PLA REPORT ON YOUNG MEN INITIATIVE IN GBV PREVENTION IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Contents

About the Project

In 2022, Center for Research and Policy Making, in cooperation with CARE International Balkans, started with implementing the new project titled *"Building healthy lifestyle habits of boys in Gostivar and Gjorche Petrov (in the text will be used with the short form Gjorche)"* with the support of the Netherlands Embassy in Skopje. The goal of the project is to positively transform the behavior of young men and boys for building tolerant societies and prevent peer and gender-based violence. The local government and the local civil society organizations are involved in this initiative, which will mobilize young people aged 14-19 years to determine the priorities and participate in the creation of local policy for young people through educational workshops and campaigns in the community. The project will:

- Improve understanding and raising awareness of violence as learned masculine behavior in the Balkans, among boys, youth civil society organizations and relevant government institutions;
- Adapt CARE's approach by engaging young men and boys and **YMI methodology** at national level as youth-led gender-based violence (GBV) prevention model;
- Increase capacities of local civil society organizations to deliver CARE's approach by engaging young men and boys through **YMI methodology** (Young Men's Initiative), as youth-led gender-based violence (GBV) prevention model.

Approach and methodology

The Young Men Initiative (YMI) uses a positive youth development and youth work framework as a tool for promoting positive outcomes in the lives of young men. The overall philosophy is: *"To work with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain voice, influence and place in society in a period of their transitions from dependence to independence"*. Moreover, by addressing gender inequalities and promoting healthy versions of masculinities and manhood, boys / young men have the opportunity to reach their full potential in society. In societies where gender equality is most prevalent, the benefits to both men and women are seen through more equal relationships, better health outcomes for men and greater human rights for all citizens.

The following principles guide our work with young people:

- Respect for young people
- Voluntary participation
- Anti-oppressive
- Confidentiality
- Ethical practice

Country Context

Although related to biological factors, gender roles are both psychologically and socially shaped entities, and in many ways depend on how a culture sees and forms the image of them and what place it assigns to them in society. Having in mind that traditional gender norms are still prevalent in the country the gender remains to be category of social replication and gender inequalities. Many initiatives have been raised that contribute to the improvement of the position of women in society, as well as to raise the awareness of the situations that arise due to the suppression of women's rights in society.

The Law on prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence from 27th January 2021[1] specifically predicts undertaking preventive measures in chapter five Article 33, to raise awareness of all forms of gender-based violence, promote gender equality, and eliminate stereotypes about gender roles based on culture, customs, faith, traditions and other practices that are based on the idea of subordination of women and men. It is noteworthy that all state administration bodies, local self-government units, public and private sectors, political parties, media, associations and foundations, informal groups, social partners, trade unions, religious organizations and other organizations are obligated to undertake the preventive measures in accordance with the competences established by law. As well, the Law clearly state that the Ministry of Education and Science, in addition to the general preventive measures, also undertakes the following special preventive measures:

1. adopts programs for equality between women and men, non-violent conflict resolution, respect for diversity, promotion of gender equality and elimination of gender role stereotypes based on culture, customs, faith, traditions and other practices based on the idea of subordination of women and men in institutions for the care and upbringing of children of preschool age at the proposal of the Bureau for the Development of Education;
2. introduces contents in the curricula that promote gender equality, non-violent conflict resolution, respect for diversity, information on all forms of gender-based violence and comprehensive sexuality education in primary and secondary schools;
3. introduces contents in the curricula that promote gender equality, non-violent conflict resolution, respect for diversity, information on all forms of gender-based violence and in adult education and
4. conducts initial and advanced education for educational staff on gender equality, non-violent conflict resolution, respect for diversity, information on all forms of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence and comprehensive sexual education through the Education Development Bureau.

Besides the government institutions entitled to work on the issue, there are a lot of NGOs and international organization which works on topics mostly related to gender, starting from Gender Budgeting, Inclusion, monitoring and evaluation of gender inclusion, training for youth and teachers and similar. In 2014, 2018 and 2022, a survey

---

[1] Law on prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence; Official gazette of RSM no. 24, 29.1.2021 https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf

on health-related behaviors among school-age children from North Macedonia (Health Behavior in School-aged Children - HBSCM) was conducted[2]. This study is a part of an international longitudinal study, which is conducted every four years in now 44 countries from Europe and beyond. In the study a sample of at least 4,000 students of three ages: 11, 13 and 15 years were included. Among other issues additionally how boys and girls are viewed in our country was considered also. The official results from 2022 are not published yet. In the following, several results from the report will be briefly presented, which are to some extent confirmed by the survey from 2022 (unofficial data that is currently being processed):

- The results of the 2014 year show that satisfaction from the school decreases with age (students like school less). Especially this is more characteristic for boys and less for girls. Usually, girls are more burdened with schoolwork than boys[3].
- Compared to other countries, young people from Macedonia in a high proportion declared that they use electronic media for communication on a daily basis. Also, they hang out more often outside of school, after classes and in the evening, and this is more specific for boys.
- Bullying at school, is more common among boys than among girls. These include calling with derogatory names, i.e. kicking, pushing and locking, as specific forms of abuse that are more pronounced among girls. While bullying and making sexual jokes or sexual gestures are more common among boys. On average, 11% of boys and 3% of girls aged 11 to 15 have been involved in a fight three or more times within 12 months. Physical violence in the family with male children is common, while girls are more exposed to verbal violence in the family.

Part of the results of 2018[4] shows a worrying trend of an increase in indicators of mental health. Girls express their difficulties more and openly than boys. Mental health has a strong connection with culture, which traditionally continues to impose roles and values, about who is, what should be, and what suits the male child, as opposed to the female child. Boys must not complain and show emotion, concluded between the lines of these findings. They should "manly" fight back every blow, instead of showing weakness. Those are the messages they receive from childhood. In contrast, girls are expected to be weak, delicate and weak, so their complaints are passed easily, and they are not judged. But that's why no one takes their emotional "outbursts" seriously. Both of them suffer equally and hopelessly, only in a gender-specific way. These kinds of statistics emphasize the need to work with young men to help them deconstruct the messages and models of violence around them and to help them build skills for alternative and healthy behaviors.

[2] Information taken from the meeting of the team on the occasion of 20 years from the study implemented in North Macedonia Обраќање по повод 20 години од студијата ХБСЦ во Северна Македонија (2002-2022) – HBSC: Macedonia (wordpress.com)
[3] A study related to a health behaviours of students aged 11,13,and 15 years of age https://hbscmacedonia.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/kolku-zdravo-i-ednakvo-ziveat-mladite-za-web.pdf
[4] SPOTLIGHT ON ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING. Findings from the 2017/18 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada. Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being | HBSC study

YMI Background

Young Men Initiative (YMI) project started in 2006 and it is being implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo and Albania. The project builds on CARE´s comprehensive and programmatic effort to prevent interpersonal and gender-based violence as well as to promote gender equality in the region. YMI is targeting youth to build their knowledge and attitudes concerning gender equality and healthy lifestyles and to decrease levels of all types of violence. YMI started with a small size qualitative research exploring young men`s attitudes and behaviors, then over the years grew into a comprehensive program with different components targeting young people, parents, teachers, educational workers, university students, journalists and other important stakeholders. Since the beginning, the YMI has directly worked with over 120,000 youth in over 230 high schools and over 1,600 high school teachers, while various educational programs and campaign activities reached 75000 people throughout the Balkans. For the first time this approach is being piloted and implemented in Macedonia with project managed by CRPM and CARE.

The core of the YMI intervention is a series of group educational workshops accompanied with social norms campaign that promote a critical and personal reflection on gender, masculinities and health, with a strong focus on violence prevention. The initial base for the overall programming of future intervention is participatory learning and action (PLA) conducted with male youth, youth facilitators and youth NGOs to determine the specific gender norms and expectations that contribute to violent behavior among young men in North Macedonia.

The methodology of research

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is a type of qualitative research, which is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a community or situation. It is widely used in work involving local communities in order to assess and outline social context and all other research-relevant topics. PLA is a participatory methodology which is conducted with the full and active participation of community members – in this case with young men. The main purpose of PLA is to support people within communities to analyze their own situation, rather than have it analyzed by outsiders. Additionally, PLA is an approach used by many development workers to enable participants to share knowledge and insight about their community and its needs, and to determine ways to address those needs. The main principles of PLA are:

- To involve people in issue identification and its resolution, and to increase their ability to act on their own behalf;
- To learn from people and their experiences, and for development experts to "hand over the stick" so that people themselves analyze, present, and determine the outcome of the information that has been collected;
- To adopt an informal approach and to be flexible in changing it if necessary;
- To assess people's perceptions and identify, prioritize and appraise issues from their knowledge of local conditions;
- To conduct field work in a relaxed manner by listening, probing, not imposing, and allowing all different types of people to have a say.

The overall goal of this first PLA activity is, on the basis of the understanding that emerges from the research, to help identify potential entry points for youth-centered interventions that CRPM, CARE and its partners could consider. This meaning, the results of the first PLA are intended to provide situation context for CRPM/ CARE and its partners to steer the project's second phase, in terms of developing an overall strategy and specific youth-centered interventions that contribute to increasing gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors of young men, and to reducing tolerance for gender-based violence among youth.

The primary focus of the participatory learning and action (PLA) research is to work **with male youth**, youth facilitators and partner organizations to determine the specific gender norms and expectations that contribute to violent behavior among young men in North Macedonia. To determine these norms and expectations, the PLA will be guided by the following five general research questions which base for conclusions within this report.

Research question 1: What are the current social constructs, attitudes and experiences for young men, especially with regard to hegemonic masculinity?

Research question 2: How do social institutions such as media, school, religion, family and peers influence social constructs of masculinity?

Research question 3: What are the ranges of young men's attitudes and behavior toward women and their relationship with women?

