



CAPITALIZATION EXERCISE REPORT

**For the project: “CARING - Challenging social and gender norms
to reduce violence against children in school”**

Co-funded by the European Union

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Contents

i.	Acknowledgments	4
ii.	Disclaimer	4
iii.	List of Acronyms	4
iv.	Executive Summary	5
1.	Introduction	7
2.	The Purpose and Scope of the Capitalization Exercise	8
3.	Methodological Approach	9
	Data Collection	9
	Data Analysis	9
	Limitations	10
4.	Main findings	11
	4.1. Project design	11
	4.2. Operations and project implementation	13
	4.3. Impact and sustainability	19
	4.4. Collaboration and Partnerships	22
5.	Good Practices and Lessons Learned	24
6.	Annexes	31
	Annex 1 – Full list of required questions in the ToR	31
	Annex 2– Typical questions for SCORE analyses dimensions	32
	Annex 3 – Data collection plan	33
	Annex 4 – Inception Capitalization report	33
	Annex 5 – Evaluation report	33
	Annex 6 – Emerging topics identified by needs assessments	33
	Annex 7 – Emerging topics identified by needs assessments	34



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ii. Disclaimer

This report reflects the Evaluation Team's evidence-based perspectives and may not entirely represent the views of Tdh Hungary and its partners, or other stakeholders mentioned in this report. Significant efforts have been made to verify the accuracy and reliability of the information presented. However, any inadvertent errors or omissions are unintentional and are the sole responsibility of the evaluation team. The content herein aims to provide an accurate account based on the data and observations gathered during the evaluation process, considering the limitations described in the report.

iii. List of Acronyms

CERV	-	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme
CMT	-	Capitalization Management Team
CET	-	Capitalization Exercise Team
IDI	-	In-depth Interviews
KII	-	Key Informant Interviews
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussions
MEAL	-	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
SRGBV	-	School Related Gender-based Violence
SAPI	-	Institute Of Social Activities And Practices Bulgaria
Tdh	-	Terre des hommes
ToC	-	Theory of Change
ToR	-	Terms of Reference
WP	-	Work Package



iv. Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The [CARING project —“Challenging social and gender norms to reduce violence against children in schools”](#)—was implemented across Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, and Romania, between May 2023 and April 2025 under the leadership of Terre des hommes Romania (Tdh), co-funded by the European Union. Its central goal was to prevent school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) by promoting gender equity, inclusive practices, and safe learning environments through youth empowerment, teacher training, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. In Bulgaria, the project is implemented by SAPI and Association Roditeli; in Croatia, by Hrabri Telefon; in Greece, by Tdh Hellas; and in Romania, by Tdh Romania. Although there was no direct implementation of the project in Hungarian schools, Tdh Hungary played an important role in project management and implementation, overseeing two out of four projects’ work packages, including the coordination of this capitalization exercise.

This capitalization exercise was undertaken to reflect on the project’s design, implementation, and impact. It identifies best practices, lessons learned, and practical recommendations to inform future programming and policy engagement at the national and EU levels. It draws on over 40 documents, 29 key informant interviews (KIIs), 7 focus group discussions (FGDs), direct observation, and survey feedback from facilitators, students, teachers, and statutory stakeholders.

Key Highlights

- **Theory of Change (ToC):** The project’s well-structured yet adaptable ToC served as a strategic backbone, ensuring coherence between activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. Its adaptability allowed successful contextualization across diverse countries, including sensitive environments like Bulgaria.
- **Legacy of Proven Methodologies:** Building on previous Tdh-led projects—REVIS, ACTIV, and YouCreate—the CARING model effectively blended structured reflection with youth-led creativity. This foundation enabled smoother implementation and stronger school engagement.
- **School-based Implementation:** Two cornerstones of impact were identified: trained school staff acting as facilitators and children trained as youth leaders. Their roles were crucial in disseminating knowledge and driving behavior change. However, both groups identified the need for clearer activity planning, quality assurance tools, and sustained support.
- **Child-led Participation:** Children valued having ownership over their initiatives and reported a deeper understanding of GBV, empathy, and inclusion. Youth-led actions like the “Emotional First Aid Box” exemplified how the project encouraged emotional literacy and student agency.
- **Impact and Sustainability:** Behavioral change was observed at three levels—direct implementers (youth leaders/facilitators), participants (students and teachers), and indirect stakeholders (parents and local actors). Several initiatives led to ripple effects, including peer replication and integration of project components into school policies and, notably in Romania, national strategy.
- **Institutional Anchoring:** The sustainability of results depends on embedding project principles into daily school practices and national systems. The Romanian Ministry of Interior’s inclusion of CARING content in its anti-violence strategy reflects strong policy-level uptake.



- **Data and Learning:** Robust data collection was a project strength, but greater emphasis is needed on data reflection to ensure project staff adaptive learning/management. Facilitators called for feedback loops and user-friendly tools to transform monitoring into a learning engine.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** Strong inter-organizational coordination, regular consortium meetings, and technical leadership—particularly from Tdh Hungary—fostered alignment and trust. Continued partnership with Ministries and early school leadership engagement were identified as strategic enablers for scaling and institutionalization.

Conclusion

The CARING project demonstrated a scalable, evidence-based model that centers youth leadership and systemic change to reduce SRGBV. Its flexible and context-responsive design, grounded in inclusive values and structured methodologies, enabled impactful school-level transformation. To amplify and sustain these results, future efforts should prioritize institutional embedding, strategic partnerships, enhanced facilitator support, and intentional learning systems.



1. Introduction

Terre des hommes (Tdh) is the leading Swiss child relief agency, working globally to protect vulnerable children and their families, improve their well-being, and ensure their rights. In Europe, Tdh operates in multiple countries, including Romania, Hungary, Greece, Kosovo¹, Moldova, and Ukraine, implementing national and regional projects focusing on child protection, juvenile justice, and the protection of children affected by migration and trafficking.

Tdh focusing on strengthening child protection and justice systems, supporting children affected by migration, and promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable communities. As part of its commitment to improving access to justice and reducing violence against children, Tdh Romania and Tdh Hungary as WP leaders are leading the implementation of the EU-funded CARING project which is being carried out between May 2023 and April 2025 across five countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary and, Romania.

The CARING project addressed school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) by challenging harmful gender norms and social stereotypes that perpetuate violence in school settings. The project aimed to reduce violence against children in 32 schools, throughout four countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, and Romania), by raising awareness, building the capacity of school staff, empowering youth to become agents of change, and strengthening cooperation between schools, public institutions, and communities.

The project contributed to the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the European Child Guarantee, aligning with the broader goals of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV). Through an integrated approach, the project engages students, teachers, parents, and statutory stakeholders to promote gender equity, foster non-violent relationships, and create safer school environments. The consortium includes six partner organizations, each bringing expertise in child protection, GBV prevention, and capacity building.

To ensure continuous learning and inform future initiatives, the capitalization exercise serves as a structured reflection on the project's achievements, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The capitalization exercise is a crucial process in knowledge management, enabling organizations to document best practices, assess gaps, and derive recommendations for future programming. Given the complexity of addressing SRGBV—where deeply ingrained social norms, institutional barriers, and varying national contexts play a role—it is essential to consolidate the lessons learned from CARING's implementation.

This exercise will examine key aspects of the project, including:

By systematically reviewing the CARING project's implementation, this capitalization exercise aimed to enhance future efforts in combating GBV in schools, contribute to policy discussions, and provide a resource for other organizations and institutions tackling similar issues across Europe or wider.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



2. The Purpose and Scope of the Capitalization Exercise

The capitalization exercise aimed to facilitate continuous learning and improvement in project implementation. By systematically documenting experiences, it sought to ensure that best practices are retained, challenges are addressed, and key insights are shared for future initiatives. As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the key objectives of this exercise are as follows (full list of required ToR questions can be found in Annex 1):

1. **Identify key successes, challenges, and lessons learned in project implementation.** This objective focuses on understanding what worked well and what obstacles were encountered throughout the CARING project, particularly in relation to school-based interventions, multi-agency collaboration, and engagement with students, educators, and parents/caregivers.
2. **Document best practices, strategies, and approaches that contributed to achieving project objectives.** By capturing effective methodologies, training approaches, and stakeholder engagement strategies, the exercise will provide a foundation for replicating and scaling up successful interventions in future projects.
3. **Assess areas for improvement and provide actionable recommendations.** The exercise will highlight gaps in evidence, challenges in implementation, and opportunities for refinement, offering concrete suggestions for enhancing future programming in GBV prevention and school safety.
4. **Strengthen knowledge sharing and capacity building.** By consolidating key findings and making them accessible to implementing partners, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the exercise will support ongoing learning and the development of more effective strategies for tackling school-related GBV.

