Technical support for film projection/screening.
- Optionally, a blackboard and chalk or large sheets of paper and markers to record certain questions or conclusions of the participants, make a summary of ideas that sounded, brainstorm solutions, etc. These materials can be particularly useful if the method is applied in a long term process of children’s skills development, given the potential of the method in this respect.

CHILD RIGHTS MONITORING

BY CHILDREN

The purpose of this program is to empower children by promoting their participation in monitoring their own rights. Monitoring of children's rights aims to help state institutions and organizations and NGOs to reflect on the actions taken to ensure children's rights and to determine how effective these actions are and what changes or additional measures are needed to improve the situation.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child encourages countries to actively involve children in the process of monitoring how their rights are respected. Children's opinions are very important, because they show from the firsthand what are the real difficulties children face and what they feel about their rights are implemented.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child set out the Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (child's opinion) as one of the principles of the Convention. Article 12 should be taken into account as an interpretation of other articles, and it is relevant in all aspects of implementing the provisions of the document. In the context of the protection of children against all forms of violence, their right to free expression of opinion is crucial, as the safety of children depends, among other things, on the ability to recognize such phenomena and on the opportunities available to report the concerns. Thus, as part of implementation of Article 12, the Committee notes the need for various mechanisms to enhance the voice of children, especially those at risk. Periodic feedback from children can help improve the services provided by adults in various areas (education, health, social care, leisure etc.)

In the above described program, Working Groups on the Rights of the Child (WGRC) were created in each community/school involved in the project. They consist of 3-4 children. These groups were supported to:

- Observe how children's rights are implemented in their schools and communities;
- Consult the opinion of other children in the community about the level of respect of children's rights;

- Represent the voice of other children from the community in relation to Local Government and other adults responsible for ensuring the protection of children's rights;
- Develop periodic reports on children's rights that would contribute to improving social services for children and youth.

The set up of WGRC offered chances for participation to all the children from 10 communities in 2 districts. The process of establishing the WGRC was a participatory one and consisted of several steps:

1. Development of a concept of selection of WGRC members based on the non-discrimination principle involving members of the students' councils along with the schools Deputy Directors.
2. Development of an information campaign in educational institutions to encourage children who are in the most vulnerable situations and have no other involvement opportunities to apply.
3. Submission of participation forms together with the informed parent or guardian's consent.
4. Selection of WGRC members by a committee composed of members of the students' councils, the adult coordinator of WGRC appointed by the institution and a representative of a local organization. The selection criteria included: gender balance, diversity of ages and groups typical for the community (e.g. family situation, income level, ethnicity or minority religion, disability, experience of difficult situations, such as abuse, exploitation). Guided by these criteria, which aimed at providing opportunities particularly to children in difficult situations and who lack opportunities for participation.
5. Announcement of results.

Children, members of WGRC, were trained with- in several training sessions. The objectives of these sessions were to get them familiar with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Child Right Convention (CRC) and its monitor- ing process, development of monitoring indica- tors, identification of data sources and collec- tion methods, examination of the relationship between rights holders and duty bearers, iden- tification of institutions/community services re- sponsible for the implementation of children's rights, but also development of life and social skills such as communication, relation and col- laboration skills within the group etc.

Thus, the monitoring of the CRC was performed by WGRC members in their communities after a series of local workshops where WGRC mem- bers had been supported to develop tools and trained how to apply different methods of data collection.

The monitoring process lasted several months and had few stages. Children started with the right to education, which was easier to under- stand as all of them experienced it in their dai- ly life. The same principle was applied to data collection methods: first, the members of the WGRC used the observation, and after a while structured interviews and questionnaires.



Monitoring indicators of the children's right to be protected from any form of violence, which WGRC have developed to collect in- formation on the observance of this right in their communities:

1. Existence of violence prevention infor- mation/ activities (within or outside the school subjects).
2. Qualitative information about the pla- ces where there the most frequent and serious forms of child abuse happen in the school (who uses violence, towards whom, where, what kind of violence).
3. Qualitative information on the use of physical punishment by teachers for „educational“ purposes.
4. Number of teachers who were trained to prevent, identify, intervene, report and refer cases of violence against children.
5. Qualitative information on the use of physical and emotional violence for sol- ving conflicts among children.
6. Existence of qualitative informative ma- terials available for children of all ages, parents and professionals about preven- tion of physical and emotional abuse.
7. Existence of information and coun- selling services for children who experi- ence violence.
8. Existence of mechanisms/ways / chan- nels in schools and communities avail- able for all children to address/ to submit a complaint in case of violence against them.
9. The number of complaints solved by the duty bearers.
10. Qualitative information about physical and emotional punishment used by pa- rents for education/ discipline purposes (including in school towards their child or toward others).

