



CARE International Balkans

Final Evaluation of the Regional Project:

Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and the Prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans – Young Men Initiative - YMI II

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADA – Austrian Development Cooperation

BMC – Be a Man Club

CSOs – Civil society organization

ESCRH - European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health

GBV – Gender-based violence

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

PEN - Peer Educators Network

PM - Institute for Youth and Community Development “Perpetuum Mobile”

SIT - SIT Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research

SK – Smart Kolektiv

SRHR - Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Program Y – Youth - Innovative Approaches in GBV Prevention and Young Boys and Girls Healthy Lifestyles Promotion in the Balkans region

WB – Western Balkans

YMCA - Young Men's Christian Association

YMI – Boys and Men as Allies in Violence Prevention and Gender Transformation in the Western Balkans – Young Men Initiative

YMI II – Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans or Young Men Initiative II

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans or Young Men Initiative II (YMI II) project was set to enable positive and peaceful societies for young people in Serbia, Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, that support gender equality and decrease interpersonal violence and its extremism.* The project builds on the efforts dating from 2007 when YMI started to encourage gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours amongst young men, to decrease violence against (young) women and peer violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. It later expanded to Kosovo* and Albania, in 2010 and 2013, respectively. Led by CARE International Balkans (CARE), YMI confronts social norms around masculinity and violence through school-based educational workshops, community engagement and social norms campaigns.

YMI II project started on October 1, 2017 and ended on December 31, 2020. It is a continuation of previous project cycles, scaled-up to respond to the political and societal developments in the Western Balkan region. The four target countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, and Serbia, similarly to other countries in the region, are struggling on their path towards the European Union, which is a proclaimed goal of each of these societies. These 4 countries are facing economic and social disparities, environmental challenges, widespread poverty, and high unemployment. Moreover, democracy is under threat in the WB, which inhibits the societal potentials to deal with these and other pending issues. In 2020, Freedom House has assessed WB6 countries as *Transitional or Hybrid Regimes*¹, defining the phrase as: *...typically electoral democracies that meet only minimum standards for the selection of national leaders. Democratic institutions are fragile and substantial challenges to the protection of political rights and civil liberties exist. The potential for sustainable, liberal democracy is unclear.* Together with the insufficiency of democratic practices and institutions, the patriarchal culture, and ethnic and religious divisions fueled by nationalistic rhetoric are blocking the efforts aimed to achieve gender equality. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 added to the complicated situation in the region and will affect the situation and development in the following years.

With this context in mind, as well as the 13 years long history of the Young men Initiative in the WB, the evaluation of the YMI II project, funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by CARE, took place in the period September – December 2020. The evaluation was carried out to determine the appropriateness of the project design and the proposed Theory of Change, to assess the sustainability of the processes initiated through the intervention and to provide evidence in order to gain more knowledge and learn for future interventions in this area. It is intended to inform CARE and local partners, the donor and the involved stakeholders about the final findings and recommendations of the YMI II project and improve design, planning and implementation of future CARE projects in gender-transformative programming. To achieve the mentioned purpose, evaluation took into consideration the attitudes of the key stakeholders (through in-depth interviews and focus groups), as well as the existing evidence produced by the project (documentation review). The

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. Applies to the whole document.

¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=nit&year=2020> (Accessed on October 1, 2020).

evaluation also assessed the role of the Be a Man Clubs (BMC), the effectiveness of regional cooperation and overall organization, emphasizing the intersections between the effectiveness of collaborations and the project impact. Finally, adequacy of the project adaptations and the response to COVID-19 pandemic were also considered.

The evaluation addressed the whole implementation period, all four target countries and main target and beneficiary groups – representatives of partner organizations, teachers, youth, movement leaders and governments. With the purpose to assess results achieved based on OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, the evaluation focused on **relevance, impact, and sustainability** of project activities – in relation to the expected results, outcome and outputs, as well as on key learning on approaches to inform future programming. Two additional OECD-DAC criteria – effectiveness and efficiency, as well as a procedural and organizational aspect of the project are taken into consideration only in its direct correlation with the outcome and impact level.

The methodological approach to the evaluation was characterized by understanding of the socio-political context, high degree of integrity, participatory approach and a utility-focus. It was also based on the Project's Results Chain approach and qualitative assessment and analysis of key evaluation components, and the mixed-method evaluation design which allows for a comprehensive evaluation, as well as objectivity and precision of the findings. Finally, the overall approach was characterized with utilization of triangulation to ensure the credibility of the evaluation results. Data was collected through a desk study review of project-related documentation and sources and online and offline interviews. A total of 50 respondents were interviewed during October/November 2020, including management, beneficiaries, decision makers and other relevant stakeholders, as well as representatives of relevant movements in the region. Qualitative, exploratory, and content analysis were conducted.

One of the key limitations regarding the evaluation was related to COVID-19 pandemic, which was mitigated with the usage of adequate and widely accessible communication tools. Also, triangulation contributed to both *reliability* and *validity* of the evaluation results. To make sure that responses of interview participants (representatives of specific beneficiary and stakeholder groups, project partners and CARE staff) were not biased, questions in the interview guide were non-leading; when necessary, questions were supported by probing, follow-up questions and requests for specific examples to back up the statement.

KEY ASPECTS OF PROJECT RELEVANCE

The evaluation found that the program addressed the issues of social exclusion, violence and extremism, and gender inequalities, **thus responding to the priorities identified in the key international documents prescribing standards in gender equality** and other relevant issues, as well as the **situation on the ground**. Also, **YMI II responded to the priorities and needs identified in the relevant national sectoral policies**, through the active involvement of CARE and local partners in the ongoing policy processes in the areas of youth, social policy, gender equality. In the third layer, on the local level, **the program has been focused on addressing specific community needs. The BMC's and schools in which the program was implemented played a particular role in local communities** – BMC's are continuing to be local youth hubs, thus addressing wider youth needs. Also, both BMCs and schools in which the program is implemented are providing a stronger sense of safety and satisfaction by offering quality education in a safe and productive surrounding.

It can be concluded that **the project remained highly relevant, especially having in mind the social and the political context in the Western Balkans, and dominant narratives based on the values opposite to the values the project tries to emit and build upon.** The project has shown importance in not just opening new possibilities and conquering new freedoms for youth, but also preserving previously liberated islands of freedoms and rights. By continuing to promote and adhere to the relevant international practices (regarding the issues of social exclusion, violence, extremism, gender inequalities) **the project introduces contemporary and proven standards, approaches, and methods to the region. By doing so, it continues to push the agenda, and stakeholders to get involved.** CARE and partners are (pro)active in the field, creating spaces and populating it with the content. On the local level, in particular **through the BMC's and schools in which the program was implemented, the project provided (sometimes exclusive) spaces for youth to organize and express itself.**

To increase the relevance, **key recommendation is to develop joint strategy and engagement in public advocacy** to position the cohort as a relevant regional/international actor in the targeted policy fields.

KEY IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation also found that **Project managed to achieve progress on the individual level through the change of attitudes of school students.** There are changes in attitudes, knowledge and behaviours of young men and women before and after the completion of the project activities in high schools; however, the expected changes did not occur in all targeted areas. There are evident positive **changes regarding attitudes on gender roles, and violence, including the gender-based violence. Also, there is an increase in knowledge regarding the topics of sexual and reproductive health. However, when it comes to the lifestyles, use of cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol, the situation slightly deteriorated in 2020 vs. 2017.**

Also, the program managed to reach out to an impressive number of people. According to the reports, in all 4 countries, there were 175 campaigns during the program. Through them, there was 3,503 youth reached in program Y1, 3,777 in Y2 and 32,149 in Y3. Also, throughout the project, there were 553 media presentations. Finally, the program managed to achieve high reach through social media: there were 193,405 people reached in Y1, 223,250 in Y2 (876,797 with the theatre play) and 6,802,761 (94,580 with theatre play) in Year III.

It can be safely concluded that **the project has provoked changes in attitudes and behaviours of youth and** increased their knowledge in several areas covered by the intervention and **Be a Men Clubs are the cornerstone of the program and its gender-transformative role.** They continue to be the place where the change is initiated and where it happens. They are also generators of youth participation and activism and have a great potential for further activation of youth in all aspects of the social and political life of their communities.

To potentially increase the impact (and sustainability as well), consider **comprehensive strengthening of the BMCs**, including investing further in their promotion on the local level, increasing BMC's organizational capacities, and investing in BMC members – while making sure this process is organic, participatory and fun

KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation found that the **Program verification/accreditation is a key contributor to sustainability**. Apart from the s verification/accreditation itself, the advocacy efforts to verify/accredit the program, in which local partners play important role, also contributes to sustainability – through the advocacy process local partners are increasing their knowledge and expertise on one hand, as well as their credibility and trust amongst various stakeholders on the other. However, the context in which advocacy process takes place is not favorable of such process, given the deeply embedded animosities towards substantial progress reflected in increased gender equality and full respect of human rights in general.

Also, **Y+ proved to be a unique regional program for youth**, and several of its elements could add to its sustainability: there is true ownership of the program by the local partners; it is in line with the vision, values and logic of the program; there is a demand, especially in social care and other institutions, for a program having a systematic approach in countering extremism and radicalization.

It can be concluded that the **local partners from each targeted country, alongside the BMCs, are central to the sustainability** of the YMI II results. Local organizations are the key agents: they are pushing the agenda, establishing and developing partnerships, activating local knowledge and bridging the gap between the emergent, bottom-up and top-down approaches.

To further fortify the sustainability prospect which local partners are bringing to the table, and with continuous trends of shrinking space for civil society in the Western Balkans, both **CARE and project partners should continue to develop participatory and flexible management mechanisms** in the future project frameworks, as well as to invest in the core organizational competencies of local organizations.

Alongside of building capacities of BMCs, consider **investing in local partners' key organizational competencies** that can contribute to their and program sustainability. For the program to be recognized as locally driven, based on local needs and to attract other actors in the region, local partners must be recognized and able to be key project actors. **Key organizational competences include fundraising** (including diversification of types of funding sources), the **project, financial and HR management**, development of suitable governance structures, policies, and mechanisms, (cross-sectoral) **partnership development**, and **monitoring and evaluation – for learning and organizational growth**. Moreover, to more efficiently build capacities of local actors, consider **establishing a regional, structured, peer support between the local partners**, aimed at transferring know-how and expertise, through orientation, mentoring, coaching, and/or trainings.

The COVID-19 crisis had a huge impact on project implementation, but the project successfully adapted to the new norm. The shift to online communication affected all actors and program beneficiaries. The pandemic can be perceived as a test for CARE and local partners. Relatively quick adaptation to new circumstances is a sign of good and open communication between all partners, as well as flexibility and resilience. However, the effects of the ongoing pandemic, and the experience gained by dealing with it in 2020, must be taken into consideration when planning further program development.

There are opportunities to further improve the prospects of program success, especially regarding the context in which the program is taking place, and the expected changes the COVID-19 will introduce. Since the program has showcased it can produce impact and transform young women men’s lives, there is a potential for scaling up of programs and implementation approaches in countries in which the YMI is already present, as well as in other WB countries. There is also space for further capacity development of local partners which are of key importance to program sustainability. Civil society in general, with all its shortages, plays an inevitable role in any transformative process in the region. Changes in the field require adaptation of skill sets and methodological approaches for organizations to create relevant and impactful actions.

2. INTRODUCTION

The evaluation was implemented within the framework of the project “The Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans or Young Men Initiative II (YMI II)” funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by the CARE International Balkans.

Project evaluation took place in the period September – December 2020, before the end of the project, and it was executed by the evaluator specialized in project ex-ante assessments and ex-post reviews. Responsibility of CARE was to obtain necessary conditions for execution of the process of evaluation such as: identify the evaluation scope and goals, approve the proposed methodology, and secure the mapped sources of information. Responsibility of the evaluator was to conduct the process of evaluation according to the agreed scope, goals and methodology securing the focus on the utility of findings and recommendations.

The evaluation was carried out to determine the appropriateness of the project design and the proposed Theory of Change, to assess the sustainability of the processes initiated through the intervention and to provide evidence in order to gain more knowledge and learn for future interventions in this area. Thus, it is meant to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of structural changes (sustainability aspect), but also change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (impact) related to gender-based violence, gender equity, healthy lifestyles, but also interpersonal violence and youth extremism amongst young men and women from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo* participating in the program. It is intended to inform the implementers, the donor, and the involved stakeholders about the final findings and recommendations of the YMI II project and to enable learning and improve design, planning, and implementation of future CARE Balkans projects in gender-transformative programming (in the region). The findings and recommendations will be particularly relevant to inform a possible continuation of the project with financial support from the ADA.

The evaluation addressed the whole implementation period, four target countries and main target and beneficiary groups – partner organizations, teachers, youth, movement leaders and governments – with the purpose to assess results achieved based on OECD-DAC evaluation criteria taking into consideration the whole project cycle by focusing on relevance, sustainability and (the road to) impact of project activities in relation to the proposed impact, outcome and outputs, and on key learning on approaches to inform future programming. Two additional OECD-DAC criteria – effectiveness and efficiency, as well as a procedural and organizational aspect of the project are taken into consideration only in its direct correlation with the outcome and impact level.

To achieve mentioned purpose, evaluation took into consideration attitudes of the key stakeholders, as well as the existing evidence produced by the project, such as the baseline/end line assessments, case studies on Output 1, Output 2 and COVID-19 project response, and monitoring documents. Existing evidence provided for findings on the level of behavioural and change of attitudes among high school students, quality of work with youth at risk and social institutions, and the long-term effects of scaling up process with ministries and schools, as well as the adequacy of COVID-19 adaptations in all target countries. The evaluation also assessed the role of the Be a Man Clubs (BMC), the effectiveness of regional cooperation and overall organization, emphasizing the intersections between the effectiveness

of collaborations and the project impact. Finally, adequacy of the project adaptations and the response to COVID-19 pandemic were also considered.