Research question 4: How are social constructs of masculinity related to men's violent use of power?

Research question 5: For men who are not violent, what are the influencing factors and consequences?

A secondary focus of the PLA activity was to continue to foster the development of partner organizations' capacity to engage in learning, reflection and action related to masculinity, gender-based violence and youth in their local Balkan contexts. To launch the PLA activity, staff from CRPM including the local researcher and the facilitator attended a two-day training on PLA and its specific methodologies held on 6th and 7th of December, 2022. The international research team provided onsite technical support to lead the PLA facilitation and to develop and present an initial analysis of the findings from the PLA exercise. This report shares the details of this first PLA research activity including its process, the results, and their implications.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

A qualitative assessment was conducted over four days with young boys from Gjorche Petrov (two days) and Gostivar (two days), separately in both mentioned localities.Team of facilitators and local researcher conducted the PLA in Municipality of Gjorche Petrov on13 and 14th of December, 2022 and in Gostivar on 15 and 16th of December, 2022.
Participatory data collection methods were used in the PLA research and specific tools were selected based on previous implementation and successes in facilitating

learning and discussion on a range of topics. The data were collected to explore numerous themes related to gender, masculinity, and violence, and included exploration of youth culture, gender norms and socialization of masculinity, power and influence, attitudes about violence, forms of violence, root causes and consequences of violence, exploring transition from boyhood to manhood, experiences of violence, and moving toward change. Substantial consideration was given to the sequencing of the PLA tools used and sensitivity of information gathered throughout the two-day exercises.

The first day began with the introduction of participants and with setting the ground rules.

Then it was continued with exercises which were implemented within several topics:

Topic 1: Exploring Youth Culture. The purpose of this topic is to begin exploring with male youth what it is to be a young man and young woman, and then to understand the role of social spaces in shaping male youth attitudes and behavior around gender expectations. In the first exercise discussion on how the young boys spent their time on a weekday and on a weekend day in comparison with females was conducted. In the second part mapping of the social spaces with aim of understanding the role of social spaces in shaping boys' attitudes and behavior around masculinity was done.

Topic 2: Gender Norms. For exploring this topic, a so called three-dimensional image of masculinity, i.e., more precisely modeling of the male figure by using modeling clay with variety of colors was done by participants themselves. This exercise aimed to understand what attitudes and behavior are expected of 'ideal' men and women in their society as perceived by the participants.

Topic 3: Socialization of Masculinity. The purpose of this topic was to explore with male youth what it is to be a young man, and to understand the role of social rites and social institutions in shaping youth attitudes and behavior around masculinity. This was done by mapping influential social institutions by the participants.

Topic 4: Power and Influence. Power Map Diagram was used with aim to gain an understanding of how power is constructed and exercised, and how participants feel and react when they "have" it and when they don't.

Topic 5 and 6: Attitudes About Violence and Forms of Violence. At this point participants and facilitators started to discuss directly and openly on violence. The aim was to explore young men's attitudes towards gender equity and violence and to identify the range of forms of violence affecting young men and young women. The exercise Agree-Disagree Continuum or "Vote with your feet" was implemented though using several statements from the Gender Equitable Men's Scale. In continuation, forms of perceived violence in the community were listed and grouped according to the detected categories.

Topic 7: Root Causes and Consequences of Violence. The topic of violence was continued to be discussed with aim to gain participant perceptions of causes and consequences of different, prevalent situations of violence (or precursors to forms of violence- e.g., relationship jealousy) in young men's lives. The participants were divided in three groups in which they discussed on emotional, physical and sexual form of violence.

Topic 8: Moving toward change. This topic helped to summarize learning and insights into gender, masculinity and gender-based violence in order to engage participants in creating a future vision for youth culture. The participants discussed about what they have learned about expectations of being a man, of being a woman, and violence. Furthermore, they discussed about next steps which can be taken regarding the topic in the future.

Gender Equitable Men's Scale (GEM scale)

In the beginning, before research team started with PLA, GEM scale was disseminated to all participants (the electronic version) and it was filled out by all participants (anonymously). 14[5] (13 males and 1 female) participants filled the questionnaires. This scale contains statements from different domains of life, such as violence, gender relations, families, social networks and similar. The responses are analyzed and incorporated in different parts of the report in relation with the topics which were presented.

Informed Consent

The research team paid special attention to ethical considerations and informed consent procedures throughout the data collection process. On Day 1 of PLA exercise, participants read and signed informed consent forms to ensure voluntary participation in the research study including use of photographs in dissemination reports and presentations.

Demographics of participants

Data were collected from 19 participants in total for both municipalities, Gjorche Petrov and Gostivar. The participants in the PLA sessions were high school students between the age of 13-19. Most participants from Gjorche Petrov are urban youth living in this Municipality, and they attend different types of high schools including gymnasium, technical, vocational and medicine in Skopje town (Gjorche is part of Skopje Municipality). On the other side, all the participants from Gostivar are coming from rural community (villages around Gostivar), and they study Economy and Industrial Secondary schools in Gostivar. The number of participants ranged by day at each site as presented in Table 1. below:

PLA Site	Day 1	Day 2
Gjorche Petrov	8	9
Gostivar	10	7

Table1: Number of participants by PLA site and by PLA Day

[5] Not all of the participants filled in the GEM scale questionnaire since it was on voluntary base. Therefore, the numbers differ from the total number of participants.

How Young Men Were Recruited

The young men participants were recruited through the partners of the project, in Skopje the NGO "Youth can" and in Gostivar NGO "Organized youth association". In Municipality of Gjorche Petrov, the partner organization published a public call for participation in PLA assessment, and young people had the opportunity to register for participation. In Gostivar, the selection process was done by the partner organization in cooperation with the municipality and the pedagogues form selected high schools. The school pedagogues explained the purpose and the process of PLA to potential young men and invited them to participate.

Findings related to elaborated topics

The findings will be presented in general – according to the responses from young men, however, in the situations where the differences are evident - the results will be presented separately. Regarding the findings, it is necessary to take into account difference in participants' structure, and therefore it is possible that there is a difference in certain answers. Youth from Gjorche differs from those from Gostivar for 2 main reasons: (1), i.e., the age group in Gjorche is predominantly 14-16 years old, while the age group in Gostivar is 17-18 years old and (2), i.e., the participants from Gjorce come from an urban environment and study in different secondary schools in Skopje, while the participants from Gostivar come from a rural environment and study in a secondary school in Gostivar.

Topic 1: Exploring Youth Culture. What it is to be a young man and a young woman, and then to understand the role of social spaces in shaping male youth attitudes and behavior around gender expectations.

A young man is described as a person who attends school because it is obligatory, hangs out with friends, and goes out, especially on weekends, takes care of his appearance especially by working out, and if possible, works i.e., earns money. A young woman is described as a person that studies a lot, even the relationship and the behavior between them and the teachers has expectations *(teachers have more expectations towards women and tolerate them more)*, they take care of their appearance by putting makeup, and dressing well before getting out of the house. If we compare who has more options of going out and hanging out with friends in their spare time it would be boys.

The social spaces, which are dominated by boys, are places where men do manly things such as drinking, hanging out, talking about various topics, whereas dominantly girls are at home or at school. They also go out but less than young men do. A general conclusion is that **young boys spend a large part of their weekdays** at school with unenthusiastic studying. They study because *"they have to be able to study in University in the future"* (something that their parents ask from them). They spend a lot of their time using social media, workout and sometimes go out in the afternoon in so called *boys' corner* (Gjorche) or in *coffee-bar for boys* (Gostivar). In addition, young boys from Gostivar declared that they **work after returning from**

school *(three of the participants work till 7 pm)*. Some work as a mechanic, in a construction site and as a waiter. It is worthy to mention that they do not intend to continue studying in college and they think that they should not spend their time worrying about studying, because they are not planning to enroll into a college. On the other side, they claimed that *women should continue their studies in college so they can educate properly our kids.*

During the weekend, starting from Friday afternoon, young men have more opportunities to go out and socialize, through the day by climbing or walking, riding a bicycle or rarely rollerblading, and in the evening, they gather in a common corner. The most frequent space to spend the evening for boys from Gjorche is the place called *Shator* (defined as a place typical for a group of four-five males, where you have to stand and drink alcoholic beverages). Everything they do as leisure activities is till Saturday whereas Sunday is just for studying (at most of the cases). In addition, the boys from Gostivar go out in coffee-bars where women do not go (if it's in the villages), but in the city there can be girls, but rarely in their neighborhoods. They had different opinions on their preferences for cafes. Some of them preferred the rural cafes because they are quiet and more relaxed, there is no music and they can discuss. They sometimes work out, or go out. Mostly they socialize more intensively during summer because days are longer. They work even in summer but sometimes go to a shisha bar to drink coffee or tea. They behave well at school, and at work but in cafes they can freely curse and smoke cigarettes. Another important place to socialize for the young men from Gostivar is praying at the mosque every Friday. In the mosque they feel relaxed.

It is interesting to point out that most of participants **do not want to play video games** anymore, because there are better players who play regularly, and they lose immediately from them, and that's why they avoid facing this situation. This devastates them and they start hating the game. The most frequent social media platform used is *TikTok and also spending time watching TV* and sometime watching porn (this was an additional question for the participants that was answered while giggling).

We spent a weekday by spending time on phone and electronics, studying so we are eligible to continue our studies in college, working out, and sleeping. (Gjorche)

After school, we go home and eat and after that we go to work. On Fridays we go to a mosque. (Gostivar)

Everyone agreed that **there is a difference between men and women on how they spend their days**. Generally, *women study more and are more active on social media. Women tend to take more pictures and selfies*; a man doesn't take as many selfies. They also take care of their appearance whereas men are simpler. Generally, the dominant space where women hang out is the school. Parents are stricter with their daughters, so that's why there are not many young girls in the cafes (more characteristic for Gostivar youth).

