

**Evaluation Report on Child Participation Assessment of
Child Protection Unit Services
2011**

Introduction

The Child Participation Assessment aimed to inform the work and efforts of MARIO project partners and local government Child Protection Units (CPUs) through collecting the children's experiences, opinions, attitudes and emotions towards the protective services they have received from the CPUs. The CPUs are based at the local government social services department and their work is focused in protecting the children that are subject or at risk of violence, abuse, neglect, social exclusion, trafficking, exploitation and other phenomena that threatens the wellbeing of children. The assessment exercise was conducted with children who were direct and indirect beneficiaries of the CPU services in eight different urban areas: Durres, Elbasan, Korca, Pogradec, Gjirokaster, Vlora, Kucova, Saranda. The process of data collection was conducted through the use of qualitative methods such as individual interviews and focus groups.

Method

For this assessment, we used qualitative methods such as individual interviews and focus groups. The individual interviews were conducted with 38 children whose cases were followed systematically by the CPU personnel. On the other hand, the focus groups were conducted with children who have participated in various activities organized by the CPU and have therefore benefited indirectly from the services.

The CPU representatives selected the children in a purposive manner by inviting mainly those children who have been receiving protective services for some time. However, the child participation depended largely on the availability of the children. As a consequence, the sample is not representative of all the children who have benefitted by the CPU services, but it may offer a good basis to understand the general trend of the children's reactions.

The individual interviews were conducted mostly in office premises, such as in CPU offices, local Terre des Hommes offices, Kucova Youth Center premises, schools, and residential institutions but in few cases at home and a hospital room. In some cases when the children were very young and shy, during the individual interviews and some of the focus groups, the interviewer was accompanied by the CPU or Terre des Hommes representatives whom the child knew very well. However the CPU or Terre des Hommes representatives did not interfere in the process of data collection but served more as observers whom the interviewers consulted about the notes at the end of the interviews. The children were informed prior to the interview or focus group discussion about

the purpose of the exercise and as well the right to stop the conversation if they did not feel comfortable in answering the questions.

The individual interview script was comprised of 18 closed and opened questions. The first set of questions asked about the knowledge that children have in general regarding the CPU work and their overall evaluation of its services. The second group of questions named as Section A asked about the CPU visits at children's homes. The third group of questions named as Section B asked about the family visits at the CPU premises. The last group of questions aimed at identifying the problems at home and evaluated the help that children's families have received from the CPU. Regarding the structure of the questions, there were three type of questions: a) Yes/No questions (i.e. Do you know what CPU is?), b) Likert scale questions with a range of answers in 1-5 scale where 1 means "very bad" or "very rarely" and 5 means "very good" or "very often" (i.e. How often has the CPU paid visits at your home?), c) opened questions that aimed at receiving descriptive answers. General observations about the participants and the process of the interview were also reported and considered in the process of data analysis.

The focus group script included 14 issues for discussion. The information was probed in a natural manner following the line of reasoning and conversation that children developed around the topics. However, for the young age groups, the moderator added few explanations and probes that were appropriate for their age and development. In addition, two fun games were conducted with children as energizers prior to and at the end of the discussion. In the end, the moderator also kept notes regarding the process of discussion, characteristics of the children and group dynamics. These notes were considered in the process of data analysis.

As the study employed qualitative methods and the sample size was as well very small and purposive, the data were analyzed mainly through thematically oriented analysis and frequencies for those data collected through the Likert scale questions in the individual interviews. Thus, the descriptive information was coded and analyzed qualitatively. We integrated the individual interviews and focus groups findings and presented them first for the overall sample and then specifically for each CPU.

Results

1. Findings from the Individual Interviews

Knowledge about CPU services

Most of the children did not know the terms Child Protection Unit but knew the CPU representatives. As such during the interview in most of the cases we used the name of the CPU personnel to refer to the CPU work and services. In general, according to the participants the CPU was defined as:

"The center in the municipality or the association that helps/takes care of/protects children that have needs, children who don't have parents, children who are poor and live in bad economic conditions, Roma children, children who do

not attend schools and disabled children. It protects their rights and makes them happy by including them in summer camps and other activities where there are toys, music, games, dramas, etc. The CPU representatives help parents and families who are poor by giving them food, medicines, school materials, shampoos, etc. The CPU representatives provide the parents with certificates, papers and documents, find them work or give them loans to start a business.

One child from Kucova:

It protects the children by helping them. Protects the children from dangers so that they don't get hurt, do not get dirty, take care of themselves so that they are healthy.

The CPU representatives are generally described as being fun persons, communicative, caring and helpful. They are considered as problem-solvers in case of family problems but also

educators who speak to children and their parents about violence, schooling and children's rights. One of the children referred to the personnel as "the persons who protect the children better than others". In addition when asked to rate the quality of CPU services in a scale ranging from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good), the children found their work between "good" and "very good" (M=4.7).

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

The CPU visits at home were common among all participants. However, eight children among whom four from Saranda, two from Korca, one from Pogradec and one from Durres indicated that they did not remember to have ever seen or heard about the CPU representatives' visits at home. In addition, in the interviews conducted with some of the children in Vlora and Durres, the children reported that it was the employee of Terre des Hommes and not the CPU representative who have visited their homes.

Those children, who reported to have had visits at home, indicated various levels of frequency varying from "very rarely" to "very often". However, the general trend as showed by the mean of the frequencies in a scale from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very often), was that the frequency of the visits was rated between "normal" and "often" (M = 3.6).