Recognizing that valuable lessons and practices can be lost during project implementation due to challenges in knowledge capture and transmission, this exercise emphasizes mechanisms for ensuring that insights are effectively documented, retrieved, and applied. Lastly, to maximize the impact of these insights, the exercise has defined strategies for knowledge transfer, ensuring that findings are not only recorded but also integrated into future programming and policy development.

This capitalization exercise serves as a comprehensive reflection on the CARING project, assessing its implementation across Bulgaria (implemented by Association Roditeli, and SAPI), Croatia (implemented by Hrabri telefon), and Greece (implemented by Tdh Hellas) and Romania (implemented by Tdh RO). It covered the entire project lifecycle from May 2023 to April 2025, examining both the strategic and operational dimensions of the intervention.

The exercise has assessed all key project activities, including capacity-building for educators, child-led initiatives, parental engagement, and multi-agency collaboration. Rather than focusing on predefined segments, the process took a holistic approach, ensuring flexibility to capture relevant insights.



3. Methodological Approach

The capitalization exercise primarily utilizes qualitative data collection methods, while also supportively incorporating quantitative data—originally collected for evaluation purposes—to systematically document best practices, challenges, and key lessons from the CARING project. The approach emphasized participatory methods to ensure that insights from project staff (incl. all implementing partners), school staff, children, and other stakeholders are accurately captured. The capitalization exercise builds upon existing project monitoring and evaluation data while integrating additional primary research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's successes and areas for improvement.

Data Collection

Primary data collection for this capitalization exercise was conducted through a combination of **in-person field visits** (Romania and Croatia) and **online methods**, using the **mix method approach** and the following sources (see Annex 3: Data Collection Plan and Annex 4: Inception Report for details):

1. **Document review (40+ documents):** An extensive review of over 40 project-related documents was conducted to inform tool development and provide contextual understanding. Documents were analyzed in alignment with the primary defined questions, with critical elements highlighted to support the capitalization process.
2. **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs – 29 total):** A total of 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted both online and in person with key project stakeholders. These included 13 project staff members, 6 facilitators, 5 statutory stakeholders, 3 children who were involved in the creation of initiatives, and 2 parents. The interviews provided rich, multi-perspective insights into the project's implementation and impact.
3. **Focus Group Discussions (8 FGDs):** Eight FGDs were held across different stakeholder groups. Four FGDs were conducted with children who participated in the initiatives, one with the Child Consultative Board (CCB) ensuring participation of four out of eight board members, and three with trained school staff. These group discussions offered valuable reflections on the project's relevance, strengths, and areas for improvement from a grassroots level.
4. **On-site Direct Observation:** Unstructured, non-participant observation was conducted during field visits in Croatia and Romania, as well as during the final project conference in Zagreb, which the evaluation team attended online.
5. **Online Survey** was administered to facilitators and trained school staff (n=73), trained youth leaders and children participated in initiatives (n=79) and parents (23). While the entire population from these categories was targeted, a convenience sampling approach was used.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this capitalization exercise employed a comprehensive, mixed-method approach. Qualitative methods—including thematic, open coding, and narrative analysis—were used to explore key themes such as empowerment, community engagement, and gender equality. Quantitative survey data supported the analysis by measuring attitude and behavior changes, including the perceived effectiveness of interventions. Contextual and comparative analyses, along with data triangulation, ensured depth and credibility. The SCORE framework was used to assess strengths, challenges, and lessons learned, contributing to strategic insights and future improvements.



Limitations

As with most capitalization exercises relying on qualitative methods and beneficiary feedback, the data collection process was inherently influenced by the subjective perceptions of participants, many of whom were direct project beneficiaries or organizational staff, potentially introducing a degree of positive bias into the findings. In addition to these general limitations, several specific factors should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

The simultaneous implementation of the evaluation and capitalization exercises within a limited timeframe presented notable operational challenges. Preparing field visits in two countries while concurrently reviewing project documentation and coordinating activities required intensive effort and logistical agility, which also carried the potential to limit the initial precision of some data collection tools. Although the evaluation team subsequently refined and improved these tools during the process, there remained a risk of minor data gaps.

High staff turnover among project personnel meant that, in some cases, historical context or early-stage project data were less readily accessible. Additionally, overlapping responsibilities related to ongoing activities, typical of the final busy months of project implementation, affected staff availability and occasionally extended timelines for data collection.

Fieldwork involved extensive travel across multiple countries within a short period, limiting opportunities for deeper engagement with some stakeholder groups. Although a broad and diverse range of participants was reached, some data (particularly from online surveys and focus group discussions) were collected through convenience sampling, which may influence the representativeness of findings.

For details regarding initially identified limitations, mitigation strategies, and ethical considerations, please see Annex 4: Inception Report.



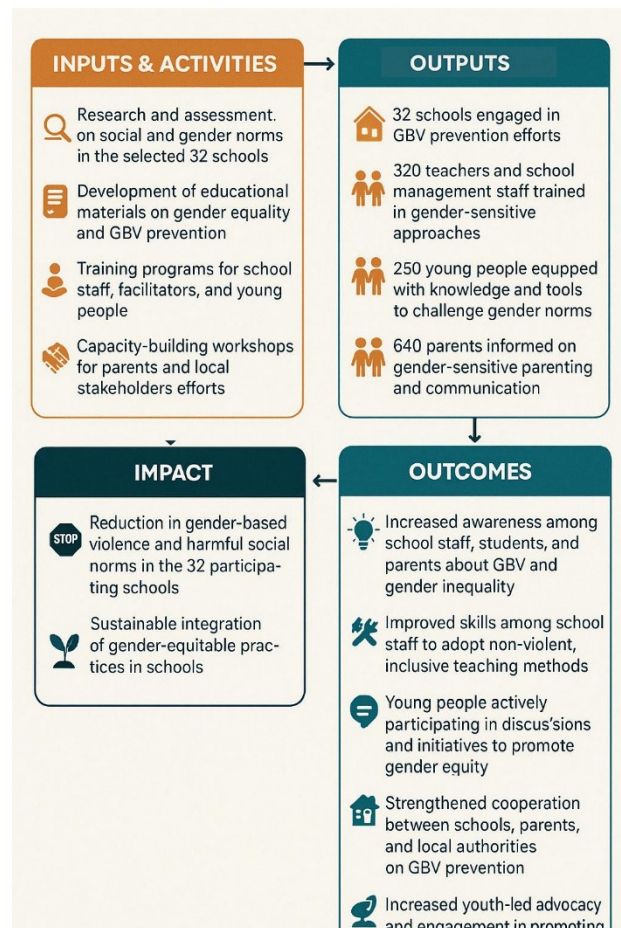
4. Main findings

4.1. Project design

A well-structured yet adaptable Theory of Change served as the strategic backbone of the CARING project, providing a shared roadmap that linked capacity-building and awareness-raising to behavioral and institutional change, while allowing national/local teams to adjust interventions to their national/school contexts without compromising the project’s core goal. The project developed and applied a well-structured and adaptable ToC that served as the project’s strategic backbone, ensuring coherence between activities, outputs, outcomes, and also long-term impact. The ToC clearly articulated the logical pathway from training and capacity building to raising awareness, but also, behavioral and institutional change in schools, and ultimately to a reduction in GBV and harmful social norms (See, for example, Figure 1). It included:

- Inputs: Needs assessments, development of age-appropriate and gender-sensitive training materials, and creation of child-friendly tools.
- Outputs: Delivery of ToT sessions, student-led initiatives, teacher engagement, awareness-raising events, and inter-stakeholder meetings.
- Outcomes: Improved knowledge and attitude change among children and teachers; increased confidence and capacity to address SRGBV; strengthened cooperation between schools and local actors.
- Impact: Safer, more inclusive schools and reduction of SRGBV.

