"If someone violates our rights, we should know that this is not a normal thing."

Child rights training in schools in Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Estonia and Sweden

Author: Agneta Gunnarsson
“If someone violates our rights, we should know that this is not a normal thing”

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Save the Children Sweden
SE-107 88 Stockholm
Visiting address: Landsvägen 39, Sundbyberg
Phone: +46 8 698 90 00
Fax: +46 8 698 90 10
www.rb.se
info@rb.se
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Summary

This study describes and analyses the situation regarding child rights training inputs in schools in five European countries: Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Estonia and Sweden. The following broad issues are covered:

- General context of the country: curriculum, teacher training and government attitude;
- Description of partner organisation (and Save the Children Sweden) activities relating to child rights training in schools and partners’ perceptions of this training;
- Results of pre-studies;
- Description and analysis of the projects and other activities relating to completed children’s rights training in schools: objectives, target groups, methods and materials used, relationship to duty-bearers, monitoring and evaluation etc.
- Plans for the future.

Initially Save the Children Sweden’s partner organisations in Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Estonia, as well as the Swedish programme of Save the Children Sweden, were requested to carry out pre-studies in three to five schools. Questions about how children’s rights are taught in the school, effects, suggestions for improvements and so on, were to be answered by principals, teachers, students and parents. Two countries, Moldova and Sweden, carried out comprehensive pre-studies. In the remaining countries more limited pre-studies were completed or information on the opinions of the different stakeholders was gathered in other ways.

General context

In all the countries there are some, albeit limited, provisions for addressing children’s rights in the school curriculum. In Romania and Serbia the issue can be taught in civic education classes or in optional courses, in Estonia it is covered in human studies or civic education. Overloaded curricula and lack of proper training and motivation of teachers, however, often mean that children’s rights are not addressed in a comprehensive manner.

In Moldova the only available space is in the form (head) teacher’s hour. In the Swedish curriculum children’s rights are not mentioned. The concept “basic values”, however, describes the values that should permeate the work in schools. This rather vague concept means that many students are not familiarised with a rights-based approach.

In most of the countries the ministries of education lack capacity and resources. The ministries’ interest in assuming responsibility for making the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child known and directing education to the development of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as stated in Article 29 of the convention, are mostly limited.
Organisations and activities

The Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) in Moldova uses children’s rights training in a strategic fashion; as a point of departure for addressing problems such as children left alone by migrating parents and children in boarding schools.

Salvati Copiii in Romania has developed an optional course on children’s rights, which has been licensed by the Ministry of Education. The Child Rights Centre in Serbia has also developed an optional course, which is implemented in a limited number of schools, and will apply for licensing.

Save the Children Sweden has promoted training on children’s rights in schools since the mid-1990s but in recent years promotion and methodological development has been lacking. The staff of the Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCW) conducts lessons on children’s rights on request from schools.

Pre-studies

Far-reaching conclusions from the pre-studies and other information gathered should be avoided. The findings, however, provide interesting qualitative insights regarding how child rights training inputs are perceived by principals, teachers and students.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that these findings are confirmed by a major survey in the European Union, carried out on behalf of the EU Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security (The Rights of the Child Analytic Report, Eurobarometer, 2008), which was published after this study was carried out.

The findings of the pre-studies indicate a relatively good level of knowledge about children’s rights among Moldovan students. Many Romanian students also seem to be aware of their rights, while this knowledge is more limited among Swedish and Estonian students. Interestingly, a comparison between the two countries where comprehensive pre-studies were carried out, Moldova and Sweden, indicates that Moldovan students have better knowledge about their rights than the Swedish do. A general challenge in all these five countries is that child rights training inputs are often rather theoretical and, consequently, children do not learn how to exercise their rights and have no clear idea about the link between theory and practice.

Analysis of the projects

Regarding how to make reality of rights, an interesting feature of the training implemented by the Child Rights Centre in Serbia is that it concludes with a practical project; the students identify a problem in the school, design an action plan and try to solve the problem. This way the students are provided with an opportunity to make practical use of their rights. The same concept is used in an annual contest in which Salvati Copiii invites schools to participate and was also used in a former project carried out by CRIC.

All the organisations - some more than others, though - have developed materials, such as manuals, guidelines and child-friendly versions on the Convention on
the Rights of the Child, that are used in children's rights training in schools. However, the opportunities for pooling resources in this sense seem limited due to government requirements in connection with accreditation of courses, adaptations to different project concepts and for other reasons.

Knowledge about participatory and creative teaching methods, which are often associated with training inputs on children's rights, is very much appreciated by teachers. Probably this aspect could be emphasised even more by the partner organisations in order to promote the training and, through them, possibly also make the teaching of other subjects more dynamic and child friendly.

Several partners have developed mechanisms for quantitative follow-up of their children's rights training (number of teachers who are trained, number of children participating etc.). Qualitative follow-up (measuring what students really have learned) is less common. Even less often are outcomes (whether the students find the knowledge useful and are able to apply it) measured. Seemingly, there is a need for development of qualitative follow-up methods.

With the exception of CRIC’s work, the links between child rights training inputs in schools and other projects related to problems in the school environment, such as lack of participation, anti-violence and anti-bullying projects and inclusion of minorities, children with disabilities or other disadvantaged children, appear to be rather weak. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, however, emphasises a holistic perspective, stating that "education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential". Furthermore, Article 29 states that education of the child must be directed to the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Considering this, there is ample room for strategic and methodological development aimed at addressing all school issues under one common heading: democratic governance in schools.

**Plans for the future**

Regarding plans for the future, CRIC intends to continue working with student participation through the strengthening of youth councils. CRIC is also considering a project targeting parents.

Salvati Copiii persistently lobbies the Ministry of Education to make children's rights a mandatory subject in the curriculum and the Child Rights Centre in Serbia hopes to obtain licensing for their child rights training courses in the near future.

As of yet Save the Children Sweden has no concrete plans regarding children's rights training in schools. The pre-study, however, indicates a low level of knowledge among teachers and students about children's rights and will be used as an input in discussions about future direction.
Introduction and methodology

Introduction

The Save the Children Sweden Europe programme has, for many years, been working to disseminate knowledge about children’s rights in schools.

During visits to the relevant countries and in project proposals and reports from partner organisations, Save the Children Sweden has noticed that limited documentation and analyses of these projects have been carried out. How have the projects developed over time? Which methods and materials have been used? What are the results?

Other questions are whether there are good examples and innovative ideas that could be disseminated to other countries? It is also important to find out how partners perceive these projects. How can they be further developed? What would the partners like to see happen within five years? Last but not least; how are activities related to the dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child linked to other projects that are carried in schools, such as work against bullying and abuse, activities aimed at inclusion of all children and the eradication of discrimination and children and young peoples’ participation?

In Save the Children Sweden’s programme for Sweden, dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and knowledge about children’s rights to schools was a priority theme for several years. Many local branches of Save the Children Sweden still work with this issue. Knowledge about the results of these efforts is, however, limited. Consequently, it was decided to include Sweden in this study.

In regions and countries where Save the Children Sweden works in Africa, Asia and Latin America, information on strategies, methods and results of dissemination of knowledge about children’s rights to schools is also scattered and often outdated. These regions have therefore also expressed an interest in this study.

Scope of the study

Before the study was initiated, Save the Children Sweden’s Europe Programme sent out invitations to partner organisations in all the countries included in the Europe Programme. Partners in five countries – Estonia, Moldova, Kosovo, Romania and Serbia – responded positively to the invitation and stated that they wished to participate in the study. For various reasons, however, Kosovo later decided not to take part. Instead Sweden was included. Accordingly, the participating countries are: Estonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Sweden.

1. Three evaluations from South Asia, Vietnam and Central America are summarised in the report Lessons Learned on Child Rights Training by Lage Bergström (Save the Children Sweden, 2001). The report also contains a checklist of aspects to consider for future child-rights training programmes.
The following broad issues are covered:

- General context of the country: curriculum, teacher training and government attitude;
- Description of partner organisations, activities related to child rights training in schools and partners’ perceptions of this training;
- Results of pre-studies (see sections on Methodology and Limitations below);
- Description and analysis of the projects: target groups, objectives, methods and materials used, relationship to duty-bearers, monitoring and evaluation, results, etc.;
- Plans for the future.

**Methodology**

Initially all participating partner organisations, as well as the Swedish programme of Save the Children Sweden, were requested to carry out pre-studies in three to five schools where some kind of child rights training activities had been carried out. A questionnaire for the pre-studies was developed by the author of this study in cooperation with the programme officer responsible in the Europe Programme. The questions to principals, teachers, students and parents dealt with issues such as knowledge about children’s rights, how children’s rights are taught in the school, objectives, methods, effects and suggestions for improvements (see appendix 1). In Sweden questions to local branches of Save the Children Sweden were included.

The author of this study visited Estonia, Moldova, Romania and Serbia in March and April 2008. Partner organisations were interviewed about the child rights training projects in schools and other activities related to them. Meetings also took place with other stakeholders: representatives of ministries of education, other government authorities and institutions, NGOs etc. (see Appendix 2).

In addition, visits to at least one school in each country were made. During these visits the intention was to carry out interviews with principals, teachers, students and parents in accordance with the questionnaire which had been developed for the pre-studies.

**Limitations**

Two of the countries, Moldova and Sweden, carried out comprehensive pre-studies. In Moldova altogether four schools were included and in Sweden five schools participated in the pre-study. Due to lack of time no interviews with parents were carried out in Sweden.

In Romania, principals, teachers and students were interviewed, mostly by telephone. In addition, brief visits to two schools were made during the visit of the author of this report.

Due to time constraints only a few interviews which partly covered the issues raised in the questionnaire were carried out in Estonia. The partner organisation in Serbia considered its rigorous monitoring of the ongoing project to provide sufficient information and had not carried out the pre-study. Brief visits to one school
in Estonia and one in Serbia were made during the author’s visit.

As the pre-studies are limited in scope, drawing firm conclusions from them should be avoided. It should also be noted that they are not representative of the general situation in the countries concerned as they are carried out in schools where some kind of child rights training inputs have taken place. The pre-studies, however, provide interesting qualitative insights regarding how child rights training is perceived by the different stakeholders. It is also noteworthy that the results of the pre-studies are confirmed by the Eurobarometer Survey\(^2\) that was published after this study was carried out (see section Final Comment).

Documentation and other written materials that would have been useful for the purposes of this study were mostly not available in English. Consequently, almost all information that is used in the study is based on oral sources. Considering language constraints, errors of translation and so on, this increases the risk of misunderstanding and other errors. Efforts have, however, been made to check the accuracy of the information.

Despite the above mentioned limitations this study, hopefully, constitutes a point of departure for further exchange of experience and knowledge about child rights training in schools and how these training inputs could be linked to other activities related to schools carried out by partner organisations and Save the Children Sweden.

**Organisation of the study**

After this introduction the situation regarding child rights training in schools in each of the five countries covered is described in Chapters 2 to 6. In Chapter 7 conclusions are drawn and some recommendations are provided.

**Author of the study**

The study was carried out by Agneta Gunnarsson, journalist, researcher and consultant at the consultancy company Context in Stockholm, Sweden.

Ulrika Persson, programme officer at the Europe Section of Save the Children Sweden, was contact person.

The consultant wishes to express her deep and sincere gratitude to all those individuals who shared their knowledge and time with her. While many people have contributed, any errors or misunderstandings remaining are solely the fault of the author.