One child from Kucova:

Better. I have felt relaxed when I talked to her at home, at school. When I talk to her, I feel good cause I can say whatever I have inside me. She hugs me, kisses me and gives me courage.

In general the interviewed children reported that they have felt good and happy when the CPU representatives have visited them at home.

Only three children assisted by the CPU in Kucova have reported that they did not feel very well during the CPU visits. They showed that these visits and the conversations done at home with the CPU representatives reminded them of their problems such as the parental divorce in one case and the poverty in

another. The third child did not feel good as the CPU went home to advise him to attend the school frequently but this was a topic he did not like to talk about.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

Most of the children who participated in the assessment reported that their parents have visited the CPU representatives at their offices. However twelve of the children interviewed stated that they do not remember such visits to have ever taken place.

The frequency of the visits conducted in the CPU offices varied from “very rarely” to “very often”. However, in most of the cases, the children reported to have visited the offices neither too rare nor too often ($M = 3.3$).

The majority of the children said that they felt good, satisfied and calm during the visits at CPU offices. They said that during these visits, their parents and the CPU representatives talked about them and the family problems. While only one the children experienced embarrassment when her parents discussed family problems with the CPU representative in the office, most of them experienced positive emotions such as hope, joy and satisfaction.

One child in Elbasan:

When I visit the CPU offices, I feel calm because the CPU representative helps my mom and she calms her down. My mom feels happy and she is full of hope when she leaves for home. She goes and does immediately what the CPU representative tells her.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

When asked about the problems that children had at home before they received protective services from the CPUs, there were various issues that came up along the interviews. Some of them are as follows:

- Poverty and unemployment (reported as lack of food, clothes, furniture, money, etc.)
- Bad housing (reported as living in bad conditions, or temporarily in relatives' house that the family has to leave soon).
- Parents' death and custody issues
- Parental divorce associated with child neglect and family separation
- Child abuse and child trafficking
- Parents' depression associated with child neglect
- School drop-out
- Abusive partners
- Poor personal hygiene

The children in general reported that the CPU have helped greatly both the parents and themselves. The assistance offered varied on the type of problem that children and their families had. However, in most of the cases, the families received food, clothes medicines and school supplies as well as economic aid and

loans for parents to start modest businesses. In specific cases the CPU has also worked to establish and mediate the relationship between the divorced parents or parents and children who lived apart from each other for many years. Hence, the CPU has assisted in finding an appropriate custodian for these children.

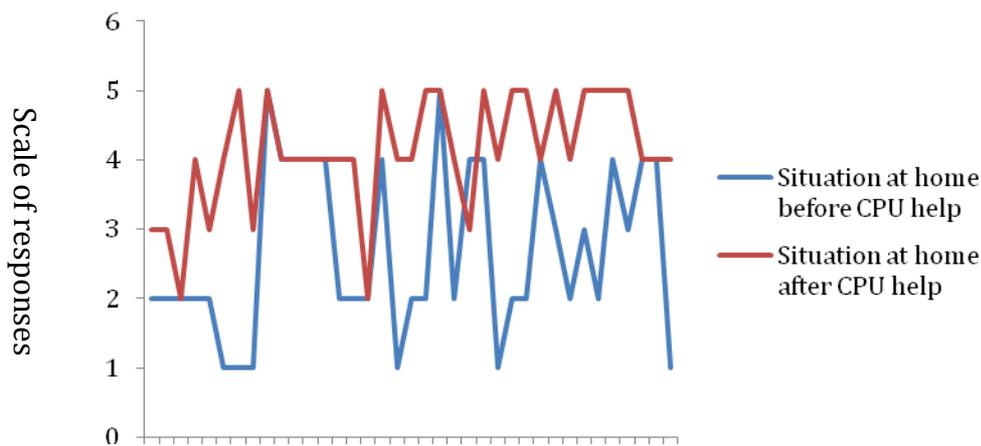
When asked about how the CPU has helped more specifically the children themselves, the participants reported mainly the following types of assistance:

- Help with books and school materials
- Help with medicines and health checks
- Help with food
- Invitations to the camp and other activities
- Consultations about important issues related to relationships with parents, teachers and friends.

Most of the children said that the help and assistance received so far was very valuable and that they did not know what the CPU could have done better. However, few children said that they would want to receive more food, clothes and school supplies in the future, as well as being engaged more often in the camps and other activities organized by the CPU.

