



Young Men Initiative

Young Men Initiative for Prevention of Gender-Based
Violence in Western Balkans

Baseline Research Technical Brief –

Country Report

Serbia



Introduction and background of YMI

Globally, prevailing gender norms have a large influence on the health and development of young men, in different but related ways that they do on young women. Patriarchal attitudes and rigid forms of manhood are often promoted through different sectors of society, in the home, in media messages, in schools and other private and public spaces. Gender equality and violence prevention are linked by these norms that often idealized different forms of behavior that put young men and young women at risk. To ensure that healthy relationships based on equality and human rights form a basis for the development of healthy young men, it is vital to engage young men in deliberate reflections about these.

As part of this process of deconstructing the challenges young men face, it is necessary to examine certain social and cultural norms around masculinity. Addressing gender norms both in terms of promoting gender equality and addressing some behavior risks young men face around health and violence requires engaging with boys and young men (men throughout society) to address attitudes, beliefs and actions that impact boys and men (and girls and women) choices.

Working definitions of gender and masculinity

*Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, expectations and definitions a given society considers appropriate for men and women. **Sex** refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men (and boys) and women (and girls). **Male gender norms** are the social expectations and roles assigned to men and boys in relation to or in contrast to women and girls. These include ideas that men should take risks, endure pain, be tough or stoic or should have multiple sexual partners to prove that they are “real men”. **Masculinity** refers to the multiple ways that manhood is socially defined across the historical and cultural context and to the power differences between specific versions of manhood (Connell, 1994). –*

Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: Evidence from programme interventions, World Health Organization and Promundo, 2007, p. 7

Young Men Initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia

The Young Men Initiative (YMI) is being implemented by CARE International and 9 international and local partners with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This initiative has been working with young men in secondary schools to address social norms around gender, promote healthy lifestyles and non violence with their peers, both girls and boys. This pilot program is working in 5 schools and completed a baseline research with over 2,500 young men on their attitudes, knowledge and behaviors around these issues.

Using a youth development and youth work framework (see annex 1) as a tool for promoting positive outcomes in the lives of young men, our program has adapted and developed a educational program of workshops for young men with topics that include gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, emotional well being and violence / conflict resolution. Youth workers from our partner’s field tested this methodology and curriculum before finalizing the program. In addition working side by side the educational program is a lifestyles campaign called “Budi Musko” or “Be a Man”. This campaign was

developed by young men working with experts to address some of the social norms amongst their peers.

The YMI is designed to promote positive behavior change amongst young men and alternatives to violence (particularly [gender base violence](#)¹). This pilot program empowers young men (and girls as well) to challenge prevailing attitudes and behaviors that impact their life in a negative way. Young men with more equitable gender norms will have healthier and more positive relationships that will allow them to contribute in a positive way to society.

Current Understanding of Sexual and Violent Behaviors in Young Men

There is little available research that explores what it means to be a young man in the Balkans, particularly with regards to gender-related norms and attitudes about violence. Much of the project's understanding of these issues is drawn from a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) exercise conducted with young men in April 2007, as well as from the experience and insights of project team members in four countries. [This exercise was a qualitative research process with young women and young men that allowed us to probe the prevailing social meanings of manhood in the participating countries. As such the study is not generally representative of youth in the region, but is useful for providing illustrative ways that gender norms play out in young people's lives in the region.](#) A few key PLA insights from young men in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia provide important background YMI's interventions and evaluation:

- Young men identified some of the characteristics of “ideal” men, including: physical strength, protection of honor, defending strong opinions, strong character, being successful in everything, participation in masculine activities (sports and drinking), sexual virility, lack of cowardice (i.e., not acting like a woman, in their words), being heterosexual.
- Young men identified home and school as the two strongest social spaces influencing masculinity across the Balkans. Within these spaces, young men are strongly influenced by parents, siblings and peers groups. Peers are particularly important in shaping a young man’s sense of the social “dos and don’ts” of being a man.
- When asked about women’s typical activities and priorities, young men identified stereotypical activities such as gossiping or applying make up. At the same time, many young men noted that these stereotypes were not accurate and, in some cases, not fair. Regarding their mothers and sisters, the young men described relations of shared respect and authority, and of a need to protect and uphold their honor.

¹ [Article 1 of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women \(DEVW\), proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993, defines the term “violence against women” as:](#)

[“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life \(Unesco 1999 p.53\)”](#)

- On the issue of power relations, most young men felt the need to retain authority over women, although some emphasized shared power.
- Young men listed and categorized types of violence into physical, psychological (emotional) and sexual violence. Violence among peers seemed to be the most pervasive, with most violence of this nature occurring at school, in the street, or in other public places. Many young men expect their peers to join in fights to maintain allegiance to the individual or group. Violence against sexual minorities, especially gay men, was widely mentioned with general feelings that the victims deserved the violence.
- Young men almost unanimously opposed the use of violence against women and said it was almost never justified because women are weaker. At the same time, slapping, hitting or otherwise “disciplining” a woman was not always perceived as violence. Such force is most often portrayed as a last resort when women have not responded to other efforts by men to exert control.
- Regarding the key causes of violence, young men identified the following: exposure to family violence; exposure to media violence; individual feelings of inadequacy; stress related to economic security and jobs; alcohol and drugs as a catalyst; and expectations of masculinity.
- When asked what some of the characteristics of men who do not use violence, young men indicated the following: gaining maturity and self-control, and recognition of consequences; seeing verbal responses and restraint as showing greater strength; and having boundaries to promote self-control. When asked about the consequences of not using violence, many young men said they would expect to experience more violence as a consequence, especially among peers.

In addition to its focus on violence, YMI aims to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Key behaviors such as increased condom use and health seeking (e.g., for STI treatment) reflect entrenched attitudes and norms that govern relations between young men and women. Recent research in four Balkan countries shows that, and while condom use at first sex is relatively high (73.7% for boys), consistent condom use is less common and access to other forms of contraception and SRH information is low.²

Young men and masculinity

Men’s and women’s lives, and the gender relations between them, change over time, across cultures and within particular societies. Many men are spending more time with their children, and voicing a desire to be more involved fathers. These shifts undermine any crude notion that there is one universal form of ‘masculinity’ (or ‘femininity’) applicable to all societies at all times³. There are, however,

² Delva, et. al., ‘Sexual behaviour and contraceptive use among youth in the Balkans’, *European Journal of Contraception and Reproductive Health Care*, December 2007; 12(4): 309-316.

³ Ruxton, Sandy. *Man made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy*, Coalition on Men and Boys UK, October 2008

dominant ways of 'being male' which affect many men's attitudes and behavior. For instance, they may display an unwillingness to take their own health problems seriously. They may adhere to restrictive codes of masculinity – 'be tough and aggressive'. There are also significant differences between men (as there are between women), and the term 'masculinities' has been coined to reflect the many possible ways of 'being a man'.