Girls have more school activities, they watch series, go out, use Snapchat, Instagram and sport activities and they use BeReal. The most important thing for girls is the other people's opinion on them so that is why they put on a lot of makeup. Men are

more simple than women, that's why girls get more easy money than boys. (Gjorche)

When at home, they (girls) spend their time mostly on their phone (Tik Tok or snap chat) or doing chores. (Gostivar)

According to the results from GEM questionnaire, it is interesting that even though they describe man as strong, a person who doesn't cry for stupid things, in the questionnaire almost all the participants expressed the need to have close male friend for sharing personal stories and to increase the ability to show their feelings without fear of being ridiculed for it. In addition, most of the participants agreed that if someone insulted them, they would defend their honor even by force if they have to, but just part of them agreed that "to be a real man, you have to be tough and rude". They agreed that **girls like more cats, whereas men like snakes and more powerful animals**. That is connected with the idea that man is more powerful. A participant was laughed at when he said that *if a man cry, it is a personal choice*. Only a female participant declared that *it's not a weakness when a man cries or shows emotions.*

The difference between boys and girls is that girls spend a lot of time on social media, they cry for stupid things unlike men that cry for important life situations. (Gjorche)

We shouldn't cry in front of our friends - we shouldn't give up - that's how they'll trample us, they'll subjugate us - if we don't show it (if we don't cry), they'll see us as strong, powerful persons. (Gostivar)

The social standards expect women *to stay home and take care of the house, where it doesn't have to be like before.* Some participants said that the house roles should be decided depending on the availability and the coordination between those family members (parents). If the woman works it is expected that the man will take care of the house and the other way around. It would be considered patriarchy if the man is the head of the house. It was a little bit contradictory because most of them learned this from Andrew Tate[6]. The participants agreed that *in our society the father has the main role in the family, also the mother but not as much as the father.* This is also really dominant in rural areas in other cities. In Skopje it is different, *my father still has a dominant role, but it is less strict compared to other rural areas outside of Skopje.* Additionally, they claim that women started gaining more rights, such as:

Today, when a woman is violent toward a man must be tolerated whereas before it was the opposite. Also, women tend to have more rights, for example if they report violence at the police station, they will be taken seriously unlike men that would be made fun of. (Gjorche)

One of the participants concluded, and everyone agreed to, that: Women want attention with quantity whereas men want attention with quality. For women and men there is an influence from social media for beauty standards when it comes for women), and heroes (for men). It is expected that once men become 18, they should have money, be strong which is defined as a quality attribute and women are expected to be beautiful to not drink (a girl said this) to not smoke. They agreed that

---

[6] American-British social media personality, businessman, and former professional kick boxer, proclaiming toxic masculinity and he is followed by millions of young persons worldwide. He was recently arrested for trafficking in human beings.

the only thing expected from women is to be beautiful (this is defined as quantity attribute). On the other hand, the group from Gostivar declared that usually girls do not go out, because their partners get jealous and because they don't have that freedom in their community. Women have more work to do and do not have as much free time. The traditions are stricter for women. Also, there are discrete gender roles, women should stay at home, go to school and do chores, whereas men need to work and do school or get a vocational degree. 90% of women will continue in college.

My sisters do not work. Girls don't go out in coffee in the village, maybe sometime in the town but very rarely. (Gostivar)

In the coffee we play video games, we are only boys there. In the cafes in the city, you can also notice women inside, but this is not appropriate in the rural (village) cafes. (Gostivar)

Some other participants believe that **a successful man is** *someone who studies, is good at sports, has money, and is a good lawyer*. One participant said that it is even expected from them to know how to repair electronics such as a TV, but he does not know so because he has never done that before. **The man who acts like** *women* **are not accepted.** During their studies they had a friend that was very feminine and he was bullied so he had to change his school.

A man that is handsome but does not have financial exceeding and a good car does not meet the norms too. (Gjorche)
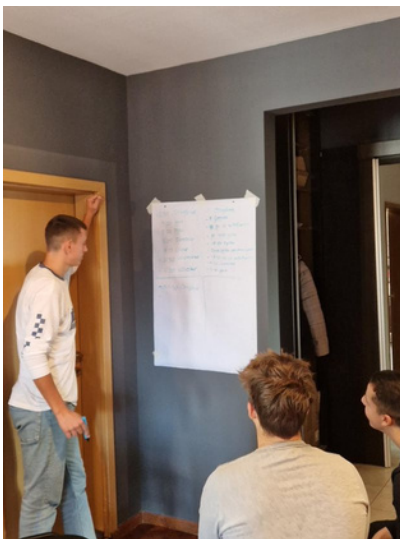
Exercise 4: How we spend time PLA workshop Skopje

Hanging out in the **school** yard and places nearby to eat *(7th-coffe bar, Record)* are places where they spend important time to be with other friends. The professors are not important people in the boys' lives, and they do not think that they learn something from them. It was evident that the influence of the professors and studying was not mentioned as an important part for boys (mostly for boys from Gjorche). On the other side the participants from Gostivar declared that they should respect the professors but they also go to school only because they have to (the Secondary school is mandatory).

They also mentioned the psychologists, the counselor, the school activities, and positions such as the student's council, open days, and organizing excursions, but they did not see these things as something important, unlike a one participant that was involved directly in these activities.

In continuation they declared that the **recreational activities** for boys are hiking on a mountain, working out at the gym, the swimming pool, biking, park, sometime studying with his girlfriend, going to pubs etc. Socializing or going out would include going to clubs in the neighborhood, partying till midnight. There were places for some people that it was embarrassing to go to, some of them wanted to go to *the club were girls are for one night stands only.*

Additionally, they mentioned that they preferred sometimes in the library, areas for gaming, tournaments, going out with girls, spending time in the neighborhood, and betting for the sport games. Some of the members mentioned socializing at the park, but a bigger part of the participants reacted that they do not go there because it's a place for people who use drugs.

Spending time at home would include activities such as sleeping, resting, eating (some of them had regular family dinners, and some others skipped dinner), watching series, social media, games, fights with siblings, socializing with family members, watching porn.
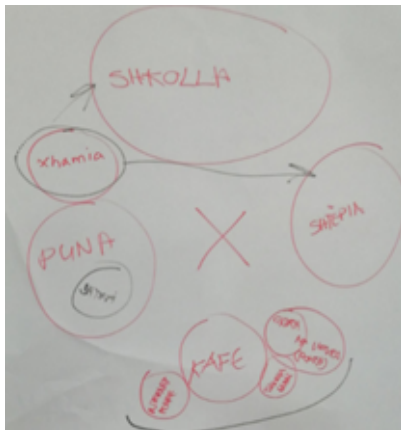
Exercise 5: Mapping of Social Spaces PLA workshop Gostivar

Mosque for the participants from Gostivar is the place where they go to pray on Fridays, they feel really released and related there. It was contradictory that they said that there are also people that go just to whole off and do not learn anything from there.

Work was mostly mentioned by participants from Gostivar. Most of them work on weekdays and weekends. This was also the place where they spent most of their time. They work mainly jobs such as a mechanic, waiter etc. Women work less, most of them are focused on school work.

Regarding the discussion on what is happening in the places they explained that the **family members are the first influence on their perception**, when they were young, they viewed family members as idols but as they grew up, they noticed a lot of imperfections in them. Boys do not have a mandatory huge role in the house. They concluded that it is important that fathers play a role in the house. **They need more understanding from their fathers**, they need to discuss with them more about their lives. This will enable them to trust them better; if they don't their sons will learn things from the internet. Their fathers usually had more expectations from them (boys), and sometimes they felt like they could not meet them because of their personal needs and wishes. Even for college choices parents find different possible negative scenarios that might happen for anything they choose. Every conversation with the parents, especially on those topics turns into a fight. One participant shared that he had a plan to start a website, but when he shared it with his parents, they didn't support him.

I cannot share anything with my parents. My friends that are my age understand me. Our parents usually do not agree with us on our choices for major. I want to study but I want to become a sportiest. And parents always ask me what if this or that happens, but this question could be asked even if you study in college. (Gjorche)

On the other hand, some of the participants (the older ones) agreed that **parents should have expectations from their children**. The mentality comes initially from the home, from parental education. They learn it when they spend time with their families. The younger participants think that when they are kids, they see their

Exercise 5: Mapping of Social Spaces PLA workshop Skopje

parents as role models, but as they grow up, they notice the other negative traits and learn how to react to them.

Their experience **at school is that it is expected that girls should study more** and they are treated as smarter. Also, women should look better at school, and they are frequently told how they should behave or what to wear at school.

In school, we do not learn anything special. It's not something that will serve me in life, such as math, but they do not give me a choice. I will not need a math credit to continue in medical school. (Gjorche)

No one wants to study, but women would rather go to college- men do not study as much that's why we do no not continue in higher education. (Gostivar)

The **pressure to be perfect** boy comes mostly from girls (their expectations), social media influence (presentation of male figures in media), peers (the pressure to be MAN) and also from the parents, professor and educators *(don't cry, be a man)*.

They all agreed that the **internet can be effective for knowing facts and information** but you cannot learn from it. Many of the participants were fans of Andrew Tate and its teaching on how to not trust anyone but yourself, to not be loyal to one woman but to have more partners, also you can find people in the streets that imitate and behave like him. Part of the participant agreed that many depressed people have found hope because of him, started working out, he helped the homeless and the fat people and it has been proved because he started from scratch and now, he is giving advices to broader population. Part of the participants (mostly the older one) didn't agree that Andrew Tate can be an influential figure in their life. They said that *"if you have an average intelligence, you can know if something is real or not"*. Generally, they saw Andrew Tate as a marketing genius, which is why he should not be followed.