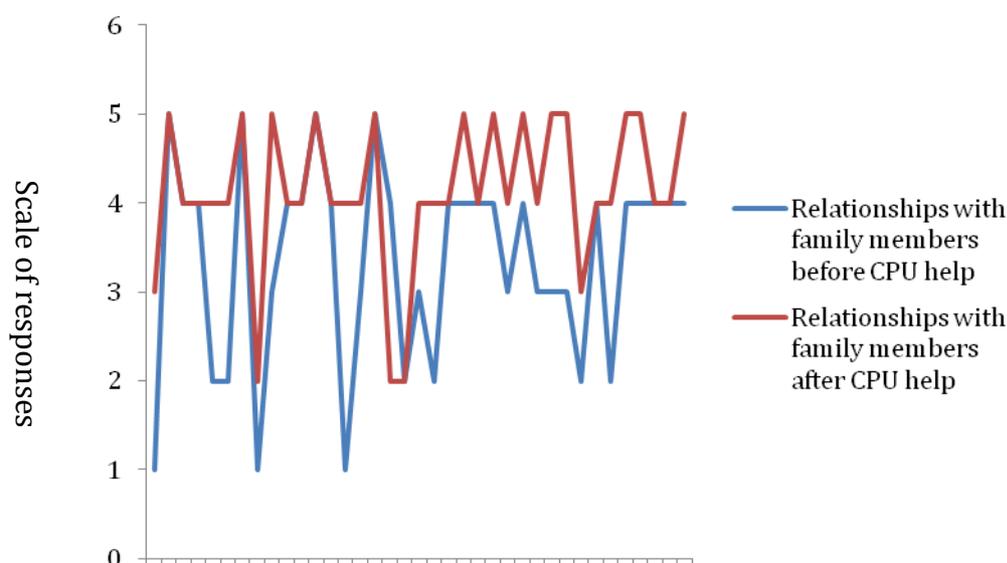
The impact of the CPU services was measured through two questions related to the situation at home and the relationships between the children and their members of the family before and after the CPU assistance. These two factors were evaluated using a scale from 1 (meaning “very bad”) to 5 (meaning “very good”). The comparative analysis indicated that in general the situation at home improved following the CPU assistance (Figure1). Such result is confirmed as well using the mean of the whole group before (M = 3.7) and after (M = 4.1) the CPU help.

Figure 1



In addition, the results showed that the relationships between the family members also improved following the CPU assistance (Graph 2). The group means before (M = 3.4) and after (M = 4.1) the CPU assistance indicate as well a change in the family relationships.

Figure 2



2. Findings from the Focus Group Discussions

Definition of violence and child abuse

The definition of violence varied slightly among different groups. However, at large the participants considered violence towards children as maltreatment and violation of children's rights. According to them, violence and child abuse is related to various constructs as follows:¹

- Negative emotions - hate, jealousy, sadness (1)
- Hostile objectives - hurting someone (1)
- Aggressive behaviors - punches, slapping, maltreatment(3)
- Consequences - symptoms of being sick (1)
- The direction of violent actions - From an adult to a child, or an older child to a younger one(2)

According to children there are several types of violence:

- Physical violence (7)
- Emotional (6)
- Negligence (4)
- Bullying and mocking (4)
- Sexual abuse (2)
- Sexual exploitation and exploitation for work (2)

The children reported that they have received information about violence from various sources. Thus, the results indicate that the family and school are also the primary actors that offer information about violence. However, as discussed

¹ The number of groups that revealed these constructs during the discussions is reported in parentheses along the constructs

further in some of the groups, the information and knowledge about violence received in the family and school is also a reflection on the violent actions that children have observed or experienced themselves from parents, older siblings, older peers or teachers. In addition, the children indicated that Radio/TV, Books and NGO workers are actors that offer valuable information on violence.

The list of sources and the frequency of times each source has been mentioned in the focus group discussions is as follows:

- Family (5)
- School/Teachers (4)
- Radio/TV (3)
- NGO workers (3)
- Books (3)
- Friends (2)
- Newspapers (2)
- Kindergartens (1)
- Internet (1)
- Psychologist (1)
- Have reflected myself (1)
- Have seen it at home (1)

When asked about what children would do in case one of their friends has been abused, the participants more often mentioned that they would advise the children to go to the police or the CPU. In addition, they indicated that they would advise their friends to use some protective measures and to share their experience with other peers in order to understand their situation better. Thus, the main reactions reported are:

- I would tell / help my friend to go to the police (3)
- I would tell / help my friend to go to the CPU (3)
- I would advise my friend to not go out of home when it is dark or in dark and narrow streets (2)
- I will call my friends' parents (2)
- I would tell my friend to talk to the school psychologist. (2)
- Register the number on the car plate (1)
- I would tell my friend to go to the doctor to cure the wounds (1)
- Memorize the stranger's face (1)
- I would tell my friend to talk to NGO workers. (1)
- I would tell my friend to talk to other children to understand better the situation. (1)

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

The children reported various community actors that can help reducing the violence and child abuse. The list of actors and the frequency of times they were mentioned during the seven focus groups is as follows:

- Parents (7)
- School (6)
- Peers (6)

- Police (4)
- CPU (4)
- Doctors (3)
- Brothers (3)
- Laws (2)
- Social Workers (2)
- Community members (2)
- Psychologist (2)
- Cousins (2)
- Residential Institutions (1)
- Shelters for victims of domestic violence (1)
- State (1)
- NGO-s (1)
- Daily centers (1)
- A stranger (1)
- A dog (1)

According to the frequency analysis, the parents, teachers and peers are the people that can help the most in protecting the children from violence and abuse. It is important to note that the police and CPU were also considered important reference points.

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

While four of the children groups reported that they have participated in activities about violence, the other groups did not (children groups from Gjirokastra, Vlora, Durres). Most of these activities about violence were organized by the CPUs or the schools. In these activities, children mentioned that they have received information about children's rights, the types of violence and methods to prevent violence. There were also dramas and shows about violence while flyers with information were distributed.

