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EMPOWERING BOYS AND YOUNG MEN IN UNFPA SAFE SPACES

Experiences from
the Humanitarian response
in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Impressum

EMPOWERING BOYS AND YOUNG MEN IN UNFPA SAFE SPACES: Experiences from the humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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The list of abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BOTM	Boys on the move
BYMC	Boys and young men centre
GBV	Gender-based violence
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
PSS	Psychosocial support
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
TRC	Temporary reception centre
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

1. Introduction

1.1. How to use this document

Following the needs of the migrant population through the mixed migration humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina led UNFPA to establish safe spaces for boys and young men. These spaces are known locally as boys and young men centres (BYMC). While a detailed description of BYMC is provided in the document *'Boys and Young Men Safe Spaces: A guidance note based on the humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina'* (see box 1), this document aims to provide an overview of the essential and the most extensive operational part of BYMCs or the empowerment activities. Yet in order to fully understand the purpose of this document as well as its applicative value, it is necessary to read the aforementioned guidance note.¹

This document describes the purpose of the empowerment activities applied in BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the methods of their implementation and their impact. Created primarily for professionals engaged in similar humanitarian response interventions, this document has strong potential to answer the following questions:

- > Why is empowering boys and young men an imperative?
- > How do you gain the attention of boys and young men on the move and keep them involved?
- > How do you gain the trust of the boys and young men?
- > How do you hear and understand the boys and young men at BYMCs?
- > How do you create a supportive environment?
- > What kind of resources do you need for successful implementation of activities?
- > How do you handle sensitive topics?
- > What are the things that we missed that you should not?



Box 1.
The document cover page

This is not a guidance document that must be followed strictly in similar future interventions but rather a document that highlights good practice and lessons learned from the mixed migration humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is based on the experiences of the UNFPA team working in the field with the migrant population as well as on evidence shared by other organisations engaged in similar activities. Yet in order to ensure the best approach to working with vulnerable categories of people on the move in future interventions the empowerment activities presented in this document need to be adapted to the specific characteristics of the population within the relevant context.

¹ The full reference is contained in Vujovic S and Pezerovic Midzic, A., *BOYS AND YOUNG MEN SAFE SPACES: A guidance note based on the humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, UNFPA, 2022. Available at https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa_bym_guidance_web_fin.pdf

Illustration 1.

The purpose of empowerment activities at BYMCs

'Now, in the BYMC' perspective

- > Create a supportive environment for boys and young man in which they feel safe and willing to share thoughts and express concerns (and expect feedback), share experiences (and expect support to overcome negative effects), and discuss plans for the future (and expect advice);
- > Inform and encourage them to take participation in relevant protection and assistance activities, with a special focus on gBV and SRH.

'Looking back' perspective

- > Strengthen boys and young man survivors of violence (especially GBV) and help to recover through empowerment activities;
- > Empower boys and young man who experienced violence and to "give them back" the feeling of responsibility for their lives as well as the ability for making choices and decisions.

'Looking forward' perspective

- > Empower boys and young men through awareness-raising, learning, and skills developed in the areas which could help them in their lives (taking into account their needs and plans);
- > Improve/maintain their mental and physical health through combination of different types of activities.

1.2. Meaning and purpose of empowerment activities in BYMCs

The term 'empowerment activities' covers different groups of activities that are based on the specific needs of boys and young men on the move. The overall goal is to empower them for their future life, with special focus on gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual reproductive health (SRH). While the active participation of the boys and young men is always encouraged, empowerment activities are normally led by the facilitator who is usually an empowerment officer. Beside their sensibility for work with the target population, people in these positions must have different developed competencies (see Box 2). They need to be able to motivate the boys and young men to participate in relevant activities, be able to assess their needs, prepare and apply activities and collect feedback and where appropriate incorporate it into the next sessions.

As shown below in Illustration 1, through the perspective 'Now, in the BYMC' staff members create a safe and supportive environment for the boys and young men. This allows for a 'dipper dive' into their past (the 'Looking back' perspective), including their background and life experience. Both of the above-mentioned perspectives then 'feed' into the third one or the 'Looking forward' perspective, which targets positive plans for the future of the boys and young men.

Empowerment activities can be implemented at the individual or group level, depending on the needs. Bearing in mind the social benefits of group work for both

**Box 2.**
Empowerment officer profile

Empowerment officers must have a relevant education background in social sciences (psychology, psychotherapy, social work, social pedagogy, andragogy and other social sciences) and the knowledge to apply theoretical assumptions in the field. Their ability to adapt their knowledge to specific circumstances is equally important. Empowerment officers must apply ethical values such as understanding, respect, responsibility, non-discrimination and tolerance.



individuals and the group, group level work is applied predominantly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides the primary purpose of each empowerment activity applied in groups the collected evidence suggests that group work at the very least contributes to the following aspects:

- trust between group members (even though some of them come from countries that are in conflict),
- trust between the facilitator (staff member) and the members of the group,
- helping individuals by sharing the experiences of other members of the group,
- maximising the impact by creating sub-groups comprised of individuals who have similar needs.

Group sessions have their goals but their success depends on different factors, such as active listening to what the group is saying, careful observation of the reaction of all members of the group when it comes to certain publicly expressed attitudes and opinions, and empathy, namely positive acceptance of all members of the group equally so that they feel free to express their opinions.

Box 3.
Separate work with adolescents compared to work with young men

Although this document uses the term 'centres for boys and young men' the centres for boys and the centres for young men in Bosnia and Herzegovina are separate and constitute separate centres within this context. In the centres for boys the activities and services provided are only for boys and access for adult men is prohibited. Likewise, boys do not have access to the centres for young men. This way of working has proven to be crucial in terms of maximising the protection of adolescents, often minors, and in preventing any illegal behaviour and violence. Adolescents were for a certain period present at one of the temporary reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was intended solely for accommodating adult men. UNFPA, which established a centre for young men, allocated a specific period when the centre could provide services and support to the adolescents. During that time, the young men did not have access to the boys and young men centre. In this document the term 'centres for boys and young men' is used because most activities refer to work conducted both with boys and with young men.



2. Empowerment activities: purpose, methods and impact

2.1. Understanding the interconnection between empowerment activities

Implementing empowerment activities is the most extensive part of boys and young men centre (BYMC) operations. Their implementation is usually critical for the application of protection and assistance activities. Compact teams at the centres (comprised of up to 10 staff members) plan and implement all of the activities together, ensuring almost perfect coordination. This is an additional reason for maintaining a high level of interconnectivity between empowerment activities as well as between these activities and protection and/or assistance activities. As the staff say, 'they are all intertwined'.

This section provides a detailed overview of the empowerment activities implemented at BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bearing in mind the above men-



tioned and with the aim to avoid any misunderstanding and assure clear interpretation, the text is divided into two sub-chapters: 'Pure' empowerment activities (sub-chapter 2.1.) and Empowering through protection activities (sub-chapter 2.2.). Despite a clear distinction between empowerment activities and protection activities in terms of their purpose and methods of implementation it is clear that the implementation of protection activities implies a significant component of overall empowerment. Table 1 below shows the key activities implemented in BYMCs in this country, together with their affiliation.

Table 1.
Groups of empowerment activities applied at BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina

'Pure' empowerment activities

1. Boys on the Move sessions
2. Informal education sessions
3. Creative (social) workshops
4. Language classes
5. Thematic sessions
6. Sports and board games
7. Art sessions
8. Monthly events
9. Social cohesion activities
10. Info sharing and socialising outside of the centre

Empowering through protection activities

11. Empowering through SRH activities
12. Empowering through GBV activities
13. Empowering through PSS activities



Planning each session is a key segments of successfully conducting the BOTM curriculum. Empowerment officers must follow the provided guidelines, which include discussions, debates, brainstorming, miming, role play and questions and answers. Each of the 12 sessions has a separate meaning and goal. It is essential to conduct each of them thoroughly and that the attendees are motivate to actively participate and share their thoughts and experiences.

The facilitator is expected to adapt the session to the characteristics of the participants. One of the significant factors is their age, which is reflected in, for example, the introductory part when defining key terms and clarifying the meaning of the session and certainly when selecting the offered work techniques. Unlike work with older participants where there is a high probability that a key part of the session will take place in the form of a participant discussion or debate, when working with adolescents a greater effect is achieved through group work where all members of the group work together to complete and present the task together.

Empowerment officers are also encouraged to use certain aids in order to conduct these sessions to the best of their ability. These aids can take various forms, such as, for example, paper and pencils, illustrations, charts or PowerPoint presentations. As many of these sessions are closely related to GBV the empowerment officer must pay close attention to participant feedback, which can be verbal or non-verbal. Some examples of non-verbal feedback are when a participant suddenly leaves a session on a certain topic for reasons such as a total misunderstanding of the topic, indolence or after being ridiculed by other participants. The empowerment officer must try to gather as much information as possible in order to identify possible GBV survivors. In the event that the feedback does contain certain information on possible GBV, the empowerment officer should, whilst taking into consideration the sensitivity of the topic and the need to respect the boy or young man's right to privacy and dignity, ask the participant to agree to speak in private. If the participant is willing then the empowerment officer will connect the him with the GBV officer, who will implement the necessary actions in accordance with the boy or young man's needs. In accordance with the 'survivor centred approach', which reduces the risk of secondary traumatisation that occurs as a result of repeated conversations with the survivor of GBV, the empowerment officer should not ask unnecessary questions or encourage the person to fully explain his traumatic experience at that moment. It is the job of the case manager or another expert, such as the legal guardian or a social worker, to use his/her skills to provide the best form of support in line with the 'Do not harm approach'.

2.2. 'Pure' empowerment activities

2.2.1. Boys and Young Men on the Move (BOTM) sessions

Implementation of the Boys and Young Men on the Move curriculum (BOTM) is one of the most important aspects of empowerment activities at boys and young men centres (BYMCs). It is an informal curriculum designed to empower adolescent boys (with special attention on unaccompanied and separated adolescent boys) and young men displaced by conflict, poverty or other reasons. It is implemented through 4 modules comprised of 12 sessions each of which address various issues that they face during their migration journey. It encompasses a set of life skills that are divided into four modules that promote health and hygiene, well-being, creative and analytical thinking, gender equality, respect for diversity, sexual and reproductive health, etc (see Illustration 2). UNFPA and UNICEF developed a detailed guide for the application of this curriculum, together with related tools and methods.²

² UNFPA and UNICEF, *Boys on the Move: A Trainer's Handbook*, 2019. Available at <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/boys-move-older-boys-and-young-men-participant-book>.

