

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy

Mentor to support UNICEF program intervention on school level relating to prevention of violence and bullying in schools

Start date: 10 February 2020
End date: 15 January 2021
Working days: Up to 120 days
Reporting to: Maria Yankova, Education Officer

I. Overview

Violence against children includes emotional and physical abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, sexual exploitation and abuse. It occurs in homes and families, schools, care and justice systems, workplaces and communities. Perpetrators include parents, family members, teachers, caretakers, law enforcement authorities and other children.

School violence includes¹ physical violence, including corporal punishment of students, mental and verbal abuse, sexual violence; bullying and cyberbullying. This usually happens invisibly: in the school itself (corridors, toilets, unobserved premises), in the school yard and around it. It can be done from child to child, from adult to child, and from child to adult.

Bullying is a particular form of school violence that is characterized by duration and repeatability as well as an imbalance of power - the performer always dominates. Bullying is seen as a group phenomenon in which observers are also participants. The consequences for the bully and the bullied are, however, equally severe in the long run.

Many children do not feel protected in school. Globally, more than one third of all children aged between 13 and 15 say that they are regularly a subject of violence or bullying at school². This is why the sustainable development goals put on the global agenda ending violence against children and its sustainable prevention.

There is clear evidence of the harm of violence on physical and mental health and children's development, on their ability to learn and build relationships with others, to become fully functional adults and parents. School bullying and insecure school environments are one of the reasons for early drop out of the education system, reduced attendance, poor student performance, and have significant socio-economic effects as education is key for the personal and professional realization of individuals and for the prosperity of societies.

In Bulgaria since 2000, the Child Protection Act sets the framework for protection of the dignity and protection against violence for each child. There is a general Coordination Mechanism for interaction between services in cases of child abuse. The problem of school violence is recognized at national level and its prevention is one of the strategic objectives of the National Program for the Prevention of Violence and Child Abuse (2017-2020)³. Other objectives of the program aim at development of various services, models and tools for violence prevention and

¹ School violence and bullying – a global status report. Presented at the International Symposium on School Violence and Bullying: From Evidence to Action, UNESCO, Seoul, 17 – 19 January 2017

² A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, New York, 2017

³ National Program for prevention of violence and abuse against children (2017-2020), p.18.

work with children who are victims or perpetrators of violence; enhancement of the capacity of the professionals working with children and improvement of the interinstitutional cooperation and coordination and awareness raising to improve society's sensitivity on questions related to violence against children. A bi-annual action plan to the program was approved in March 2017.

In addition the new Family Code prohibits, for the first time in family law, the use of force by the parent or of methods of education, which degrade the child's dignity. The prohibition is confirmed in the legislation relevant to schools and the other institutions.

Despite the above activities, violence in schools remains a serious issue of concern as the number of reported cases has increased in the last few years and a number of severe cases of violence have been covered by media.

According to the study on the health and behaviour of school aged children (HBSC)⁴ students in Bulgaria are among the top ten out of 43 surveyed countries affected by the problem of school bullying. An important role for risky behaviour plays the school environment - discomfort and alienation from the school, low achievement and bullying affirm the risk behaviours among adolescents. Almost one third of all students report that they have at least once been subject to violence or bullying at school within one year.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Science⁵ (MES) show that 4519 cases of manifested aggression were registered in schools for 2014/2015. 92 cases of aggression from teacher and/or parents against children, 310 – children against adults, 4 117 – peer aggression. Among peer aggression 1 662 incidents of physical aggression, 1 603 incidents of verbal aggression, 497 case of psychological bullying, 51 cases of online bullying and another 256 incidents of destructive behaviour (vandalism), 48 incidents of self-harm (suicidal attempts), 252 cases of antisocial behaviour. In 2017, over 80% of Bulgarian schools have reported at least one case of violence.

According to MES there is a growing trend on all areas of manifested aggression.

A study of the views of Bulgarian children on important areas of their life⁶, conducted by UNICEF and the State Agency for Child Protection, also confirms that violence, in particular school violence, is as a major problem for children and adolescents.

- The different forms of aggression, violence and bullying, are identified as one of the four major problems faced by children in Bulgaria together with poverty, the easy access to drugs, alcohol and cigarettes, and the low quality of education.
- As educational problems, children highlight mostly outdated learning material and teaching methods, as well as conflicting relationships between teachers and pupils and among students (misunderstanding, aggression, and violence).

Schools, on the other hand, are recognized as an important space where children, teachers and education personnel can learn and adopt pro-social behaviours that can contribute to preventing violence within the school and in the community.