\(^2\) Eurobarometer, 2008
Moldova

Opportunities for child rights training in Moldovan schools

Curriculum

In the mandatory school curriculum the available space for training on children’s rights is in the weekly “form teacher’s hour”. In the form teacher’s hour, the head teachers are supposed to discuss practical matters, try to solve disciplinary or other problems and also introduce a wide array of subjects that are not included in the curricula of other subjects, for example topics relating to health, democracy and governance and international organisations.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is mentioned in the curriculum as one subject that should be highlighted during the form teacher’s class. Whether the issue is really taken up in a reasonably comprehensive manner depends on the form teachers’ knowledge and interest and the availability of material providing guidelines for the teacher. Teachers in Moldova are poorly paid and, therefore, many of them have limited motivation for putting in extra effort.

During the years 2002–2006 the subjects, “Civic education” and “The law and us”, provided more opportunities for dealing with children’s rights. Due to the overloaded curriculum these subjects are now optional, which means that they are not taught in many schools as students want to concentrate on the subjects that are most important for their final examinations.

Some years ago, the need for a more life skills-oriented subject was, however, identified by UNICEF and NGOs. They convinced the Ministry of Education to accept “Life skills” as a new subject. A curriculum was developed and tested, teachers were trained and the subject was introduced in September 2005. Shortly after this, however, the conservative Moldovan Church voiced concerns about some parts of the curriculum. The Government gave in to this criticism and decided that life skills should only be an optional subject.

Teacher training

Among Moldovan university students, teacher training is not a prestigious subject. This means that some university students who take this course do not do so because they have chosen the subject, but because they achieved only low marks and have, therefore, no other options.

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3. Form teachers are teachers with overall responsibility for a class. The form teachers are responsible for information to the students, for dealing with problems, contacts with parents, and so on. For this extra responsibility the form teachers’ salaries are about ten per cent higher than those of other teachers.
Higher education is considered to be rigid and conservative. In addition, universities have a high degree of autonomy from the government. Issues relating to children's rights are not included in the curriculum of the teacher training courses and, according to NGOs and the Ministry of Education, few opportunities for the government to influence the universities on this matter are available.

In-service training for teachers is provided by the state Institute of Educational Sciences and some NGOs, such as ProDidactica and the Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC).

According to an NGO representative, one obstacle to change is, however, the legacy from the Soviet Union:

“There should be no visible problems. The main goal for the teachers was to avoid criticism. Everything should look good when the inspectors came. This mentality will probably last for another 30 years, or as long as the teachers who were trained under this system are there.”

**Government attitude**

The Ministry of Education lacks economic resources as well as capacity, according to actors outside the government. At district level district departments of education are responsible for matters relating to education. School inspectors at district level pay visits to schools and organise seminars, primarily for school directors and deputy directors.

Eugenia Parlicov from the Ministry of Education states that students are familiarised with human rights in mandatory subjects, such as history, and in extra-curricular activities provided by NGOs.

Government officials at both national and district level highlight the importance of cooperation with NGOs. The fact that the NGOs bring guidebooks and other materials that are useful for teachers is highly appreciated. Government officials also stress the fact that the country recently passed from communism to democracy and that teachers need time to change mentality and adapt to the new situation.

**Partner organisation and activities**

**Background**

In 1998, UNICEF Moldova and the European Youth Exchange Association created and trained a group of young volunteers with the aim of disseminating the Convention on the Rights of the Child in schools. These volunteers, who were students in history, law, educational science and other faculties, formed the independent NGO Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) in 1999.

CRIC began to develop projects such as training inputs on children’s rights and participation. A Children’s Parliament and local youth councils were set up. Small grants were introduced for youth council members who wanted to identify and attempt to solve problems in their communities.

The local youth councils are now institutionalised and should be introduced in all schools by 2009, according to the national youth strategy.
Current activities

In recent years CRIC has moved on to addressing children’s rights through other issues:

“We started with raising awareness about the Convention on the Rights of the Child but then understood that projects on concrete rights were needed, for example parental neglect, participation and protection from trafficking,” says Cezar Gaviriluc, Director of CRIC.

In 2003, CRIC was the first NGO to gain access to Moldovan boarding schools and since then life skills education as well as special training for girls is carried out in eight boarding schools in the country.4

In 2007 the project “Social inclusion of children left behind” 5 was initiated. This project is based on the idea that children who have been left behind by migrating parents are in need of special emotional and social support. Often these needs are not noticed and instead the children are regarded as privileged as they have money which their parents send home.

In cooperation with teachers, CRIC has developed guidelines and training inputs for teachers. The intention is that teachers should use the guidelines and the new knowledge they have acquired in the form teachers’ hours. In these classes all students participate, both those who have migrating parents and those who do not. Consequently, all the students and the teachers train their sensitivity to the individual needs of others.

Both the life skills training inputs in boarding schools and the material on children left behind are based on the children’s rights. Issues relating to children’s rights are addressed in training inputs for teachers as well as in theoretical lessons for students.

Pre-study

Introduction

CRIC carried out a comprehensive pre-study about child rights training in schools. Three schools that had been involved in some projects were visited. These schools were the Hirova School in Calarasi District, Biesti School in Orhei District and Lapusna School in Hancesti District. In these schools interviews were carried out with principals, a group of teachers, two groups of children and a group of parents. In addition, the Bravicea School in Calarasi District was visited during the author’s stay in Moldova. There interviews were carried out with the principal and groups of teachers, students and parents.

4. Most of the children who are placed in boarding schools are there because of poverty or alcoholism and other family problems. Approximately 12,000 Moldovan children are in boarding schools which are often located in remote areas. In the boarding schools they are brought up in poor material and emotional circumstances and often lack contact with the surrounding communities.

5. According to investigations made when the project was started large number of Moldovan children have parents who work abroad, either in Western Europe or in Russia. In the Cimislia District is was found that about 46 per cent of the school children have at least one parent abroad. In the Calarasi District 31 per cent of the children had at least one parent working abroad. Of them 25 per cent reported that both parents were abroad. Most of the children live with grandparents or other family members but 7.5 per cent said that they lived alone.
The principals

The child rights training started in different ways in the schools that are covered by the pre-study. In some schools the initiative came from NGOs such as CRIC or the National Youth Resource Centre, in others teachers received training from the district Department of Education or some other government authority.

Some of the principals regret that civic education and life skills are not mandatory subjects any more. Now child rights issues are taken up in the forms teachers’ educational hours and, in some of the schools, in history classes and optional classes. Children’s rights are, however, addressed in a rather “superficial” way, one principal admits. Another says that it depends on the teachers how the issue is covered. More material on children’s rights was requested by some of the principals.

The objective of the child rights training is “to create aware citizens” and for the students “to be aware and to be able to help others who do not know about rights”. Regarding effects of the training the principals have no clear picture, but one of them states that children express their opinions more freely than they used to.

One of the principals says that he noted that parents are not well informed about new topics. Therefore, he organised a “parents’ school” consisting of seminars on children’s rights and other issues.

The teachers

Most teachers participated in training inputs on children’s rights when they were teaching civic education or life skills. This training was conducted by the district Department for Education or by NGOs. Two teachers have had no training on children’s rights. Some of the teachers say that the training was important for them, not only as teachers but also as human beings. They changed their way of teaching and also their attitudes towards children.

More or less unanimously the teachers state that there is not enough time for teaching children’s rights; a large number of topics have to be covered during the educational classes and often instructions about new subjects that have to be dealt with are sent out from the Ministry of Education. Therefore, no more than two or three hours per year are dedicated to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some teachers also requested guidelines, DVDs and other material as they have limited time and are badly paid and it takes time to prepare these educational classes.

The teachers regret that civic education and life skills were omitted from the curriculum. These subjects “prepared the children for life”, one teacher says. The teachers think that the best way to teach children’s rights in a comprehensible manner would be to reintroduce a combination of the two subjects.

Some of the teachers noted positive changes among their students, such as the ability to express opinions, more independent thinking and improved teacher-pupils relations. However, they also state that there is a long way between knowing and respecting rights and that children also need to learn how to apply their rights.

In one of the schools teachers point out that it is not easy to teach children about rights in a society where rights are constantly violated: parents migrate and leave their
children behind, teachers and many other groups cannot survive on their poor salaries and "all rights vanish when you step into the hallway of a hospital and have to pay for services" and so on.

**The students**

The majority of the students state that they learned about children's rights in elementary school. Some also mention participation in projects run by NGOs. A few students say that they first heard about children's rights from their families, in kindergarten or on TV.

Both younger children (4th to 8th grade) and the older ones (9th to 12th grade) seem to have a fairly good knowledge about children's rights. They mention several rights that are relevant to themselves such as the right to participate, the right not to be discriminated against and the rights to education, privacy and leisure time.

Children's rights are taught in the form of teachers' educational classes. Most of the students also mention that the issue was taken up in civic education and life skills while these subjects were still compulsory. The majority of the students would like to have these subjects reintroduced into the curriculum.

"In order to learn about our rights we need time, trained teachers and interesting lessons," a student in Biest summarises.

The rights of children are taught because "if someone violates our rights, we should know that this is not a normal thing," one pupil suggests.

"We should be able to defend our rights, for example if we are forced to do hard labour," another one says.

"Parents do not know about rights, therefore they have to be taught in school," is another suggestion.

The objective of child rights training is that children should become confident and be able to protect themselves, one student assumes.

Another student says that through learning about rights they can promote these rights among other children.

Most students acknowledge the fact that they have rights as well as responsibilities.

One student, however, remarks that the way teachers present the issue it sometimes becomes almost threatening: "Fulfil your obligations and then we can talk about rights."

When the question is first asked most of the students say that their rights are respected, but after some discussion they mention several examples where they are not. Students from poor families as well as children with disabilities are teased and humiliated, in school it is not possible to express opinions freely unless you want to risk bad marks and some children have low school attendance because they have to work. Other students cannot afford to buy books, bullying is frequent and Roma children are discriminated against. In spite of this, one student says that the problems in school are small compared to the ones children encounter when they come home and are met with harsh treatment, yelling and hard work.

It is unclear to most of the students what they should do about these and other problems. Some say that they cannot challenge teachers or parents:

"We are aware of our rights but we do not know what to do with them."
Another student says “We don’t really learn how to defend our rights.”

Others, however, think that they have become more confident and dare to enter into some discussions with teachers. Others say that they can turn to the youth council, if there is one. Yet others think that teachers have changed as a result of the child rights training and are more open and easier to talk to. Other improvements are that youth councils have been set up in some of the schools. Some schools also have school magazines.

Interactive teaching methods are very much appreciated by students. Further suggestions for improvements of teaching methods are to include more examples from real life in the training, that young people should come and talk to the students about children’s rights and to involve parents and grandparents in discussions about children’s rights.

The parents

Parents generally think that it is good that children are taught about their rights, but they stress the fact that they also have to know about their responsibilities.

“They need to know in order to become someone in life,” one parent in Biesti says.

“As parents do not know about these things, children need to have the knowledge,” another parent says.

Some parents state they have noticed changes in their children’s behaviour after rights were taught. Children are more free and confident. They are also more responsible and more mature. Others have not noted any particular changes.

“But there should be a good relationship in the family. A lot of parents beat their children,” a parent from Bravicea says.

Concerning rights violations, parents point out that many children are involved in work in the villages. Another problem is that, due to the economic situation, many parents have migrated and children are brought up by their grandparents.

“Some children from families in poor circumstances have no proper shoes and feel ashamed. We try to help them. There is no discrimination; in small villages people know each other and take care of each other.”