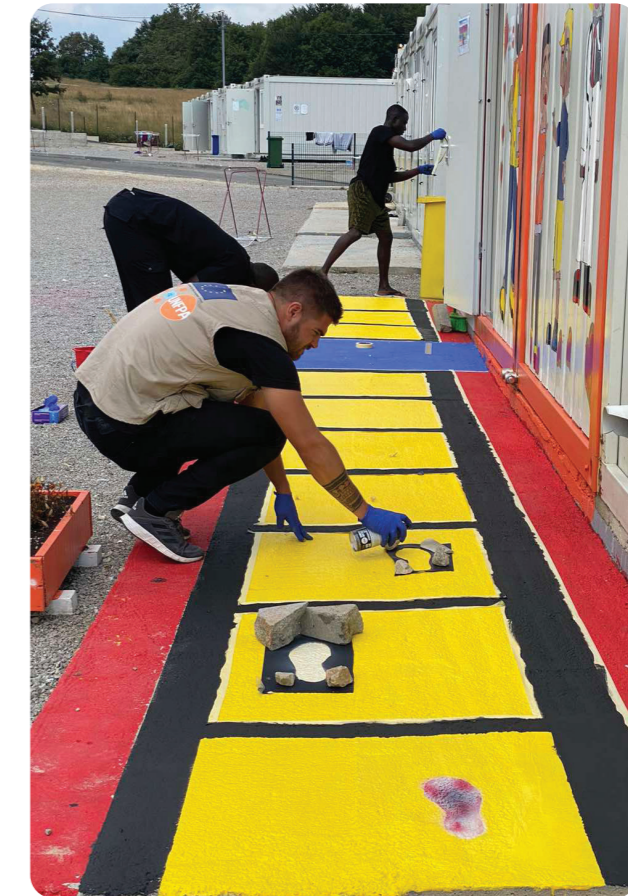
Boys on the Move sessions are also important for the prevention of GBV. In the context of the population of BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this is most often done by acquiring knowledge that is key to breaking stereotypes and prejudices. Some of the stereotypes can best be expressed through statements such as "young men must not show emotion", "a woman has no right to refuse a man", "my culture and tradition are better than others", "it's okay for the father to ask his young son to work for the family without going to school" and "men should work and women should stay at home." After such beliefs have been identified the BOTM sessions are adapted to break such wrong beliefs by presenting human rights and how social relations should run in accordance with these rights. A BYMC coordinator conducts monitoring and evaluation activities aimed at ensuring that the desired impact of successfully implemented BOTM sessions is achieved.

2.2.2. Informal educational sessions

Many boys and young men in the temporary reception centres (TRCs) throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina have not had the opportunity to complete a formal education in their countries of origin. Those without the ability to read and write are not the exception because there are many of them. Low literacy skills make them extremely vulnerable to different threats, including GBV and SRH issues. They also feel inferior in comparison with their peers in Europe and consequently do not believe that they will have good opportunities related to employment. At the same time, there are also young men with a good education background who want to continue their education and also exchange their knowledge. However, the gap between their aspirations and the possibilities available to them have a different yet significant negative impact on the population of boys and young men on the move.

The purpose of informal education sessions is multiple. In addition to acquiring new knowledge from various fields, such as history, geography and information technology, these activities raise self-confidence and build personal identity, improve socialisation, social values and make them aware of their rights and obligations. Moreover, the implementation of educational sessions contributes to raising their awareness about healthcare (including SRH) as well as the detection of potential cases of GBV. An educational session on how to create a CV aimed at gaining quality employment, for example, uncovered that certain people had experienced elements of labour exploitation and extortion as well as emotional, economic and physical violence from employers.

Educational sessions are also something that the empowerment officers conduct in accordance with their expertise in certain fields. Whether it be an educational session on geography, history, culture or something similar, the main goal is always to create an environment in which the boys and young men also share their points of view on certain matters. More often than not these sessions include a PowerPoint presentation/projection on the topic at hand, because illustrations combined with text evoke more interest and are more easily understandable. More specifically, the main goal of educational sessions is to provide new information on relevant topics that the participants may find useful in the future. Potential activities are shown in the table below.



Name of activity

Geography classes

Description of activity

The purpose of implementing geography classes is for the boys and young men to acquire general knowledge about the basic concepts from that field (heavenly bodies, continents, countries, capitals, climate, parts of the world, etc.). The classes are usually conducted in lecture format (introductory part) in combination with some of the techniques (group work, work in pairs) through which the basic task of knowledge acquisition and the preparation of a joint presentation are carried out. The most important points along with the presentation of conclusions are repeated at the end of each session. During the implementation of, for example, the 'Capital Cities' session the purpose of the session is clarified in the introductory part and an introductory lecture is given on the reason for the existence of capital cities and the need for this knowledge. In the central part of the session the participants are divided into groups and are given the material that they need to go through (e.g., a film with pictures of the capitals of Europe/Asia/Africa or printed photographs of capitals with an inscription about

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Motivated learners: The purpose of the activity is explained to the boys and young men in a motivational way.
Materials available: Paper, pencils, boards, a video projector and maps of the world/continents. Picture books and video material with content that shows and interprets geographical terms (climate, relief, ebbs and tides and islands) as well as aids in the form of globes, maps, canvas, etc.
A safe space suitable for educational sessions: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.
Additional note: Be careful when drawing the flags of the countries of origin of the boys and young men and when placing them in the BYMC. This can have undesirable consequences. It

Name of activity

Description of activity

the country). The groups need to learn that material by working together. In the final part, for example, a knowledge quiz is organised in which all of the groups participate. The conclusions should contain both key facts and some universal values that will have a significant impression on adolescents. This could be that all cities of the world are beautiful in their own way, that they all contain important cultural and historical landmarks, that all of them are open to tourists and that their hosts like visitors.



Assumption/preconditions/comments

has been shown that adolescents in particular are sensitive to the flags of their own and other countries. If, for example, not all members of all nations were present at the session then those arriving later at the BYMC and noticing that the flag of their country is not included could lead these adolescents to misinterpret it in such a way that they feel that they are not welcome or that adolescents from other countries are favoured. If one flag is placed higher on the centre wall than another this could lead to a similar problem.

Name of activity

Etiquette

Description of activity

These sessions also aim to impart knowledge about the system of polite behaviour. They have proven to be especially good for comparing acceptable and unacceptable patterns of behaviour in different parts of the world and for adopting those norms and principles of behaviour that are universal and generally accepted. The 'Greeting' session, for example, can be implemented in such a way that it starts with a discussion about the differences in greetings around the world and then moves on to watching a video about those actions that fall into generally accepted universal values when entering a society, leaving a society, entering an institution, a school, public transport, etc. Afterward, a demonstrative practical exercise can be organised wherein the participants are assigned different roles from the functioning of everyday life. They try to imitate this whilst respecting the knowledge they acquired in the field of greeting etiquette.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Motivated learners: The purpose of the activity is explained to the boys and young men in a motivational way.
Materials available: Video with examples of desirable/acceptable and unacceptable/wrong behaviour. Prepared image tests with correct and incorrect answers.
A safe space suitable for educational sessions: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.
Additional note: The facilitator should be familiar with specific cultural differences regarding desirable and undesirable behaviour in the countries from which the participants come.



Name of activity

Digital skills (PC usage, typing exercises, creating CVs)

Description of activity

Digital skills sessions are something that adolescent boys usually find very interesting and attractive and in which they participate regularly. The purpose of these sessions is to introduce the boys and young men to the basics of working on a computer and, if possible, to learn the basics of MS packages. For some adolescents it is the first time that they have used a computer. It is explained to them that knowing how to work on a computer is one of the basic prerequisites for business in the modern age (working in Word and other MS

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Materials available: Laptops/PCs, applications for quick typing, Microsoft Office package (for practical work), demonstration films, a projector, screen, etc.
A safe space suitable for educational sessions: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.

Name of activity

Description of activity

programmes and knowing how to write a CV on a computer). The session itself contains a large percentage of practical work on a PC/laptop. In order to realise an IT class, namely typing text in Word, it is necessary to make an introductory speech about the importance of typing fast and to clearly and visibly demonstrate the skill itself through instruction (the position on the keyboard, etc.). For this purpose, a live example can be used where the facilitator demonstrates fast typing. However, it is more effective to show a video with instruction on a large screen using a projector. After the presentation on instructions, the largest part of the session should consist of practical exercises on PCs/laptops for all of the participants. In later sessions, the first type of competition can be organised whereby the participant with the highest score receives a symbolic prize.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Name of activity

Basic mathematics

Description of activity

The importance of mathematics sessions is the acquisition of basic knowledge in this area. These are usually conducted with the population whose basic knowledge in this area is very low. During the implementation of mathematics sessions it has been shown that the facilitator's work on the board is inevitable but also that it should definitely be upgraded. Namely, it should be supplemented by visual aids such as objects and shapes. A session on, for example, the topic of Arabic (universal) numbers can begin with writing the numbers on the board and their joint reading and repetition (usually in English). Then the participants practice copying these numbers (in notebooks or on the board) and after that they can be given prepared tasks, such as pictorial representations of objects next to which the number should be written. Sessions on the topic of numeracy are implemented in a similar way (work in pairs or group work) to solve tasks, be included and avoid individual anxiety.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Motivated learners: The purpose of the activity is explained to the boys and young men in a motivational way, especially for those with a low level of education.
Materials available: Blackboard, markers, notebooks, worksheets, tests, counting items and shapes.
A safe space suitable for educational sessions: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.

Name of activity

General knowledge quiz

Description of activity

This type of session can be implemented from time to time in order to check knowledge from other areas covered by the non-formal educational session. It can also simply be in the form of organising a quiz on general knowledge that is acquired through formal/informal education and life experience. It has been shown that boys and young men are happy to participate in this type of activity. A good technique (especially in the case of working with adolescent boys) is group work done in such a way that the participants are divided into as many groups as there are assigned names and then a shorter quiz competition is organised. Adolescents help each other, exchange information and skills within groups and learn teamwork. With young men, in addition to this technique, the technique of giving individual answers can also be used.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.
Additional note: When forming groups it is good to mix participants of different nationalities and cultures because this contributes to tolerance and coexistence at the TRC (meeting, socialising and improving communication between groups of different linguistic origin).





2.2.3. Creative and social workshops

In general, the purpose of creative and social workshops is to activate each individual in BYMCs and to monitor them in order to gain a deeper understanding of their individual needs. More specifically, this activity is very important for developing a culture of diversity and acceptance of differences but it also has good occupational effects. Moreover, creative activities allow the boys and young men to express themselves in a creative way and to 'tell' something that they cannot say verbally.

From the perspective of the participants, the most visible effect of these sessions is to evoke their creativity and further develop their existing skills. It is about learning specific practical skills that will enable independent work and the production of final products, namely the provision of quality practical services such as working with wood, foil, making decorative objects, sewing workshops and many others. It is a group of workshops of a practical nature the realisation of which passes through the process of learning, socialisation, exchange of experiences and opinions and mastering the production of final products or the acquisition of independent craft skills. During these workshops, a large number of adolescents and young men are identified as carpenters, tailors and painters who used to practise this in their country of origin. This is an important element in the realisation of activities where young men and adolescents can play the role of facilitator for certain activities and they are usually very happy to respond. It is of great importance to note that we work on occupational therapies to relieve stress through creative work. The inclusion of adolescents in these activities and their occupation with such work means that they are less exposed to participation in risky practices and situations that could result in violence.

In general, educational sessions are implemented in a similar way for both adolescent boys and young men. At the beginning of the implementation, it is essential to pay attention to the characteristics of the participants in the group and to adjust the teaching approach accordingly. Through the implementation of these sessions with young men and adolescent boys in BYMCs it was observed that the young men showed greater interest in this topic. This can be explained by their awareness of their educational deficiencies, which are often caused by their leaving home at an early age and traveling for many years during which they are forced to earn money for their own existence. Adolescent boys approach educational sessions more casually and it is noticeable that it is far more difficult to keep their attention. Thus, the evaluations showed better results were achieved when working with young men than with adolescent boys.

Besides improving their education in general, a desired impact of educational sessions is to contribute towards a safer and more certain future for the boys and young men. While some of the boys and young men increase the literacy level necessary for daily life many acquire skills and knowledge that will prove helpful in their further life, such as writing a CV or offering/applying their skills in the market. Moreover, the acquired knowledge will help them to make important life decisions by increasing the possibility that their decisions will be in accordance with accepted social norms.

