

included: 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.

2. **How do social institutions such as media, school, religion, family and peers influence social constructs of masculinity?**

Young men across most sites identified home and school as the two strongest social spaces influencing masculinity across the Balkans. Within these spaces, parents and siblings are strongly connected to the home while peer groups like friends, company and groups of friends are strongly connected to schools where young men learn social “dos and don’ts.” In addition, religion (and tradition) plays a particularly strong role in constructing masculine identity and is usually connected to the home. Participants also reported that socializing with other young male peers strongly influences the expectations of how to “be a man.”

3. **What are the ranges of young men's attitudes and behavior toward women and their relationship with women?**

The young men's attitudes about women, including relationships with women, emerged in the course of three PLA exercises that tapped into the participants' direct experiences and expectations. When asked about women's typical activities and priorities, the participants across all five sites named two central activities: gossiping and applying makeup. Young men also identified other stereotypical activities such as talking on the phone and spending time in bathrooms. At the same time, many young men noted that these stereotypes were not accurate and, in some cases, not fair. Participants generally reported that parents applied different standards to girls than boys, e.g., earlier curfews. Moreover, girls who stay out later or drink in public are subject to gossip and condemnation from neighbors.

When asked about their mothers and sisters, the young men described relations of shared respect

and authority, and of a need to protect and uphold their sisters' and mothers' honor. At the same time, when asked about the traditional division of labor in the home, many young men stated that women are raised to be responsible for domestic activities, while men are expected to work hard to support their families (although this was not reported uniformly). On the issue of power relations, most young men felt the need to retain authority over women, although some emphasized shared power. The full report provides an additional discussion of the variations between sites regarding the gender equity discussion.



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4. **How are the social constructs of masculinity related to men's violent use of power?**

Young men listed and categorized types of violence into physical, psychological (emotional) and sexual violence. In Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo, participants also listed political 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. Other participants identified institutional abuses of powers from teachers, the police and others (in some cases linked to discrimination based on nationality and religion). Bullying, which begins as early as primary school, was identified as a primary cause of physical violence and results from proving oneself among one's peers. In turn, those who are bullied resort to violence to protect their pride and dignity. Violence against sexual minorities, especially gay men, was widely mentioned with general feelings that the victims deserved the violence.

Regarding women, the young men almost unanimously opposed the use of violence 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. Participants expressed theoretical support for a woman's right to leave a violent situation, generally relating to their own mothers. However, they agreed that if an abused woman were to seek help from the police and legal system, she would not receive it.

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. Across all sites, participants reported the central role of families, and especially fathers, in encouraging the use of violence for self-defense. Moreover, many young men expect their peers to join in fights to maintain allegiance to the individual or group.

5. **For men who are not violent, what are the influencing factors and consequences?**

Some of the responses to this question included the following:



For further information, please contact:

ICRW
1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Suite 302 Washington, DC 20036, USA
Sarah Degnan Kambou
skambou@icrw.org
Aparna Jain
ajain@icrw.org

CARE International NW Balkans
Simeuna Djaka, Banja Luka, 4 B&H
John Crownover
jcrownover@carebhc.org
Sasa Petkovic
spetkovic@carebhc.org

- Gaining maturity and self-control, and recognition of consequences;
- Seeing verbal responses and restraint as showing greater strength;
- Having a “line” or “border” beyond which young men will use violence in other words, having boundaries to promote self-control.

In addition, young men across the groups highlighted the role of their mothers in supporting non-violent alternatives to conflict resolution. It should be noted that mothers provide one of the sources of non-violent messaging that young men receive. 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.

Potential “Cracks” in Hegemonic Masculinity
During the five-day exercise, young men were able to articulate and envision personal ideals for masculinity and violence that differ, to varying degrees, from dominant or hegemonic forms. These “cracks” in hegemonic masculinity might provide opportunities where change is already happening and where it could be accelerated by promoting a wider range of acceptable behavior for men. Building on these opportunities, the core CARE-ICRW research team, research partner organizations and the young men themselves brainstormed a range of potential programmatic interventions for the project's Phase 2. These ranged from activities focused on supporting changes in an individual's constructions of masculinity and related knowledge, attitude and skills, to activities that promote community mobilization and advocacy for change in the institutions of media, schools, police and the courts.

CARE staff and partner organizations will translate these suggestions and conversations into a concrete plan of action that will shape the course



Western Balkan Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative

Exploring Dimensions of Masculinity and Violence

Executive Summary



Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a major public health problem that has a devastating impact on mental, emotional and reproductive health. GBV, commonly referred to as violence against women, is defined by the UN as “violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim and which arises from unequal power relationships between men and women.” Increasingly, the international community is recognizing the importance of understanding masculinity and the role that male socialization plays in promoting and understanding gender-based violence.

Significant research has indicated that working with youth can help construct alternative definitions of masculinities and ultimately reduce GBV. Adolescence is a key developmental stage when gender identities are constructed and can be reshaped. In other words, reaching boys can change the way men interact with women. Moreover, working with young men can build leaders who themselves can advocate for gender equity more broadly.

During the Yugoslavian wars that occurred between 1991 and 2001, numerous GBV cases were reported, including mass rapes of women and sexual abuses of men and boys imprisoned in war camps. In the northwest Balkans, a prevalent culture of violence, including GBV, has emerged from the aftermath of war. In the context of conflict and reconstruction, multiple masculine identities are shaped and formed according to the intersection of masculinity with religion, nationality and ethnicity.

