



CHAIN EMPOWERMENT

PROGRESS EVALUATION REPORT
JULY 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report was written by independent consultant: Tatjana Obradovic-Tosic. The consultant would like to thank all those who gave their time and contributed information during the evaluation, project team and girls peer educators, who gave their time and shared insights in a short available timeframe.

DISCLAIMER

“This Assessment has been developed by an independent evaluator. The analysis presented in this report reflects the views of the author and may not necessarily represent those of the Center for Girls, nor the Global Fund for Women”.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of this progress evaluation was to assess the progress and achievements in the implementation of project activities, successes in the first year and lessons learned. The information generated from this evaluation will contribute to organizational learning as well as generate knowledge for development effectiveness in next project year.

The technical grant was provided to the Center for Girls for delivery of project activities in 3 years, from July 2020 – July 2023, on annual basis approval. Project proposal includes set of core activities around empowering leadership skills of adolescent girls, but also incorporates internal capacity building and development as the organisation. At the end of project year 1, the team initiated evaluation with clear purpose to capture implementation assessment and lessons learned.

The approach applied to evaluation was structured against OECD/ DAC (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee) criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact (without sustainability).

Evaluation used two scales for the assessment of Project performance. The first one is a 6-level rating scale assessing project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and M&E. The second scale was the Gender Responsive Assessment Scale (GRAS) used to assess gender equality potential of project indicators and activities as gender-negative, genderblind, gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative.

The consultant adopted a participatory methodology in the progress evaluation, employing a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The approaches comprised of qualitative data collection, which was complimented with quantitative data collection. Qualitative data collection entailed documentation review (reports and evaluations from trainings and workshops) and 2 focus group discussions with 10 peer educators, with a lack of possibility to gather information from direct beneficiaries due to COVID-19. The methodology specifically considered primary and secondary data sources. The intent of this approach was to ensure the evaluation offered diverse perspectives and promoted the participation of different groups of stakeholders. The main data sources consisted of project documentation and project stakeholders reached by interviews.

The main findings of the progress evaluation show high relevance of the project activities for adolescent girls and their peers. The planned project activities have been delivered even though COVID-19 pandemic impacted the form and the timeline. 13 adolescent girls have been trained on gender-based violence and delivery of the topic to their peers. 11 stayed in the project and delivered 60 workshops with more than 500 adolescent girls participating at 4 localities. The biggest change and impact can be seen in 11 peer educators, while brother impact is to early to assess. The evaluations after workshops shows the attitude change and knowledge on the circle of violence, as well as causes and consequences of violence. Aside from the core project activities, the project reached wider audience with jingles and campaign delivered, as well as with Art-femine festival. The utilisation of project funds has been assessed as highly satisfactory, having in mind that it is technical grant and the impact of

COVID-19.

The main recommendations from the evaluation are focused on the implementation and achieving the targets set by the project proposal, as well as monitoring and evaluations system for tracking if the same girls are participating in the next round of workshops.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Introduction

The technical grant was provided to the Center for Girls for delivery of project activities in 3 years, from July 2020 – July 2023, on annual basis approval. Project proposal includes set of core activities around empowering leadership skills of adolescent girls, but also incorporates internal capacity building and development as the organisation.

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Evaluation methodology

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria were identified as the most suitable criteria to drive the evaluation process. Specifically, the project was assessed in light of the four DAC evaluation components of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact**. Evaluation used two scales for the assessment of Project performance.

1. The first one is a 6 level rating scale assessing project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, M&E and impact:

Ratings scale:

1. Highly satisfactory (HS),
2. Satisfactory (S),
3. Moderately satisfactory (MS)
4. Moderately unsatisfactory (MU),
5. Unsatisfactory (U),
6. Highly unsatisfactory (HU)

3. The second scale was the Gender Responsive Assessment Scale (GRAS) indicated in Table 3, to assess gender equality potential of Project indicators and activities as gender-negative, genderblind, gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative.

Level	Criteria
Gender Negative	Inequalities are reinforced to achieve desired development outcomes through use of gender norms, roles and stereotypes.
Gender Blind/neutral:	Gender is not considered relevant to development outcome. Gender norms, roles and relations are not affected (worsened or improved).

Gender Sensitive:	Gender is a means to reach set development goals. Addressing gender norms, roles and access to resources in so far as needed to reach project goals.
Gender Positive:	Gender is central to achieving positive development outcomes. Changing gender norms, roles and access to resources a key component of project outcomes.
Gender Transformative:	Gender is central in achieving positive development outcomes. The project is transforming unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision- making, and support for women’s empowerment.