The pressure for becoming successful comes mostly from social media. For example, Leonardo DiCaprio is rich and he has a new one (girlfriend) every month…(Gjorche)

When it comes to **gaming** part of the participants thought that it has some influence on boys because it can promote aggression and can reduce eyesight. Most of the participants, especially the younger one, didn't agree. They think that gaming doesn't influence the level of aggression, just can influence eyesight and spending time on it. According to this group of boys, **men who gamble** are viewed as stupid by women and usually men that gamble are the ones that fought with their wives. But they agree that gambling for fun is OK - *there is a difference between gambling with friends and gambling in a casino, because they do not communicate and have fun but just swear to the machine.*

One of the places for having fun is Shator (a corner in the city) and/or a coffee-bar for boys. When socializing with boys in those places they talk for hours because they think that *peers (boys) understand you better than the parents*. The most frequent

conversations they have are about girls, sports, and wars. Unlike girls that judge other girls, boys do not do that, they do not gossip. Some of the participants socialize with people from other neighborhoods.

Girls should stay at home, to study and not go out. Boys have to work and go out. (Gostivar)

When it comes to **relationships** all participants from Gostivar and a smaller part of participants from Gjorche declared that they are in a relationship with a girl. According to the questionnaire all participants are heterosexual and 9 boys have girlfriends (out of 13 male participants who filled the questionnaire). The participants in Gostivar dominantly agreed that they **must be protective of their girlfriends and must take care of them.** They agreed that when they are in serious relationship they respect them and they decide not to have other female friends because of that. In the GEM instrument they had relative opinion (mostly neither agree nor disagree) related to question young men lose interest in the girl after sleeping with her or A real man must have as many sexual partners as possible. It was interesting that according to the responses in GEM most of the participants, especially the ones from Gostivar declared that when they get girlfriend they don't hangout so much with other girls, they try to give maximum time to their girlfriend. Also almost all participants agreed that their girlfriend would get angry if they talk or connect on social media with someone she doesn't like.

On the other side all participants agreed that the **girls usually gossip with their friends about boyfriends.** They declared that they don't feel comfortable about this because they tell everything to each other.

When texting with messages, they (girlfriends) firstly send it to a group chat and analyze every detail of the message and then decide together what to reply to my message. If you share a secret with a woman, four other women will know, but if you share a secret with a man, your secret will bear with him in his grave. (Gjorche)

Regarding **dating, it is more strict for girls**, because they do not have as much freedom; they also get disturbed more and laughed at. Therefore, for boys, you can hear frequent questions such as *when are you getting a girlfriend*, but for girls' parents would say *it is too early for you*. But they think that when they become parents, they will do the same with aim to protect their daughters.

On the question would they rather to be born as boy or girl **everyone would choose to be a boy** even though they were constantly saying that girls have an easier life. But a participant said that if a man works three times more than a woman, it would be easier to be a woman. A man's life is easier when they are kids, after they grow up, it gets more difficult. For example, if a man works as a *streamer*, he has to work out all the time, but if a woman works as a *streamer*, she can make ten times more money in a bathtub or a Jacuzzi. But, they all agreed that if a woman walks around the streets, she would be scared not to be harassed whereas a man can fight without an issue. Four participants had older sisters and they declared that their sisters get more pressure when going out, but most of the participants agreed that for girls is harder to protect themselves in comparison with boys. If they (boys) bring a girl to their house, it won't be a big deal.

That's how it works here traditionally; parents are stricter with their daughters. My sister cannot go out to a café or out at night (Gostivar).

For going out, men have the most freedom. The same goes for relationships, men have more freedom. It is different if I invite a girl to our house, but if my sister does that, it is more difficult because she will be blackmailed, ashamed, and they will laugh at her. (Gjorche)

Men have more freedom, but when a woman wants to have a partner, they will say to her it is too early, but they constantly ask me when am I having a girlfriend. (Gjorche)

Topic 2: Gender Norms. What attitudes and behavior are expected of 'ideal' men and women in their society as perceived by the participants.
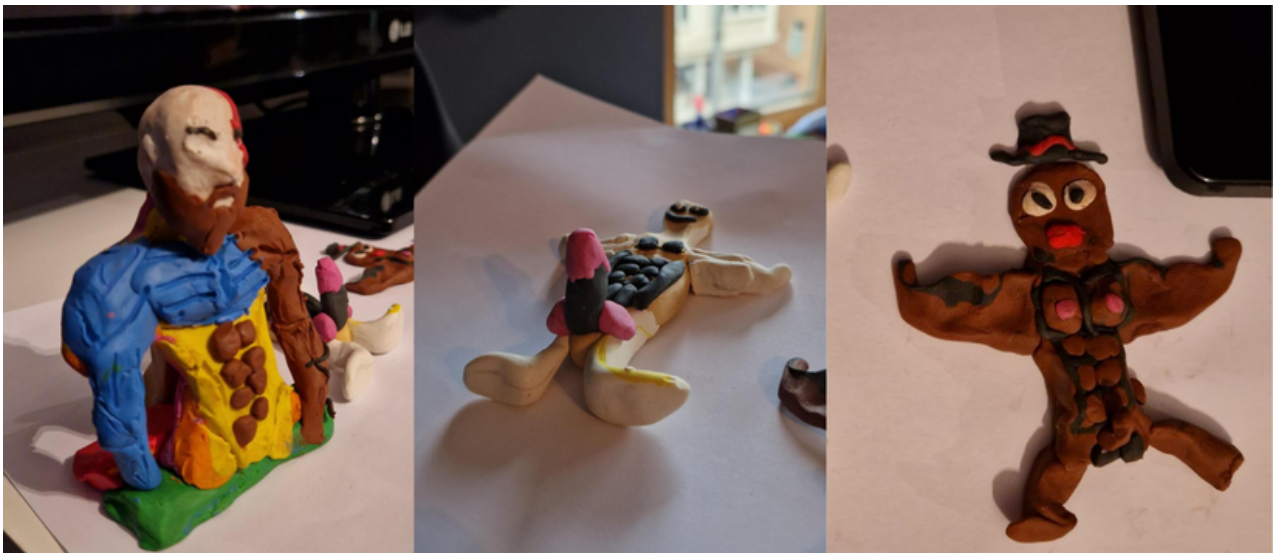
*Exercise 6: Creating Three-dimensional image of Masculinity
PLA workshop Gostivar*

Through 3D figures with colored clay **the ideal man was represented** with huge biceps, triceps, chest, with a huge penis, which means to have a *"knife"* (penis), which is a sign that he is able to have a family in the future. According to them an ideal man has to look proportional, and he has to be able to have an erection any time when it is needed. He can be successful if he works. Some figures in the sculptures have hats and they are with casual clothes. Ironically, the figures in the sculptures do not look like their fathers. According to the GEM results more of participants declared that men are always ready for sex and also agreed that man has stronger sexual desire than women.

The physical appearance (beautiful/attractive eyes, hair) plays a role but is not essential. The ideal man was compared with the characters of a video-game, where men fight for their dreams and nothing stops them. Another idol boys have is Tyson[7], because he is very strong. Men must be mentally stable, to have a good personality, and soul, to have discipline, trust and resistance (those are the qualities that make the man a man).

[7]Mike Tyson - American former professional boxer

If you do not have muscles, you will be one of those weak men; the size of the penis affects the confidence of men. (Gjorche)

In my opinion, the difference between a boy and a man is the moment when you will start becoming responsible, when you can stay straight in front of critiques, and facing the problems with responsibilities. (Gjorche)

You become a man when you are yourself, and when you work and create your family you gradually become a man. (Gostivar)

Exercise 6: Creating Three-dimensional image of Masculinity
PLA workshop Gostivar

In terms of behavior **boy who becomes a man should be closer to his family,** not to do drugs, alcohol; they can marry if they want. To look like a man and **not like a homosexual** (offensive use of word). To not have long hair or to roll their eyes like women *(we have a friend at school who acts like that and we do not support him).* It bothers them when they do not behave like a man, they do not support LGBT. On the other hand, an ideal woman must have morals, to have respect, to work, to take care of the kids, to study, dominantly to stay at home and the men to work outside.

An ideal man has the honor of the family, to have only one woman and to not have other relationships out of the marriage, to be close with the family members, to know what he wants and what he is doing. He doesn't forgive (it forgives only if it won't be repeated), has a clean heart, money for him is just paper, works to have a family, sacrifices, not consume drugs and alcohol, to love his kids, to be polite with people. They agree that a man should respect his wife, and *you cannot beat her if she hasn't done anything (their understanding is that if she is slapped that's not beating, not like they beat with boys, but just a hit).* When it comes to family relationships, most of the participants see fathers very distant to their sons, and they would change that for their children.

Exercise 6: Creating Three-dimensional image of Masculinity
PLA workshop Gostivar

According to the participants from Gostivar you become a man when you get married and prioritize your family. They agreed that 30% of men are real men, mostly the old men (grandparents). Some of them want to be like their fathers because they are very respectful. Some of them want to be like their grandfather, who worked very hard for their families.

To be a family person, to not consume alcohol, to take care of the family, to hang out with friends, but to also be there for his family… When I will get marry, I will become a man, and then your priority is to work for the family, you do not only think about yourself but also about your family. The man is the pillar of the family. (Gostivar)

Respected, with a moustache, to take care and to respect his family and have dignity. He takes care of the family business, has only one woman. They know how to forgive, but if they make a lot of mistakes, they do not forgive; generally, he does not make mistakes. If he forgives a lot they take advantage of him. (Gostivar)

A man (father) should be free with his son and be friends with him (most of participants expressed that they need that because they miss that in their homes). According to the participants father can beat sons sometimes (for educational reason), but daughters never. They agree that mothers can beat their daughters.

It is interesting that a female participant commented that in both figures the heart is missing, because in men its always visible the external and the heart is always missing, the boys started to talk on how does a man love.