After they collected data in their communities, WGRC members shared and systematized the information with the colleagues from other communities. Within a workshop, the children were supported to analyze available information, to formulate conclusions and recommendations, to identify advocacy strategies to deliver to local authorities the messages they had formulated.

The reports developed by children were presented during various meetings with decision makers at district/ national level and other events: joint meeting of the directors of pre-university educational institutions with WGRC members, joint meeting of the National Council for Child Rights Protection and representatives of children, National Children's Forum, Reflection Group for children's consultation on the priorities of the National Strategy for Child and Family Protection. Also WGRC members were consulted on the help line service initiated by the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

In order to support the activity of WGRC, the managers of each educational institutions attended by group members designated a teacher as their coordinator, with the following basic responsibilities:

- to ensure the safety of WGRC members and to accompany them during the trainings and workshops;
- to provide assistance at the request of WGRC members, encourage and supervise them, respecting their independence;
- to facilitate communication of WGRC members with various community leaders and local institutions/ organizations (city hall, local council, the management of the educational institution, student council etc.);
- to ensure that WGRC members are not subject to any kind of pressure or intimidation because of their activity;
- to maintain the communication with CRIC on any difficulties/ challenges faced by WGRC members during the performance of the monitors roles.



Along the presented program 17 WGRC from 2 districts monitored the rights to education (art. 28, 29 CRC), to protection from violence (art. 19 CRC), to opinion (Art. 12 CRC) and conducted a research on children's knowledge about their rights. The results were published in two editions of the Children's Report on the observance of the CRC, with the help of which children provided the local and national authorities with information about their perspective on the implementation of child rights, including on the gaps they identified in achieving the CRC provisions.

See <http://childrights.md> for the children's reports and „Child Rights Monitoring Guide”.

Several factors contributed to the effectiveness of the program:

- ❁ **Time.** Establishment and operation of a group of children requires time, especially if the entire activity is based on the principles of non-discrimination and participation. In this regard, a minimum of three years is a reasonable period of time to support children's groups.
- ❁ **Training.** Rights monitoring is an activity that requires certain skills that are currently underdeveloped in school.
- ❁ **Support.** Frequent communication with WGRC members within seminars, workshops, other events and by phone or internet allowed timely provision of appropriate support to each group.
- ❁ **Local coordination.** The existence of an adult to support emotional wellbeing and WGRC activities was favourable for promotion of children's participation in monitoring of their rights. With training in child rights and a relationship based on confidence, the coordinator's role is to provide assistance and encourage children in the monitoring, and help them to communicate with professionals and authorities.



During this program, the teaching staff that supported the WGRC benefited from consultancy and methodological support. Parents and caregivers of the involved children were encouraged to support their children's activities. At different stages of the program they were informed by letters about the activities of the WGRC, and asked for their consent for their children's participation in workshops and other events. Phone contact was also kept when necessary.

However, due to the novelty of the concept of children's participation in the monitoring of their rights, many adults lack understanding of the benefits of this process. To overcome cases where some children from WGRC were intimidated for their activity or were not given the support they needed, additional efforts have been made to provide them protection.

This program is recommended for implementation in a systemic and continuous way due to its multiple benefits:

- ❁ The program allows enhancing children's capacity to monitor their rights, particularly the rights to protection, to report cases of abuse, to submit reports on the implementation of children's rights to the media, the local and the national authorities. Also, the members of such groups make important steps towards personal development and become more self-confident as individuals and as citizens;
- ❁ Teachers improve their ability to organize the selection of students for curricular and extracurricular initiatives (student's councils, community actions, various initiatives and projects) based on the principles stipulated in the CRC: non-discrimination and participation.
- ❁ A framework for monitoring the right of the child to protection (indicators, sources and data collection methods) has been developed at national and local levels, enriched by the perspective of children, which can be used by both the authorities and other children interested in this subject;
- ❁ The institutions and organizations that coordinate groups of children develop their skills in several areas: training for children, strategies of communication with decision makers and adults that work with and for children, as well as child protection policy.