The primary progress evaluation user is implementing organisation – Center fr Girls.

Evaluation approach and data collection

The evaluation adopted a participatory methodology and appreciative inquiry (AI) approach with a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Commonly used mixed data collection methods were deployed: desk review of relevant documents, with the focus group discussion and observations. The evaluation required mixed methods and a variety of data collection resources to validate, analyze and triangulate findings.

Data collection methods and sources have been present in table below.

Method	Source	No
Desk analysis	Project proposal	1
	Available progress reports	1
	Project documentation – evaluation reports from trainings	4
Focus group discussion	Focus group discussion with peer educators	2

Relevance – overall assessment is highly satisfactory

The project showed as relevant to its key objectives and local needs of adolescent girls. Evaluation findings show that the project was of extreme relevance, importance and value for the peer educators, they assessed relevance on a scale from 1 to 10 as 10. They stated that some of them have been victims of violence and had issues with self-confidence so the project was relevant to them personally, for their own growth. On the other hand, project was relevant to their understanding of the reality around them and how society and media shape that reality. As one of them said:

“Belittling and psychological violence in my environment is normal and part of everyday life. I feel empowered now to say: its enough, we are not going

to talk like that anymore. “(peer educator Smederevo)

The methodology used on the project was from their point of view inclusive and following development of awareness, accompanied with behaviour change. In that manner they were able to first understand and then act, which contributed to the change in their own lives and lives of their peers explained below in impact.

The evaluation findings also show, from the perspective of peer educators, that project was extremely important for their female peers as the violence is highly normalised in their environment and communities. They stated they are now in the period of life where they learn about love, and falling in love, but there are so many bad things happening in relationships that they do not know how to perceive. The workshops were helpful to see and understand of what is going on. Also, the project workshops have been relevant for moving from screens and social networks to real life, eye to eye contact, which than can impact and develop deeper connection, followed by developing of trust. The focus groups discussions also show that the project was relevant to development of criticism of adolescents towards reality they live in, and questioning patriarchal norms and roles.

“It was relevant for girls because they are silent about violence, they do not speak about it, as they do not feel safe” peer educator Nis

Additionally, even though some of the girls, peer educators, come from capital – Belgrade, they never had opportunity to hear or experience this type of work and workshops, which shows the relevance of the work in other communities.

The project was also relevant to developing more equal and just society. Some of peer educators had prejudice against LGBTI community, which has been changed now. At the festival, at least half of the 40 guests were LGBT, if not more so. Among the speakers on two panels, 10 of them are Croatia 2, BiH 3, Montenegro 1, Serbia 4, with certainty 4 lesbians, 2 Roma women. It was important for everyone present, as well as for peer educators, who push their boundaries and break down prejudices, as well as the message to LGBTIQ + people and Roma women that Centre is there for them, that they are welcomed and appreciated.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON RELEVANCE: EVEN THOUGH THE PROJECT PROVED TO BE HIGHLY RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN REGARDS TO VIOLENCE, PROJECT SHOULD CLOSELY MONITOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES ASIDE FROM PROJECT ACTIVITIES. ONE OF THE WIDER GOALS OF THE PROJECT IS STRENGTHENING THEIR LEADERSHIP SKILLS WHICH ARE RELEVANT FOR THEM BECOMING THE LOCAL ACTORS OF CHANGE. **THUS, THEIR WORK AND ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE MONITORED.**

Effectiveness – overall assessment is highly satisfactory

The project showed high level of effectiveness in the first year of implementation, even

though faced with number of challenges and risk management issues due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Application process for peer educators was widely open and transparent. The invitation was public with the fact that the description stated that it was for girls who were in the first or second year of high school, because the goal of the project was to be the same peer educators who would work with the same workshop groups for all three years. It was valid for the whole of Serbia, and applications were received from different cities. 19 girls applied and 14 have been chosen. Out of that number the plan was for 12 to pass the training and do workshops, but, from the experience of dropping out of interested girls, project ensured that 14 were called to the training. Eventually 13 showed up, as 1 was not allowed by parents.

The evaluation findings from the focus groups discussions showed that girls/adolescents were interested in applying, even though they were not completely aware what is it all about. Some of them heard of that possibility through teachers, some through social networks. The application process for them was not demanding, even though some did not know at all what is the CV and motivation letter.