Some parents often visit the school to discuss with the teachers. Others have few contacts with the school and feel somewhat left behind.

Several interviewees say that parents and grandparents definitely should have more knowledge about children’s rights. Others are more hesitant, though, and point out that they neither have the time nor the confidence to become involved in such issues: “We were never taught about rights. All we know is to ensure that the children are clean, they attend school and they are fed.”

Analysis of child rights training in schools initiated by CRIC

Target groups

CRIC does not work with general child rights training, but includes issues relating to children’s rights in more specific training inputs targeting children left behind by
migrating parents and children in institutions.

The project for children left behind is currently targeting school age children in four districts. Two more districts will be included in 2008. The children in institutions project is underway in eight boarding schools.

**Objectives**

For the children left behind project the objective that is related to child rights training is that “school principals, form teachers and school psychologists, who have participated in training, should develop strategies for interventions and support based on the specific needs of children with parents who have migrated”.

Another goal is to organise leisure time activities and provide children left behind with emotional support. The third goal is to inform children and adults about the consequences of migration for the emotional and social development of children and to provide information about existing and necessary services for supporting these children.

Regarding children in institutions, CRIC trains teachers and peer groups on children’s rights, health and other life skill issues and tries to link the children in the institutions with their communities. Girls are specifically targeted, with the objective of making them better prepared for life outside these institutions and consequently to help them avoid becoming victims of trafficking.6

**Actors**

Staff of CRIC develops training materials and, together with outside resource individuals, organise training for teachers in the four districts that are participating in the children left behind project. After the training inputs, form teachers are primarily responsible for organising activities.

CRIC staff also works with children, teachers and educators in boarding schools.

**Methodology**

The methodology used by CRIC implies that general child rights training is provided through the addressing of concrete rights, such as the right to life and development, the right to a family and protection from trafficking.

Guidelines for teachers, including suggested lessons as well as different supporting materials, are developed. The guidelines contain theoretical as well as practical parts. Children’s rights are addressed in the theoretical part of the guideline.

Teachers are invited to a four-day initial training, carried out in cooperation with the district Department of Education. All training sessions are part of the work plans of the District Departments.

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6. A recent study showed that about 50 per cent of the victims of trafficking were girls who had lived in boarding schools.
Guidelines and other materials

Guidelines for teachers who participate in the children left behind project have been developed in cooperation with teachers. These guidelines contain a theoretical and a practical part that includes suggestions for issues that can be addressed during the classes. These classes are intended for all pupils, not only those with parents working abroad. The suggested lessons deal with issues such as migration and its emotional consequences, the independent life of children and communications. The theoretical part addresses child rights issues. Two booklets have also been developed within this project; one for parents called “My child at home alone” and another one intended for children, “At home alone”.

A guide about life skills to prevent human trafficking, intended for teachers and educators in boarding schools, is used for the children in institutions project. A guide for graduates from boarding schools provides practical information, for example about the Moldovan constitution, the Convention on the rights of the Child, family and other relevant laws, how to get an ID card, how to write a CV and which institutions and organisations to contact if assistance is needed. This guide is updated every year. A booklet containing stories from children in boarding schools is primarily intended for awareness-raising purposes – with the aim of demonstrating that children in boarding schools are no different from all the other children.

In addition, CRIC has developed brochures with child-friendly versions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adapted for different ages. CRIC has also published a booklet about participation, a paperback book about delinquency prevention and a brochure about how local youth councils can develop projects.

Financing

Approximately 80 per cent of the resources for the work with children left behind are provided by Save the Children Sweden. More limited amounts are provided by IOM and OSCE. IOM and Caritas are the sources of funding for the work with children in institutions.

Relationship with duty-bearers

CRIC has signed agreements with the Ministry of Education and Youth. These agreements are a precondition for gaining access to schools and boarding schools. Good relationships and cooperation with the district Departments of Education are also crucial for the effectiveness of this work. Some districts have declined cooperation with CRIC regarding children in institutions. Consequently the organisation cannot work in these districts.

7. A CRIC project that was supported by UNICEF. The project was terminated when UNICEF changed priorities and funding was cut.
**Monitoring and evaluation**

The children left behind project is closely monitored. Each month teachers are requested to submit reports on the activities they have performed. Consequently, CRIC’s quarterly reports to Save the Children Sweden contain detailed information about training inputs, activities in schools, number of participating children etc. The project implementation team is in permanent contact with teachers and supports them with information and consultations. An evaluation is planned for late 2008.

No special monitoring or evaluations have, however, been carried out about the child rights training inputs that take place as part of ongoing projects – or have been carried out within the framework of former projects, such as the Children’s Parliament, local youth councils and grants for local projects.

Probably the best source of information about these training inputs is the small pre-study that was carried out within the framework of this study.

**Results**

Numerous quantitative outputs are available in CRIC’s project reports to Save the Children Sweden. When it comes to qualitative outputs, such as the quality of strategies for support to children with parents who have migrated and of the emotional support to these children, no information is provided.

Concerning outcomes and impact, such as increased availability of support for children left alone, fewer children without family support etc., no information is available. As the project has only been going on for 18 months it would, however, be a bit too early to try to measure such more long-term effects.

**With an eye to the future**

**CRIC’s plans**

CRIC plans to continue working with specific themes rather than general child rights training inputs in schools:

“There is no framework for general child rights training, only the form teacher’s hour,” Cezar Gaviriluc points out.

Some related issues that CRIC would like to address are:

1. Support for local youth councils.
   As the youth councils are already present in many schools and are likely the spread to more schools in the coming years they are a good way of reaching students. The weakness of the Ministry of Education implies that support will be needed if the youth councils are to become really institutionalised.

2. Activities to make school regulations more participatory.
   These regulations are normally developed without the involvement of students, parents or sometimes even teachers. A more participatory approach would probably contribute to a sense of “ownership” as well as better rules – and more willingness to comply with them.
3. Activities for parents.

More knowledge and understanding for children’s rights among parents is needed, both in a general sense and regarding concrete issues. One example of such an issue is that there is still no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in Moldovan law, neither in schools nor in the family. Some teachers abuse children and even use corporal punishment, but as child rights issues are introduced into schools, teachers are exposed to the message that physical and humiliating punishments should not be used. There are, however, fewer opportunities to reach parents. Furthermore, CRIC does not know of any other NGO working with parents.
Romania

Opportunities for child rights training in Romanian schools

Curriculum

In the Romanian curriculum civic education is a compulsory subject in grades 3, 4, 6 and 7. The curriculum for the civic education classes includes human rights. Also children’s rights are mentioned in the curriculum, but the space for addressing this subject is limited. The content of the civic education classes is also, to a greater extent, dependent on the teachers’ knowledge and materials available.

Human and child rights issues may also be covered in several optional courses. One of them is “Education for Democratic Citizenship”, which is a life-skills based course that includes human rights. This course is promoted by the Council of Europe. UNICEF supported the development of manuals and teachers’ training and also NGOs and several government agencies were invited by the Ministry of Education to participate in this process. It is unclear how widely used this course is. In relation to the development of this course the Compass Manual was elaborated by the Council of Europe and UNICEF in partnership. This manual is used for training teachers on education for democratic citizenship.

“Education for Health” is another optional course. The curriculum for the course was developed by NGOs. Education for health contains topics such as drug abuse and sexual relations. The course has encountered some resistance from parents who do not want their children to be taught about these issues.

Teacher education

The teachers’ profession is not very popular in Romania. The salaries are low and many teachers do not feel respected. Increasingly there are also problems with violence and aggression in Romanian schools.

Furthermore, education for teachers focuses in traditional methods with little or no room for modern educational science. As universities are autonomous from the state, the government cannot intervene or give instructions to the faculties of educational science.

Numerous opportunities for in-service training exist. Teachers need to attend training courses for which they collect points in order to increase their salaries. Various courses are provided by institutes such as House of Teachers, NGOs and others. In-service training courses are grouped into different categories and those offering training on compulsory subjects such as history, languages or mathematics are awarded more points than courses on optional subjects, such as human and children’s rights.
Several courses are offered by House of Teachers, which is a government institute. Among the accredited courses that have been developed by the institute one is about human rights. According to the acting director of House of Teachers, Mihai Revbenciul, teachers primarily want to learn about new teaching methods. The courses offered by House of Teachers are, however, only available in Bucharest and some other cities.

The National Authority for Child Protection, a government institution which is mandated to promote the implementation of children’s rights, initiate projects and monitor the situation, also works in schools and organises training inputs for teachers, for example on the new Child Law. An optional course about children’s rights, intended for 6th grade teachers, has been developed by Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania).

**Government attitude**

Policy issues relating to education are, like in many other countries, politically sensitive. Discussions on educational reform have been ongoing in Romania for several years. Consequently, the fact that all political parties have recently signed a pact; an agreement to develop a reform proposal, is highlighted as an achievement by some. Others, however, point out that lack of capacity and nepotism in the Ministry of Education will remain major challenges no matter what politicians agree on.

The education sector is highly centralised. At local level school inspectors have been appointed in the last few years, however they are examples of de-concentrated services, not of real decentralisation, in other words a transfer of decision-making and economic resources to regional or local level.

Despite these challenges, Eugen Crai at the UNICEF office in Bucharest thinks that the government now has a more proactive role than it used to:

“The pre-accession period to the European Union built capacity and created a different mentality,” he says.

Radica Cherciu in the Ministry of Education does not acknowledge any major problems within the education sector except a shortage of school buildings and classrooms, which has to do with the Ministry of Education’s lack of resources. Teachers are offered training inputs on human rights and life-skills based subjects. Children are aware of their rights and students’ suggestions are taken into account in the schools, according to Radica Cherciu.

**Partner organisation and activities**

**Background**

Salvati Copiii was founded in the early 1990s, shortly after the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been adopted. It has been supported by Save the Children Sweden from its inception.

In 2005 a new Child Law was adopted. The new law prohibits corporal punishment of children and introduces the duty to report in cases of child abuse.
Training inputs on children’s rights in schools through peer to peer education were initiated in 1995. In 2002 and 2003 teachers were trained and handbooks on the Convention on the Rights of the Child were piloted within a child rights training project.

The children’s rights course was approved as an optional course in the national curriculum and in 2006 Salvati Copiii accredited (licensed) the course with the National Centre for Staff Training and Staff Development, which is a government institute responsible for quality assurance and monitoring of teachers’ in-service training. The course is approved as an optional course for the 6th grade.

The accreditation was a time-consuming and expensive process. Contents, trainers, venues and all other aspects had to be approved by the National Centre for Staff Training and Staff Development. Due to this, the course is only accredited in Bucharest and Ploiesti. Consequently, it cannot be used in other parts of the country.

**Current activities**

In 2007, 50 teachers were trained in two children’s rights courses. Subsequent monitoring carried our by Salvati Copiii indicated that all the participating teachers had used the information and material they received during the course. For several reasons only 20 per cent had, however, introduced children’s rights into the optional courses available in their respective schools. Instead most of the teachers preferred to teach children’s rights in the head (form) teachers’ educational hour. In 2008, Salvati Copiii plans to organise six training courses for teachers.

In addition, the Salvati Copiii head office in Bucharest, as well as local branches in other parts of the country, train volunteers on children’s rights. These volunteers, who are between 16 and 25 years old, are mostly recruited with the help of posters and other information in high schools and in faculties. Volunteer work is relatively popular among university students. In some courses students earn points for voluntary work, in others voluntary activities count as practical experience.

