

samara

**Initiative Prävention
von sexuellem Missbrauch
und Gewalt**

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**Prevention of Violence and Sexual Abuse
Implementation of Child Protection Standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Microproject for the Austrian Development Agency October 1, 2007- September 30, 2008

We worked at four comprehensive schools and two SOS Children's Villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We held "violence prevention workshops" for girls and boys, teachers, SOS Childrens' mothers and SOS Childrens' pedagogues.

Due to the recent war there are a lot of orphans and children who lost one parent. These children have lost a protection factor similar to children of other post war countries. There is a higher risk for these children to become victims of violence or sexual abuse.

In the war in Bosnia sexual violence was systematically used to humiliate women and children that where from different ethnic backgrounds than the soldiers.

So now Bosnian children and adolescents live in a society that was not only traumatized but also brutalized.

One of the consequences of the war is that the inhibition level to become violent became much lower.

Several teachers told us about violence and abuse of power in the country now:

A teacher told us a short time ago she saw that a University professor hit a female student in her face in front of all other students.

She also told us that there are employees of the Universities that ask female students for sex in exchange to receive good exam marks.

Children as well as teachers told us that there are still a lot of illegal weapons in the country. Officially they should have been given back to the state, but were not.

Boys of 12 or 13 years of age have said that it is easy for them to buy guns now at the city's vegetable market.

Our impression is that compared to Central European countries, like Austria, violence rises faster which means the risk to become injured is higher.

Children and adolescents in Bosnia told us their stories about border violations and violence. They where very interested to hear our opinions as outsiders.

They spoke very openly about their feelings in the role of the victim as well as the perpetrator role.

A Bosnian teacher asked our Bosnian colleague who translates all the workshops to not use the words „vagina“ or „penis“. Instead she asked to discribe these words with the expression „the stomach area“.

In our meetings with school principales we noticed that all of them knew about the problem

of violence or sexual abuse. But we clearly felt that as guests of the school we should talk about the subject with the children but not with the principals. This would have been considered as being rude!

During our project in Bosnia the correlation of violence and sexual abuse to war became clearer to us.

Countries where structures of the state and civil society are not developed enough or are destroyed by war are high risk countries for children to become victims of all kinds of sexual violence.

In the global context of organized commercial sexual violence, like child prostitution and child trafficking, have to be considered.

A teacher of a school in Bosnia told us about her experiences during the war.

She told us that what shocked her most during the war of 1992-1995 was what the UN soldiers did to them. The UN soldiers were distributing food to the people. A UN soldier said to her,

„ I thought you women here are like animals, but you are not different than our women at home.“

Instead of giving the bread to the people, the soldiers threw it and women, men and children had to catch it.

Some of the cans of food were from the second world war.

Some of the UN soldiers abused their power. They exchanged food for sex with women and they didn't even try to hide this abuse of power.

During our project week in October and November 2007, the political situation in the country was very tense. Some of our partners were worried that this could be the starting point of a civil war in the country.

Some people had already started making preparations to go into exile.

The point at which we heard the most diverse opinions was whether the ethnic conflict in Bosnia would be solved or not.

At our work in one of the schools in Janja, Northeastern Bosnia, we saw a situation that touched us deeply:

In the class were girls with Muslim and Serb-Orthodox background. Muslims and Serb-Orthodox people were enemies during the war.

The two groups were sitting segregated from each other. The ethnic background can be recognized by the names, with the restriction that some children have parents from two different ethnic backgrounds.

A Muslim girl and a Serb-Orthodox girl sat next to each other and held hands during the entire workshop, their affection open.

Democracy, human rights and corruption were topics of our workshops. Especially the groups of boys wanted to discuss these subjects with us. Twelve- and thirteen-year-old boys said, that they were frustrated to see the corruption in their country.

In schools a lot of work is done to implement democracy in the minds and hearts of children. In some regions of Bosnia there are “competitions of democracy“ between schools.

In the project, we used our own material and material from other organizations..

We translated our material into the Bosnian language, which can be downloaded from our homepage.

We were asked if we could work with teachers on a larger scale to create a multiplier effect. This was not possible in a microproject.

During our third project trip through Bosnia in May 2008, we invited Ms Arnela Pasic, student of a pedagogic university to accompany us. This gave us the opportunity to

receive feedback **from** local teacher and to involve local experts in the project. The cooperation with our local project partner “SOS Children's Village International” was excellent. We would like to thank them.

Public Relations Work of our Project

Television Interview for: „Kantonalna televizija – Sarajevo“ (TVSA) about our project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

Interview with a Journalist from „Oslobodjenje“, Newspaper, Sarajevo

2 Interviews with Journalists from „Avaz“, Newspaper, Sarajevo and Bijeljina

Meeting with members of „KRUG 99“, Association of independent intellectuals, Sarajevo

Meeting with employees of the „Department of education“ of the City Hall, Sarajevo

Meeting with Mr Anil Raghuvanshi, Programme Officer, Inclusive Basic & Child Protection Services, United Nations Children´s Fund, Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

Meetings with Herbert Pribitzer, „Office of the High Representative“, Sarajevo

Meeting with Ms Marina Tomic, „First Children´s Embassy“ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

Meetings with Ms Astrid Winkler, President of „ecpat Austria“ (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Child Trafficking for Sexual Purposes“, Vienna

Lecture about our project at „Vienna Network against Sexual Abuse of Girls, Boys and Adolescents.“, Vienna

and shortly after...

Our NGO is member of the Austrian Government Delegation at „World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents“, Rio de Janeiro