The adolescent girls value a lot process before the actual training. Namely, even though it was not planned, project team organised several workshops live and online for girls to meet and know better each other. It was also a risk management strategy. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the training could not be held when

training. It was added value of the project, as girls had opportunity to watch movies, read, or just connect with each other. The topics were always around gender based violence. The focus group discussion shows that girls bonded before training and even opened their own Viber group for talk, share and connect.

The actual training was delivered in 2 training sessions – one in Vrnjacka Banja and one in Nis, because some of girls were not allowed by parents to travel to Vrnjacka Banja. The participants at focus groups coming from outside of Nis, stated they and their families appreciate a lot Tatjana Nikolic, from Center for Girls, made additional effort to come and meet their parents and explain the purpose of training, but also ensures safety of girls. It was necessary step which contributed to the trust of parents, as well as participants.

The training was delivered for 13 adolescent girls. The training evaluation shows high relevance of the training on their knowledge around gender based violence and especially on the circle of violence. The participants from focus groups stated that the training was very good and demanding but had major impact on their lives. It also enabled for girls to connect and bond between each other more.

“I bloomed, I changed toxic things in myself and in my environment.” Peer educator Belgrade

“Every topic was something I am interested in. I realised how much in reality media and TV makes everything perfect. When I realised some things – like sexual violence in private places, I got a little bit scared. Which helped me to understand the behaviour of girls at my workshops, as I could tell them my experience. “ peer educator Nova Pazova

“I felt seen and visible, I am not the only one suffering violence, atmosphere of circle and connection was really great.” Peer educator Smederevo

“At training we became very close to each other and learned to listen each other. “ peer educator Nis



By the start of workshops delivery 11 adolescent girls stayed in project and they delivered 60 workshops for more than 500 female peers. As the training was delivered in April, the workshops have been delivered in challenging timeframe, at the end of school year. Some of peer educators had more than 10 workshops while some had 2. It was dependable on the time limitations as well as openness of the school authorities. The focus group participants stated that they appreciate help of project team in meetings with school

principals and pedagogists or psychologists, as some time it was not easy to talk with them. They also stated they learned a lot throughout of process if organising the workshops – on time management, planning, organisation, and communication with authorities. They were empowered for more than hey expected.

Aside from workshops delivery, the peer educators participated at Art-femine festival in Nis, preparing the jingles for social networks, at the press conferences, public performance and as actresses in the readings of the “Vagina monologues” by Eve Ensler. They say that participating in all these activities was of extreme importance for them, as for some of them it was the first time they have spoken publicly and standing in the public square with transparents.

Aside from the core activities, GBF grant was supposed to be used in capacity building and strengthening the organisational capacities of Center for Girls. The progress towards these goals is mapped out in table bellow, but the main conclusion is that the team works on all planned processes:

Spreading in other cities – was done, and now Center for Girls has empowered and educated adolescent girls from Smederevo, Nova Paxova, Belgrade and Kursumlija, aside from Nis.

5 women employed – has not been achieved yet, but the grant enabled that 4th person in Center finally has honoraria for her work. Some project applications have been submitted and answers are expected.

EU project – has not been achieved yet, as application was not accepted. They will continue to work on it.

Stable financial support – is in the progress, not yet achieved

Fundraising capacities – Covid prevented organisation of online or offline fundraising activities in Y1, but will continue in Y2

Financial management – not yet worked on – there is a need expressed for qualitative and concrete training in this field

Program delivery, improving effectiveness – not yet achieved, there is a need for more human resources, as well as more bigger projects

Additionally, evaluation looked at how team managed challenges and risks mapped out in the project proposal. All risks and challenges are managed well, and they are still relevant. Even though it was not planned to be done in Y1, education on political participation started this year due to Art femine festival. One of the topics for public debate was on that with relevant participants from a whole region. There was no funds for actual education on public speaking, as it was stated in challenges, but preparation of Vagina Monologues, performing them and participation in jingles, and press conference, have contributed to more self esteem and confidence of girls.

In addition to planned challenges and risks some new appeared. There was a risk and challenge for dropping out of the group of peer educators before the training. It was overcome by constant communication, meetings, watching movies on the topic of this year's project and preparing them for training.

The organisation of live training was reduced to 2 out of planned 3 nights so that girls are not too much from home, but also to not lose from school days. As stated before, the risks of parents not allowing girls to come was not anticipated, but was overcome with clear communication and in some situations the team bring the adolescent girl to and from training by car.

Additional challenge was to work in schools in Covid-19 limited conditions. The team faced the challenge to reach the desired number of workshop participants, of 900. But, this will be managed by increase in next school year.