Thus, the specific objectives of the evaluation have been to:

1. Analyze the design and coherence of the project including the design of the log frame matrix theory and present the underlying Theory of Change and its assumptions.
2. Analyze the extent to which the project has already achieved its objectives and results, focusing on the impact on target groups/partners, beneficiaries, and other affected parties and processes;
3. Analyze the extent to which cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability and empowerment of marginalized groups were applied;
4. Extract lessons learned and identify main challenges which will help with determining how future projects in this area could be made more relevant, impactful, and sustainable.

The evaluator had primary responsibility for assuring the quality of the evaluation and its outputs, and for ensuring that all deadlines were met. However, timely and accurate support of CARE, its partners, and other involved stakeholders was very important for the overall working dynamics and timeframe respect.

Quality assurance was provided with a particular focus on ensuring the utilization of an appropriate methodology and the respect of accuracy standards. General principles of independence, credibility, utility, and quality were respected throughout the evaluation process.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS

3.1. Project Beginnings

Since 2007, YMI has been working to encourage gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours amongst young men and decrease both violence against (young) women and peer violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. It expanded into Kosovo* in 2010 and into Albania in 2013. Led by CARE International Balkans, with technical support from Promundo and the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) and financial support from the Austrian Development Cooperation, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Oak Foundation, and CARE Austria, this program has been confronting social norms around masculinity and violence through school-based educational workshops, community engagement and social norms campaigns targeting adolescent boys (in its initial phases) and both adolescent boys and girls (in later stages), aged 14-19.

YMI project has been scaled up in 2017 to respond to the contextual developments in the Western Balkans region and proposed for funding to ADA as YMI II.

3.2. Project Context

YMI II project has been implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Albania and Serbia, countries that are at different stages in the accession process to the European Union, which implies the necessity for a transformation of the political, legal, and macro-economic framework and is generally considered as an opportunity for projects aimed at achieving progressive structural changes. However, at the time of project design, as in the period of project evaluation, economic and social disparities, environmental challenges, lack of the rule of law, weak governance, corruption, widespread poverty, and high unemployment have had been among the key contextual factors in the countries targeted by the intervention.

Even though institutional and legislative frameworks in all countries reflect certain efforts towards improving gender equality and decreasing gender-based violence and discrimination, de facto changes in the societies seem to be lagging. Obvious imbalance in gender equality is still reflected in the numerous regional researches on the attitudes of youth towards gender norms and discrimination, but also the statistics on growing gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination. Patriarchal culture, re-traditionalization tendencies, and lack of political will to comprehensively address the problem of gender inequality – due to the emergence of nationalism and right-wing discourses – has been shaping cultural context(s) according to more traditional and conservative values and weakening the position of advocates in their efforts to achieve gender equality in all aspects of social and political life.

3.3. Project Synopsis

Project Title	The Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans or Young Men Initiative II (YMI II)
Countries	Western Balkan region: Kosovo*, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia
Project Duration	36 months (1 October 2017 to 30 September 2020)
Actual Project Duration	39 months
Start Date	1 October 2017
End Date	31 December 2020
Total Budget	1.000.000 EUR
ADA Contribution	900.000 EUR
CARE Contribution	100.000 EUR

Table 1: Project Synopsis

3.4. Key Stakeholders

The project has been designed and implemented in close cooperation with the following civil society organizations (CSOs): [Institute for Youth and Community Development “Perpetuum Mobile”](#) (Banja Luka), [Center E8](#) (Belgrade), [SIT Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research](#) and [YMCA Kosovo*](#) (Pristina), and [Act for Society Tirana \(Tirana\)](#), and the social communication partner [SMART Kolektiv](#) (Belgrade).

Apart from implementing the project, organizations participated in the project design by being a part of the project design workshop which was held by CARE in the proposal development phase to map the next steps and formulate objectives of the initiative. All involved CSOs had previous experience with engaging boys and men and were selected as partners based on previous successful cooperation and specific experience. In addition, CARE and its partner organization had been jointly targeting teachers, youth (especially young men vulnerable to violence and anti-social behaviors. It aimed at strengthening key skills, knowledge, attitudes that support improved behaviors around gender-equitable norms and non-violence), CSO leaders and activists, movement participants, local authorities, representatives of educational institutions, and religious leaders.

3.5. Project Design and Intervention Logic

The Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans or Young Men Initiative II (YMI II) project build upon CARE’s comprehensive and programmatic effort to fight interpersonal and gender-based violence (GBV) as well as to improve gender equality in the region and address preventative issues related to youth extremism and violence.

Expected Impact	To enable positive and peaceful societies for young people in Serbia, Kosovo*, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina that support gender equality and decrease interpersonal violence and its extremism.
Theory of Change	IF students learn to recognize harmful gender norms and are provided safe spaces to practice questioning these constructs, THEN there is a greater likelihood of internalizing new ideas in the support of gender-equitable, healthy and non-violent behaviours. But this process of change cannot happen only at the individual level. It has to be supported by certain broader influences and structures, such as positive peer groups and role models, and the existing policy environment.

Target groups (as stated in the Project Document)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 6 project partner CSOs 2. Teachers 3. Youth, especially young men vulnerable to violence and anti-social behaviours. It aimed at strengthening key skills, knowledge, attitudes that support improved behaviours around gender-equitable norms and non-violence. 4. NGO leaders, movement participants and other stakeholders
Expected Outcome	To improve Youth NGOs and government capacities to integrate Program Youth - Life Skills Educational Curriculum in the current educational and youth policy strategies and strengthen governmental and civil society efforts related to the inclusion of youth vulnerable to extremism.
Output 1	Life Skills program (Program Y) scaled up in accredited countries with the Ministries of Education and supported in its promotion and capacity building for use in secondary schools.
Output 2	In selected communities, a Program Youth “Plus model” is developed, piloted, and tested to address issues of vulnerability to violence and extremism amongst selected youth.
Output 3	In targeted countries, social movements activated and/or supported to engage/encourage citizens; including parents, youth, and diverse civil society, with the focus on encouraging governments to actively promote/address gender equality, life skills and health education in schools.
Output 4	Social norms campaign developed for targeted audience promoting peaceful masculinities, gender equality and addressing hate speech and intolerance.

Table 2: Project design and intervention logic

The key YMI II strategy was to work with both the civil society sector and the governmental actors in the following areas:

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1. Youth work practice – The project continued to build on the earlier youth work methodology so to address the issues of social justice, gender equality and social exclusion. Focusing on youth work practice (and standards) also implied the perception of young people as creators of opportunities and agents of change;
2. Social norms change – This focus pointed toward addressing the broader social norms that support gender inequalities, and specifically, addressing school cultures that support sexism and violence and cooperation with parents to promote good practice examples and changes within the households;
3. Movement and coalition building – Project have also been focused on increasing citizen participation and engagement so to contribute to an improved rule of law and democratization. Cooperation with formal and informal groups and organizations, established and new initiatives and leaders have been an important component of the YMI II;
4. Policy development – The project supported policy processes related to youth and gender issues.

Throughout the project design and implementation, CARE Do No Harm and Child Protection Policies have been applied and respected by all involved actors.

3.6. Program Management and Implementation

COVID-19 outbreak affected the project implementation as it affected the overall communication – both internally between the project partners and with other stakeholders, demanded shift to the online and disallowed travel and live events. Also, elections taken place in all target countries affected the advocacy processes.

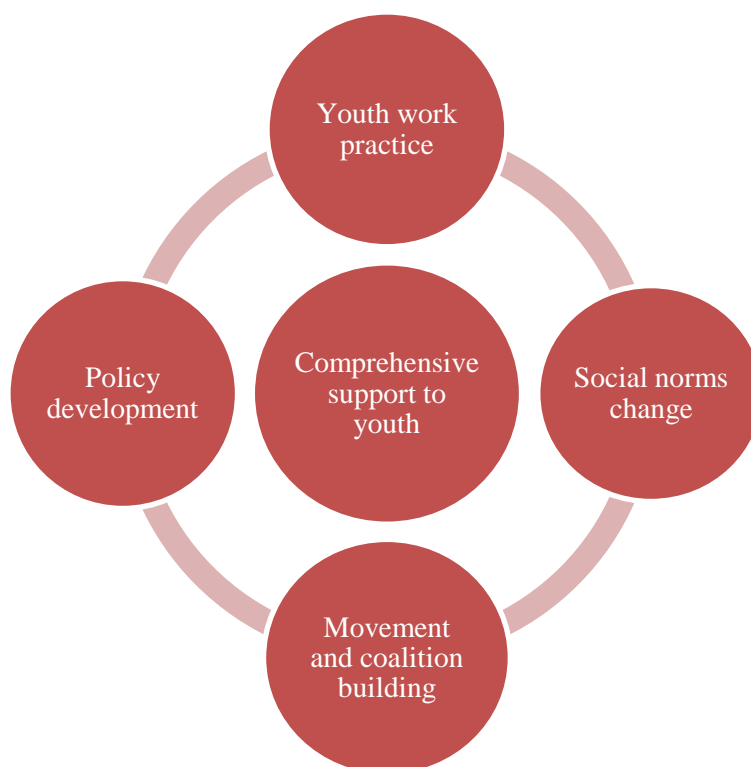


Figure 1: YMI II Strategy

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak the project has been granted one no-cost extension and will be finalized by 31 December 2020. During the project implementation, the following changes occurred:

CARE	In regard to the CARE team, Project Coordinator was appointed Project Manager twice due to personnel fluctuation, while Project Advisor was replaced by Project Manager. In 2020, Project Coordinator was also changed.
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	<p>Institute for Youth and Community Development “Perpetuum Mobile”: Two project coordinators (in 2019 and 2020) have left the organization, being replaced by other staff.</p> <p>Centre E8: in 2019 new project was appointed; in 2020, after project coordinator left the position, new one was appointed, supported by the director.</p> <p>Act for Society: two project coordinators have left the team (in 2018 and 2020) had to be replaced.</p> <p>In May 2020, the contract was terminated with local partner PEN due to a drop in quality of financial reporting and application of CARE PSHEA/Safeguarding Policy. In June 2020 new partner organizations were selected in Kosovo* based on an open call for applications (May-June 2020). After shortlisting 5 local organizations, individual and in-depth interviews and assessments have been organized. The process resulted in the selection of two organizations: SIT and YMCA Kosovo*.</p>

Table 3: Management changes (CARE and project partners)

Each partner went through the following trainings and integration of procedures: CARE Safeguarding Policy (former Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse, And Child Abuse (PSHEA-CA); CARE Anticorruption Policy; CARE Child Protection Policy; Tailored capacity building in financial reporting by CARE finance staff and Tailored capacity building in terms of Program Y methodology implementation.

Figure 2. on the following page presents project organogram with the responsibilities and functions of the CARE staff engaged in project management and implementation.

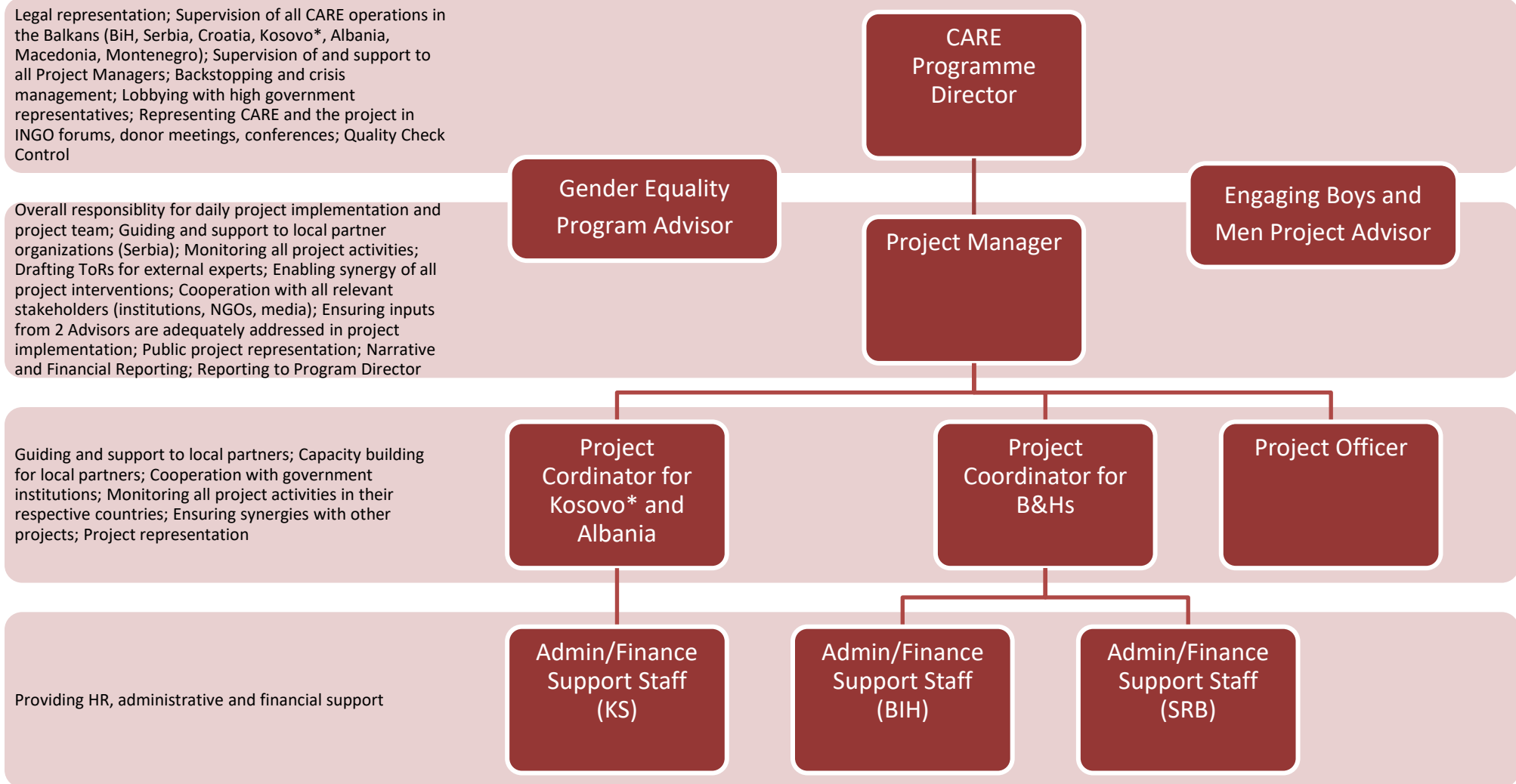


Figure 2: Program management and implementation

4. EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH

4.1. Methodological Approach

The overall approach to the evaluation was characterized by the following quality assurance standards:

- A focus on ensuring a good understanding of the socio-political context in which the project had been implemented, through the careful selection of the respondents, prior analysis of relevant documents, etc.
- Highest possible degree of integrity, which was ensured through a transparent methodology and triangulation of facts and opinions.
- A participatory approach through which the evaluator aimed to involve and consult with all project partners and project staff throughout the evaluation process. Regular debriefings with the CARE management and all project partner organizations' management were undertaken to ensure that evidence gathered by the evaluator reflected the project correctly and that the key stakeholders had a sense of ownership of the evaluation process.
- A utility-focus through which consideration was paid to ensure that the evaluation is of direct value to all relevant stakeholders. Efforts were made to ensure that all communication relating to the evaluation was characterized by clarity, brevity, and the avoidance of unnecessary technical language.

The final evaluation is based on the Project's Results Chain approach and qualitative assessment and analysis of key evaluation components. The evaluation approach responds to standard international practices in project evaluation with a special emphasis on the OECD DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. To that end, projects' relevance, impact and sustainability are main components that were assessed, together with the effectiveness and efficiency on the outcome level. The mixed-method evaluation design allows for a comprehensive evaluation, as well as objectivity and precision of the findings. Since there is no *one* source of information (be it a person, an official document, a record, etc.) that provides absolute objectivity, validity or richness of data, mixed-method helps secure reliability and objectivity, and finally the practical usage of the evaluation. The evaluation included following data collection methods: desk review of relevant documentation, focus group and in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders, as well as relevant wider stakeholder group to provide for documentation of the extent to which the project intervention was relevant to the final beneficiaries' and local communities' needs and requirements, countries' (sectoral) policies and global standards and priorities, and the extent to which the envisaged project outputs influenced the target groups and stakeholders, as well as structural changes in the targeted countries. In addition, quantitative data gathered by partner organizations through the baseline and endline assessments were also used to ensure the reliability of the results. Specific attention was paid to how the findings could be used to inform future CARE programming.

Furthermore, selected qualitative data collection methods also contributed to the quality of evaluation results:

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS
<p>Specifically, in a focus group design, social interaction between participants is the core issue. The evaluator is tasked with encouraging and observing discussions between individuals, thus enabling collecting information about mutual relations and similarities/differences in understanding the same issue/phenomenon. Therefore, focus groups were used to consider not only participants’ own opinions and impressions but the way they negotiate these accounts with others, therefore showing divergence or convergence between their views. In addition, focus groups were used for participants with diverse backgrounds, attitudes and knowledge and, at the same time, were a very useful tool in motivating quality discussions and exchanges.</p>	<p>On the other hand, in-depth interviews were used to collect detailed information from individuals who were not (necessarily) mutually connected and had had comprehensive knowledge on the issues discussed – those who did not need additional encouragement in expressing their views and knowledge.</p>

Table 4: Qualitative data collection methods

Finally, the overall approach was characterized using triangulation to ensure the credibility of the evaluation results:

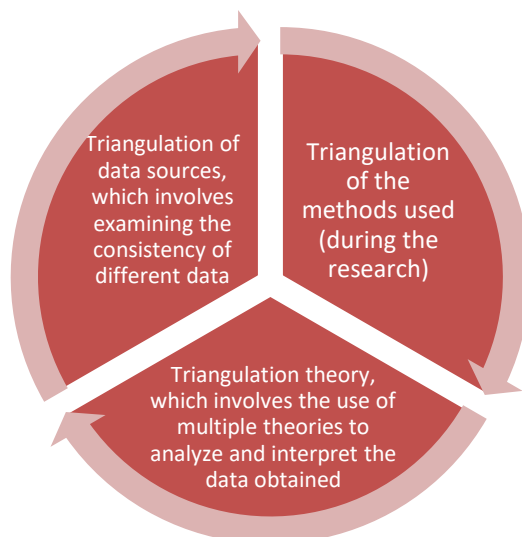


Figure 3: Triangulation of data (sources), methods and theory

4.2. Data Collection and Analysis Tools

Data was collected through:

- Desk study review of project-related documentation and sources
- Online (and face-to-face when possible) focus group interviews.

A total of 50 respondents were interviewed during October/November 2020. Selection of respondents was based on the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the evaluation – first, project documents. The respondents were sampled to inform important facets and perspectives related to the project and the evaluation criteria – their respective roles in the project were taken into consideration (management, beneficiaries, decision makers and other relevant stakeholders), as well as their experience level (newly appointed/employed organizations’ staff, as well as organizations’ founders), and/or diversity (gender, ethnicity, other presumed background). Also, in order to analyze the alignment of the YMI movement and with other, similar, and existing movements in the region, as well as to harvest the experiences, and identify opportunities and obstacles for further growth of the YMI Movement, representatives of relevant movements were interviewed as well.

The following table represents breakdown of respondents, including gender, country, and type of organization. Same table can be found in Annex 3.

	Albania	B&H	Serbia	Kosovo*	Interview Type
CARE Management Staff	/	1 (m)	2 (f)		Focus Group
				1(m) ²	In-depth
Local Partners Staff	2 (f)	5 (3m, 2f)	2 (f)	6 (2m, 4f)	Focus Group
			2(1m, 1f)		Focus Group
University professor				1(f)	In-depth
BMC members/trainers	5 (3f, 2m)	4 (m)	4 (2m, 2f)	4 (2m, 2f)	Focus Group
School Pedagogist	/	/	1(f)	/	
School directors/professors	1(f)	1(f)	/	1(f)	In-depth
Institutions’ representatives	1, Assessment Sector for Organization and Leadership	1, Ministry of Education	1, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological	2, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (f)	In-depth

² Former CARE staff member

	at Agency of Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (f)	and Science ³ (f)	Development (f)		
Movement Representatives		Women Movement	Youth Movement	In-depth	

Table 5: Respondents' breakdown

List of reviewed documents and the questionnaires are available in the Annexes 4 and 2 respectively.

Analysis of data gathered through the school baseline and endline assessments, as well as case studies on Program Y+, Program Y scaling up, and COVID-19 program adaptations, ensured that the evaluation utilizes different qualitative and quantitative information collected from different sources (triangulation). Also, the participation of various stakeholders with diverse background and experience, as well as detailed analysis of the monitoring reports and other data collected to verify the intervention logic, was used as a way of quality insurance. Findings were then categorized and analyzed to help provide evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions/evaluation components.

Quantitative data from the project monitoring are to be analyzed through the exploratory techniques to summarize its main characteristics, verify the data from the narrative reports, and calculate changes in outcomes (baseline-endline reports). Also, content analysis was used for the qualitative data to reduce large amounts of unstructured textual content into manageable data relevant to the (evaluation) research questions. Thematic coding is also used to record and/or identify passages of text that are linked by a common theme or idea allowing the categorization and identification of cross-cutting issues/topics. Finally, to interpret data and draw conclusions about the project relevance, sustainability and the impact, available data on (and from) the similar regional programs/project was used to compare the information/results from the evaluation to better understand the context and validate results.

4.3. Limitations, Risks and Mitigations Measures

One of the key limitations was related to COVID-19 pandemic and the switch to an online working mode in general, which included conducting online interviews. However, adequate and widely accessible communication tools were used, and the respondents were additionally supported to use them by the evaluator, partner organizations and CARE.

As proposed in the Inception Report, due to intrinsic limitations of the qualitative research/methodologies, additional efforts were invested in the methodology planning, respondents' selection and data triangulation, which eventually contributed to both *reliability* and *validity* of the evaluation results. Validity was substantiated by a triangulation use of contradictory evidence and quantitative data. Contradictory evidence (deviant cases) was sought out, examined, and accounted for in the analysis to ensure that evaluator's bias did not interfere with or alter the perception of the data and any insights offered. Also, the participation of various stakeholders with diverse background and

³ Republic of Srpska

experience, as well as detailed analysis of the monitoring reports and other data collected to verify the intervention logic, were used as a way of quality assurance.

Quantitative data gathered through the school baseline and endline assessments and the monitoring data additionally insured that the evaluation utilized data from different sources.

To make sure that responses of interview participants (representatives of specific beneficiary and stakeholder groups, project partners and CARE staff) were not biased, questions in the interview guide were non-leading. When necessary, questions were supported by a probing, follow-up questions and requests for specific examples to back up the statement. Also, the triangulation of data sources ensured that the consistency of different data was examined. In addition, participants were carefully selected upon project documentation analysis, and both CARE and partner organizations' staff were consulted in the process of selection, so to avoid bias in the process. Finally, evaluator remained open to suggestions from the participants and the additional respondents were identified during the interviews.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Relevance

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To what extent the project responded to international standards and anti-discrimination priorities?*

R.1. The program addressed the issues of social exclusion, violence and extremism, and gender inequalities that impact the development and contribution of young people to society, responding to the relevant international standards and practices. As with its previous cycle⁴, this program cycle responded to the priorities identified in the key international documents prescribing standards in the area of gender equality and specifically: The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women⁵, as a roadmap for national governments and policies; The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁶, which encouraged men to fully participate in all actions towards gender equality and urged the establishment of the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the community, in the workplace and in the wider national and international

⁴ Evaluation report from 2016 elaborated in detail relevance to the international standards in the area of gender equality and women's rights. Results of the assessment implemented in 2016 are still valid regarding the program relevance.

⁵ Adopted and opened for signature, ratification, and accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979; entry into force 3 September 1981.

⁶ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13).

communities; Conclusions from the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women⁷, which recognized the importance of boys' and men's contribution to gender equality, the need for developing policies, programs and school curricula that encourage their positive involvement in achieving gender equality and positive results for children, families and communities; SDGs and its fifth goal which re-established obligation of the states for the improvement of policies and practices in regards to gender equality and the men's greater involvement in achieving gender equality; The Council of the European Union's Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality (2006)⁸, European Commission's Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2010–2015⁹.

The program, particularly with its educational dimensions, also addressed the international obligations and standards defined within the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)¹⁰. The Istanbul Convention clearly states that preventing violence against women and domestic violence should not be left to the state alone and that all members of society, in particular men and boys, should help, as well as that the states and other relevant actors should “regularly run awareness-raising campaigns”, “take steps to include issues such as gender equality and non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships in teaching material; - set up treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence and sex offenders.

In addition, the program has also been in line with the Council of Europe's Paris Declaration¹¹, which noted the rise of extremism in the European society and expressed commitment to upholding fundamental values – including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights and emphasized the role of education in ensuring that “children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship”. Furthermore, YMI II is in line with the United Nations Security Council's resolution on Youth, Peace and Security¹², which recognized that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security” and that youth and youth-led organizations should be important partners in the global efforts to counter violent extremism and promote lasting peace.

Apart from the SDG 5, the YMI II has strong references to the SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages) and the SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning and its target).

The program also responded to the target countries' contexts. According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) data related to social norms and practices in 2014, the overall index rate for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was very low – in Serbia 0.0097 while 0.03333 in B&H. In Albania, it

⁷ Forty-eighth session 1-12 March 2004. *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*. Agreed conclusions, 12 March 2004, as adopted.

⁸ 15487/06. 2767th Council Meeting, Brussels, 30 November–1 December 2006. *The Council of the European Union's Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality*.

⁹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 21 September 2010. *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015* [COM(2010) 491].

¹⁰ the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, CETS No. 2010.

¹¹ Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

¹² UNSCR 2250 (2015)

was higher, with the 0.2476 value. In 2019 it continues to be very low in Serbia (19.8%), but is low in Bosnia & Herzegovina - 21.8%, and Albania - 22.6%.¹³

As data from IMAGES (<https://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>) presents, there are violent and homophobic norms overlapping with ethno-centric attitudes among young men in the region. Also, violence is highly present in the lives of young men throughout the region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, IMAGES data found that 21% of men interviewed had participated in robbery, 19% in fights involving weapons, and 18% say they own a firearm. Throughout the region, young men report exposure to family violence, violence in media, job and economic stress, substance abuse, and notion of masculinity as major factors associated with their use of violence. Moreover, in Bosnia and Herzegovina 24% of men in the IMAGES study were involved as combatants in the conflict, and 49% had to leave or move from their home of origin due to the conflict. These numbers give an indication of the impact of the conflict – on men and women – and the lingering effects of the conflict. Data from IMAGES in Bosnia and Herzegovina found that 39.7% of men respondents feel most comfortable only with members of the same ethnic group, suggesting attitudes of ethno-centrism or prejudice towards those of other ethnicities.