Masculinities can also be understood as collective as well as individual experiences. The way young men think and act is influenced or conditioned by the groups and/or institutions they belong to, be they schools, cafes, businesses, or the football club. For example, young men make choices about how they behave and communicate amongst their peers, in part on the basis of the social context they find themselves in (e.g. at school, café, youth center, watching or playing a sports match). Violence can also be sustained or encouraged by the cultures within particular groups (e.g. among football hooligans or fan clubs) or institutions (e.g. in schools).

Gender equality holds the promise of improvements in men's and boys' relationships – not only with women and girls, but also in the relations they often have with other men and boys. Greater gender equality will reduce the pressures on men to conform to damaging and rigid forms of masculinity. This is likely to reduce men's violence, help to strengthen community safety and develop peaceful conflict resolution and improve family interaction. Involving men may help to create wider consensus and support for change on issues (e.g. in relation to family, violence, sexual and reproductive health) that have previously been marginalised as 'women's issues'.

Building on these reflections, there is a growing basis of work globally to engage adult and young men in group education activities, community campaigns and other processes to seek to change the underlying norms related to gender. A recent review of 57 male involvement programmes published by the World Health Organisation found evidence that nearly 60 percent showed evidence of attitude or behaviour change.⁴ The YMI intervention builds on this growing experience of good practice in engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality.

Baseline highlights

Baseline Study Design

A quasi-experimental study design is being used to evaluate YMI, with data collection occurring at two points in time (baseline and endline) in intervention and control schools.

The study includes nine schools from five locations in three countries: Banja Luka and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Zagreb in Croatia; and Belgrade and Prokuplje in Serbia. With the exception of Prokuplje, matched pairs of schools were selected for inclusion in the study – one as the intervention site, and the other as the control site. In Prokuplje, only one school was selected as an intervention site, due to the size of the town and the unavailability of a suitable match for a control site.

⁴ World Health Organization (2007). Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: Evidence from programme interventions. Geneva

The evaluation uses a self-administered survey with young men aged 15-19 enrolled (as of February 2009) in Grades 1 and 2 at the nine schools. As the intervention straddles two academic years, the program will continue to engage with this same group of young men as they move into Grades 2 and 3 in September 2009. The evaluation will match this movement across academic years to follow the same group of young men. Data collection occurs at two points – baseline (February-March 2009) and post-intervention, or endline (April-May 2010) with a cross section of young men from the same grades (with approximately equal number of young men selected from each of the two grades) at the same schools.

The baseline data presented in this report was collected from 2,567 students (see Table 1 below) from the nine study schools in February and March 2009⁵. In Serbia this included 2 schools in Belgrade and 1 school in Prokuplje for a total of 741 students.

In addition qualitative research was conducted via interviews with school directors, pedagogues and teachers in both control and intervention schools. These interviews were designed to give feedback and insights into the quantitative baseline results. In addition focused interviews took place with the target young men in both control and intervention schools to further explore some of the issues coming from the initial data.

Methodology and evaluation design (limitations)

Baseline Implementation

Local research consultants from each of the three countries were responsible for overseeing data collection with supervision from CARE NW Balkans and ICRW. Research consultants worked with young men data collectors to ensure that surveys were administered according to the study protocol and in adherence with procedures that protect human subjects. The local research consultants and data collectors were trained on research methods and ethics in February 2009, prior to the initiation of data collection. Data collectors then worked with the Youth Service Associations (YSA) and school administrators to schedule and conduct the surveys. Data collectors also ensured that adequate space was available in the classrooms to allow for young men to have privacy while filling out the questionnaire. In most cases, only one data collector needed to be present in the classrooms while the young men filled out the survey instrument. However, in some cases, two data collectors were present in order to manage larger groups of students and to prevent disciplinary issues. Young women were excused from classrooms during data collection, and young men who did not wish to participate were either allowed to move to a pre-arranged alternate location to work quietly at their desks while other students filled out the questionnaires.

Ethics Review and Assent Procedure

⁵ The refusal rate for participation in the baseline was very low, at less than 5% per each school in the study.

Key study documents, including the study protocol, assent forms and survey instrument, were reviewed and approved by the ICRW Institutional Review Board. Assent forms were presented to young men who expressed their willingness to participate in the survey. Any questions about the study or assent forms were answered by data collectors, who were also available to respond to questions during survey administration. Any young man who did not want to give their assent did not participate in the survey, and no data was collected from these young men.

Limitations

A general limitation of any quasi-experimental study design is that selection bias cannot be ruled out, since study participants are not randomly assigned to intervention or control sites. However, having the control group allows us to measure program effects, while controlling for background characteristics, other programs that may be introduced during the YMI implementation period, and any effect due to participation in the study (e.g., exposure to the survey questionnaire at baseline and/or endline). Despite this limitation, the quasi-experimental design allows for testing of the YMI intervention in a true program environment, and this design fits well with a program that is being implemented in multiple settings/countries.

Using a self-administered survey can be thought of as strength as well as a limitation. By allowing the young men to fill out the survey themselves, they may be more willing to share sensitive or private information than they would in a face-to-face interview. However, a potential problem with self-administered surveys is that young men may not understand the questions, and may not feel able to ask the data collector for clarification due to embarrassment, concerns about privacy, etc. Efforts were made to reduce this limitation by pre-testing the survey with a similar group of young men in each site to ensure comprehension/simplicity, and by having young men data collectors present during survey administration.