The monitoring and evaluation of activities is incorporated in the work of the project team and are on the satisfactory level. The assessments after training have been done, and pre and post assessments on the workshops have been done. Regular meetings with peer educators are organised after each workshop to assess how it went and what changes or improvements are needed. Having in mind the experience of Y1 reporting requirements of GWF, the team should reallocate time to establish data collection for Y2 in regard to format.

According to GRAS scale, project activities, indicators and outcomes have been assessed as gender transformative.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON EFFECTIVENESS: IT HAS TO BE SAID THAT THE PROJECT WAS DELIVERED IN HIGHLY SATISFACTORY MANNER. IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT IN NEXT PROJECT YEAR TEAM:

- **DEVELOPS PROJECT SCENARIOS ON HOW THEY WILL REACH TARGETS FOR THE WORKSHOPS IN CASE WITH AND WITHOUT COVID RESTRICTIONS.**
- **SPECIAL ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS FOR TRACKING THE PARTICIPATION OF SAME GIRLS AT THE WORKSHOPS IN Y2.**
- **ALSO, EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE EVENTS ONLINE SHOULD BE REGULAR FOR ALL PEER EDUCATORS.**
- **IT WAS NOT CLEAR FROM PROJECT COMMUNICATION HOW PROJECT TEAM MONITORED THE DELIVERY OF THE WORKSHOPS – DID THEY PARTICIPATED IN IT, OR AT LEAST AT FIRST ONES.**
- **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MAY BE GIVEN TO PEER EDUCATORS OUTSIDE OF NIS, AS IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY STRUGGLE WITH NUMBER OF GIRLS PARTICIPATING AT WORKSHOP.**

- **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO STRENGTHENING VISIBILITY AND PUBLIC SPEAKING IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS NATIVE ENVIRONMENT – WHAT SUPPORT CAN BE GIVEN TO THEM TO PARTICIPATE/INITIATE LOCAL ACTIONS, SPEAK FOR TV AND RADIO SHOWS IN THEIR OWN ENVIRONMENT**

Efficiency - overall assessment is highly satisfactory

Having in mind the challenges and reorganisations the team faced, efficiency is assessed as highly satisfactory. Out of 33000 \$ received, 31150\$ is spent, which is utilisation of 94% of the grant. Some savings have been made on the trainings and Art Femine festival, but generally funds are utilised really good. Even though unspent funds could be maybe used for some additional workshops, it has to be said that in limited timeframe, it was spent really responsible and well, with more than 550 persons benefiting from it directly and more than 436,862 citizens reached indirectly to online campaign.

The team stated that funds have been enough for the activities planned. But, internal capacities for financial management have been recognised as one for improvement, so in future project year some of the funds can be allocated to that.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON EFFICIENCY: IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT CENTRE LOOKS FOR MENTOR IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT NEXT YEAR. THE TRAINING IS NOT RECOMMENDED AS EACH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION HAS ITS OWN RULES AND PROCEDURES. FINDING THE PERSON WHO ALREADY WORKS ON EU OR USAID PROJECTS IS STRONGLY ADVISED. ADDITIONALLY, POSSIBLE UNDERSPEND IN Y2 SHOULD BE CLOSELY MONITORED IN ADVANCED. POSSIBLE DISCUSSION WITH PEER EDUCATORS ON ADDITIONAL TRAININGS ONLINE AND OFFLINE MAY BE USED FOR INCREASING THE IMPACT WITH UNDERSPEND FINANCES.

IMPACT

The assessment of long term impact is to early to be done. The progress evaluation findings show short-term impact in following areas:

- **ADOLESCENT GIRLS PEER EDUCATORS INCREASED THEIR AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR RIGHTS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

With 13 peer educators and 60 workshops delivered, project succeeded to increase awareness and knowledge of adolescent girls, peer educators of their rights and gender based violence. It had impact on changing their relationships with themselves, their peers and environment. The evaluation findings show that they changed on how they think about causes and effects of the violence, but also, how they think about patriarchy and power relationship. It also contributed to their better understanding of their role and position in society, and how it can be changed for better. It was noticeable that they feel scared but confident enough to read publicaly Vagina Monologues, to record jingles and participate in press conference and give statements to journalists. Some of them stated that couple of months ago it would not be possible for them.