After receiving training the volunteers send invitations to schools and offer to conduct lessons on children’s rights. According to Salvati Copiii, peer to peer training often works better than lessons on children’s rights conducted by teachers. The volunteers’ lessons are more dynamic and the pupils speak more freely as they are not afraid of the consequences of saying something that could be considered to be inappropriate by the teacher.

An annual contest, which is open to all schools, is also organised. For this contest teams of students have to identify and work out a solution to a problem in the school. The projects are presented using drawings, PowerPoint presentations and so on and these presentations are submitted to Salvati Copiii. The contest is open to all schools as long as the projects promote children’s rights.

Salvati Copiii also works with other issues related to schools, such as prevention of violence and abuse, trafficking and inclusion of children at risk. Seemingly, no clear links between these projects and the promotion of children’s rights have been established.
Pre-study

Introduction

Due to lack of time Salvati Copiii carried out the pre-study through telephone interviews with five teachers who had attended the children's rights course and principals of four schools. Volunteers carried out interviews with students in one school.

In addition, two schools were visited while the author of this report was in Romania, one in Bucharest and one in Ploiesti.

The principals

According to the principals, the purpose of the children's rights training is primarily to inform the students about their rights. Two of the principals state that the training also addresses adults, for example teachers.

In three of the schools child rights training inputs are conducted by teachers and school counsellors who have attended the training course for teachers in cooperation with volunteers from Salvati Copiii. In one of the schools the course is organised by volunteers only.

The material used is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, methodological guides, brochures, questionnaires, posters etc. Most of the principals had no clear idea about how the teachers’ training and the material was financed.

The objectives of the child rights training inputs are, according to the principals:

– to inform students and teachers about the rights of the child;
– to develop critical thinking;
– to develop self-esteem and trust in others;
– to learn about democratic values and active citizenship.

Regarding effects, the principals think that the most important result is that students and teachers had been informed about children’s rights. Other effects mentioned are that students are better at respecting rules as well as other people and that they are more involved in voluntary activities relating to the promotion of children's rights. The student councils have become more active in some schools.

Four teachers from the Ploiesti school participated in the children's rights course. The principal of the school points out that the teachers appreciated the interactive methods and have applied them in their classes.

One effect of the children's rights training is that the student council, which formerly only existed on paper, has been reactivated. One proposal from the student council has been that the football pitch in the school yard should be repaired. Due to financial constraints this has not yet happened.

As the school is small there are no serious problems with bullying or violence, the principal says. Teachers notice, however, that some students are subject to corporal punishment. Head (form) teachers can deal with the issue and speak with the parents.
The teachers

One school in a Bucharest suburb was visited by the programme officer of Salvati Copiii and the author of this report. The teacher who was interviewed said that she first found out about children’s rights when she realised that there were parents who beat their children. She was concerned about the issue and started to look for information.

The teacher declared that she was happy with the new knowledge she acquired at the training course. After attending the child rights training course and implementing the new knowledge in an optional course and during the form teachers’ educational hour, she has noticed that more children come to her and report problems. In the optional course the students set up a theatre play and made posters, leaflets and a PowerPoint presentation about children’s rights.

The five teachers interviewed by telephone all found the course on children’s rights useful and interesting. They especially appreciate the new knowledge they learned about child psychology, conflict resolution, children’s rights and responsibilities and new non-formal learning methods. Some teachers asked for material based on cartoons in order to facilitate their teaching. Four of the teachers had applied the knowledge they acquired in the form teacher’s class. As they are not teaching in the 6th grade they have not opted for introducing an optional course.

The teachers consider their role to be to inform their students about children’s rights. Only one of them said that teachers also have a responsibility to implement children’s rights in the school environment.

Concerning the results of the child rights training inputs, some of the teachers primarily refer to effects on themselves: they feel more secure in their role, their relationship with the students has improved and they are more open in their communication with their students. Others mention changes for the students: They have learned how to deal with rights violations within the school and have set up a team of mediators in order to solve conflicts between peers, a student council has been established and students have learnt to respect the rights of others.

The teachers appreciate the new and creative teaching methods, such as brainstorming, role play and teamwork, which they learned. One of the interviewees thinks that the teachers’ course contained a little too much technical information, but understands that this was necessary background for the subject.

The students

Ten students in grades 5 to 8 were interviewed. According to the students, the purpose of the children’s rights course was to learn about their rights, understand them and know who to address if rights were violated. The students found the course interesting and especially appreciated the new and interactive methods used. “We learnt a lot from playing,” one of the students said.

According to the students, the most common problems in their own schools are physical and verbal abuse and discrimination. Most of the students think that the situation in the school has changed for the better after the children’s rights training,
but others say there is no change. Among the improvements mentioned are that stu-
dent councils have been set up and students are better informed about what is going
on in the schools. Several interviewees mention that there is a better, non-violent
communication than before. Some say that one important effect of the training is
that they now know what to do if their rights are violated. On the whole the stu-
dents are happy with the course. Some of them consider that more time was need-
ed in order to explain all the new concepts.

In the Bucharest school that was visited discussions were held with students in a
5th grade class. Seemingly, the students have a fairly good idea about their rights.
They also state that all rights are not respected. For example there are students in
the class who have been abused by others.

“We are not always listened to in our families,” one student says.

“But we are lucky,” another one states. “In Africa there are children with HIV/AIDS.”
Regarding concrete rights violations the students mention a 13-year old Roma
child who went to Spain to work and get married.

If there are problems in the school the students turn to the school counsellor or
the principal.

All the students in this school are supposed to wear uniforms. Nobody in this class
does, however:

“We do not like uniforms so we do not wear them,” one student says. “But our par-
ents want the uniforms.”

“So me families cannot afford school uniforms,” one of his classmates objects.

Effects of the children’s rights training are, according to the students:

“I am nicer to smaller children.”

“There is not so much fighting.”

“We know we have the right to have opinions.”

In the Ploiesti school, pupils from a 5th grade class were interviewed. These chil-
dren are considerably shyer than the students in Bucharest and only a few of them
participate in the discussion.

However, they mention several rights, such as the right to a family, the right to
education and the right to participate.

Their rights are not always respected, one of the students says:

“Older students are sometimes aggressive.”

“But we can ask the principal and parents to defend our rights.”

One effect of the children’s rights training, mentioned by the students, is that the
student council is now active.

Analysis of child rights training in schools initiated by Salvati Copiii

Target groups

The accredited teachers’ course on children’s rights primarily targets 6th grade chil-
dren. The objective of the course is that teachers who have participated should set
up an optional course for 6th grade students.
However, with time it has become clear that most teachers choose to use the knowledge they have acquired during their form teacher's hour. This has widened the target group. With minor adjustments, Salvati Copiii considers the course to suit all ages from pre-school children up to the 8th grade.

The training offered by volunteers is flexible and Salvati Copiii is of the opinion that it suits students of all grades. However, no evaluation of this training has been carried out.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the training course had to be submitted to the Ministry of Education and therefore all of them relate to teachers' knowledge and abilities.

The overall goals of the course are:

- to develop competences in the field of children's rights in order to contribute to behaviour changes towards children; and
- to form and develop children's civic responsibility, influencing them to acknowledge the rules and values of a democratic society.

Specific objectives have also been developed, such as to develop the abilities of teachers to act in the best interest of the child and to develop teachers' team working abilities.

The issue of participation is easily connected to already existing structures in the schools, primarily the student councils that are supposed to exist in all schools but are not yet functioning everywhere. Another existing structure is the student ombudsperson, a mechanism for handling complaints, which has been set up in some schools with the support of UNICEF.

As Salvati Copiii also works with issues such as prevention of violence and abuse, trafficking and inclusion of children at risk, objectives linking the training on children's rights to these issues could also be established.

**Actors**

Staff of Salvati Copiii and external experts conduct the training inputs for teachers. The teachers are then responsible for organising training for students.

Salvati Copiii and local branches carry out the training for volunteers. The volunteers subsequently offer their services to schools that are interested.

**Methodology**

Teachers and volunteers are trained about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its different articles and the legal implications of the Convention. They are also trained on how to use interactive methods, such as role play, group work and games, in their lessons.

All actors involved unanimously state that the dynamic and creative methods are the most useful part of the courses for the teachers. Consequently, it is probable that
these methods are also used in other subjects, thereby not only benefiting the students when children’s rights are addressed.

**Guidelines and other materials**

A guidebook for organising an optional child rights course is handed out to all teachers who participate in the training courses. Teachers also receive notebooks which contain exercises and a child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The same materials are distributed to volunteers.

**Financing**

No external financing is available for the teachers’ courses. Therefore, Salvati Copii charges a fee of 50 Euros from each participant. Normally this fee is paid by the schools where the teachers are employed.

The expenses for the training of volunteers are covered with Salvati Copii’s own resources.

**Relationship with duty-bearers**

Salvati Copii constantly lobbies the Ministry of Education and tries to persuade the civil servants responsible at the ministry to award higher priority to issues relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and children’s rights. However, the Ministry of Education focuses more on the compulsory subjects of the curriculum. As a result, the organisation is rather pessimistic about the prospects for major steps forward in the short run.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

The teachers’ courses are evaluated through a questionnaire that all participants are requested to fill in. These evaluations show that about 90 per cent of the participants are satisfied with the course and consider the information new and interesting. At the end of each course a report is drafted, based on participants’ feedback and trainers’ impressions.

Salvati Copii monitors whether teachers implement what they have learned. So far, all teachers have declared that they use the new knowledge but only 20 per cent do so as intended; within the framework of an optional course.

**Results**

Regarding quantitative outputs exact figures are available. For example, in 2007 50 teachers were trained in two courses, 200 volunteers were trained and 11,000 students in schools benefited from child rights training.

Regarding outcome, in other words whether children know how to exercise their
rights and are able to reap some benefit from this knowledge, assessments are more difficult. Information from the pre-study and the visits to two schools, however, indicate that students who have participated in training inputs have a reasonable knowledge about children’s rights. Some of them also have at least some ideas about how to make use of this knowledge, for example in school councils and in cases of abuse and violence in the school.

The Salvati Copiii Centre for Information and Research on Children’s Rights regularly monitors knowledge about children’s rights. In 2002 between 15 and 30 per cent of the children, depending on which right they were asked about, were aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its contents. In 2007 the figures had increased to between 60 and 85 per cent.

It would be too far-reaching to assume that this increased awareness is due to the child rights training inputs that are carried out by teachers and volunteers trained by Salvati Copiii, especially since many other state institutions, as well as non-governmental actors, are involved in the promotion of children’s rights. However, it is likely that the child rights training inputs, which are carried out by teachers who have attended the course and volunteers who have been trained by Salvati Copiii contribute to this, seemingly positive, development.

Regarding impact, in other words whether an increased awareness about children’s rights has led to any concrete and lasting improvements for children, is even more difficult to draw conclusions. Salvati Copiii has not intended to measure the impact – and to do so would be difficult, considering the fact that numerous political, economic, social and other factors influence developments in this sense.

**With an eye to the future**

**Salvati Copiii’s plans**

In the short term Salvati Copiii would like to expand the number of children’s rights courses for teachers. In order to do this, however, resources are needed. Initially Salvati Copiii covered all costs related to the teachers’ training from its own revenue. Currently, however, no external funding is available for the courses and starting from 2007 each participant has to pay a fee of 50 Euro. This amount covers some of the administrative costs, lunch for the participants and trainers’ fees.