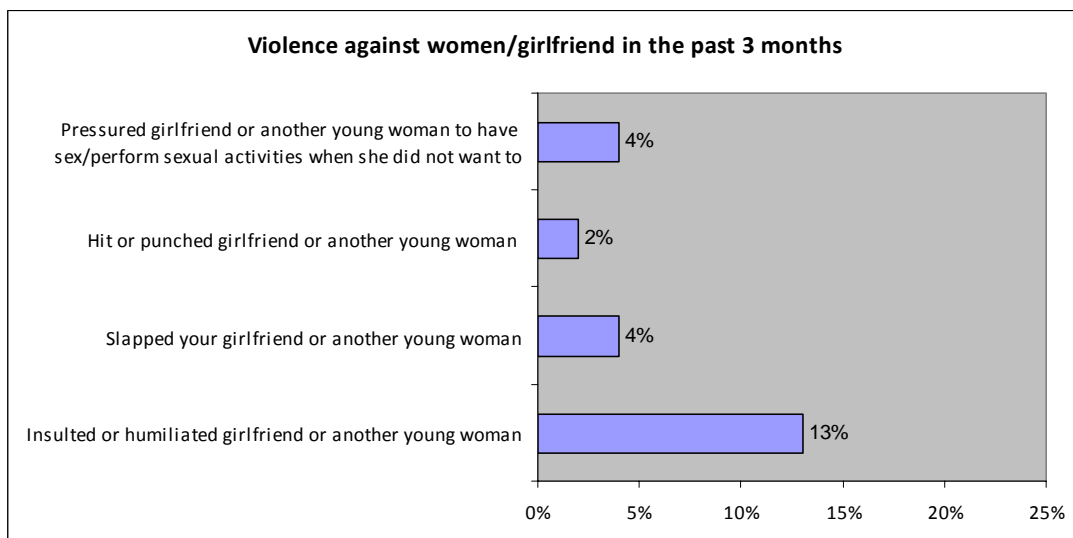
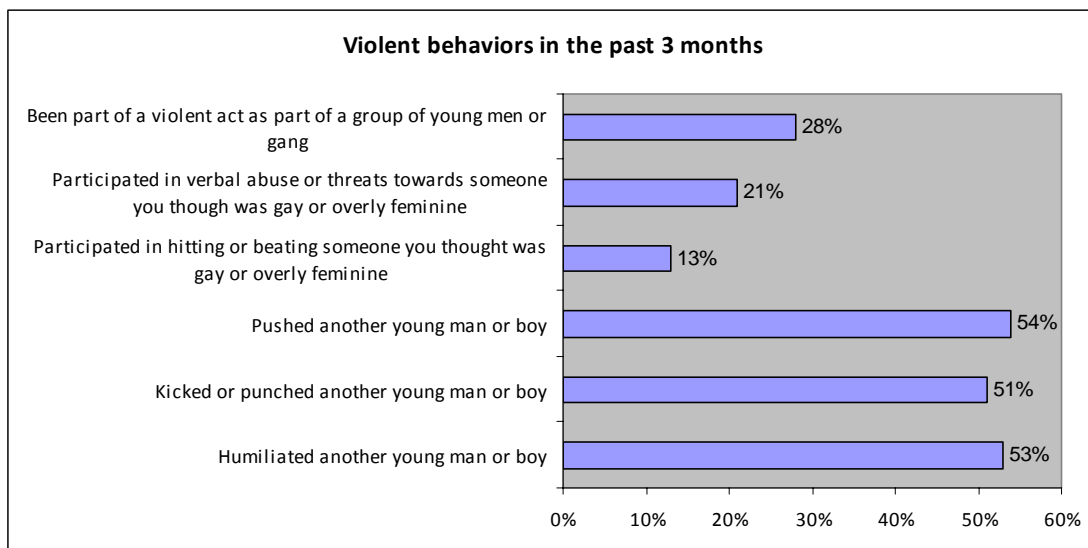
Finally, as this data is specific to certain schools and locations within the different study countries, comparisons between sites can pose difficulties. While it is possible to compare one school to another, these data do not say anything that can be generalized to young men as a whole in these cities, or countries. Rather, the data tell a detailed story only about young men in those specific schools.

Results

Numbers of young men surveyed in each city and by school

City	School		Total N per City
	Intervention	Control	
Belgrade, Serbia	305	315	620
Prokuplje, Serbia	121	-	121
Total	426	315	741

Violence - Belgrade



Associations

The study team also analyzed baseline data to identify any associations between variables of interest, particularly associations with the primary outcomes related to sexual or violence behaviors. The team explored multiple associations, of which only a few proved significant using Chi-square analysis. This report focuses on the key associations that emerged, including the relationship between alcohol consumption, self-esteem/social support and attitudes towards violence on violent behaviors. After analyzing these data, it quickly became apparent that violence against young men was reported frequently in all sites, and there were strong associations between alcohol and violence, previous experiences with violence and violent behavior, and self-esteem/social support and violent behaviors. Analyses of the associations with violence against women were also conducted. However, the reported cases of violence against women were so few that associations for this outcome are not presented in this report. Significant associations are presented by site in the following results sections.

Bivariate associations

Alcohol Consumption	
Currently drinking was significantly associated with*:	Odds Ratio
Humiliating a young boy in the past 3 months	2.4
Kicking or punching another young man or boy in the past 3 months	2.4
Participating in a violent act as part of a group or gang in the past 3 months	4.4
Participating in hitting or beating someone thought to be gay or overly feminine	3.0

*p<0.05

Experienced Violence	
Reported violence against other young men or boys was significantly associated with*:	Odds Ratio
Being punished at home by being beaten or slapped by parents or other adults	2.6
Being beaten by other young men or boys	2.3

*p<0.05

Self-esteem and Social Support

Reported violence against other young men or boys was significantly associated with*:

Odds Ratio

Having someone in the home who listens to me when I have something to say

Humiliating another young man or boy

0.5

*p<0.05

Qualitative Reflections

School Officials and Teachers:

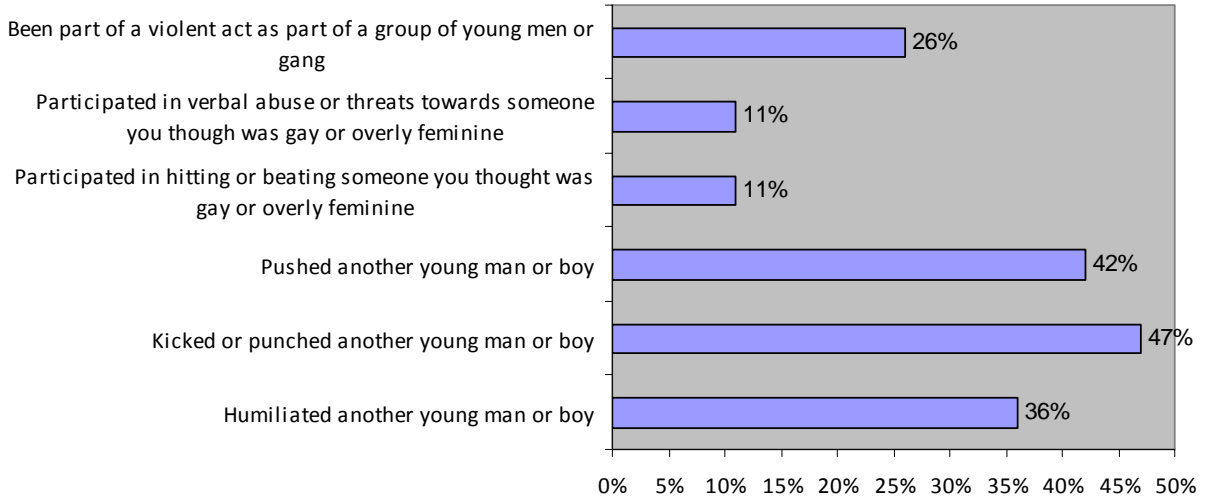
- Officials note that students do engage in peer violence, particularly in the first and second year when they are jostling for positions and 'marking their territory.' However, they generally seem to think that most of this takes a verbal form, with occasional incidents of rougher, more physical violence.