These data were also affirmed by the various interlocutors, especially the BMC members which are the closest to their peers and are aware dominant homophobic ethno-centric attitudes. Some of them, like one of the interviewed BMC members from Bosnia & Herzegovina, shared that, before joining the BMC, he had those types of attitudes towards others. Also, like stated in the Program Y+ Case Study: *Interviewees in each of the Western Balkan countries evaluated in Extremism Research Forum's report cited "the pressing need to address systemic factors such as economic deprivation, corruption, and political and institutional dysfunction." Furthermore, respondents of all types, across the Western Balkans, have highlighted that the key potential driver of extremism is the personal and community-level crises of identity, especially among youth, who face very high levels of unemployment and social disenfranchisement.*¹⁴

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To what extent has the project responded to the needs of the local communities and the relevant sectoral policies of the target countries and proven to be feasible?*

R. 2.YMI II responded to the priorities and needs identified in the relevant national sectoral policies. Key program actors participated in the processes on the national levels. In the project implementation period, both CARE and partner organizations' staff have been involved in the ongoing policy processes in the areas of youth, social policy, gender equality. Program staff have been active in

¹³ There is no available data for Kosovo*.

¹⁴ The Program Y+ Case Study cites Azinović, V. (2018). Extremism Research Forum, Regional Report – Understanding Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans, British Council

the governmental working groups and local policymaking efforts. The relevance of these processes in which YMI II take part was acknowledged by all interviewed decision makers.

Following contextually relevant focuses within the specific policy frameworks have been addressed by YMI II:

ALBANIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Youth Strategy and the related Action Plan (2015-2020) envisions series of program-related initiatives, particularly in the cross-section with the education of youth (improving life skills curricula, strengthening and enhancing the educational system, and mobilization of schools in addressing gender-based violence). • The National Strategy on Gender Equality and the related Action Plan (2016-2020) introduces the measures which include boys’ and men’s engagement in addressing gender-based violence. • The National Action Plan on the Involvement of Men and Boys as Partners to Women and Girls in Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Combating Gender-Based Violence (2015–2020) calls on an increased focus on engaging men and boys to challenge gender inequalities and addressing gender-based violence through both school- and community-based activities. • The National Strategy to fight violent extremism (2015-2020) envisages actions to reduce the causes leading to radicalization and violent extremism through community-based prevention programs and policies in the educational, employment and law enforcement fields, calling for encouraging the values of tolerance through education, school and extra-curricular efforts to prevent radicalization, and similar activities that increase the resistance.
Kosovo*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kosovo Youth Strategy (2013-2017, as well as 2019-2023) identifies the need for raising awareness of youth about the importance of health care for their individual and social welfare, as well as about the timely identification, prevention and effectively addressing the risks they are exposed to. • The Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism (2015–2020) calls for the efforts in prevention programs for youth at risk. The strategy calls for community initiatives that involve inter- and multi-sectoral collaborations. • The Law on Gender Equality, the Program for Gender Equality and the Law on Anti-Discrimination recognize the need for comprehensive actions in the areas of prevention of and combating gender-based violence and promotion of gender equality at all levels.

SERBIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020) highlights the need for reducing gender stereotypes and changing harmful cultural norms, among other issues. • The National Youth Strategy (2015-2025) recognizes a problem of peer violence, sports hooligans’ violence, violence against LGBT population, violence in intimate relationships and towards foreigners, disrespect of human and minority rights as well as the intensified usage of weapons. The Strategy focuses on the prevention in formal and informal settings. • The National Strategy for the Fight against Violence and Inappropriate Behavior at Sports Events (2013-2018) with one of the main strategic objectives in the prevention of violence by educating and raising awareness of youth and their parents, both within the educational system but also throughout informal education and campaigns.
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Youth Strategy (Republic of Srpska) (2016-2020) focuses strongly on violence prevention and the engagement of men and boys in achieving greater gender equality. • The Gender Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013-2017) recognizes the important role of men in achieving gender equality. • The Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Preventing and Combating Terrorism (2015–2020) identifies the prevention and education of youth as very important in combating terrorism and radicalization. which is aimed at preventing vulnerable people and groups from opting for violent extremism.

Table 6: Policy frameworks addressed by YMI II in each target country.

R.3 YMI staff have been invited to share their expertise from the program in various regional and international events which speaks to the global recognition of the program and the esteemed reputation it has achieved. Some of examples include: Study Session at the European Youth Centre in Budapest on the theme “A change of perspective: queer feminist principles as the fabric of a modern, peaceful and socially just European Society”, event within the Erasmus Plus program in Turkey on the theme “Partner Building Activity for Gender Equality”, Youth Working group of the MenEngage, SIGI (Social Norms Insights from the Social Institutions and Gender Index) event “Turning Promises Towards Gender Equality Into Action”, “Regional Forum Partnering with Men and Boys for Gender Equality in Belarus, OSCE’s conference “Commitment - Data – Action” in Vienna, MenEngage: “Engaging Men and Boys to Prevent and Respond to GBV: Practical Lessons from Pandemics” and “Militarism, Masculinity, COVID-19, and Resistance”), ALIGN Platform presentation, OECD Expert Group Meeting on Masculinities for Defining and examining masculinities through the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) Framework in Paris, Promundo Global Event “If He Can See It, Will He Be It? Representations of Masculinity in Boys’ Television”, among many others.

R.4 Program Y is recognized as a relevant SRHR tool globally. YMI products were included in the online knowledge base developed by the European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health

(ESCRH). After January 2019, in which ESCRH launched an online library,¹⁵ Program Y (in all regional languages, as well as other materials), become accessible to available in the global ESC library to researchers, school directors, teachers. Materials are available on the following link: <https://escrh.eu/education/web-library-on-sexuality-education/? sf s=Educational%20Toolkit>. Also, in October 2017, YMI won education innovation award from [GENE – Global Education Network Europe](#), which recognizes the importance of innovation in global education. YMI was selected among twelve awardees out of 80 applications.

R.5 The Project, to some extent, supplemented insufficiently implemented national youth policies and youth participation mechanisms. Out of four countries where the project is implemented, Kosovo*, Serbia, and Albania have laws on youth, while Bosnia Herzegovina has it at the entities level. Also, the situation is similar when it comes to youth strategies. Nevertheless, despite the existing laws and strategies, youth participation is low in each country, and the funding for youth organizations is insufficient for them to operate sustainably – there is limited state funding, and private funding is not sufficient. This gap is, to some extent, filled by Project’s activities – through the empowerment of youth, especially within Be a Man Clubs across the four countries, provides opportunities for youth to take an active part in their everyday lives, participate in social and political life and affect their local communities for the better. However, it is not an easy task: *“So the community we live in has a different understanding of life. And we try to change the community and change other's opinions. And I think it's very hard”*. (BMC member)

R.6 The BMC’s and schools in which the program was implemented positively affected local communities in at least two ways. Firstly, BMC’s are sometimes the only places in which youth can organize, express themselves and be creative. This allows for BMC’s to serve a wider purpose than to promoting gender equality and prevention of extremism and violence – they are becoming local youth hubs, thus addressing different youth needs. Number of interviewees – representatives of SIT, as well as interviewed beneficiaries from Albania, stated that in rural areas the program opens possibilities for the wider community, particularly schoolchildren’ peers, parents, families and extended families to challenge the status quo and dominant patriarchal norms. Also, it provides a stronger sense of safety in two ways – in a long term, parents and families are satisfied with the fact that youth are having better quality education both trough project’s workshops and higher interest for the regular school activities the workshops generate; in the short term, there is a greater feeling of safety and satisfaction that youth are spending quality time in a safe and productive surrounding.

Like the representative of the Agency of Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education stated: *“At the beginning, they (parents) were very sceptical... After when the organization (local partner) and the trainer have spoken and explained to the parents that they will work with their children to go to school more and do more sports for example, and not going to take drugs or alcoholic drinks and things like, the parents after the meeting suggested to the organization to organize more activities like that so that*

¹⁵ Online library provides access to research, education tools, scientific papers, on the topic of health, sexual and reproductive health and other complementary areas (violence, health of people with disabilities, upbringing, mental health, prevention of the use of psychoactive substances).

pupils can be in the safe place, with reliable educators, learn new and more things which parents cannot teach them at home.”

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *Have the activities implemented been relevant for achieving the outcomes defined by the project?*

R.7 The implemented activities have been relevant for achieving the expected outcomes to a large extent. YMI II has been aiming to improve youth NGOs and government capacities to integrate Program Youth - Life Skills Educational Curriculum in the current educational and youth policy strategies and strengthen governmental and civil society efforts related to the inclusion of youth vulnerable to extremism. The interventions have been focused on scaling up and mainstreaming the Gender Transformative Life Skills program for youth (Program Y) via targeted advocacy through close cooperation with relevant stakeholders and building coalitions, and engaging parents and citizens in supporting gender equality-focused life skills education program. The project has piloted Program Y plus by working with a selected group of youth vulnerable to violence and extremism. Supported by the project, the partners have launched campaigns targeting youth and selected communities, creating awareness about hate speech, and promoting all community members' positive role in addressing extremism and violence. The project has been building on social media and popular media and arts to reach to and engage vulnerable groups. Finally, the project has continued to support five of CARE's local partner organizations' efforts to become national resource centers regarding gender equality, youth, and violence prevention. Moreover, the project has been widely recognized as a relevant resource for tackling escalating violence and radicalization through the mobilization and activation of youth in gender transformative and progressive actions.

R.8 Finally, the program has a documented track record of adaptiveness to diverse social and cultural backgrounds and as such, could be recommended for further replication throughout the region. Implemented assessments during the project, reports developed, and interviews' respondents affirmed that YMI II education program model's variations reflect the intervention logic, partner organizations' capacities and longer-term strategic orientation, as well as (momentary) institutional conditions. Throughout the assessments and the final evaluation, interviewees, in particular school staff (high school teachers and directors) and program beneficiaries reaffirmed that general Program Y approach and specific organizations' program strategies can easily be replicated across the (Western) Balkans, given the conditions that the implementing agency/organizations are:

1. Equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to deal with gender equality and positive youth development,
2. Are recognized as such by local institutions and policymakers within their communities.
3. And most importantly – constantly gather evidence on its target groups and context in general and establish relevant cross-sectoral and intersectoral partnerships and collaborations.

5.2. Effectiveness¹⁶

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To what extent the outputs of the intervention were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance and direct links to impact and sustainability?*

E.1 In the scale-up period (2017 to 2020), partners in all target countries have been implementing all proposed activities with the significant increase in coverage of final beneficiaries (young men and women), intermediary beneficiaries (educators), and advocacy-related target groups (allies and relevant sectoral institutions). Specifically, based on the available reports, with its educational component before COVID-19 crisis, Program Y was implemented in 181 high schools (and 38 primary schools) and reached 1 268 teachers, 34 121 students, and 1260 university students. In the same period, 230 829 young people were reached directly and 5 616 521 through social media by the Program's 175 campaign activities (in schools, communities, online), and additional 2 632 young people were regularly active in 33 'Be a Man' clubs in schools and communities. With its activities aimed at alliances building - the creation of regional coalition/movement for healthy lifestyles, violence prevention, and gender equality and introduction of Program Y, the project reached 15 968 young people, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders who have been engaged in 147 events, public actions and meetings/conferences around Life Skill Education. Finally, only in the three months from the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak/crisis, additional 62 524 people were engaged online. The outbreak of COVID-19 pushed the YMI Team to implement an already developed online course as a multilingual educational platform for teachers and educators, which will undoubtedly increase the influence and success of Program Y's scale-up process in the future, both in terms of accessibility and cost-efficiency.

E.2 Although the partner organizations and CARE have been carefully documenting evidence on performance, focusing on output indicators, there is a lack of evidence about the YMI II contribution to the impact achievement. First, it should be noted that it is difficult to assess the impact of any intervention during its implementation or right upon its finalization. A long-term impact of any work to significantly influence attitudes and behaviour changes, as well as policy change, can be measured after some considerable time. Furthermore, since the potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth have yet to be assessed in-depth, and have just been anticipated at the time being, YMI II's approach and the focus on awareness-raising and mental health protection could be considered as (potentially) impactful and relevant, especially since it was based on the existing knowledge and expertise of the project team and the snapshot assessment and crisis management capabilities of CARE, rather than on in-depth analysis of the position of youth in target countries and ex-ante assessment of the program effects. In addition, program capacity to continue the implementation of the planned activities in such a disruptive context should be considered as a specific quality and strong potential for eventual impact achievement.

¹⁶ This criterion is included by the consultant / it was not requested in the Evaluation ToR.

The findings from the Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 conducted by the partners of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth¹⁷ point out that the impact of the pandemic on young people will be systematic, deep, and disproportionate, with particularly severe effects on young women, younger youth and youth in lower-income countries. This comprehensive study, along with numerous other implemented in the period of crisis, calls for a systematic, comprehensive, and well-coordinated transnational and cross-sectoral actions in all the areas covered by the YMI II, but also in protecting basic human and socio-economic rights of youth. CARE's and partner organization organizations' capacities and this global call for action could point to the need for further widening of the program scope, but also more comprehensive planning and setting up independent program's functions which could comprehensively support at least: 1. Accumulation of Program knowledge about the topics in focus and beneficiary groups' needs and allow for continuous in-depth contextual analyses and Program adaptations (e.g. Program research unit), 2. Youth-centred public advocacy and policy-making endeavours. Next project phase could be, thus, used for comprehensive strategic planning and re-thinking the current structure in which all organizations implement to the large extent same activities (although in a different scale and using different methods). New partners (with different sets of competencies, partnerships, policy-focuses, etc.) could be this involved to further upgrade already good Program's advocacy position and knowledge base and additionally serve as an assurance that constant adaptations to the contextual changes are implemented.