In the longer term Salvati Copiii hopes that its persistent lobbying of the Ministry of Education will generate results. As a first step the organisation requests that the course should be put on a list of prioritised training courses. The final aim is, however, that children’s rights should become a mandatory subject in the school curriculum.

“Within five years from now our aim is that all schools should have child rights training. With more interest and solid promotion from the Ministry of Education and if we manage to find funding for the printing of manuals and other costs this should be possible,” says Gabriela Alexandrescu, Director of Salvati Copiii.
**Serbia**

**Opportunities for child rights training in Serbian schools**

**Curriculum**

In the Serbian curriculum either civic education or religion is a mandatory subject. Students – or rather their parents – choose one of the two subjects in the 1st grade. Before starting the 5th grade and again before starting 9th grade it is possible to change and switch to the other subject. The civic education curriculum contains subjects such as citizens’ participation, state-citizen relationships, media and human and children's rights.

No national figures on the proportion of students who choose civic education or religion respectively are available. According to information from the NGO Civic Initiatives, however, in only two of the 17 municipalities in greater Belgrade more than 50 per cent have chosen civic education.

Children's rights can also be taught in the form teachers’ hour, provided that the teacher is interested in the issue and suitable materials are available.

The third opportunity for familiarising Serbian students with issues related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is through optional, extra-curricular activities. Through advocacy and training of teachers the NGO Civic Initiatives works to promote civic education. Another NGO, the Child Rights Centre, has introduced an optional course on children's rights in a limited number of schools. First the form teacher's classes are used to teach the students about children's rights and then the students who are interested work together with the form teacher on an extra-curricular activity. This activity consists of identifying a problem in the school, establishing an action plan and finally trying to solve the issue.

**Teacher education**

Serbian teachers for grades 1 to 4 teach all subjects except foreign languages. Above the 4th grade teachers are specialised and primarily teach their own subject. They study this subject at the university, pass their exams and then get a license. This means that most teachers have no training in educational science.

In faculty there is no course in civic education. Instead the timetables of other teachers, such as history and geography teachers, are filled up with civic education. Consequently, the NGO Civic Initiatives trains teachers from the 5th grade and upwards in civic education.

“Human rights is the basis of all our training inputs,” Radmila Radic Dudic, Democracy Coordinator at Civic Initiatives says. “We have developed a handbook in which there is a section on children's rights. This section was elaborated by the Child Rights Centre.”
Marija Petrovic and Milena Golic from the Child Rights Centre have also participated in training of trainers. The two-day training courses for teachers are organised by the Ministry of Education and the ministry or the local school administrations decide which civic education teachers should attend.

In cooperation with the Faculty of Political Science at a Belgrade university, Civic Initiatives has recently introduced a course on civic education. About 50 teachers are studying this specialisation in 2008.

“We are now lobbying the faculty to accept civic education as a separate course in the curriculum,” says Radmila Radic Dudic.

**Government attitude**

Issues relating to education are politically sensitive in Serbia. The Ministry of Education is considered to be conservative and rather inefficient by independent experts and NGOs. Numerous changes have taken place within the Ministry in recent years, but at present there are no serious attempts at educational reform.

The education system is centralised and municipalities have limited room for manoeuvre.

Teachers’ salaries are very low. A normal salary for a teacher is the equivalent of approximately 300 Euros per month. For all other professions that require an academic degree anything below 700 Euros in considered to be a poor salary. Most teachers are women and the low salaries and status mean that their commitment and morale is not always the best.

“In the transition period we have been going through, education has not been valued. Instead focus has been on acquiring wealth and positions – often in dubious ways,” one of the interviewees says.

**Partner organisation and activities**

**Background**

The Child Rights Centre in Belgrade is a non-governmental organisation working with research and education, information and child rights policy development. The aim of the organisation is the implementation of children’s rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Present activities**

The project “Towards child rights implementation” was initiated in 2005. The project consists of two sub-projects: child rights monitoring and children’s voices. Child rights monitoring is about building NGO networks and cooperation with state authorities in monitoring children’s rights. In 2007 an alternative report was produced and submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Children’s Voices is a project for training on children’s rights in schools. Initially teachers are trained by staff of the Child Rights Centre on children’s rights as well
as interactive teaching methods, such as brainstorming and group work. The teachers are also provided with two handbooks and some technical material. The next step is that students in the 6th and 7th grades are taught about children’s rights. For about two months the head (form) teachers’ hours are used for this activity. In the third step students are invited to participate in an extra-curricular activity which consists of the identification of a problem in the school, the elaboration of an action plan and, finally, activities aimed at solving the problem.

The problems students have worked to solve include: adapting a room in the school for a students’ club, organising a workshop about reproductive health and drug abuse, influencing a teacher who provided no information to students about marks and other issues of importance to them and producing a school magazine. In one school the students identified violence in the school as a problem, but as a “Schools without violence” project9 had already been started no action was taken.

Teachers are not paid for extra-curricular activities, but the Child Rights Centre pays a small fee for their work:

“First we wanted to contribute to a school improvement fund. But we found that this was not a good way; sometimes the equipment was not fully accessible to students. So we decided to pay a small amount to the teachers,” says Marija Petrovic from the Child Rights Centre.

The Child Rights Centre identifies the geographical areas in which it wants to work, for example one of the municipalities in Belgrade. The Ministry of Education then decides which schools should participate.

In 2005, three schools were invited to participate in the project and in 2006 three more. In 2007 another five were included in the project.

“The idea is that schools should continue with the activities after the project. So far only one school has dropped out. The rest are continuing with their extra-curricular activities.”

The project includes exchange visits between the schools participating and also an exchange with similar projects carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. In addition, students from the schools participating have been involved in the development of a Children’s Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. One student presented the Report to the committee in early 2008.

Pre-study

Introduction

No pre-study was carried out. One reason for this was that the Child Rights Centre considered that, due to the rigorous supervision and monitoring of the schools participating, most of the information required was already available. Another cause was lack of time on behalf of the teachers as well as the Child Rights Centre.

Consequently, the information below is collected from the surveys the Child Rights Centre carried out with teachers and students after training inputs and

9. A nation-wide UNICEF project which involves school staff, parents and children.
optional courses. In addition, one school in New Belgrade was visited by the programme officer of the Child Rights Centre and the author of this report.

**The teachers**

Concerning the training course for teachers, nine of the 24 teachers participating said that they felt “completely ready” to work with the children on children’s rights issues after attending the course. Another 12 teachers thought that they were “ready” for this kind of work.

The teachers were generally satisfied with the course, but some of them said that the theoretical part should be shorter in order to have more time for practical exercises.

The teachers were also asked if there were any changes after the students had learned about children’s rights. Primarily, the teachers mentioned three areas where they perceived that changes had occurred:

- Students are more self-confident.
- The confidence and sincerity between teachers and students has improved.
- Students have a better understanding of the situation in the school and have started to notice problems in their surroundings.

A teacher of the school in New Belgrade said that the most important effect of the training was that children learn how to fulfil their needs while simultaneously taking the opinions of others into consideration. The problem identified by the students in this school was a lack of information. Consequently, a school Parliament was set up and a school magazine was produced.

“The project gave us motivation to realise the school parliament,” says the Principal. “The students elected their representatives and they have already presented several suggestions.”

“Students like to participate. It makes them feel important,” the Principal concluded. “I hope we will be able to stay in the project. There is a risk that the teachers’ motivation will decrease next year when they get no remuneration. But there are other advantages for them, such as improvements in the atmosphere of the school.”

**The students**

The students interviewed said they had learned to “respect ourselves and value others”, “to ask questions” and “to solve problems together.”

According to one student most significant thing with the project was: “We were recognised by teachers and peers.”

Others mentioned the improvements in the schools that were made and the new methods for learning that had been applied as the most significant things.

Suggestions for changes included starting preparations earlier and having more

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10. Romanian law provides for school parliaments in grades 7 and 8, but they are not obligatory.
time for meetings, working in smaller groups and more involvement from teachers and other staff in the school.

Concerning what the students would like to learn more about one answer was: “To exercise knowledge in real life.”

Other answers were “To persuade adults to listen”, “To escape corporal punishment” 11 and “How to calm someone with words.” One student pessimistically answered that he did not think it would be possible to achieve anything among adults. More than 90 per cent of the students, however, thought that this new knowledge would be applicable to everyday life.

One question was “What would you do if your rights were jeopardised?”

The answers were varied:

“Refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child” or “ask for advice from a psychologist or from a social pedagogue”, were some suggestions. Others would call the police, the Red Cross or the municipal centre for social affairs. One jokingly said he would go on strike.

**Analysis of child rights training in schools initiated by the Child Rights Centre**

**Target groups**

The target group is the students in the participating schools. (In 2007, 667 students participated in child rights training inputs. About 200 students participated in extracurricular groups.)

**Objectives**

The objectives are:

- to empower children for active monitoring and reporting on child rights violations;
- to establish a basis for multiplication of a model that supports child participation; and
- to encourage networking among children and relevant supporting players.

**Actors**

The actors involved are staff of the Child Rights Centre who train teachers and teachers who conduct training for students.

**Methodology**

The method has a step by step approach: from teachers to students and from theory to practice. First teachers learn about children’s rights, then they teach students

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11. This student was referring to his/her parents. In Serbian schools corporal punishment is forbidden.
and finally the students carry out a practical action (the identification of a problem, design of means of solving it and concrete work in order to obtain a solution).

**Guidelines and other materials**

Two handbooks for teachers have been developed by the Child Rights Centre; one for the training of entire school classes and one for extra-curricular activities.

Child-friendly versions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are available in Serbian, Hungarian, Albanian and Roma. The booklets are distributed to the participating schools which can copy them for all students.

**Financing**

Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children Norway cover 50 per cent each of the costs of the project.

**Relationship to duty-bearers**

Good relationships with the Ministry of Education are a precondition for the project. The ministry makes the final selection of the participating schools (after consent from the schools).

**Monitoring and evaluation**

The participating schools are closely monitored, supervision meetings are held with the teachers and surveys are carried out with teachers and students after training inputs and extra-curricular activities.

In early 2008 a mid-term review was carried out on the initiative of Save the Children Norway. One preliminary finding of the review was that teachers had acquired a solid understanding of children's rights.

"Initially the project has been met with scepticism, but when teachers and others see the results they become more positive," says Jelena Vranjesevic, who carried out the mid-term review. "Rights is a concept that is sometimes considered too academic; a luxury in difficult times. Rights are also sometimes perceived as something negative. People say 'Now we have rights, but we have no jobs. Before we were denied rights, but we had jobs'."

The mid-term review also highlighted the fact that children have become more aware of problems in their environment, not only in schools but also in their communities.

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12. At the time of writing this report the review was not finalised.
Results

Quantitative outputs, such as number of participating schools, teachers and students and number of students’ projects, are available. The fact that actions to solve problems are carried out in all participating schools demonstrates the fact that students are empowered to monitor their rights.

Whether the new knowledge is applicable outside the project environment is, of course, a different question. According to the surveys that are filled in after the projects the majority of the students think that what they have learned is useful. More detailed and concrete questionnaires and also more in-depth interviews with a representative sample of students would, however, be needed in order to really find out how much the students have benefited from the project. The ideal situation would also be to have a baseline, in other words to compare students’ knowledge and sense of empowerment before the project with their impressions afterwards.

As the project has only been going for three years it is still too early to expect any significant impact, in other words long-term, concrete improvements for children.

With an eye to the future

The Child Rights Centre’s plans

The Child Rights Centre will try to accredit (license) the child rights training with the Ministry of Education. Licenses are normally not granted to NGOs, but two schools in Belgrade will sign the formal application in cooperation with the Child Rights Centre.

