



Course Book

CONSCIOUS GENDER-SENSITIVE PARENTING

Training program to
increase involvement
of boys and men in
child care and
education to prevent
violence and abuse
against children



CONSCIOUS GENDER-SENSITIVE PARENTING

**TRAINING PROGRAM TO INCREASE INVOLVEMENT OF
BOYS AND MEN IN CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION TO
PREVENT VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST CHILDREN**

Course Book

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Chisinau 2016

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BACKGROUND

The training program “**Conscious Gender-Sensitive Parenting**” is intended to serve as theoretical and practical guidelines in the training activities aimed at increasing the participation of boys and men in the educational processes both in the private sphere, i.e. the family, and the public one, i.e. formal and informal education, as well as in the educational processes taking place at community level.

The program addresses issues that are critical in increasing the parenting role of boys and men, so that both their children and they benefit from a relationship of synergy, whereas nonviolence and tolerance evolve from legal terms into values, moral standards and quintessence of individual and collective civic consciousness to create a genuinely democratic society.

In order to educate children according to the democratic and contemporary standards, to help them effectively integrate in the social life and achieve psychological well-being, children should be raised and educated by both women and men.

Only through parents’ joint efforts will the children become aware of and understand, practice, learn, and discover new things, these efforts contributing to their harmonious development and identification of own personality valences.

This is an interactive program, which targets the people who wish to develop and improve the gender competences (personal, social, methodological and/or technical) they need to efficiently work with children, those who are planning to deliver training in the related issues, more specifically: community social assistants/supervisors; members of multidisciplinary teams; teaching staff (teachers, entertainers, heads of the class, psychologists, principals); social assistance representatives; experts from crosscutting sectors (public order, healthcare); NGO members; representatives of local public administrations and others.

The program has three sections: curriculum and summary of the training modules (1), course book for 5 modules (2) and annexes (3).

It includes the recommended training design and duration. The modules can be delivered either separately or in various combinations depending on the training objectives and target group.

TRAINING CURRICULUM

RATIONALE

Parents play the most important role in the development of children from birth to adulthood. In most of the societies, however, regrettably, only mothers take up this role. They do it either deliberately or because of certain circumstances, or being forced to do it, out of obligation or because of social pressure and traditional gender roles. Thus, the family space becomes a true copy of the society: the men who don't work in the education, social and service delivery sectors are also absent in child rearing and education. Whose fault is it? Is it a choice or the stereotypes that are still persisting in the 21st century are to be blamed?

The modern society has other values. Equality, tolerance and non-discrimination are crucial in a democratic society, where people have the right to feel good and to be treated with respect.

The gender-sensitive approach transposed in education means that the gender differences are well-known and considered, but cannot be a reason for discrimination. Finally, in the gender-sensitive approach, parents play equal, but also different, roles in the upbringing of their children, depending on the latter's and their own peculiarities.

So, how do we bring to light the conscious boys and men, brothers, uncles or fathers who are interested in education or professionals, so as to create a genuine gender partnership at home and in the public sphere? How do we strengthen the gender partnership in schools and communities? What should we do to influence the public discourse, community and public policies to make the much feminized education sector more inclusive for men? How do we involve boys and men in the upbringing and education of children so that ultimately we all benefit from it? From the psychological point of view, active and conscious participation of boys/men in the upbringing and education of children, at home and in the formal and informal education, brings along major benefits, both psychosocial and academic.

Besides being a positive role model for boys and girls and an adequate and nonviolent relationship model, the involvement of men in the parenting processes also benefits the society and the intimate relationship of couples by minimizing the risk of violence and risk behaviors.

GOAL

To develop the skills of the people interested in psychosocial applications of the involvement of boys and men in the upbringing and education of children aimed to prevent violence and abuse against children.

OBJECTIVES

To acquaint participants with the key principles of gender-sensitive parenting; to develop the gender competences at personal, social, methodological and technical level; to help participants gain the skills that are required to raise tolerant, gender-sensitive children who would be able to make decisions and adjust to the social environment; to raise the awareness of the community on the personal, family and social impact of the increased involvement of boys and men in the upbringing and education of children; to strengthen the role of the community in mitigation of the children vulnerability risks; to gain skills for the development of children's gender competences.

TARGET GROUP

Teachers, heads of class, educators and psychologists; community activists, members of NGOs or other entities, young people or students; representatives of mass media, local public administration, anyone who can have an influence in child-rearing and education.

COMPETENCES

The training is expected to improve the psychosocial, relationship and communication gender competences of the participants, as well as the civic and professional ones as follows:

- Learning and application of the principles of conscious gender-sensitive parenting and adopting personal and professional strategies in the relationship with children and adults in line with these principles;
- Adopting and sharing values like gender equality, tolerance and nonviolence;
- Planning and carrying out psychosocial group activities with the adults and children interested in increasing the involvement of boys and men in the upbringing and education of children;
- Showing empathy, proactivity and group and community solidarity in preventing abuse and violence against children;
- Raising awareness of the individual and collective responsibility to prevent violence against children in schools.

STRUCTURE

The training program has 5 modules. Each of them has a theoretical and a practical section aimed at developing the beneficiaries' both personal and professional competences that will help them carry out group psychosocial activities with adults and children. The participants will also receive handouts.

The modules can be delivered separately or in combination (depending on the goal of the training, target group, number of training hours).

MATRIX OF MODULES			
No.	Module	Objectives	Hours
1.	Involvement of men in child rearing and education: benefits and methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To acquaint the participants with the benefits of increased participation of men in child rearing and education; To gain specific skills for increased involvement of men in the education processes; To develop specific gender competences that are required for practical involvement in child rearing and education. 	8
2.	Conscious gender-sensitive parenting: principles and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To familiarize the participants with the specifics and principles of conscious gender-sensitive parenting; To gain specific gender-sensitive parenting skills; To develop specific gender competences required for conscious gender-sensitive parenting. 	8
3.	Nonviolent communication – a social change model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get familiar with the peculiarities of nonviolent communication; To gain nonviolent communication skills; To develop nonviolent communication competences; To promote social change through nonviolent communication. 	8
4.	Role of school in strengthening gender partnership and violence prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn how school can help increase the participation of boys/men in child rearing and upbringing; To develop the gender partnership in school in order to prevent or mitigate risks in the modern society. 	6-8
5.	Development and improvement of children's competences from the gender perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To acquaint the participants with the techniques for working with children that support the emotional, social, cognitive and personal development; To gain skills for application of these techniques; To improve the parent-child relationship from the gender perspective; To teach the participants how to efficiently use the available techniques to increase participation of boys in education processes. 	6-8

TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

The training program has been designed for a longer time (optionally, it may contain 5 modules (workshops) and a follow-up activity (final evaluation). The *initial training* will last 5 days. The most appropriate number of participants is 12 to 16 people. Every module contains an initial practical part, which will help them assimilate the theory. At the end of the training, the participants will practice the activities indicated in the course book in order to develop specific skills.

The program is interactive and has been designed after the Evocation – Realization of Meaning - Reflection – Extension model. It focuses on the development or gaining of new personal, social, methodological and technical competences in gender education. The recommended working techniques help gather information in a friendly manner and gain skills through group activities and individual tasks aimed at developing advanced work competences.

During the program period, the participants will carry out the group activities with adults and children that they learned during the earlier modules, supported by *ongoing training* (coaching activities or guided discussions) and *additional training*, depending on their needs that have been spotted during the program period.

EVALUATION

The evaluation and monitoring process is a complex one and has the following objectives:

The *initial evaluation* will evaluate the participants' gender competences (personal, social, methodological and technical), using initial and final evaluation forms (templates attached). The purpose of the pre-training evaluation is to determine a baseline against which the gender competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) will be evaluated and program impact assessed. The post-training evaluation will assess the input of the program in the development of gender competences and collect feedback and recommendations for further improvements.

The *mid-term evaluation* will evaluate the knowledge/ attitudes/ practices, after a certain period during which the gained competences were applied and ongoing training delivered (group discussions, focus-groups with beneficiaries of training modules, whose facilitators were among those who received initial training). The mid-term evaluation is intended to detect the ongoing personal and professional development needs for planning further specific activities.

The *final evaluation* will be conducted after all training modules are delivered and will involve presenting a homework assignment that will be evaluated against a rating scale.

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MODULE 1. INVOLVEMENT OF MEN IN CHILD REARING AND EDUCATION: BENEFITS AND METHODS

GOAL

To improve the gender competences (personal, social, methodological and technical) to facilitate increased participation of men in child rearing and education.

OBJECTIVES

- To acquaint the participants with the benefits of increased participation of men in child rearing and education;
- To gain specific skills for increased involvement of men in the education processes;
- To develop specific gender competences, which are required for practical involvement in child rearing and education.

TIME REQUIRED

8 hours

MATERIALS

Blackboard and chalk or flipchart and flipchart paper, A4 paper, post-it notes, a ball of thread (preferably red), colored markers, cardboard sheets – two colors, pens.

METHODOLOGY

Evocation – Realization of Meaning – Reflection – Extension.

Interactive work in small groups; tailored critical thinking techniques; brief presentations by facilitator and visual support.

KEY MESSAGES

Men (fathers) and women (mothers) have equal, but also different, parenting roles.

PLANNING NOTES

To prepare for the training, the facilitator will study the theoretical framework of the module. The facilitator is advised to adopt the theoretical vision in order to be able to cope with a potential reluctance of the participants.

After the training agenda and other handouts are distributed and before the first session starts, ask the participants to fill in the initial evaluation questionnaire (see Annexes for templates).

STEPS

Session I. Evocation

- I.1 Activity "Getting to know each other and the subject"
- I.2 Activity "The value of personal experiences"

Session II. Realization of Meaning

- II.1 Activity "Debates: should more men involve in child rearing and education?"
- II.2 Activity "Causes, problems and consequences of noninvolvement of men in educational processes"
- II.3 Activity "Involvement of men: what for?"

Session III. Reflection

- III.1 Activity "Finding solutions"
- III.2 Activity "My solution"

Session IV. Extension

- IV.1 Activity "Making the change happen"
- IV.2 Final evaluation and homework

RESOURCES

Resource A

Session I. EVOCATION

Activity "Getting to know each other and the subject"¹

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator writes "Involvement of men in education" in a circle on the blackboard and makes a brief introduction, highlighting the objectives, rules and other issues related to the training module.
- 2) The facilitator asks the participants to introduce themselves (how they would like to be called by other participants) and make a very brief statement on the topic of the training, using words or phrases which start with the initials of their first names.
- 3) The facilitator writes on the blackboard (flipchart) all the ideas and as more words are being written, the participants are asked to establish connections between the voiced ideas, and also name the first name of the colleague that voiced that idea.
- 4) If the participants face difficulties with identification of certain topic-specific concepts, they can voice ideas that start with the initials of the surnames.
- 5) The facilitator will use questions to encourage the participants to provide ideas and establish connections between them, for instance: *How can we group these ideas?, Which ones of these ideas are concepts, problems, solutions or descriptions of what we are discussing today?*
- 6) The activity will end with a stocktaking of the clusters of ideas, which will be summarized by facilitator.

Variations:

- ✓ The first name initials rule is not compulsory. It has been introduced in the adjusted clustering method to stimulate the participants' creativity and does not play a crucial methodological role.
- ✓ Different colored markers can be used to mark different clusters of ideas.

¹ Adjusted *Clustering* technique – a nonlinear brainstorming technique, which stimulates creativity and makes it easy to connect ideas and achieve a sense of the whole. The clustering technique allows for taking stock of the knowledge and attitudes of the participants in a non-authoritarian manner in order to connect the new knowledge with the existing one.

Activity "The value of personal experiences"²

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator divides the participants in pairs.
- 2) The participants are asked to think of an experience (personal or witnessed) linked to the topic of the workshop (Involvement of men in child rearing and education: benefits and methods) and take notes individually (3-5 minutes).
- 3) Afterwards, the participants share with each other the experience (5 minutes) and formulate a common statement that summarizes and couples the two experiences (5 minutes). One participant from every pair will tell the entire group the conclusion they came to (2 minutes).
- 4) The facilitator encourages every pair to tell the group the results of their work in pairs and after all pairs present their conclusions, the participants will discuss the expressed opinions.
- 5) If a pair does not reach common ground, the facilitator may have both members of the pair speak.
- 6) In case of a big group, the facilitator may decide to have the participants present their conclusions in smaller groups made of several pairs, which will further present their common visions to the bigger group.
- 7) The facilitator will thank the group for sharing personal experiences and stress that formulation of own experiences helps highlight the issues related to the debated topic. Revealing of a personal experience facilitates the understanding and elucidation of the deepest elements of the issue, which will help the participants to develop their personal, social, methodological and technical competences.

Variations:

- ✓ A variation of the technique is *Formulate-Communicate-Share-Create*. It consists of writing down and sharing the experience with the partner and jointly, through cooperation and consensus, identifying and formulating a solution to the shared experiences or a new, improved prospect for the situations described by the two participants.

² *Think-Pair-Share* technique – promotes active participation in discussions, which stimulates self-analysis and introspection, because students think about the problem individually and afterwards work in pairs to solve it.

Resource B

Session II. REALIZATION OF MEANING

Activity "Debates: should more men involve in child rearing and education?"³

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator prepares worksheets with relevant information (statistics, data from surveys, theories).
- 2) After the Evocation session, to summarize the previous activities, the facilitator will ask a binary question, which will be the subject of the activity – "Should more men involve in child rearing and education or not?"
- 3) The participants are divided into two groups⁴ (this can be done randomly or in some other way), with equal number of participants. Each group will have to justify one of the answers ("should" and "should not").
- 4) The two groups receive informational support to formulate their arguments.
- 5) Every participant writes down at least 3 reasons in support of the answer attributed to his/her group (5 minutes).
- 6) After this individual task is completed, each member is asked to tell his/her team one of the 3-4 arguments he/she has written down (5-7 minutes).
- 7) Each team chooses the strongest 4-5 arguments and formulates a final statement to support its answer (5 minutes).
- 8) The teams are free to choose how to present their stands or they may delegate a person to do it.
- 9) The two teams make final statements and each participant has the right to express his/her strong argument or join the other team. The facilitator will moderate and support the activity by asking supporting questions (10 minutes).

Variations:

- ✓ The teams don't formulate final statements. After the first 5 steps the facilitator kicks off the debate during which the two teams support their answers.

³ Adjusted *Think sheets or cards* technique – interactive method used to discuss a controversial issue, which can be a subject of a binary question. The participants will use the available materials to formulate and present their reasoned position to their opponents.

⁴ This can be done at the beginning of the session as the participants arrive and find on chairs an equal number of cards in two colors.