Young Men

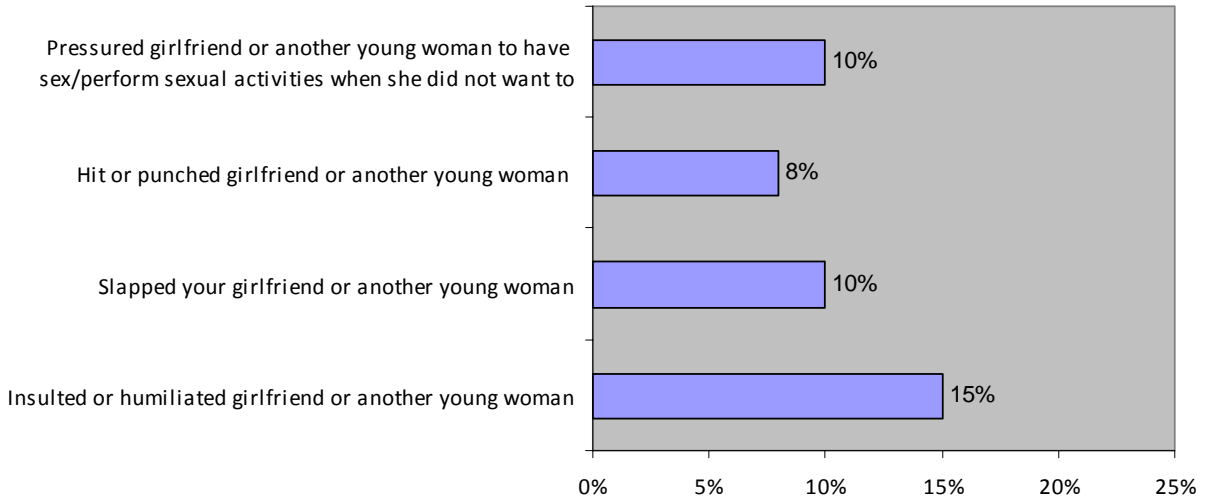
- Verbal violence is very common, but most young men report that this is not taken seriously – it's more like fun. When things get more serious and someone is abused regularly, then you have to do something: "You are an idiot if you don't do anything." Another notes that the only situation that demands a violent response is if someone insults your family.
- Older students fight less, according to one respondent, because they "have a better understanding of life."
- They leave the nice girls alone, but 'sluts' get insulted and humiliated. Young men do not report any physical violence towards girls. One young man did make a connection between being drunk and being violent towards a woman.

Violence - Prokuplje

Violent behaviors in the past 3 months



Violence against women/girlfriend in the past 3 months



Qualitative Reflections

School Officials and Teachers:

- All officials noted a lack of discipline in the school, saying that students do not have respect for rules, the school 'code of behavior' or for the value of education in general.
- Officials/teachers did not seem to feel that violence between young men was a major concern. One teacher said: "They know who is stronger, who is weaker . . . and the stronger students make (the) weaker do their (share) as well." Despite this, most said that violence is decreasing in the school and is noticeably less common than in the past.

Young Men and Violence

- Does seem to be an issue for young men, although here again, they seem to have many different definitions/interpretations of what constitutes violence. One defined it as "when you bully someone, and he doesn't do anything to you." Another said about going out to have fun: "You can't even take a look at somebody. If you do, he comes to you and hits you. This happens downtown, on the streets, in discos, everywhere."
- One young man noted that he has to fight back if someone teases him – that it is important to prove who is stronger. Another note, however, that this continues the cycle of violence: "if you are trying to prove that you are strong, you fight, and then you have to get into more fights because others tease you. If you don't fight, it stops."
- One respondent felt that violence is more common for older young men, and that most fights are over girlfriends – "in order not to look like a pussy in front of his girlfriends, a boy must get into a fight with this other boy" (someone who has challenged him).
- Respondents seem to echo the officials in saying the violence has decreased in school.
- Fighting as part of being loyal to friends was cited by all young men. If a man doesn't join in, he would be humiliated by his friends. This supports the survey findings.
- Generally, young men did not support violence towards women/girls, with the only acceptable reason being if she has cheated on him. Interestingly, this works the other way too, with one young man saying that "There are some slaps if he is looking around" (at other girls). An interesting quote on this: "If a man hits somebody weaker than he, this only shows how weak he is. If he needs to prove how strong he is, he should fight with somebody strong than him."

Gender Norms - Belgrade

[See overview on Gender Equitable Men scale below](#)

Gender Norms

Gender Equitable Men Scale Score (1= most Gender Equitable, 0 = least gender equitable) 0.54

Agreed with the statement:**%**

It is the man who decides when and how to have sex	72%
Men need sex more than women do	76%
A man needs other women, even if things with his wife are fine	46%
There are times when a woman deserves to be slapped.	46%
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.	25%
It is okay for a man to hit his wife if she will not (does not want to) have sex with him.	10%
Changing diapers, giving kids a bath, and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility.	76%
A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.	71%
If someone insults me, I will defend my honor, even if it means using violence.	85%
I would never have a gay friend.	79%
It disgusts me when I see a man acting like a woman	93%

Qualitative Reflections

Relationships with Young Women and Sexual Issues

School Officials and Teachers:

- Young men have many unanswered questions about sexual and RH care issues, although parents think they are well-informed. One official noted that many teachers still feel that sex ed is a taboo.
- There are few young women in the school and the young men feel 'protective' towards them. They don't feel that violence between young men and women is happening.

Young Men:

- Young men act differently around girls: "Everyone wants to get attention and to prove themselves."
- One young man feels that in a steady relationship, there is intimacy – 'you share your problems, experiences with the girls, you can talk with her about everything.' Relationships don't always have to include sex.
- Relationships with girls allow young men to talk about feelings and issues that they can't raise with male peers: "When you talk with a man about feelings, they usually call you a queer."
- Interestingly, being in a technical school with girls influence opinions of them. As one young man said, "Women are usually underestimated; there is an opinion that women can't do male jobs like engineering."

Gender Norms – Prokuplje

Gender Norms

Gender Equitable Men Scale Score (1= most Gender Equitable, 0 = least gender equitable) 0.40

Agreed with the statement:

%

It is the man who decides when and how to have sex	76%
Men need sex more than women do	87%
A man needs other women, even if things with his wife are fine	60%
There are times when a woman deserves to be slapped.	63%
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.	43%
It is okay for a man to hit his wife if she will not (does not want to) have sex with him.	40%
Changing diapers, giving kids a bath, and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility.	77%
A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.	84%
If someone insults me, I will defend my honor, even if it means using violence.	92%
I would never have a gay friend.	81%
It disgusts me when I see a man acting like a woman	92%

Qualitative Reflections

Relationships with Young Women and Sexual Issues

School Officials and Teachers:

- One official expressed concern over how young men and women communicate with each other, and that young women, in particular, can be aggressive in how they relate to others.
- Several officials felt they really couldn't comment on this (which, given the very small numbers of female students, is not as surprising). One teacher, however, noted that young women are more experienced than young men when it comes to sexual matters and relationships.

Young Men:

- One young man echoed the feeling that young women may be ahead of the game when it comes to sex/relationships: "A girl can do anything she wants with us, since we are a bit dumb. They could completely destroy us."
- Girlfriends or issues related to relationships are a key source of stress for young men. All felt that young women should not have as much sex or as many partners as young men.
- Young men have very different ways of defining relationships, in terms of duration (2-3 months, or 4-5 months, etc.) and characteristics, although most agree that a 'relationship' implies monogamy.