In April 2017, MES initiated the development of a cross-sectoral Action Plan which aims at prevention of violence and building safety in schools. The measures include provision of psychologists and pedagogical counselors, targeted trainings of teachers, introduction of in-class and after school activities for prevention of violence. There has been a revision of the State Standard on Inclusive Education with regards to the cases of bullying and violence in schools.

⁴ Health and behavior in school-aged children - HBSC 2013/2014: An international survey. Summary of data for Bulgaria <https://www.unicef.bg/assets/NewsPics/2017/PDFs/HBSC_2013_2014_Resume.pdf> (02.07.18)

⁵ Official data MES; National Program for prevention of violence and abuse against children (2017-2020)

⁶ My voice matters. UNICEF. 2015

A **Mechanism for combatting bullying and violence in educational institutions** has been introduced in the education system⁷ to support educational institutions in their efforts to create a safe school environment. Its introduction implies the understanding that real progress in addressing violence and bullying can only be achieved by implementing a coherent and purposeful policy that is shared and implemented by all actors in the education process. The document introduces the necessary measures to create a safe school environment in the understanding of social-ecological model and a whole-school approach to prevention and intervention on violence. Each institution in the system of pre-school and school education is obliged to:

- Set up a coordination council which is responsible for planning, monitoring and coordinating efforts to tackle violence and bullying;
- Assess and analyse the situation with a view to educating the school community on the topic of violence, but also revealing prevalence of certain forms and measures taken so far;
- Based on the assessment, plan / update prevention and intervention activities at both institution and group / class level.

Despite the existence of a unified framework that lays the foundation for a safe school environment, it appears that educational institutions need support for its effective implementation and enforcement. One of the weaknesses of the approaches so far is that they are adult-oriented and that children and adolescents are not active participants. Empowering them as equal participants in improving the school climate is an approach that also contributes to their development as responsible and independent individuals. Additionally the role of parents as part of the school community needs to be strengthened and pedagogues need support for their role in the prevention process.

II. UNICEF role

UNICEF Bulgaria is in the second year of implementation of the Country Programme for the period 2018-2022. The overall goal of the country partnership is to support Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society.

The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices will be a cross-cutting element throughout the country partnership in the period 2018 – 2022.

In the area of violence and bullying prevention UNICEF has provided policy advice and technical assistance to MES for the development of Mechanism and school protocols for addressing bullying and violence in schools and introduction of whole-school approach to violence prevention. At the end of 2017 UNICEF in Bulgaria initiated a national representative study (in progress) on violence against children that aims to reveal the scale of the phenomena in different settings in Bulgaria as well as to inform the efforts for revision of the legislation on the issue.

Together with the MES UNICEF started in 2019 a long-term initiative on prevention of violence and bullying in schools. The main goal of the initiative is to raise awareness, understanding and sensitivity on the subject of violence, to reduce tolerance for various forms of violence in schools and to support the Bulgarian schools to become more effective in tackling violence and bullying.

⁷ The document has been introduced in 2012 and its latest update was in December 2017.

The initiative is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science and UNICEF with the support of other partners and stakeholders. It consists of:

- A) A nationwide communication and advocacy campaign **#End violence in schools** on the right of every child to live free from violence in schools that will engage children and adolescents as agents of a positive change in their own environment.
- B) A school-based program intervention **Steps together** aimed at creating a safe school environment and preventing violence and bullying. The program builds on the whole-school approach, a social-ecological model to addressing the problem. Under this approach violence is regarded as social phenomenon with drivers on several levels (individually, interpersonally-the class, the school and the local community). Tackling the problem requires a response on each level, as well as from every participant in the school community (students, pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, principals and parents).

The program is expected to run for 3 years in 5 pilot schools countrywide, with the continuous support of especially assigned mentors to each school. The main goal is creating a safe school environment through following components: assessing the school environment, raising awareness and knowledge on the issue and creating a school commitment to prevention work; training of principals and coordination committees in the whole-school approach; ongoing support and training of teachers on effective classroom management and communication with parents; participation of students in social-emotional learning classes; parents' seminars; strengthening the school community through student and parent participation and other mechanisms, creating a student peer-to-peer support group and installing the restoration of values approach.

Evidence and knowledge generated through the tested interventions will inform the national policy framework on violence prevention and child protection in the education and will support the development of training packages and modules on the topic to be integrated in in-service teacher and principal training.