Activity "Causes, problems and consequences of noninvolvement of men in educational processes"⁵

Work algorithm

- 1) After the facilitator makes a brief introduction about the complexity of noninvolvement of men in educational processes (both in the public and private spheres), the participants will be asked to think of its causes, problems and consequences and write them down on post-it notes (5 minutes).
- 2) While the participants are working on this task, the facilitator is drawing on the blackboard (flipchart or a flipchart paper) a tree with roots, trunk and branches.
- 3) When the participants are done, they are asked to read what they have written down in front of the big group and stick the post-it notes on the tree, as follows: the post-it notes with causes will become the tree roots, consequences will become branches, and the problem will become the trunk.
- 4) It may happen that the participants have different views about the cause, the problem and the consequence. In this case the facilitator will make sure the discussions are taking place in a friendly and comfortable environment and that every participant has the opportunity to articulate his/her views.
- 5) The facilitator will encourage the participants to share their views by asking clarification or supporting questions in order to stress the cause and effect relationship.
- 6) "The tree" that has resulted from this activity will remain on the blackboard (flipchart or flipchart paper) and will be used during one of the following activities.

Variations:

- ✓ The big group is divided into three smaller groups, which are assigned the task to identify the *causes* (group 1), *problems* (group 2) and *consequences* (group 3) of noninvolvement of men. After the three groups are done with the task, they will present their views to the big group. The facilitator will moderate the discussions in order to facilitate consensus.

⁵ The recommended *Problem Tree* method allows to make an analysis of a situation, identify the core problems and the main causal relationships, visualized as a chart/tree (cause and effect relationship).

Activity "Involvement of men: what for?"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator divides the participants into five groups.
- 2) Each group will have to identify the benefits of increased involvement of men in child rearing and education in terms of:
 - *Cognitive development*
 - *Emotional development and psychological welfare*
 - *Social and civic development*
 - *Physical condition and health*
 - *Mitigation of risks of negative behaviors*
- 3) The groups will be encouraged to use the brainstorming or brainwriting⁶ techniques or any other technique they like in order to identify as many benefits of involvement of men in education as possible (10 minutes).
- 4) The facilitator will ask the participants to look into both the private (family) and the public spheres (formal and informal education).
- 5) After the time given for the assignment is up the 5 groups will present the results of their common work in whatever way they want (e.g. oral or graphic presentation, role play).
- 6) The facilitator will moderate the discussions to make sure that all the participants understand the impact of increased involvement of men in the lives of children.

Variations:

- ✓ If the group finds it difficult to identify the benefits, the facilitator will distribute to all the groups written statements indicating benefits, which the groups will be asked to attribute to the five areas: *cognitive development, emotional development and psychological welfare, social and civic development, physical condition and health, mitigation of risks of negative behaviors*. After the groups present the result of their work, the facilitator will step in to provide details in case of any inconsistencies.

⁶ The brainwriting techniques is a variation of brainstorming, where participants are encouraged to write down without stopping all the ideas that are coming into their minds and afterwards present them to the group in order to decide together which ideas will be presented to the bigger group.

Resource C

Session III. REFLECTION

Activity "Finding solutions"⁷

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator brings into discussion the results of the Problem Tree exercise.
- 2) The participants will be divided into three smaller groups, which will have to identify solutions for: causes of the problem – roots (group 1), related problems – trunk (group 2) and consequences – branches (group 3).
- 3) The groups will discuss and write down on flipchart paper sheets the causes, problems and consequences of noninvolvement of men in child rearing and education, according to their task, and will also suggest solutions.
- 4) The facilitator will have the groups move to another flipchart paper sheet where they will discuss the previous group's response (causes, problems, consequences and solutions) and add content of their own. Afterwards the facilitator will have the groups move again to another flipchart paper sheet where they again work in group and after that come back to their first stations.
- 5) Once they get to their place, the groups discuss what other participants added to their first response trying to reach a consensus and present adequate and applicable solutions to the big group.
- 6) When the three presentations are over, the facilitator asks questions in order to help the participants make an assessment of their work and the debriefing of the activity.

Variations:

- ✓ One person from every group remains near the group's flipchart sheets to answer the questions asked by the moving groups.
- ✓ Only one person from the group moves to the other flipchart sheets, while the group remains near its flipchart sheet and debates the subject with the person that is moving.

⁷ *Gallery Walk* technique – a method of summarization and graphical representation of the content, which develops the science communication and public speaking skills.

Activity "My solution"⁸

Work algorithm:

- 1) After debriefing the previous activities, the facilitator briefly tells the factors that influence the involvement of men and the strategies to increase it.
- 2) The facilitator stresses that besides the public policies and the activities that a country implements, the institutions and community, and each and every person can do something to bring the change.
- 3) The facilitator encourages the participants to think of their own attitude towards the involvement of men in child rearing and education.
 - Afterwards the facilitator explains the rules of the Cinquain technique (it is advisable to write them down on a flipchart paper) and encourages the participants to write a five-line poem on the subject, following the instructions below:
 - One-noun title;
 - A pair of adjectives describing that title;
 - 3 verbs (predicates) related to the subject;
 - 4 key words that build the full picture;
 - 1 noun synonym to the first one, which derives from the earlier written 4 words.
- 4) The participants will have 5 to 7 minutes to write the poem.
- 5) After all who wish read their poems the group will discuss the issues highlighted in them and will appreciate them.

Variations:

- ✓ The participants can be paired for this activity and after each of them writes the first four lines, the two partners exchange poems so as to let the other partner write the ending (last noun).

⁸ Cinquain technique – a method of formulation of own vision on the subject, general opinion in the form of a five-line poem.

Resource D

Session IV. EXTENSION

Activity "Making the change happen"⁹

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator stresses that change starts with each of us – step by step we can slowly change the approaches in the family and society.
- 2) The participants sit in a circle. The facilitator holds a ball of colored thread in his hand. He asks the trainees to think of what they could do starting today, tomorrow or the next week to increase involvement of men in child rearing and education.
- 3) The facilitator will give the ball to a participant who will pass the thread over his/her wrist making a "thread bracelet" and will share his ideas about what can be done, at personal, family or group/community levels to increase involvement of men. Having said that, he/she will pass the ball to another participant to do the same.
- 4) This will result in a canvas – metaphor that symbolizes the importance of every step, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem, because when such steps are many the change is certainly possible.
- 5) After all the participants present their action plans, the facilitator will go to each of them to cut and tie the thread around every participant's hand and this bracelet will be a reminder for them to do as soon as possible what they have planned.

Final Evaluation

The participants will be asked to fill in the final evaluation questionnaire (template attached).

Homework

The participants will be encouraged to choose from the list of solutions ("Finding solutions" Activity, using the *Gallery Walk* method) one activity they commit to do until the next workshop. Their conclusions after fulfilling that commitment will be included in the general subject of the coaching session "Triple-entry journal".

⁹ The recommended *Commitment Canvas* technique is an adjusted technique, which allows for creating friendly environment in which the participants publicly commit to do something related to the subject of the module.

Resource E

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Until recently researchers focused their efforts mainly on the mother-child relationship. Connecting child development with the way that mother and child build their interaction used to be a natural thing. The realities of the contemporary society, however, have revealed the need to study the influence of the bonds between the child and the father.

Being an involved father means being there at all the stages of the child's life (upbringing and education). For small children the involved fathers are similar to mothers, with the only difference being breastfeeding (or that they spend less time at home because of their jobs), who give them affection and approval and make emotional exchanges through play and caregiving (changing diapers, feeding, bathing).

It is obvious that more and more fathers are getting involved in the upbringing of their children. The times when it was believed that only mothers had to look after their babies (and children in general) have been left behind. Although not long ago, many fathers felt embarrassed when they were seen with prams or even humiliated when they had to change the diaper in somebody's presence, today it is common to see fathers carrying their babies in slings or holding their children's hands while walking in the park without mothers.

Lack of time is not an excuse for fathers to not involve in the education of their children, as fathers play a crucial role in the latter's harmonious development. A father who lets other people educate his child at some point might feel left out of the child's life and heart or overwhelmed.

Benefits of fathers

In recent years the father's parenting role has become the focus of many surveys, the findings of which speak for themselves - fathers have a huge impact on child development, in particular on *cognitive development, emotional development and psychological welfare, social development, physical condition and mitigation of risks of negative behaviors*.

The surveys focusing on the *cognitive development* of children have revealed that most of the children, whose fathers involved in their upbringing and education since early childhood and till adulthood are better academic achievers, are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and, in general, have a positive attitude towards education and school.

As for the *psychological development*, surveys revealed higher ratings of competitiveness and self-esteem, more independence and proactivity in making decisions associated with higher levels of involvement.

From the *social* and *civic* points of view, the children with involved fathers develop social competences earlier than their peers, more specifically team spirit, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, as well as team solidarity.

As for the physical condition of the children with involved fathers, surveys suggest that besides the immediate benefits for their physical condition (muscular development, increased strength, improved immunity and other), by engaging children in various physical activities fathers contribute to maximizing the chances for their children to become more popular among peers, to be perceived as leaders and even to become leaders.

Researchers also argue that an appropriate involvement of fathers in bringing up and educating their children *minimizes the risk* of juvenile delinquency, drinking, promiscuous behavior and early sexual activity.

A healthy family environment and the loving and partnership relationships between partners foster, as a rule, the involvement of fathers in child rearing and education. In families with warm and affectionate relationships, where mothers encourage and provide positive feedback to fathers about their qualities and skills, the latter are more likely to involve in child development.

The socio-psychological parenting and paternity surveys look into a myriad of variables that are crucial for the involvement of fathers. The positive attitude of mothers and their emotional support for fathers during child conception period, pregnancy and especially after the babies are born are key factors in father involvement. Self-confidence, the feeling that they are useful and that mothers and children need them, the favorable perception of themselves and of the positive impact of their involvement in the lives of their children are contributing to increased involvement of fathers. A critical role is also played by the parents' families: if parents had positive experiences of communication with their fathers in childhood, this model is likely to be replicated in the new family.

Regretfully, responsible and conscious fatherhood does not come with the birth with the baby. Nor does the responsible and conscious motherhood. The parental instinct – maternal or paternal, is not enough for the psychologically favorable and socially appropriate upbringing and education of children.

Parents need knowledge and skills and to show behaviors that are appropriate for bringing up and educating healthy and socially friendly children. The parental competences are improving throughout life but they have to be there even before the baby is born. Compared to mothers who want to know more about the development of their children (read, receive training, attend discussion clubs), fathers are reluctant to do that.

The main reason why fathers are quite absent in child rearing and education is perpetuation of the gender stereotypes in our society, the traditional gender roles and cultural factors, because of which our society continues to attribute the parenting role to mothers and leave fathers out of the equation. Of course, there are also other factors, for instance economic ones (intense work schedules, two jobs or no job, working overtime), social ones (involvement of fathers in various social groups or civic, political activities), family ones (migration, divorce, step-

father/mother, death of a parent, disorganized family, substance use, disproportionate involvement of grandparents/nanny and other) or certain psychological and temperamental peculiarities (father: introvert, impulsive, indifferent towards children and family, with psychological traumas; mother – overprotective, intrusive, critical about father involvement).

What fathers do not know, however, about their parenting role is that, beyond “fatigue”, “anger” and “wasted time”, if consciously taken up, it has a very strong positive impact on their children. Surveys revealed that the involved fathers:

- think that parenting is pleasant and rewarding; are more confident and feel that their children and the children’s mothers and their families, in general, need them
- have intimate and nice relationships with children, children’s mothers and other family members;
- are satisfied with life, psychosocially are more mature and are more responsible;
- have a low stress level, are rarely hospitalized and have fewer accidents, live longer, are less prone to addictions and are healthier;
- feel more empathy for others, are more involved in the community life and civic activities;
- are better performers at work and feel high job satisfaction;
- are happy in marriage even after 20-30 years of marriage.

Researchers found that the major factors that influence the involvement of men in bringing up and educating children are:

Father-related factors:

- Gender identity and role identification
- Commitment
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Psychological welfare
- Relationship with own father
- Traits of father’s personality and temperament
- Job peculiarities
- Residential and financial status

Mother-related factors:

- Gender identity and role identification
- Attitudes towards the father of the child
- Personal beliefs about the involvement of men/fathers in education
- Experiences in her family of origin
- Expectations from the child’s father
- Expectations for the child
- Personality traits
- Job peculiarities

Child-related factors:

- Child's temperament
- Attitude towards father
- Attitude towards mother (specifics of the relationship)
- Sex
- Age
- Development stage

Contextual factors:

- Institutional practices
- Parenting policies
- Job peculiarities
- Economic factors
- Ethnicity (race)
- Resources and challenges
- Social support
- Cultural expectations

Factors related to parenting or co-parenting relationship:

- Marital versus non-marital status
- Custody arrangements
- Job peculiarities of parents
- Commitment to relationship
- Cooperation between parents
- Communication peculiarities
- Mutual support
- Conflicts between parents

The key ingredients for healthy involvement in child development are: child-centered, unconditional and healthy love (including, showing care and interest in everything that is happening to the child and his/her feelings); setting limits, discussed and agreed rules; consistent, open and assertive communication with the child and other family members; positive gender identification and cohesion with other members of the community where the child lives.

Some researchers highlight three fundamental components of father involvement in child rearing and education, which lay a solid foundation for the harmonious development of children:

- ✓ engagement (also called direct interaction with the child)
- ✓ accessibility (availability of father for interaction when the child needs it), and
- ✓ responsibility (providing necessary resources for the child).

In this regard, psychologists list several essential ways in which fathers can involve:

- direct communication with the child
- teaching certain things
- observation and monitoring of the child when the latter is busy doing something

- involvement of father in the activities of the child
- protection of the child
- emotional support
- showing affection to the child
- organization of races or competitions
- child care (washing, dressing, feeding, putting children to sleep, walking with the child), sharing common interests with the child
- showing availability for interaction with the child
- making plans together with the child.

These tips can help families that wish to increase father involvement in child-rearing and education to identify the things they can do together.

Some countries, for which the psychological welfare of their citizens – children and adults alike - is a priority, implement policies to address these issues. For instance, the compulsory presence of both parents when the sick child is consulted by the generalist or alternative participation of parents in school parent meetings.

In Moldova, in spite of the efforts to increase involvement of fathers (for instance, day off on June 1, Family Day, paternal leave), unfortunately father involvement is quite low, superficial or rare. The most important thing that our society should do is to put an end to the categorical and distorted separation of traditional gender roles.

Summary

When our society will be able to put an end to the gender stereotypes and the traditional gender responsibilities in the public and private spheres, when fathers will discover how rewarding fatherhood is and when the family will adopt a responsible and conscious partnership-based parenting, only then will the family become stronger and the children will be healthy and happy.

MODULE 2. CONSCIOUS GENDER-SENSITIVE PARENTING: PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

To gather information and gain the appropriate skills to develop specific gender competences (personal, social, methodological and technical) for conscious gender-sensitive parenting.

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the participants with the specifics and principles of conscious gender-sensitive parenting;
- To gain specific gender-sensitive parenting skills;
- To develop specific gender competences for conscious gender-sensitive parenting.