5.3. Impact

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *Has the long-term impact as defined by the project document been achieved (or it's on the path to be achieved)? To what extent have all stakeholders/target groups as defined gained new knowledge and changed their behavior?*

I.1. The project proposed 5 indicators to measure the (road to) impact but could benefit from additional focus in the identification of relevant indicators and sources of verification, as well as documentation of the progress per identified indicators. Following indicators were proposed as relevant for the impact measurement: 1. % improvement in data on the outcomes through a decrease in risky behaviours and increase in gender-equitable and non-violent attitudes and behaviours of youth, 2. % of people/youth who reject intimate partner violence, 3. Several cases of violence against women/girls reported, investigated and sentence, 4. The proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence (SDG 5.2.2), and 5. Several countries have a positive change in the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) rating (GAP II 19.1):

	SIGI value 2019	Discrimination in the family	Restricted physical integrity	Restricted access to prod. and fin. resources	Restricted civil liberties
Albania	22.6%	33.3%	16.4%	26.0%	13.4%
Serbia	19.8%	32.9%	6.7%	19.8%	18.0%

¹⁷ ILO (2020). *Youth and COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Right and Mental Well-Being*. More information about the Initiative and the Study is available on: <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/global-initiative>.

Kosovo*	N/A	27.8%	N/A	17.7%	15.0%
B&H	21.8%	27.4%	10.9%	30.6%	17.1%

Table 7: SIGI Rating 2019

Apart from school and endline assessment, Program lacked in providing evidence on the progress based on the identified indicators. On the other hand, detail report on the outcome and output indicators is provided in the 3rd progress report to ADA, but the indicators lack baseline values (out of 24 indicators none has a baseline determined). Also, several indicators have no targets set, while in multiple cases targets are overreached by 100% or more – which leads to the conclusion that targets are either unrealistic, or there is no flexibility to change targets (and therefore expectations) if internal or external circumstances change.

Since the project has been covering a wider range of cross-sectoral topics, including (but not limited to) youth health/lifestyles and extremism, as well as educational system response(s) to the needs of youth and progressive EU politics, additional (and/or different) impact indicators and monitoring frameworks could be considered for use and additional efforts should be invested in establishing collaborations with the nationally (and when possible) regionally relevant institutions and organizations which collect data regularly (e.g. National Statistical Offices, international organizations in cooperation with the national agencies, local CSOs, etc.) and can potentially include Program-related questions in their surveys, help with data analysis, etc. For example, Program could consider using some of the indicators within the monitoring framework for the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s, and Adolescents’ Health, (2016-2030) focusing on its Survive, Thrive and Transform objectives and 17 targets¹⁸.

I.2 Based on the available source – school baseline and endline assessment, project managed to achieve progress on the individual level through the change of attitudes of school students.

Baseline and endline assessments were carried out to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the overall project progress focusing on changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to gender-based violence, gender equality, healthy lifestyles amongst young men and young women from target countries who were participating in the ‘Program Y’ in target schools in the period from 2018-2020. It assessed whether there are differences in attitudes, knowledge and behaviours of young men and women before and after the completion of the project activities in high schools. Assessments covered following areas: views regarding gender relations; health of young men and women, including mental health, use of psychoactive substances; knowledge about sexual reproductive health; experience of youngsters with suffered and perpetrated violence.

First, the sample of the respondents from baseline and endline survey significantly varies in sex distribution (baseline: 57% of male and 43% of female respondents vs. endline: 39% of male and 62% of female respondents). This methodological discrepancy should be kept in mind in future actions of results promotion.

¹⁸ More about the monitoring system could be found on: <https://www.who.int/life-course/publications/gs-Indicator-and-monitoring-framework.pdf>

However, the endline survey recorded progress in several areas covered by the intervention. As per the assessment endline report, the increase in participation in household chores is evident in all targeted cities, with the young women being more engaged than young men, with traditional gender division of labor still present (e.g. young men are mostly involved in fixing things in the house and cleaning, and young women in cleaning and cooking).

I.3 When it comes to attitudes on gender roles, progress is evident in almost all areas and all targeted communities, with the several exceptions (marked below). When it comes to the topic of responsibilities of pregnancy prevention, the results point out to the need for either reviewing the curriculum or re-orienting the trainers delivering the content (decrease in numbers of young men and women from Banja Luka, Tirana and Pristina who understand the need for joint responsibility for pregnancy prevention is indicative for the revision of the programmatic approach). The same goes for the topic of emotional expression.

		Young men				Young women			
		Banja Luka	Belgrade	Pristina	Tirana	Banja Luka	Belgrade	Pristina	Tirana
A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family	Before YMI II	59,6	34,0	61,4	36,7	49,3	10,9	65,4	19,7
	After YMI II	42,5	29,4	33,3	23,6	24,1	7,9	33,3	9,7
Changing diapers, bathing kids, and feeding the kids are mother's responsibility	Before YMI II	59	42,9	57,8	31,4	62,9	28,4	74,1	21,6
	After YMI II	41	31,3	20,7	20,0	30,1	12,2	21,4	8,0
A man should have the final word in decisions at home	Before YMI II	49,1	37,8	61	35,2	15,9	6,1	44,0	6,2
	After YMI II	48,5	35,3	22,2	21,2	12,0	2,7	11,9	4,6
It is both man's and woman's responsibility to prevent pregnancy	Before YMI II	77,4	85,7	74,3	88,4	85,3	92,9	67,6	86,2
	After YMI II	75,6	92,2	74,6	80,0	86,7	93,8	67,1	79,4
It's more acceptable for a boy to skip class than for a girl	Before YMI II	42,6	15,5	45,4	35,7	37,7	3,4	23,7	11,5
	After YMI II	15,2	17,7	15,9	18,8	19,3	5,3	4,8	8,0
It is okay for men to cry and show their emotions in front of others	Before YMI II	61,3	59,5	65,5	70,0	75,8	90,5	74	87,6
	After YMI II	59,1	70,6	61,9	64,7	90,4	92,1	81,0	78,3
The most important quality of a man is physical strength and power	Before YMI II	42,8	19,8	31,9	18,6	39,1	9,6	25,0	4,2
	After YMI II	40,9	19,6	12,7	14,1	21,7	7,9	7,2	5,7
I would have a gay friend	Before YMI II	13,3	22,1	18,2	5,2	63,2	74,6	31,5	52,6
	After YMI II	15,2	39,2	23,8	35,3	62,7	82,4	45,2	55,3
It is okay to hit or kick a gay person if he flirts with me	Before YMI II	57,3	44,2	56,0	50,6	26,5	4,8	28,6	14,0
	After YMI II	42,4	35,3	31,8	27,0	9,6	4,4	9,6	4,6
I would be ashamed if I had a homosexual son	Before YMI II	70,6	69,2	64,0	68,6	47,8	23,4	39,4	31,1

	After YMI II	68,2	56,9	49,2	42,4	33,8	19,3	23,8	19,4
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Table 8: Changes to attitudes in gender roles

I.4 As per the attitudes on gender roles, the progress was made in all cities. In most cases, attitudes are more positive with 10% of participants in the end phase, but this progress in some cases varies even up to 40%, with the most significant variation in Pristina (37.8%). Similarly, hegemonic attitudes towards gender norms are less represented in the endline research, and progress mostly varies from 4-14%. The progress with the young women is even more evident – around 80-90% of young women expressed full understanding of the equitable gender norms.

Homophobia is quite spread in the population of young men. Around 15-39% of young men in the endline study state they would not like to have gay friends. Between 42 and 68% would be ashamed to (hypothetically) have a son who is gay and 27-42% support violence towards homosexuals. However, a positive fact is that endline research results show that the Program supported some progress, comparing to the baseline. In the endline research, the percentage of people who are more tolerant towards homosexuals is higher. That progress is on the average present with 15-20% of participants, and for some attitudes, it goes even up to 30%. The greatest progress was made in Pristina and Tirana.

I.5 On the other hand, when it comes to the lifestyles, use of cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol, the situation slightly deteriorated in the period 2017-2020. The endline study does not offer convincing explanations for such deterioration, but these could be found in the numerous researches on the effect of the COVID-19 and related policies and measures on the mental health and on the general socio-economic conditions in the region in the last five years. Data are presented in the table below.

		Young men				Young women			
		Banja Luka	Belgrade	Pristina	Tirana	Banja Luka	Belgrade	Pristina	Tirana
Currently smoking cigarettes	Before YMI II	19,8	2,8	18,1	13,4	20,3	6,1	16,3	1,9
	After YMI II	27,3	19,6	25,4	16,5	24,1	17,5	31,0	6,9
Smoking marihuana in the last 3 months	Before YMI II	8,1	4,7	5,4	4,5	8,8	4,1	0	1,0
	After YMI II	3,0	17,6	6,4	8,3	4,8	9,7	4,8	2,3
Percentage of respondents whose close friends consume marijuana	Before YMI II	19,1	22,9	24,3	32,9	24,3	16,6	16,9	21,7
	After YMI II	19,7	31,4	36,5	42,4	18,1	28,1	21,4	28,0
Drinking alcohol	Before YMI II	36,2	18,9	16	16,7	21,7	12,2	8,8	8,6

	After YMI II	48,5	49	9,5	30	24,1	29,8	4,8	16
MENTAL HEALTH STATUS									
How much time, during the past month, were you nervous?	Before YMI II	14,4	29,0	18,4	13,5	28,6	43,3	53,8	45,6
	After YMI II	18,2	21,6	15,9	22,4	37,3	29,9	50,0	42,4
How much time, during the past month, you felt downhearted and blue?	Before YMI II	9,2	10,3	13,5	6,4	24,3	18,2	23,8	24,6
	After YMI II	6,0	11,8	15,9	20,0	24,1	11,4	47,6	30,8
How much time, during the past month, you felt calm and peaceful?	Before YMI II	57,8	48,1	65,3	73,8	48,6	41,7	43,0	43,2
	After YMI II	80,3	60,8	50,8	58,8	47,0	57,9	33,0	47,4
How often, during the past month, you felt so down that nothing could cheer you up?	Before YMI II	5,3	9,3	6,7	4,5	10	8,2	19,0	10,8
	After YMI II	12,2	9,8	19,1	16,4	16,9	7,9	38,1	22,8
During the past month, how much time were you a happy person?	Before YMI II	86,1	83,2	68,9	72,4	65,7	62,8	58,2	45,9
	After YMI II	90,9	66,6	58,7	69,5	65,1	69,3	45,2	47,0

Table 9: Changes in lifestyles, use of cigarettes, marijuana, and alcoholic drinks; mental health status

I.6 The increase in knowledge is noticeable with the topics of sexual and reproductive health.

Endline research showed significant progress in knowledge of the topics covered. Percentage of correct answers in the endline research varied between 19-90%, but in most cases the percentage of correct answers was over 50%. Participants from Belgrade showed the highest level of knowledge, then Banja Luka and Pristina. Consistent differences in knowledge of young men and young women were not noted. The topics which should be emphasized in the future education processes (respondents showed the lowest level of knowledge) are protection from unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, the transmission of HIV. The endline report once again confirmed the need for urgent inclusion of the topic in education processes.

I.7 Finally, the Program significantly influenced young people attitudes and behaviours towards violence, including gender-based violence, which was one of its most reliable influences from the beginning of the implementation.

		Young men				Young women			
		Banja Luka	Belgrade	Pristina	Tirana	Banja Luka	Belgrade	Pristina	Tirana
A single slap is a type of violence	Before YMI II	60,9	60,0	53,7	57,4	60,0	78,9	61,1	78,7
	After YMI II	68,2	70,6	62,0	60,0	78,3	80,0	59,6	67,5
Verbal insults are a type of violence	Before YMI II	59,9	67,3	69,4	82,8	80,9	86,4	64,3	91,4
	After YMI II	83,3	82,4	66,7	70,6	84,4	86,8	71,4	77,7
It is acceptable if parents beat their children when they don't behave well	Before YMI II	46,2	29,9	41,1	12,8	41,2	17,6	22,4	2,4
	After YMI II	37,9	43,2	15,9	8,3	25,3	10,6	7,2	4,0
I was sending threatening or insulting messages to my peers via SMS, mail or through social networks	Before YMI II	6,5	7,6	8,9	12,2	5,7	4,1	6,5	3,8
	After YMI II	9,0	9,8	4,8	12,9	6,0	2,6	4,8	9,7
I sexually harassed or touched other people against their will	Before YMI II	4,7	5,7	6,8	-	0	0	0	-
	After YMI II	3,0	3,9	0	-	0	1,8	2,4	-
As a member of peer group, I took part in violent act	Before YMI II	10,5	9,6	6,9	25,6	7,1	7,4	3,9	6,2
	After YMI II	12,1	5,9	28,5	22,3	1,2	5,3	2,4	9,7
I verbally insulted or hit someone I thought was gay	Before YMI II	12,3	14,3	4,8	14,1	2,9	2,1	3,9	0,5
	After YMI II	19,7	25,5	6,4	8,3	1,2	3,5	2,4	2,3
If a woman cheats on a man, it is justified for him to hit her	Before YMI II	16,4	17,2	33,2	15,4	5,7	,7	19,5	1,0
	After YMI II	7,5	11,7	11,1	7,1	2,4	1,0	4,8	0
It is okay for a man to hit his wife if she does not want to have sex with him	Before YMI II	9,3	2,8	11,5	5,2	1,4	1,4	4,1	0,5
	After YMI II	3,0	7,8	4,8	7,1	2,4	2,6	4,8	0,6
A woman should tolerate violence in	Before YMI II	14,5	2,9	24,4	16,0	7,2	2,8	10,7	5,2
	After YMI II	7,5	0	7,9	12,9	0	1,0	2,4	1,7

order to keep her family together									
When a woman is sexually harassed, it is usually because of the way she is dressed	Before YMI II	40,6	37,5	72,5	42,0	32,9	16,0	41,5	23,6
	After YMI II	24,2	44,2	39,7	36,5	21,7	19,3	14,3	8,5

Table 10: Changes in attitudes and behaviours towards violence, including GBV

Assessment report concluded that the project influenced the increase in knowledge about different forms of violence and the general decrease in psychological and physical violence. Also, endline assessment confirmed the project capacity to influence gender-based violence's attitudes (the progression varies from 5 to 10%, with the highest positive change in attitudes in Pristina).