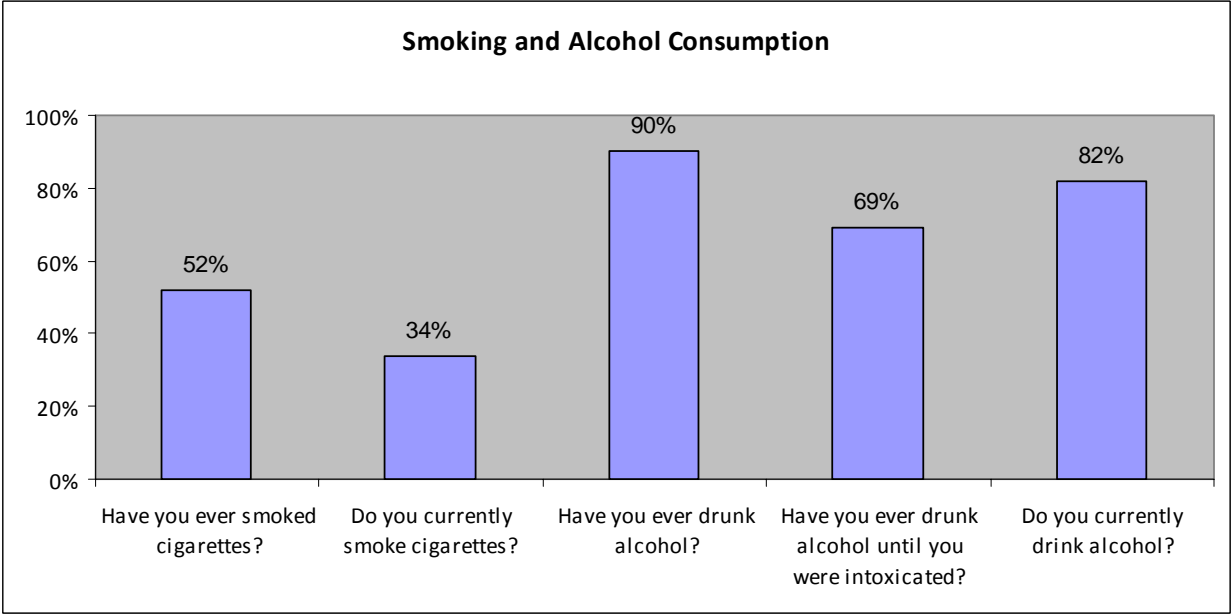
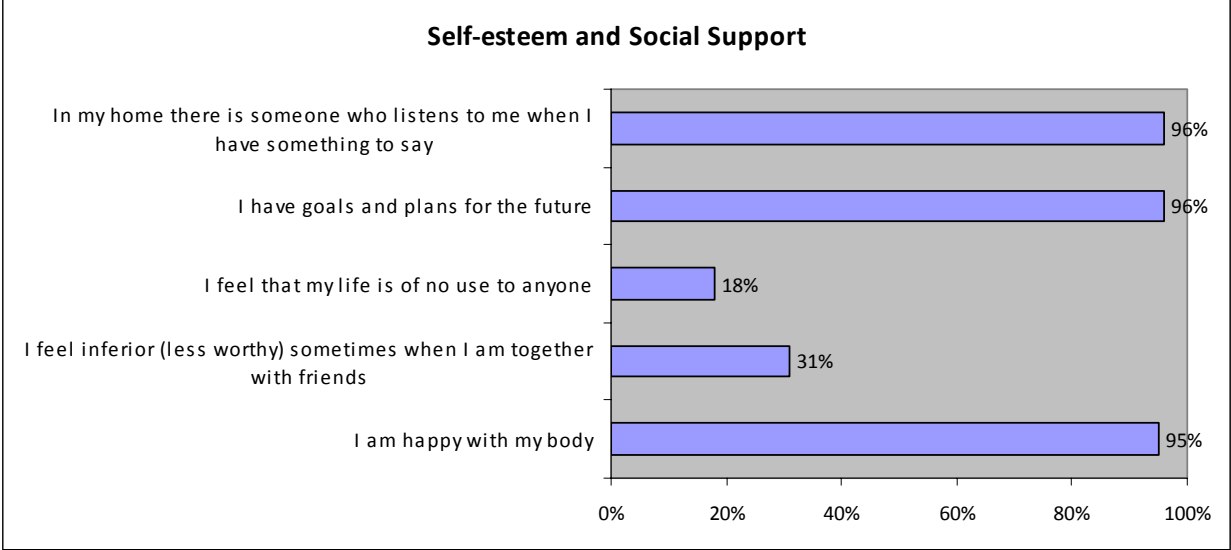
Overview of the Gender Equitable Men Scale

A "Gender Equitable Man" is a man who:

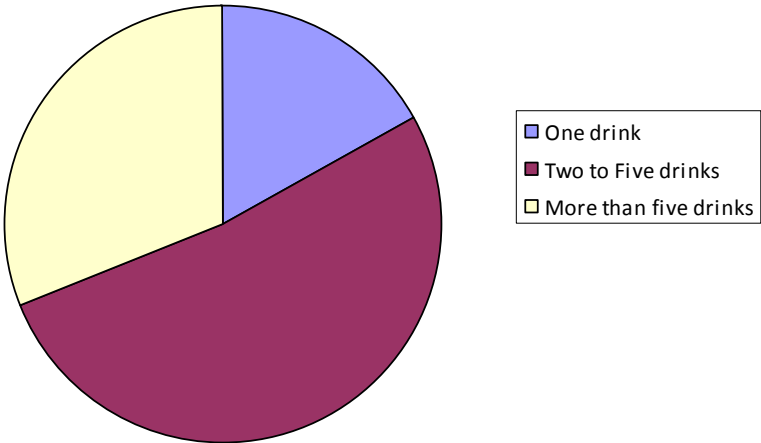
1. Seeks relationships with women based on equality, respect, and intimacy rather than on sexual conquest.
2. Seeks to be involved in household chores and child-care, meaning that they support taking both financial and care-giving responsibility for their children and household.
3. Assumes some responsibility for sexually transmitted infection prevention and reproductive health in their relationships.
4. Is opposed to violence against women under all circumstances, even those that are commonly used to justify violence (e.g., sexual infidelity).
5. Is opposed to homophobia and violence against homosexuals.

The GEM Scale for the YMI includes the 17 core items of the original scale with three possible responses: 1-totally agree, 2-partially agree, 3-disagree. All items are formulated in phrases so that agreeing means a nonequitable response. For example, Item Number 1: It is the man who decides when and how to have sex. If a respondent circles 3-disagree he will have a higher score, and thus this a higher "gender equity" measure.