The actors invited in these activities included:

- Parents (3)
- Teachers (3)
- Local Government Representatives (3)
- CPU (2)
- The Mayor of Municipality (2)
- NGOs representatives (2)
- School director (1)
- School security person (1)
- Community members (1)
- Police (1)

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

Children discussed about the community members they would invite in case they would design activities for child abuse and violence. These actors would be: local government representatives, friends, parents, teachers, school psychologists,

brothers and sisters, CPU representatives, police, doctors and school directors. In these activities they would do various things, such as:

- Talks about why violence shouldn't be used in family and school.
- Dramas and songs about violence
- Posters with the title STOP Violence.
- Display cases of abused children and examples of ways to complain in such cases.
- Increase the interest about children among adults.
- Role-plays
- Training with parents where parents themselves will be face-to-face with their children.
- Establish a contact number for the CPU.
- Facilitation of trainings about peer-to-peer violence.

Evaluation of the CPU services

Children that participated in focus groups defined the CPU as a center in the Municipality that conducts activities for children, workshops, various games, and journeys. According to them, the center gives children and their families, economic aid, clothes, medicines. This is an office where children can go and talk about their concerns. Based on children's answers, the CPU identifies the cases of neglected, trafficked and physically abused children and works to help them.

According to the children, the CPU has helped to reduce the violence oriented towards children by organizing talks about violence. In these talks, the CPU has showed the strategies that can help children to protect themselves by others, as well as has shared messages against violence to the community.

Most of the groups were satisfied with the quantity and quality of the services offered by the CPUs. However, the groups of Elbasan and Kucova mentioned that the services should become more known and public so that the services can reach more children that need help. According to them, these could have been done by:

- Organizing more activities with community members, teachers and parents
- Preparing and distributing leaflets
- Opening a facebook account for the CPU and appoint a person who can be contacted by the children.

In addition, the children of Vlora expressed the need for the CPU to conduct more meetings with parents, teachers and friends in order to reduce the violence at home and school.

Th children expressed their willingness to cooperate with the CPUs in order to maximize the services outreach as well as their quality. The children volunteered to:

- Identify the cases of violence in the community
- Help children with school registration
- Prepare various games and activities about violence

- Prepare and facilitate meetings with adults and peers to talk about the services of the CPU
- Manage the facebook account of the CPU
- Help collect materials for children and families that need food, clothes and medicines.

Main Findings for each CPU

CPU of Durres

Individual Interviews

Three individual interviews were conducted in Durres. Because of the children's age and they were shy and often responded with limited answers, it was difficult for us to gather a lot of information or to make a proper evaluation.

Knowledge about CPU services

One of the children did not know the CPU. The others know CPU as a person who helps people in difficulty and with preparing various papers and documents. However both of them appreciated its work as good.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

According to children's reports, CPU had visited two of the children houses. They evaluated the employees of CPU as good people, nice and beautiful.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

Always basing on children's reports, two of their families have visited CPU's representative at the office. They felt good about it. One of the children said he felt good being in the center of attention.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

One of the children (1/3) had no knowledge about the CPU's assistance. The other one assumed that the CPU helped his family with money and her sister with a hairdressing course. The last one said that she gave to his family birth certificates.

They were clearer about what CPU offered to their families rather than to them. One said that CPU didn't help her. Only one of them said CPU supported her to continue going to school.

Two of them had no idea what CPU should have done differently. The last one said she should give food to them and help her parents more.

Evaluation of the CPU services

After CPU's intervention, we can notice a considerable change in the relationship between the family members and the situation at home.

One of the children reported violence in family (his father was imprisoned because of this) and the other one the lack of medicaments (her mother was pregnant).

Focus group

Six children (4 girls and 2 boys) participated in the focus group discussion.

Definition of violence and child abuse

We noticed that the children we met in Durres described very well violence in emotional terms: there is violence when there is jealousy, sadness, hate (people don't love each other, they fight). As a consequence, they have problems and become sick.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

Children mentioned as actors who can help reducing violence and child abuse all the persons that are part of their social network and support them, such as friends, teachers, adults, parents, older brother and cousins.

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

They have never participated in activities related to violence and child abuse.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

They did not have recommendations.

Evaluation of the CPU services

The children reported that they did not have much information on the CPU services.

Discussion

The group of children was very young, averagely 6-10 years old. They had a very simple but correct definition of violence, although they indicated that no one had ever talked to them about violence. By saying that they have seen and used violence in their own house and that the children should go to the doctor to cure the wounds, they have indicated the presence of violence and its harsh consequences in their lives. It is also very important to see who these children indicate as their group of support in cases of violence, their family members.

Recommendations

Based on the data collected and the dynamic of the group, we can argue that the young age of the group may be a limitation in formulating clear conclusions and recommendations for the work of CPU in Durres. However, we can definitely say that the domestic violence may be an issue that should be in the focus of the CPU work with this target-group. In addition, the CPU should take into account and engage as partners in its activities the persons that the children see as the point of reference for help and assistance.

CPU of Kucova

Individual Interviews

We conducted individual interviews with eight children (6 girls and 2 boys).

Knowledge about CPU services

Two of them had knowledge about CPU services; the others know it only by the name of its representative.

For a child she is a person who speaks to them and after writes on her computer. For most of them she is a person who:

- Protects children (e.g. from danger, from people who harm them; to be healthy and to be clean; those who have no parents),
- Integrate children at school
- Help them (especially poor people) with materials (ex: school materials, food, soaps),
- Entertain them with various activities (like summer camp where they communicate with each other, courses like piano, theater, various games etc.).

