



Building Relationships through Innovative Development of Gender-Based Violence Awareness in Europe [BRIDGE Project]

Children and Youth Survey – 1st Data Collection – Key Findings

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This data collection took place within the framework of the regional project [“Building Relationships through Innovative Development of Gender-Based Violence Awareness in Europe - BRIDGE”](#) with the purpose of gathering information on the level of awareness among children and youth on the move on gender-based violence. Data was gathered through a questionnaire encoded in a mobile data collection tool that was used during face to face meetings.

The BRIDGE project is **supported by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)** and is implemented under the lead of Terre des hommes Regional Office for Europe in Hungary, in partnership with Defence for Children International Belgium (DCI Belgium) and FEDASIL (Belgium), Association for the Social Support of Youth – ARSIS (Greece), Kopin (Malta) and Terre des hommes Romania. The aim of the project is to strengthen the response to gender-based violence (GBV) affecting children and youth on the move in European Union countries as well as to empower children and youth on the move to better protect themselves.

1. General

17 youths, age 18-24, were interviewed¹ during the first data collection of the BRIDGE project. At the time of the interviews, in August-September 2019, the interviewees were all residing at the Hal Far Tent Village (HTV)², an open centre run by the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS)³.

¹ The interviewees were held face-to-face with the researcher filling in the answers directly in the application on a tablet.

² <https://homeaffairs.gov.mt/en/MHAS-Departments/awas/Pages/Open-Centres.aspx>

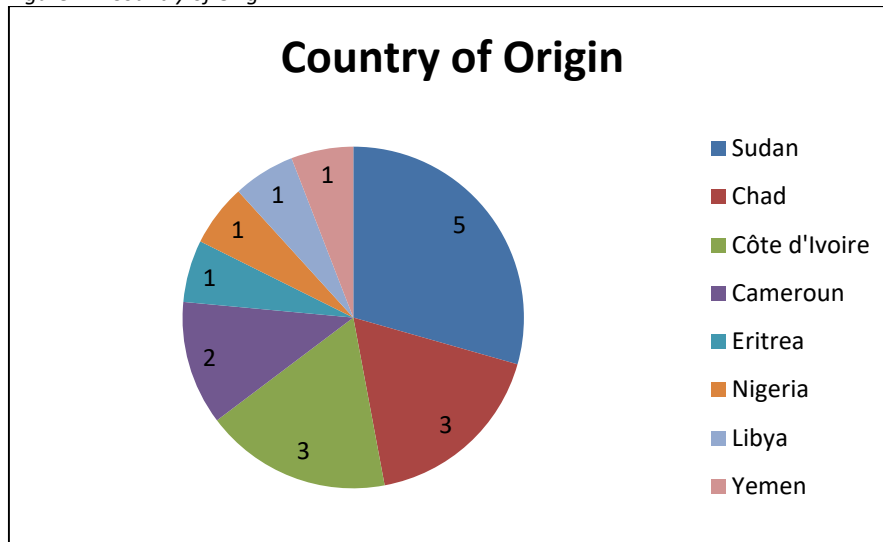
³ <https://homeaffairs.gov.mt/en/MHAS-Departments/awas/Pages/AWAS.aspx>



Gender. The majority (12) of the interviewees are male, with only 5 being female. This is due to the fact that the majority of the residents (reflecting the majority of asylum seekers arriving in Malta) are male.

Country of Origin. All of the interviewees (see Figure 1), except 2, hail from sub-Saharan Africa (both from Western and Eastern Africa), with the greatest number hailing from Sudan. The other 2 interviewees are from North Africa (Libya) and Asia (Yemen).

Figure 1 – Country of Origin



Family Members. None of the interviewees were accompanied by a member of their family, except one whose younger brother was also residing at the open centre. This interviewee, along with two others, indicated that they had been separated from their family members during their journey, while the majority (14) noted that they had not left their country of origin with any family member.

2. Friends and School

Out of the 17 interviewees, only 3 replied that they have found friends of their own age at the HTV⁴, while almost half of the interviewees (8) indicated that they spend time with friends much older than them (i.e. at least 5 years older than them). However, both those who indicated that they have friends and those who did not, spoke about how they spend their time with friends. (This could mean that they do not necessarily consider the other residents as friends, but they still spend time with them. Only one interviewee specifically reiterated that he does not have any friends).