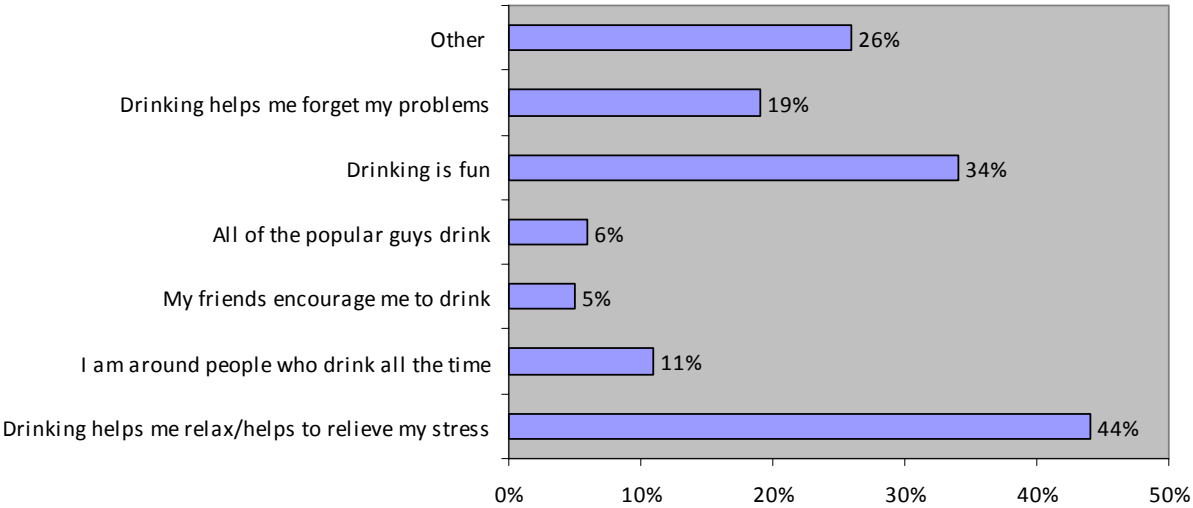
Healthy Lifestyles (Health and Well Being)- Belgrade



On the occasions when you drink, how many drinks do you usually have?



Why do you drink? (Multiple responses allowed)



Sexual and Reproductive Health

Age at first sex	14 years
Ever had vaginal sex	35%
Ever had oral sex	30%
Ever had anal sex	15%
Condom use at first sex	66%
Ever had a girlfriend	92%
Currently have a girlfriend	39%
Used condom the last time had sex with girlfriend	65%
Always use a condom with girlfriend	57%

Qualitative Reflections

General Well-being and Identity ('being a man')

School Officials and Teachers:

- Officials note that everything is a challenge for young men, as growing up is a hard process: they are trying to find themselves, their position in society. They also noted the first year in the school as being particularly important. One official expressed the challenge of adolescence as follows: "It's a hard period for young women and men. They fight for their position in the family, to become equal in conversations, to have adequate contact with peers and not to lose their individuality."
- One said: 'Families play a crucial role in creating healthy life habits.' But that parents transfer all responsibility for upbringing of young people to the schools. Another echoed this almost verbatim: "Parents completely transfer the upbringing function to the school."
- Officials also reported feeling that young men do not have people to talk with in the home: "parents always ask 'how was school?' which means that the school is the only thing that is important for them and they do not pay attention to other things that are important for adolescents." Peers were cited as the main source of support.
- Officials also note a lack of motivation and discipline, and that they don't see a connection between school/education and life. One said that young men "just don't know what to do with themselves" in their spare time, which can lead to risky situations.
- One official highlighted the inability to say 'no' to various risky behaviors: 'Young men live in surroundings where narcotics and alcohol are easily accessible, violent behavior ubiquitous. . (and without) a certain value system.'
- One official questioned the high percent of young men who said that they are happy with their body image in the survey, which she feels runs counter to what she senses from her students.

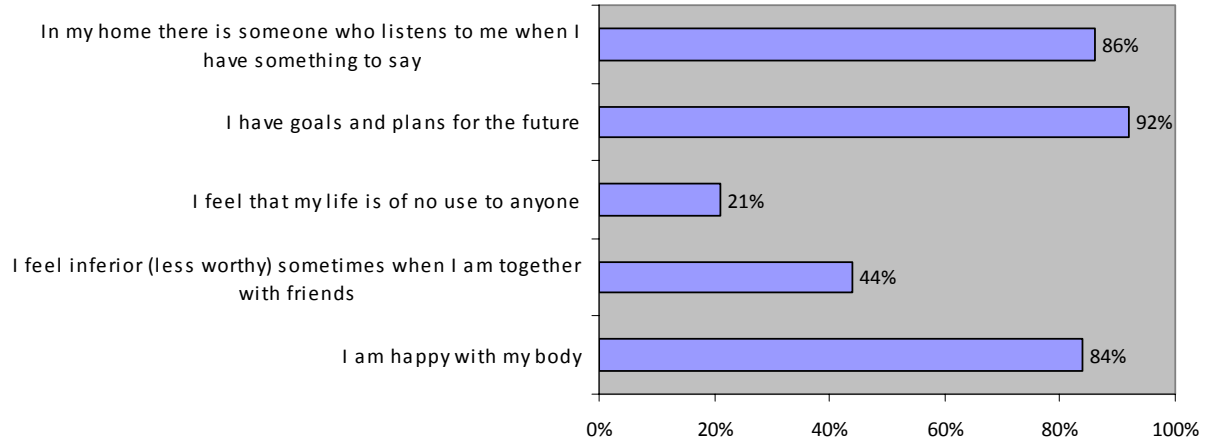
- On gender norms, one official felt the GEM scale results held very true: “it is typical Balkan. Young men wouldn’t admit that they don’t think like that, even if they really don’t, because such a way of thinking signifies that they belong to the group.”

Young Men:

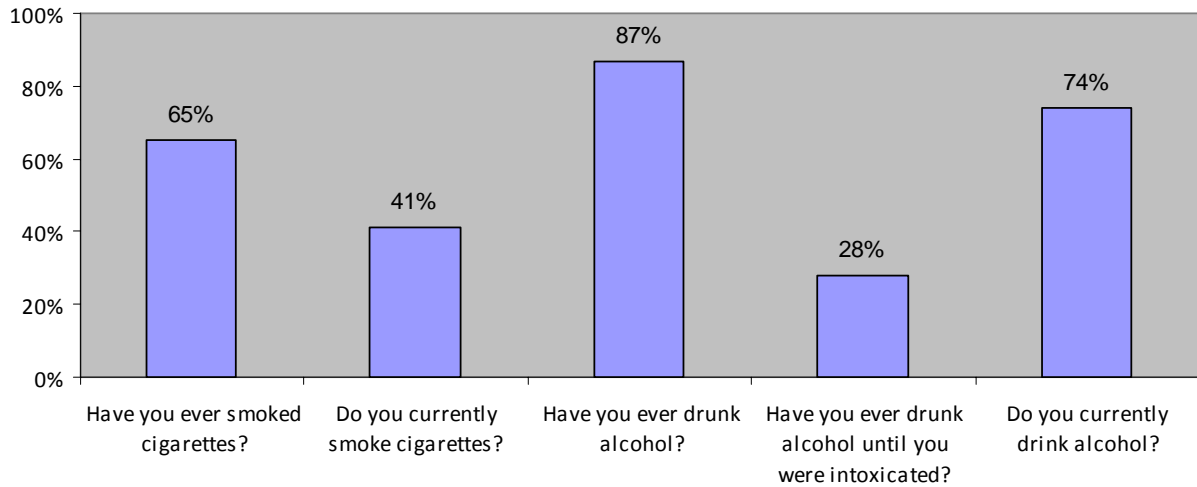
- Again, young men note that the expectations they face vary by situation and surrounding and are often in conflict with each other and with what they, themselves, think. For example, “The worse and sloppier you are in your work, you become a cooler guy”, which is not what he believes.
- A real man is an independent person, a good friend, big and strong. A man “is responsible for his actions (and) is able to take care of himself.” He also takes care of his family, makes the money and keeps everyone out of trouble. Sex and drinking are also part of becoming a man.
- A few of the young man commented that young people can communicate with adults and find support there, and that this important because adults/parents have more experience. Others noted that it is common for young men not to treat their parents with respect.