Name of activity

Description of activity

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Decoupage

This activity can be done with wood, paper boxes, bottles, trays and furniture and is very demanding since it is implemented in several stages. The height of this activity is to master the technique and develop the ability to design as well the process of restoring old items. The purpose of the activity is occupational work and stress relief.

Materials available: It is necessary to provide material that is useful for the decoupage technique as well as items that will be processed, whether it is furniture, wooden or paper boxes or glass bottles.
A safe space available: A BYMC, but it can also be an outdoor activity.

Mandala art

It is important to explain to the participants that they have to think about the shape that they want to draw. Usually, the mandala presents flower petals that are later dotted with colours, but if the participants find it difficult they can draw whatever they want.

The purpose of this activity is to encourage the participants in the grooming process, which is very inspiring and has a therapeutic aspect. The participants should enjoy the process. The final product is usually a reflection of the person who created it. Applying this activity to adolescents gives us a clearer picture of their state of mind. In many cases they give up and it is at that moment that

Materials available: Printed materials with mandala patterns that the participants can colour.
A safe space available: A BYMC, but it can also be an outdoor activity.

Name of activity

Description of activity

Assumption/preconditions/comments



'Ludo game'

it is important to think about the approach to individuals and try to discover the underlying reason for their lack of concentration and their agitation.

Ludo is a game that adolescent boys often play and so they are happy to participate in the creation of this game because it is played in their country and therefore they are proud to present this game. It is important to ask them to help when making the Ludo game on the table or on the floor. Moreover, give them a chance to teach you how to play and they will be more than happy to play something that comes from their country. This activity helps build self-esteem among adolescent boys.

Materials available: Prepare paints, paint brushes, a measuring tape, etc.
A safe space available: A BYMC, but it can also be an outdoor activity.



Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments
Holiday decoration	The workshop is implemented during the holiday period, whether religious or other. The participants are given the materials and are encouraged to create decorations in accordance with the upcoming holiday. They work on the basis of what the practice is in their country. After making the decorations the participants present them and either decorate the centre or their rooms.	Materials available: Different necessary materials needed to support the participants in making decorations. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. Additional note: During the holidays, the participants are especially sensitive and emotions are visible in everyone. This is because they are happy to recall warm family moments and the time they spent with their family.	Landscape creation	An interesting yet demanding activity in which a large number of participants take part is when a landscape is painted on a large piece of hammer paper. One of the participants is asked to draw the landscape next to the countries of origin using a graphite pencil. Next small beads of different colours and glue are prepared. After that, the participants fill in the parts of the painting with the beads one by one. The purpose of this activity is that through group work all of the participants take part in coordinating and filling in the different parts of the landscape and that they advise each other. More important during the activity is the development of fine motor skills.	Motivated learners: Animate the group and, more importantly, inform them about this activity, which requires patience. Materials available: Prepare hammer paper, beads and glue. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.	Handcrafts	The main purpose of the handcrafts workshops is first to activate each individual and small group. In an ideal situation this would involve everyone in creative work and contribute to the community in which they live. This is because the objects and decorations they make are used in the boys and young men centres or in the temporarily reception centres. It is very important to make a good workshop plan and have an interested group of participants. This group should work on a wide range of topics. One example is working with wood. Wooden benches are made along with wood engraving, foil engravings, stained glass, plaster figures, vases and cement figures.	empowerment officer a psychologist is also present and involved in the activity. This is in case the need arises for psychological intervention.	Sewing	The purpose of the sewing workshop is to develop practical skills that will enable the individual to progress independently. It is about learning specific practical skills that, after their adoption, will enable independent work and the production of final products. Namely, the provision of quality practical services. When it comes to these skills, all you have to do is ask. You will be surprised how many boys and young men are tailors, carpenters, electricians and more. Your task is to empower them to share their knowledge and teach others. Adolescents identified as being engaged in sewing in their country of origin are usually willing to take on the role of facilitator.	Materials available: Different materials for the workshop, a table and a sewing machine, etc. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.
											
			Painting and drawing	The drawing and painting workshop is implemented in a quiet relaxing atmosphere with instrument music in the background. The participants are given a canvas on which they are free to transfer their emotions. It was found that the young men from Burundi are very talented in drawing and they left very beautiful pictures at the centre. In contrast to them, the young people and adolescents from Afghanistan would mostly draw	Materials available: Prepare a canvas and a calming environment. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. Additional note: It is recommended that during this activity that in addition to the						



“Our ability to create and sustain our social world depends in large measure on how we communicate. People’s social skills are crucial to their well-being - individually and collectively. The importance of understanding skilled behaviour in all its complexities cannot be overstated.”⁴

Communication plays a key role in everyday life, even in conveying the simplest messages. However, the ability to communicate in a foreign language is essential for boys and young men on the move because it not only overcomes issues during their journey but also helps ensure a better life in the future through, for example, improved employment prospects.

Many of the boys and young men in BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have the chance to complete their formal education in their country of origin. It is therefore very important to them that the BYMCs offer opportunities to learn new languages, depending on their wishes and affinities. Thus, language classes are one of the most popular activities.

Implementing foreign language classes for people on the move requires special attention and a willingness to hold a class with different levels of knowledge and populations from different countries. Within a group of participants there are different categories, ranging from those who have not been introduced to the Latin alphabet to participants who are unable to write at all. Practice has shown that learning a language through flashcards is very productive, as is working with materials with words accompanied by pictures. In these cases, the audio visual method is applied during which the participants listen to the pronunciation, follow the word on the work material as well as the picture and at the same time learn to pronounce the word and its meaning. It is also important to mention the availability of online courses and access to different levels of knowledge.

Empowerment officers in BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina are mostly focused on English and the constituent languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, this also depends on the language expertise of the empowerment officer. Language lessons are prepared ahead of time but are also subject to adjustment. Since the number of participants within a session is not determined, sometimes there are boys and young men whose language knowledge differs and the empowerment officer needs to adjust the lessons in accordance with their language skills. Language classes include all aspects of learning a language, namely alphabet, grammar, vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation, reading and writing exercises, phrases, etc. The table below shows examples relevant to language classes.

Creative activities also include other activities such as carpentry, painting or any other crafts activity for which the safe space and the empowerment officer has prepared all of the necessary materials. Some of these activities need more time to be completed and work on specific art pieces can continue during the next creative workshop. The empowerment officer interacts with the boys and young men during the session and opens various discussions on certain topics that they are willing to speak about. The empowerment officer always pays attention to signs of potential GBV survivors.

The impact of creative activities is evident in all dimensions of the purpose of empowerment activities. While ‘looking back’ participants are encouraged to take positive things that can serve as resources for their resilience, through the ‘Now, in the BYMC’ approach they are occupied and productive whilst acquiring new skills that may be useful in their future life. Thus, their perspective of ‘looking forward’ is more positive.

2.2.4. Language class

It is a known fact that anyone who leaves his/hers native country in search of a better future has significant disadvantages upon arrival in the host country, such as the language barrier. Research shows that the employment and wage gap between local people and immigrants is significant.³

³ Arendt, J. N., Bolvig, I., Foged, M., Hasager, L and Peri, G, *Language Training and Refugees’ Integration*. 2, 2021.

⁴ Wiemann, J., *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills*.ix, 2003.

Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments
Alphabet	The purpose of this activity is to learn the alphabet as the first step towards literacy (which is a prerequisite for learning a language). Working materials with letters are prepared for participants and every participant has the assignment to write 10 rows per letter. The goal is to develop fine motor skills, because in the initial phase the participants do not have a sense for lines and their letters go above and below the lines of a row. It is important to teach them until they master the writing technique. Apart from the written part, the alphabet letters should be prepared and shown to them letter by letter. Pronunciation should also be practiced both in a group and individually.	Materials available: Prepare working materials with alphabet letters as well as cards with alphabet letters. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. Additional note: Try to involve the participants in teaching each other and that those who know the alphabet better help those who know it less. This has proven to be empowering for those helping and made the learning process easier for those who were just learning the alphabet.	Everyday social expressions	practice at the start of each game to choose 15 flashcards (15 is a sufficient amount of vocabulary for the participants to master). At the beginning, using the 15 selected flashcards each group should do five to six repetitions of showing the card and pronouncing the word and this is then followed by group repetition. After that, we move on to the games as the last step.	with the relevant principles.
Vocabulary	Learning vocabulary is practiced through games (taking into account the different levels of knowledge within the group). Some of the games in which participants master vocabulary are the memory game, ‘I Need’ and ‘Pantomime’.	Materials available: Prepare flashcards for the games ‘I need’ and ‘Pantomime’, with special emphasis on the preparation of memory game cards. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance	Auxiliary verbs	This session is implemented to present the participants with auxiliary verbs in a foreign language that are considered a strong tool in communication, such as the verb ‘to be’ in all tenses, ‘to have’ and ‘to be able’. The purpose of the session is to familiarise the participants with the possibilities of using these verbs in any situation and in any institution. When, for example, they want to raise	Materials available: Work materials with the described dialogue with everyday phrases. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.

Name of activity

Description of activity

money, buy something, etc. Verbs are implemented separately. So, working materials and situations where they can be used are prepared separately for the processing of each verb. Participants take part in role play games and they are given a specific situation to practice the use of verbs and to navigate the given situation.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

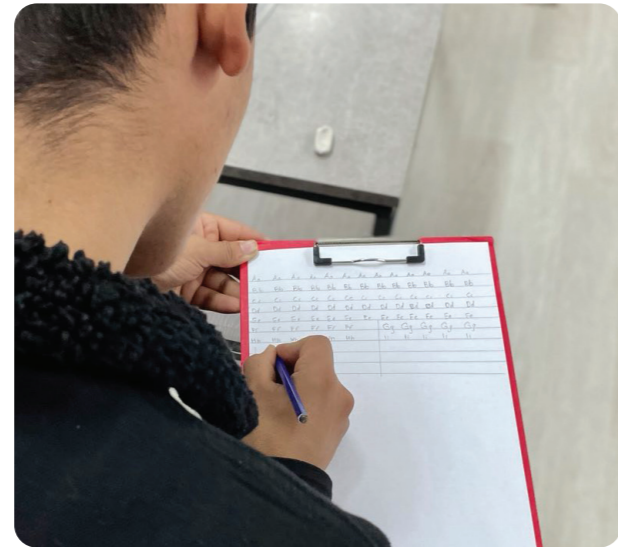
Name of activity

Description of activity

fear of stigmatisation and labeling within the group. In those special corners the boys and adolescents are given working material and provided with continuous support and monitoring by the empowerment officer.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

able: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. **Additional note:** A prerequisite for rewriting texts for the purpose of literacy is to teach the participants the alphabet. The young men who pass the alphabet lessons in some cases rewrite texts from several textbooks and reach a high level of literacy. The end results are increased motivation and mutual satisfaction.



Language classes can be delivered in a variety of forms using different approaches. Some practical examples written by the staff members are available in Annex 1 (6.1).

After regular attendance of language classes the boys and young men enhance their language skills and this allows them to successfully participate in daily conversations and also makes them more competitive in the market.

Box 4.
The specifics of working with adolescents

One of the main differences between implementing language sessions for young men and for adolescent boys is that adolescent boys often need to be motivated to learn a foreign language, because some of them still did not understand the importance of knowing a foreign language. This requires adaptation of the implementation of the session itself, using methods and techniques that make the session closer and more interesting to the younger population. This can be done, for example, by including a combination of pictures, sounds and coloring books in a foreign language, repetition of lessons after an audio recording, naming cartoon characters and giving tasks for the next session.

