

Using creative techniques to change attitudes to violence



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Silence is not golden (Šutnja nije zlato) – National Campaign to prevent gender-based violence

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In brief

The *Šutnja nije zlato* (Silence is not golden) campaign, carried out in Croatia in 2007-08, used a national multimedia campaign backed up by work in schools to raise awareness of the different types of gender-based violence – family violence, violence in relationships ('date rape') and human trafficking – and the connections between them.

The project first researched the prevalence of and attitudes towards gender-based violence in adolescents in Croatia, and then used the results to mount its campaign. It used television spots (provided free of charge by broadcasters), billboards, illuminated signs, magazine advertisements as well as leaflets and the web.

The campaign also wanted to change the attitudes of tomorrow's decision-makers. It organised seminars for 64 secondary-school teachers, which were recognised by the Teacher Training Agency. Once they had been trained, the teachers organised creative projects with 1,200 of their pupils, who produced films, plays, newspaper articles, comics and a radio show. The best of these were awarded prizes at a final ceremony.

The results are striking. There was almost unanimous praise for the campaign, and it provoked an uncommonly high degree of civil engagement: as many as 31% of pupils who took part said they would like to join an organisation supporting victims of gender-based violence.

Two main lessons emerge: that a well-researched and well-executed media campaign can change attitudes, and that offering a chance to be creative can successfully engage boys and young men in the fight against gender-based violence

Putting policy into practice

Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread in Croatia and has been tolerated for decades. While violence in the community, and particularly youth violence, is highly visible and generally labelled as criminal, GBV is generally hidden from the public view. Moreover, the police and courts are less prepared to target such hidden violence, or to take action against it.

However at policy level, things have improved significantly in recent years. The Law on Protection against Family Violence was adopted in 2003 and was followed in 2007 by the National Strategy on Protection against Family Violence for 2008-2010. These were accompanied by the Rules of Procedures in Cases of Family Violence. Although the national strategy deals with family violence in general, it specifically refers to international documents on violence against women and, following the Council of Europe Recommendation (Rec (2002)5), quotes the definition of violence against women (pp. 10). On this basis the government formulated and implemented the National Campaign against Family Violence against Women 2006-2008.

The campaign aimed to raise awareness of gender stereotypes and other causes of gender-based violence (GBV) among young people – the decision-makers of the future – and to promote the values of gender equality in young people’s attitudes and behaviour. It was principally targeted at secondary-school pupils and teachers and at decision-makers, but also at the general public.

The organisers were CESI – Centar za Edukaciju, Savjetovanje i Istraživanje (Centre for Education, Counselling and Research) and OMG – Otvorena Medijska Grupacija (Open Media Group). Financial help came from the European Commission, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and CARE International. Its efficiency was boosted by the broadcasting of TV clips ensured by Croatian television and RTL free of charge.

A multi-channel campaign

Silence is not golden researched the recognition, understanding and frequency of GBV among adolescents, and then, based on the results, launched a media campaign. The main themes were family violence, violence in relationships (‘date rape’) and human trafficking. It used several channels: four TV spots were broadcast for 2-3 months on national television, a range of printed materials was distributed, billboards and illuminated signs rented, magazine advertisements placed and a campaign web page created.

It then organised seminars for teachers in order to enhance their skills and knowledge on GBV. These were followed up by creative workshops with young people. In the five months following the seminar, each teacher who attended organised at least one project on the issue of GBV with their students, such as a film, comic or play. These were presented at an award ceremony at the final gathering and on a CD. The campaign educated 64 teachers in the use of creative techniques in work with youth on preventing GBV, and 60 schools exchanged their ideas and practices. In these schools, 1,200 young people gained knowledge and awareness on GBV, and they produced 25 films, 16 theatre plays, 10 newspaper articles, one radio show and 34 comics.

The campaign also held public discussions between celebrities and young people on their views and experiences with GBV, and attempted to influence public policy by advocating the inclusion of a gender perspective in prevention programmes for young people.

A unique intervention logic

The project progress was monitored by the Regional Monitoring Office in Sarajevo which is charged by the Commission Services with the monitoring of EC assistance to the Western Balkans and Turkey.