Healthy Lifestyles (Health and Well Being)- - Prokuplje

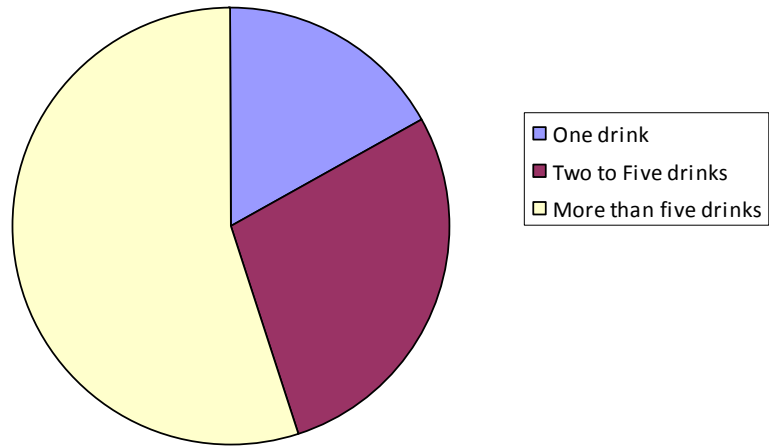
Self-esteem and Social Support



Smoking and Alcohol Consumption



On the occasions when you drink, how many drinks do you usually have?



Drinking h

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I am around p

Drinking helps me rela

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Age at first sex

14 years

Ever had vaginal sex	44%
Ever had oral sex	27%
Ever had anal sex	16%
Condom use at first sex	41%
Ever had a girlfriend	83%
Currently have a girlfriend	55%
Used condom the last time had sex with girlfriend	47%
Always use a condom with girlfriend	34%

General Well-being and Identity ('being a man')

School Officials and Teachers:

- The general poverty of Prokuplje was raised as a concern by all respondents. Options are limited for young men, which can impact their outlook on their education and life in general. One official said, "Prokuplje is a small town and people are not ready to change. There is not enough money for families and youth." Most noted that young men often have to work to help support the family.
- All respondents also mentioned the importance of the home environment and the family (especially the parents) in influencing the young men; as one teacher noted, a crucial factor is "the quality of the family." Coping with poverty, parents may be distracted from providing the kind of support that young men need. Officials also noted that parents help shape a young man's idea of relationships (both good and bad) and may contribute to violent behavior.
- Without jobs or strong family support, one teacher expressed concern that young men will "give up." Another noted that there is no motivation to continue their education.
- One official and one teacher felt that the reported occurrence of drinking and sexual activity from the survey seemed high, and that young men were inflating their responses to seem more masculine.

Young Men:

- One young man felt that he was expected to be experienced in everything, and all respondents noted that there are high –sometimes conflicting - expectations from parents, girlfriends and peers (e.g., parents want them to be honest, but peer expect them to help them cheat on exams).

- All identified with their fathers, and mentioned being 'impulsive' as a shared trait.
- A boy should have sex – “he should be with a girl” to be a man (at around 16 years in age). Most young man said there was a lot of peer pressure to engage in sex. Others said that drinking and smoking were also signs of being more masculine and that there was pressure to do this from peers, as well. Being a young man means going out, having fun.
- Being loyal to friends was mentioned by all as a critical characteristic of being a man or behaving “like an adult.” One said: “When some shit happens, (a man) should stick to his friends. Shit means a fight or something like that.”
- The first year of high school was mentioned by some as a critical marker or milestone in the transition from boy to man.
- Young men seem to have different ideas about communication/support from adults. Some don't feel like they can talk to their parents, but they also noted that they can talk with other adults (they were also young once) or older young man if they need advice. Siblings (particularly sisters) seem to be important influencers.

Key Findings and Insights for the Young Men's Initiative (YMI)

Several important findings can be drawn from the baseline data presented in this report, including some common themes that appear across the five study locations. While these results are specific to the young men who participated in the study, the patterns generally seem to reinforce earlier findings from the PLA exercise and from the direct experience of the implementation team. With this baseline information, there is a much clearer sense of who these young men are and of the possible scope and impact of the YMI program. This section presents the key results that emerge from the baseline, as well as insights for the intervention going forward.

Attitude and Behaviors Related to Violence

- Young men in all study sites report high levels of peer violence in the last three months, including humiliation, pushing, kicking and punching, and participating in violence as part of a gang.
- There is a high level of acceptability of violence against gay persons (or people perceived to be gay) in all sites.
- Reported perpetration of violence against young women is relatively low compared with reported perpetration of violence against young men. [This may be about the cultural acceptability of violence against other young men compared to a lower cultural acceptance of violence against women, or it may be that the young men do not have stable female partners, which the results suggest. Studies from other parts of the world suggest that violence against girlfriends/female partners is often higher in the context of a more stable co-habitation or more regular partnerships or relationships, which is not the case for the majority of the young men in the study.](#)
- Reported experience with violence in the home or by peers is relatively low.

Insights for YMI: Given that reduction of violence is a key outcome for YMI, baseline results support the need for creative activities that explore when and why young men engage in violent acts against peers. With reported experience of violence by peers low, but reported perpetration high, more information on who is targeted by peer violence may be useful. The program should also look into how group dynamics may be a factor in peer violence, with such reported activity being highest in the Zagreb study sites. While reported perpetration of violence against other young men is high, there are some young men in each site who did not report participating in peer violence. The program may consider having activities that allow young men to reflect on those peers who go against the norm.

Relationship between Alcohol and Violence

- Analysis of baseline data from four study sites (excluding Prokuplje) shows a significant association between alcohol consumption and violence. While this finding cannot show causality (that one leads to the other), it does hold that the two variables are related.