Figure 1. Illustrative example of the ToC logic



Importantly, the ToC was designed with adaptability in mind, allowing for contextual modifications at both school and country levels without compromising the overall logic or thematic integrity of the intervention. Representatives of all project implementing partners share this belief. For example, the adoption of the so-called “anti-LGBTI propaganda” law in Bulgaria introduced unexpected political and legal challenges to implementing the project as originally planned. Nevertheless, implementing partners successfully adapted the approach to align with the evolving context. As one project staff member explained, “*We primarily adjusted the terminology we used, while the core purpose of the project remained the same.*” Additionally, all six interviewed facilitators stated that they believe the project can be successfully replicated in other schools, provided there is sufficient (1) willpower and motivation from facilitators, as well as (2) support from school



management. This support primarily refers to logistical aspects, such as granting consent for project activities and ensuring time is allocated within the school schedule for implementation.

By articulating the causal logic between capacity-building, awareness-raising, and behavioral change, the ToC helped ensure consistency and alignment across diverse countries and implementation teams. It provided a shared framework that supported meaningful collaboration among all actors—often referred to by school staff as the “golden triangle” of Child – School Staff – Parents, with local authorities also included to reinforce their role in the broader change process.

This balance between structure and adaptability allowed local teams to tailor interventions to school-specific challenges, cultural contexts, and stakeholder readiness—without deviating from the project’s overarching goals. Additionally, the ToC served as a practical learning tool and foundation for monitoring activities, helping teams track progress, identify challenges, and adapt strategies as needed throughout the implementation cycle.

Building the CARING project on proven methodologies from previous initiatives was a game changer—ensuring an evidence-based model that combined structured reflection, creative youth expression, and continuity of practice, which in turn enabled smoother implementation, deeper engagement, and more meaningful collaboration among educators, youth, and communities. The CARING project successfully leveraged and integrated the key methodologies and experiences from previous Tdh-led initiatives, including REVIS² and ACTIV³ projects, alongside the creative, youth-driven spirit of YouCreate⁴ initiative. By doing so, the project avoided duplication, capitalized on lessons learned, and ensured that all components were built on a solid evidence base.

- REVIS and ACTIV laid the groundwork for training facilitators and educators to become confident, empathetic, and participatory leaders capable of engaging youth in reflective and transformative learning.
- YouCreate, developed in partnership with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, introduced creative, arts-based youth participation strategies. It empowered young people to design and implement “Art Actions” that address social issues in their communities, fostering ownership and innovation.

One of the key advantages of the project, as emphasized by project staff, was that it was built upon methodologies already proven to be effective, rather than starting from scratch. This practice also supported continuity across programming cycles, allowing CARING to move forward with trusted partners and tested content while adapting to new challenges and priorities.

Each approach added a vital layer to the intervention: REVIS and ACTIV provided a structured foundation for reflective dialogue between adults and youth, while YouCreate introduced elements of creativity, freedom of expression, and visual storytelling into project implementation. The importance of

²<https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/shifting-norms-around-violence-schools-guide-trainers-and-facilitators-working-children-and-young-people>

³https://tdh.ro/en/activ-act-against-violence?fbclid=IwAR13QvPGT21LEI-tL6WSzIG98ItNysVfzE_1Rtw-KCe1rldEQd1VKqaituY

⁴<https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/youcreate-toolkit-participatory-arts-based-action-research-well>



involvement in earlier phases was highlighted by a staff member from Tdh Hellas, who noted: “*We were not part of the REVIS project, so it was slightly more difficult for us to establish collaboration and maintain effective work with schools.*” This underscores how previous engagement contributed to smoother implementation and stronger school partnerships.

The project’s design shows strong potential for adaptation to younger children (ages 7–12), offering a strategic opportunity/option for scale-up. Building on the demonstrated adaptability of the CARING project, several facilitators and statutory stakeholders, including a representative from the Ministry of Education, suggested that the intervention could be effectively adapted for younger children, particularly those aged 7 to 12. An illustrative example was also identified: “*As a teacher in an early primary school, I applied what I learned from this project with my students, including the exercises we were trained to use. I adapted the topics to suit the age and context of my students, focusing on themes of tolerance and general equality,*” the teacher shared, highlighting the positive outcomes from the adapted exercises used in her classroom. This indicates an opportunity to expand or differentiate the Theory of Change to include at least two distinct age categories:

- (a) children aged 7–12 and
- (b) adolescents aged 13–17.

Such an expansion would allow the project to cover the full school-age population, rather than being limited to teenagers alone. One of the most important distinctions emphasized by stakeholders relates to parental involvement. For adolescents, peer relationships tend to be more influential, and parental involvement is primarily about being informed and supportive. However, for younger children, active parental involvement is essential to the success and meaningful implementation of the project. Any future adaptation of the model should therefore account for this age-specific dynamic in designing activities and engagement strategies.

4.2. Operations and project implementation

The capitalization exercise identified two key cornerstones of the CARING project’s effectiveness and impact: (1) school staff trained as facilitators, who led project implementation within their own schools, and (2) children trained as youth leaders, who acted as peer educators and change agents. These two groups played a central role in disseminating knowledge, mobilizing others, and creating a ripple effect of awareness and engagement among both students and school staff.

Both facilitators (during KIIs) and youth leaders (during FGDs and KIIs) expressed strong motivation and a sense of ownership over their roles in the project. Facilitators, in particular, emphasized the importance of clarity at the outset of the project. They recommended the provision of a simple action plan or checklist outlining the expected activities, roles, and administrative responsibilities (including documentation, coordination tasks, and event logistics). Such a tool was assessed as very

Figure 2. Action Plan Developed by Facilitators in Romania





helpful to organize implementation more effectively and reduce uncertainty (See, for example, Figure 2).

Participants from both groups also highlighted the importance of aligning project activities with school calendars and daily schedules, noting that this significantly improves feasibility and participation. If activities are poorly timed (e.g., scheduled during exam periods or outside regular lesson blocks), they are more difficult to implement and risk lower engagement from students and staff alike.

Facilitators also consistently pointed to the value of regular, responsive support from project staff. In schools where communication with implementing partners was more frequent, including direct contact and occasional field visits, facilitators felt more confident, less isolated, and better equipped to overcome challenges. These relationships fostered trust, motivation, and smoother project delivery, suggesting that ongoing support mechanisms are crucial for the success of school-based initiatives. *“For me, it was extremely important when I realized that the project coordinator truly understood the challenges I was facing while implementing the project in a school environment—which is quite specific both in terms of organization and management.”* The evaluation team also noted that closer communication and collaboration between project staff and facilitators created an important opportunity to strengthen the monitoring process.

Successful project implementation at the school level depends heavily on selecting schools with both motivated facilitators and the institutional capacity to meet project requirements—making a structured self-assessment a valuable tool for ensuring readiness and commitment. Selecting schools that are well-positioned to meet project requirements and deliver expected outcomes proved to be a critical factor for success at the school level. As one implementing partner representative explained during the final project conference, *“For us, it’s very hard to choose the schools that are truly interested and ready for the project.”* On the other hand, project staff observed that some schools struggled significantly to fulfill basic implementation expectations, often due to a lack of internal capacity, commitment, or structural support.

Both facilitators and project staff, during FGDs and KIs, emphasized the value of introducing a self-assessment tool for schools prior to their selection. Such a tool would allow schools to assess their own readiness, including the motivation and availability of the designated facilitator(s), and the school’s overall ability to allocate time and resources to the project. As one facilitator from Croatia put it, *“If you don’t have even one of these enablers, it becomes hard for anyone to be part of such a good but demanding project.”*

These findings highlight the importance of ensuring **school-level ownership and preparedness** as a foundation for successful implementation. A structured self-assessment process could serve as both a readiness check and a commitment signal, helping the project team prioritize schools where support structures are already in place.

The project’s flexible, child-led approach empowered students to create meaningful initiatives and enabled facilitators to adapt activities to their specific school contexts, but it also highlighted the importance of clear guidance, consistent support, and a tailored quality assurance system to ensure coherence and effectiveness across diverse implementation environments.

Children involved in developing school-based initiatives were granted full freedom to choose the topic they believed was most relevant to their peers and school community. This autonomy enabled them to identify local issues and propose solutions from their own perspective. One facilitator shared, *“We are very pleased to see what our children can do by themselves, we’ve learned that we can rely on them much more in schools,”* a sentiment echoed by teachers during both FGDs and key informant interviews KIs.