CPU helps all the children especially those that have no parents. For the children CPU work is “good” to “very good”.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

According to children reports, CPU representatives have visited everyone's houses. For most of them she visited often and for few rarely. They felt good and relaxed when she visited, because she brought things like soap and detergents which helped them. They felt good as well because they have a place to talk and they can share their problems with someone else. One of them showed a special relationship with the representative. The child felt that she could talk to her about everything she has in her heart and she is happy when the representative of CPU gives her courage.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

Four (4/8) of them knew that their parents had visited CPU's offices. They felt good about that especially because she took and drove them around with her car.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

According to their reports, she helped their families with supplies (school materials, food, medicines, detergents and money). She had promised them to help in the reconstruction of their house. The children also reported that the representatives have helped them though talking about the daily problems in their families. The CPU's representative helped one of the children, which was threatened by her ex-boyfriend. She went to police and reported the case. The

CPU representative was also present in the court when the decision about custody was taken.

They didn't know what she could have done more. For some of them, maybe she could have helped by buying a house or providing more cleaning materials.

Evaluation of the CPU services

Based on children's answers, we can notice a slight change in the relationship between the family's member and the situation at home before and after CPU's intervention. Only in one case the relationship with family members had worsened.

Focus group

During the focus group discussion 11 children (6 girls and 5 boys) were present. They were not only beneficiaries of the CPU services but already its active partners.

Definition of violence and child abuse

They defined violence as violation of children's right and maltreatment. Surprisingly, they could mention all the forms of violence (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, trafficking and exploitation for work) except they put mocking as a separate form of violence.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

They could mention as actors who help reducing violence and child abuse:

- Their social network (parents and peers),
- School personnel (teacher and the psychologist),
- Institutions (school, daily centers, police, NGOs for children rights and CPU)
- Doctors,
- Community

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

They have participated in activities about violence in the framework of the collaboration it shares with the CPU. These activities helped them to be aware that their community use violence as a normal form for disciplining children.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

According to their reports, children would recommend the psychologist, CPU representative or his/her parents as persons of support in case of violence. During activities about violence, parents and children should be invited and parents should confront their children. Flyers giving messages against violence and containing the contact number of CPU's representative would complete

these activities. In the end, children suggested that trainings about violence peer to peer should be delivered.

Evaluation of the CPU services

They evaluate CPU as a unit who works and distributes messages against violence. They recommended that CPU should be well known by everyone. So people can feel safe that it surely works for children and put them on its focus.

Based on the data gathered, the work of the CPU is very valuable for the children in the area. They indicated as well a strong positive attitude towards the qualities and work of the CPU personnel.

Discussion

The children of Kucova had a lot of information about child abuse and the actors that can contribute in this field. They were not only beneficiaries of the CPU services but already its active partners. Based on the data gathered, the work of the CPU is very valuable for the children in the area. They indicated as well a strong positive attitude towards the qualities and work of the CPU personnel. However, the children and youth offered some good recommendations that can help extend the CPU services towards other children that need protection.

Recommendations

Based on the children's recommendations the CPU should engage the children more actively in the awareness-raising activities. The children are willing to contribute by sharing the information about the CPU services to other children and families in need. One of the suggested interventions is to open a facebook page and appoint one child as a contact person for the other children who want to ask for help.

CPU of Vlora

Individual Interviews

In total three children (2 boys and one girl) were present in the individual interviews.

Knowledge about CPU services

Only one of them knew CPU as a service, the others knew its representatives by name. One of them thought the CPU representative was a teacher and two others as a person who wants to help children, brings them at school or in the zoo. Two of the children evaluated CPU services with “very good” and one with “good”.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

According to their reports, CPU had visited all their homes. In two cases she had visited often, and in one case rarely. There is confusion between the personnel of Terre des Hommes and CPU. They said they felt well when the personnel of Terre des Hommes brought them medicines and school materials.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

All their families had visited the CPU premises and most of the time “often”.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

The CPU representative had helped their families with clothes, school materials and various activities. She had helped them with school materials and various activities. They wished she could give them more clothes and money.

Evaluation of the CPU services

According to children’s answers, we didn’t notice a change in the relationship between the family’s member and the situation at home before and after CPU’s intervention.

Focus group

Seven children (2 girls and 4 boys) were present in this focus group discussion.

Definition of violence and child abuse

According to their reports, violence is hurting someone. They could distinguish three forms of violence: physical, emotional, negligence and peer-to-peer bullying.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

According to their reports actors that can help reducing violence are:

- Teachers,
- CPU representatives,
- Parents, brothers and peers.

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

They have never participated in activities about violence and child abuse. They supposed that their teachers don't want to organize such activities. They are afraid that in case of violence children would put this information against their teachers.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

Posters with the title STOP violence should be delivered. For cases of violence, a referral system should be established. Children would refer cases of abused children themselves.

Evaluation of the CPU services

They know CPU by the name of its representative. They mentioned services that CPU offers as food, books and clothes. It's a place where children can talk and learn how to protect themselves from violence. According to the children, CPU should have worked more with teachers and parents. She should spend more time and energy teaching children how to be in good company. In the end, they evaluated the CPU's work as very good. They enjoyed the summer camp and teacher's personality as well as their discipline.