An external evaluator conducted field research, and analysed internal documents and management procedures. The conclusion was that the project fulfilled all its objectives by implementing a unique intervention logic whereby research results were used to raise awareness and influence decision-makers, and at the same time to create educational programmes for young people and their teachers to prevent GBV. Moreover, a national media campaign addressed the most alarming findings of the research.

The campaign proved to be very effective in raising concern about the problem and involving young people, teachers, the general public and politicians. It proved that a wide impact and long-term effects could be achieved by training teachers and involving young people. Its activities spread good practice, and also improved collaboration between institutions and schools.

Its webpage reached 250,000 people, and 810 young people used an online counselling service to get advice on GBV, gender/sexual identity and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Taking part in GBV awareness projects had a positive influence on the attitudes of students: they have been sensitised to recognise stereotypes and GBV, and empowered to remove themselves from violent relationships.

A leap in civic engagement

The participants were clearly very satisfied. 94% of teachers plan to continue with educational activities and many said that involvement in the project has improved student-teacher rapport, increased confidence levels and provided insights into young people's ways of reasoning, enabling a much better mutual understanding. Meanwhile 80% of students involved in project activities trust their teachers' abilities to help them or their friend, should they find themselves facing or witnessing GBV, in the form of direct assistance, advice and support.

The high level of students' satisfaction with the project is evident from the fact that 97% of those who responded to the evaluation questionnaire said that they would like to participate in further activities dealing with the prevention of GBV in adolescent relationships, and 31% said that they would like to join an organisation supporting victims of GBV. This is a significant unexpected result of the project, since according to numerous studies, the Croatian population in general is not very interested in civic engagement. The students' self-assessment of knowledge and skills related to GBV prevention reflects an average increase from 3.08 at the beginning of the project to 4.01 at the end.

Media research agency HENDAL evaluated Silence is not golden using the AdVisor campaign tracker. It surveyed a nationally representative sample of 400 young people aged 15-18 and asked whether they had noticed the campaign and understood its message. The biggest success was that 91% of those surveyed saw the connection between the three types of violence presented – violence in the family, date rape and trafficking. Viewers reacted strongly to the TV clips which were the focus of the whole campaign: 92% of them were familiar with the slogan and it proved so strong that people have taken to using it themselves. The slogan gained a very high percentage of recognition in all clips, indicating that the campaign designers did a good job in its creation. This finding is corroborated by the fact that the slogan was also used as the leitmotif of the university students' protests in 2009.

A sustained effect

To make the initiative sustainable, CESI established cooperation and built up relationships with the relevant state institutions, in order to inform them about project activities. All of them supported it and provided relevant information. The Teacher Training Agency recognised CESI's teachers' training on gender-based violence as a relevant component of the teachers' professional development programme and included it in its curriculum.

If there is weakness, it lies in the fact that the legislative framework is still incoherent and is slow to be implemented. Preventing gender-based violence requires systematic education, both formal and informal, at all levels, the elimination of gender stereotypes and the mainstreaming of gender equality into the entire formal educational system. The long-term approach to ending gender-based violence requires efforts at all levels, including stronger partnerships among public institutions, civil society and local communities. Some progress has been achieved, but greater efforts are needed to ensure that all stakeholders work together to challenge gender stereotypes and other causes of GBV.

Creative ideas

The campaign's success is a result of a good evidence base gained through research, which led to a well-targeted campaign. It used a strong communications strategy using wide range of tools and media support, and was well executed. Preparatory work with the media ensured that they donated free space, and recognition by the Teacher Training Agency encouraged teachers to take part. There is a particular lesson to be learned about how to engage young people in work on GBV. Creative activities such as creating films and comics were especially attractive to boys and young men. The competitive element in the project design as well as a paid trip to Zagreb were additional incentives to take part.

Some elements of the campaign have been used in other projects, mainly in the context of youth work, but shortage of funds makes any repeat unlikely in the near future. As the campaign is well documented it can be easily transferred. Moreover, there have been some replication efforts. There was an intention to carry out the project in Macedonia, but it was not accomplished due to the lack of financial sources. CESI conducted education for teachers and distributed materials in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contacts/Further Information

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Further information

Campaign website



TV spots



CESI



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Downloads



Silence is not Golden - Awareness raising - Croatia

EN (PDF, 265.08 KB)

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