Children, in turn, valued the opportunity to take ownership. As one student in Romania noted during an FGD, *“It allowed us not only to show our creativity, but also to decide what we think is important and how we should act upon it.”* At the same time, children acknowledged the importance of support from facilitators and other teachers—particularly around structuring their ideas, identifying key components of a successful initiative, and understanding the basic steps involved. Several participants agreed that having minimum standards or a simple framework for what constitutes a strong initiative would have helped them stay focused. One youth leader in Croatia explained, *“We started to create an initiative at the beginning, but later realized it was not related to the project topic at all. Eventually, we changed it and succeeded, but we still lost some time.”*

Throughout implementation, activities were regularly adjusted based on field-level feedback and real-time learning, which strengthened both project efficiency and community ownership. Facilitators played a central role in navigating these adaptations within their schools, often with minimal direct intervention from the project team. These adaptations required facilitators to take initiative, troubleshoot independently, and tailor approaches to their school context.

Despite these positive adaptations (see Figure 3), facilitators noted several operational challenges, including inconsistent understanding of project expectations, documentation demands, and limited capacity to manage project tasks alongside regular school duties. One facilitator reflected, *“As we are not experienced project managers, it’s always helpful to check with the project coordinator if we’re doing the right thing—before it’s too late.”*

These findings highlight the need for stronger upfront operational guidance and structured feedback mechanisms, particularly in the early stages of implementation. While the high level of flexibility and facilitator autonomy was a project strength, it also emphasized the importance of a tailored quality assurance approach—one that balances independence with consistent support and shared understanding across all schools and countries involved.

Parental engagement remains a challenge, but those involved strongly value the CARING project and advocate for greater inclusion—especially for younger children—highlighting the need for shared responsibility between schools, families, and communities in fostering respectful, resilient, and socially aware youth. Actively engaging parents remains a challenge across project settings. However, those who do participate strongly advocate for greater parental involvement—not only for the benefit of their own children but also to support the broader school community. During FGDs, parents emphasized the widening generational gap caused by rapid technological and cultural shifts (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, smartphones), and called for more structured and meaningful opportunities to connect with the school environment.

Engaged parents consistently described the CARING project as invaluable for promoting real-life skills and personal development beyond academics. They expressed strong support for expanding similar initiatives, particularly for younger children, with an emphasis on violence prevention and self-protection. One parent

Figure 3. Key examples of learning-driven adjustments include:

- Improved structure of child-led initiatives after initial feedback indicated a lack of clarity in the early stages;
- Enhanced follow-up in ToT sessions, addressing the need for ongoing support beyond one-time training;
- Curriculum revisions to reflect emerging local topics such as cyberbullying and appropriate gender terminology;
- Integration of digital tools (e.g., WhatsApp, Google Forms) to facilitate reporting and streamline communication between facilitators and project staff.



proudly shared how her 13-year-old son learned to assert boundaries, recounting him saying, “*Stop, I don’t want that.*”

While changing adult perspectives can be difficult, participating parents believe that with proper support, schools can help raise children grounded in values such as respect, equality, and open-mindedness. These parents stressed that schools and projects like CARING should proactively encourage wider parental engagement, as meaningful change requires shared responsibility and cannot rest on schools alone.

At the same time, school staff acknowledged that while parental support is important, peer influence plays a more critical role for children in this age group. As a result, facilitators have focused their efforts more on peer interactions. As one experienced staff member explained, “*I would suggest much greater involvement of parents in similar or future projects if the target age group was younger—up to 12, for example.*”

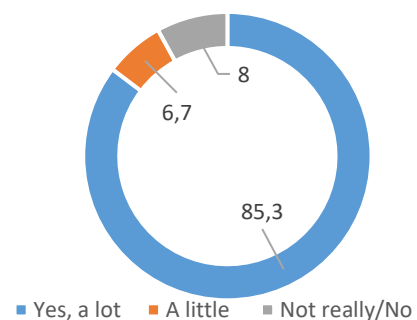
The CARING project’s child engagement strategy balanced structure with flexibility, leadership with empathy, and content with connection. It demonstrated that when young people are respected, informed, and given space to lead, they not only engage—they transform their schools from within. Namely, a core pillar of the CARING project’s success was its youth-centered, inclusive, and respectful approach to working with children. Facilitators emphasized that building strong relationships with young people starts not only with structured sessions but with genuine energy, openness, and the ability to lead by example. Rather than directing or lecturing, facilitators acted as role models, demonstrating positive values and guiding youth in a way that empowered them to form their own views and decisions.

Children consistently reported that they felt respected and valued, largely due to the creation of safe, trusting, and engaging spaces. These spaces were cultivated through fun, interactive activities and opportunities for authentic dialogue. One facilitator described the shift: “*We didn’t teach them—we walked with them. That’s when they opened up.*”

The CARING project’s approach to learning emphasized foundation building through facts, data, and context-relevant insights. Both children and facilitators were introduced to key terminology around GBV and SRGBV, with an emphasis on how these forms of violence are embedded in social and gender norms. Country-specific data (including those from Rapid assessments conducted at the project start) played a central role in helping children understand the realities in their own communities. This grounding in evidence made the topic real and urgent, allowing space for more open and constructive dialogue. “*I didn’t know some of the things we said every day were actually hurtful. Now I hear them differently—and I say something,*” shared a 14-year-old participant during an FGD in Croatia. This is also confirmed by survey data through which one nine in ten children reported improvement of knowledge about GBV or VAC (See Figure 4).

A critical outcome of this approach was the shift in how children recognized and responded to normalized harmful behaviors—including jokes (See, for example, Figure 5), remarks, or teasing that had previously been dismissed as harmless. Developing this awareness was described by facilitators as a starting point for deeper empathy and cultural change within schools.

Figure 4. Project helped you to better understand GBV or VAC? (N=79)





Facilitators practiced active listening—not just to what children said, but to how they behaved, the silences between words, and the subtle signals of discomfort or hesitation. Respect was shown not only through asking thoughtful questions but also by being present, casual, and human in interactions, allowing children to share at their own pace.

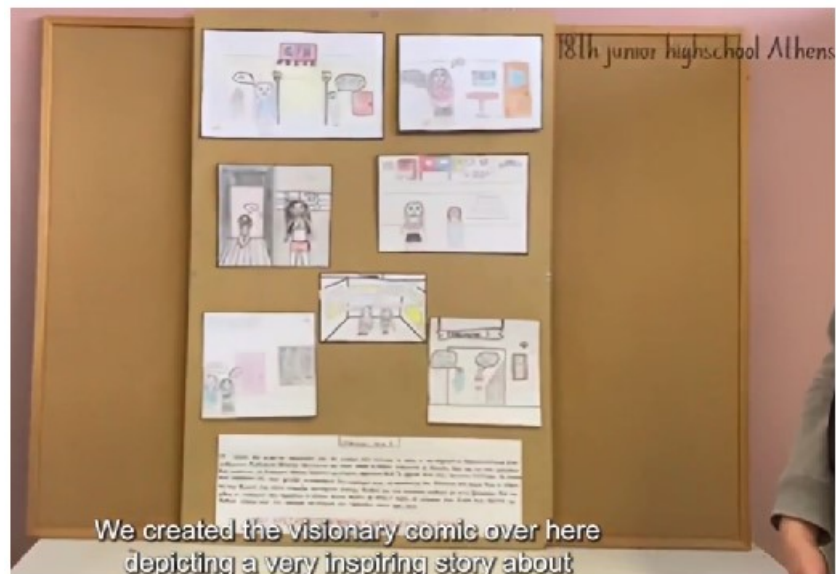
Fostering inclusion meant responding to diverse behaviors with empathy and patience. Some children were eager to speak; others were quiet observers. Facilitators respected both, creating meaningful roles for youth regardless of their communication styles. Over time, this approach—built trust and encouraged participation—including from children who had experienced bullying or exclusion in the past. *“One girl never spoke in the first sessions. But after two weeks, she started staying behind to help us clean up. That’s how we knew she wanted to be part of something,”* recalled a facilitator from Romania.

In several instances, children used the project as a platform to share personal experiences or advocate for peers. Some students who had faced bullying created initiatives aimed at helping others avoid similar experiences—a clear indicator of how the project encouraged not just awareness, but agency and peer-driven solutions.