Regarding the heart, in order to be loved you have to love, if you do not want something to happen to you, do not do that to other people. (Gjorche)

One participant that previously participated in educational activities with young people was talking about the differences he sees in the male figures. He was ready to accept what's best for him and to **see different point of views (different perspectives)**. He also expressed worries and confusion why can't other people accept different opinions (he experiences men as less ready for accepting other opinions).

I listen to other opinions so I can perceive other opportunities. It surprises me that other men cannot see the other side of the story/perspective. It is easier to keep the problem for yourself rather than to share it with others. The men that risks are better, but the ones that wait, no. (Gjorche)

Concerning the topic of should a man seek help, the participants had dichotomous approaches/opinions. It was dominant that a man should be strong and to avoid seeking help, to work solitarily, to fix the problems and to not cry. A smaller group was convinced that a man sometime (very rare) can seek help but again he should be MEN and must fix every problem. Help can be asked from other close and trusted family member or friend, but never from professionals (especially in our country).

Some men need a psychologist, but there are some other men that can face the problems, though some exercise, can fix their own problems. A man focuses in one thing and that's how they fight with their problems. (Gjorche)

Topic 3 Socialization of Masculinity. What it is to be a young man; what is the role of social rites and social institutions in shaping youth attitudes and behavior around masculinity and femininity

Topic 4: Power and Influence. How power is constructed and exercised; how participants feel and react when they "have" it and when they don't.

A general impression is that at home **fathers have the most power, especially towards the boys.** There are situations where mother have the power too, but it's mostly with the presence of the father. The power of the boys toward the parents is very technical- to help the parents with their phones and computers, or to reach something higher than their height. Also, it easier to reject the needs of the mother in comparison with the needs of the father.

My father- has power with giving duties- they can say get the table ready for dinner, and I see him as authority. If his computer is not working, I have to fix it, also for the mother. In relation to the mother, can choose whether I will do it or not. (Gjorche)

My mom educates me; my dad gives me advice... my grandfather tells me stories (Gostivar)

The father is more dominant - when he will say something that's the last word (Gostivar)

At school the power is in the teachers, because they give us knowledge, but they get angry because we do not learn the way they want us to. This refers especially to boys because they try to get good grades with minimum efforts, and always use alternative ways (as cheating on the tests) instead of learning the school material. A huge number of the participants gave the most power to the male professors.

Professors- give me knowledge on a topic and whether I will study or not will depend on whether he would get angry or not. (Gjorche)

School teaches us to become better people. School effects on a person to become a man because it teaches you to have respect and to have morals. If you are nice to the professors, they are also nice to you. (Gostivar)

Another aspect that has an influence in boys' attitude is the **peers**. To keep a friendship will depend on how much do they accept or help each other. Regarding the girlfriend, usually the boys are the ones who take the actions. For example, the boys decide where they will go, because in their opinion girls are indecisive.

A friend- we both choose; the only power we have is our friendship. (Gjorche)

My friends are my brothers- they are always close to me for every problem. (Gostivar)

Relatives are also seen as part of the circle of power by some of the participants and often see this as an exchange of honesty, love and trust. Only in those situations can kinship be maintained. The relationship with a brother/sister can also be included in

this section. The power is dominant in the older child due to age, but the younger child is using emotional manipulation so they can get what they want. Regarding male/female power, it can also be said that brothers are more powerful than sisters, because they are stronger and there are more opportunities in the home and outside.

My sisters have fewer restrictions, and I have more freedom in terms of going out - both in terms of curfew and in terms of not having to ask. It's probably because a woman can't be alone on the street. (Gjorche)

My grandmother - I love her the most, she taught me to be careful and not to hate anyone. Uncle - he teaches me about everything and is my second father (Gostivar)

Regarding the types of power, the first one they see as the most dominant is **awe** (respect based on fear). Then follows the **authority** due to position, age, and knowledge of a certain area. They see boys' power by their elders more in terms of whether or not they have knowledge of a certain thing. Respect or disrespect for power is linked to sanctions and social norms that determine behavior.

Men have strength - it is expressed by beating, scolding, physical strength, authority (Gostivar)

Our power over others - if I fix my grandmother's TV, it is out of respect, and if I fix my mother's - I will ask to go out in return. Fathers - it gives me restrictions, funds me and can tell me not to go out. (Gjorche)

On the other hand, almost everyone agrees that **girls have more power, but it does not come from strength, but from the fact that they are more tender** (they will cry) and that is why people (parents, teachers) are easier on them. That's how they get things that boys wouldn't ask for that way. There were comments from all the participants that girls are seen in terms of how they are dressed, how they move and thus, especially with male professors, they have an easier time and get an easier approach.

Girls have more power to influence others – for girls, mothers are more powerful. With the professors, the females will cry a little bit and the professors will forgive them (manipulation). In my school, all the girls have grades above 4, and I guarantee that they are not better than the boys. (Gjorche)

For example, if a woman wears tight clothes, the professors react. I have a German teacher - he takes them out on the board and puts 4 on them. (Gjorche)

The boys showed a **big respect about family values in the construction of their identity.** A participant said *"Sometimes my parents are really right, I made a mistake and my family was right, but everyone can make a mistake"*. Many of the problems fall on the man of the family. When it comes to women, they show their value mostly through the chores, cooking, doing the dishes, ironing, and doing women's work. They agreed that a woman cannot do a man's job, but a man can do a woman's job (they do not clean their rooms, but have cooked before). A woman can lead the family, but cannot face all the problems that a man can because they are more sensitive.

Ironically, the mothers *take care of them emotionally, and the fathers just finance them.*

In terms of what men can do to change the way others see them, everyone responded that they shouldn't bother with how others see them. This contradicts the idea that they do certain things in order not to lose their masculinity - for example, they fight, they do not cry, etc. in order not to show weakness.

That it is not so important to them how others see them - they should not bother (Gjorche)

There was a discussion about how **gender inequality** has developed and in general the participants believe that unlike other more authoritarian countries, in our country women have more rights and freedom. They even think that feminism, instead of influencing the equalization of rights, influences more the favoring of women's rights. The statements were quite contradictory - they think that women have too many rights, but at the same time they agree that there are women's and men's type of work. Although some women may do "men's" work, they are still divided, and the same is true vice versa. There is even a belief that it *is biologically determined, a woman or a man chooses a certain job; or toy among other toys; under the influence of gender.*

Feminism - used to be positive, but now in modern times the goal has been lost - they used to demand the right to vote, to run for prime minister. Now women can do those things, it doesn't mean that they have to win a battle (Gjorche)

Feminism has gone from demanding equal rights to dominance. They don't wonder if a woman does the same job. No research has been done on what a woman does. For example, construction is a man's job - it is statistically proven that physically stronger, there may be women, but they are born with male chromosomes. If it is a creative job - a woman would be more suitable, for example I would prefer to take my child to a female teacher. If it's a doctor - they can both be good - but men are calmer, they can work in more stressful situations and if my child needs surgery, I would rather give my child to a male doctor. (Gjorche)

Gender equality - for men and women to be the same, both men and women should work, both husband and wife to drive cars. For a home decision – it should be joint, but it's not like this at home - the man does everything at home to support the family. A woman should not get involved in this situation because she is not strong enough. In situations where there is no husband then she is forced to work. (Gostivar)

It was striking that the participants from Gostivar believed that **in our country their mothers, sisters or wives would not be allowed to work,** because they think there is no need and because the neighbors will gossip about them (the women which leave the house alone are considered as immoral). **But if they live abroad (EU) they (women) would work** because they think that life is more expensive there and money is needed and at the same time because there are neighbors who would not make fun of them. It was arguable if a woman has morals if she works a job in the office, depending on her character. They had contradictory opinions about females, they

think that life is more expensive there and money is needed and at the same time because there are neighbors who would not make fun of them. It was arguable if a woman has morals if she works a job in the office, depending on her character. They had contradictory opinions about females, they think that the female professors have morals but they don't want their sisters or wife's to work as professors. They agreed that females are studying in university with aim to be educated and prepared for tutoring their kids.

When my mom needs to go visit her brothers, she should ask dad, but dad doesn't ask her when he goes somewhere (Gostivar)

If they live abroad, both the husband and the wife must work outside. Here, if the woman works, everyone talks - "his wife does this, his wife does that". Here, even if they don't talk behind their backs, I still won't let her work here. Here the woman should work at home, cook, the man is the pillar of the house (Gostivar)

In the family, for the girls is expected to be more serious, successful in school and disciplined. On the other side, they feel that more attention is paid to them (girls) because they simply know how to earn it. But when asked if they could choose (when they are born) whether they would change their gender, everyone said no, they would still remain male. Additional discussion was developed about how many rights women have in the judiciary and the general conclusion is that rules are less strict for women.

I think fathers forbid girls from having boyfriends as opposed to boys being seen as "big shots". If a girl has a boyfriend, she is seen as easy girl (Gjorche)

If they see a girl twice on the street - they immediately talk about her… here people are like that, not only the elderly, but everyone looks at other people's business. In my house they don't talk like that, but others do. (Gostivar)

All agreed that the gender roles were built from early age. And most of the participants think that it is something that comes naturally - from a young age, men play with cars and women play with Barbies. This was confirmed also in the GEM responses. Most of the participants agreed that Men and women are fundamentally different and they think that this is biologically determined. In addition, in the GEM all the participants agreed about the importance of the fathers' presence in the lives of the children, but regarding the taking care about the children and partially chores more responsibilities are given to mothers.

Naturally, there are gender roles. A man playing with dolls may be socially fine- but genetically, he has something wrong with genes that make him do that. (Gjorche)

If my son plays with dolls several times I will try to tell him that he should not play with dolls, I will explain to him that boys play with cars, but if he continues then I will accept him (Gjorche)

On the question who they would go with if their parents got divorced, almost all of them answered that they would go with the mother, some because they are more devoted to them, and others because they want to take care of the mother.