To some men, war provided an opportunity to act out behaviors that would not have been tolerated during times of peace. Men returning from war faced a “masculinity crisis” because unable to find jobs and often relying on their working wives for financial support -- they were unable to regain the status previously held in their families, provide financially and care for their families, and reassume their role as leader of their households. This caused feelings of stress, inadequacy and low self-esteem among men, which increased their likelihood to perpetrate violence. Regional data and an emerging youth development sector in the Balkans point to the strategic importance of working with young people to reverse the growing trend of gender-based violence and to help adolescents become leaders to shape their personal development and that of the region.

CARE's Western Balkan Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative

With a goal to reduce and eliminate GBV, CARE is implementing a ground-breaking program that works with young men aged 13-19 to deconstruct masculinity in their cultures and determine how gender norms and male socialization lead to inequitable attitudes and behaviors toward women and girls. Funded primarily by the Norwegian government, CARE's Western Balkans GBV Prevention Initiative is working in collaboration with six youth organizations from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro. The project's three main objectives are:

1. To determine the specific gender norms and expectations that contribute to violent behavior among young men in Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia;
2. To design interventions most effective at reducing levels of violence and increasing gender-equitable behaviors; and
3. To evaluate the effect of the interventions in reducing violence and increasing equitable behaviors.

CARE is partnering with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) on the project's monitoring, evaluation and action-research components. To contribute to the first objective, ICRW carried out participatory learning and action (PLA) research activities from March 26 April 17, 2007 in partnership with CARE's six local implementing organizations.

PLA is a participatory research approach that encourages participants to share knowledge about their community and its needs, determine ways to address those needs. The overall findings from the PLA will help CARE and its partners identify potential youth-centered activities that will be used in the project's second phase. In other words, the research findings will be used to develop an overall

strategy and specific activities that help increase gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors of young men, and that reduce tolerance among young people for GBV.

The primary focus of the PLA was to work with male youth, youth facilitators and youth service agencies to determine the specific gender norms and expectations that contribute to violent behavior among young men in Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The PLA was guided by the following five research questions:

1. What are the current social constructs, attitudes and experiences for young men, especially with regard to hegemonic masculinity?
2. How do social institutions such as media, school, religion, family and peers influence social constructs of masculinity?
3. What are the ranges of young men's attitudes and behavior toward women and their relationship with women?
4. How are the social constructs of masculinity related to men's violent use of power?
5. For men who are not violent, what are the influencing factors and consequences?



In addition, a secondary focus of the PLA was to continue fostering the development of partner organizations' capacity to engage in learning, reflection and action related to masculinity, GBV and youth in their local Balkan contexts. Partner staff attended two five-day trainings in December 2006 and March 2007 to build their collective understanding of gender, sexuality, masculinity and GBV.

Throughout the PLA itself, ICRW and CARE staff collected data to explore numerous themes relating 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 the transition from boyhood to manhood, experiences of violence and moving toward change. Data was collected at five sites, each with 9 to 15 participants per day over a five-day period. The young men, aged 13-19, were primarily identified through CARE's partner organizations.

PLA Results

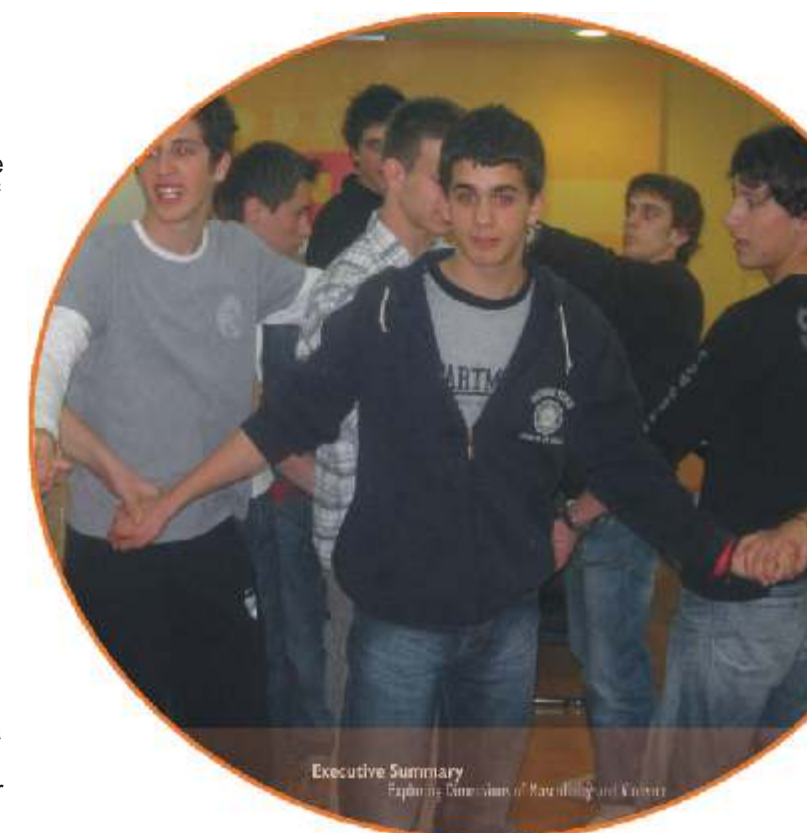
For most of the young men who participated in the PLA, this was their first opportunity to openly discuss and critically reflect on masculinity and violence with their peers. The young men engaged in serious reflection to consider their influences, attitudes and hopes, listened intently to each others' ideas, debated different points of view, and shared a range of emotions including laughter, embarrassment and concern as they discussed their ideas about masculinity. Participants across all sites expressed their appreciation for such an opportunity.

Although the attached report contains a great deal of additional information about the results of the PLA

including regional variations, some of the key themes (by research question) are described below.

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

Despite variations across and within the different sites, the young men identified some common defining features of masculinity for their communities. These



key features emerged vividly in an exercise where the participants used modeling clay to construct models of ideal men. Some of the characteristics of “ideal” men