The project demonstrated strong commitment to monitoring and accountability, particularly through its robust data collection practices. Throughout implementation, project staff and facilitators systematically gathered valuable data that served as a solid evidence base for tracking change and assessing progress. All activities were carefully documented, including meeting minutes, photographs, feedback notes, and activity outputs. Pre- and post-activity tests were regularly administered, and evaluation questions were built into the project flow, ensuring that qualitative and quantitative feedback was continuously captured. Notably, facilitators and staff gathered this data while also managing regular school responsibilities—showing remarkable dedication to delivering results while ensuring documentation and accountability. *“We knew data collection was important, even when it added to our workload. We wanted the project to be visible and credible,”* explained a facilitator from Romania.

While this monitoring system was highly effective in tracking activity completion and participation, the real opportunity lies in shifting the data use approach—from tracking to learning. Currently, most data served its accountability purpose, but less space was given for structured analysis, cross-country reflection, or learning from patterns over time. There is significant potential to turn the existing data system into a learning engine—one that not only records what has been done, but also asks why it worked, where it struggled, and how it can be improved. This would enable the project team, facilitators, and partners to use data more actively for adaptive management, iterative design, and continuous improvement. *“If we had more time to reflect on*

Figure 5. Initiative by students from Athens - Visionary comic pointing GBV



Source: The final project conference recording material



the data together, we'd probably make small changes that could have big effects," said a project team member during a capitalization interview.

Empowering facilitators and staff to see data as a source of insight could further increase their ownership and confidence. With the right tools (e.g., simple dashboards, regular reflection sessions, and feedback loops), CARING could move from a model of monitoring toward a culture of learning, where data serves not just the donor, but everyone involved in the change process.

Facilitators found the training materials clear and practical, with the ToT sessions effectively building their confidence and equipping them to lead meaningful, engaging activities in their schools.

Facilitators received a set of guideline/manuals and supporting materials, including PowerPoint presentations developed during the ToT sessions. These sessions were generally well-organized and comprehensive, which is confirmed by the survey and document analysis results. While these resources provided a solid foundation, facilitators demonstrated varying levels of confidence in delivering the content, reflecting differences in their professional backgrounds and familiarity with GBV topics. *"The materials were clear, practical, and easy to use. I felt well-prepared to lead sessions in my school. The ToT gave us confidence and showed us that we're not just delivering content, but helping students think differently,"* said a facilitator, from Romania.

Both facilitators and participating teachers emphasized the importance of having user-friendly, well-organized training materials, which would further empower them to lead sessions effectively. In particular, they praised the quality and relevance of the interactive exercises designed to illustrate inequality and gender dynamics, noting that these tools helped engage students and promote deeper understanding.

The training sessions delivered to children were reported as especially successful in raising awareness of GBV and promoting values of equality and inclusion. Many children became more vocal and confident in advocating for these issues within their school communities, an outcome seen as one of the project's key achievements.

To fully realize this potential in future phases or replications, several important considerations should be taken into account to ensure equity, fairness, effort recognition and sustained engagement.

First, the selection and motivation of youth leaders should be approached with intentionality. While facilitators or school principals may identify student leaders based on academic performance, reliability, or language skills, youth participants themselves expressed a preference for inclusive and democratic selection methods. One widely appreciated idea, shared during FGDs, was to empower Student Councils to lead the selection process, thereby promoting peer ownership, transparency, and trust. *"Honestly, we never know why somebody wants or needs to be involved in such projects"* shared a student during an FGD in Croatia.

Children are motivated by diverse factors to take participation in the project, including the excitement of potential travel, the appeal of creativity, or the chance to step outside the routine of school life. While not always fully aligned with thematic goals from the outset, these motivations represent genuine curiosity and openness to learning. Connecting personal interests with project purposes helps deepen engagement and foster long-term commitment.

"Children expect and deserve some kind of recognition for their work and effort," noted one facilitator. During the FGDs, children also highlighted the importance of non-material forms of recognition, such as certificates, opportunities to showcase their work, and receiving feedback. As one youth participant shared, *"We all worked on the project, but without any recognition, some of us could feel like we didn't matter."*



4.3. Impact and sustainability

The evaluation results showed a significant potential for the project impact (See the Evaluation Report for CARING project): Data from the capitalization process shows that change can be effectively measured at three key levels:

- (c) Behavioral and attitudinal change among those directly involved in delivering activities, such as youth leaders and facilitators. Youth leaders reported initiating additional community-based initiatives to prevent GBV and expressed increased confidence in addressing incidents of GBV. Facilitators observed their peers adopting their methods and noted a heightened awareness of SRGBV within their schools.
- (d) Attitude shifts among children who participated in project activities and teachers who engaged with facilitators. These groups demonstrated a deeper understanding of GBV and were able to articulate new perspectives, showing meaningful cognitive and emotional growth.
- (e) Increased awareness among indirect beneficiaries, such as other students, parents, and key stakeholders.

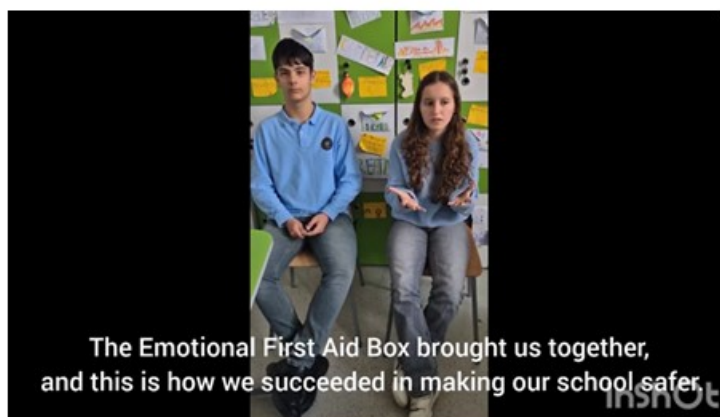
"I learned to recognize all the masks that Violence wears, without getting confused. I learned how to deal with it directly, but also how to behave when I find myself in the position of the person responsible for preventing it." – Surveyed girl from Greece.

The project fostered a shift from passive awareness to active student engagement, empowering children as agents of change in violence prevention and emotional wellbeing. The CARING project helped all participants become more aware, informed, and engaged in addressing GBV in schools. A standout example of this shift is the *"Emotional First Aid Box"* initiative (See Figure 6), which had a profound personal and community impact. By creating a tangible, handmade toolkit focused on emotional wellbeing, students addressed school-related stress, conflict, and peer exclusion, while promoting values such as empathy, inclusion, and mutual respect.

The process cultivated teamwork, creativity, and communication skills, with students reporting stronger friendships and a deeper understanding of one another's differences (See, for example, Figure 7). Many expressed feeling more confident, heard, and empowered—both in and outside the classroom. The initiative also sparked wider dialogue among peers around emotional needs, gender stereotypes, and violence prevention.

Teachers and some parents responded with pride and support, while students envisioned how such efforts could be replicated in other schools and scaled into larger student-led initiatives.

Figure 6. Child-led initiative presentation with the "quote"



Source: The final project conference (showed recordings)



More broadly, the project had a transformative impact on school culture, particularly in schools facing existing challenges. In one case, where the school had recently undergone relocation and was experiencing a rise in bullying and weakened belonging, the CARING project arrived at a critical moment. By building what staff referred to as a “golden triangle” of students, teachers, and parents, the project fostered collaboration, ownership, and shared responsibility.

Figure 7. Child-led initiatives (Croatia) - Involving broader community



Source: The final project conference (showed recordings)

Students were no longer passive recipients of information; they became active participants and initiators of change, engaging their peers and tackling sensitive issues through peer-led dialogue and inclusive activities. Teachers reported improved collaboration through peer observation and joint planning. Despite the limited number of trained facilitators, their presence served as a valuable model, equipping staff with approaches they could continue to use.

As a result, a visible ripple effect began: student leaders influenced their peers, attitudes toward GBV and gender norms started to shift, and the school community became more cohesive and responsive. Teachers expressed a strong sense of ownership and commitment to sustaining and expanding these efforts, applying CARING principles to future activities and curricula.

Strengthening connections within and between schools, and with local authorities, emerged as a valuable unintended outcome with strong potential and OPPORTUNITY for sustainability: One of the most frequently mentioned outcomes across all stakeholder groups was the project’s role in building stronger bonds—among children within the same school, between children from different schools, and among teachers within schools, as well as between schools and local authorities. While not an explicit objective of the project, this effect significantly contributes to its broader impact and long-term sustainability.