2.2.5. Thematic sessions

Thematic sessions that are implemented in BYMCs are planned in advance and are structured and adjusted to the interests and needs of the participants. Through the implementation of thematic sessions, the participants develop skills and attitudes and are strengthened in the area of expressing their identity as well as their understanding of situations where they were or could have been a victim of any number of forms of violence. Among others, topics related to violence are discussed through non-violent communication workshops. The thematic workshops at BYMC help to identify many cases of GBV, because they are run in such a way that through their active participation in the discussion the young men express a need for a conversation with the GBV case manager.

It must be kept in mind that these sessions are of an informal and relaxing nature and are intended to expand the knowledge of the participants on various topics. These sessions should therefore be of a flexible nature and the wishes and needs of the boys and young men should be taken into account when designing them. Sometimes it is good to let one of the participants lead a session on a topic that they know well. In this way the participants are given a sense of confidence and thus build their self-belief. However, taking into account the fact that group participants come from different countries with cultural differences it is not recommended to allow individuals to hold a thematic session of their choice without prior discussion with the empowerment officer. This is because it could contain cultural practices and traditions that are not acceptable to participants from other countries.

The creativity and good observation of the empowerment officer are the keys for successfully implementing thematic sessions. Depending on his previous migration experience and the needs of the boys and young men, the empowerment officer will prepare a topic to be presented and discussed during this session. The table below contains a description of thematic sessions that are successfully applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵

⁵ Some additional examples written by staff members are also available in Annex 1 (6.2).

Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments
Covid-19 during migration	With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic there was a need to share information about the infection itself as well as advice on how to take preventive measures. Thematic sessions were the ideal way to achieve the maximum effect in this respect. According to the same principle, any current topic can be addressed through thematic sessions.	Materials available: It depends on the selected topic. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.		violence. It is important to present certain aspects of the behaviour of a person who has or is experiencing such violence and also the behaviour of the perpetrator of the violence.	with the relevant principles. Additional note: The session is very productive in terms of identifying vulnerable cases. Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to the behaviour of the participants (who communicates, who is reticent and who leaves the centre in a hurry with the excuse that they have to go at the first mention of some kind of violence) during the session. It is desirable to have a conversation with each person whose behaviour deviates from the norm.
What is your profession?	The purpose of the session is for young men and adolescents to gain a general picture of the profession they want to pursue in the future. The session helps them to focus their attention and free time on learning useful information related to their chosen profession.	Materials available: Prepare a PowerPoint presentation and encourage the participants to hold an open discussion on the topic. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.			
Geder-based violence	Through the session, introduce the participants to the meaning of gender-based violence and to the basic forms of violence (where it occurs, which population is exposed to violence, risks, etc.). Place special emphasis on migrant adolescents as a category particularly exposed to	Materials available: Prepare a PowerPoint presentation with key terms related to the topic of violence. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance			
			Tolerance	This is a structured and planned session aimed at involving young men and adolescents from different countries. Considering that the main goal of the session is to educate the participants about the terms 'labelling', 'violence', 'tolerance' and 'diversity', at the end of the session the participants will answer a few questions to provide feedback about their own social position, whether they have	Materials available: Organise a group with participants from different countries and prepare working material with questions related to the session that the participants will answer at the end. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is estab-

Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments
	been exposed to labelling or violence or if they have participated in labelling or violence.	lished in accordance with the relevant principles. Additional note: It is very important to pay attention to the answers because from them it is possible to identify cases of gender-based violence. Questions relate to violent behaviour include: Have you ever exposed anyone to psychological violence? Have you ever exposed anyone to insults, humiliation etc. on social media? Have you been a victim of insults?



Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments
Box of Happiness	Introduce the group participants to the topic and inform them about the first proclaimed International Day of Happiness, which was proclaimed on 20 March 2013. Present the participants with a 'Box of Happiness' and distribute materials on which they can write their understanding of happiness, what makes them happy and with whom they would or would not share the Box of Happiness. The goal of the session is to learn more about the mental state, the level of stress and possibly traumatic experiences of the participants.	Materials available: Prepare a box with the caption 'Happiness', working materials and pencils. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. Additional note: It is preferable that the facilitator reads the messages, because it can happen that some of them contain sensitive content that should be skipped. While reading the messages pay attention to the facial expressions of the participants. It would also be good to ask the participants to sign, but emphasise that their names will not be read out loud. The purpose of this is that in the case of a sensitive situation we have the name of the person and can therefore arrange to speak to that person at a later date. It is preferable



Name of activity

Description of activity

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Cultural differences

This is a session that focuses on the participation of participants from different countries. The participants will have the opportunity to present the culture, customs and language of their country of origin. The goal is for them to acquire knowledge and accept cultural differences.

Materials available: Everything that is available and could be used to represent one's own culture, customs and traditions.
A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.
Additional note: Encourage participants from different countries to take part. When implementing the session pay attention to the presentation of the traditions and cultures of the participants as well as the reactions of others. Sometimes comments can be unpleasant and it is important to react in a timely manner in these situations.



The areas covered in the thematic sessions apply equally to adolescents and young men. In both groups the focus is on empowering individuals in the group who are withdrawn, reluctant to engage in communication activities and are reluctant to communicate and afraid of participation. Thematic sessions are ideal for joint activities of adolescent boys and young men. Adults play an important role in continuing the dialogue whilst adequately respecting the process of development of adolescent boys, who struggle with three core issues: identity, intimacy and independence.

Sometimes, as a result of the thematic discussions, it is possible (especially with adolescent boys) to obtain useful information about the 'protection' challenges they encountered during their travels from their country of origin to the TRC as well as information on their future action plans (future plans). Although this activity was introduced as a form of casual conversation and 'chatting' about interesting topics it can also be used as a tool for gaining an insight into significant trends and difficult or traumatic personal experiences and conditions of individuals, primarily adolescents.

The impact that thematic sessions have depends on the nature of the selected topic. They usually contribute towards other empowerment activities, while their flexibility also allows them to contribute towards protection activities.



Box 5.
Group and individual work during thematic sessions

Through thematic sessions, depending on the topic, the application of group and individual work is practiced. All the participants, through prepared work materials on which they work individually, are given the opportunity to present themselves in front of the group of participants. The aim is for them to express their individual opinions and attitudes and to strengthen their personality and self-confidence, while taking into consideration the need to respect the different opinions of the other participants in the group.

2.2.6. Sports and board games

Sports and board games are purposefully aimed at establishing positive and strong social bonds and trust between the boys and young men and the empowerment officer. At first glance, these activities appear to create a fun relaxing and friendly atmosphere; however, they achieve much more than that.



Guided by the importance of physical activities for the health of each person, the UNFPA team conducts sports activities in BYMCs and outdoors. According to the WHO, "...regular physical activity helps prevent and treat non communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and breast and colon cancer. It also helps prevent hypertension, overweight and obesity and can improve mental health, quality of life and well-being."⁶

Although the type of sports activities should be selected together with the boys and young men, they are carried out in accordance with the resources available. BYMCs are usually equipped with sports equipment such as those for football, volleyball, badminton, darts, etc. All these sports require physical activity and allow the empowerment officer to recognise potential physical injuries that could result from GBV.

Implementing social games in BYMCs or outdoors occupies a special place and has multiple roles. All social games include different forms of behaviour and

⁶ WHO Sports and Health Programme. Available at www.who.int/initiatives/sports-and-health.

Name of activity⁷

Sports (football, volleyball, darts, badminton, etc.)

Description of activity

Choose the sport that will be the focus and make sure that everyone understands the rules. The facilitator should be consistent in the application throughout the entire period of the sports activity. It is good to take on the role of a referee. In addition to playing matches, specially designed body tasks (e.g., movements with a ball) can be organised. This is especially beneficial for adolescents as it contributes to the proper development of their muscles, proper body position, etc. If the sessions are organised to prepare for a tournament then they require continuity and specific organisation of training at various levels (from simpler to more complex) and for the participants to work together as a team (getting to know each other, exchanging experiences and skills, etc.). It is also useful to actively involve, as assistants, one of the young men/adolescents who has had professional/serious involvement in that sport in the past.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Equipment needed: Sports equipment and props and the presence of medical assistance in case of injury.
A safe space available: A safe field (e.g., basketball court or a football pitch).

Name of activity

Board games (Tumbling Tower, the card game 'Uno', the card game 'Tash', dominoes, chess, etc.)

Description of activity

Different types of games are distributed to the participants and they decide how they will play. One staff member will participate in each of the formed groups. The role of the staff member is to teach individuals who do not know how to play as well as to include those who are reticent and do not want to participate. The facilitator should develop a positive atmosphere and encourage the participants to communicate within the group during the game. Games played in pairs, such as Tumbling Tower, are used in cases where a withdrawn quiet person is noticed within a group of adolescents. This person is encouraged to play with a staff member who through the game attempts indirectly to discover the reason for the individual's reticence.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Materials available: Ensure the availability of various types of board games.
A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles.
Additional note: Keep in mind that each game has its own purpose and that the application of each game can play a major role in identifying the most vulnerable categories.



rules and each individual game includes an educational aspect. Many cases of GBV have been identified through the implementation of social games in the safe centres, especially those that are played in pairs and during which closer communication is established between adolescents and staff. During the game, there is no direct questioning but the very flow of the game and the communication during the game along with the exchange of information and experiences empowers adolescents to share their experiences. In these moments, if it is realised that a person has experienced violence further communication on the topic will be indirectly stopped and the conversation will be held later when space and time permit. The latter is done in the presence of the relevant staff, primarily the GBV manager or in the case of an unaccompanied minor by the appointed legal guardian and the respective centre for social welfare.

Sport and board game activities can be implemented jointly with adolescents boys and young men in the presence of the empowerment officer. When organising sports activities with adolescent boys, additional attention should be paid to designing the activity itself in such a way that it contains elements that teach them group work and commitment to the team as well as taking responsibility for their actions and viewing success as a joint team achievement. Some sports activities are designed to improve proper body position, proper walking, proprioception training, etc., all of which is very important for the proper development of musculature at a young age. They also help teach the correct patterns of co-operation with others in achieving common goals through teamwork (assuming personal responsibility and attributing success to the team as a whole).

While it is more suitable to implement sports activities outside, board games can be played both indoors and outdoors.

The positive effects of these activities is not only to keep in good physical condition and achieve situational 'mental relaxation' but also to learn (e.g., spirit of sport, fair play, positive emotions), socialise and to share difficulties.

2.2.7. Art sessions

Art sessions at BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina are designed primarily for work with adolescent boys. Their purpose is to encourage the boys to express themselves artistically and to develop a sense for various forms of art at an early age (e.g., through sessions on acting, poetry, film and dance).

Those sessions for which there are interested participants are implemented intensively in phases and usually result in the performance of longer prepared content through events where adolescents play an active role.

These art sessions also contribute to and bring together adolescents from different countries. They learn about the art of different cultures through a two-way process where everyone gets to explain and learn about different forms of national art and at the same time a form of artistic content is created.

Art sessions are conceived and carried out as constant activities whose intensity is adapted to the interests of those attending the TRC. They usually result in occasional manifestations where the created and rehearsed content is demonstrated in front of the TRC audience. In this way, for example, the adolescent boys from one BYMC in Bosnia and Herzegovina independently performed the theatrical performance titled 'We are human' in front of the employees of all the organisations present at the centre who attended as their guests. Another example is 'Culture Days' where written poems were recited. Some of the specific art activities that achieved a significant impact in this country are described in the table below.