TIME REQUIRED

8 hours

MATERIALS

Blackboard and chalk or flipchart and flipchart paper, A4 paper, post-it notes, colored markers, cardboard sheets – two colors, pens.

METHODOLOGY

Evocation – Realization of Meaning – Reflection - Extension.

Interactive work in small groups; adjusted critical thinking techniques; presentations by facilitator.

KEY MESSAGES

A modern parent is a conscious and gender-sensitive parent. Conscious gender-sensitive parenting highlights how important it is to take into account the inherent challenges in child rearing and education according to the values of the modern society, without ignoring the gender peculiarities of children, while also putting an end to the gender stereotypes, by building emotional bonds with the child, by empowering the child to develop his/her potential, regardless of his/her gender or the stereotypes in the society.

PLANNING NOTES

To prepare for the module, the facilitator will study the manual "Psycho-social activities on gender equality for teenagers"¹⁰. After the agenda and other handouts are distributed and before the first training session starts, ask the participants to fill in the initial evaluation questionnaire (see Annexes for templates).

¹⁰ http://tdh-moldova.md/media/files/files/culegere_de_activitati_psiho-sociale_8331974.pdf (Terre des hommes, 2016)

STEPS

Session I. Evocation

- I.1 Activity "Are men just as good at parenting"?
- I.2 Activity "How did I become a boy or a girl?"

Session II. Realization of Meaning

- II.1 Activity "What does gender-sensitive parenting mean?"
- II.2 Activity "Gender-sensitive parenting awareness"

Session III. Reflection

- III.1 Activity "Elements of conscious gender-sensitive parenting"
- III.2 Activity "My recipe for gender-sensitive parenting"

Session IV. Extension

- IV.1 Activity "Methods to implement gender-sensitive parenting"
- IV.2 Final evaluation and homework

RESOURCES

Resource A

Session I. EVOCATION

Activity "Are men just as good at parenting"?¹¹

Work algorithm

Stage One

- 1) The facilitator will prepare for the session a text with findings of opinion polls, excerpts from theories and media reports on the subject addressed by this activity. An alternative would be to discuss a real case reported by the participants.
- 2) The facilitator makes a brief presentation of the subject and disagreements about it in order to trigger a debate.

For instance: *"A public opinion poll conducted by the Institute for Public Policy in 2014 revealed that 18% of the population of the Republic of Moldova think that men are not as good as women at parenting. What do you think about it?"*¹²

Supporting questions:

- *Why do people think that women make better parents than men?*
 - *Can the fact that women, not men, give birth to children (a biological argument) explain why women are expected to take care of the others?*
 - *Is there any gene responsible for the ability to raise and educate a child that only women have?*
 - *Or maybe it is rather a "tradition", the messages that family, school, church, mass-media keep conveying to promote/perpetuate/prescribe a model according to which women's performances are mostly associated with the private sphere, while men's performances are associated with the public sphere?*
- 3) The facilitator will not step in the debate and will only moderate it to make sure that anybody who wants has a chance to speak.
 - 4) The participants are given time to write down their views and arguments on the cards distributed by the facilitator.

¹¹ The *Corners* technique is a working together method, which stimulates debates and contradictory discussions.

¹² Any other truthful information, which is relevant to the subject, or any other resources can be referred to.

Stage Two

- 1) Depending on their answers (YES or NO), the participants are asked to go to two opposing corners of the room. The participants who have not decided yet will remain in the middle of the room between the two corners.
- 2) The participants in each group will say their arguments and will choose two people – spokespersons – to represent their teams in the debate.

Stage Three

- 1) The facilitator will kick off the debate. The teams will present their stand and arguments.
- 2) The members of the opposing team are allowed to ask clarification questions.
- 3) If necessary, the teams revise their arguments/position. Then the spokespersons resume the debate.

Stage Four

- 1) After the facilitator makes a summary of the responses, the teams are asked to take some time for reflection and if they reconsider their positions they can join the other team.
- 2) The move can again be accompanied by discussions and reasoning.
- 3) After the teams are formed, the arguments may be revised.
- 4) After the group activity is over, the participants are asked to write down or rewrite their arguments on cards that will further be collected by the facilitator.

Variations:

- ✓ Steps 3 and 4 in Stage Four may be given as homework and used as evaluation methods in conjunction with other subjects provided at the end of this module.

Activity "How did I become a boy or a girl?"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator starts a discussion (based on Resource E, theoretical framework, Gender Socialization sub-topic) about the shaping of gender identity in early childhood and asks the participants to think of and to recall their childhood and how they understood that they were "boys" or "girls".
- 2) The participants are divided into two groups by gender. Every group receives a flipchart sheet with a big circle drawn in the middle of it.
- 3) After the participants reflect on how they became boys or girls, they are encouraged to graphically represent on the edge of the flipchart sheet distinct educational elements which shaped their gender identity.
- 4) When all the participants are done with the graphical representation, the group discusses the elements specific to every group member and identifies the common elements and writes them down (or graphically represents) inside the circle drawn in the middle of the flipchart sheet.
- 5) Each group will delegate a person to present the work of the group.
- 6) After the two groups are done with the presentations, all the participants discuss the similarities and differences of gender socialization between boys and girls.

Variations:

- ✓ If the group is big, the participants will work individually, and steps 2 and 3 will be skipped. After the individual work is over, the group is divided by gender and the two groups write down on flipchart sheets the factors that shaped their gender identity. After that the participants move to step 4.
- ✓ If the group is not mixed-gender, the participants will be divided into two groups randomly. It is recommended to have 4 people in a group (working individually at the four corners of the flipchart sheet and writing down the common elements in the middle).

Resource B

Session II. REALIZATION OF MEANING

Activity "What does gender-sensitive parenting mean?"¹³

Work algorithm

- 1) If necessary, the facilitator will explain the essence of association as an intellectual operation.
- 2) The facilitator will distribute handouts to participants and ask them to write down the associations (words or phrases) which strike their mind with the "conscious gender-sensitive parenting" phrase.
- 3) 1 to 5 associations, depending on the size of the group, are enough (more associations will take more time for discussions and debriefing).
- 4) After the participants write down their associations on cards, the facilitator collects the cards and writes down the participants' ideas on the blackboard (flipchart).
- 5) The participants discuss the associations and are asked to decipher them.
- 6) The facilitator will make sure that the discussions are taking place in a friendly environment, where no idea is rejected or criticized.

Variations:

- ✓ If the group is big, it can be divided into two smaller groups. One of them will generate associations for the word "parenting", while the second one will identify the associations for "gender-sensitive".
- ✓ If the group is small, the individual activity where participants write down their associations can be replaced with open discussions that will be moderated by the facilitator.
- ✓ If the group is very big (more than 20 people), the Think-Pair-Share technique can be used so as each pair names 1-2 associations and follow the next steps of this technique.

¹³ The *Free Association* technique is a method used to trigger individual associations with an idea, name, term, phenomenon, which helps address new perspectives for analyzing the connections between realities.

Activity "Gender-sensitive parenting awareness"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will start the activity by highlighting the inherent gender-stereotyped differences in handling children the parents are often not aware of.

For instance: *Parents treat sons and daughters differently. They dress them differently and in different colors. They buy them different toys. The punishment, restrictions, rewards are also often different for boys and girls. I am sure that you also can identify examples from your own experience (including examples that invalidate the "general rule"!)*. Now we will do an exercise that will help you take stock of your life and identify this kind of examples. Look at your family from the perspective of the gender socialization which you received and which you offer to you child (if you are a parent).

- 2) Every participant receives a worksheet, which contains unfinished sentences:

Instruction: *Read the questions below and give honest answers, without signing the worksheet.*

- I) What **used** your parents **to say** about what a boy or a girl should do, say or want?

A girl should:

A boy should:

- II) What **are your observations** about your family - the gender roles at home and outside it (compare the roles of the parents, brothers/sisters, grandparents)?

- III) What **do you read** (school books and newspapers), what **do you see** and **hear** (in parks, during trips, on the radio or TV) about other families from our and other countries?

- 3) After the participants are done with the individual work, the facilitator will collect the worksheets in a box and then distribute them randomly to participants.
- 4) The participants will be asked to read the answers on the worksheets they receive and answer the following questions:
 - ✓ *In your view, are the gender roles in this family:*
 - *traditional/ conservative or*
 - *based on partnership*

Justify your answer.

- ✓ *How would you like the gender roles to be in your family, in particular in relation to your children?*
- ✓ *In your view, what are the educational benefits of the traditional parenting and the conscious gender-sensitive parenting?*

For unmarried participants or without children:

- ✓ *Imagine your future family/ future children. What gender roles would you like to create in your family/how do you want to raise your children?)*

Justify your answer.

- 5) The facilitator will end the activity with a debriefing session.

Resource C

Session III. REFLECTION

Activity "Elements of conscious gender-sensitive parenting"¹⁴

Work algorithm

- 1) The participants will read individually the text below, distributed by facilitator.

Mrs. X, with a strong background in education and feminism, knows very well what the negative implications of gender socialization are, has two children and brilliant ideas. During her second pregnancy she kept a diary in which she wrote all her thoughts, feelings and words generated by the still invisible presence of her child.

Toward the end of the pregnancy (somewhere in the sixth-seventh month), the teacher-mother-researcher-feminist finds out that it will be a boy. And to her surprise, this is what happened: *"It was a boy. He was "stronger" than the child I thought I was carrying a minute earlier. I shouldn't use honeyed tones and words like "little baby" when speaking to him. (...) So I started talking with a deeper voice, which was no longer gentle, the tone became more articulate and solemn. I wanted him to be "strong", this is why I had to speak to him with a "strong", "male" voice, to foster "the innate strength".*

Some parents are serious about gender-sensitive education and make significant efforts to neutralize any sexist influence on the development of their child's identity.

Lawrence Summers, a well-known American economist, theorizes about the essential difference between genders, that are very obvious from the day the baby is born: *"While I would prefer to believe otherwise, I guess my experience with my two and a half year old twin daughters who were not given dolls and who were given trucks, and found themselves saying to each other, look, daddy truck is carrying the baby truck, tells me something. And I think it's just something that you probably have to recognize".*

Other parents believe that children should be kept away from the social-cultural correlates of gender until they are old enough to be critical of stereotypes and sexism.

Sandra and Daryl Bem was a couple of well-known American psychologists.

Their children, Jeremy and Emily, for years were subjected to a two-pronged strategy. Their parents did all that they could to reduce (or even remove) the gender associations in their children's environment (i.e. what "goes" with the "being" male or female: things, feelings, responsibilities, skills, haircuts and other) and normally ubiquitous information about what means to be a man or a woman was replaced with the idea (single) that the main difference between men and women is in anatomy and the sexual-reproductive system. This led to: *"My son, Jeremy, naively decided to wear barrettes to nursery school. Several times that day, another little boy insisted that Jeremy must be a girl, because "only girls wear barrettes". After repeatedly insisting that "wearing barrettes doesn't matter; being a boy means having a penis and testicles" Jeremy finally pulled down his pants to make his point more convincingly. The other boy was not impressed. He simply said, "Everybody has a penis; only girls wear barrettes".*

The two parents equally shared the parenting roles, offered trucks and dolls with equal enthusiasm to both children, but also pink and blue clothing. Care was taken to make sure that the children saw men and women doing cross-gender jobs. Moreover, by way of censorship and redecoration, they ensured that the children's book shelves offered an egalitarian picture-book world.

"My husband and I got into the habit of doctoring books whenever possible so as to remove all sex-linked correlations (by changing the sex of the main character, by drawing longer hair and the outline of breasts onto illustrations of previously male truck drivers, physicians, pilots and the like; and by deleting or altering sections of the text that described females or males in a sex-stereotyped matter). When reading children's pictures books, we also chose pronouns that avoided gender implications, for instance "And what is this little piggy doing? Why, he or she seems to be building a bridge."

¹⁴ Guided Discussion technique – participants work with a text which triggers heated discussions, debates. The role of the facilitator is only to guide the discussions, not interrogate or evaluate. During this activity the participants make statements, ask questions, make signals and breaks.

- 2) After the participants read the text, anyone can start the discussion with a statement on it. The participants are free to ask the participant who has made the statement or other participants questions.
- 3) If the discussion comes to a deadlock, the facilitator may step in with questions for the group.
- 4) The facilitator will let the participants discuss and will avoid telling his/her own view.
- 5) From time to time, the facilitator will use certain nonverbal signals (that the group is already familiar with, e.g. facial expression, hand gestures, look and other) to foster the discussion.
- 6) Similarly, breaks will be taken, in particular when more complicated or controversial questions have been asked in order to stimulate revelations and give the participants time to reflect.

Supporting questions (used by facilitator only when discussions come to a deadlock):

- *What do you think about the educational models described in the text?*
- *Would you recommend them to parents? Justify your answer.*
- *What jobs the Bems' children have?*
- *In your view, how did Mrs. X behave as a parent after giving birth to her boy?*

Activity "My recipe for gender-sensitive parenting"¹⁵

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator kicks off a discussion about the importance of self-transformation in order to be coherent with the parenting style that we consider efficient for our children.
- 2) To help the participants shape an opinion, the participants will be asked to develop their own parenting vision/justification.
- 3) The facilitator will write on the blackboard (or flipchart) the structure of justification: *statement*, *explanation* (preconditions) and *evidence* (proofs, data, and information to support the statement) and *conclusion*.
- 4) The facilitator will distribute excerpts from Resource E. After the participants read them, they will be asked to write their *statements* (an affirmative sentence).
- 5) After all the participants write their statements, they will proceed with the *explanation*: 2 or 3 sentences that describe the statement, explain the principles that underlie the statements.
- 6) After they are done with the explanation, the participants will write down the *evidence*, references to statistics, research, experts that support the statements.
- 7) Then follows the *conclusion*: a short and clear statement confirming the truthfulness of the original statement.
- 8) Those who wish will present their justifications to the entire group.

Variations:

- ✓ If the group is big, the technique can be adjusted so as to include writing an essay following the same steps as homework or evaluation.
- ✓ The assignment can be given as homework in a training program that lasts a couple of days, so as the participants present their individual work the next day.
- ✓ If the group is better prepared, the assignment can be made more difficult: every participant writes the *statement* on a A4 paper, which he/she gives to the participant on his/her right, who, in turn, will read the statement and will write his/her own *explanations*, and will further pass the paper to the participant on his/her right, who will write down the *evidence* that underlies the statement and explanations. Then, the paper is handed back to the participant who wrote the statement to formulate the *conclusion*, based on what has been written by colleagues.

¹⁵ The *Four Step* technique facilitates formulation of a well-argued position by analyzing different views in order to choose the most compelling one.