Discussion

The children of this group brought cases of violence only related to peer-to-peer violence and violence at school used by teachers towards children. They also reported one story when the child who was abused by the teacher attacked him together with his friends. When they talked about this example they argued that this was a behavior that children imitate from adults. The conversation at this point indicates that the children were aware of the effects of violence on their behavior. However, it was hard for them to talk about violence at home. They also showed that they have never talked about violence in the activities conducted by CPU or other local partners.

Recommendations

The CPU should consider children as its primary partners in planning, coordinating and evaluating the activities about violence and child abuse. More specifically regarding the CPU of Vlora, the children gave specific recommendations about the CPU work that were related with advising children regarding the peer bullying and violence issues. They indicated that they would want the CPU to engage them in sensitizing the other children in the area regarding the violence and child abuse issues.

CPU of Gjirokastra

Individual Interviews

Five children (two boys and three girls) were interviewed. They were all Roma children; very hesitant to talk which made the information gathering very difficult.

Knowledge about CPU services

Everyone knew CPU as a unit and also by the name of the representative. They were very shy and they agreed to the questions just by nodding. As such, we are not sure if in this case their answers count. The children reported that the CPU representative gave them assistance, school materials and consulted the teachers about their progress in school in order to help them to leave the street. They were satisfied by her services.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

When the CPU representative came often to visit at their home, they felt good.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

When their parents went to the CPU premises, they felt good as well.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

The CPU representative brought to their family members food and assistance aid and she sent them to the beach for three following summers.

Evaluation of the CPU services

It was difficult to evaluate their right perception of the CPU impact in the children's lives. According to their reports, we could notice a slight change in the relationship between family's members and the situation at home before and after CPU's intervention. But when they described the situation, we learned more. Before they didn't have a house, clothes and children didn't go at school. The father of two girls (they both participated in the interview) was in jail and the mother has disappeared from their life. The representative of CPU said that they lived with their grandparents and sometimes the grandmother feels forced to take them away from their grandfather and to sleep with the girls in order to prevent an abuse. We suggest that the representative of CPU should pay specific attention to this case and if needed report to other institutions.

Focus group

Six children (3 girls and 3 boys) participated in the discussion.

We noticed that the children preferred more the employees of Terre des Hommes than those of the CPU. These data were collected with the support of representative of Terre des Hommes.

Definition of violence and child abuse

According to their reports, violence is to hit someone or to punish members of family. We suggest that when they talk about violence they keep on mind their situation in family. They could mention only physical violence as form of abuse and mocking among peers. Some of them have reflected by themselves about this phenomenon.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

Actors that can help reducing violence are:

- Family (parents)
- Friends and
- School

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

They said they have never participated in activities about violence.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

CPU should organize different games and activities.

Evaluation of the CPU services

They know CPU as someone who offers material supplies and organizes summer camps. They appreciated her work as she advice their parents for a better discipline.

Discussion:

We noticed that the children preferred more the employees of Terre des Hommes than those of the CPU.

Recommendations:

In similar focus group discussions in the future, other children should be chosen from this type of target group. We believe that children of this age from the Roma community have more difficulties to express themselves.

CPU of Elbasan

Individual Interviews

Three children (girls) did the individual interviews.

Knowledge about CPU services

All of them knew what CPU is and they evaluated its work with “very good”. According to their answers they defined CPU as an organization that:

- fights for children rights, preventing that bad things happen to children.
- helps them with food, assistance aid, medicaments and school materials.
- organize activities.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

According to their answers CPU has visited all their houses, very often. They felt very good because as the CPU representatives talks about their problems and tries to help them.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

According to the data collected from the children of Elbasan city all their family’s members had visited the employee of CPU at her premises often. They appreciated these visits as they saw their mothers finding support and hope about their problems.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

CPU helped one of these girls having an fMRI in the hospital. She helped others with support and the right medicaments when one of the girls was sick. CPU helped them and their family’s members with medicines, clothes, food, school materials, finding a job to a mother, helping a sister who was sick with food and support. They are very satisfied about all her work and the way she helped them, that they can’t ask anything more.

Evaluation of the CPU services

Problem of divorce and as a consequence the lack of a house, parents’ depression and school dropout were the main problems in two families. The third one had problems of unemployment and poverty. We could notice a considerable change between the situation at home and the relationship between family’s members before and after CPU’s intervention.

Focus group

16 children (8 girls and 8 boys) were present in this focus group.

The children of this group believed that the help they have received themselves by the CPU is big and valuable. They expressed their willingness and enthusiasm in cooperating with the CPU for raising awareness on child violence and abuse issues. They also displayed a preference about the CPU personnel who according to them is kind and helpful.

Definition of violence and child abuse

They could give the best definition of violence compared to the other groups. According to them, violence could be directed to a child as a form of maltreatment or it can come from an older child. In general we talk about violence when children's rights are violated.

They mentioned five forms of violence and child abuse, physical, emotional, sexual, negligence and as well as bullying.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

Actors that can help reducing violence are:

- Institutions (school, Police, CPU, Residential Institutions, shelters for victims of domestic violence, state, NGOs),
- Family (parents),
- Social network (peers),
- Professional (Doctors, social workers, laws),
- Community members.

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

They have participated in activities organized by the residential center and CPU for different occasions. In these activities, they talked about forms of violence and how to prevent it. Through shows and dramas, violence and negligence were illustrated.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

Dramas and dances about violence should be organized.