⁷ Practical examples of sport and board games activities written by staff members are attached as Annex 1 (6.3).

Name of activity ⁷	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity ⁷	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments	Name of activity	Description of activity	Assumption/preconditions/comments
Theatre /drama sessions	The purpose of theatre/drama sessions is to develop a sense of art and personal artistic expression and creation. Guided by the idea that art has a beneficial therapeutic effect, there is an additional reason for implementing sessions of this type in the migration context and the conditions in which adolescent boys and young men find themselves. Concretely, the drama sessions have their own continuity and take place in a planned sequence. Some of the steps are to form a group of adolescents who will participate, achieve group cohesion and relaxation of the participants, basic exercises on the elements of acting (voice, facial expression, gestures and movement), joint design of the content of the piece (plays) and future training to the required level. After rehearsing, there is the opportunity to perform the play in front of an audience. In addition to the artistic element, the drama section/sessions also contain elements of getting to know each other, bringing adolescents together and socialising, appreciating different cultures and working together on joint projects week after week.	Materials available: Costumes and equipment (masks, t-shirts with messages, etc.) that can be made by the teenagers themselves during creative sessions or drama sessions. Audio and video recordings, a laptop, a projector, speakers, etc. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. An outside space can also be used for this purpose.	Poetry sessions	These are implemented in two ways and with two goals. Namely, 1) reading poetry for the purpose of understanding and artistic expression and (2) personal writing of poetry. Interest in certain authors and their works is determined together with the adolescents. This is discussed later during sessions (reading and discussion). In the case of motivated participants there is also an opportunity for them to write their own songs. During certain manifestations/events these adolescents have the opportunity to present their works (about their homeland, family, etc.) in front of an audience. The goal of the sessions is to arouse a love for reading and writing in the participants. Through poetry writing sessions they are given the opportunity to express themselves, which can potentially involve important matters that could not be reached through other forms of communication.	Materials needed: Paper, pencils and the printed desired poetry. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. During manifestations/events an outside space can also be used for this purpose.	Sessions on national dances	The participants can describe their own experiences in relation to the film using the emotions it evokes in them and the ideas and messages contained in the film. A skilled facilitator with the necessary prior knowledge can analyse different elements and aspects of the film. In this way a critical attitude is adopted when selecting the films during their free time and learning about film as the seventh art. Based on these sessions, the activities of the 'day/night cinema' form are organised, during which the film is shown outside the BYMC or in the TRC in an appropriate space on a large screen for all boys and young men present. A cinema atmosphere is ensured by using the appropriate light level and, where possible, providing popcorn and drinks.	A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. If there is a large number of adolescents then a larger space is more suitable. In warmer weather an outdoor space can be used for this purpose. Additional note: It is always good to check beforehand what the film is about. The adolescents should not experience any form of re-traumatisation because of the screened film and it should not in any way stigmatise a certain culture.	Music sessions	part of cultural identity for some nationalities and has a therapeutic and relaxing effect). These sessions can be included in, for example, the implementation of regular activities at BYMCs where talented young men who were singers and played instruments in their home country are identified. The UNFPA team suggests organising a concert where the young men can show and present their talent to which they gladly respond. A concert can be organised with the accompaniment of a guitarist and the residents of the TRC can be invited to support the event. The purpose of implementing such an activity is to increase motivation and improve the mood of the group as well as to build the self-confidence of individuals.	attention to the age of the participant dancers and make sure that the group is composed of participants of a similar age. Avoid a combination of different age groups. This is due to the fact that in some cultures dancing can also be seen as a form/act of courtship or even abuse. Equipment available: Musical instruments (guitar), microphone, a speaker, space for the audience as well as decorations for the room where the concert will be held. A safe space available: Ideally, it is a BYMC that is established in accordance with the relevant principles. If there is a large number of participants then a larger space is more suitable. In warmer weather an outdoor space can be used for this purpose.
			Film sessions	There is an opportunity during film sessions to develop a discussion about the film shown. The films can be short educational films on taboo topics, films about relationships, feature films, etc.	Equipment needed: Various appropriate films, a flat screen, a projector and, if possible, drinks and popcorn.						

2.2.8. 'Monthly events'

'Monthly events' is an empowerment activity primarily of a recreational nature that targets adolescent boys. It is an activity that is organised once a month and in such a way that it takes the form of a manifestation/event for a wider audience (in the context of BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is most often for an audience at the level of the TRCs). Namely, at regular meetings with adolescent boys (ideally at the level of the 'Boys' Voice' group) proposals about what they would like to organise are collected.

This is a great opportunity to practice leadership because the organisation itself (giving a loan, helping with organisation and performance) involves adolescents. After an idea for a future monthly event is submitted the proposal is then presented to professionals at the BYMC and to other organisations. Once the proposal is approved, the event's planning and preparation begins. On the day of the event, adolescents play the most important role in the implementation of everything planned, with the support of the empowerment officer of course.

The adolescent who will participate, the materials and other content needed for the event are prepared during the month during regular BYMC sessions (depending on the event in question). The following are examples of monthly events implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1) the drama performance 'Days of Culture', which was prepared by a BYMC together with adolescents during Art drama sessions, where adolescents presented the cultures of their countries of origin in the form of, among other things, recitations, songs, dances and drawings; 2) 'Bazaar Day', during which adolescents sold their works of art and handicrafts made during BYMC creative sessions and used the money received from the sale to, for example, buy new materials for work; 3) a pairs table tennis tournaments in which the pairs were formed by one adolescent and an employee of one of the organisations at the BYMC; 4) tournaments of darts, football, basketball, volleyball, etc.; 5) 'Film night/day' where films intended for this age group are projected on a big screen in a cinema atmosphere and 6) cleaning the TRC or BYMC. Different equipment and materials are needed depending on the type of event.

Although this group of empowerment activities resembles some of the previously mentioned ones in terms of content, its specific impact is reflected in the

⁸ Please find relevant details on 'The Boys' Voice' in Vujovic S and Pezerovic Midzic, *BOYS AND YOUNG MEN SAFE SPACES: A guidance note based on the humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, UNFPA, 2022.

fact that adolescents are given the opportunity to propose the events they want and to participate in the preparation and implementation from start to finish. This certainly contributes to their empowerment in the form of strengthening their advocacy and leadership skills, organisational skills and practicing public speaking and also contributes to their getting to know each other and exchanging experiences.

2.2.9. Activities related to social cohesion

The purpose of activities related to 'social cohesion' is primarily to remove prejudices in the community based on ethnicity, gender, race or other prejudice. They are realised in the form of some of the previously mentioned types of activities. This paper uses, for the purpose of demonstration, sports and recreational activities as examples. Namely, the UNFPA agrees with the local community sports centre to implement certain sports activities once a week for two hours. During this period the young men and boys participate in sports activities such as football, table tennis, billiards and darts. In addition to socialising in the community, this activity encourages understanding and the acceptance of differences.

Name of activity⁷

Football

Description of activity

Identify 12 boys or young men and share information with them about going to sports activities. The purpose is for them to socialise in society and to accept the set rules of behaviour and cultural diversity. It is good to make a heterogeneous group. If more than 12 participants apply for the activity then it is necessary to mix them up every time so that everyone eventually has the opportunity to attend such an activity.

Assumption/preconditions/comments

Equipment and organisational activities needed: Sports jerseys, organise transport where the boys and young men are accompanied by UNFPA officers, encourage members of the local community to participate in these activities.
Location of the activity: Sports hall in the local community, indoors or outdoors.



The key impact of these activities is expected to be the development of a sense of belonging to a group, namely a sense of acceptance within a group in which adolescents and young men of different characteristics must accept and respect such diversity. An additional benefit is that adolescents and young men actively engaged in sports activities will develop the skills they need to manage stress and behave in ways appropriate to the environment. This will help them to believe in themselves and increase their confidence when learning new skills.

2.2.10. Info sharing and socialising outside the BYMC

Upon arrival at work, the empowerment officer will use the first hours to conduct the activity 'Info sharing and socialising outside the centre'. This activity is performed in such a way that the empowerment officer makes a tour of the TRC and visits the accommodation units. It is a precondition for the successful inclusion of boys and young men in the above-mentioned empowerment activities. It can also be understood as the initial encouragement for the boys and young men to visit the BYMC and take part in empowerment activities and/or to receive the protection and support they need.

The main goal of info sharing activities is to invite and motivate the boys and young men to participate in the scheduled empowerment activities and to gain information about certain events within or outside the TRC. The empowerment officer introduces himself and explains the work and purpose of a BYMC as well as the exact location of the safe space. At the same time, the UNFPA team speaks to the boys and young men and the empowerment officer gathers all possible useful information about their migration journey and pays attention to anything that they may find important in regard to the events that have occurred in their life so far. The team collects significant information and based on this it creates the further activities but can also react and include persons in need of urgent services if such a need is identified. The info-sharing activity is performed on a daily basis and the empowerment officer can conduct it more than once per day when needed.

2.3. Empowering through protection activities

2.3.1. Empowering boys and young men through SRH activities

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) activities, as protection activities, in BYMCs are an essential part of the UNFPA mandate. Their importance and methods of implementation are described in the document BOYS AND YOUNG MEN SAFE SPACES: A guidance note based on the humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹ Yet besides its primary purpose, SRH activities contribute towards the general empowerment of the boys and young men.

In cooperation with local healthcare centres, urologists visit the BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina at least once per week. His visit to the centre includes educational sessions on topics closely related to his medical expertise. These sessions are prepared ahead of time and delivered mostly through PowerPoint presentations as a tool for their proper execution. Later on, the boys and young men have the opportunity to have individual consultations with a urologist. The empowerment officer has an important role before, during and after these sessions.

It is essential to encourage participants, especially adolescent boys, to raise a question during the SRH sessions or to ask for an individual consultation. As many boys and young men present in Bosnia and Herzegovina have never previously visited a urologist and generally have poor knowledge of SRH, the empowerment officer explains the importance of the sessions and motivates them to participate.

During the group sessions, the empowerment officer clarifies certain input provided by the urologist in order to ensure that they are understandable to the boys and young men. In the event that some medical assessment or intervention is needed the transport and the escort, which is provided by the empowerment officer, must be assured and conducted in a timely manner. After group or individual sessions, the empowerment officer may collect feedback in order to identify and encourage those who had but did not raise questions at the time.

Knowledge about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and access to adequate care has the power to improve the lives of people. Therefore, it is cru-

⁹ Vujovic S and Pezerovic Midzic, BOYS AND YOUNG MEN SAFE SPACES: A guidance note based on the humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNFPA, 2022.

cial to raise awareness on SRH and related services and to empower and inform the boys and young men about this topic. The UNFPA educational programme was created in order to prevent entry into early unprotected sexual relations, teen pregnancy, early diagnosis of prostate cancer and treatment of urinary infections, the consequences of sexual and intimate partner violence and sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and HPV.

Empowerment sessions should be organised separately for boys and young men because they do not feel comfortable taking part in such sessions together and because the topics relating to certain aspects of SRH are relevant solely to boys or young men. Sessions on puberty and changes in a boys' body, for example, should be held separately with boys because they might feel ashamed to ask questions or share their thoughts in front of older male persons. It should also be kept in mind that the approach to boys from conservative and more traditional countries should be different from that of other boys, because they may not be so open or willing to talk about such issues.