Resource D

Session IV. EXTENSION

Activity "Methods to implement gender-sensitive parenting"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will make a summary of the most relevant issues of the training day and will conclude that we all should adopt a different educational approach, consistent with the emerging values of the society and with us, transformed by the books that we read, the people we communicate with, the social situations we face, our children, etc. Life is constantly changing and if our goal is to remain functional and efficient, we should also keep changing and fine-tuning our actions.
- 2) To induce participants to commit to a new challenge related to the parenting role (or professional field, depending on the target group), the facilitator will bring gender dimension into discussion.

For instance: To do the cooking and the cleaning, to do the shopping, to take care of the ill and old family members, to take care of the children... To caress, speak with a calm voice, to pour oil on troubled waters... As a rule, long time in many countries these things were done only by mothers. Lately, however, more and more fathers have been taking up household responsibilities. More and more fathers are adopting emotional behaviors without feeling embarrassed. Mothers, in turn, do not take extended child care leaves.

This is how besides the public partnership (a balance between women and men in the public sphere, equal number of men and women in management position), a private partnership is emerging – a formula for modern couples, in which partners re-assess and share their family responsibilities and child rearing and education is the obligation and privilege of both parents.

The parenting roles are equally important, but also different, depending on the child's needs and the type of the relationship. Instead of limiting the development of the child's potential because of gender stereotypes, they, on the contrary, stimulate his/her upbringing despite these stereotypes.

This is how parenting becomes gender-sensitive and conscious.

- 3) The participants will receive the worksheet below to fill in and, afterwards, if they wish, to read out some of the activities included in the last column (no.4):

Instructions: *Read carefully the activities with children (behavior, actions, gestures) in the first column and tick the ones that took place in your family of origin (column 2), which take or have taken place in your current family (column 3) and write a couple of actions that you plan to take or continue taking (column 4):*

Activities:	In my family of origin	In my current family	Actions to take or keep taking
Involvement of the father, together with the mother, in child care tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bathing - changing diapers - dressing - feeding - putting children to sleep - massage - physical exercises 			
Involvement of the father in creative play activities (drawing, playdoh)			
Initiation of dynamic games by father/ sports games			
Involvement of the father in education			
Father's attempts to soothe a crying child, without calling the mother and without being rude to the child			
The mother does household chores that are typical for men (considered to be nontraditional for men)			
The father does household chores that are typical for women (considered to be nontraditional for women)			
Organization of competitions/ celebrations/ picnics jointly with the child or by the father			
The father makes the child learn poems/songs			
The father participates in the reading of fairytales			
The father walks with the child without the mother			
The father spends vacations with the child, without the mother			
The father takes leave to provide care to his ill child			

The father takes the ill child to the doctor, without the mother			
The father attends parent meetings at nursery school/school			
The father takes part in the nursery school/school celebrations			
The father takes paternity leave when the child is born			
The father helps the child with homework			
The father/mother uses to hug the child			
The father/mother uses to kiss the child			
The father/mother shows respect verbally for the child every day			
The father/mother encourages verbally the child every day			
The father/mother discusses with the child about the latter's feelings, encouraging him/her to talk about them			
The father/mother discusses with the child about his/her own feelings			
The father/mother discusses with the child about the latter's relationships with mates/friends			
The father cooks/does the cleaning/does the laundry together with the child			
The father takes care/picks flowers together with the child			
The father feeds/takes care of cats, doves (other living creatures) together with the child			

Final evaluation

The participants will be asked to fill in a final evaluation questionnaire (see Annexes for the template).

Homework

The participants will be asked to select several activities (at least 5 of those that they typically have not done so far) from the list of activities (Activity "Methods to implement gender-sensitive parenting"), column 4, to do until the next workshop. Supporting questions for the implementation stage (for discussions with the partner or for reflection):

- ✓ *What values do we want to educate in our child?*
- ✓ *How do we want to raise and educate our child?*
- ✓ *What is our role as a parent?*
- ✓ *What kind of parent do we want to be?*
- ✓ *How long and what kind of interactions do I want to have with my child?*
- ✓ *In my view, what should mothers/fathers do/not do?*
- ✓ *How would I like to be treated if my partner disagrees with me or over something related to our child?*
- ✓ *How can I best support my partner?*
- ✓ *As a parent, how can I best support my child?*

The conclusions after doing the selected activities will be included in the general subject of the coaching session "Triple-entry journal".

Resource E

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Challenges of gender-sensitive parenting

We all want to feel accomplished/successful both in the public sphere (career) and the private one (family). For this we need to know more about what is going on in the family, about our differentiated socialization (including) based on our biological sex, about the equality issues and difference between women and men in the family, about how authority and hierarchy works in a family, and about the conflicts between the family members. We should also look into the family from the “gender perspective”. The family generates and conveys important messages about our place and aspirations in the society as women and men. We inherit the gender models from our family and reproduce them, with or without changing them.

Sometimes, even in two-parent households, mothers do most of the parenting work. In spite of their physical availability, fathers are emotionally unavailable. Some fathers either do not have enough time, or are too tired after work, or simply consider that it is not their job to educate their children. This attitude, however, has long-term implications for children and fathers alike.

The recent global report that provides a global view of men’s contributions to parenting, State of The World’s Fathers (SOWF)¹⁶, produced by MenCare¹⁷ – a global campaign to promote men and boys’ involvement, highlights that to develop the children need at least one engaged and committed caretaker, who can be male or female.

The father has a very important role in the development of the child. Moreover, biologically he is as able as the mother to take care of the child, while the fathers with closer connections with their children live longer, have fewer health problems and are more productive and generally happier. These are among the key findings of the first-ever SOWF report – a landmark analysis of fatherhood that draws evidence from hundreds of studies covering all countries in the world with available data.

Therefore, the SOWF report reveals long-lasting disparities.

Women continue to spend between 2 to 10 times longer than men caring for a child or older person. These inequalities persist despite the fact that women today make up 40% of the formal global workforce and 50% of the world’s food producers. While it is increasing, men’s unpaid caregiving has not kept pace with women’s participation in the labor force.

In fact, there is no country in the world where men and boys share the unpaid domestic and care work equally with women and girls. This imbalance has widespread negative effects. It hurts men, women, and children. Women lose opportunities for work and income, and girls are often held back from educational opportunities, exacerbating the gender inequality and gender-based poverty. Girls

¹⁶ <http://sowf.men-care.org/>

¹⁷ <http://men-care.org/>

and boys lose out on the benefits of having an involved father, and men miss out on the connections and closeness that fatherhood can offer.

The report also reveals that between 61 and 77% of fathers say they would work less if it meant that they could have more time with their children.

However, although maternity leave is now offered in nearly all countries, only 92 countries offer leave that can be taken by new fathers; for half of these, the leave is less than three weeks. Iceland, which seems to be the world champion in men's use of paternity leave, sees men averaging 103 days of paid leave, but it is still only a third of what women take.

Leave policies for fathers, when well designed, have the potential to transform the gender relations at home, at work, and in the society at large. In the United Kingdom, fathers who took leave after birth were 19% more likely to participate in feedings and to get up with the baby at night 8 to 12 months later, as compared with fathers who did not take leave. A study from Sweden showed that every month that fathers took paternity leave increased the mother's income by 6.7%, as measured 4 years later, which was more than she lost by taking parental leave herself.

The report argues that gender equality will not be achieved unless men are engaged in the care of their children and families, a subject "virtually invisible in public policies and in public discourse."

Around 80% of the world's men and boys will become fathers in their lifetime, and virtually all men have at least some connection to children in caregiving relationships. This may be in an extended family or a nuclear one, with parents living together or not. Despite this, engaging men in caregiving is only just beginning to find its way onto the global gender equality agenda.

When fathers take on their fair share of the unpaid care work, it can alter the nature of the relationships between men and women and children, as both fathers and mothers will have more time for their children, women are released from some of their 'double burden,' and fathers get to experience the joys, satisfactions, and stresses of caring for their children.

Taking up roles as caregivers also offers men the opportunity to begin to break free from the narrow concepts of manhood and fatherhood, providing their sons and daughters with positive role models, improved health and development, and higher hopes for the future.

Like women, nature has endowed men biologically to develop strong emotional ties with the children. In other words, children influence the development of both mothers and fathers, just like fathers and mothers influence their children.

Surveys revealed that the involvement of the father in the child's educational activities differ a lot from one country to another and ranges between 10% in Swaziland and 79% in Montenegro of fathers who claim to engage in at least one learning activity with their children.

Sex and gender roles

One might find it natural for a boy to have certain gender-specific psychological traits since birth. Surveys, however, argue that it is not so and that the sex role – more specifically, the psychological traits of women and men, as they are perceived by most of the people – are acquired through the contact with the society, which defines what it is to be a man or a woman.

The sex role concept can be translated as the asymmetry in the roles of men and women. It is dictated by the society and can be easier explained as the roles and jobs that the social thinking assigns to women and men. For instance, the traditional family patterns in which the woman is loving and caring, taking care of the household and children, while the man is expected to be the breadwinner. The sex role concept is also what the community expects a child to do or not to do depending on his/her gender.

The child acquires the sex role concept during the third year of life, until then having had no idea of the differences between genders and the why they “should” work. This is why, until the child reaches this age he/she is very likely to watch his/her parent in amazement if the latter tells him/her that only the opposite sex does certain actions/things. He/she gathers most of the information on this subject until he is 5 or 6, when they have deeply rooted in his/her personality and he/she unconsciously wants to follow them.

Effects of the gender roles

The only positive effect of the gender roles comes from the functionalist mentality according to which for the society to be functional it should stick to the traditional gender roles. And yet, how far would have the society and civilization gone if women had been allowed to contribute to their evolution? How would a world look like where men are free of the frustrations caused by the fact that the gender role does not allow them to express their feelings?

The drawbacks of the gender roles are, in turn, overwhelming. Surveys revealed that depression is more common among the stay-at-home mothers who adopted a traditional female role, than among the women who are making a career.

Gender stereotypes

There are many gender stereotypes, about both men and women, many of them unjustified. Some of them, however, are rooted so deeply in the social thinking that they can be easily noticed in people’s personality traits. Therefore, if we really don’t want our son or daughter to become a victim of wrong stereotypes, we should first of all adopt gender-sensitive parenting practices and after that, as parents, be vigilant and check our own stereotypes.

The gender stereotypes are the concepts, ideas and beliefs that people from a certain culture or society have about their expectations from men and women.

In the case of women, the gender stereotypes are called "*expressive traits*", while the gender stereotypes for men are called "*instrumental traits*".

Is there any difference between men and women?

The parents who wish to provide the best possible education to their children have to choose between the traditional or modern pattern, whether they should tell their son that expressing the feelings and emotions is something ok or not ok, whether they should let their daughter ignore the household chores and focus on car service.

Psychologists have no doubt about that: detached from gender stereotypes men and women are mentally equal and this is how they should be raised and treated in the society.

A person's traits are not just biological. They are determined by various things like education, social status, experiences, sexual orientation, religion etc.

Researchers for a long time already have been discouraging couples to share traditional values by adopting traditional gender roles, such as active/passive, emotional/instrumental, rational/emotional, dependent/independent. The fact that they still play an important role in nowadays society is only due to lack of education and to the fact that this scientific evidence is disregarded.

The origin of the behavioral differences between men and women has also been a reason for debate, with sociological, psychological and sociobiological theories standing at opposite poles. Some theories suggest that there are innate behavioral differences between men and women, arguing that men, compared to women, are genetically programmed to be aggressive. Women, in turn, biologically are the nurturers. Other authors argue that male aggression, as well as female passivity and nurturing, differs in different cultures, and that the fact that a trait is more common is not evidence that it has a genetic background and that it might be rather dictated by general cultural factors.

Other researchers stress that the hormonal differences between men and women play an important role. Testosterone – a male sex hormone – is associated with men's aggressive tendencies.

There are also authors who refute these theories.

Most of the authors, nevertheless, believe that the behavioral differences between men and women occur as a result of the social learning of one's gender identity, while gender socialization, i.e. the process through which children learn gender roles through social agents, like family, mass media and education, plays an important role in this process.

The small differences existing in the brains of girls and boys at birth grow as parents, educators, teachers and the entire society unconsciously force the gender stereotypes on them during their entire lifetime. Certainly the genes and hormones

are also to be blamed for some gender differences (during puberty the male voice deepens and this is immediately associated with power), but the social factors – the way we treat and speak to girls and boys, the way we encourage initiative, sensibility, etc. – have proved to be much more important than thought before any neuroscientific and psychological research was conducted.

In an ever more complex and competitive world, for the good of the individual and society, we should nurture more emotional intelligence in boys and more technical aptitudes in girls.

Gender socialization and gender identity

Family plays the most important part in child development. “The first seven years of a child’s life” (here synonym to “good family upbringing”) is the result of the work of the parents and of the family environment in which the child grows up. There the child learns the language of the culture in which he lives, acquires the norms, attitudes, values and behaviors that he needs in order to integrate in the society. All these socialization processes also have a gender dimension – these are lessons taught differently to girls and boys, people with preconceptions (including gender ones), which they, willingly or unwillingly, pass down to their children.

The answer to the question “girl or boy?” is also very important for everything that will happen in one’s life. Depending on it, parents (followed by relatives, friends, colleagues, teachers, employers, church, and politicians) start the gender socialization process, often underlying the differences, instead of similarities, between girls and boys until they seem to be belonging to completely different worlds.

The family has an important role to play in gender socialization by attributing distinct roles to children depending on their gender, which they will ultimately conform to. Children play “mom and dad” being aware of the behavioral differences between the two of them and conforming to these roles. They notice that the grown-ups treat girls and boys differently (a big mistake, some psychologists would say), that women use other perfumes than men, wear other kind of clothes, have other kinds of haircuts, etc. At the age of two, children are believed to have some understanding of gender – they know that they are girls or boys and how to differentiate the other people. Later (at the age of 5-6), they will already know that the differences between boys and girls also lie in anatomy.

Not only parents treat boys and girls differently (tone of voice, games, activities, rules, etc). Industry also does that (in particular games and clothes). All these things underline the differences between the attributes of masculinity and femininity. Even the toys that seem to be neutral, for instance the plush toys, are not that neutral – cats, rabbits (most of them pink) are recommended to girls, while the plush toys that convey power, for instance lions or tigers, are recommended to boys. The studies that analyze the children’s books have discovered clear gender differences and suggest that boys play roles that are much more important than girls and perform activities involving power and independence, being portrayed as heroes, fighters, policemen, judges or kings. Girls, on the other hand, are more passive

(wait for the prince to save them) and do the housework (cooking, cleaning, waiting for the male characters to come home).

Today, things have changed a little bit, in particular in the TV shows. However, there are still many children's books that have preserved the traditionalist, anachronistic nature.

To conclude, gender identity is a key component of self-awareness, and there is a myriad of factors, both biological and, especially, social and cultural, that influence its formation and development. The psychological balance of an individual also depends on the way a child is raised and gender identity is practiced, without stereotyping and pressing. The parents' role in this is to accompany the child throughout the development and identity shaping processes, without diverting them.