If my parents get divorced - I'm not sure who would take care of me - I would still choose my mother - I think that the child should choose, not the court. (Gjorce)

I would feel more secure with fathers, but I won't get the emotional side from him the way I get it from my mother. (Gjorce)

Regarding how men and women are **presented in the media**, everyone agrees that the media also influences the social norms of how a woman or a man should behave. All this affects how a man/woman will be treated in relation to various issues.

The movies build that image of what it is to be a man - the woman is presented as expressing emotions, and men are always put in quick decision situations and don't have the opportunities to show emotions. If there is room to express an emotion there must be some good reason. On the other hand, "softer men" have more space to express their emotions. (Gjorche)

In the following, related to discussion whether and how much a man can express emotions, and whether gender roles are innate or acquired from the environment everyone agreed that a **strong man** *does not express emotions that show weakness.* He must be portrayed as strong. He may express emotion only among close family or with friends (on exceptional occasions). A man who is more emotional is seen as feminine and is very often the subject of teasing at school or in the environment. They also believe that if the male does not have a father figure, he will become more gentle under the influence of the mother. It's an interesting moment that even suicides are connected to the man's determination - they choose *to kill themselves with a weapon so it will really end, and not to cut veins that can give you time for someone to save you.*

Men do not talk to friends nor a psychologist. They cannot cry in front of friends because it is embarrassing and they will believe that you already gave up. Men have strength - it comes by beating, scolding, physical strength, authority. (Gostivar)

It is acceptable for a man to cry when a person dies, when his family is destroyed, for his children. But there are STRONG MEN that don't cry even though this can cause stress and depression. A man should never cry in front of his family or children. Even when you have a disease you should never tell them so they do not get sad. (Gostivar)

In addition, according to the results from GEM most of the participants agree that both men and women can suggest the use of condoms or which contraceptive they will use, but half of the participants would become angry if his partner asked him to use a condom. In continuation they are mostly agreed that is important to consult your partner for consent sex and not to force her. Also, regarding the decision to have children they all agree that this is something that should be made jointly in communication with the partner. Some of the participants stated that they had some kind of SRH education in their schools organized by variety of NGO's. They all stated that there is a need to continuous education on the topic of SRH.

According to the response in GEM teasing women on street is considered offensive by half of the participants, the other half is in the middle, didn't express any opinion.

clothes by half of the participants were considered as liked, the other once are not sure about that.

Topic 5 and 6: Attitudes About Violence and Forms of Violence. Young men's attitudes towards gender equity and violence and identifying the range of forms of violence affecting young men and young women.

Violence against women and the weaker (kids) is seen as relative and it is considered that it can be used to a certain extent if it is for educational purposes. Otherwise, it should not be tolerated and should be reacted to. It is striking that if a woman wants violent sex, men would make it possible and allow it. Violence against women for educational purposes is more acceptable than violence against men (by women) because they are weaker and more deserving of being hit because they do not respect certain agreed upon things.

Homosexuality is seen as a negative phenomenon and young boys believe that especially lately there has been a lot of propaganda related to it and there is a fear that because of this the number of homosexuals in the country may increase. That's one of the reasons why they wouldn't want to have a gay friend or a friend who acts like a woman.

Almost all participants agree that **if someone insults them, they will defend their reputation, with force if they have to.** In relation to this statement, the participants believed that if they did not react, their honor would be taken for granted. Also, everyone believes that there are certain limits that, if exceeded, will have to be reacted to. Even body language shows that he must react accordingly. The participants who disagreed with previous statement were the participants who have already been bullied and would not want to bully someone either - they see the use of force as bullying. Another participant believes that in such situations he would prefer a different approach, without reacting, just to step aside (a person who has undergone training for nonviolent conflict resolution).

Regarding the statement that *There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten*, some of the participants partially agree and think that sometimes a woman deserves to be slapped when she crosses the boundaries *(if she is a whore)*, they will not beat her as they would beat a man, but they would slap her. Part of the group doesn't agree at all, especially because they associated themselves with their sisters or mother. A large part of the participants in Gostivar agreed that a woman deserves to be beaten sometimes, especially if she overdoes it or if she has made a mistake with his parents, *then I will not just slap her*, I will beat her a lot. It was striking that if it was the other way around (a woman beating a man) somehow it was not quite acceptable because they think that she is not as strong as the man, *or she can't kick me out, I'm at home - she can get out of the house (for wife)*.

Regarding the statement: *A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together* a discussion developed about what kind of violence we are referring to. For example, sometimes just a push can mean violence. They all agreed that if the man comes every day drunk and abuses his wife, she should not tolerate, especially if she does not have children with him. In situations where there are children, is a little

different, everyone agrees that a quick decision should not be made. It is necessary to look for other solutions because if they split up, the children will have pressure. She should suffer for the sake of the children, if she doesn't have children, *she should immediately leave him. If he has children, she is not allowed to leave.*

All the participants did not agree that **It is okay for a man to hit his wife if she won't have sex with him because** they think it is her right to accept or reject them. There was a comment that there are situations where some women want to be beaten, here most agreed that they would do it if the woman asked them to do so during intercourse.

All participants agreed with the statement that **I would never have a gay friend**, with a few exceptions (in some situations when the person is of the opposite sex). The ideas ranged from the extreme of not wanting to even think of going out with them to maybe considering to hang out with them. There were even comments that they wouldn't want their children to study with a teacher who is gay (especially if it's a male child) because they think he will view their boys as a pervert the way girls are viewed by straight male professors. They also think that hanging out with a gay person can affect their image because homosexuals are not accepted in the society. A small dose of tolerance of a homosexual of the other sex is striking - then they would more easily decide to socialize, but only to a limited extent, because there are situations when, if parents found out, they could prevent them or react to that socializing.

I would not like to make friends; he can flirt with me (Gostivar)

I wouldn't feel good if a teacher/doctor/coach was gay. I wouldn't really want to, he can look at my child with different eyes - when I think of how the coaches look at the girls, I think of how he would look at my son. So, if it's a son, I wouldn't give him to a gay professor - if I had a choice. (Gjorche)

There was a shared opinion as to whether it was a biological or a social decision, as most people think it is mostly biological, but lately it has become a trend that someone becomes gay just because it is fashionable.

I would say either way it's not normal - if it's normal why they can't have their own child - it's not naturally. If it was natural, they would be able to have kids. (Gjorche)

Even if I lived in any other country, he wouldn't be my friend, LGBT people don't have rights and they shouldn't have them - they should go to prison. (Gostivar)

Most of them agreed with the statement *It disgusts me when I see a man acting like a woman* and all of them said that they have someone like that at their school, a friend who is like that and he is hardly accepted. Some even said that they tried to change it *(to help him)* but failed. All of them agreed that those people are most often the target of bullying by others and that sometimes they even have to change schools due to peer pressure. There was a small number of participants who disagreed and still said they found it strange when they watched boys who act like women but wouldn't respond in someone special way.

It is interesting that in the discussion they were stricter about men who act like a girl (that they don't like them), but in the questionnaire different opinions were expressed

all of the participants seem them like persons for joke. On the other hand, they are more relaxed toward girls who act like a boy (they would not tease her that much).

The participants **identified several types of violence, but generally divided them into physical, psychological and sexual violence.** Below are presented several types of violence that can be one or more of these 3 types of violence.

Physical violence is defined as violence based on the use of force. It may appear at home when parents or older siblings are beating them. Almost everyone justified this violence if it was used for educational purposes and if it was based on a single slap. In the **family (domestic violence)**, everyone agreed that most of the time there is a possibility that the fathers will slap kids (especially the boys), and also the mothers sometimes (in Gostivar, the mothers often slap the children). In terms of physical violence at home that is used as a result of a parent's bad mood, especially the father, they already see it as violence and think that it should not be done. In the family, they believe that there is also psychological violence to a large extent, but the physical one is more dominant.

Exercise 10: Forms of violence
PLA workshop Skopje

Violence in the family is, if I am a father and I beat the child unnecessarily. I'm talking about discipline - if I hit (slap) him because he steals is OK. If the children are slapped often, they will be more disciplined. If he beats me for discipline, it is not violence. (Gjorche)

When parents use violence, it is because of the wellness of the child - so that they do not repeat the mistake. But there are parents who get annoyed by other things and we get the beating - that's not allowed. (Gostivar)

Mothers are softer and lenient, fathers are more aggressive, they don't talk much, only once and that's it, mom can give up when she insists for something, but if dad says no, there's no going back. (Gostivar)

Physical violence in school is present among peers and mostly in elementary school (peer violence). This is especially relevant between young men, who according to them should not suffer because it will be difficult for them, but they must show others that they can't be victims of violence or bullying. Otherwise, the young boy becomes a victim of bullying and will always be attacked. Most often, older children commit violence against the younger ones, but when they grow up it will become a lesson learned so they will also use violence, i.e. beat the weaker ones from them. Interestingly, being beaten reinforces the need to fight even more and to prove themselves, to show power and strength and that they are invincible. The peer violence can be both psychological and also sexual, but it is less talked about.

I've been to both sides. I was nicer, funnier, more outgoing as a child until I learned some things the hard way. I fought for my own every time. At the age of 6, everything changed, older children were waiting for me in the yard, they beat me… and then I started doing the same, then I started to become aware… then we wanted to prove ourselves, we agreed to meet there as men (to fight) and we proved ourselves there. (Gjorche)

At one point I hit him in the stomach and he started not breathing... I felt strong and I was looking for more and all the time I was looking to fight with someone. (Gjorche)

There is opinion that **the professors exert psychological pressure on the students to learn.** On the one hand, they justify this, but on the other hand, they consider it to be psychological violence and that it is not advisable to use it. The professors should understand the students and not to constantly scold them for not studying.

Emotional violence - this is when someone insults us - the father or the professor - when he tells me that you are of no use. (Gostivar)

Street violence is another kind of physical violence that usually occurs in certain places, for example walking on the street and someone attacks you.