The facilitator should have a good understanding of the cultural, religious and traditional sensitivities of the boys and young men and organise and implement the sessions in secure safe and comfortable conditions in order for the beneficiaries to become actively involved and express their needs and questions and provide feedback. The facilitator should avoid making the boys or young men feel ashamed because of the unusual SRH practices that they use or their level of understanding and knowledge. Whenever required, the facilitator should talk to the boys and young men individually and allow them to share their experiences in confidence. The terminology used in the sessions should be explained in simple and understandable words.

In addition to being able to visit the hospital or receive the necessary medication, the boys and young men will also receive the knowledge needed to have a healthy sexual and reproductive life through urological health sessions (sexually transmitted diseases or infections, urogenital infections, testicle diseases, erectile dysfunction, etc.). All are fields that the boys and young men will not only be able to relate to their own health experiences but also receive valuable information in order to recognise in time certain health issues that may occur in the future. Potential SRH activities are listed in the table below, while some examples are provided in Annex 1 (6.3).

SRH activities

- > Awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infections and their causes.
- > Genital/anal health and hygiene.
- > Methods and awareness of contraception and its importance in terms of sexual and reproductive health.
- > Awareness on puberty and changes in the body of adolescent boys.
- > Awareness of the sexual relationship between men and women.
- > Family planning sessions.

Teaching materials: stationery, visual literature, posters and models and video material.

Impact: The majority of the boys and young men who had not had the opportunity to be examined by a urologist previously decided after the SRH sessions and activities to go for a urological examination. They also spoke openly about their difficulties in respect to sexual reproductive health with the urologist and the empowerment officer. Through these activities the participants level of awareness is raised about the importance of taking care of sexual reproductive health, about the importance of contraceptives and the possibility to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and their spread.



2.3.2. Empowering boys and young men through GBV activities

GBV is the most extreme expression of unequal gender relations in society and one of the most widespread violations of human rights. While GBV disproportionately affects women and girls it also affects men and boys. These abuses take place all over the world in homes, schools, work places and communities.¹⁰ Yet GBV is preventable and education and educational institutions can play a central role in ending it.

As the identification of gender-based violence is done on a daily basis during the implementation of all activities at BYMCs, education and prevention of GBV is another separate activity that is performed within these centres. If we are to determine what GBV represents then we can note that "...gender based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. Gender based violence is violence directed against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience gender based violence."¹¹

Men and boys on the move who are currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina have generally not had the opportunity to learn about gender-based violence before and it is not rare for them to be unaware that they have survived situations involving this form of violence. This happens because this population is not sufficiently aware of what constitutes gender-based violence and in some of their cultures it is considered normal. Given that the UNFPA mandate is based on zero tolerance of gender-based violence and given that the situation on the ground has shown that there is a need to educate boys and men about this subject, GBV education has to be conducted with this population.

More often than not, the boys and young men who visit BYMCs come from regions that have been afflicted by war or similar social misfortune and were therefore more likely to become or are survivors of GBV committed either in their native country or during their migration journey than those who live in established democratic societies. GBV education consists of educating the boys and young men about the types of GBV. The main goal is to acquaint them with these terms

¹⁰ Fergus, L. van't Rood, R, *Unlocking the potential for change: Education and prevention of Gender-based violence*, 2013.

¹¹ EIGE, *What is gender-based violence?*, 2015. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>.

but also to identify potential GBV victims and by using the already existing referral system and tools provide help to those in need. One of the roles of the empowerment officer is to identify GBV survivors; however, GBV sessions are conducted by the UNFPA GBV case manager, a professional who deals with this issue. The GBV case manager is also the person responsible for taking further steps in regard to the identification, inclusion in essential services and further processing or referral of the survivor to another organisation. By using the existing tools, the case will be opened in the safe centre's database (GBVIMS) and its progression will be monitored. Needless to say, the privacy of the victimised person and his dignity is of utmost importance.

When conducting this training, it is necessary to explain to the participants the concept of gender-based violence and then all of the types of violence that exist, how violence is identified and how to react in the case that they experience or witness violence. Potential GBV related activities with an empowerment dimension are listed below, while several of them are described in Annex 1 (6.4).

-
- GBV activities**
- > Education about different GBV topics (e.g., psychological violence, sexual violence, addressing GBV, legal aid, etc.).
 - > Group activities focused on compassion (mutual support).
 - > Integration into society.
 - > Learning about ways to protect themselves.
 - > Prevention of potential GBV.
 - > GBV risks that boys and young men may be exposed to during their migration journey.
 - > The support system in Bosnia and Herzegovina and where to look for it.
-

Teaching material: stationery, visual literature and posters and video material.

Impact: It is important to emphasise that one of the goals is to educate survivors of gender-based violence, empower them but also to identify those who may be at risk of GBV or are experienced it but due to the some reasons do not recognize it as violence or are not ready to talk self-refer themselves for help. It is not uncommon for them to realise during their education that they have experienced gender-based violence. Of course, the participants are told before the education

begins that if they come to such a realisation during the education they will have the opportunity to talk to the GBV case manager immediately after the education ends or whenever they want to schedule an appointment for an individual interview.

To sum up, the importance of this education is multiple. In addition to raising awareness about gender-based violence, the participants also learn how to behave in the event that they experience or witness gender-based violence. Identification of potential victims of GBV is also carried out and as a last resort the identified survivors are provided with psychosocial support and other necessary services. Lastly, by raising their awareness and informing them about the risks to which they may be exposed during their migration journey the adolescents and young men are empowered and can more easily recognise such risks and act accordingly to protect themselves and prevent possible violence.

2.3.3. Empowering boys and young men through psychosocial support activities (individual and group activities)

The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological dimension of a person and the social dimension of a person. The psychological dimension includes the internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions, while the social dimension includes relationships, family and the community network, social values and cultural practices. Psychosocial support refers to the actions that address both the psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities.¹²

The provision of specialised, targeted and age appropriate GBV mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities is a lifesaving service. UNFPA recognised the need to prioritise the provision of comprehensive psychosocial services, which includes age appropriate activities, the promotion of positive coping mechanisms, resilience and self-esteem as well as targeted specialised case management support and counselling. Reluctance to seek psychological support stems from deeply embedded cultural factors; therefore, vulnerable populations fear exposure and the resulting stigmatisation and shame if their family or community were to find out that they rely on this type of support. UNFPA staff also observed that women and girls are often prohibited from reaching out for professional psychological support by their family members (fathers and brothers).¹³

Boys and young men on the move are very often unwilling or unable to talk about the difficult experiences they have survived in their country of origin, during their journey or about the problems they currently face. Therefore, it is necessary to build a relationship of trust with them. Sometimes all you can do is listen to their story and be understanding. In most cases, GBV survivors need psychosocial support in order to overcome this traumatic experience. Psychological support for survivors of GBV can be of an individual character. In this case, the GBV case manager or MHPSS expert arranges an appointment with the GBV survivor and conducts a counselling session. At the same time, there is also a group form of psychosocial support. Such a group can be led fully by the GBV case manager or an MHPSS expert or it can be led jointly by the aforementioned facilitators. When the expert is facilitating the process he only directs the flow of the conversation whilst giving the participants the opportunity to share their problems with each other and to offer words of support to each other. Given that each individual knows his problem the best, during individual or group PSS activities a relationship of respect, mutual trust and awareness is necessary.

Judging from the experiences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the male population in need of psychological support is reluctant to agree to receive this form of support outside of the Boys and Young Men Centre (BYMC) or the Green Zone. Yet psychological support within a BYMC has proven to be crucial, because survivors of violence very often do not give their consent to be referred to other agencies. There are a couple of reasons for this. The first is that they do not want to repeat GBV disclosure to different people and the second is that they have come to trust the UNFPA personnel at the BYMC and expect that in addition to the already existing services they will be provided with psychosocial support within the UNFPA centre.

The above-mentioned reasons led to psychological support to the male population within BYMCs being focused on GBV survivors and those at risk, whereas psychological support intended for the female population covered all women and girls aged 15+.¹⁴

According to our experiences, the most needed and most impactful MHPSS support activities are 1) psychotherapy sessions and 2) educational sessions.

Psychotherapy sessions: Support the mental health of the young men and help them to deal with their problems. The BYMC psychologist and psychotherapist organise three types of sessions: individual, group and educational sessions.

Box 6.
Reflections of a BYMC
staff member

“Experience shows us that young men mostly decide on individual psychotherapy sessions and psychotherapy counselling because in that way they relax the most and are most willing to share their experiences. Furthermore, they are happy to participate in psychological education on certain topics such as assertive communication, healthy lifestyle and the influence of such habits on psychological and physiological benefits.”

¹² What is psychosocial support? Available at <https://papyrus-project.org/what-is-psychosocial-support/>.

¹³ Pezerovic Midzic, Support provided to Women and Youth at Risk in the UNFPA Humanitarian Response in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2022: Successes, Lessons Learned and Systems Built, UNFPA Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022.

¹⁴ Ibid.

-
- Psychosocial support activities**
- > Encourage and strengthen community and family support.
 - > Group activities focused on emotions (learning about emotions, provide examples for each group).
 - > The connection between thoughts, emotions, behaviour and physiological reactions.
 - > Addressing basic needs in a participatory safe and socially appropriate way.
 - > Non-violent and assertive communication.
 - > Understand the interaction between heritage and the environment and the need to respect everyone's values system and opinions.
 - > Ways of dealing with stress, etc.
-

Teaching materials and stationery: workbooks, white and coloured paper for group activities, pens, pencils, scissors, glue, video materials, etc.

Impact: PSS activities have a positive effect on a person's physical and mental health, but also on their social skills and techniques. During these sessions, participants have the opportunity to learn different methods of coping with stress and other life problems. They also help them to maintain good physical and mental health, use coping and resilience mechanisms during difficult times, to connect socially and they increase their sense of safety and hope. All of this further empowers the male population.



3. Lessons learned and tips for users

3.1. General facilitation tips

- * Facilitators should be adequately acquainted with the topics they intend to discuss during the session.
- * Before asking any personal questions the facilitator should be prepared to share their own personal life experiences as well in order to engage the boys and young men in conversation and discussion.
- * Facilitators need to have understanding and patience when implementing activities, because there are persons who will need additional explanation or are not able to express themselves because of language or some other barrier.
- * Facilitators should create a relaxed atmosphere in their working area by providing (if possible) coffee/tea or candy for the participants.
- * Facilitators should always introduce themselves and their colleagues and thoroughly explain the work of the BYMCs if there are newly registered boys and young men.
- * Facilitators should ask the boys and young men to provide their feedback at the end of each session (where applicable).
- * Facilitators should avoid speaking about sensitive topics with the boys and young men when employees of other organisations are present or nearby.
- * If a BYMC does not have an official interpreter then a boy or young man who is skilled in English and willing to provide assistance in translation would be of great assistance during certain activities as he would be able to translate for those who do not have such a good understanding of English. However, this should be approached with caution in order to avoid any possibility of the person translating having to translate some difficult experiences, traumatic events or anything that could traumatise, retraumatise or put the 'translator' himself in a stressful situation. This is particularly important when working with adolescent boys.
- * Use 'energiser activities'. This is especially important when working with adolescent boys. BOTM as well as other informal education sessions should include some kind of energiser activity. It is a good form of preparation because it contributes to group cohesion, relaxes the participants and motivates them for the

upcoming topic.