Domestic violence

The family is not always a harmonious and balanced environment for the child. The power negotiations between the family members often lead to tensions, conflicts, quarrels, misunderstandings, which may result in domestic violence. Most of the victims of domestic violence are women, children and old people. Domestic violence may take different forms: physical or sexual abuse, intimidation or verbal abuse, damage of victim's property, isolation from family/friends, threats, control over financial resources and other.

Domestic violence is a social phenomenon (not just isolated/individual). Statistics suggest that it is just the tip of the iceberg. Because "one should never wash dirty linen in public", often because of embarrassment, fear or lack of information, victims do not report domestic violence.

The children who grow up in violent families often face:

- physical problems: unexplained illnesses, slower physical development, more exposure to accidents in and outside the home;
- emotional and mental problems: increased anxiety, feeling of guilt, fear of abandonment, isolation, anger, fear of pain and death;
- psychological problems: self-doubt, depression, comparison with the happier life of their peers, identification with negative characters;
- behavior problems: aggressive behavior or passive response to the attacks of others, sleep disorders, enuresis, fights, running away from home, pregnancy at a young age, casual relationships just to leave home, mutilation, drugs and alcohol, defensive behavior by telling lies;
- school problems: expelling, sudden changes in academic performance, lack of concentration, lack of social manners and non-adaptive behavior at school.

Adopting conscious gender-sensitive parenting

Our children do as we do, not as we say. Our reactions shape their behavior, while gender roles come through socialization. The most important age for the formation of gender identity is between 2-3 and 6 years when children have increased capacity to absorb new information. During this period, we should be very careful about how we raise our children. Boys who are served and see their mothers only doing the cooking and the household chores will start to think that it is the job of all mothers

and women, while girls will tend to identify with their mothers and will take up this role as something that goes without saying. Parents should offer children both specific and non-specific gender models. An example of gender-specific activity for girls is playing with beads, while a non-specific gender activity is, for instance, playing with the hammer or trucks.

We often involuntarily implant in our children the gender stereotypes through our interactions and reactions. Girls, for instance, are encouraged to play with dolls and kitchen utensils. These activities help girls exercise their maternal and caregiving instinct. Through role play girls identify with their mothers, learn how to raise their children and take care of their families. Boys receive dolls far less often, and very rarely does one find kitchen utensils in their rooms, as if they are not going to become parents when they grow up, or they will not need food...

In a modern family, however, parents should share both the household chores and the child rearing tasks. Both parents work and spend about the same amount of time at work. Both parents are tired after a day's work, even if, usually, one of them is paid more than the other (women earn on the average 88% of the average earnings of men). However, the higher earnings of one of the parents do not set that parent free from doing household chores.

It may happen that, despite our attempts to protect our children from gender stereotypes, they will still absorb the beliefs promoted by the society. A girl might choose to become a teacher, because all her favorite teachers were women.

We as parents should keep in mind that the society is strong enough to influence our behavior and career-related decisions. There is no way we can protect our children from these influences, but only united can families hinder the perpetuation of the gender stereotypes. For these reasons, it is important that our children see us also doing other activities than the gender-specific ones (housework or renovation).

Both parents should show that what they do at home and at work is important and useful. It is advisable that the child sees an efficient, "resourceful" mother (able to drive a nail in the wall or change a light bulb) and a "weak" father, touched by a song or sad news.

It is also important that parents promote both gender specific and nonspecific patterns for their children: for boys, for instance, playing with trucks (gender specific), and playing with household utensils (gender nonspecific).

In the contemporary world more and more families (especially young) are negotiating the distribution of tasks, time, money, with both partners being successful at work, but also involved in child rearing, families in which decisions, priorities and strategies are shared. Many of these young people come from traditional families in which there is a clear distinction between roles and in which, most of the time, the man decides and the woman obeys. These young people, however, choose to renounce the traditional socialization pattern, instead of replicating it.

Because the world is constantly changing, societies adopt new values and cultural norms and such influences are stronger in the life options of open-minded people who build genuine gender partnerships in their families and replicate them in the public sphere.

Summary

There is no doubt that gender matters in child rearing and education and in everything that we do as human beings. But if we pay more attention to the differences between men and women, instead of our values, similarities, potential, we will never evolve - neither at society, nor at individual level. After many years of fighting for equal rights and opportunities, nobody wants to lose the progress made until today because of distorted stereotypes about girls and boys, women and men.

This is why it is very important that parents, teaching staff and other adults who interact with children reduce these differences by developing all the cognitive, social, personal and emotional skills in girls and boys alike. All the intelligences should be developed in boys and girls alike so as the child to be able later to make a decision about the sector in which he/she will specialize and work, because studies suggest that success in today's world depends on the many traits and strengths of men and women – speaking, reading, writing, mathematics, orientation in space, dexterity, technologies and physical skills, as well as empathy and perseverance, resourcefulness and sensitivity, courage and tenacity.

Therefore, if the boys and girls do similar activities, the differences between them will reduce, and both girls and boys will be more likely to develop a balanced set of skills and competences.

The gender differences have a negative impact on children by depriving them of certain development opportunities. All those who are involved in the education of children, including parents, education staff and trainers should be aware of and harness and break through the limits imposed by the gender differences.

The real challenge is to recognize and use our understanding of the differences between men and women to help our children to develop freely, without gender differences limiting their becoming and essence.

MODULE 3. NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION – A SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL

GOAL

To gather information and acquire the most appropriate skills for the development of nonviolent communication competences (personal, social, methodological and technical) in order to adopt nonviolent communication as a social change model.

OBJECTIVES

- To get familiar with the peculiarities of nonviolent communication;
- To gain nonviolent communication skills;
- To develop nonviolent communication competences;
- To promote social change through nonviolent communication.

TIME REQUIRED

8 hours

MATERIALS

Blackboard and chalk or flipchart and flipchart paper, A4 paper, post-it notes, colored markers, colored cardboard sheets, pens.

METHODOLOGY

Evocation – Realization of Meaning – Reflection - Extension.

Interactive work in small groups; adjusted critical thinking techniques; presentations by facilitator and visual support.

KEY MESSAGE

The nonviolent communication theory and practice show how we can change our world by nurturing the nonviolent communication principles, how to make a difference between the fundamental human needs that we want to satisfy and the strategies we use to do it, as well as how to strongly connect to the values that motivate us to help the social change.

PLANNING NOTES

To prepare for the training, the facilitator will study the theoretical framework of the module and the books “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life” and “Nonviolent Communication: A Model for Social Change”.

After the participants receive the agenda and handouts and before the first work session starts, ask the participants to fill in the initial evaluation questionnaire (see Annexes for templates).

STEPS

Session I. Evocation

I.1 Activity "Pairs of detectives"

I.2 Activity "What is and what is not nonviolent communication?"

Session II. Realization of meaning

II.1 Activity "Nonviolent communication under scrutiny"

Session III. Reflection

III.1 Activity "Nonviolent communication helps personal and social change"

Session IV. Extension

IV.1 Activity "Find someone who..."

IV.2 Final evaluation and homework

RESOURCES

Resource A

Session I. EVOCATION

Activity "Pairs of detectives"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator asks the participants to say what are their favorite animals and why.
- 2) The facilitator will show the participants two pictures depicting a giraffe and a jackal. They will have to recognize the animals in the pictures and say what they know about them and which one of the two animals they think is good and which one is bad and why.
- 3) The facilitator can invoke the concepts of "aggressive language" and "nonviolent language" and will ask the participants to associate each of the two animals with the type of language they would use if they could speak.
- 4) The facilitator will lead the discussion towards the conclusion that the giraffe language is nonviolent and can be associated to the observation and description of a behavior, while the jackal language is aggressive and can be associated to evaluation, judging.
- 5) Referring to the work of a fellow, somebody who uses the giraffe language will say: "*Your work has stains and holes!*" (observation, description), while the jackal person will say: "*Your work is horrible!*" (evaluation, judging).
- 6) After the participants discuss the example, the facilitator will kick off the following activity "Pairs of detectives".
- 7) Every participant will draw a note from a basket with a statement, which is either an observation or evaluation (see the worksheet).
- 8) After every participant reads the sentence on his/her note, he/she starts looking for the participant with a related sentence. This means that the participant whose sentence describes a behavior will look for the participant whose sentence evaluates this same behavior and vice versa. When the two "detectives" find each other they come in front of the group by two.
- 9) After all the pairs of detectives are formed, each pair of notes, one by one, is pinned on a flipchart sheet. Before this the facilitator will write on the flipchart paper the names of two columns where the notes will be pinned: "Observation/description" and "Evaluation/Judging".
- 10) At the end of the activity the participants discuss the language they prefer using when somebody addresses them or why they refer to themselves and why.

Variations:

- ✓ For the activity to be more entertaining, the facilitator may encourage the participants to fulfill the task more quickly and will award the first pairs of detectives.

Worksheet. Pairs of detectives

She gave me a cake.	She is generous.
Last time when we played together, I was hurt.	You play too hard.
She often jumps the queue.	She does not care about others.
He told mother that he did not break the window, but I saw him doing that.	He is a liar.
The teacher told me to stop threatening you.	You are the teacher's favorite student.
I have got a bad grade in math.	The teacher is demanding.
He asked me to join the game.	He is friendly.
You haven't solved the problem.	You are stupid.
He pushed me out of the line.	He is aggressive.
He told the teacher that I offended him.	He is a tattletale.
Miruna told me that I am stupid.	Miruna is bad.
She took my pencil without asking me.	She is impolite.
I did not like this movie.	It was a terrible movie.
Radu is beating the table with his fist.	Radu is furious.
You are rocking back and forth in the chair, and the chair may break.	You are very nervous.

Activity "What is and what is not nonviolent communication?"¹⁸

Work algorithm

- 1) Before starting the activity, the facilitator will write on paper sheets relevant statements from the theoretical framework.
- 2) The participants will be divided into two groups, with equal number of people, who will receive different statements.
- 3) The participants will discuss them and agree on the distinct elements of the subject and will write on two flipchart papers as many characteristics as possible for "What is nonviolent communication" and "What is not nonviolent communication".
- 4) The participants will be asked to identify a couple of proverbs and sayings, which address the subject of the activity.
- 5) When both teams are done, the participants decide how the teams will present the results of their work (role play, oral presentation, etc.).
- 6) The facilitator distributes the full text to the participants, who are asked to read it and say if there are any other relevant statements in the text which they think help better describe the subject.

Variations:

- ✓ Instead of the statements from a given text, the participants can think about other statements in relation to the task received.
- ✓ Proverbs, sayings or excerpts from classic literature can also be used. In this case, the participants will skip step 4.

¹⁸ Adjusted *Quotes* technique – a technique used to look into a phenomenon, personality, event, which aims to facilitate discussions on certain quotes in order to motivate the participants to explore the phenomenon, event etc.

Resource B

Session II. REALIZATION OF MEANING

Activity "Nonviolent communication under scrutiny"¹⁹

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will have prepared in advance a cube with inscriptions specific to the technique on all cube faces. While presenting the complexity of nonviolent communication and its multiple implications, the facilitator will also present the sides of the cube, explaining how the technique will be applied to this activity.

For instance: *The cube has six faces on which verbs which express six thinking operations are written in a specific sequence, as follows:*

1. Define/ describe it.

Before we start communicating about something, we should give and agree on the definitions, with reference to reliable sources. If no definition has been given before, we will define the situation/phenomenon, drawing on the available information.

2. Compare it.

The most important thing now is to link the new information with the information that we know/have absorbed. Making a comparison will help us see the specifics, peculiarities of the phenomenon against the ones that we already know.

3. Associate it.

Every situation/ phenomenon/ subject that is under scrutiny may trigger certain associations and make you think of various concepts, places, similarities, etc.

4. Analyze it.

This stage is to decipher all the structures, elements, principles, strategies, etc. of the phenomenon that is under scrutiny.

5. Apply it.

At this stage consider the possibilities for practical application of the phenomenon under scrutiny and suggest contexts from the real life that can be included in the phenomenon.

6. Argue for or against it.

The final step in the description of nonviolent communication is the justified assessment of the value of this process by each participant; the assessment may be positive or negative.

- 2) The facilitator will divide the participants in 3 or 4 smaller groups and will give them 15 minutes to prepare a comprehensive description of nonviolent communication.

¹⁹ Adjusted *Cubing* technique – is a technique for considering a subject from a variety of different perspectives, organizing the available information and absorbing new information, that is useful in debating a subject and articulation of personal opinion.

- 3) For the step nr.5 the groups are asked to prepare a quick role play from real life where nonviolent communication could be used.
- 4) When the time is up, each team will read/present its comprehensive description and will include in it step 5 with the role play. At the end the teams explain their positions for supporting or not supporting nonviolent communication.

Variations:

- ✓ If the group is big, the participants can be divided in pairs and will skip the role play.
- ✓ If the group is small (less than 12 people), the participants can work individually.
- ✓ If the group is very big (more than 18 people), the participants will follow all the steps of the technique and the groups will only role play and present the final arguments, without reading the description.

Resource C

Session III. REFLECTION

Activity "Nonviolent communication helps personal and social change"²⁰

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will talk for a couple of minutes about the dilemmas related to the applicability of nonviolent communication both in the personal and the extended, social spaces, without returning a verdict or voicing his/her own point of view.
- 2) The facilitator will have prepared in advance 6 hats (or anything that can replace them) in the following colors: white, red, yellow, green, blue and black.
- 3) The facilitator will divide the participants into 6 groups and will distribute the hats randomly to one member of each group. The color will determine the role the group members will play. The task for the groups will be to discuss how nonviolent communication can be applied to help both personal and social transformations.
- 4) To achieve the objectives of this task the participants should know what the colors mean:

The white hat: is about data and information; neutral; focuses on facts and clear images; objective thinking;

The red hat: unleashes imagination and feelings; provides an emotional perspective to events; can also express anger or rage;

The black hat: relates to caution, worries, warning, and judgment; sees the sad, dark side of the situation; negative, pessimistic thinking;

The yellow hat: is for a positive and constructive view of things; symbolizes sunshine, brightness, optimism; positive, constructive thinking based on logic;

The green hat: generates new and innovative ideas and stimulates creative thinking; symbolizes the fresh grass, vegetation, rich growth, fertility;

The blue hat: is used to manage the thinking process; it symbolizes the sky that is above all of us, all-seeing and all-knowing; supervises and guides the work; concern to control and organize.

In other words:

The blue hat → **clarifies** (defines the problem; at a later stage: chooses the appropriate solution and goes to the next step)

The white hat → **informs** (provides available information and materials about the problem; at a later stage – dialogue – connects the solutions with the available information, answering questions like "Are these solutions informed");

The green hat → **generates ideas** and new efforts (suggests possible solutions)

The yellow hat → **brings creative benefits** (looks for real ways to implement the suggested solutions);

²⁰ Adjusted *Thinking Hats* technique – an interactive technique that stimulates participants' resourcefulness and critical thinking, and helps explore different perspectives of a situation.