A notable example comes from Croatia, where children from one school adopted and implemented an initiative developed by peers from another school, actively promoting its key messages and spreading awareness within their own environment. Such peer-driven dissemination reflects the horizontal spread and ownership of project values, which enhances local relevance and reach.

In future phases, the project can strategically harness this momentum to amplify results—by facilitating structured exchange, peer learning mechanisms, and formalizing inter-school and school-authority cooperation pathways.

Student-led initiatives were genuinely youth-driven, but clearer pathways are needed to support sustainability and OPPORTUNITY for replication. A key finding from this process is that most initiatives were genuinely initiated and developed by children themselves, with minimal input from project

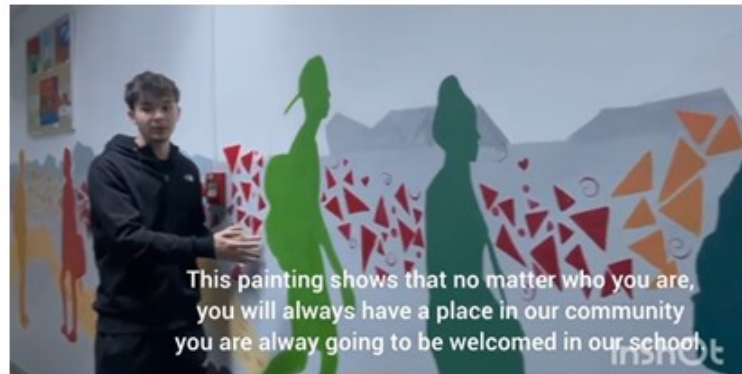


staff, facilitators, or teachers. Children emphasized that these were their own ideas—projects they would have pursued regardless—while the CARING project provided them with something they previously lacked:

- a formal platform to launch their initiatives,
- an organized group structure,
- the support and consent of teachers and school principals, and
- a sense of legitimacy and encouragement to act.

Children expressed confidence that other students, in other schools, could successfully implement similar initiatives—if they knew how to start and what steps to follow. However, they also clearly stated that, without project support, it is unlikely that new initiatives would be launched in their own schools. This signals a concern for project sustainability, particularly in environments lacking proactive support structures.

Figure 8. Child-led initiative: School walls inspired by project themes



Source: The final project conference (showed recordings)

During FGDs, children, facilitators, and teachers all agreed that a practical step to improve sustainability would be to provide a simple, visible flowchart—displayed in schools—that outlines how to initiate and implement a student-led activity. Such a tool could guide children, school staff, and even parents through the basic process and reduce reliance on external project staff, while reinforcing a culture of student initiative and agency. *“I’m so happy that I’m part of all of this project particularly in the role facilitator. I had the opportunity to learn and share the knowledge among school staff. This knowledge remains in our school not only for this but also for the next generations and we are keen to continuously improve our knowledge in this aspect.”* - Boy from Croatia.

School staff who participated in the project, particularly facilitators are key to sustainability. Schools with engaged principals and staff reported smoother implementation and greater integration of project values into daily routines. In contrast, limited involvement from school leadership often constrained facilitators, who already faced heavy workloads and limited support structures. Facilitators were central to success, yet many carried significant responsibilities without clear guidance or backup mechanisms. Strengthening institutional support for facilitators and prioritizing follow-up activities after the project end, will be a strong base for sustainability of the project.

To secure systemic sustainability, there is a strong opportunity to deepen the institutional anchoring of the ToC—ensuring that its logic and practices are embedded in the daily functioning of schools and formally integrated into national education systems. At the school level, this means moving beyond activity delivery and embedding the project’s principles into formal structures, policies, and routines. Schools should be equipped with practical tools and frameworks, such as internal protocols for responding to GBV, standardized templates for implementing and documenting student-led initiatives, and checklists for



school leadership to ensure continuity and accountability. These tools would not only support sustainability but would also reduce the burden on facilitators, providing clarity and structure while allowing for contextual adaptation.

At the systemic level, strategic partnerships with Ministries of Education and affiliated agencies are essential. The CARING project has already demonstrated this potential in Romania, where a representative from the Ministry of Interior formally integrated project outcomes into the national strategy against school violence. This policy-level uptake reflects the strength of the ToC and its potential to drive long-term structural change. *“This project offered more than activities—it offered a model we can carry forward through national strategy and training,”* stated a Romanian Ministry official during a capitalization interview.

Figure 9. Child-led initiative: Safe Space



Source: The final project conference (showed recordings)

To build on this progress, future iterations of the project should aim to formalize the role of institutional stakeholders within the ToC framework. This could include aligning with teacher training institutions to embed GBV content into professional development curricula and establishing shared implementation benchmarks between project staff and education authorities.

4.4. Collaboration and Partnerships

Strong and professional partnerships drove impact: The CARING project was anchored in a network of committed, professional partner organizations that collaborated with trust, mutual respect, and a shared vision. Regular consortium meetings—both scheduled and ad hoc—provided critical platforms for coordination, learning, and planning. Tdh Hungary’s role in maintaining high standards and donor requirements were widely appreciated, ensuring consistency and cohesion across countries. These partnerships created a stable foundation for implementation and opened doors for future collaboration.

Collaborative partnerships and opportunities for strengthening coordination. The project benefited greatly from strong, collaborative partnerships built on shared commitment and professionalism. All partner organizations emphasized the positive and productive nature of their working relationships. Regular consortium meetings provided valuable platforms for coordination, learning, and collective planning. The proactive support and leadership from Tdh Hungary on the assigned WPs and tasks were particularly appreciated and played a vital role in ensuring cohesion across countries. What worked well:

- Highly committed and professional partner organizations.
- Monthly and ad hoc meetings that fostered collaboration and transparency.
- Positive engagement from schools and facilitators, contributing to smooth implementation.
- Strong technical support that enhanced project alignment.

Key Learnings and Growth Areas: While the foundations for effective collaboration were clearly in place, several important lessons emerged to further strengthen future project performance:



Empowering School Leadership: Schools where leadership was actively involved saw smoother implementation and more lasting impact. This reinforces the importance of engaging in school management early and meaningfully. Future efforts should include structured onboarding for school authorities and clearly defined roles to support ownership and institutional integration.

Supporting Facilitators for Sustainability: Facilitators were pivotal to the project's success. Their effectiveness could be further enhanced with clearer guidance, streamlined administrative processes, and mechanisms to ensure continuity when replacements are needed.

Looking Ahead: The overall experience confirmed that strong partnerships, regular dialogue, and mutual respect are foundational strengths of the CARING project. By building on this success and implementing targeted improvements—particularly in communication and school | early engagement of school leadership are essential for long-term sustainability.



5. Good Practices and Lessons Learned

1. A Well-Structured but Adaptable ToC Enables Coherence and Flexibility

Key Insight:

The CARING project's ToC was not only clearly articulated and logically sequenced, but it was also designed to allow contextual flexibility. This adaptability ensured that project goals remained consistent across countries and schools, even under political or legal constraints.

Tips for future application:

- Design ToCs that balance structure with flexibility, allowing for national or local adaptations without altering the core objectives.
- Use the ToC as a communication tool and ensure all stakeholders understand their role within it.
- Incorporate the ToC into regular monitoring and reflection sessions, helping teams track progress and make adjustments when needed.

2. Proven Methodologies Provide a Reliable and Scalable Foundation

Key Insight:

The project built on the strengths of earlier interventions (REVIS, ACTIV, YouCreate), creating a program grounded in evidence-based practices. This continuity made implementation smoother and more credible among facilitators and schools.

Tips for future application:

- Build on existing, tested models where possible—don't reinvent what's already working.
- Involve staff who participated in previous initiatives as mentors or peer trainers to ensure continuity.
- Ensure all partners receive orientation on legacy methodologies, especially those not involved in earlier phases.

3. Integration of Creative and Participatory Tools Boosts Youth Engagement

Key Insight:

The integration of creative, arts-based approaches gave young people powerful tools to express themselves and take ownership of local initiatives. This helped bridge formal learning with personal experience and advocacy.

Tips for future application:

- Equip youth with tools that match their strengths (e.g., storytelling, theatre, visual arts).
- Link creative activities with practical social outcomes, helping students see their impact.
- Ensure facilitators are trained in non-directive facilitation, encouraging youth ownership.