- * When implementing foreign language classes, the initial assessment of the participants' ability to read and write is important.
- * Do not give them pencils to write with or ask them to write in front of the blackboard before assessing their skills, because there is a possibility that they do not know how to write.
- * When handing out work materials it is important to combine pictures and words so that individuals in the group who do not know how to read do not get discouraged.
- * During the implementation of all sessions and activities, continuous staff support is necessary, because in most cases the participants are under stress and give up easily.
- * In the practical workshops it is necessary to guide the participants step by step because it has been shown that they are afraid and tend to run away from the unknown.

All professional interventions are directed towards one specific goal, regardless of whether they deal with an object or a human being.¹⁵ Staff working with boys and young men on the move must have a number of different qualities. One of the initial qualities of any professional working with this population must be motivation. In addition to motivation, it is necessary for the staff to have knowledge and education in the relevant sciences for working with people (psychology, psychotherapy, social work, social pedagogy, andragogy and other social sciences). Professionals who work with people on the move must possess ethical values such as understanding, respect, responsibility, non-discrimination and tolerance.

Important factors on which the assessment and determination of goals in group work depend are active listening to what the group is saying, careful observation of the reactions of all group members to certain publicly expressed attitudes and opinions, and empathy, namely positive acceptance of all group members equally so that they feel free to express their opinion. Confidentiality and not harming persons on the move are of utmost importance.

3.2. What about sensitive topics during the activities

- * Since many of the boys and young men originate from countries where topics such as sex or intimate health are regarded as taboo, BYMC employees should

pay special attention to their facilitation style and give extra care when dealing with such topics. First-hand experience of working with boys and young men on the move has shown that an appropriate approach to the boys and young men is crucial when it comes to evoking their interest in topics such as SRH and GBV (see Box 3).

- * Boys and young men who decide to open themselves up in regard to sensitive topics must be assured that all of the **information given will be protected by the employee** to whom he spoke and that only with their consent and with the consent of their legal guardians (if a minor) can that information be channelled further. Namely, if there is a need for an intervention by employees from another international organisation. Furthermore, if a sensitive topic is brought up during a group activity the officers should recognise if someone is trying to avoid speaking in front of the group and **wait for an appropriate time to speak to that person individually in order** to avoid any possible stigmatisation.

Facilitators need **to be careful when discussing sensitive topics** with the boys and young men. It is necessary that the **same topics are adapted to all categories of BYMC visitors** and especially to unaccompanied and separated boys and adolescents. When talking about sensitive topics, it is necessary to choose your words carefully and monitor the reactions of the participants or interlocutors in order to recognise if or when someone is uncomfortable listening. The vocabulary used by the facilitator must be official but at the same time adapted to the listeners in order for them to understand the topic. If there is foreknowledge that someone present **has survived a certain trauma** in the past then it is preferable to adapt the topic to the participant without putting him in an uncomfortable position. On the other hand, if we notice that one of the participants is particularly touched by the topic then we should **not put pressure** on that person. It is easier to approach the person after the activity and gently say 'If you want to talk to me know that I am at your disposal'.

When implementing history classes, attention should be paid to the choice of topics and especially to the way the material is presented. This is because the very interpretation of history can be sensitive. The adolescents/young men originate from different countries and we do not want anyone to feel that they can be called names, neglected or threatened in connection with the history of their country. Because of the above, history classes are not always the most desirable.

¹⁵ Petrović, D. Sedmak, T. Čorić, B (2008). *Metode grupnog socijalnog rada*, Belgrade.

Usually, some boys and young men tend to withdraw or feel shy when we invite them to take part in a SRH session. After thoroughly explaining what the purpose of the SRH session is and the role of the urologist, sometimes the answer is simply 'I'm fine and I don't have any problems with that'. However, the officers explain that even if someone is healthy and has no medical issues it is always advisable to participate and listen to what the doctor has to say because the information learned during the SRH session will be valuable in future life (maintaining good hygiene, recognition of the first signs of some illness, preventing sexually transmitted diseases, etc.). After an additional explanation, many decide to participate. Based on the feedback provided we can conclude that the session is successful and has its purpose.

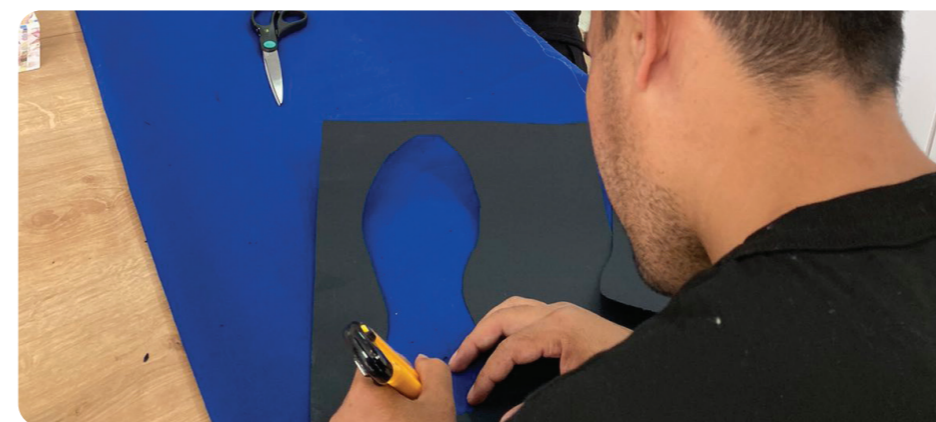
Box 7.
Inviting the boys and young men to participate in SRH sessions

3.3. Gaps and challenges

* The location of a BYMC within a TRC: When attempting to reach as many of the boys and young men as possible the location of the BYMC within a TRC is also one of the crucial aspects with regard to its successful work. If a BYMC is located remotely or if it is outside of the perimeter that is used by the boys and young men in their everyday TRC life the BYMC will not reach as many of the boys and young men as it potentially could if the location was on hand for the boys and young men.

Two contrasting BYMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlight the importance of the location. One BYMC is located at the entrance to the TRC and hence the boys and young men were able to see it immediately upon entry. This resulted in a great number of participants during the implementation of activities and it was also easy to explain the location to those who had perhaps not noticed it. On the other hand, the other BYMC is located on a plateau that was not used by anyone and therefore it drew little attention in the TRC. This has also proved as an issue during the 'info sharing' activity when it was hard to explain the location of the BYMC to the young men because of its remote location. After receiving feedback from the young men and after further assessment the BYMC units were relocated to the plateau where the accommodation units are also located. This resulted in an increase in the number of participants during the BYMC activities.

* **Activities of other organisations within a TRC:** The time schedule of activities implemented by other international organisations sometimes intervenes with a schedule of a BYMC resulting in a small number of attendees during a BYMC activity. Coordination between all humanitarian agencies is crucial for ensuring that there is no overlap or duplication of activities. Respecting the agreements reached between the agencies is another important aspect.



* **Language barriers:** Many of the boys and young men who decide to visit the BYMCs and the officers who work at the BYMCs experience language barriers that sometimes make it hard to properly execute an activity. Taking into account the large number of different cultures and countries from which the migrants and refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina come it is sometimes difficult to ensure the presence of all of the necessary languages, such as the Kirundi language spoken by Burundi, the Tigrigna language spoken by Somalis and the Amharic language spoken by Eritreans. Even if they are willing to speak to the officers about a sensitive topic they are not able to because of their lack of knowledge of the English

language or because they do not want someone to translate for them (not wanting someone else to hear what they have to say).

It is clear that there is a need for a cultural mediator/empowerment officer who speaks their native language. It should be understood and taken into account when carrying out activities that these people come from different cultural environments and that the presentation of the activity should be adapted to account for this factor. It is necessary to adapt the form of presentation to the level of education of the participants. Sometimes it happens that at one activity we have a group comprised of highly educated people on the one hand and people with no education at all on the other. The facilitator must take care to balance this gap and try to adapt the topic to the given situation.

3.4. Empowerment stories from Bosnia and Herzegovina

3.4.1. Bosco aged 17

Bosco came to the Temporary Reception Camp a few months ago. He says that he is very passionate about selling and designing clothes and shoes and that he could not develop his future in his home country.

"I was very good at that, but if I continued that I know I would not succeed. I miss it very much, especially because here I do not have a job. In Boys and Young Men Centre life skills workshops is something I very much enjoy. When I come to this centre I learn some information I didn't have before and I develop my knowledge about various different topics."

Bosco says that the UNFPA team helps him and his friends as well.

"I come here every day, when I have free time, because I know that if I come here I will get many things and at least one of the team members from UNFPA will help me. They advise me on how I can continue my way in life, they help me with many problems, they advise me on how I can develop myself as a person and how I can develop my knowledge and use the skills I already have."

3.4.2. Hamza aged 21

Hamza has been on the move for the past two years. He says his mother was against his decision to leave their country but that he is determined to provide for his family. His father died when he was four years old and to help his family

Hamza became a welder at a very young age.

"I was forced to work because my two brothers are people with disabilities and I was the only one who was able to work and support my family."

Upon arrival at the Temporary Reception Centre, Hamza met the UNFPA team and began to participate in classes and sessions.

"I could not write or speak English. Every day of my stay at the centre, for three months, I learned to write and speak English, quite good actually. When they ask me what 'special' means I tell them that learning English is special."

English is a language commonly spoken in many countries around the world and by learning it Hamza can take even more opportunities now, meet and talk to more people and continue his education elsewhere.

"For me, staying at UNFPA BYMC is a wonderful experience because in addition to learning the language I recognised the importance of learning about sexual and reproductive health, which will be useful in my future family life, and life skill workshops that I will be able to apply in my life. The most important fact is that UNFPA brought a smile back to my face and helped me deal with the difficult and vulnerable moments I faced during the journey, which is the most difficult period of my life."

3.4.3. Gustave aged 17

Gustave has been in the Temporary Reception Centre for a couple of months, he has even made a couple of friends among other migrants and refugees during his stay. As regularly as he can, Gustave joins the UNFPA activities with his friends. What stands out in his story is that he does not just think about how these activities can benefit him but instead he notices how they affect other migrants and refugees attending them.

"The activities that I can say that helped me the most are group activities, like ping pong, music. This helps so much because it relaxes us, it makes even me feel like I am with friends and not in a centre. This is what I appreciate and like so much and I would just want you to continue in this way because these activities are not only important for me but for others as well. The way you approach somebody and try to talk to them and strike up a conversation without minimising them so to say. It is important to me that UNFPA team, whoever they talk to, they keep in mind of how

that person could feel, they listen and they are very considerate. It motivates me to be like that myself, to help others, to be a better person in general."

3.4.4. Ali aged 23

Despite surviving several uncomfortable situations and being confronted by racist and prejudiced individuals, Ali has remained optimistic and has learned to appreciate the delicate things in life. Although he worked as an ore tester in his home country, his smile grew bigger as he pointed to a small pot with hand crafted paper and fabric roses.

"I made that, here in the BYMC with the UNFPA team. I really enjoy the creative session because it allows us to make something with our own hands and it's beautiful. It is also a great distraction, when I occupy my hands I occupy my mind also ... I don't think about the past and I don't worry on the future, I just do art with what I have in my hands."

Working on ground testing may include the use of his hands but it is in stark contrast compared to the colourful paper flowers he was holding in his hands. Yet this proves that although some things are different it does not make them any less or any more beautiful than the other. Ali has shown great talent during creative sessions at the centre, but he says that in the future he wants to do what he did before.

"I enjoy learning about the environment and I want to continue to help the environment through my work. It is my way of giving back to society."



4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are useful for realising the full potential of a BYMC.