The black hat → **spots mistakes** (highlights the weaknesses of all the solutions)
The red hat → **makes statements** of emotional feelings (stimulates the participants to answer questions like: "What are your feelings about the solutions?");

- 5) To make the job of groups easier, the facilitator can distribute a brief description that the teams can use in their work.
- 6) The discussions start after the participants understand the roles they have to play. The facilitator will make sure the discussion is not monopolized by any of the groups of hats. The purpose is to address the subject and all its implications.
- 7) The activity will end with a debriefing, after which each participant will say what conclusions he/she has made. The role of the facilitator is to trigger a proactive attitude to nonviolent communication.

Resource D

Session IV. EXTENSION

Activity "Find someone who..."²¹

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will summarize the main elements of the nonviolent communication and the personal commitment that we can make to make the social change happen in the communication between people. He/she will refer to the participants' assessments from the previous activities and Ghandi's advice "Be the change that you wish to see in the world".
- 2) To keep the participants engaged and proactive, the facilitator will kick off the next activity "Find someone who..."
- 3) The facilitator will distribute to the participants the worksheet below.
- 4) When the activity is over, the participants discuss what commitments they adhered to. The facilitator will make a summary of the activity and highlight that this is going to be the homework, and that the participants are expected to write down the information related to the activities (situation, conclusions and other details) for the coaching session that will be based on the "Triple-entry journal" worksheet.

Variation:

- ✓ The participants can work individually and afterwards have group discussions on the options and motivation of each of them to do what they planned to do.

Final evaluation

The participants will be asked to fill in the final evaluation questionnaire (see Annexes for template).

Homework

The participants will be encouraged to choose from the activity list (Activity "Find someone who...") at least 5 activities they have not typically done so far and which they are going to do until the next workshop. Supporting questions for the participants (for discussions with partner or for individual reflection):

- ✓ *What is my greatest challenge with nonviolent communication?*
- ✓ *How can we apply the principles of nonviolent communication in the family, in our relationship with the child?*
- ✓ *What is our role in promoting nonviolent communication at community level?*
- ✓ *How much time do we spend really interacting with our child?*
- ✓ *How can we transform so as to facilitate the transformation of others?*

²¹ Adjusted *Find Someone Who* technique – a method that facilitates the interaction and constructive exchange of ideas and information among the participants.

Instructions: At the facilitator's signal, move around and ask as many colleagues as possible if they plan to do the activities described below, reading them one by one from the table. When somebody says he/she will, write down the name of that person in the appropriate column. When you have filled in the blank spaces, say "Bingo". The activity will stop in this moment and will be followed by a discussion about who and what intends to do.

Activity/ attitude/ mood	Colleague's name
1) Observe the people around without judging, evaluating, labeling them	
2) Identify and communicate personal feelings in a non-abusive manner	
3) Learn 20 new words that express feelings/emotions/mood	
4) Listen to the child/partner with empathy	
5) Show the child/partner own vulnerability	
6) Replace "must" with "I would like you to..." or "I prefer to..."	
7) Recognize and express anger in a non-abusive manner	
8) In a constructive manner appreciate the child/partner every day	
9) Listen to other's appreciations without feeling superior or displaying false humility	
10) Use the appreciations addressed to somebody else not to manipulate, but rather to appreciate that person's success	
11) Reveal personal feelings to a close person, without diagnosing or labeling them	
12) Focus on what he/she wants the child/partner to achieve, instead of what the latter has done wrong	
13) Be aware of personal beliefs about gender roles in education of girls and boys	
14) Do not use to withdraw the child's privileges as a punishment	
15) Be aware of the violent thoughts that come to his/her mind, without blaming him/herself for it or putting it into action	
16) Breathe deeply several times when angry	
17) Do not blame him/herself or others when having to face difficulties, but rather try to reflect on it like a Giraffe	
18) Be aware of own anger, like an alarm signal, and manage it without abusing anybody	
19) In the relationships with children and family do things willingly, not out of fear, guilt or obligation	
20) Accept someone's refusal without getting angry or taking revenge	
21) Refuse something to the child, partner or other family members with empathy and honesty without feeling guilty	

Resource E

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nonviolent communication is a communication process developed by the American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg, used as a model to help positive changes in the contemporary society in the human relationships and people's psychological welfare in order to prevent or deal with violence and conflicts through functional strategies.

Nonviolent communication focuses on three aspects of communication:

- self-empathy (defined as a deep and compassionate awareness of one's own inner experience),
- empathy (understanding and sharing an emotion expressed by another),
- self-expression (defined as expressing oneself authentically in a way that is likely to inspire compassion in others).

Nonviolent communication (NVC) is based on the idea that all human beings have the capacity for compassion and only resort to violence or behavior that harms others when they don't recognize more effective strategies for meeting needs. Habits of thinking and speaking that lead to the use of violence (psychological and physical) are learned through culture. NVC theory supposes all human behavior stems from attempts to meet universal human needs and that these needs are never in conflict. Rather, conflict arises when strategies for meeting needs clash.

Nonviolent communication includes a simple method for clear communication consisting of four steps:

- Observation
- Feelings
- Needs
- Request

It aims to find a way for all present to get what really matters to them without the use of guilt, humiliation, shame, blame, coercion, or threats. It is useful for resolving conflicts, connecting with others, and living in a way that is conscious, present, and attuned to the genuine, living needs of yourself and others.

The process of NVC encourages us to focus on what we and others are observing separate from our interpretations and judgments, to connect our thoughts and feelings to underlying human needs/values (e.g. protection, support, love), and to be clear about what we would like towards meeting those needs.

These skills help us shift from a language of criticism, blame, and demand into a language of human needs - a language of life that consciously connects us to the universal qualities "alive in us" that sustain and enrich our wellbeing, and focuses our attention on what actions we could take to manifest these qualities.

NVC offers concrete tools for building relationships based on compassion, understanding and mutual respect:

- Differentiating observation from evaluation: being able to carefully observe what is happening without evaluating or judging, and to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us;
- Differentiating feeling from thinking: being able to express internal feelings in a way that does not imply judgment, criticism, or blame;
- Connecting with our satisfied or unsatisfied universal human needs;
- Requesting what we would like in a way that clearly and specifically states what we do want in a language free from ambiguities and abstract concepts.

These skills emphasize personal responsibility for our actions and the choices we make when we respond to others, as well as how to contribute to relationships based on cooperation and collaboration, without violence and discrimination.

With NVC we learn to hear and identify our own needs and those of others, and clearly articulate what we want. When we focus on clarifying what we are observing, feel, need, and want, rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion.

NVC is based on language and communication skills that enable us to remain human, even under trying conditions.

The nonviolent communication means being aware of and express our feelings. It requires much effort from our side, because our language of feelings is very poor, we have not been taught how to become aware of what we feel and how to be in harmony with ourselves and the people around us. On the contrary, since childhood we are encouraged to ignore our Self and this wonderful universe of feelings, hide our feelings and focus on what we must do and learn.

From the gender perspective, things are even more complicated. Traditionally, boys are encouraged to repress their feelings of helplessness, need for protection, help, safety, and adopt a rather instrumentalist style, showing strength, courage, domination, aggressiveness etc. Girls, on the other hand, are distortedly educated to show their helplessness (in order to attract males), the need for help and protection, while also being docile and submissive, passive and overly emotional. This is how in childhood (nursery school and school) and adulthood the power relations are taking roots and there is a very blurred line (represented by the legal authority or legal staff) that separates the power relations from abuse and violence.

Marshall Rosenberg, the psychologist who developed the nonviolent communication concept, chose the giraffe and jackal to depict two different behaviors of a person in different situations. The Giraffe and Jackal are two roles we often “play” in real life, without being aware of the consequences. When Marshall Rosenberg developed the nonviolent communication method, he thought of the *Giraffe* as a symbol of this type of communication. This is why, nonviolent communication is also known as “the giraffe language”.

Apparently the giraffe is the animal with the biggest heart if compared with the body size. It symbolizes deeper, heart to heart communication, which reveals more

genuine and more things about us. The giraffe also has a long neck, which offers it a broader view and helps it keep balance.

It often happens that, when we face a problem, we let our mind take control of the situation and we lose ourselves in the turmoil of thoughts, often negative, judgment (about ourselves and others) and interpretations (distortion, as a rule). The giraffe is a calm and detached animal; it allows you to observe quietly the things as they are, it can make a pure ascertaining remark. In other words, the giraffe represents, in each of us, those moments when we can take a break between the moment we receive a stimulus and the moment we respond to it. Therefore, the Giraffe represents those moments when we are in contact with what we feel and what we need.

Another symbol in the nonviolent communication is the *Jackal*. Many people think that it is a bad, harmful, dangerous animal. In nonviolent communication the jackal represents those moments when we are not in contact with what we feel and need, moments when we respond by virtue of inertia, when our mind is overrun by judgment, labeling, stereotypes and prejudices and interpretations and when we convey all these things to the people we come in contact with. Our inner dialogue is often also like a jackal – we blame ourselves including for how we behave with our children.

It is critical to understand that in nonviolent communication the jackal is not the person, but rather the behavior that causes fear, guilt, shame, despair, helplessness, humility, etc. in ourselves and in others.

Another thing that we need to keep in mind is that the jackal is nothing else but the giraffe that faces communication problems. By being aware of it and giving the jackal the opportunity to learn the nonviolent communication, it can turn into a nice giraffe.

To do this, we need to treat the jackal living in us and in the people around with respect, understanding and acceptance. This means accepting that there are moments when we are not that nice and kind as we would like to be, that we are humans and we make mistakes, including in the relationships with our children or other family members of the community. Only by understanding the jackal, its needs that at a certain point we tried to meet, we can make it turn into a giraffe and, therefore, improve the relationships around it and in the society as a whole.

The jackal is often our friend. Every time when we start judging, “whipping” the people around, putting ourselves in victim role or attacking, we feel bitterness in our soul, which is a signal that something is wrong. This inner signal is the jackal that can help us get where we need. The jackal “is shouting” asking his need to be met, and if you become aware of that need you turn into a giraffe.

Not always, however, can we meet our needs when we have them, but this type of empathy (which implies listening, hearing, accepting the need) is enough to transform into a giraffe and have a language that will make sure that sooner or later there will be a response to this need.

When a person notices that his/her behavior arouses in other people fear, guilt or shame, this should be a clear signal that he/she should change the communication style so as what he/she says does not have that devastating impact on others.

A jackal message speaks about another and about what the latter says or does wrong, while a giraffe message speaks about myself, my feelings and needs in this very moment and I can communicate these things in simple language (I am concerned, afraid, sad because...).

We are often afraid to admit these things to children, because we have been taught that adults know everything. But the child will grow and will become an adult and will be shocked to notice that it is not so, and this will emotionally estrange him/her. The child will be disappointed of his/her own behavior and moments when he does not know what to do, and this is because the parents taught him that an adult must know everything/must be able to do everything, which is not true. Another risk resides in the perpetuation of this model, the child may become a similarly inefficient, dysfunctional and unhappy adult, making others unhappy, abusing them or resorting to violence.

Building the human relationships on nonviolent communication makes us revise the way we communicate and listen to others. Instead of giving usual, automatic answers, our words become messages; we become aware of our answers and help the other person become aware, thus perpetuating a genuine and balanced communication that can change the dysfunctional communication models rooted in the society.

Summary

Nonviolent communication promotes cooperation and conflict resolution, discouraging domination, abuse and power relationships among people. When it becomes a lifestyle, nonviolent communication brings about the social change for the better in the connections between people, where everyone's needs are assessed and met, by offering compassion and taking joy in contributing to the psychological welfare of another human being. Nonviolent communication is a model that promotes personal and social change by:

- ✚ becoming aware of or nurturing personal and social values consistent with the developments of our society, and*
- ✚ taking up responsibility and being courageous enough to stick to these values and encourage the change in others.*

MODULE 4. ROLE OF SCHOOL IN STRENGTHENING GENDER PARTNERSHIP AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

GOAL

To gather information and learn what are the most appropriate ways to increase the role of school in involving boys/men in child rearing and education and promoting gender partnership.

OBJECTIVES

- To learn how school can help increase the involvement of boys/men in promotion of gender partnership and violence prevention;
- To develop the skills for prevention or mitigation of risks in the modern society.

TIME REQUIRED

6 - 8 hours

MATERIALS

Blackboard and chalk or flipchart and flipchart paper, A4 paper, post-it notes, journals, newspapers, colored markers, colored cardboard cards, pens.

METHODOLOGY

Evocation – Realization of Meaning– Reflection - Extension.

Interactive work in small groups; adjusted critical thinking techniques; presentations by facilitator.

KEY MESSAGES

Not just the education in the family should be seen as the main tool able to produce adequate and happy adults, functionally integrated in the modern society. The community as a whole, and school, in particular, and the daily interactions with all the social actors also provide important socialization backgrounds, where equality and tolerance become also social values and norms, not just legal.

PLANNING NOTES

The facilitator will study the theoretical background in order to understand the subject and will deliver this module only after the two previous modules have been delivered.

STEPS

Session I. Evocation

I.1 Activity "School violence"

Session II. Realization of Meaning

II.1 Activity "Identification of solutions and ways to prevent violence".

II.2 Activity "Common forms of school violence".

Session III. Reflection

III.1 Activity "The value of gender partnership"

Session IV. Extension

IV.1 Activity "How do we implement gender partnership in the school environment"

IV.2 Final evaluation and homework

RESOURCES

Resource A

Session I. EVOCATION

Activity "School violence"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will distribute excerpts from journals, newspapers, and advertisements etc., which depict/describe different forms of aggressiveness, abuse and violence.
- 2) The participants will be given 5-7 minutes to look at them and discuss what they are seeing. Afterwards the facilitator will start a discussion for evocation purposes.
- 3) Examples of questions:
 - *What kind of materials are these?*
 - *What do they represent?*
 - *What do you think about them?*
 - *Do you use to read this kind of articles? Why?*
 - *Is it good that such materials exist in our society?*
 - *What is the impact on children/young people? etc.*
- 4) The facilitator will moderate the discussion by asking problematizing questions.
- 5) Examples of questions:
 - *Isn't our society too tolerant of the violence in mass media?*
 - *Aren't some aggressive heroes or anti-heroes in movies being transformed into idols?*
 - *What solutions are there to stop aggression? etc.*
- 6) The facilitator will write on a flipchart paper (or blackboard) the word "violence" and will ask the participants to give as many definitions as possible without criticizing or evaluating the definitions given by them²².
- 7) Examples of questions:
 - *What is violence?*
 - *Why do people's definitions of violence differ?*
 - *Why do people resort to violence?*
 - *What are other ways to handle these conflicts?, etc.*
- 8) The facilitator will ask the participants to recall a few conflicts in school and share some of them.