Sexual violence can be both physical and psychological violence. Physical is when force is used to obtain sexual pleasure. Psychologically they think it is when a certain man looks at a girl and seduces her with his eyes or if he throws inappropriate words at her and so on. They believe that psychological sexual violence is actually sexual harassment and almost everyone agreed that it is also a type of violence.

Physical violence also includes gender-based violence that is used against women by men because they feel stronger and more powerful.

Gender based violence - I torture you only because you are female/male (Gjorche)

Another type of violence they consider is the **internet violence - cyber bullying** - regarding this they had a divided opinion because some of the participants believed that it is our choice whether we will be a victim of electronic bullying or not, that it is our decision whether we will send a picture to abuse or not. On the other hand, the other participants believe that this is typical psychological violence and that it can be very difficult we protect from this violence.

Violence in the workplace which happens at work, especially in private companies, so they believe that that's why their parents insist that they study and then work in state institutions.

Economic violence was another type of defined violence. It is believed that violence in which certain persons condition you economically - with money.

An interesting discussion developed around the **disciplinary slap**. All participants agreed that it can be used at home or when training soccer or basketball. The purpose of this slap is to raise the child properly and not to beat him, that's why everyone justified this kind of violence.

Discipline from a coach - When I played handball, if I didn't listen, I was slapped, or thrown a ball... and the next time I felt like not doing the right exercise, I thought of leaving (Gjorche)

All participants agreed that male-to-male violence comes first, then female-to-female, then male-to-female, and finally female-to-male. Violence among men was justified,

because sometimes they must compete, *such is nature, males compete for a mate.*

Violence among men drives the need for dominance, to gain a reputation. Power or status influence. As men we seek to have status - to always be above anyone, above positions (Gjorche)

You try approaching first with words, but if he doesn't understand then you use force. You should not be a man that never beats, because if someone mistreats you and you don't return it, he will take advantage. If he does not use force, he will feel bad inside, and usually those types of men are the ones that suffer and get tortured the most (Gostivar)

In terms of attitude, **whether there is a difference in how a girl is dressed**, where she moves, everyone agrees and believes that girls should think carefully before going out, dress appropriately so as not to draw attention where it shouldn't.

It was interesting to see that they believe that society gives more support to women when they experience sexual violence, but if a man reports it, he will be laughed at, so they won't even bother with reporting it.

All participants said that they feel the most secure at home, with their family, or in some situations with their close friends.

Topic 7: Root Causes and Consequences of Violence. Participant perceptions of causes and consequences of different, prevalent situations of violence (or precursors to forms of violence- e.g., relationship jealousy) in young men's lives.

The participants agreed that **violence is noticed more in larger cities**. In smaller towns, people know each other better. Also, the group from Gostivar sees the more religious people as calmer, more relaxed and they avoid using violence to solve problematic situations. If violence was used in the family as a method of discipline or if a male was previously a victim of bullying, there is a greater probability that that child will use violence. Apart from violence in the family, children can practice violence if they did not had enough attention while they were growing up (for example, children from orphanages - violence is more visible among them).

As soon as I hear people yelling, I immediately get angry (previously he said that his father yells a lot at home). At that moment I felt like killing him. I don't know where it comes from. (Gostivar)

Violence starts at home, if for example the father is violent then the child will become violent. Also, if he is not close to the family, it can affect it. (Gjorche)

Violence occurs a lot as a result of having too much energy. When there is a physical fight, everyone gathers to watch and it is more interesting for the men to see what is happening. In Skopje, violence can be found in the park, where they believe that during the day there are interesting people and at night it is uncertain and creepy. Girls usually express violence because of jealousy, but boys express violence when

something or someone provokes them, for example, if they curse them. Men are more prone to provocations than women.

After COVID-19, when we could go out more, we started fighting more than before, because of the accumulated higher energy from the time when we were in quarantine (Gjorche)

Both groups believe that **if there are police present, they will feel more protected.** The participants from Gostivar said that if they went abroad, violence would not be used by them or against them, because the law protects them there.

The **source of sexual violence can be a wrong interpretation of the women's need**, for example if a man interprets a woman as someone who wants sex, but in reality, she doesn't. Interestingly, the presence of the girls is seen as a stimulating - the girl can encourage me to attack even more.

Violence in addition to physical pain and wounding, there are also emotional **consequences**. The violence can cause psychological consequences mostly if it's not resolved the right way.

Part of the participants think that **preventing violence** can be done by consulting with an older or more experienced person who can say things that can mean something to you and help you overcome the feeling. On the other hand, most of the participants agreed that adults cannot help prevent violence, and that they can even make it worse.

If you tell a psychologist or a teacher it doesn't help, even worse, after that you have to hide from those who bullied him (Gjorche)

Talking can have a small influence on psychological violence. It is generally considered that peer violence can be prevented if it returns with violence, to teach the other a lesson. Confronting with violence to violent behavior is seen as self-defense.

Talking can help, but in Macedonia physical violence can only be prevented by counter-violence, or by practicing how to fight back. I had a friend at school who asked the teacher for help and then he was beaten the most. (Gjorche)

On the other hand, going to a psychologist, especially men, is seen as an inappropriate solution, although the participants see it as useful. But if you do, you will be laughed at.

When I have a problem, I talk to my friends. In our country it is not possible to go to a psychologist. If you go to a psychologist, it is concluded that you are crazy (Gostivar)

All participants agreed that *violence can never be prevented and that it will always exist*. Maybe it is possible if they have some education in school on non-violent behavior, but a lot of work needs to be done, for every type of violence. It has to be considered to be treated from a young age in school. There should be some book and guidance to read on how to overcome violence step by step.

Topic 8: Moving toward change. Summarizing learning and insights into gender, masculinity and gender-based violence in order to engage participants in creating a future vision for youth culture.

From the two-day meetings, participants **learned a lot of important things for them personally, especially in terms of relationships.**

The general conclusion for everyone is that they realized that **it is nice to talk about such things with others, but it is not easy** to talk about these topics. They do not have a courage to speak openly with adults and rather speak with the friends about this.

That is why **they recommend organizing this type of meeting with young people**, through schools or with trained young people (peer learning) who will spread the topic and the idea.

Also an insight is that they had the **opportunity to hear different perspectives** (different ages) and this helps them form a certain opinion rather than just basing it on one opinion.

They see gender more relatively now, but they still think that a lot of work should be done with all young people in order for change to happen and for them to be able to express their different opinion regarding these sensitive topics. They believe that violence will continue to exist, but their participation during these two days **made it possible for them to look at violence a little differently.**

They continued to think that boys should be strong, to not show weakness, but at the same time they experienced that **they don't have to show physical strength, but they shouldn't give up either**. All young people should be allowed to talk to their peers about these topics, so that they become more sensitive.

For now, and in the future, **they are willing to share their problems only with the closest ones (friends or a family member)**, but they would still be happy if they were given the opportunity to go to a psychologist (who will be a quality psychologist) and discuss the problems. Crying is still **perceived as weakness by men** and they think that pride should be heard, which on the other hand can block them from solving their problems.

They all agreed that **in order for men to be more open and express their emotions, they should attend such workshops and educate themselves.** Additionally, in schools, they believe that it is necessary to work with parents, especially fathers.

Education on the topic of Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is also detected as a need in order to reduce the possibility of using sexual violence. So, boys will learn **how to respect others' boundaries.**

Conclusions related to research questions

Research question 1: What are the current social constructs, attitudes and experiences for young men, especially with regard to hegemonic masculinity?

The ideal man is seen as someone strong, unbreakable, unscarred, very street taught and withstand everything in life. They should take care of their body (to have strong muscles and be healthy) in contrast to women that need to take care more about their appearance. Strong muscles and large penis size, show men's strength, responsibility, self-confidence, authority, respect and readiness for sex. Masculine activities like sports and going out with boys and drinking (café or alcohol) are described as characteristic of hegemonic masculinity.

Manhood in many cases is equated with power/force, and the idea of the ideal man does not include emotions, but the man must always be cold and determined, the burden for the well-being of the family is on him, especially when it comes to the financial aspect. The man should not cry, even if he does something like that, he shouldn't do it in front of his friends because then they will think that he is weak. He should not even cry in front of his family because then the family will lose hope, because the one who should protect them will always show a moment of weakness. This is presented as a part of a strong character of a man who does not express his feelings of weakness which is presented as a characteristic of a women.

The role of protector and defender of honor, especially of families and also among peers was another definition of ideal man. But although the protector role of his family, the father is notably absent in the lives of the young men participants. They expressed the need of his presence in their live more as a person who understands their needs more, not only as a person who shows them the best life-path. The man that is married is seen as the main pillar of the family and he needs to take care of the family and provide for them.

Among the participants in Skopje, it can be observed that the gender division is more balanced, they see women as an active part of public life. The woman can work but she doesn't have to, but a real man is expected to work and provide security for the family. This was differently presented in Gostivar, they agreed that women should not work in our country because of gossips in their community. But, she can work if they live in other country or community.

All participants think that girls should be educated and they admit that girls are more successful with learning lessons than boys, but they do not see them as leaders. In many cases, they find different reasons justify violent behavior at any form, even though they constantly repeat that violence should not be used except in certain educational cases.

Men that show weakness and sough help are not accepted by the rest of the men in all the communities, they are seen as weak people. In both groups the young men expressed negative attitudes ranging from discomfort to strong feelings of disgust and not acceptance toward gay person or toward a person who "act like a girl". Most of them do not support the LGBTIQ community at all, when they talk about it, they also show cases of violence against this community, justifying these actions.

When talking about gender equality, they think that feminism has lost its essence and today it is more of a war against men and the dominance narrative that if everyone is equal, women should be part of the army or do physical work, where physical strength will be a measurement unit for gender equality. The interesting fact is that most of the group, even though they are 17 and 18 years old, they work, after school hours they go to work (various trades), and this is also related to the fact that they are now adults and have to they help at home, that is, they are transitioning from boyhood to manhood.