“We are quite confident that this will work and we should have the license rather soon,” says Marija Petrovic.

A license would imply several advantages:

“We will then have funding from the Ministry and from the participating schools for the courses that take place. We will not need funds from external sources any more and teachers will be paid for their work.”

If a license were to be granted, the child rights training would also become less dependent on the benevolence of the Ministry of Education. Furthermore it would appear in a government list of optional courses, which might open up for an expansion.
Estonia

Opportunities for child rights training in Estonian schools

Curriculum

Human and children’s rights are embedded in two mandatory school subjects. The subject “human studies” is taught in grades 1–9 while “civic education” is a mandatory subject in grades 4–9. Both subjects are also taught in high schools. The curriculum for human studies includes issues such as relationships with others, health, social competence, human rights and responsibilities and children’s rights. Civic education covers human rights including children’s rights, legislation and how it protects human beings etc.

Despite these seemingly good provisions for Estonian children to learn about their rights, people interviewed for this study point out that there are no guarantees that children’s rights will be taught. One reason for this is that the curricula for human studies, as well as civic education, are overloaded:

“They contain everything and there is very little space for human rights,” says Sulev Valdmaa, who is working with development of school materials for the Jaan Tönisson Institute. “Children’s rights should be clearly written into curricula, with topics that should be covered and achievements to aim for.”

Another reason for this unsystematic way of dealing with children’s rights is that teachers have limited knowledge about the subject and about the Convention on the Rights of the Child; consequently they tend to avoid topics related to them. Limited availability of materials on children’s rights adds to the problem.

Teacher education

Child rights issues are not comprehensively covered in the pre-service education of Estonian teachers. The issue might be taken up briefly, but there is no separate course on children’s rights.

In-service training is, however, available albeit not on a permanent basis. Some years ago, the department responsible for training of teachers at the University of Tallinn organised in-service training of teachers on children’s rights. Malle Hallimäe from the Estonian Union for Child Welfare lectured at these courses.

“But these courses were discontinued. I do not know why, probably the need was covered,” she says.

The Jaan Tönisson Institute initiated teachers’ training inputs in the 1990s. In-service training was then a new field with few actors in Estonia. This situation has changed now and, according to Sulev Valdmaa, not all training providers are serious:

“We and others sell courses to teachers. The schools use government resources that are provided for in-service training. But there is no follow-up on how the money is used. Some
training inputs are held in Spas\(^{13}\}; teachers go there for the week-end, relax, have massage... and a few lessons are provided.”

In the mid-1990s, the institute also developed human rights textbooks and a teachers’ manual:

“These books were sent out to all schools, but I do not know how they were used. Some teachers were not happy with the subject, though. They said it remained them of the situation in Africa and the issue felt distant.”

The Jaan Tönisson Institute still offers training for teachers, but less frequently than before:

“We used to give a lot of training inputs, about democracy, democratic institutions and such issues. But after some years the demand for these courses decreased as people became more familiar with the democratic system – and we have no Spa.”

**Government attitude**

A debate on the educational system is constantly ongoing in Estonia. While some people say that there should be room for more life-skills based subjects, others argue that students have to concentrate on improving their knowledge of languages, mathematics etc. As schools are graded in the media according to results in “core” subjects many of the schools are unwilling to accommodate or give more space to “social issues”.

The development of a new school curriculum was initiated some years ago. A draft curriculum was presented in 2005, but a change of government and a new Minister of Education meant that new ideas were brought into the process and the work started all over again:

“Now the curriculum will be finalised in 2009 and should be ready for implementation in 2010,” says Erle Poiklik at the National Examination and Qualifications Centre.

According to Erle Poiklik there will be more emphasis on social relations and issues such as bullying, drugs and trafficking in the new curriculum. The subjects human studies and civic education will, however, be left without major changes, mainly because of lack of time to revise them.

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare at times works in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research, primarily when the ministry invites NGOs to cooperation on issues of common interest. EUCW, however, considers that there is less interest in children’s rights from the Ministry of Education and Research than from the Ministry of Social Affairs. For example social workers learn about children’s rights at the universities and, therefore, know more about the subject than teachers. EUCW assumes that this situation is connected to the fact that the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for reporting to the United Nations’ Committee on the Rights of the Child.\(^{14}\)

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13. Resorts offering hydrotherapy.
14. A planned interview with an official of the Ministry of Education and Research was cancelled. Because of this it was not possible to find out the views of the Ministry on this subject.
Partner organisation and ongoing activities

Background

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCW), in Estonian Lastekaitse Liit, is an umbrella organisation which comprises 40 local societies.

EUCW has carried out projects related to training on children's rights in schools. In the late 1990s, material on children's rights for pre-school teachers was developed. Currently, the organisation publishes different materials aimed at raising awareness on children's rights. These materials are available via the Information Centre and the website. Thematic seminars for specialists, including teachers, are also organised.

Current activities relating to child rights training in schools

At present, EUCW carries out several projects and activities relating to children's rights in schools, for example an anti-bullying project in six schools in Tallinn, the contest “Do I know” 15 and forum theatre. The forum theatre 16 project is carried out by members of the EUCW Youth Council, which consists of about 20 young people, and other young people.

“Last year we performed a play about school violence, connected to the right not to be discriminated against,” the Project Manager Piret Soosaar says. “We selected ten small schools in the countryside and set up performances there. An evaluation of the project was made, but it is not ready yet.”

This year the group has started to develop a play about violence in the home and intends to play it in residential care institutions, youth prisons etc.

In cooperation with the Estonian Union of Student Councils the project entitled “101 children for Toompea” 17 is aimed at youth participation and lobbying on educational and other issues of interest for young people. “Furthermore, EUCW organises seminars and translates material about children’s rights from other languages. An information centre is open to the public.”

When it comes to training on children’s rights in schools, EUCW believes that such training inputs should be carried out based on what teachers think is needed, in cooperation with teachers’ associations. On invitation from teachers, EUCW staff frequently visits schools in order to conduct lessons about children’s rights. Sometimes members of EUCW’s youth group participate. Some games, a CD about children’s rights and child-friendly versions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are used in these lessons.

15. IN 2007 teams of six 7-9th grade students from about 30 schools participated in the contest which was about promoting understanding for human rights and children’s rights. A similar, but Internet-based, contest will be launched in 2008.
16. The methodology is similar to role play. After the play the spectators are invited to work with the actors to find another and more “happy” ending to the story.
17. The Estonian Parliament
“Often we are invited to schools because somebody knows us. We try to accept all the invitations we get,” says Käthlin Mikiver from EUCW.

**Pre-study**

**Introduction**

A limited pre-study was carried out by EUCW. Two teachers, a social pedagogue and some 8–10th grade students from Viimsi School and Haapsalu Wiedemann Gymnasium and two parents were interviewed.

In addition, a programme officer from EUCW and the author of this report made a visit to Viimse School where the social pedagogue was again interviewed. One teacher and a youth organiser were also interviewed.

**The teachers**

One of the human studies teachers interviewed had not covered issues related to children’s rights in the last school year:

“I did not even consider it. The programme does not ask for it.”

The teacher knows a little about children’s rights from her own studies and also knows where to find more information about the issue. However, she thinks that it would be good if there were established guidelines with practical examples about how to teach children’s rights.

The other human studies teacher who was interviewed also pointed out that there are no provisions in the curriculum for teaching children’s rights. He, however, includes children’s right in his lessons and sometimes invites EUCW to participate:

“It is good to have somebody from outside to come and discuss with the students. Some classes have good questions while others are more passive.”

He uses some games and other materials that EUCW provides and has also looked for information on the Internet. During his university studies, children’s rights were mentioned, he says, but very briefly.

“Probably there is no immediate use, but if something happens later they can say ‘my rights were violated.’”

Viimsi School is located in a prosperous area near the sea, about ten kilometres from Tallinn. The school is new and modern and seems to have most facilities, including a support centre staffed by a psychologist, social pedagogue, doctor etc.

The social pedagogue says that the most common issues students want to speak with her about are relationship problems with friends or teachers. She thinks that the most frequent problem in families is that parents do not have enough time for their children.

**The students**

All the students say they have heard about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most of them, however, can not explain what it is.
Some students know more about children's rights than others. These students are all members of the school youth council or some other organisation – or have attended a conference where the issue was raised.

**The parents**

Both parents had some basic knowledge about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In their children’s schools the issue had been taken up briefly during human studies classes. The parents agree that they needed more information about children’s rights, either from the media or in some other way.

**Analysis of child rights training in schools initiated by EUCW**

**Target groups**

The direct target group is the students of the classes to which staff of EUCW is invited to speak about children’s rights. The students of the schools where the anti-bullying project is carried out, the teams of students (about 180 students in 2007) who participate in the contest “Do I know” and the students who participate in the forum theatre performances are also, to some extent, included in the target group. They receive no comprehensive training on children’s rights but the projects and activities are all based on children’s rights, EUCW staff says.

**Objectives**

In 2007 the relevant objectives of the project which included the contest “Do I know”, information in schools about children’s rights and some other activities were:

- to raise awareness and understanding of child rights;
- to disseminate information about child rights; and
- to enhance children’s participation.

In 2008 the contest is included in a project named Child Rights Information Centre. This project also comprises the compilation of educational material on children’s rights in Estonian and Russian. The relevant objective in relationship to children’s rights training in schools is:

- to raise awareness and understanding about children’s rights by systematically disseminating information on children’s rights and children’s situation.

Other objectives are to enhance children’s participation, to analyse the situation for children and “promote necessary changes”.

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*Child rights training in schools in Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Estonia and Sweden*
**Actors**

The actors involved in the training inputs and other activities are staff of EUCW and members of the Youth Council.

**Methodology**

Lessons where a CD on child rights is shown, some interactive games are used and the students have opportunities to ask questions.

As the forum theatre and the contest “Do I know” are based on children’s rights, theatre performances and the use of a contest could also be included among the methods used for disseminating knowledge and understanding about children’s rights.

The project proposal states that the anti-bullying project takes children’s rights into account. It is not clear, however, how these links are made.

**Guidelines and other materials**

EUCW has developed material for pre-school teachers. Games, a CD about children’s rights and child-friendly versions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for different age groups are available. Books providing basic knowledge and understanding about children’s rights are also published.

**Financing**

For the project “Advocating for children’s rights” in which the contest “Do I know”, training in schools, activities related to participation, including the project “101 children to Toompea”, seminars and the publishing of information materials was funded by the European Youth Programme, the Tallinn City Government and the Estonian Committee of Gambling Taxes in 2007. In addition, Save the Children Sweden contributed about six per cent of the budget.

In 2008 basically the same funding agencies are supporting the project “Children’s Rights Information Centre”. The contribution from Save the Children Sweden is SEK 70,000.

**Relationship to duty-bearers**

The Ministry of Education and Research is not directly involved in these activities.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

No monitoring or evaluation of the child rights training inputs in schools has taken place. An evaluation of the 2007 Forum Theatre Project has been carried out.
Results

As the activities are rather limited in number, the quantitative outputs could be accounted for without any problems. The objective is general so whether children's and other stakeholders' understanding and awareness have been raised would be considerably more difficult to measure. According to the information provided by EUCW, no attempts to examine the fulfilment of this objective have been made hitherto. No information regarding previous achievements is provided in the Project Proposal for 2008.