*** Interpreters:** More often than not the officers struggle during the implementation of certain activities because of the language barrier (as mentioned in the previous paragraph). It would be useful to have interpreters with language skills that correspond to the majority or most spoken language/languages within a TRC. Yet the demographic changes in TRCs make this quite challenging. This is because at this moment the majority of TRC inhabitants are from Pakistan but during the next month the majority could be from Ghana.

*** Psychological supervision:** This is something quite useful for the well-being and psychological state of BYMC employees. Regular consultations with a psychologist could prevent potential issues for the staff, since working in such an environment and dealing with stressful situations/events can cause psychological damage. Besides group sessions such supervision should also offer staff the chance for an individual consultation, which can result in more sincere and open communication.

*** Activity fliers:** Practice has shown that fliers increase the number of participants during the activities at BYMCs. Upon their arrival and registration at a TRC, the boys and young men should not only be acquainted with the work of UNFPA BYMCs but also with all other international organisations whose work is implemented within the TRC. Activity fliers are a great way of introducing the boys and young men to the work of everyone involved.

*** Feedback questionnaire:** This would be quite useful in the sense that the attendees would be able to provide feedback (in a physical form) after each or a particular session. This feedback is helpful in increasing the quality of services and attendees should be aware that their opinions are taken into consideration within the work of a BYMC. The form used should be simple and comprehensible to everyone. Examples of a feedback form can be found in Annex 2.

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6. Annexes

Annex 1.

6.1. Examples written by staff members

Body parts

Materials: sheets of paper, pencils, white board and white board markers.

The activity begins with the officer explaining that they will name all body parts in both English and in Bosnian and Herzegovinian. The officer proceeds to draw a male figure on the board and asks the participants to do the same on their sheets of paper. Starting from head to toe, all body parts and features are named on the board. After completing this task, the participants are then asked to read them out loud and thus practice pronunciation and enrich their vocabulary.

Almost all of the boys and young men have a certain knowledge of English language; however, this lesson is valuable since not many of them can name all body parts and, of course, additional explanation and presentation of body parts in Bosnian and Herzegovinian language is also something they may find useful.

Articles a, an, the

Materials: sheets of paper, pencils, white board and white board markers.

This lesson is implemented when the officer notices that there are advanced English language speakers present in the BYMC unit. Even though they may possess a certain knowledge of the language many of them struggle with the usage of articles. Using the white board the officer thoroughly explains the difference between the articles and how and where each one of them is used. After giving the explanation, the officer then conducts exercises with sentences in which the participants have to write the corresponding article (further explanation is provided if needed).

6.2. Examples from a thematic session

Cultural differences

Materials: laptop/projector.

Since the boys and young men originate from different countries and different parts of the world, this activity has proven quite interesting and useful because we are able to talk about and discuss different cultures, religions and customs. Depending on their country of origin, the participants are asked to speak about something interesting that is specific to their culture (clothes, dance, food, etc.). The officer also engages in this activity by providing examples of his own. The activity is further enriched by presenting these cultural differences via a laptop or a projector.

The activity is intended to relax the participants and encourage them to speak about and share their own views on the aforementioned aspects of life.

Dangers in my surrounding

Materials: laptop/projector.

Since migrants and refugees are not aware of the possible dangers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the activity aims to provide them with an understanding of the area, its climate, the possible dangers they may encounter in the forests, etc. While performing this activity the officer uses a projector in order to provide illustrations of things that may be harmful to them. Those dangers come in the form of animals (snakes, wolves and bears), plants such as the locally well known 'žara' or poisonous mushrooms. Another potential danger to the boys and young men that needs to be paid attention to whilst they are walking through unmarked trails are landmines and unexploded ordnance. By showing illustrations of each of the named potential dangers the officer raises their awareness and thereby possibly saves the boys and young men from certain danger.

Please Note: One example of how unaware the boys and young men are of this area is the fact that they sometimes ask if there are lions or tigers living in the

forests in this country.

6.3. Empowering through SRH sessions

Urogenital infections

Materials: laptop/projector.

The session is introduced by explaining that urogenital infections, after respiratory infections, are the most common infections health wise. It is explained that the physical differences mean that women are more prone to such infections but that men are also able to contract this type of infection, especially migrants and refugees who often spend nights outside during their journey and drink water from unreliable sources. The difference between the male and female urogenital tract is explained via illustrations.

The session continues with an explanation of the usual symptoms during an infection: painful urination, constant need to use the toilet, small amounts of urine, blood traces in urine and fever. It is also explained to the participants via illustrations that the colour of their urine can also be one of the signs of a potential issue, namely the darker it is the greater the possibility of an infection.

The participants are then told what to avoid and what to practice in order to preserve the health of their urogenital tract. Spicy food, alcohol, wet underwear/shorts and long bicycle rides are things that can do harm whereas fruits (berries) and drinking a lot of water as well as using protection during sexual intercourse can preserve urogenital health.

The next part of the session addresses 'Escherichia coli' bacteria, which is the main cause of this infection. The process of urogenital infection treatment (sample of urine for analysis, ultrasound of the urinary tract, blood samples and in case that does not help a CT scan must be performed) is then explained to the attendees.

As always, the attendees are encouraged to speak to the doctor in case they have similar health issues. As previously mentioned, this kind of infection often occurs in boys and young men on the move because of their living circumstance.

6.4. Empowering boys and young men through GBV

Empowerment activity – 'Gender-based violence'

The training is conducted by explaining the term gender-based violence to the participants at the very beginning and then asking them about their understanding of the topic and asking them to give an example. The training is interactive. The facilitator leads the training but the participants have the right to ask questions and make comments, whilst respecting the rules of the group. At the end of the training the participants provide feedback and compare what they said at the beginning with what they have learned.

Example of a workshop: The participants are given papers on which fictitious situations that they might find themselves in are described. Their task is to imagine themselves in those situations and to share with the others how they would behave if they found themselves in such a situation. The other participants have the right to comment and ask questions or to say how they would behave in that situation. An example of such a situation is that you are travelling to Italy and you realise that your companion intends to seduce a boy. How would you act? If the participant does not know how to respond, the facilitator, taking into account all factors, motivates and advises the participant so that he can act. Other participants are also involved in solving this task.



Sexually transmitted diseases

Materials: laptop/projector.

Before the session starts, the officer introduces himself and the doctor in case there are newly registered boys and young men at the BYMC. The topic is then introduced through an explanation of sexually transmitted diseases (how to recognise and how to prevent them).

After the introduction, it is explained to the participants how such diseases are transmitted (oral, vaginal, anal contact or through blood) and what are the symptoms (stinging and pain during urination, pain, scabs, swelling and unpleasant odours).

The next part of the session consists of a talk on how to prevent contracting sexually transmitted diseases and that noticing the early signs of certain types of health issues is key to preventing their further development. The boys and young men are encouraged to use protection (condom) during sexual intercourse and the doctor explains how a condom is properly used. The session continues by speaking about each of the potential diseases: Gardnerella vaginalis, genital herpes, gonorrhoea, HIV/Aids, human papillomavirus, chlamydia and pubic lice. During the explanation of each of the named diseases illustrations are used so that everyone can see what these diseases look like and what to pay attention to when observing their own body.

SRH sessions are always concluded by instructing the participants to take good care of their hygiene, especially in the genital area. Moreover, in the event that any of the problematic signs are recognised the participants are asked to report it immediately to the nearest medical facility.

Empowerment activity – ‘Harmful traditions in the world’

This activity is carried out as part of gender-based violence (GBV) education. Namely, before the PowerPoint presentation, the group of participants is given papers on which different customs from all over the world are written. They are then asked if they have ever heard of this custom. If they are familiar with it they are then asked to explain this custom and then to evaluate whether it is ‘good’ or

‘bad’. After they answer the questions, they are shown a prepared presentation that complements their answers. Considering that there are many documentaries about these customs, it is desirable that (if deemed advisable) certain documentaries should be shown. In this way, it is easier to explain the topic being discussed to the participants.

6.5. Empowering boys and young men through PSS

Empowerment activity – ‘Emotions’

This activity requires paper and a pencil. At the beginning of the activity the participants are told to write different emotions they know on pieces of paper. After they have written their emotions, each of them briefly reads what they have written and explains the same emotion. The facilitator writes everything that the participants read out loud on the board. When everyone has finished reading out the emotions they wrote, the facilitator together with the participants then categorise the emotions into positive and negative emotions. In order to facilitate the process of categorisation the facilitator should ask questions or give an explanation about certain emotions. At the end of the activity the participants are asked to write in one sentence how they feel, but not to use a single word that indicates a certain emotion. You could respond by, for example, saying ‘I feel like a sunny day’ and in response the facilitator could ask an additional question such as ‘Can you explain to me what a sunny day is to you?’ Once everyone has said how they feel, the facilitator lastly asks the participants to draw a smiley face on a paper to rate the activity.



Empowerment activity – ‘Future Me’

This activity requires a pen and paper and good background music. The activity is carried out by asking the participants to write a letter to themselves but five years in the future. These boys and young men are very often demotivated and need something to make them think positively. Given that planning for the future can positively affect the mood of this population this activity is carried out precisely with that goal in mind. The aim of the activity is for the participants to write themselves a letter about how they currently feel and what they hope to achieve in the next five years. The participants are given the opportunity to read their letter in front of the others; however, if they do not wish to do so no pressure is put on them. At the end, it is explained to them that they should keep the letter in a safe place so that they can keep it for the next five years under the agreement that they will not read the letter before then. Participants who have taken part in this activity stated in their feedback that this activity really gives them more motivation to plan for their future.

Empowerment activity – ‘Describe to or wish something for me’

You need a piece of paper and a pencil to implement this activity. The optimal number of participants for this activity is six. The task of each participant is to describe each other on paper and after writing it down put the same in front of the person they wrote about. Everyone must write at least five words on the paper. In addition to the description, they also write their wishes for each other for the future. After everyone has written letters to everyone, they get up one by one and read all the letters they have. The purpose of this activity is for the young men to understand that they are not alone in the situation and that there are people around them who can understand what they are going through. This also has a motivating effect on the participants.

Empowerment activity – ‘My journey to Bosnia and Herzegovina’

Many of the boys and young men have not had the opportunity to share their travel experiences with others. During the frequent arrivals of the same group of young men at the session, an activity that is often created for them, if they so wish, is to describe their journey to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The facilitator of course explains to them that they do not necessarily have to talk and that it is perfectly okay if they wish to remain silent, while he explains to the others that they must respect the decision of others to remain silent and not to attempt to force anyone to speak.

Through this activity, people are given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, to learn from their own experiences or from the experiences of others. It very often happens that by describing their journey they become aware of what they have been through and then realise how strong they really are, even though some of them might feel completely hopeless at the time. A lot of information can be discovered about sensitive cases through this activity as well as many others. This activity is intended to motivate participants to speak and through this to help themselves as well as other participants.

Please Note: Never do this activity with a newly established group, only with a well-established group that you know has developed a mutual trust relationship. The participants will also tell their stories, which means that the activity has been implemented successfully.



Annex 2.

Example 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please circle your answer)

Activity name:

Date:

Did you like the activity?



Did you learn something new?



Did you understand the provided information?



Do you think this activity needs improvement?



Will you participate in similar activities?



Example 2

Activity:

Date:

Please cut out a jar to rate this activity.

Place the cut piece of paper in the box in front of you.

Answers are anonymous.



I'm not satisfied.

**I am neither satisfied
nor dissatisfied.**

I am satisfied.





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