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To which extent other mediating factors (e.g., social support networks, family social-economic status, etc.) have also influenced the attitudes and behaviors of young men and women?*

I.8. Employment of the parents and the financial situation of the family is positively related to some risky behaviour and unequal gender attitudes, which impedes the impact of the program on targeted youth. The Endline Survey demonstrates that there are some social characteristics which seem to be related to the behaviour and attitudes of youth. Although in most cases there are no statistically significant correlations between families' social status - parents' level education, employment, and the financial situation, there still are several significant correlations found - in Banja Luka and Pristina unemployment of parents is related to unequal gender attitudes, perpetrated peer violence in Tirana and worse mental health in Belgrade and Pristina.

The existing correlations between the social status, that is the economic situation of the family and risky behaviour, unfortunately, is becoming more relevant with the expected effects of the COVID-19 to the economy and the socio-economic rights of 4 targeted countries (and the Western Balkans in general). According to the World Bank's Western Balkans Regular Economic Report¹⁹, 139.000 people lost their jobs by June 2020, and there are expectations that more people will lose jobs and/or will be pushed towards poverty due to lower economic activity, as well as fewer remittance inflows from the emigrants which are huge contributors to household budgets in the region. This is particularly important, taking into account that socio-economic, political, and cultural factors are the structural, "push" factors that contribute to the conditions conducive to violent extremism, as explained in the Program Y+_Case Study report.

¹⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/western-balkans-regular-economic-report>

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To which extent campaigns and/or programs implemented by the project have increased awareness of key target groups about promoting peaceful masculinities, gender equality and addressing hate speech and intolerance?*

I.9 The program managed to reach higher numbers of target groups than planned. One of the biggest reasons of the high reach of the campaigns lays in the fact that they are being conceptualized after consultations with local partners, by the youth themselves, through focus groups organized in each target country. The campaigns are thoroughly planned and developed, and later adjusted to the national/local context. This praxis exists from the beginning of the program but is not always implemented to the fullest – this depends, as one of the interlocutors pointed out, *time and money available to do it*. Another important factor is the synergy between the CARE, the Smart Kolektiv being the key partner in this regard, and local partners. The local partners, as representatives from SK mentioned, are getting more autonomous in the implementation of the campaigns (than, for example, previous project cycles), because of their increased capacities, and the fact that campaigns, in general, are being more conducted on the social media, which is the key channel of communication.

The program managed to reach out to an impressive number of people. According to the reports, in all 4 countries, there were 175 campaigns during the program. Through them, there was 3,503 youth reached in program Y1, 3,777 in Y2 and 32,149 in Y3. Also, throughout the project, there were 553 media presentations. Finally, the program managed to achieve high reach through social media: there were 193,405 people reached in Y1, 223,250 in Y2 (876,797 with the theatre play) and 6,802,761 (94,580 with theatre play) in Y3 of the project. Direct engagement of youth through campaigns is, for practically all interviewees, the best aspect of the outreach efforts. Engagement and active participation in different aspects of the campaign are exposing youth both directly and indirectly to positive messages and practices of gender equality, healthy lifestyles, tolerance, peaceful conflict resolution, etc. One of the best examples comes from the Centar E8 engaging theatre plays used to challenge the topics of extremism, violence, and radicalisation. The play, according to the Program Y+ Case Study Report, is described as moving, intensive and thought-provoking, and leaves all in the audience with strong impressions and emotional reactions. Also, it is important to notice that the preparation and development of the play included important and valuable participation and contribution of youth.

Reach acquired through the social media is very high in numbers (also because of the general shift to the internet due to the COVID19, as mentioned already in the *Effectiveness* section), but there is no evidence what type and level of engagement these numbers stand for, and what quality and quantity of change, or at least interest they can really spur. More precise and tangible social media metrics and analysis could provide an answer to what affects these high numbers are causing, and what is their true value.

I.10 The impact has been achieved on the individual level. The Project managed to achieve behaviour changes among students, both girls and boys. Both boys and girls participating in the program are showcasing changes in their attitudes and behaviour. The changes go from shifting the way how young boys, BMC members are perceiving life in general, and how their life choices are safer and healthier for themselves and their community. *“I was that “troubled kid”. If I haven’t joined the BMC a few years ago, who knows how I would end up. And when would I end, literary.”* (a member of a BMC). The changes are tremendous not just on the personal level- this change seems to be “infectious” and once violence-prone young men are highly motivated to work with his peers and show them how they can fight their anxieties and that they can be accepted and acknowledged: *“I know those* (the

nationalistic and patriarchal narratives) *are dominant. But we have to do something. If we can pull one kid out of it, let's do it.*"

When it comes to girls participating in the project, their empowerment and self-confidence is usually the most prominent behavioral change: *"I can now stand up to my parents and have a discussion. Give arguments"*. (girl BMC member). The project, especially skills and knowledge gained through the workshops, equips young girls to firmly express grounded arguments about things they used to feel as unfair but could not express or did not know they can. These changes are accomplished through different sets of activities (BMC, school programs, summer camps), but it seems that BMCs, because of focused work, creating a safe place for youth and peer-education has the biggest impact on the individual youth behavior. Although BMCs are noted as examples of good practices in the Scaling-up case study and the prioritization of the classroom setting of BMC, *...they are losing some of their previous strengths and potentials.*

I.11 Be a Men Clubs are youth hubs are generators of youth participation and activism. BMC impact surpasses the project goal. They are places where young people can realize their ideas in a friendly and supportive environment. Fun, which is neglected in many youth programs, is what is the most appealing for youth (interviewed) to join the BMCs, and later stay active in them. BMCs thus are, for many of its members, a "friendly places where you have fun and learn something new". As places for expressing creativity and developing ideas, BMCs are generators of youth activism in local communities they are part of, and they have great potential for further activation of youth in all aspects of the social and political life of their communities. With evident shrinking space for civil society and citizen activism in general across the WB - being hubs for youth activation, BMC's significance could be even higher in the following years.

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: **To what extent the project adapted to the COVID 19 pandemic with the specific focus on gender equality impact?**

I.12 COVID-19 crisis made CARE and the local partners adjust the program to new circumstances, which have led to some unintended results. The shift to the internet had to be done with the array of activities. Most notably – program's communication efforts and campaigns had to move to the internet because that was the safe place where everyone is. According to the interlocutors from local partner organizations, the shift was quick and efficient given the circumstances, but it yielded both positive and negative impacts. Like stated before, concentrating more on the internet and social media resulted in high audience reach, but there is a doubt that this high quantity produces quality.

On the other hand, this intense communication seems to have contributed to greater connectedness and understanding between the local partners. In addition to bringing relief and support to all participants in the project, in a very stressful period, establishing closer relationships and understanding also resulted in greater cohesion and better group dynamics, which in the long run leads to greater motivation and engagement, which are preconditions for a regional, joint effort to succeed.

The COVID-19 crisis had a huge impact on the Project implementation, but the project successfully adapted to the new norm. The inevitable shift to online communication and project implementation, due to COVID-19 crisis had different effects to project implementation. And although

different actors, stakeholders and program beneficiaries perceive the effects of COVID-19 differently, it seems that the project successfully adapted and maintained high efficiency given the changed reality. CARE and local partners’ “safety first” policy was understood and valued by all actors. The BMC members, whether high school or university students, all being “digital natives” have easily adopted to online communication and workshops. BMC members are emphasizing that: *We have switched more quickly to online than some universities here.*

Also, for most of the BMC members, weekly trainings provided more than just a learning experience – although online, they continued to be a safe place for youth: *“We had online trainings, like, weekly online trainings using Zoom... Those trainings were important for us, especially during quarantine, because some of us were experiencing it badly. And so, having someone to talk to, like having our group to talk about our feelings, the way we were experiencing them, it was good for us. You know, she (local partner coordinator) always told us, like: “Call us whenever you need or let's do a group meeting” (BMC member).*

Making a shift to online has also been supported by the partnering schools: *Two weeks after lock/down started, we decided to do all our programs online. “We did all our other programs, but we also continued with the YMI II workshops. The school director was very positive, she gave us all the students’ contacts. ...We managed to set all the online workshops like the ones we were doing in the school.” (project partner representative).*

Specifically, in the period March-July 2020, YMI II reached 32,736 young persons with its 475 activities:

KOSOVO*	SIT and YMCA got permissions not only from a target school but scaled up its project to three additional schools (1 in Gjakove, 2 in Prishtine, 1 in Mitrovica). Additionally, SIT managed to continue with working with Program Y+ in additional high school in Podujeva. Trainings of peer educators and students on Program Y were realized by SIT and PM during total lockdown period which is a great success. They implemented 38 workshops with 721 students.
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	Since the workshops could not have been implemented in the targeted high schools, PM focused on implementing workshops with BMC members and volunteers gathered around Program Y by organizing online educational videos, debates and online activities in which 485 students directly participated.
SERBIA	Since the high schools could not be reached, Centre E8 issued the open call for participation engaged 336 young people from the region in 24 Program Y workshops. Beside 336 direct participants, social media reach of the Centre E8 workshops was 216 963 users.
ALBANIA	AfS managed not only to implement Program Y workshops in target school but to get permission to scale up the Program Y implementation to Kruja district and received support for additional 8 schools in the school year 2020/2021. From April-June period, AfS trainers and peer educators worked together with teachers and helped teachers to implement their classes by organizing workshops and working with students. In this period, they worked with 635 students on 30 workshops.

Table 11: Number of young persons reached (March – July 2020), per country

On the negative side, the physical contact and bonding were missed, especially those which are bringing together young men in summer camps. Traveling, bonding, and having fun are a particular incentive and motivating factor, but they are also allowing for focused work: *“The best way how to change them (young boys) is to group them together and then work with them in camps. Some other location, out of the city... That is the best, the best kind of motivation for them and, we have the best results after those travels with them”* (project partner representative). Apart from pure bonding, the cancelation of summer camps because of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the peacebuilding component of the program. Various interlocutors stated that, besides the fun and creativity the summer camps are provoking, they have an important role in breaking ethnic prejudices. For many young boys and girls, as one BMC member stated, those camp are the first opportunity to meet their peers of different ethnic background.

Apart from the summer camp, COVID-19 also stopped school and community campaigns in 2020. In first three years of the program (2017-2019), there was total of 13317 youth engaged in all 4 target countries. Out of that number, 1040 were engaged in preparation of the campaigns, 4048 were reached trough school-based campaigns, and 8229 trough community-based campaign. Beneficiaries and BMC members, as well as other stakeholders (like the school staff) stated that school-based campaign (especially in the urban areas), and both community and school-based campaigns in rural areas, are highly effective in engaging and attracting youth.

Some unintended but welcomed shifts in the approach were achieved due to the project design adaptions – innovation, youth-friendly design, additional capacity development and increase in reach can be attributed to the successful management and good relations between the partners. Detail presentation of the reach per beneficiary group and type of activity is presented on the following page, table 12. Rapid and successful adaptations to the online mode of functioning resulted in both exceeding initial targets and additional unintended effects – the introduction of new activities, more in line with the primary beneficiary group needs and habits.