When it comes to outcomes and impact no information is available. Furthermore, as the activities are scattered and the objectives are broad it would be difficult to evaluate the outcomes and impact of the child rights training-related activities in schools.

The anti-bullying project is limited in scope and time and, therefore, probably easier to evaluate than the other projects.

With an eye to the future

EUCW’s plans

Regarding plans for the future, EUCW would like to develop cooperation with teachers, through teachers’ associations:

“We want to motivate teachers, show them what is possible. There are teachers who are genuinely interested in child rights issues,” Malle Hallimäe says. “A primary issue for us is how the quality of education on human rights for students can be improved.”

Concrete plans on how to realise these ideas are yet to be developed, however.

In addition, EUCW plans to publish methodological material, which has been translated from English, about children's rights. This material is intended for use in after-class activities by teachers, youth organisers and others. Another idea is to make a film about the contest “Do I know”. Raw material for such a film was recorded during the 2007 contest. Updating the CD about children's rights, which is partially outdated, is also planned.
Opportunities for child rights training in Swedish schools

Curriculum

The concept “basic values”, which was introduced in the early 1990s, describes the values that should constitute the basis for the work in all Swedish schools. The basic values are expressed in the Schools Act and in the curricula for pre-schools, the 1-9th grades and high schools. It is stated that all activities should be carried out in accordance with democratic values. Individuals, as well as the general environment, must be respected. Equality between genders should be promoted and all kinds of degrading treatment, such as bullying and xenophobia, should be counteracted.

Human rights are not mentioned in the curricula. Neither is there any reference to children's rights. In the curricula there are, however, several references to values that are in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Three of the basic principles of the convention: the rights to non-discrimination, participation and life and development, are mentioned in the curricula.

In recent years, some reports and studies have recommended that human rights should be more clearly highlighted in schools. There should also be a stronger link to the basic principles of non-discrimination and the best interest of the child. No changes have, however, been made so far.

Despite this, space for teaching about children's rights is available, for example in the integrated subject that, among others, includes history and geography. Other provisions are thematic days or weeks, such as “United Nations week” or the “Child rights week” which are organised in most schools.

Teacher education

According to a survey among people studying to become teachers, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is included in their literature lists. There are, however, few separate courses on children's rights, the convention is not discussed in class so literature on children's rights often remains unread. Sometimes the issue is, however, highlighted in connection with a broader course about the basic values.

Several courses on children's rights are available at universities for students who wish to broaden their education to include extra subjects or are prepared to study on a part-time basis while working as teachers.

In-service training on human rights and children's rights, albeit not on a permanent basis, is offered by government authorities and NGOs, such as Save the Children Sweden.

18. Florin, O., Thelander, N., 2004
Government attitude

A new Schools Act is under development. The committee which has been assigned by the government to revise the old law is scheduled to present its recommendations before the end of 2008. The experience of Save the Children Sweden is that this committee is not very open to suggestions from NGOs or other stakeholders.

Evaluations have shown that the Swedish teacher education has several shortcomings; consequently this is also under revision. A proposal will be presented in November 2008.

Activities initiated by Save the Children Sweden

Background

In the mid-1990s, Save the Children Sweden initiated the promotion of training on children’s rights in schools. Extra resources from the government for dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were available, which made it possible to hire a project manager, develop guidebooks and carry out training of trainers. The child rights week, a concept that was later to become replicated in several other countries in different parts of the world, was introduced.

In the early 2000s, Save the Children Sweden transferred resources to new regional offices which were established in order to provide support for the local branches of the organisation. The responsibility for promoting the child rights week was transferred to the local branches. Many local branches contacted schools in their municipalities, organised information meetings, presented available materials (such as a manual for teachers) and offered other activities.

As there are no local branches in some municipalities some schools were, however, excluded from this activity. Therefore, Save the Children Sweden decided to send out invitations for participation in the child rights week to all schools from the head office. Numerous schools responded to these invitations. In 2004 about 150,000 students all over the country benefited from the child rights week.

This, however, meant that the link between schools and the local branches became weaker. Some local branches opted for prioritising other subjects; it became less clear to the schools where to ask for materials and so on. Simultaneously, the government initiated a campaign, aimed at promoting the basic values.

The importance of the child rights week diminished. Only about 35,000 students participated in the thematic week in 2006. The following year Save the Children Sweden decided to stop sending out invitations to the child rights week from the head office. The printing of new material was also cut back.

Current activities

Several local branches of Save the Children Sweden still promote the child rights week in schools. In the absence of clear directions from the head office the concept has, however, become relatively diluted and the child rights week could consist of
anything from a comprehensive package of activities to the handing out of some leaflets.

In recent years some new materials have been developed at the head office. At present a booklet for students entitled “These are your rights” and a teachers’ manual are available. Three different packages of materials about the rights of children and young people, which schools can buy from the Save the Children head office, are also available: one basic package about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, one about gender equality and one about bullying. The pre-study (see below) indicates that local branches, as well as teachers, are not always aware of these materials.

**Pre-study**

**Introduction**

A comprehensive pre-study was carried out. Five schools in different parts of the country were visited and interviews were carried out with students as well as teachers, principals and board members of local branches.

**Save the Children Sweden local branches**

Several of the local branches regret that they have no back-up from the head office any more:

“*Now it is up to us. This means that there are fewer activities.*”

Several of the local branches still try to promote the child rights week through sending information to schools, organising some activities for children, such as a play, or for teachers, for example a lecture:

“*Teachers are interested. But they say ‘we need some materials, a manual, a ready-made package which we can use…’.***

**The principals**

Principals all state that children’s rights are important. They refer to the curriculum’s emphasis on democracy and basic values. The principals also emphasise the schools’ work against discrimination and degrading treatment – and the fact that all Swedish schools are required to have an Equal Treatment Plan.19

The main objective of teaching children about their rights is that they should know that they have rights and that they are entitled to have a say about matters affecting them, most of the principals say. Some principals also emphasise that students should learn to respect diversity. They should also develop an understanding for children in other (developing) countries.

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19. In 2006 a new law, the Act Prohibiting Discrimination and Other Degrading Treatment of Children and School Students, was approved. The law stipulates that school staff is responsible for counteracting bullying and other degrading treatment and that schools should develop an Equal Treatment Plan.
The teachers

None of the teachers interviewed remember learning anything about children’s rights during their teacher training studies. Most of them have received some information or participated in training inputs organised by Save the Children Sweden or other organisations. Some of the teachers, however, considered this information too general, others apparently have rather vague ideas about the contents of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the implications of a rights-based approach. Like in many other countries, some teachers say that children should not only know about their rights but also about responsibilities.

Concerning objectives, most teachers think that children should have knowledge about their rights in order to feel safe and protected. It is noteworthy that several of the teachers also refer to the international perspective; the students should be aware of the situation in other countries and cultures and develop an understanding for children in these countries.

One teacher says that some results of the training on children’s rights are that the atmosphere in the school is more open than before and students are not afraid to express their opinions. Opportunities for participation are offered in class councils and school councils. Most teachers see no obvious results, however.

The students

Very few of the students interviewed knew anything about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most of them, however, have heard about children’s rights. Several of the students are able to mention some rights, such as the right to food and to education and that children should not have to work. (The fact that so many interviewees specially mention child labour clearly reflects the contents of films, magazines and other materials about children in developing countries that has apparently been used during the child rights week or in other lessons where children’s rights have been highlighted.)

Several of the younger children mix up children’s rights with the internal regulations of the school. They primarily refer to topics relating to their own behaviour, such as not to bully anyone and not use bad language. Older students more often say that it is important to know about rights in order to counteract violations:

“It is important so that you are not beaten and think that it is okay.”

Several students remember some games or exercises about values which they have participated in, for example during the child rights week. Most of them do not relate this to children's rights.

Regarding the importance of knowing about children’s rights one student says:

“I suppose it is useful to know all the time, but you don't think about it…”

Others say that it is useful to know that you have the right to participate. Several students, however, see no obvious advantage from this knowledge.
Analysis of child rights training in schools initiated by Save the Children Sweden

Target groups

The target group is all Swedish students, from pre-school to high school level.

Objectives

According to the Save the Children Sweden Programme Officer, the objective is to disseminate knowledge about the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all students.

Actors

Members of local branches in many Swedish municipalities promote the child rights week and other activities relating the children's rights among teachers and other school staff.

The teachers are the key actors as they are the ones who should familiarise their students with children's rights and a rights-based approach.

Methodology

At present, no clear or uniform methodology is used. Teachers are encouraged to buy materials from Save the Children from which they can gain ideas about how to familiarise students with children's rights.

Local branches use a variety of methods: meetings with teachers, distribution of materials, invitations to lectures and sometimes plays and other activities directly targeting students.

Guidelines and other materials

“These are your rights” is a package containing a manual for teachers and booklets for students.

Three packages of materials under the common heading “The rights of children and young people” about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, gender equality and bullying are available.

Financing

The only resources available are limited sums for the printing of new editions of the materials.
**Relationship to duty-bearers**

Duty-bearers at central level are not directly involved in these activities. Save the Children Sweden, however, takes every opportunity to lobby the Minister of Education and other duty-bearers on issues relating to education.

In the municipalities, local branches have sometimes established cooperation with municipal authorities about the child rights week or other activities relating to children’s rights.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

In 2006 a survey was sent out to the schools that participated in the child rights week. In summary, the answers indicated that teachers think that they are familiar with child rights issues. In their classes they mainly work with issues related to the basic values, though. Children’s rights are less often highlighted. Teachers appreciate the materials that have been developed by Save the Children Sweden.

**Results**

Information is available regarding numbers of participating schools, students and so on until 2006. As the involvement of head office ceased in 2007 no such information is available for this year. No qualitative information about what teachers and students really know about children’s rights has been compiled. Regarding effects on teachers and children, in other words outcomes and impact, no information is available.

Seemingly, the pre-study that was carried out within the context of this study is the only available information about teachers’ and students’ knowledge about rights and how these rights can be applied.

**With an eye to the future**

**Save the Children Sweden’s plans**

Save the Children Sweden plans to develop new strategies regarding the promotion of children’s rights in schools. The results of the pre-study are important inputs in formulating these new approaches.

“The pre-study clearly shows that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a non-issue in Swedish schools,” Lena Rostock, Save the Children Sweden Programme Officer says. “Teachers have not realised that the basic values depart from the convention. ‘We know children’s rights,’ they say, but apparently they don’t. ‘We apply children’s rights’, they say, but they don’t.”
Concluding comments and analysis

Country by country summary

Moldova

- In the present curriculum the only space for training on children’s rights is the form teacher’s hour. Despite this, Moldovan students seem to have relatively good knowledge about children’s rights.20 One major problem, however, is how to translate this knowledge into activities aimed at real improvements for children – in the schools, in the family and in society at large. In other words: What to do with the rights?
- The Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) uses child rights training in a strategic manner; as a point of departure for addressing concrete problems, such as children left alone by migrating parents and children in institutions. Seemingly, these projects manage to motivate teachers and provide some benefits for children, both those who are directly targeted and others.
- Good relations with the Ministry of Education are a precondition for the work CRIC carries out. The Ministry itself lacks capacity and resources and, in the short or medium term, prospects for increased government responsibility for ensuring that children acquire knowledge of their rights seem limited.
- Among CRIC’s ideas regarding future projects are to continue working with students’ participation in schools through strengthening local youth councils and making school regulations more participatory. CRIC is also considering a project targeting parents as they are not included in any other activities of the organisation and there are no other Moldovan NGOs working with parents.