Evaluation of the CPU services

According to the children, CPU helps children from maltreatment as well as their parents. They appreciated the fact that CPU had moved children away from abusive families to the residential institution.

Discussion:

The children of this group were very much informed about the forms of violence and abuse. Their answers indicated that the children value highly the work of the CPU. They also believed that the help they have received themselves by the CPU is big and valuable. They expressed their willingness and enthusiasm in cooperating with the CPU for raising awareness on child violence and abuse

issues. They also displayed a preference about the CPU personnel who according to them is kind and helpful.

Recommendations

As already done, the CPU should consider children as its primary partners in planning, coordinating and evaluating the activities about violence. Based on what the children discussed during the focus group, the children can help the CPU to extend the services to other children that need protection. They can help sensitize the children and parents on the effects of children violence and ways to look for help and support in such cases.

CPU of Pogradec

Individual Interviews

Five children (1 girl, 4 boys) from 10-16 years old participated in the individual interviews. They were Roma and Balkan-Egyptian children. One of them was a girl 15 years old who was married before and now she is divorced. Some of children were tensed and it was difficult for us to collect the needed information.

Knowledge about CPU services

Most of them (4/5) didn't know CPU but its representative. One child confounded her with a teacher. With some help they could remember CPU's services as helping them with medicines, clothes and food and giving them the opportunity to follow a summer camp. According to them, CPU helps children, preventing street situation and protect them from violence. They evaluated her services with "very good".

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

CPU had visited their homes often. Only one of the children couldn't remember. They felt good and satisfied because she brought them a lot of things.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

Three of them reported that their parents had visited often CPU's representative at her office. They felt happy and good about it.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

Three of them reported that CPU representative helped their family with food, clothes, medicaments, and a surgery of teeth; attending tailor's classes, frequenting school or kindergarten. She helped them with the summer camp and with the monthly food assistance. According to them, she can do more, for example finding a job or giving more medicines and food.

Evaluation of the CPU services

Most of the children assisted by the CPU had problems with money and bad housing. The children of one family were exploited for trafficking from their father. In this case, even if the father was in prison we could notice a kind of nostalgia for the period when they had a lot of money in their family. Now, they didn't have food at home and they were in a desperate situation.

In general, we noticed a slight change in their situation and the relationship between family members before and after CPU's intervention.

Discussion

We had the impression that the CPU served as a "bridge" between the community and other agencies that can help children. It is the reference point for all the services that protect children's rights in Pogradec. We supposed that

“Amarotan” school is a big support for all the children in difficulty.

CPU of Saranda

Individual Interviews

Five children (4 girls, 1 boy) from 7-15 years old participated in the individual interviews.

Knowledge about CPU services

Only one of them knew CPU as an institution, the others knew it by the name of its representative. One of the children knew CPU's premises, its office in Municipality. They had an understanding about CPU's services. According to them, it helps children in difficulties, who don't have a house or food, protects them from violence and gives economic aid to the families. Based on the children's evaluations, the representative of the CPU has done a very good work.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

Only two of them had seen the representative of CPU visiting their homes. They felt good about it.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

Three of them reported that their parents visited CPU's premises and they felt good about it.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

Based on children's descriptions, CPU helps the families with food and economic aid. On the other hand, it helps children to be integrated in the center, to go at summer camp and going to school by giving them school materials. Only one child reported that she should work more.

Evaluation of the CPU services

These children had suffered the divorce of their parents or the death of one parent, which has made things more difficult. After CPU's intervention, the situation at home and the relationship between family's members have considerably changed.

Focus group

Six children, (4 girls and 2 boys) were present.

Definition of violence and child abuse

According to their reports, violence is maltreatment toward children; an act or an action toward another person. They could distinguish two forms of violence, the physical and the emotional one.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

The actors that can help reducing violence are:

- Professional (doctors, psychologist, social worker and teachers),
- Institutions (police),
- Family (parents),
- Even strangers.

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

They were reminded of these activities only with the representative's help. During these activities, information about violence was given.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

Children can contribute in the fight against violence by listening and solving problems together.

Evaluation of the CPU services

They associated CPU with the municipality building where the CPU office is. CPU had organized children activities, workshops, different games and journeys. They appreciated all its work against violence as the discussions about violence; strategies how to protect ourselves by others, strangers; activities, journeys and different games.

Discussion

The children were very young and it was difficult to collect information from them so it is difficult to generate conclusions about the work of the CPU. Although the children reported an understanding of violence and child abuse and gave also an evaluation for the work of the CPU, they were not able to clearly articulate the impact of the work of the CPU.

Recommendations

The CPU should work more in explaining the work and services of the CPU to the children. They should be considered as the primary partners and as such, they should be aware of the CPU methods of assisting the children.

CPU of Korca

Individual Interviews

Five children (4 girls, 1 boy), from 8-14 years old participated in individual interviews.

Knowledge about CPU services

Only two of them knew what CPU was. The others knew it by its representative's name. They knew that CPU takes care of children; it helps them when they are in difficulty with food and having a house. It helps also poor people and who are in difficulty. According to the children, the CPU representative has done a very good job.

Evaluation of the CPU visits in the family

Three of them admitted that the CPU has visited often their home. Depending on the child temperament, they felt happy or tense.

Evaluation of the family visits in the CPU premises

Four of them admitted that their family's members had visited CPU's premises. Some of them felt well about this except one who was embarrassed because her mother asked economic aid.