III. Purpose and tasks of the assignment

The overall goal of the assignment is to support the implementation on school level of UNICEF's program intervention in the area of violence and bullying prevention. In particular, under the guidance and supervision of the UNICEF Education Officer and in cooperation with Project coordinator and Consultant on prevention of violence in schools, the Mentor will support one of the 5 pilot schools to implement, monitor and sustain the whole-school approach to prevention of violence and bullying in schools, throughout the programme period;

In particular, the Mentor will be expected to carry out the following tasks:

1. ***Support the implementation on school level of all the activities and processes of a whole-school approach to prevention of violence and bullying in schools, tested through the program intervention***
 - 1.1. Receive instruction and training on the specific assignment as school Mentor of the programme, incl. on the whole-school approach theory and practice, activities, challenges, time frame and expected workflow of the programme etc. (appr. 2-3 days of training and instruction)
 - 1.2. Support through provision of guidance and assistance the effort of one or more schools to build local capacities and develop mechanisms to implement and sustain prevention practices (incl. through regular visits, at first once per two weeks, after the introduction period once per month or other frequency as needed).

- 1.3. Provide support for data collection and evidence generation on prevention practices, for needs assessment of pilot school(s), for defining the elements of safe school environment (incl. through focus-groups, discussions and workshops with members of the school community)
- 1.4. Provide methodological support and be available to the school as support person as per planned visits and at request.
- 1.5. Provide or be able to recommend and facilitate appropriate training to school personnel according to needs assessed and core elements of the programme, as agreed with UNICEF (incl. on prevention and intervention approaches to bullying and violence etc);
- 1.6. Support and facilitate all school processes related to the implementation of whole-school approach to prevention of violence during the whole pilot period (as for the first implementation year);
- 1.7. Oversee implementation along with school personnel and adapt responses and actions to specific situations, as appropriate.

2. *Other general:*

- 2.1. Participate in relevant meetings, workshops, seminars as needed;
- 2.2. Cooperate and exchange relevant experience and information with other Mentors;
- 2.3. Others as agreed with UNICEF office.

IV. Timeframe and duration of the assignment

It is expected that the assignment will take place in the period 10 February 2020 – 15 January 2021.

V. Required education, experience and competencies

The successful candidate is expected to have the following competencies:

- Master’s degree or higher in one or more of the following areas: pedagogy, social pedagogy, pedagogy of special needs, social sciences/social work, psychology or other relevant field.
- Ample experience in working with schools and/or implementing similar prevention programmes in different environments.
- Good knowledge and understanding of the functioning and structure of the school education system.
- Good understanding of the conceptual framework, national policy framework and institutional arrangements relating to violence against children, prevention and child protection.
- Ability to work independently, to work with teams through group dynamics, problem solving and conflict resolution;
- Respect for cultural diversity and human rights;
- An ongoing professional training in psychotherapy and/or supervision in social work is an advantage.

VI. Expected deliverables

1. Technical assistance in conducting baseline study and needs assessment – until 31 March 2020:

- a. 3 focus-groups per school conducted with students, teachers and parents;
 - b. 2 interviews conducted with principals and school counsellor;
 - c. Other technical assistance according to received instruction and instruments.
2. At least 12 facilitated school meetings with different participants in the school community on topics and processes of the programme intervention (as for the 1st implementation year). Topics could be some of the following: prepare for and plan baseline study, discuss school plan for prevention activities, plan cooperation with parents, discuss over an appropriate social-emotional learning pack, discuss over and plan teachers training and support, provide methodological support etc., and other topics as per needs assessed initially.
3. Other deliverables agreed upon in the course of the assignment as required.

VII. Official travel involved

The consultancy will involve up to 40 days in-country travel to the settlement where the pilot school is situated. Each mentor will be matched to one school. The pilot schools are situated in the following regions: Sofia, Lovech (city of Teteven), Razgrad (city of Zavet), Pleven (city of Iskar), Kjustendil.

VIII. Remuneration and incurred costs:

The consultant will receive a daily fee in accordance with the submitted and agreed with UNICEF financial offer. Payments will be made based on written certification of timely and satisfactorily provision of consultancy services provided every month.

The Mentor is expected to have frequent travels to country regions. A lump sum will be paid for in-country travel which includes travel cost, accommodation and DSA to the amount of 60 BGN for in-country travel without overnight and 120 BGN for in-country travel with overnight.

IX. Monitoring and evaluation

The selected consultant will work under the direct supervision of the UNICEF Education Officer and in close collaboration with the Project coordinator and the Consultant on prevention of violence in schools.

Performance indicators

The performance will be evaluated against the following criteria: timeliness, responsibility, initiative, communication and quality of the products delivered.

UNICEF recourse in the case of unsatisfactory performance

In case of unsatisfactory performance, the contract will be terminated by notification letter sent 10 days prior to termination.

Developed by:

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Approved by:

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