Insights for YMI: The association between alcohol consumption and violent attitudes and behaviors is critical for the program. Reducing outcomes related to violence is a primary objective for YMI. With such high alcohol consumption reported in all study sites, this reinforces the need for the program to delve into why and when young men drink. In particular, activities should focus on exploring the link between alcohol and violence.

Relationship between Other Factors and Violence

- Although the numbers of young men reporting that they have experienced violence are small, the analysis did show an association between experiencing violence and violent behaviors in all sites except Prokuplje.
- Baseline data show an association between high self-esteem/social support and lower levels of violent outcomes in all sites except Prokuplje. The other side is also evident, and there is an association between low levels of self-esteem/social support and violent behaviors. However, the numbers of young men reporting low self-esteem are low.

Insights for YMI: Both of these insights yield important information for the implementation team, although they may not have immediate implications for the program, itself. Although the first association is significant, it involves a relatively small number of respondents, and it may well be that there are other factors influencing the relationship between the variables. There also may be little that the project team can do to address violence within the home.

With the second association, the vast majority of young men reported having high levels of self-esteem and social networks, and therefore, there may be limited room for improving this. That said, implementers may consider having activities that strengthen self-esteem and social networks, potentially reaching those young men who may be feeling more isolated or unsure.

Relationship between Violent Attitudes and Behaviors

- The final association of interest is that between young men who reported violent attitudes and those who reported violent behaviors. Again, while this cannot speak to causality, the association does show that attitudes and behaviors are related.

Insights for YMI: This finding helps to support the overall approach of the project in addressing both attitudes and behaviors in young men. This is particularly helpful, given the relatively low levels of some violent behaviors (e.g., against women). Understanding that the analysis cannot show the direction of the association, this finding suggests that by working to change attitudes towards violence, the program may also be effective in changing violent behaviors.

Self Esteem and Social Support

- Young men in this study report high levels of self-esteem. In all sites, the vast majority of young men appear to have confidence in themselves and in their futures.
- Young men in this study also report having solid social networks, either through their families or through their friends, including people they can turn to in times of difficulty.

Insight for YMI: The majority of young men in this study appear to be secure in their self-esteem and in their social networks. In each site, however, there is a small percent of young men who report feeling more unsure and isolated, which may put their health and well-being at risk. While the numbers do not suggest that this needs to be a major program effort, implementers may want to consider including activities that focus on building self-esteem and social interaction amongst intervention participants.

Gender Equitable Attitudes (GEM Scale Scores)

- Young men in this study seem to have [mostly in equitable attitudes related to gender](#). When averaged across all young men in each site, the scores were 0.41 in Prokuplje, 0.44 in Sarajevo, .054 in Belgrade, 0.55 in Banja Luka and 0.56 in Zagreb (0 = less gender equitable, 1 – gender equitable).

Insight for YMI: The GEM scale averages by site suggest that young men in these sites are not particularly gender equitable in their attitudes. While further analysis still needs to be completed on the GEM scale, this result suggests that there is room for YMI to have an effect on young men's attitudes and see some shifting towards more gender-equitable attitudes and related behaviors.

Sexual Knowledge and Experience

- Approximately half of the young men in this study report that they are sexually experienced. These results appear to be in-line with other studies that have reported on age of sexual debut in the region. While the majority of those who are sexually active say they engage in vaginal sex, several young men also indicate that they engage in oral and anal sex.
- Young men in this study have little knowledge of reproductive health, STIs, HIV or condoms. Across all sites, young men did not have the correct responses to basic RH and condom-related questions or indicated that they did not know the information.

Insight for YMI: With the average age of first sex ranging from 14 years to 14 year and 5 months in the five study sites, these young men in the study are right at the cusp of sexual activity. They are also engaging in different forms of sexual activity, each of which has specific concerns and risks for their

health. With half of these young men reporting that they are already sexually active, poor knowledge of RH, STIs, HIV and condoms is a particular concern. Taken together, these findings suggest that the intervention may need to emphasize activities that build basic knowledge and skills related to sexual health, particularly regarding STIs and condoms.

Other Risk Behaviors – Smoking and Alcohol Use

- Smoking is relatively common amongst young men in this study, with half the young men at each site reporting that they have ever smoked.
- Young men in the study report high levels of alcohol consumption. This holds true across all of the study variables that explored their use of alcohol, including how often they drink, how much they drink (on an occasion when they do drink), and how often they drink to the point of intoxication.
- Many respondents who report ever drinking also report consuming more than five drinks on the occasions that they do drink alcohol.
- Young men who currently drink consistently indicate that ‘relaxing/relieving stress’ is a key reason for consuming alcohol.

Insight for YMI: The frequency of reported risk behaviors – particularly those related to alcohol – provide important insights for the intervention. Most young men in this study are consuming alcohol, and many young men drink large amounts of alcohol when they do drink. They also appear to have an uncertain sense of what the point of intoxication may be, and may not have a good understanding of the effects of alcohol on their reasoning and risk-assessment skills. All of these findings indicate that the intervention must address alcohol use and the effect of alcohol in increasing other risky behaviors such as sexual activity and violence. In addition, the program should help young men explore why and when they drink, since many appear to be using alcohol to cope with stress.

Annex 1 - Youth Development Framework⁶

Positive Youth Development is an approach toward all youth that builds on their assets and their potential and helps counter the problems that may affect them.

Summary

Adolescent health and youth development go hand-in-hand. Youth who, with support from their families and communities, successfully engage in the developmental tasks of adolescence are more likely to experience a sense of well-being, withstand life's stresses, choose health promoting behaviors and avoid activities and behavior that can lead to negative health and life outcomes.

8 Key Elements

- Providing youth with safe and supportive environments.
- Fostering relationships between young people and caring adults who can mentor and guide them.
- Providing youth with opportunities to foster pursue their interests and focus on their strengths.
- Supporting the development of youths' knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, including study, tutoring, sports, the arts, vocational education, and service learning.
- Engaging youth as active partners and leaders who can help move communities forward.
- Providing opportunities for youth to show that they care - about others and about society.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and teaching positive patterns of social interaction.
- Providing a safety net in times of need.

Overview

The youth development approach is predicated on the understanding that all young people need support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. With this support, they can develop self-assurance in the four areas that are key to creating a happy, healthy, and successful life:

- A sense of competence: being able to do something well.
- A sense of usefulness: having something to contribute.
- A sense of belonging: being part of a community and having relationships with caring adults.

A sense of power: having control over one's future.

The Positive Youth Development approach suggests that helping young people to achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors. Organizations and communities that promote Positive Youth Development give youth the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and get involved. The self-confidence, trust, and practical knowledge that young people gain from these opportunities help them grow into healthy, happy, self-sufficient adults.

⁶ Hamilton, S. & Hamilton, M.A. (2004). Youth development handbook. London: Sage Publications

The baseline report and the data it contains would not have been possible without the hard work of the local partners, including Center E8 Belgrade and Initiatives Prokuplje. We would like to highlight the role of Dr. Vladimir Turjacanin and Jovana Stojanovski in data collection and analysis.

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