Planned activities	Activities/Adaptations During COVID-19 crisis	Direct Participants	Social Media Reach	New activities	Activities/Adaptations During COVID-19 crisis	Direct Participants	Social Media Reach
Program Y Workshops	Online workshops with students in target schools and the introduction of workshops for a wider public	2 892	219 288	Podcasts	Were introduced by three partner organizations.	5 353	116 585
Events & meetings	All planned and new events were organized online	8 215	14 022	Quizzes, challenges, etc.	Were introduced by all partner organizations via popular applications and social media	4 813	206 966
Video Production	Videos were filmed by BMC members from their homes	17 854	85 121	Psychological support	BMC served as a safe space for youth and offered support. Partners initiated activities related to mental health and psychological support.	928	4091
Endline evaluation	Endline evaluation has been conducted online in cooperation with schools in all target communities.	1879	n/a	Online petitions	PM organized an online petition on the signing of Declaration on YMI movement	35 NGOs	n/a
Campaigns	Campaigns switched to social media only	20 021	474 858				
BMC meetings	Most of the partners organized BMCs online meetings and activities	552	n/a				

Table 12: Planned and new activities, and their reach

5.4. Sustainability

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *What actions/results can be maintained after this intervention is over?*

S.1 For the Program sustainability, the most important identified factor is that advocacy/lobbying efforts resulted in program verification/accreditation for the professional development of teachers and/or school staff, and/or youth workers in Kosovo*, Serbia and B&H. Apart from some minor variations, mostly related to administrative-territorial organization, the regulatory basis for program accreditation is the same in all four countries. Namely, ministries mandated with educational policies and decision making and/or its relevant institutions (ministries' agencies, services, institutes, etc.) grant official permission to implement the program and official accreditation for program implementation under similar procedures. Next step on the road to program further institutionalization is additional advocacy/lobbying push for introducing Program Y as a mandatory subject on Life Skills Education in all high schools, as stated in program documents. Another aspect of the advocacy process is the general political and social context in which it takes place. As noted in the Scale-Up Case Study: *Program context is thus more or less characterized by de iure approachable environments with deeply embedded animosities towards substantial progress reflected in increased gender equality and full respect of human rights in general. That being said, levels of manifestation of resistance towards changing societal norms and improving equality slightly differ from country to country⁴ and from one phase to another. However, in all targeted countries circumstances have been significantly changing mostly as a reflection of momentary, rather than strategic, priorities – elections dates, visits from EU officials, redistribution of power within political parties, but also as a consequence of individual changes within the institutions. Thus, the report affirms that model's variations reflect partner organizations' capacities and longer-term strategic orientation, on one hand, and momentary institutional conditions, on the other hand, rather than some deep contextual diversity (between the countries).*

In addition, multiple interlocutors – some project partners representatives, CARE staff and the school staff have questioned whether the quality of the of program implementation in schools is satisfactory enough, given that teachers, and not peer educators are implementing it. Similar dilemmas, like the quality vs. quantity (focusing on boys with risky behaviour vs. entire classes), quality control of program implementation (and the capacity of local partners to monitor implementation) were also risen, which opens up questions of the sustainability of the action (as well as its impact).

S.2 To secure sustainability, Program invested in the additional upgrade of knowledge base and further contextual grounding. Detail analyses of the Program approach and achievements were implemented in the forms of case studies on Program Y+, Program Y scale-up and the Program COVID-19 response. Reports produced useful conclusions and recommendations which should be carefully analyzed before the next phase implementation to produce the effects beyond its cycle. In particular, the YMI II Digital Response in Covid 19 Pandemic analysis, among other, clearly articulates the importance of the BMC and their key role in the context of the pandemic: *...Be a Man Clubs in the region (which) managed to daily and weekly gather total of 1324 young people in its activities and to adapt so fast to the Covid 19 pandemic. BMCs serve a safe space, both offline and online for young people to express their opinions, find solace and fun with their peers and unleash their potentials which has been highly important in Covid 19 period. All BMCs provided guidance, psychosocial support and*

peer support in dealing with the crisis. This conclusion is in line with previous findings on the importance of BMCs. It also contributes to the understanding of the critical role in the sustainability BMCs have as they, even in the time of crisis can quickly adopt and continue to play their role in gathering and activating youth around key program topics. Similarly, Scaling-Up Case Study emphasizes the importance of the BMC as effective mechanisms, particularly since they are locally established and recognized. At the same time, this study raises some of the dilemmas recognized further in the evaluation: *In implementing programs within the school context, all context characteristics should be considered to create adequate strategies to mitigate extrinsic barriers to a supportive learning environment and achieve effective attitudes and behavior change. Namely, in the traditional classroom, already established relations and expected effects tend to repeat cyclically and it is very hard to overcome this barrier. Furthermore, young people in need of additional support are hard to recognize and consequently – influence.”*

The Program Y+ Case Study, among other conclusions, emphasises that the *Theatre play within Y+ was a major success*, and that it *can be enriched in the future* (with moderated discussions and spin-off plays). The theatre plays have proved huge potential to attract different audiences and to *enhance critical thinking and engagement of audience through interactive methods*. This makes them critical to the sustainability of the action. Also, this case study emphasises the necessity of the capacity building of trainers implementing the Y+, and the urgent for their need for sensitization.

S.3 The advocacy process itself contributes to the sustainability of the Program. Apart from the systematization (through accreditation/verification) of the Program Y, which largely contributes to Program sustainability, the advocacy process itself, in which local partners play the key role, adds to sustainability as they build their capacities. This process, in which local organizations are playing multifunctional roles – presenting data and cases to support the issue (like the Baseline and Endline Reports), formulating, and proposing policies (through participation in working groups for example), developing advocacy strategies, building partnerships and campaigning – are building their knowledge and expertise on one hand, as well as their credibility and trust amongst various stakeholders on the other. On the other hand, the approach of building their capacities and involving them in the advocacy processes further should be more tailor made and in line with their capacities to absorb and implement new advocacy skills and learning while conducting other activities.

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To what extent can the Program Y accreditation be integrated in Program Y Plus ensuring sustainability?*

S.4 Program Y+ proved to be a unique regional program for youth, and its development and implementation represents many important and valuable approaches of the YMI II. Like noticed in the Program Y+ Case Study, partner organizations had a high level of autonomy in developing and implementing the program. Like the former program manager stated: *“Y Plus was a bit of experiment. We had some experience with extremism, radicalization... So, it was small scale, done just in some places, with out-of-school youth, youth at risk... And on top of it, this was one of our objectives, to let (local) partners freely use different approaches.”* This contributes to bigger buy-in and of local partners and true ownership of the program which is inevitable for its sustainability. It is an important characteristic of the entire program that should be kept and further developed. Furthermore, all local partners worked on common topics, like, breaking of prejudices and stereotypes, preventing labeling

and discrimination, dealing with emotions, fostering empathy, improving mental health hygiene, improving communication skills, peaceful negotiation and problem/solving, recognizing, and understanding fake news, rights-based activism, challenging gender norms and stereotypes, etc. Staying through to the program's vision, values, and logic adds to its credibility, recognizability, and integrity.

S.5 It also puts to a test how the topics mentioned above and methods (proved to be valuable in Programs M and Y - trainings, workshops, seminars, educational theatre plays, etc.) mix, and which combinations are producing the best results. Having this in mind, more efforts should be invested in monitoring these processes and evaluating which of these methods and topics are the most impactful and why.

S.6 There are some important elements built in the Program Y+ contributing further to its sustainability: the credibility and expertise of CARE and the local partners, established partnerships with local and national stakeholders, BMCs as established youth hubs. Similarly, the experience of Perpetuum Mobile's (and Status M in Zagreb, Croatia, within the larger framework of the program) work with the social workers and other professional involved with the youth at risk proved there is a need for a systematic approach in social care and other institutions in a program countering extremism and radicalization. It provides solid argumentation for standardization of the program, and possible accreditation, leading to sustainability and broader impact.

The following findings correspond to the evaluation question: *To what extent are the key actors (partners and other stakeholders) prepared to take over the responsibility and carry on with the implementation of the developed strategies and commitments (ownership and leadership), taking into account institutional level?*

S.7 CARE's approach to project communication and management contributed to the project partner's sustainability. This is especially visible with CARE's approach of high involvement of youth in the different aspects of the program, through project partners, during campaign development, peer education, monitoring, and evaluation, etc, gives credibility and inserts trust in project partners, which are perceived as reliable counterparts by youth, school authorities, parents, etc: *"I have been in so many projects, different projects, but for the first time, I see the youth so involved... And for the first time, both boys and girls are involved. And I think it helps boys be more tolerant (than girls)"* (Representative of Agency of Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education).

S.8 Project partners are using different methodologies and skills acquired through the YMI II in other projects, which adds to their sustainability. These skills range from better financial management to using an approach to the training program. This contributes not only to the sustainability of the partners but potentially replicates the effects of the program.

S.9 All project partners have expressed ownership over the project. This is especially true for partners that have been contributing to the project for a more extended period. They have more than once verbally expressed and acted as the project is theirs – showing clearly, they are proud of the accomplishments of the entire program, taking the initiative – for example, to establish communication and provide services at the beginning and later on during the COVID-19 pandemic (which is illustrated in program reports and described during interviews). This sense of ownership is also evident within the

interview BMC members, as they also, since they are given freedom to play and develop BMC programs, feel that the BMCs “are theirs”.

5.5. Organization²⁰

The following findings are corresponding to the evaluation question: *To what extent 6 project partners have improved organizational capacities for self-sustainable functioning as well as lobbying and advocacy (beyond project duration)?*

O.1 YMI II built of the results of the evaluation of the previous cycle evaluation from 2016.

Namely, CARE has continued to support and develop capacities of local partner organizations and continued its efforts in mainstreaming gender equality and violence prevention into the educational curricula. Also, existing resources have been continuously upgraded so to adapt to a changing environment. All resources have been shared with all stakeholders: teachers, peer educators, youth educators and other relevant interested parties. Furthermore, BMC clubs continued to be valuable local resources/hubs for young men (and women) willing to promote values of gender equality and non-violence. The members of BMCs were/have been continuously supported and additionally trained on positive mental health and the prevention of youth extremism, as well as the prevention of digital violence and hate speech. Finally, the movement-building component was built on the evaluation recommendation which identified the need to actively involve the primer constituency group in the formulation of the advocacy initiatives and campaigns implementation. When it comes to advocacy an lobbying skills and knowledge, CARE also invested efforts in project partners capacities. This is reaffirmed by the interviewed decision makers from each country – they are all aware of both CARE and project partners dedication and expertise, and especially the results/impact the program had made. However, when it comes to specific skills like advocacy (unlike organizational/management skills), it is evident that not all project partners are capable of being “all-around players” – they neither have all resources nor super-solid inclination to be advocates, service providers, brokers & networkers, and education specialist – all at the same time. During the interviews, local partners expressed reluctance regarding playing all the above-mentioned roles. Also, it is noted in reports as well as by decision makers during interviews that CARE staff sometimes plays more important roles in opening doors (and keeping them open) of the relevant ministries.

O.2 Communication between CARE and project partners has been open and allowed for ideas to flow and issues to be faced and dealt with rapidly.

The preparation (in the initial stage) and later implementation of the project’s campaign and messaging provides the best example how the communication looks like between the project partners – Smart Kolektiv, together with project partners which activated local youth, got involved jointly into the development of this important aspect of the project. Because of multiple stakeholders, both inside (CARE; SK and other project partners) and outside (youth, communication experts) of the project, this action demanded active coordination,

²⁰ This criterion is included by the consultant / it was not requested in the Evaluation ToR.

constant communication, and efficiency. The COVID-19 crisis had put to the test the way how the communication will function, but the lines remained open and allowed for quick exchange of idea and coordination of activities. As one partner representative has stated: *“We were constantly online and, sharing information and supporting each other.”*

O.3 Management changes in CARE and partners, during the project implementation, had different effects on program implementation. Management changes in CARE started in July 2018 and continued throughout the end of the project. However, according to partners, these changes did not affect the communication and effectiveness of the project. The transition went smooth, and CARE had resources and systems in place, including sound hiring process which allowed for transition not to affect the project implementation, although it did burden the workload of CARE staff.

Changes in the management of project partners did not affect their effectiveness, but it is obvious that organizations with systems and recourses can quickly and painlessly deal with management changes: *“We are trying to use the approach in which the project coordinator always has two other people along his/her side. And when the project coordinator wants to leave the project, the other two people, which are familiar with the project can replace him /her (project partner representative). Partners with less capacity need more time to balance the workload and find proper replacements: (This change) affected our organization. In February (2020) project coordinator had left our organization, and he has been 10 years on this project. When I came to the project, in March, right before the situation with COVID-19, I did not know anything about it. Now I do, but before I have joined the YMI II project I was involved in our media literacy project, so it's been difficult for us.”* (project partner representative).

6. CONCLUSIONS

(The *Men and Boys as Partners in Promoting Gender Equality and the Prevention of Youth Extremism and Violence in the Balkans – Young Men Initiative - YMI II* project managed to achieve its goals. Goals have been reached despite the unfavorable changes in an already challenging context, unprecedented crisis (COVID-19) and management changes. Project goals are mainly achieved thanks to the expertise of CARE and local partners (which leads to their credibility in the field, especially among key stakeholders – decision-makers and schools): high commitment (which resulted in flexibility and quick adaptation to the *new normal*²¹, and communication tailored to youth needs and habits.

(R1), (R2), (R7), (R8)²² The project remained highly relevant, especially having in mind the social and the political context in the Western Balkans and dominant narratives based on the values opposite to the values the project tries to build upon and emit. Implemented in 4 countries at different stages in the accession process to the EU, but with all of them sharing the same lengthy and uncertain path towards the final accession, the project has shown importance in not just opening up new possibilities and conquering new freedoms for youth, but also preserving previously liberated islands of freedoms and rights. The political elites in all four countries are showing low capacity and/or low political will to make progress towards the EU. Apart from already mentioned economic and social disparities, lack of the rule of law, weak governance, corruption, poverty, and unemployment – the nationalistic and populist narratives and patriarchal norms are on the rise. In all four countries, these narratives contrast with the efforts to improve gender equality and decrease gender-based violence and discrimination, yet are in line with the marginal results those efforts are producing. The social and political context will become even more critical in the upcoming period, in which the adverse COVID-19 effects on the national economies will provide more space and opportunities for further polarization and division and nationalistic/traditionalistic response to the crisis, which raises opposition and fear towards the gender equality and advancement of human rights.