Research question 2: How do social institutions such as media, school, religion, family and peers influence social constructs of masculinity?

Young men of both groups identified home as strongest social spaces influencing masculinity. Within these spaces, parents and siblings are strongly connected to the home.

School was identified as a strong social space dominantly by the boys from Gostivar, but both groups agreed that the schools are more influential toward girls.

 The peer groups like a group of friends (dominantly male groups which hangout in some joint spaces or Cafes and Clubs) are strongly influential especially to the attitude of boys in the public space – sometime is connected with violence also. Their peers also have a very big influence and from the role models they have and mostly they are characters from the Internet.

The social media, mostly the heroes (Andrew Tate) are presented also as an important in forming a younger boys' attitude for the boys from Gjorche. Through the discussion they expressed awareness about toxic influence of this public personality and what they choose to take for themselves as an advice from his presentations. Boys from Gostivar do not have role models from the world or the internet for them, the figures that influence them are mainly family members, Father, Grandfather, Uncle, it is notable that they live in larger communities than the boys in Skopje.

Religion and tradition (dominantly in Gostivar) play a particularly strong role in constructing masculine identity and is usually connected to the relation with females in home. Every Friday they perform religious rituals in the mosque, and this is another institution that also affects their attitudes.

Sports and recreative activities (walking, biking, rolling, hiking, fitness), dominantly among young boys from Gjorche are presented as a relative social institution with high influence in shaping masculinity, especially in terms of physical and social development versus intellectual.

Research question 3: What are the ranges of young men's attitudes and behavior toward women and their relationship with women?

The young boys' attitudes about women have varying degrees of experience starting from parental/sibling, friends, teachers till romantic relationships with their girlfriends. Young boys concluded that their female peers spend their time in applying makeup and in gossiping about their relationships with boys.

Mothers are described as persons who shows more respect toward traditions, for instance not to work because of cultural influence (in Gostivar or in smaller towns in the country) or because they decided to resign their jobs with aim to have adequate time to give more attention to their kids (in Gjorche).

Females in the family in Gostivar are presented as more responsive for chores but in Skopje there was more divided opinion, more precisely, chores in the house are mostly responsibility of the person who has more time to ne engaged and usually kids mostly help by doing some chores in their rooms or in kitchen.

In relation to their mothers, they always point out the care they have for them, they all say that if their parents were divorced they would choose to live with their mother because she takes care of them more. In the family, they respect the father's decisions more than the mother's, even when they are asked to do a certain job, they take it more seriously when the father gives the request

All young boys agreed that there are "female" and "male" jobs. Jobs which request force or decision making is defined as a male job and the once which are based on creativity are defined as female jobs. They agree that they can work in both type of jobs but they will be successful in their once job.

Most of the boys felt the need to retain authority in a form of protection over women. There were some cases when they agreed shared power but conditional *(if she agree)*.

Related to gender equality the participants (especially boys form Ghorche) expressed worries that the feminism has been advanced so much in our country that even is becoming evolving in a form of extreme female right in comparison with male rights. They think that women should have equal rights with men, but at the same time they talk about how women are very emotional and therefore they are cowardly in some aspects.

They agree that they should not experience mental or physical violence from their partners and that they would never hit a woman, some said they would never hit a woman first.

When they talk about gender equality, they are aware and admit that their sisters have less freedom than they themselves. Some think it's wrong, some think it should be because of the circumstances in which we live, mainly the patriarchal mentality of our society.

Research question 4: How are social constructs of masculinity related to men's violent use of power?

Young boys listed several types of violence and categorized them into physical, psychological (emotional) and sexual violence.

The violence is more perceived among peers - older students toward the younger. The physical violence is mostly present among boys and appears mostly as a result of the need to keep their status in the society - as strong and unbreakable. The psychological appears mostly among girls which is done by gossips or by bulling. They all agreed that the psychological violence is more powerful and also is connected with the physical violence among peers.

This type of violence appears mostly in schools and is happening in all communities. Starts from Primary schools when they are bullied and as a result they continue in secondary school when they start to bully.

Sexual violence is something that is defined ranging from bulling by just staring even though you receive response to stop, until sexual abusing of other person (dominantly female) without permission. In continuation this topic was not so much discussed and boys agreed that it is very negative phenomena and it was skipped as a taboo topic in their community. Additionally, both groups said that they had some activities on sexual education in their schools.

Other types of violence including gender violence, family violence, violence at work and economic violence were also mentioned as violence in combination with other three basic types of violence appears.

Media violence was also discussed and part of the participants agreed that the responsibility of receiving this kind of violence is in themselves. They thought that they are responsible to accept or to report the violent actions or contents.
Discipline slapping toward kids (especially when they are younger), sometime toward partner (dominantly women) when boundaries of morality in the community or in the family are passed was justified, and even seen as necessary. This apparent contradiction stems from how they perceive violence.

It is interesting that strong link between use of violence and experienced emotional or physical abuse or neglect in young years was detected. Organized fights among peers within the school or among schools were actual in both groups. Those were more present at older age in secondary schools and their function was to help them growing up and proving themselves.

Research question 5: For men who are not violent, what are the influencing factors and consequences?

During the workshops there was only one boy who was categorically against violence in any form. Later, during the conversation it was realized that he had been a victim of bullying. Older boys took a different approach and condemned violence. Usually, the boys who had participated earlier in various trainings, involved in voluntary initiatives or had more experiences in non-formal education, were more prudent, and their previous experience with gaining more information taught them to a different approach to violence.

Boys didn't consider violence as a first approach to resolve problems, but they agree that it can be used when the boundaries are exceeded. Also, they think that sometime violence is the only solution, because the "weak" and different boys are not accepted and will be victims of the continued bulling from their peers.

Gender-based violence is indirectly accepted in the sense that it is a consequence of the women actions and the man has the duty to discipline her. Often times the participants from Gostivar also talk about the fact that the house where they live belongs to the man, while the woman comes to that house and she must always adapt, and not speak when the elders address her or not complain when the elders ask her for something.

They also see violence as a solution to problems between peers with the idea that if someone does not understand with words, they will understand with violence.
When they talked about their parents, they talked about someone with more authority and for the most part they justified the violence against them when they were younger because they thought they were at fault and their parents' used violence as a tool to discipline them.

Young men across groups saw age differences in fighting, noting that young men often develop more self-control as they grow older. Some boys pointed to the use of words, instead of violence, as an effective way to show power and superiority. But when this is not functioning, they think that they had to use force.
Passing a "line" or "border" beyond which young men will use violence it was used as a good reason for using violence. They agreed that each man should have "a line" up to which he tolerates insults or aggressions, and that force is only appropriate when this line is crossed.

Some of the impressions of the participants about PLA:

I was not surprised by some of the comments, it impressed me the importance given to authority. I liked what we have done these 2 days. (Gjorche)

I usually only talk about such topics with friends, and this was interesting to me and I notice what a difference in thinking 2 years (age difference) make. (Gjorche)

Let's educate everyone how to ask for help (they don't know how, where, they don't know how to deal with it). (Gjorche)

Education of the children is very important; also the father should be more involved and have an influence in the child's life, to have more contact with children. (Gostivar)

You should work through the media, to work with parents, to have meetings with fathers as well. (Gostivar)

People who tell their story, yes there are men who would tell their story as a victim, (Gostivar)

Personally, if I see violence - I will react, if it doesn't work, I will report it to the police - but not everyone would do that. (Gostivar)

We would recommend the other boys to come to such lectures, the parents told us super- keep going (we have told the parents about this activity). (Gostivar)

PLA workshop Skopje

PLA workshop Gostivar

General conclusion and recommendations

During the workshops implemented in Gjorche Petrov and Gostivar Municipalities focus group discussions were made with several activities. More than a few areas of interventions and further exploration were identified:

1. Toxic masculinity was identified as a taboo topic for discussion. This is influenced by cultural norms and formal/ non-formal education. All participants agreed that this is a topic which is hard to be opened and disused but at the same time is pretty much needed in their community. Trainings, mostly by peer education was evaluated as a more appropriate solution.
2. Gender roles are seen as separated between men and women, starting from the male/female toys to type of jobs which can be performed.
3. The dominant and powerful male figure is seen as very normal and exacted. In the situations when male has feminine traits he would be bullied and abounded by the male friends. This topic must be included in the trainings.
4. Regarding gender based violence, participants expressed that it can be justified in some situations, for example if a woman cheats, if she did not fulfill her duties after men gave her several warnings, if she initiated violent sex, and similar. Therefore, discussions related to GBV can be useful for boys that can be potential assaulters.
5. Physical violent conflict resolution is more dominant at male communities especially among schoolmates. This can be good foundation for discussion and elaboration of this topic, especially because young men view it as the best solution in most situations.
6. Lack of formal and academic education aspiration is noticed among young men. This makes the influence and the power of the school and formal education more and more weak.
7. Due to the existing traditional norms young men have social restriction on expression of any emotions and showing of emotions such as grief, sadness, empathy etc, will make boys as a "weak" persons.
8. Young women in comparison to young men tend to be more restricted by the family from going out (especially at night) with the idea to protect her. This can be included as a topic in the trainings with aim to give directions how to deal with it. One of the options can be to teach their sister or female friend how to protect themselves if they are attacked.
9. Homosexuality is being seen as very threatening to their community and relatives. Participants are against having contact with them (especially with the male homosexuals) because they are afraid of them flirting with them.
10. Evidently, from findings of this research we can conclude there is a strong need for educational programs related to promotion of healthy masculinity, gender equality and human rights with young groups of participants. Furthermore, training and work with teachers and school representatives is needed. The training can be conducted in a form of discussion related to the issues with male students which can be noticed by the teachers and come up with strategies on how they can be overcome.