3. Awareness of GBV: Hypothetical Scenarios of Violence and / or Abuse

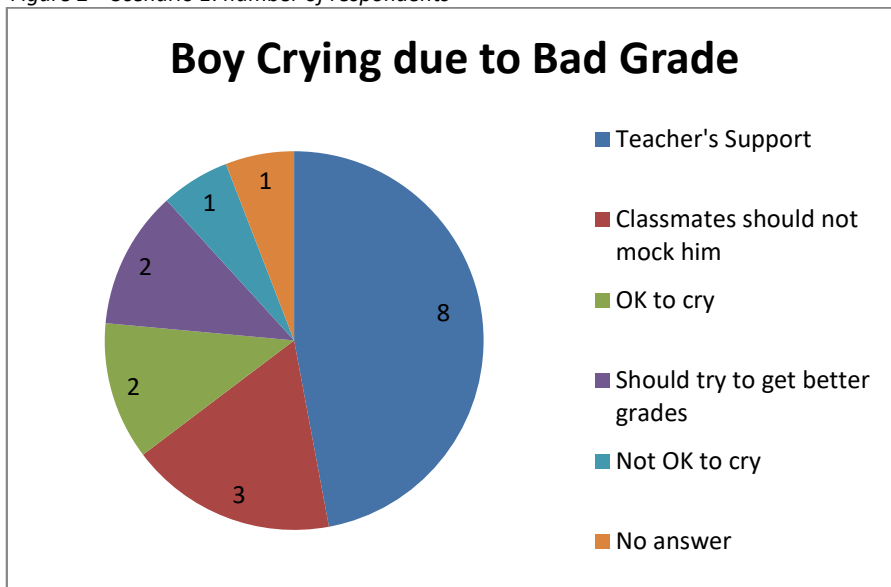
This section analyses the responses to the different hypothetical scenarios concerning abuse and / or violence, some of which are situations where the respondents are victims themselves, while in others they are witnesses. Some examples were:

⁴ See, however, section 6 on limitations with regards to these questions.



Scenario 1: Emotional Abuse / Bullying. In the first situation, where a boy at school cries because he received a bad grade and his classmates make fun of him, the majority of the respondents gave rather positive answers (see Figure 2). Half (8) of those who answered (16) indicated that the boy in question should ask for the teacher’s support. 2 interviewees replied that it is OK for a boy to cry in such a situation; while 6 interviewees gave their own reply. Out of the latter group, 3 said that his classmates should not make fun of him. However, 2 others said that the boy should make an effort to obtain good grades; while 1 interviewee said outright that he should not cry.