4. ToC Should Be Tailored to Different Age Groups

Key Insight:

The CARING model was highly effective for adolescents, but feedback showed strong potential to expand or adapt it for younger children (ages 7–12). This would require modifying language, materials, and parental engagement strategies.

Tips for future application:



- Develop age-differentiated versions of the ToC, with appropriate activities and expected outcomes.
- For younger children, include more parental involvement, simplified materials, and age-relevant methods (e.g., play-based learning).
- Train facilitators to adjust their methods depending on the developmental needs of children.

5. Local Ownership and School-Based Adaptation Are Crucial for Implementation

Key Insight:

The adaptability of the ToC at the school level ensured the intervention could respond to varied cultural and logistical realities. Facilitators played a central role in this localization process.

Tips for future application:

- Give schools and facilitators freedom to tailor activities, while clearly outlining non-negotiable project standards.
- Promote the “golden triangle” approach—strengthening ties between children, school staff, and parents, with support from local authorities.
- Develop quick-start implementation guides or “minimum standard” tools to support school-based customization.

6. Institutional Anchoring of the ToC Increases Sustainability

Key Insight:

While the ToC guided implementation effectively, its long-term sustainability depends on integration into formal school practices and national policy frameworks. In Romania, for instance, project outcomes were reflected in national strategy documents—a promising step toward structural change.

Tips for future application:

- Embed ToC elements into school-level protocols, such as GBV response mechanisms or action plans for student-led initiatives.
- Partner with ministries and training institutions to align project outcomes with national teacher training and child protection mandates.
- Create policy briefs and advocacy tools based on the ToC to promote formal adoption at system level.

7. Contextual Responsiveness Enhances Resilience and Legitimacy

Key Insight:

Facilitators’ ability to adjust terminology and language in response to evolving legal or cultural constraints—without abandoning the project’s essence—demonstrated how flexibility builds resilience and legitimacy.

Tips for future application:

- Encourage implementers to identify and adapt to context-specific risks early on (e.g., legal shifts, cultural sensitivities).
- Provide training on navigating politically sensitive topics with care while staying true to project values.
- Maintain core objectives even when modifying delivery language or public framing.

8. Dual Leadership Model: Empowering Facilitators and Youth Leaders



Key Insight:

The CARING project's success was driven by two key groups: trained facilitators embedded in schools and youth leaders who acted as peer educators. Their ownership, motivation, and role in knowledge dissemination were pivotal to achieving scale and depth of engagement.

Tips for future application:

- Ensure both facilitators and youth leaders receive structured induction and role clarity early in the project.
- Provide simple implementation tools (e.g., action plans or activity checklists) to reduce uncertainty and support planning.
- Align training and activity timelines with school calendars to improve feasibility and participation.

9. Structured School Selection through Self-Assessment

Key Insight:

School readiness and facilitator motivation significantly influenced implementation success. A pre-selection self-assessment tool could help match project demands with school capacities and interest.

Tips for future application:

- Introduce a school self-assessment tool assessing facilitator availability, motivation, and institutional capacity.
- Use this tool as a commitment signal and readiness indicator in the selection process.

10. Flexibility Paired with Quality Assurance

Key Insight:

The project allowed facilitators to tailor activities to their school's context, which enhanced relevance and ownership. However, without minimum standards and structured guidance, some initiatives drifted off-topic.

Tips for future application:

- Develop and share minimum standards or guiding frameworks for school-based activities.
- Create a tailored quality assurance system that balances autonomy with shared expectations and support.

11. Safe, Inclusive Spaces Foster Meaningful Child Engagement

Key Insight:

Children thrived in environments where facilitators fostered trust, inclusion, and openness. This enabled them to speak up, share experiences, and take meaningful action through the initiatives they created.

Tips for future application:

- Train facilitators in non-directive, empathetic engagement strategies.
- Allow room for creative expression and storytelling as legitimate forms of advocacy and learning.
- Design safe spaces with informal formats that allow silent or reserved children to engage at their own pace.

12. Grounding Learning in Contextualized Evidence and Terminology

Key Insight:

By using country-specific data and clear definitions around GBV/SRGBV, the project made the content relevant and urgent. This approach helped students and teachers connect abstract topics to local realities.



Tips for future application:

- Present national or school-level data early in trainings.
- Use consistent, age-appropriate terminology—but allow adaptation for sensitivity where needed.
- Include real-life examples to bridge learning with daily student experiences.

13. Recognizing Youth Contributions Increases Motivation

Key Insight:

Youth need meaningful recognition—not only participation. Recognition helps sustain engagement and validates their contributions.

Tips for future application:

- Integrate non-material recognition mechanisms like public acknowledgments, certificates, and opportunities to present their work.
- Ensure equitable recognition for all contributors—not just visible leaders.

14. Democratic and Transparent Youth Selection Processes

Key Insight:

Top-down selection of youth leaders may exclude capable students and affect motivation. Children preferred transparent and inclusive selection (regardless of school grades, English language skills, etc.), such as through student councils.

Tips for future application:

- Involve peer bodies (e.g., student councils) in selecting youth leaders.
- Clarify criteria while ensuring diversity in representation (academic levels, gender, communication styles).

15. Monitoring for Learning, Not Just Accountability

Key Insight:

While data collection was robust, its use was mainly for accountability. There is a strong opportunity to shift toward using data for reflection, learning, and adaptive management.

Tips for future application:

- Introduce regular reflection meetings with facilitators and partners to review and learn from data.
- Use dashboards and visual tools for real-time progress tracking and insight generation.
- Develop short “learning briefs” to document what’s working and what needs adjustment.

16. Training Materials Must Be Practical, Flexible, and Inclusive

Key Insight:

Facilitators appreciated the clarity and usability of training materials, though confidence varied based on previous experience. Teachers highlighted the value of well-organized content and age-relevant exercises.

Tips for future application:

- Offer modular, adaptable content that matches different facilitator profiles.
- Include real-life classroom scenarios and flexible exercises for different age groups.
- Provide space for facilitators to co-create content or contextualize it based on school dynamics.

17. Multi-Level Impact Measurement Enhances Understanding of Change



Key Insight:

The CARING project successfully tracked change across three levels—(1) behavior and attitudes of youth leaders and facilitators, (2) attitudinal shifts among students and teachers, and (3) increased awareness among indirect beneficiaries. This layered approach provided a comprehensive view of impact.

Tips for Future Application:

- Design Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) frameworks that differentiate indicators for each level of impact.
- Use participatory tools like storytelling, testimonials, or peer-reflections to complement quantitative tracking.
- Regularly revisit and adjust outcome measurement tools to ensure they capture behavioral and attitudinal changes effectively.

18: Student-Led Initiatives Drive Cultural and Institutional Change

Key Insight:

Initiatives like the “Emotional First Aid Box” not only fostered individual growth but also helped shift school cultures toward empathy, inclusion, and shared responsibility. Students transitioned from passive participants to agents of change.

Tips for future application:

- Continue using creative and peer-driven methods to spark emotional literacy and anti-violence dialogue.
- Document and showcase successful initiatives to inspire replication across schools.
- Promote cross-school exchanges to scale up positive models, such as peer adoption of initiatives seen in Croatia.

19: Sustainability Requires Structured Support and Institutional Anchoring

Key Insight:

Although the student-led approach empowered children, sustainability depends on supportive structures like internal protocols, school-based ownership, and system-level integration.

Tips for Future Application:

- Equip schools with toolkits (e.g., initiative flowcharts, implementation checklists, GBV response protocols) to embed project practices.
- Formalize follow-up roles for teachers or coordinators to ensure continuity beyond project funding.
- Use visual, age-friendly guidance in classrooms to encourage children to take initiative without relying on external prompts.

20: Strengthening Facilitator Support Is Crucial for Long-Term Impact

Key Insight:

Facilitators played a central role in implementation but faced significant responsibilities without consistent structural support.

Tips for future application:

- Ensure facilitators have access to regular supervision, professional development, and peer support networks.



- Include school leadership in facilitator planning and encourage shared responsibility to reduce individual workload.
- Establish institutional backup or succession mechanisms for facilitator roles to prevent disruptions.

21: Institutional Partnerships Are Key to Policy-Level Impact

Key Insight:

The integration of CARING outcomes into Romania's national strategy of the school violence prevention demonstrates that long-term impact is possible when strategic partnerships with ministries are cultivated.