²² Reference will be made to the brainstorming rules.

Resource B

Session II. REALIZATION OF MEANING

Activity "Identification of solutions and ways to prevent violence"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will divide the participants in three preferably mixed-gender groups.
- 2) Each group will receive a case study (see worksheets for case studies), flipchart paper, markers. The groups will be asked to discuss and study the cases and write on the flipchart paper:
 - The causes of what happened
 - The consequences of aggression
 - What measures should be taken to prevent it
 - The gender implications of what happened
- 3) After all the groups are done, one person from each group will present the results of their work.
- 4) When the presentation is over, the participants will ask questions or make suggestions and provide solutions for the presented case.

Case Study 1

When I came in the class, the fight had already stopped. There was blood on C.'s face, and P. had a red nose and was gasping as if he had just come from a running race.

- What's happened? I asked.

- He has been calling me „Casanova“, replied C. all covered in blood, for some time. He does that when we are alone, when our classmates are around and even during breaks when we are in the school courtyard and students from other classes have heard him calling me so and have also started calling me „Casanova“. I asked him to stop once, twice...nothing... Today again. I told him to stop, but he head-butted me instead and...

- And?

- I showed him who is "Casanova" and what he can do. Let him know who he is trying to hold up to ridicule in front of the boys. Cristina was also there...

- But weren't you friends?

- We still are, but this does not mean that I will let him do whatever he wants.

- Have the classmates stepped in?

- We have!, some students said. If we haven't, things would have been worse.

Case Study 2

Mihaela is a 10th grade student. Her family does not differ from many other families and is not rich. She goes to school regularly, is aware of the financial status of her family and wants to continue studies.

After the spring holidays, however, she no longer feels like studying and gets a couple of bad grades. She starts hating physics, which she once liked very much, because the teacher has been persecuting her. The teacher notices it and asks her what is happening to her. Mihaela does not answer his question.

- What does he care? It is my life, I know better when I have to study, Mihaela tells her desk mate.

One day her father asks her how school is going.

- Everything is ok, dad. Don't worry!, she said.

In the following days Mihaela did not go to the math classes and other classes as well... She became friends with two girls and a boy, who went to a different school. They used to stroll through the town together, skip school and smoke. One of the girls used to bring expensive cigarettes and wore trendy clothes.

- Where do you have them from?, Mihaela asked her one day.

- There are plenty, said the other one, and made a gesture that means pilferage.

Mihaela started spending more time with her friends. One day a shop-assistant caught her „friend“ putting a lighter in her pocket. She shouted at her calling her „thief“. Mihaela got angry and tried to help her friend. She called the shop assistant a liar and even caught her by the hand trying to stop her get her „friend“. People started approaching to see what the noise was all about. Police also came...

Case Study 3

For a couple of weeks, „James Bond“, a 10th grade student, who was very proud of the nickname he got due to his muscles that he used to show off all the time, had been teasing a 12th grade student – a shy and modest girl. He used to trip her up, push in the school corridors or cafeteria, chase her in secluded places in the school courtyard and talk dirty to her, send her explicit images of sexual nature on social networks and flirt with her.

The girl did not have the courage to tell anybody about it because she felt shame and guilt. Until one day, when a „star's“ mate told the girl that that was not the way to behave when one was intimidated and that he would tell everything to the headmaster if she did not do that.

Activity "Common forms of school violence"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will divide the participants into two groups by gender.
- 2) Each group will discuss and write on a flipchart paper the most common forms of violence they or someone of the same sex they know are facing.
- 3) One person from each group will then present the results of their work to the big group.
- 4) After both groups are done with presentations the participants start discussing the forms, frequency, severity of violence etc.
- 5) The facilitator will give the girls' flipchart sheet to the boys and the boys' sheet to the girls.
- 6) The groups will be asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 the most common and the severest forms of violence.
- 7) After this "mirror" evaluation is done, the two groups come together and discuss the results.
- 8) The facilitator will highlight the gender implications of some forms of violence and how important it is to understand them.

Variations

- ✓ If the participants are women/girls only or men/boys, they will be randomly divided into groups. There will be a discussion on the frequency or severity of these forms of violence among girls and boys in order to identify potential differences.

Resource C

Session III. REFLECTION

Activity "The value of gender partnership"²³

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will make a summary of the previous activities and will highlight the gender dimension of the destructive phenomena sometimes encountered in schools (intimidation, moral and spiritual harassment, verbal abuse and physical violence and other). The facilitator will make a subtle connection between all the other forms of polarization of people by various false criteria, such as the financial status, place of residence, gender etc. encountered in the society and the replication of these small scale smoldering or open conflicts in other social environments or various socialization backgrounds.
- 2) The facilitator will touch upon the gender partnership as a strategy in the public sphere, highlighting certain measures that could be taken (gender quotas in politics, mixed teams in management boards of big companies etc.), and the private one (examples of other countries, and the paternal leave recently introduced in Moldova etc.) and will formulate a statement with two possible opposing answers: *Can or cannot the gender partnership in the school environment become a strategy for creating a nonviolent and friendly environment?*
- 3) The participants will be given time to think about how they feel about the issue (if they want they can even write down their arguments).
- 4) In the available space of the room the facilitator will identify a place to represent symbolically the gender partnership value line and its poles will be marked with something.
- 5) The facilitator will ask the participants to line up, one at a time, according to their opinion, so as the point where they stop to render best their attitude to the gender partnership issue.
- 6) If the separation between the two camps is obvious, the facilitator may decide to "break" the line in the middle and kick off a debate between the camps.
- 7) If the distribution of the participants is more or less even, those who wish may defend their reasoning, in an effort to persuade others to join.

Variations:

- ✓ To make the task easier for the participants, three distinct points can be drawn on the value line: PROs, CONs and NEUTRAL.

²³ The Value Line technique – a technique that stimulates formation of personal attitude about a disputed or new concept, which teaches tolerance and flexibility, and is useful in stressing the main elements of an issue.

Resource D

Session IV. EXTENSION

Activity "How do we implement gender partnership in the school environment"

Work algorithm

- 1) The facilitator will divide the participants into three preferably gender-balanced groups.
- 2) The first group will have the task to discuss how they could implement the gender partnership in the school environment from the students' perspective, the second group – from the parents' perspective, and the third group – from the perspective of teachers. Therefore, there will be one group of students, one group of parents and one group of teachers.
- 3) The facilitator will distribute flipchart sheets, markers and other supplies to the groups and will suggest them to use the brainstorming or brainwriting techniques in order to gather as many innovative ideas as possible and to encourage all the participants to speak.
- 4) After the teams are done with the task, each of them will designate a person to present the results of their work.
- 5) While a team presents the results of the group work, the other participants consider the proposals of the opposing teams from their perspective, i.e. "students", "teachers" or "parents".
- 6) After all the teams have presented their results, the participants have a discussion on the proposals. Each participant will choose 3 proposals for every group of beneficiaries, which he/she thinks are doable in his/her specific case and will defend his/her reasoning.

Final evaluation

The participants will be asked to fill in a final evaluation questionnaire (see Annexes for template).

Homework

The participants will be encouraged to do or start doing the activities selected during this activity and fill in the *Double-entry journal* worksheet for the next workshop.

Supporting questions for the participants:

- ✓ *What is the major challenge that I am facing with the implementation of the gender partnership in the school environment?*
- ✓ *What is my role in promoting gender partnership in my community and in my child's learning environment?*

Resource E

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

School environment

The school environment and the school's institutional procedures can have a big impact on the behavior of girls and boys, both in classrooms and on the playground, school gym, corridors and other places. Just as big is the impact of the school environment from the gender perspective on the academic performance of girls and boys, as well as on their vocational and career orientation. The separating of girls and boys for different class or sport activities or the differentiated outfits (trousers for boys, skirts for girls) are practices that strongly highlight the gender differences and do not benefit the children.

Attitude of teaching staff

Studies conducted in different European countries proved that the teaching staff treats girls and boys differently. Both categories of the teaching staff (men and women) tend to encourage passiveness and compliance among girls, and independence and individualism, as well as competition, among boys. Teachers usually expect girls to be more obedient, but are also more lenient towards their rebellious behavior. Girls are perceived to be more cooperative, more understanding, while boys are considered to be more competitive, rivaling with each other, and sometimes even with girls.

A study conducted in Malta, for instance, suggests that although girls are considered better students, the reason given is behavioral rather than cognitive and intellectual. And it is not because of differences in their academic performance. On the contrary, girls tend to get higher grades than boys. Girls are more meticulous in their work and "study harder" than boys.

The countries where gender equality is a value and subject to public policies implement various actions in this regard, including in education. For instance, the Scottish teachers, having learned the findings of extensive studies of the interference of gender dimension with the school environment, came to the conclusion that gender-sensitive teaching practices should be adopted, to accommodate different learning styles and students' preferences and that both the teachers and the training materials should be gender-sensitive in order to avoid gender stereotypes.

Clearly education cannot be seen as the main tool to produce gender equality, because the society as a whole does not provide equal opportunities, for instance the gender pay gap, the small number of female decision-makers or the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in certain careers.

However, education offers important backgrounds for information, familiarization, practice and socialization. Both the knowledge acquired by children, and the informal interactions between students at school and university are significant socialization platforms (although not always properly recognized), which have a very strong

impact on the integration, from the gender role perspective, of these young people, who will become adults in the future.

Role of teachers

Children's gender identity builds on their relationships. The family, society, mass media and school are the most important *gender socialization agents*²⁴. In the school environment children interact with their peers, boys and girls, and teachers. They form and develop their gender identity through exposure to the gender stereotypes of their peers and teachers. If they are traditional, restrictive and inconsistent with the realities of the contemporary society, children are exposed to multiple risks. The inconsistency between the "public discourse" and the treatment by the child's environment and the realities the child sees causes ambiguities, confusion, frustrations etc.

Because the teachers' role is critical for understanding the gender roles in childhood, in some countries they receive gender awareness training.

Such an initiative was launched in Moldova as well. After an extensive study of curricula and school books, a gender education manual and a training module for the teachers involved in ongoing training processes were developed. Unfortunately, this project was not taken forward. Finally, the initial training of teachers does not include a module/class to address equality, tolerance or human rights in general.

Therefore, often, because of personal stereotypes of which they are not aware and which are proliferated by the society and mass media, teachers also use to label students during classes or extra-curricular activities and, thereby, promote different gender models.

Teachers should stop giving advice depending on the students' gender, because any differentiation questions the equal treatment of students and creates discriminatory environment. Many teachers, however, keep doing it. Studies have revealed that teachers replicate the societal patterns. In the case of girls, most of the recommendations are about their appearance or certain traditionally female gender roles. As for boys, the recommendations are mostly about discipline.

This is a very common thing among heads of the class. Boys are most often told to be quiet or hardworking "like the girls", and never cry "because they are boys", while girls are told to wear "decent" outfits, to be tidy, patient and to not let boys "cheat" them.

The recommendations about certain gender interaction models, which also fuel the gender stereotypes, are also common. While teachers advise boys to not be violent with girls, protect and respect them, girls are advised to be indulgent and patient with boys, to make concessions.

Sometimes, to help mobilize boys/girls, they are compared ("If girls can do it, why can't you?", "When a girl wipes the blackboard, she does it well!") These comments do not stimulate students at all. On the contrary, they can give birth to unpleasant

²⁴ a process which encourages or discourages certain behaviors and attitudes of a specific gender, which communicates what is in line with current gender norms, which teaches the language of the culture.

feelings or even inferiority complexes, and students may start to believe that these differences are specific to their gender or able to trigger/fuel “the war of the sexes” – an everlasting dispute.

Studies on students’ views about the gender messages conveyed by teachers show that the gender roles promoted by teachers are antithetical pairs: associated to one of the genders: “girls are associated with attributes like reasonable, scrupulous, weak and shy, while boys are attributed impudence, neglect, power and aggression”.

Moreover, as a consequence of the proliferation of certain myths about the differences between the aptitudes of boys and girls, some teachers encourage boys in subjects like math, physics and information technologies and girls – in foreign languages, native language and history.

Because the mechanisms used to “favor/disfavor” are subtle and psychological, and the evaluation without technological support is biased, there are no solutions yet to handle these interferences between teachers’ thinking patterns and students’ academic performance. One of the solutions available to everyone is self-observation, introspection and vigilance, that helps the teachers to become aware of their biased behavior.

Teachers should always question their own assumptions, when encouraging, evaluating or discouraging students and rely on facts and results, instead of assumptions and stereotypes.

Although gender equality research worldwide started in 1980-1990 and the social discourse has changed for the better ever since, researchers came to the conclusion that teachers most often are not aware of how important the critical analysis of their own gender stereotypes is. For many of them, concepts like sex/gender, innate/acquired, differentiation/discrimination are not clear enough and this is why they are less aware of how male/female students become men/women and of the consequences which their own gender patterns can have on them.

To get over this kind of approach in education, teachers should understand and critically question the gender stereotypes. This will help them act free of misconceptions and stereotypes. They should not use gender attributes, because they can become labels and have a negative impact on the development of the gender identity and self-esteem of the students. Teachers need to distance themselves and critically relate to their own gender stereotypes, and avoid giving superficial advice.

One of the teachers’ primary roles is to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to ask questions. This is why it is very important that present and future teachers receive adequate gender education, initial training tailored to the changes in the society and adequate ongoing training in gender issues. The understanding of their own gender roles also plays an important role and can contribute either to the perpetuation or elimination of gender stereotypes in the education institutions.

School violence

The school (classrooms, courtyard, cafeteria, gym etc.) is a social micro-universe where children learn their first life lessons outside their families. For children it is a different social background, which, on one hand, means social recognition, approval, acceptance, empathy and, on the other hand, means rejection, confrontation, fear, shame. Sometimes the negative emotional burden in school diverts the academic and social trajectory of children, reduces the positive emotions, sabotages their perseverance and irreversibly compromises the development of children's potential.

Violence is one of the major issues facing the contemporary world. Mass media reports information (more or less public) about different manifestations of violence every day. The presence of different forms of school violence has become something almost natural to which the children and teachers have got used and no longer see the imminent danger of their consequences.

Although school violence, among the children of the same or different schools, is a serious problem, no systematic efforts are being made to handle it and even the enforcement of the policy on the referral and handling of aggression in schools has not helped to reduce its size.

Moreover, to approach this phenomenon in a comprehensive way, one should understand its causes, origin, forms etc. so as to be able to identify and take adequate actions to prevent and deal with violence.

Research shows that the most common types of school violence is interpersonal – between teachers and students, parents and students, teachers and parents and between students themselves, and can take different forms:

- Physical violence (assault, pushing, hitting, causing injuries)
- Psychological / verbal violence (name-calling, teasing, chaffing, mockery, threatening, moral harassment, extortion through intimidation and other)
- Sexual violence (rape, sexual harassment)
- Deprivation and neglect
- Financial abuse (destroying personal property, theft).