Evaluation of the CPU assistance

In one side, CPU helps their family members with food, economic aid and school materials. In the other side, it helps the children with toys, to go at school and at summer camp. The children wished that CPU gives them a special room and more toys.

Evaluation of the CPU services

Before CPU's intervention, their situation in family was very bad. Their parents were continuously fighting (because one's father was alcoholic). They didn't have food or clothes. After CPU's intervention, their situation in family greatly improved, while the relationship between family's members slightly changed.

Focus group

Five children (3 girls and 2 boys) were present in this focus group. They were all Roma children.

It was very difficult for us to gather the information and sometimes the presence of the CPU representatives and their help were needed. The CPU is known with the name of its representative, for example: Marjana. CPU is more appreciated for the economic aid, as it is the first thing that children remember from the CPU.

Definition of violence and child abuse

It was very difficult to talk about violence with Roma community children. They said that they had never heard this word before. They couldn't bring examples or talk about this topic. But one of the participants was aware that once he hit his friend and he apologized to him. Surprisingly, they could mention all the forms of violence (physical, emotional, negligence, sexual exploit and trafficking) except sexual abuse.

Actors that can help reducing violence and child abuse

Actors that can help reducing violence are:

- Professionals (teachers),
- Social network (friends),
- Family (parents, cousins and brothers),
- Institutions (police and CPU),
- A dog.

Evaluation of activities about violence and child abuse

It was difficult for them to remember activities about violence. They could only remember that they ate and drank beverages. With some help only one of the children remember that they received information about children rights and saw a theater with children who beg.

Children's recommendations about violence and child abuse

Evaluation of the CPU services

CPU helped them with medicines and money to buy a horse.

Discussion:

It was very difficult for us to gather the information and sometimes the presence of the CPU representatives and their help were needed. It was very difficult to talk about violence with Roma community children. They said that they had never heard this word before. They couldn't bring examples or talk about this topic. But one of the participants was aware that once he hit his friend and he apologized to him. We had the impression that they didn't understand the purpose of this focus group.

The CPU is known with the name of its representative, for example: Marjana. CPU is more appreciated for the economic aid, as it is the first thing that children remember from the CPU.

Recommendations

Maybe the CPU should plan workshops with information about violence. Another name should be found for CPU, to be memorized easily by children.

General observations and Discussion

It is important to consider the observations and impressions developed in the field during the data collection, as they may be helpful to understand fully the results reached. Following the data collection and analysis, we reflected and shared the following impressions:

- All the children related the unit of child protection with its representative but yet in some of the cases, they did not know what their responsibilities are.
- Most of the time, children perceived the CPU representatives only as the persons who give material aid, food and clothes.
- Most of the children seemed to have built a relationship with the representative of CPU. They know her by name, felt good with her and trust her. They felt supported by her and were aware that this support will last in time.
- When they were asked how the CPU representative helped its parents, children included almost all the time the help they have received for themselves. It shows that children felt that they are in the focus of CPU's work and interest.
- It was difficult for them to find what CPU representatives should have done differently.
- Some of them had little information about violence and its forms.
- Most of the children did not understand the purpose of activities conducted about violence and children abuse.

In addition, we noticed few differences between the CPUs we visited:

- First, the opportunities to assist the children through partners' services are different for each city. For example "Amarotan" school in Pogradec, is an institution who functions very well and has its medical care and economic aid, which can facilitate and empower the role of CPU who refers difficult cases to this school. So it's easier for the CPU's representative of Pogradec to integrate children at this school or to stop their begging. Some of the other CPUs did not have partners who could support their work.
- Second, children interviewed in the cities we visited have different features. For example, the Roma community of Gjirokastra is less developed than other communities (for example in Tirana). So it's very difficult to work with this category of children (who have language barriers, very bad conditions of living, and problems of hygiene) and to help them. In consequence, the work of CPU is relative to child development.

- Third, the child related issues that the representative of CPU met in each city are different. For example, while the domestic violence seems to be the main problem in Durres, the children of Vlora indicated the peer-to-peer violence and bullying as more problematic.
- In the small cities the visits at CPU's premises were more frequent.
- While some of the CPUs conducted more visits at home, others conducted meetings and the office.

In sum, we evaluated the work of CPU representatives as "good". The representative of each CPU knew the problems of each family in details, had built a good relationship with the children and with its family. An other important observation was that the CPU representatives in general worked very well with partners. They could identify difficult cases and refer them to the appropriate institutions that can assist them. However, in few CPUs we noticed that the CPU staff lacked a direct specialization in the work with children. As such, we would recommend that they receive trainings to increase their skills in how to identify potential cases and problems before they become difficult to manage. In one case for example, we noted that the child had lost the academic year because she lacked few books. In addition, we found important that the CPU staff receives training about the ethic of communication with children and parents, for example not to talk about children problems in front of them.

In the end, we should consider some factors that may have had an impact on our evaluation and therefore on our conclusions. This assessment had some limitations such as:

- The purposive sampling method which impedes the representation of the data
- Most of the children were shy, reserved or had language challenges so the information gathered may have not been complete.
- Other features could influence our perception about representatives of CPU's work:
 - Differences in personality of children we interviewed.
 - Cultural differences (some groups were Roma children)
 - Different age groups
- The fact that they have created a relationship with the CPU's representative may have influenced their responses. They may have not wanted to speak bad about her.