Figure 2 – Scenario 1: number of respondents

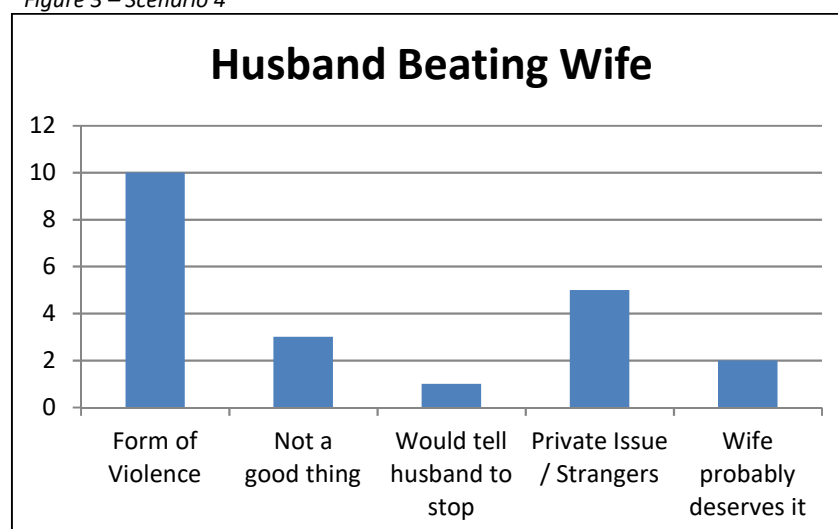


Scenario 4: Physical Abuse/ Domestic Violence. In this scenario, a husband is beating his wife in the street. The majority (10) of the total number of respondents (16) indicated that this is a form of violence. 4 respondents (some of whom also said that this is a form of violence) said that this is a private issue and it has nothing to do with them. 3 interviewees added that what is happening is not a good thing, but while one said he would tell the husband to stop, another said he cannot say anything because they are strangers. Only 2 interviewees indicated that the wife most probably deserves it (see Figure 3). It is notable that in this scenario, all female respondents (4) indicated that this is a form of violence (even though one added that it is a private issue and that the wife probably deserves it).

Scenario 5: Physical Abuse / Domestic Violence. The 5th scenario presents a situation where the respondent is in a relationship and his / her partner beats them out of jealousy. Only 5 respondents (3 of whom are female) said this is a form of violence. Almost the majority (8) of the interviewees noted that this means that their partner really loves them; while 4 replied that they themselves are probably responsible for the situation. One respondent noted that if she errs, her partner can punish her in another manner (rather than beating her).



Figure 3 – Scenario 4



Analysis. Based on the responses to the scenarios presented above, the majority of the respondents consider husbands beating their wives in public as a form of violence. However, when it comes to partners beating them out of jealousy, most of the respondents feel that this is done out of love. These differences in answers could be attributed to various factors (one of them being that the possible replies to the two scenarios were largely different and thus cannot be fully compared). However, there are 2 distinct differences between the two scenarios: one is definitely happening in public while the location of the other is unknown (presumably private). The other difference is that in the first scenario, it is the male beating the female, while in the second scenario it can be either partner beating the other (thus in the latter, it could be the woman beating the man).

This seems to indicate that when it is a case of a man beating a woman it is considered (especially by the women) as violence; while if a woman is beating a man it is not necessarily considered so (although it is still considered as violence by the majority of the female respondents). This perception is also reflected in the case of the aunt shouting at an uncle, where most of the interviewees consider it as nothing to do with them.

Notably, in most of the scenarios presented (whether it is a case at school involving bullying and emotional abuse or a case of sexual abuse / harassment), most of the interviewees would choose to talk to someone about it, with most choosing to (or are of the opinion that the victim should) speak to a figure of authority. In fact, in the question asking respondents to whom they would ask for help if they encounter any form of violence, the vast majority (14) of them answered that they would speak to someone at the office of the open centre. (The other 3 respondents indicated that they would speak to the police and an organisation separate from the open centre, or speak to no one).

4. Support found at the Centre and in Malta

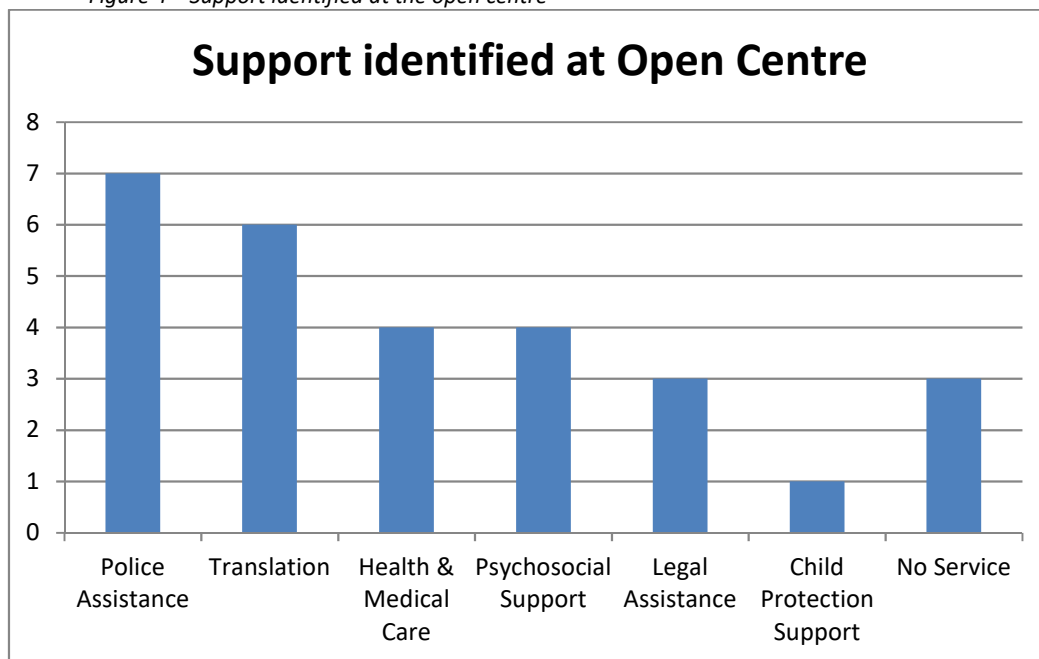
This section explores the respondents' perceptions of the support to be found at the open centre and in Malta in general, with regards to violence and abuse.