(R1), (R2), (R3), (R4), (R5), (R6) By continuing to promote and adhere to the relevant international practices (regarding the issues of social exclusion, violence, extremism, gender inequalities) the project introduces contemporary and proven standards, approaches, and methods to the region. By doing so, it continues to push the agenda and stakeholders to get involved. CARE and partners are active players²³ in the field, which are creating spaces (like partnerships), filling them with the content (educational programs, trainings, workshops...), and involve others in it (campaigns). The project connects to the national policy processes' opportunities, using them to push its agenda again²⁴. On the local level, mainly through the BMC's and schools in which the program was implemented, the project provided (sometimes exclusive) spaces for youth to organize and express themselves. Also, they are generating

²¹ A term frequently used to explain the social context, social norms, rules and expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

²² Numbering of findings

²³ Opposite to the “passive players” waiting for opportunities to happen, rather than creating them.

²⁴ Please see Table 5: Policy frameworks addressed by YMI II in each target country, page 17-18

a greater feeling of safety and satisfaction in the community, as youth can spend quality time in a safe and productive surrounding.

(I2), (I3), (I4), (I5), (I6), (I7), (II2), (O3), (E1) The Project continues to be impactful. Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of youth have changed in several areas covered by the intervention. Most notably, changes have occurred concerning the violence, including the GBV. When it comes to gender roles, there are multiple indicators of such change, including the increased participation in household chores (although some traditional division of “male” and “female” chores are still present). As per the attitudes on gender roles, progress was made in all cities, and young women's progress is more evident than in young men. Although homophobia is quite spread in the population of young men. However, with 15-20% of participants on average, there are positive changes, especially for Pristina and Tirana. Also, there is a significant increase in knowledge when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. In most cases, the percentage of correct answers regarding this topic is over 50%, with Belgrade's highest knowledge level. Unfortunately, the project was not impactful on the use of cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol (especially in Belgrade).

(I10), (I11) The Be a Men Clubs are youth hubs that are generators of youth participation and activism. They remain to be the centerpiece of the program. They are generators of key project values, safe places for boys and girls to challenge and change the patriarchal paradigms; recognize, and deal with violence, and acquire the notion and practice of gender equality. The success of BMC is in the buy youth for youth logic: programs and campaigns are developed, tested, and implemented with heavy involvement of youth. They are places of fun, where creativity is provoked even by goofiness and acting silly and–freely. There are now generations of boys and girls at least touched, often changed by the BMCs, which are becoming true ambassadors of the YMI. As noted in the Scaling-up Case Study, “organizations recognized within their communities as relevant resources in achieving YMI-related and contextually welcomed results within diverse political frameworks – youth policy, gender, education policy, social welfare policy, reproductive health policy, etc. – have greater potentials to successfully identify entry points for influencing societal norms and create corresponding actions to do so.” BMCs should be viewed through this lens, to use the potential fully.

(S1), (S2), (S3), (S4), (S5), (S6) As a result of advocacy/lobbying, program was verified/ Accredited for the professional development of teachers and/or school staff, and/or youth workers in Kosovo*, Serbia, and B&H. regulatory basis for program accreditation is the same in all five countries²⁵. The accreditation of Program Y thus contributes to sustainability. Entering the school system means the program's institutionalization, which further allows wider reach and inclusion of youth which may lead to systematic change. Namely, ministries mandated with educational policies and decision making and/or their relevant institutions (ministries' agencies, services, institutes, etc.) grant official permission to implement the program and official accreditation for program implementation under similar procedures. The next step on the road to program further institutionalization is additional advocacy/lobbying push for introducing Program Y as a mandatory subject on Life Skills Education in all high schools, as stated in program documents.

²⁵ Specifics for each country can be found in the Scaling-up Case Study, attached.

It also means sensitization of school staff, directly or indirectly involved in the program. The Y+ program, successfully piloted and tested in the latter stages of the project, also has the potential to be accredited. Further accreditation process opens several questions which remain to be answered in the future: the quality control of the program implementation in the school system, the capacity of local partners to monitor the implementation, the quality of the program when implemented by the teachers vs. by the peer educators, the potential of the program becoming unfocused from boys with risky behavior.

(S6), (S8), (S9), (O1) The local partners from each targeted country, alongside the BMCs, are central to the sustainability of the YMI II results. Like in many other broad efforts of the civil society to bring about change, local organizations are the key agents: they are pushing the agenda, establishing, and developing partnerships, activating local knowledge and bridging the gap – and building pathways – between the emergent, bottom-up approaches and practices, and the designed, top-down ones, coming from the academia, development agencies, funders, and INGOs. During this project cycle (as well as the previous ones) local partners have been at the forefront – opening-up spaces for dialogue, campaigning, partnering, and advocating for change. Whatever the future programs bring and in what direction the context changes, local partners will develop the program further or defend reached accomplishments. This conclusion comes from the high motivation, engagement, and dedication of local partners, which are the result of CARE inclusive management model, the autonomy and creativity local partners have, and the fact that the program allows its participants to witness the tremendous change happening in lives of young boys during 8 to 9 months. The COVID-19 crisis had put CARE and local partners to the test. Relatively quick adaptation and switch to the *new normal* is a sign of good and open communication between all partners (despite inevitable glitches) and flexibility and resilience.

To further fortify the sustainability prospect which local partners are bringing to the table, and with continuous trends of shrinking space for civil society in the Western Balkans, both CARE and project partners should continue to develop participatory and flexible management mechanism in the future project frameworks, as well as to invest in the core organizational competencies of local organizations.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are classified relatively to area of intervention: capacity building, movement building, (social norms) campaign, advocacy. Each recommendation is also linked to specific finding (for example S2, I4) and through it, the conclusion.

Capacity Building

1. Apart from expertise development relevant to the management of the YMI project and specific project goals, consider investing in local partners' key organizational competencies that can contribute to their sustainability in general, contributing to the sustainability of program results run. Sustainability (particularly financial sustainability) of all program partners and their ability to as much as possible independently conduct project activities is key to maintaining program quality and effectiveness during the next project cycle, as well as after it ends. For the program to be known as locally driven, based on local needs, and to attract other actors in the region, local partners must be recognized, and able to be, key project actors. Key organizational competencies usually include fundraising (including diversification of funding sources), the project, financial and HR management, development of suitable governance structures, policies, and mechanisms, (cross-sectoral) partnership development, and monitoring and evaluation for learning and organizational growth. Before interventions in these areas, consider assessing capacity building needs to determine the most important areas for improvement. *Sustainability, Impact. I12, S1, S2, S6, S7, S8, S9, O1*
2. Similarly, to assessing and then investing in key organizational competencies, consider assessing partners' capacities to be able to lead the advocacy processes, especially the extent to which advocacy is part of their organizational mission and vision and their theory of change. Also, it is crucial to understand whether building their advocacy skills may deteriorate other skills and capacities (do they have enough resources to be equally successful advocates, networkers, fundraisers, service providers...?). In cases where there is clear potential for the advancement of advocacy skills, consider further development of partner organizations' capacities for engagement in, for example, ex-ante and ex-post policy (effects) analysis, alternative and shadow reporting, and other areas relevant for the project goals. *Sustainability, Impact; S1, S2, S7, S8, S9, O1*
3. To more efficiently build capacities of local actors, consider utilizing, as much as possible, resources possessed by the local partners – for example, consider establishing a regional, structured, peer support between the local partners, aimed at transferring know-how and expertise, through orientation, mentoring, coaching, and/or trainings. The first step in this regard would be to assess the needs and the capacities (including capacities to share the knowledge, i.e., to organize and deliver training, mentoring... on a specific topic identified as necessary for a local partner(s)). This would contribute to increased partners' organizational capacities and sustainability and more vital connectedness and ownership among partners. *Sustainability, Impact; I10, I11, I12, S1, S2, S7, S8, S9, O1*

4. It has been noted several times that BMCs are one of the cornerstones of the project., as they vouch sustainability and are producing impact – directly and indirectly. Therefore, consider comprehensive strengthening of the BMCs, including investing further in their promotion on the local level for them to attract more youth; increasing organizational capacities – structure, procedures, plans; investing in BMC members – from specific skills (related to local needs) to group cohesion and communication. Throughout this process, make sure that the growth is organic – relying on internal and local needs, pace, and recourses; participatory – including multiple stakeholders in determining priorities and challenges, and fun for all participants. ***Sustainability, Impact; I10, I11, S2, S9, O1***

Movement Building

1. Together with all donors involved, try to envision a movement-building as an indigenous, grassroots effort in which donors and CARE will jointly create space for an open, collaborative, participatory process in which actors in the field are building a vision and the narrative of the movement, with the vision of bottom-up development. To make the movement stronger and vibrant across the region, consider establishing further and deeper collaboration with the national and regional mechanisms that gather parents, teachers, child rights organizations/networks and include them in the national lobbying/advocacy actions, as well as in the efforts aimed at positioning key program topics high on the regional political agenda. Also, consider opening avenues for communication, partnership building, and collaboration with the existing youth, women, SRHR and other CSOs and networks, and the existing movements in the region with the same or similar goals and agendas, like the women or youth movements. ***Impact, Relevance, Sustainability. R1, R2, R5, R8, S1, S2***
2. To support the sustainability prospects of the movement-building efforts, consider investing recourses in building knowledge and skills in social network analyses and partnership/coalition-building strategies to utilize the existing experience within the regional civil society sector. Also, consider further identification, exploration, and coordination of existing transnational, inter-governmental, and civil society efforts to improve the position of youth in general, particularly in the areas of youth, gender, and SRHR policies. ***Sustainability, Relevance. R1, R2, R5, R7, R8, S1***
3. Consider making a continuous effort to identify grassroots in various local communities across the region and establish partnership and learning opportunities throughout the project cycle. Including the grassroots will allow for a better understanding of the needs and potentials in local communities in regard to the youth, gender and related issues; it will also allow to broaden the network and enrich the movement by providing space for diverse voices from different communities to be heard, and thus enable further vertical scale-up. Local partners and BMCs should play a key role. ***Relevance. R1, R6, R7, S2,***

Campaign

1. As varieties of both online and offline campaigns proved to be impactful in terms of their reach and engagement of target audiences, consider investing in more specific measurement and analysis of quality and quantity YMI communication efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the program to the limits in finding best solutions to continue to provide services and support to the beneficiaries, and at the same time attract new audiences. As many approaches have been tested, the following period could be used to thoroughly assess how different channels and tools performed in regard to the state of current and potential audiences; how youth interacts with messages YMI provides, how effective the communication is and what are dominant attitudes of reached youth on the YMI messages and narratives. **Impact; 11, 19, 112.**

Advocacy

1. Using previous experience in awareness-raising and participation in the policy processes, consider joint (CARE with partner organizations and relevant civil society partners) development of a strategy and engagement in public advocacy to position the cohort as a relevant regional/international actor in the targeted policy fields. **Impact, Relevance. R8, S1, S3, S9, O1**
2. Implement review of the other existing accredited and non-formal education programs in the region covering topics which are in the focus of Program Y and Program Y+, and create synergies with the authors/implementors, within the YMI movement building efforts, to develop a common platform of action for the reform of regional education policies and practices. This platform could be based on clear minimum/optimum standards of competencies for educators (in the formal and non-formal education systems), covering both extracurricular and cross-curricular approaches to Program implementation. This would allow for broader and more stronger education system reform effort, built as a coherent framework. This wider and more inclusive approach could bring YMI closer to addressing the educational system as a totality, instead of offering Programs' topics and agendas. As wider process, with "more hands on the deck", it could provide solutions to some of the dilemmas regarding capacity of local partners to fully monitor the implementation of accredited programs – with more organization being part of the advocacy process. **Impact, Sustainability, Relevance; S1, S3**
3. With various negative effects that COVID-19 crisis will have on national economies, there is probably even stronger need to examine (in the context of both Program Y and Y+) the relationship between the poverty (COVID-19 will push more families into poverty or closer to the poverty line or leave even fewer possibilities to those already in poverty), and the unequal gender attitudes, (peer and GB) violence, and mental health in youth. In those further investigations, it would be critical to more precisely define and then operationalize the "social characteristic" of parents or, better yet, the socio/economic status of the family. These data could be used as the additional project baseline data, lead to refinement of the project, but fundamentally – increase YMI's knowledge and understanding on how socio/economic status of the family affects the SHRH, gender attitudes, ethnic prejudice, and other relevant topics. **Relevance; E2, 11, 18, S1, S3**

Also:

- Regarding the monitoring and evaluation plan, consider capturing and presenting baseline data where possible. Baseline data is essential for understanding the project achievements on both output and outcome level. Without it, any conclusions on whether changes have happened will not be reliable enough. Following that note, consider developing targets for each indicator: reachable but optimal (not modest) at the same time. The longstanding presence of CARE in the region, excellent understanding of different (both regional and global) context(s), topics, and stakeholders, as well as roundedness and expertise of local partners, provides quite sufficient knowledge base to allow for the development of sound indicators and realistic targets which can help understand, steer and adjust the program better, as well as plan new initiatives. **Impact; E2, I1, I9, S5**
- Consider exploring opportunities for widening the scope of the action to other countries in the region, North Macedonia in particular. The country has similar issues as other WB countries, shares the legacy of Yugoslavia and its breakup, and suffers from ethnic tensions (between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians) and, as well as the rest of the region, from prevalent patriarchal and rigid norms around gender and masculinities. Using the existing connections and partnerships established by both CARE and local partners (especially from Serbia and Kosovo*), consider a) identifying potential partners and their capacities, b) conducting an overall stakeholder analysis, and c) analyzing the existing policy framework and educational system in order to plan the strategy for project implementation in N. Macedonia (or other countries in the region). **Relevance, Sustainability; R1, S1**

8. LIST OF ANNEXES

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- Annex II – Instruments for data collection
- Annex III – List of interview partners
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