- **ADOLESCENT GIRLS, PEER EDUCATORS, CHANGED THEIR POSITION AT THE HOME, SCHOOL AND GENERALLY ENVIRONMENT**

Some of the participants at the focus groups stated that the training changed them a lot, and even their family members commented it. From their statements it can be seen that they are perceived now as a leaders in the field of gender based violence, that they know how to listen and they know where someone can turn to. They also stated it was important to them to overcome judging and become supportive person to other girls, to understand why they are behaving in certain way. Some of peer educators also changed how they behave towards themselves. They know have more confidence in themselves, their knowledge and capacities, as well as potential to impact the change in others.

“In my home, I was youngest, and it was hard and have my own voice. At training I got my voice. I realised I have my own voice, and I am going to use and say loud I have my voice and attitude towards this and that! It was most important thing for me, I became aware of my voice, other if they want to hear or not its on them.

My mother said: I sent one girl to Vrnjacka Banja, and got completely new child, in a positive way”. Peer educator Smederevo

- **ADOLESCENT GIRLS, PARTICIPANTS AT THE WORKSHOPS INCREASED THEIR AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR RIGHTS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Evaluations from the workshops show these key changes in knowledge and attitudes:

- 55 girls (10.28%) out of 535 (100%), changed their minds from I AGREE that one slap is not violence to I DO NOT AGREE that one slap is not violence.
- 154 girls (34.2%) out of 535 (100%), changed their minds from I AGREE that alcohol (ism) is the cause of violence to I DO NOT AGREE that alcohol (ism) is the cause of violence.
- 132 girls (24.67%) out of 535 (100%), changed their minds from I AGREE that rape most often happens in public places by an unknown person in I DO NOT AGREE that rape most often happens in public places by an unknown person.
- 70 girls (13.08%) out of 535 (100%), changed their minds from AGREE that in some cases girls are guilty of violence to DISAGREE that in some cases girls are guilty of violence.

- **CENTRE IS A SAFE SPACE FOR GIRLS OUTSIDE OF NIS**

- Even though Center has experience with girls outside of Nis, especially because of Art Femine festival, this type of impact is different. The participants at focus

groups explained that they feel safe, listened and free in Center, which they did not experienced in their hometown.

Stories of change and impact

„One of the workshops was organised outside in the park, as it was not allowed in school. In circle, when we talked about violence on women, and they did not know about femicide, and number of women killed in Serbia. In one moment, one girl said she is angry about it. I allowed her to be angry, then four girls started to cry, as no one told them they can be angry. They were thought it was for boys and girls always have to obey and smile. I was so proud that I could recognise their emotion, allowed them to feel it, and teach them that violence is issue, and anger is normal emotion, which is ok to be felt, compared to violence which is behaviour and action. I realised how much girls push back their emotions of anger they feel towards what is said/ done to them or their friends and mothers. They were so helpful at the end as this was for them first time someone allowed them to talk about things, they experience and feel for a long time. They felt safe.“ Peer educator Smederevo

„I gained self-confidence, I understand more my own feelings and feelings of other. Connection with girls from workshop, and they contact me. And I spread my circle of people I know, as I was close only to my own family. Others look at me different as they realised how much knowledge I have. They also realised that it is safe to talk with me. In Roma communities, girls in Roma community have issues with early marriages. I in my family I was not in that situation, and my family support me because they want to break the circle they were in (my mom married when she was 17, but she is now major supporter of my education). But some of my friends had and still have those issues. And I want to be role model in Roma community, and show them, especially girls they can break the poverty circle (poverty, lot of number of children, lack of funds for schooling, marriage of girls as escape from poverty of the family). I started to talk more openly about importance and right of education for Roma girls, with my friends, on my classes. On the other hand, I do not want to run away from my roots and nationality, as we have so much to offer.“ Peer educator Nova Pazova



It has to be again strengthened, from evaluation perspective, that these findings are based only on the discussion with girls. As it was recommended in the effectiveness sections, it is not clear does adolescent girls/peer educators can feel safe to talk about gender based violence on radio/Tv in their hometown. Thus, next year should be focused on spreading the impact in their communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

From the project team lessons learned have been mapped out as followed:

- Girls need additional empowerment and that, in fact, it was very good that team had activities with them before the training, because in that way we got to know each other better and connected.
- Continuous work with them is crucial.
- Involvement in all activities Center can offer is more than recommended
- Face to face meetings and training events are proved to be major changer. Online events cannot ensure human touch

From the perspective of peer educators:

- We learned why listening and communication skills are necessary
- We learned how to communicate with school authorities, what is required, and what it looks like to organise event in school. We have not been aware of that before

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