School violence should become an issue to be considered by all those involved in education, especially that school has significant resources to design violence prevention programs and break the vicious cycle of school violence. Moldova has very few statistical data about harassment and violence in schools, although empirically one knows that it is steadily growing in our country and many cases of school violence have been even reported in the printed and audio-visual mass media.

School violence is thought to be a learned behavior tangentially identified as related to adult violence against children, associating the dysfunctional family with the potentially violent behavior of the children from these types of families. For the prevention and intervention programs to be successful, one should understand both the school harassment and violence phenomenon and the characteristics of abusers and victims.

Triggers of school violence

House environment

Research into the role of family in aggressive behavior corroborates that the aggressive children most often have aggressive parents who apply inappropriate discipline methods. The studies on the relationship between an aggressive father ("tyrant") and a teenager suggest that the conflicts between them can end up with the teenager breaking up with parents and running away from home, or becoming a vagabond.

The children who become victims of harassment and violence are more likely to be found in overprotective families, where parents satisfy any desire of their children, control and prevent them from making friends, the family replacing the school mates, the friends in the courtyard, the best friend etc. The likelihood that these children will turn into socially isolated young people with non-adaptive behavior, who will find it difficult to make decisions and exhibit functional behaviors in certain life situations, will be unable to manage various environmental factors, is high.

Social environment

The social environment contains many sources of influence able to induce, fuel and perpetuate school violence: financial status, gender inequalities and stereotypes, poor social control mechanisms, social inequalities, the crisis of moral values, mass media, failures of those responsible for youth education, lack of cooperation between the relevant institutions.

The economic and social background (migration, divorce etc.) cause confusion among children and young people, who become reticent, start questioning the efficiency of social systems, schools and importance of studies, and lose trust in their parents. This intensifies when they realize that school is not a warrant that they will find a job.

The traditional values promoted in school – labor, merit, effort – are going through visible degradation. A social crisis, like the one that we are experiencing, has a strong negative impact on the personality of children and young people and on the society as a whole.

Individual factors

One of the major determinants of aggressive behavior is the inability to cope with frustration. Frustration is increased excitability and, depending on one's temper and emotional set-up, one can exhibit violent behavior, oblivious to the norms and values set by the society.

The emotional frustration is one of the most common reasons for behavioral disorders. A longitudinal study on the development of children with behavioral disorders revealed that emotional frustration was the reason in 82% of the cases. The ability to cope with frustration depends on self-control, temper and the norm of internality.

The individual factors pertaining to the victim's personality refer to the types of interactions with others; individuals who can easily become victims of harassment and violence are loners, socially isolated, anxious, submissive individuals with poor communication and social skills. The children who become victims of abusers feel inferior to others, experience feelings of low esteem, negative self-image, lack or poor skills to cope with stress and inability to cope with their own problems. They can also be too emotional and feel guilty for what is happening to them.

The school as a source of violence

The sources of harassment and violence in the Moldovan schools are broadly similar to other countries.

Among the main triggers of school violence are the communication deficiencies. Another source is evaluation of students' performances and the competitive climate, which cause frustration among students. Despite the efforts to reform the performance evaluation system in schools, surveys show that the ongoing evaluation is a source of stress and frustration for students. Another trigger is the attempts to impose the teacher's authority on students at any cost.

A study conducted in Romania suggests that more than 40% of the students consider this to be one of the main triggers of violent responses. This is amplified by their often quite negative views about the professionalism of teachers (an important component of the teacher's authority).

Bullying

What is Bullying?

In the recent years, school violence has been taking on more subtle forms, mainly because the extreme forms of physical violence are increasingly addressed through school policies or because teenagers are trying to avoid dealing with the police.

One of these subtle forms of violence that is becoming more common in school is *bullying*, which means intimidation, harassment and is a steady and often lasting physical and/or psychological harassment behavior towards a child or a group of children by using force, threats, intimidations in order to maintain the power imbalance.

The bullies just don't care about the common sense and behavior rules in the society. Those who resort to these extreme teasing techniques claim they do it for several strong reasons: because they get more recognition, and because by bullying smaller children they exhibit authority and superiority. On the other hand, some children bully because they imitate others, or feel the pressure of the environment and because this is a litmus test that they have to pass in order to be accepted in a certain group, or also because the bullies themselves do not want to be victims of violence.

Bullying is a type of aggression that is different from the one triggered by distress (e.g. when students are angry or afraid).

Aggressiveness manifested through bullying (intimidation, harassment, and humiliation) is proactive, because it does not involve emotional factors. It has an instrumental role and is an attempt to get something through coercion, intimidation, sarcasm, the disregard for what the other one feels being associated with expectations of successful violent behavior compared to the reactive aggression, which is an emotional response to a certain trigger or frustration.

Bullying is often repetitive and at some point children and sometimes even teachers and parents get used to it and see it as part of the school life. School becomes, therefore, a background for power struggles, which, as a rule, are triggered by some fake reasons, like financial status, gender, ethnicity, religion and others. Who is the most fearsome in the class, which is the "dangerous gang"? Who are the most popular girls?

The bullies use to tease, hit, offend, call names and mock at others. Bullying proliferation can make the school an extremely traumatizing and feared place for the victims of this degrading behavior. Stress, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, school dropout and even social phobia are among the negative impacts of bullying.

Bullying is a form of emotional or physical abuse that has three defining characteristics:

- *deliberate* – a bully's intention is to hurt someone;
- *repeated* – a bully often targets the same victim again and again;
- *power imbalanced* – a bully chooses victims he or she perceives as vulnerable, weak and not able to defend.

Basically, bullying is the destructive intention of a student (or group) to gain supremacy over another student (or group).

Research findings

Bullying in schools is a phenomenon related to the children's age and until recently the grownups (parents and teachers) had a relaxed attitude towards it - "they are just kids" or "kids are kids". Teasing, name calling are all bullying behaviors, which most often, go unnoticed, seen as part of a so-called daily learning routine. In reality, however, these subtle forms of violence are the early stages of the worst forms. Cases of school violence, including its extreme forms like the armed attacks reported in the American schools, reveal the negative and sometimes even fatal consequences of bullying.

One of the pioneers and "founding father" of research on bullying is the Norwegian psychologist Olweus. In his 1993 book, *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*, Dr. Olweus identifies the characteristics of students who are most likely to be victims of bullying:

- Are sensitive and quiet;
- Are afraid to go to school, often complain of headaches and stomachaches to not go to school;
- Have few friends, if any;
- Are sad and frightened;
- Are physically weak and very short;

- Feel uncertain and are not resourceful;
- Have a hearing impairment or some unusual physical and behavioral characteristics;
- Come home from school with dirty, torn cloths or broken things;
- Have bruises.

Bullying often takes different forms depending on the gender of children. Clearly boys resort more often to physical intimidation than girls. Moreover, quite many girls, about 50%, claim they are bullied by boys.

When the bully is a boy, his characteristics are the following:

- Has a strong need to dominate and subdue other students;
- His victims are the children who don't like conflicts;
- Gets pleasure from hurting his victims;
- Justifies his actions complaining that he has been provoked.

The tactics most commonly used by bullying boys are: *name calling, beating, fights, taking away the victim's things (money, personal belongings), damaging victim's belongings, pushing, hitting, and repeated assaults.*

Girls who bully have the following characteristics:

- manipulate
- hurt the victim's feelings
- spread rumors
- subtle rejection, marginalization or exclusion of the victim.

The tactics most commonly used by girls are: name calling, victim isolation ("Don't talk to her"), spreading rumors and gossiping, humiliation in front of boys and other. These forms of aggressiveness can be as harmful and stressing as the direct and open attacks by boys.

The configuration of the bully-victim cycle is a very complex process. Although the bullies and their victims are naturally the main players in it, studies suggest that the other students (bystanders) also play a critical role.

Research has revealed that bystanders (those who watch bullying happen), by doing nothing to change things, help maintain the bullying behavior. On the other hand, certain group mechanisms, like social contagion and diffusion of responsibility, have been identified as facilitating factors in the situations when more students took part in aggression.

What are the causes of bullying?

Exposure of an individual to violence can go further – "the butterfly effect" (a small action in a certain place, at a certain time can produce major changes, exponentially amplified in other areas) – to other bullying behaviors in the bully and the victim alike.

The aggressor, abused or neglected him/herself, often resorts to violence as the last opportunity of outpouring and expression. The most common causes of such behavior can be lack of empathy, egotism, self-importance, superficial human relations and, especially, exposure and uptake of similar behavioral patterns – most

often, the child reproduces with peers what he/she sees at home or in the society and mass media.

Good practices

Dr. Olweus' research has led to the development of the Bullying Prevention Program. As part of a governmental initiative, the program is offered to all of Norway's public schools.

A growing number of schools in the U.S. now use the program, considered to be a model program for violence prevention. Six large-scale evaluations of the program over a period of more than 20 years have yielded quite positive results, including the following:

- ✓ Substantial reductions - typically in the 30-50 percent range - in the frequency with which students report being bullied and bullying others;
- ✓ Significant reductions in students' reports of general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, theft, drunkenness, and truancy;
- ✓ Significant improvements in the "social climate" of the class, as reflected in students' reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork and school;
- ✓ Improvements in students' satisfaction with school life.

This intervention is an efficient and quite simple approach aimed to reduce the bullying among students.

From the social learning perspective bullying was explained as a bully-victim binomial, which develops through modeling and reinforcement (Craig & Pepler, 1995). This means that a student may imitate other student's bullying behaviors, while the victim may reinforce the behavior of a bullying student by exhibiting signs of distress (fear) because of the bully's behavior.

The intervention program is built on four key principles. These principles involve creating a school environment characterized by:

- (1) warmth, positive interest, and involvement from adults;
- (2) firm limits on unacceptable behavior;
- (3) consistent application of non-punitive, non-physical sanctions for unacceptable behavior and violation of rules, and,
- (4) adults who act as authorities and positive role models.

The program includes school level, classroom level, and individual level components. The intervention is done through provision of information to schools and parents, movies to watch in the class and questionnaires for schools to assess the size of the phenomenon. The four big intervention strategies of the Olweus program are:

- educate school staff;
- develop a discipline policy;
- inform parents;
- teach students the core sets of pro-social skills according to a curriculum.

Other examples:

- ✚ In 2011 Cartoon Network in Latin America started the anti-bullying campaign called "Basta de Bullying – No te Quedas Callado!"
- ✚ Finland has the DiVa program, used by 90% of the Finnish schools;
- ✚ Following a European cooperation process, Germany, Italy, Spain, England, Poland and Greece have designed the "Media Heroes Do Not Bully" program.

Strategies to reduce bullying

Bullying or teasing, humiliation, intimidation is sometimes a result of how victims behave against the socially accepted norms or dress. Therefore, the understanding and acceptance of the individual differences may be learned at home and at school.

Victims should be involved in trainings aimed to develop their skills to handle the exposure to others' aggressive behavior.

Bullies should be involved in training on how to control anger, become more assertive and other self-control skills. Their behavior must be carefully observed and they need to receive frequently rewards for their appropriate behaviors, while also applying clear consequences for bullying.

It is recommended that parents receive parenting training to learn how to manage aggressive behavior and educate tolerance and nondiscrimination.

Teachers and especially heads of class have an extremely important and efficient role in prevention of bullying in schools. The activities carried out by teachers, along with training on social skills, diversity and equality can set up an efficient program to prevent aggressive behaviors.

Anti-bullying recommendations and solutions

The most efficient anti-bullying recommendation is to change the mentality at a very young age. This can be done through a long-term plan that integrates the following:

- Non-formal anti-bullying education methods, such as the role plays, that will help children understand the positions of the bully and victim and become aware of the negative consequences of ignoring bullying.
- In-depth discussions on bullying during the homeroom or civic education classes.
- National campaigns, seminars and open debates, meetings with psychologists or individuals who were involved in bullying and who managed to cope with it, as example of good practice.
- Immediate reporting by students, adults (teachers, headmaster, school counselor, school mediator, supervisor/parent) when bullying situations take place.

What is cyberbullying?

In cyberbullying, like in any other form of aggression, there is a victim and a bully. Cyberbullying is the use of Internet or cell phones to harass, threaten or intimidate someone. This phenomenon has been increasingly gaining ground lately because the bully can hide behind a screen, while the victim can be ridiculed in front of much more people compared to a real aggression.

In the online world, aggression can mean many things: sending threatening emails, posting photos of someone on porn sites, using the email account, breaking the password and blocking accounts, sending text messages on behalf of another child, posting personal or fake information on blogs in order to harm someone's reputation, spreading viruses, subscription of other children to porn sites and other.

Many bullies are the once victims of cyberbullying, this being a response to the injustice they faced.

Cyberbullying consequences

The negative effects of cyberbullying are similar to the effects of the traditional bullying: panic attacks; lower self-esteem; shyness; nightmares; anxiety; lack of concentration; reduced learning capacity; depression; suicide.

Moreover, in the online world the information is often stored for an indefinite period of time and is easily and immediately spreading, and sometimes there is no way to delete it. This is just exacerbating any repercussion of bullying on the victim.

How do we prevent cyberbullying?

Frank communication with the child. Both parents and teachers should be open and kind to the children, so as the latter can trust them to talk about these issues. Some parents make radical decisions when they learn that their child has become a victim of cyberbullying and forbid them to use the Internet, because, without even trying to understand what is going on, they blame and punish the child for this.

It is recommended to encourage the children to Google their names from time to time, for instance "Maria Popescu" search, to make sure their names do not appear on websites they do not want.

The children should be instructed and warned that it is not allowed to post online photos of other people without their consent and, in turn, also have the right to ask their friends to follow this rule. The children should also be told that they are not allowed to pose as somebody else. In cyberbullying this can take place when they use the online messages.

Another recommendation is for children to avoid emailing personal information, confining to writing things that would not harm them if they become available to other people.

The children should be encouraged to not disclose their passwords to anybody and learn how to change them if they suspect that other people know them.

Before forwarding an email, the child should know that he/she should first ask the permission of the person who sent the original email.

The children should be warned to be careful with whom they communicate online and what they say when they communicate online.

How do we stop cyberbullying?

If parents find out that their child is a victim of cyberbullying, they should immediately talk to him/her about it. With the child's consent they should get in touch with the parents of the bully and try to identify solutions.

Parents should instruct their children to not respond to aggressive messages, even if the children know the bullies, and talk, instead, to an adult they trust in order to handle the problem.

The adults should show the child how to use the "report abuse" option of the social networks, how to remove the bully from friends and block the people or phone messages from bullies.

If the emails or text messages are sent by a classmate during classes, the child should be encouraged to ask for the teachers' help.

The adults should teach their children how to save the evidence of cyberbullying, incoming emails and messages. If things are getting worse and the child is in danger, the bullying should be reported to the police.