Tips for future application:

- Involve ministries and education authorities early in the project lifecycle.
- Align project ToCs with national education goals and frameworks to facilitate uptake.
- Use successful examples (like Romania) as advocacy cases to replicate engagement with policymakers in other countries.
- Encourage regular joint donor-partner learning exchanges (e.g., through mid-term reflections or learning briefs).

22: Early Engagement of School Leadership is Critical for Ownership

Key Insight:

Schools with actively involved principals and management staff experienced smoother implementation and longer-lasting integration of project values. In contrast, limited school leadership engagement often left facilitators unsupported.

Tips for future application:

- Conduct a structured onboarding process for school principals that includes role expectations, timelines, and benefits.
- Develop communication materials specifically targeting school leadership to foster institutional buy-in.
- Schedule periodic leadership check-ins to reinforce alignment and support.

23: Facilitators Need Clearer Guidance and Continuity Mechanisms

Key Insight:

Facilitators played a central role in implementation but faced heavy administrative demands, occasional communication gaps, and no formal system to ensure continuity if they left mid-project.

Tips for future application:

- Create a concise facilitator implementation guide with timelines, reporting templates, and FAQs.
- Provide simple tools to reduce administrative burden (e.g., pre-filled forms, digital reporting apps).
- Develop a backup facilitator strategy in partnership with schools to avoid disruption due to staff turnover.

24: School-Level Structures are Essential for Sustainability

Key Insight:

The presence of strong school structures (including leadership, peer support among teachers, and alignment with school calendars) directly influenced the durability of outcomes and post-project continuation.

Tips for future application:



- Integrate sustainability checklists and planning tools into school-level implementation.
- Encourage schools to embed CARING principles into annual action plans or extracurricular programming.
- Promote joint student-staff planning committees to foster ownership and continuity.



6. Annexes

Annex 1 – Full list of required questions in the ToR

The capitalization exercise should respond to questions focusing on successes & challenges encountered during project implementation, adjustments needed, quality of implementation, partnership aspects, resources needed vs resources available. Below are listed some guiding questions:

1. Which were the best practices used during project implementation who conducted to achieving project set goals and objectives?
2. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality/performance of this project? Any further comments?
3. What kind of feedback did the stakeholders/beneficiaries share with the project team?
4. What are the main assumptions, information gap in CARING project's theory of change that we need to verify?
5. What are the main gaps in evidence during the project implementation Tdh needs to learn about?
6. How easy were the evidence gathering processes of the project to apply and conduct were easy to conduct?
7. How efficient were the tools applied during the project implementation for informing project outputs? What about the balance between qualitative and quantitative data gathering processes?
8. Did the project staff and implementing partners organize reflection meetings for gathering lessons learnt, best practices and recommendations aiming to enhance project implementation? To what extent were these project learnings implemented?
9. What were the results of implementing the findings from the project's learning sessions? How did applying lessons learned during the project impact its implementation and results?
10. Is there anything needed to complement the set of indicators for accountability and learning purpose? What are the qualitative questions linked with our quantitative indicators that we must consider for ensuring rich, robust and useful information?
11. Did this project lead to any unexpected changes/ outcomes? If yes, please provide details (including why you didn't expect this to happen).
12. What activities need to be changed to make the project more effective? What new or different activities can be suggested to be considered for further replicability?
13. What about the project duration, timing or sequence of activities? Was it a perceived need to change it? If yes, why?
14. Did the project reach its intended target groups? Were any changes necessary during implementation compared to the original plan? Do you think the target group was well chosen,



or would you suggest adjustments for future projects?

15. Was the Gender & Age & Diversity Marker applied during the project implementation? What was the progress made in this regard after using the tool? What should be done differently next time? Any learnings from this process?
16. How were the dynamics between partners and stakeholders? What went well? What were the challenges and why?
17. Would you involve different stakeholders or partners? If yes, who/ why? (If possible, list the partners you would choose to work with again, and those you would not), and argue the choices.
18. Was the budget sufficient? If not, why not? What activities were under-resourced?
19. Did the project have enough competent staff to carry out the planned activities? If not, why not? What additional competencies or HR resources would have helped this project?
20. What additional support from the Regional Office or the HQ might have helped?
21. To what extent lessons learnt and project recommendations are enabling the replicability and transferability of the approach and results to other European countries, specifically to those with similar particularities of violence in schools: Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Poland, Latvia, Slovakia?

Annex 2– Typical questions for SCORE analyses dimensions

Strengths

- **Strengths.** What would we regard as our strengths in this?
- **Services.** What services and capabilities do we have? What services can we call on from others?
- **Support.** What support-resources do we have available to us? What support do we have, from others?

Challenges

- **Challenges.** What are the issues we need to address? – within the organisation? – in relationships with partners, suppliers, other stakeholders?
- **Constraints.** What holds us back? What would constrain us to prevent any needed change? How will we resolve or work around those constraints?
- **Capabilities needed.** What new capabilities and services would we need? What skills would be required? What would be needed to develop these skills and services?

Options

- **Opportunities/Risks.** What opportunities present themselves? What risks arise from with those opportunities? What opportunities arise from those apparent risks?
- **Options.** What are our options in relation to those opportunities and risks? How can we act on those options? How should we prioritise those options and actions?

Responses

- **Responses.** What responses would we expect from stakeholders? from customers? competitors? providers? partners? staff?
- **Returns / Rewards.** What is the value or implication of each opportunity and risk?

Effectiveness

- **Local scope.** How can we make *this* work better?
- **Global scope.** How can we use this to make *everything* work better, for all stakeholders in scope?



Annex 3 – Data collection plan



Data%20Collection%
20Plan.xlsx

Annex 4 – Inception Capitalization report



CARING
Capitalization_Exercise

Annex 5 – Evaluation report

Annex 6 – Emerging topics identified by needs assessments

The project addressed part of the needs and issues related to GBV in schools that were identified during the needs assessment conducted in September 2023 by Tdh Hungary such as:

1. **Gender Stereotypes & Norms**
 - Persistent stereotypes influence perceptions and treatment of students (e.g., “boys shouldn’t cry,” “girls need protection”).
 - Gender nonconformity is more tolerated in girls than boys.
 - Students generally hold stronger stereotypes than staff.
2. **Types & Prevalence of Violence**
 - **Verbal abuse** is the most common form across all countries.
 - **Physical violence** is more frequent among boys; **sexual violence** and **verbal abuse** more often affect girls.
 - **Cyberbullying** is growing, especially in Bulgaria.
 - Discrimination based on gender, social status, ethnicity, or sexual orientation is widespread.
3. **Underreporting & Weak Response Mechanisms**
 - Students fear retaliation or think reporting won’t help.
 - Teachers often lack clarity or training on how to respond.
 - Formal protocols are often weak or inconsistently applied.
4. **School Climate & Trust Gaps**
 - Staff often perceive schools as safer than students do.



- Students are more open to discussing sexuality and violence but lack trust in adult support systems.
- 5. **Disciplinary Practices**
 - Schools rely more on punitive or informal measures.
 - Positive disciplinary approaches and student engagement are underused.
- 6. **Need for Training & Awareness**
 - Teachers and staff need more training in GBV, positive discipline, and inclusive education.
 - Psychosocial support structures are under-resourced.

Annex 7 – Emerging topics identified by needs assessments

For learning purposes, qualitative indicators could include:

1. **Impact of Practices and Interventions:**
 - *Qualitative Question:* How have the practices implemented influenced the children's and educators' day-to-day experiences or outcomes in a meaningful way?
2. **Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback:**
 - *Qualitative Question:* What are the key insights shared by the facilitators/children/school management about the challenges and successes of the project? How do these insights align with or diverge from the intended outcomes?
3. **Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer:**
 - *Qualitative Question:* In what ways have the activities contributed to the educators' long-term skills development or organizational capacity? Can we observe evidence of skills being applied in real-life contexts?
4. **Sustainability and Continuity:**
 - *Qualitative Question:* How likely is it that the practices introduced will be sustained after the project ends? What are the barriers to long-term adoption?
5. **Contextual Relevance and Adaptation:**
 - *Qualitative Question:* How well do the project activities align with the local context or needs of the beneficiaries? Were there any changes made to adapt the project to specific local circumstances?