With regards to **support found at the open centre** (see Figure 4), **the most identified support available was police assistance**, with almost half (7) of the respondents (16) indicating they knew about this service. This was followed by translation (identified by 6 respondents), and health /

medical care (which most respondents identified as consisting of the staff at HTV open centre calling for an ambulance) and psychosocial support (4 each). **3 respondents indicated that there is no support at the open centre in any of the areas mentioned** (These are the respondents who solely chose the option of 'No help' and do not include those who chose this option together with others).

Figure 4 – Support identified at the open centre



Strikingly, none of the respondents indicate that they learnt about the support services (both inside and outside the open centre) available through formal channels and information-giving sessions at the centre. Instead, they learnt about the help available through witnessing this help being given to others (or themselves), such as an ambulance or the police being called when needed. One respondent even indicated that they knew they can call the police because this is what people do in their home country.

The lack of knowledge of services, and sometimes confusion about the existence of support, emerges clearly when respondents were asked **if medical support exists** if someone needs it, to which **more than half (9) had no answer or answered in the negative**: 3 did not reply and 6 replied 'probably / definitely not'. The situation is worse with regards to knowledge of the existence of **legal assistance**, to which question **almost half (8) did not answer and 5 replied 'definitely not'**.



5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings emerging from the survey, it is clear that while the young asylum seekers interviewed are aware of the possibility of speaking to the management of the centre they reside in should they encounter situations of violence / abuse, there is a huge lack of knowledge of the services and support regarding the same situations. While this does not mean these services do not exist, it indicates that the interviewees do not know of their existence or how to access them. This could be due to multiple reasons, including lack of information and language barriers (many residents do not speak English). Such findings indicate the need for action to be taken on several levels, including:

- Regular and accessible information sessions on the services and support available at the centre and in Malta. While information might be given upon arrival at the centre, it is necessary that such information is given on a regular basis, especially considering that at the time of arrival residents are possibly overloaded with information. Information also needs to be delivered in an accessible manner in order for everyone to benefit. Thus there is a need for interpreters and cultural mediators to help transmit the relevant information.
- Information needs also to be regularly disseminated by organisations (including non-governmental organisations [NGOs]) who are separate from the open centre but offer services to asylum seekers. While these NGOs are often short-staffed, they deliver vital services which need to be made known to the residents.
- Language classes are of utmost importance. These are being delivered, both at the open centre and elsewhere; however there is a need for more since the ones delivered at the centre (by volunteers) are fully booked. If asylum seekers cannot communicate their needs to others, services and support will be redundant.

6. Key Ethical Aspects and Limitations

Despite taking ethical considerations into account, certain obstacles and limitations were encountered. Firstly, the interviews were all held at one centre, thus possibly skewing the data. This also links to the fact that no children under the age of 18 were interviewed, due to difficulties in obtaining the necessary permissions from the relevant authorities within the data collection timeframe. Furthermore, interviews were only held with those who spoke the 3 languages spoken by the research team and the available interpreter - English, French and Arabic - thus missing out on obtaining the views of asylum seekers from other countries and of those who possibly encounter more barriers in accessing services and support due to language. Finally, the fact that the research team recruited participants through the open centre staff and were accompanied by a policeman while going round the centre could have brought several ethical issues into play. While gatekeepers (open centre staff) were necessary to access participants in this case, power issues which are already at play between the open centre residents and staff were further compounded in these situations.

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