Romania

- Some space for teaching children’s rights is provided in the curriculum for civic education, but whether children’s rights are dealt with depends on teachers’ knowledge and motivation. Human rights and children’s rights issues can also be covered in several optional courses. Although many Romanian students, according to monitoring carried out by the Salvati Copiii Centre for Information and Research, have some awareness about children’s rights21 their knowledge about how to exercise these rights is more limited.

20. This finding is confirmed in the UNICEF regional study on education in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Education for some more than others? This study states, without going into further detail, that particularly in Moldova, Albania and Turkey children are aware of their rights because they are taught about them in school.
21. These findings are also reflected in the Flash Eurobarometer, 2008
• Salvati Copiii has developed an optional course on children’s rights, which has been accredited (licensed) by the Ministry of Education. Approximately 50 teachers were trained in 2007. Most of them, however, choose to use the new knowledge in the form teacher’s hour instead of in an optional course. About 200 volunteers per year are also trained to conduct child rights training inputs in schools. There are no obvious links to Salvati Copiii’s other projects and activities regarding the situation in schools.

• The Ministry of Education lacks capacity and is currently showing no interest in prioritising training on children’s rights. Several other government authorities also work with in-service training for teachers, the implementation of children’s rights, development of materials for schools etc. Efforts are, however, uncoordinated and cooperation with NGOs limited.

• Salvati Copiii persistently lobbies the Ministry of Education for the course on children’s rights to be put on a list of prioritised courses. The final aim of these lobbying activities is that children’s rights should become a mandatory subject in Romanian schools.

Serbia

• Either civic education or religion is a mandatory subject in Serbian schools. In the civic education curriculum child rights are included, but civic education teachers are generally poorly trained. Consequently, most of the Serbian students have limited or no knowledge about children’s rights.

• The Child Rights Centre has introduced an optional course on children’s rights. The course is implemented in three steps: first teachers are trained, then the entire classes are familiarised with children’s rights and finally the students who are interested participate in an extra-curricular activity where a problem in the school is identified and solutions are worked out. This way theory is put into practical use and the students are provided with an opportunity to exercise their rights. Monitoring shows that teachers, as well as students, are happy with the course and find it useful.

• The Ministry of Education is relatively conservative and centralised. The Ministry makes the final selection of the schools that are included in child rights training project but has taken no initiatives of its own to enhance Serbian students’ knowledge about children’s rights.

• The Child Rights Centre plans to apply for the accreditation of the optional course. If the licensing attempt succeeds, funding for the project will be available, teachers will get paid for their extra work and the course will be less dependent on the benevolence of the Ministry of Education. The course will also appear in a government list of optional courses which might increase demand.
Estonia

- Despite provisions for addressing children's rights in the curriculum, they are included in the subjects human studies and civic education, the limited pre-study as well as observations from the partner organisation, Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCW), and other people interviewed indicate that the knowledge level on children's rights is limited among Estonian teachers and students.
- EUCW does not work with child rights training inputs in schools in any systematic manner. The staff of the organisation conducts lessons upon requests from schools.
- The Ministry of Education has shown no particular interest in enhancing teachers' knowledge about the Convention on the Rights of the Child or more clearly and explicitly including child rights issues in the curricula for civic education or human studies. The EUCW has no concrete plans for lobbying the Ministry of Education on these issues.
- Forum theatre performances based on children's rights are an interesting feature of EUCW's programme. As new and creative methods for teaching children's rights are in high demand in all the countries included in this study, it might be worthwhile for partner organisations to consider replicating this model. In addition, forum theatre, performed by young people, is a good way of involving youth in the work for children's rights.

Sweden

- In the curricula for the different educational stages - pre-schools, grades 1–9 and high school – neither human rights nor children's rights are mentioned. Instead the concept “basic values” describes the values that should permeate work in Swedish schools. Despite the fact that many of these values have apparent similarities with children's rights, this means that many students are not familiarised with a rights-based approach. The pre-study also indicates that both teachers and children have limited knowledge about the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Since the mid-1990s, Save the Children Sweden has encouraged training on children's rights in schools, primarily through their child rights week. In 2007 the head office ceased to promote these child rights weeks. Concerning education, priorities other than children's rights were identified. In spite of the ongoing efforts of many of the local branches, the concept has therefore become rather diluted.
- At present a review of the Schools Act and a revision of teacher education are underway. There are no indications, however, that the Ministry of Education plans to put more emphasis on training on children's rights or replace the rather vague concept of basic values with human rights.
- As yet Save the Children Sweden has no clear plans regarding child rights training inputs in schools. The pre-study that was carried out within the context of this study, however, indicates a relatively low level of knowledge about children's
rights among teachers and students and will form an input into future strategic discussions about this issue.

**Overall conclusions and analysis**

- Article 42 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child says “State Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike”. Furthermore, in General Comments on Articles 29, 4, 42 and 44, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has pointed out: “Children need to acquire knowledge of their rights and the Committee places special emphasis on incorporating learning about the Convention and human rights in general into the school curriculum at all stages”. A recent study, commissioned by the Save the Children Sweden Europe Programme, also confirms that promoting respect for human rights still requires systematic change in the educational sector and that there is some confusion between the notions of children’s rights, child protection and a child perspective. Despite this, in none the five countries included in this study have any major signs of interest been observed from governments as far as enhancing students’ knowledge about their rights goes.

- In Moldova, Romania and Serbia the governments do not seem to be prepared to assume any more responsibility for making children’s rights known to children and young people. Primarily they consider this task to be a duty of NGOs. In Estonia and Sweden there are indications that the governments consider the Convention on the Rights of the Child to be sufficiently well-known and no further efforts are needed. As this study shows, this assumption is not correct.

- Partner organisations either have a somewhat vague notion about government responsibility for training teachers, providing materials and making children’s rights known to students or, for the time being, do not consider it worthwhile to request the governments to assume their responsibility in this field. Based on the situation and the opportunities available in each country, more efforts could probably be made to find new and creative ways of influencing this situation, such as the building of alliances with other civil society organisations for lobbying governments or gradually persuading schools assume part of the costs for training inputs, materials etc.

- The Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) in Moldova has moved beyond dissemination of general knowledge about the children’s rights and uses child rights training inputs as point of departure for addressing other issues. It might also be worthwhile for some of the other partner organisations to consider a similar approach as a way forward.

- The training of teachers carried out by Salvati Copiii in Romania has been accredited by the Ministry of Education. The Child Rights Centre in Serbia is also aiming for licensing of training. A problem with the projects run by these

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two organisations is that they reach relatively few children and are difficult to scale up due to financial constraints and lack of human resources. Consequently, Salvati Copiii also lobbies the government to make children’s rights a mandatory subject in the Romanian curriculum.

- An interesting feature of the training implemented by the Child Rights Centre in Serbia is that it concludes with a practical project: the students identify a problem in the school, such as lack of information, design an action plan and try to solve it. This way the students are provided with an opportunity to not only to learn but also to make practical use of their rights. The same concept is used in a contest which is administered by Salvati Copiii. This concept was also used in a former CRIC project.

- The Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCW) and Save the Children Sweden do not clearly prioritise child rights training inputs in schools. EUCW carries out training on requests from schools and some local branches of Save the Children Sweden continue promoting “the child rights week” although, due to limited methodological development and other support from the head office, this concept has not been developed further.

- Far-reaching conclusions from the limited pre-studies and other information that has been compiled during the work with this study should be avoided. It should also be noted that the pre-studies have been carried out in schools where some kind of child rights training inputs have taken place and, therefore, are not representative of the general situation in the countries concerned. Despite this, the interviews provide interesting qualitative insights into how children’s rights and child rights training inputs are perceived by teachers, students and other stakeholders.

- In Moldova and Sweden relatively comprehensive pre-studies were carried out in schools where CRIC or Save the Children Sweden have implemented training or awareness-raising activities. Interestingly, the Moldovan students seem to have better knowledge about their rights than their Swedish counterparts – but, of course, less opportunities to exercise them. A general challenge in all the countries is that the links between theory and practice are rather weak; students learn about their rights but do not know how to make use of them.

- All the partner organisations – some more than others, though – have developed materials, such as manuals, guidelines and child-friendly versions on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that are used for the training inputs for students on children’s rights. Opportunities for pooling resources in this sense seem limited due to requirements in connection with accreditation of training courses, adaptations to different project concepts as well as other reasons.

- Knowledge about participatory and creative teaching methods, which are often associated with training on children’s rights, is highly appreciated by teachers. Probably this aspect could be emphasised even more by the partner organisations in order to promote their training inputs – and, through them, possibly also make teaching of other subjects more dynamic and child friendly.

- Several partners have developed mechanisms for quantitative follow-up of their
child rights training inputs (number of teachers who are trained, number of children participating etc.). Qualitative follow-up (measuring what students have really learned) is less common. Even more seldom outcomes (whether the students find the knowledge useful and are able to apply it) are measured. Seemingly, there is a need for development of follow-up qualitative methods.

- With the exception of CRIC’s work, the links between child rights training inputs in schools and other projects related to problems in the school environment, such as lack of participation, anti-violence and anti-bullying projects and inclusion of minorities, children with disabilities or other disadvantaged children, seem to be rather weak. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, however, emphasises a holistic perspective, stating that the “education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”. Furthermore, Article 29 states that the education of the child must be directed to the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Considering this, there is ample room for strategic and methodological development aimed at addressing all school issues under one common heading: democratic governance in schools.23

**Final comment**

The findings of this study are confirmed by a recent Eurobarometer survey, The Rights of the Child – Analytic Report, published in April 2008. This survey was carried out on behalf of the European Commission’s Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security. Over 10,000 randomly selected young people (15–18 years old) across the EU were interviewed about their knowledge on the rights of the child.

The main findings of the study are that the majority – 67 per cent - of young people from the 27 EU member states are aware that people under 18 enjoy specific rights compared to adults. Nevertheless, when asked to identify problems that might be encountered by others in their age group trying to defend their rights, 79 per cent said that they would not know who to contact and that they are simply not aware of their rights. Consequently, 88 per cent thought that more information is needed.

According to the Eurobarometer survey the level of awareness about the rights of the child is highest in Romania where 85 per cent of the young people said that they are aware of these rights. Estonia is just on the EU average; 67 per cent know about their rights. Sweden is at the lower end of the distribution with 63 per cent who are aware that there are specific rights for children.

When asked their opinion about the level of protection of children’s rights, however, the lowest proportions of respondents who think that the children’s rights are well protected in their country is found in Portugal and Romania. In Romania 42 per cent consider their rights to be very or fairly well protected. In Estonia the corresponding figure is 68 per cent and in Sweden 86 per cent.

23. Democratic governance in schools is a concept that has been introduced by the Council of Europe as a means of preparing young people to become participating, democratic adult citizens and identifying how schools can contribute to their students’ education for democratic citizenship.
Appendix 1

Questionnaire – pre-study

Questions for principals/head teachers:

- Why are CRC training inputs carried out in this school and on whose initiative?
- How is the training currently organised, who are the trainers and which groups receive the training? How is the CRC training financed? Is there any involvement from local authorities or other primary duty-bearers?
- Which training materials are used? How have they evolved over time?
- What are the objectives of the training inputs?
- Have there been any identifiable effects? Which ones? Are there objectives that have not been met? Which ones and why?
- Does the methodology or contents of the training inputs need to be changed somehow? If yes, how? What is needed in order for these changes to take place?

Questions for teachers:

- Describe the CRC training you have participated in. What did you learn? What worked well and what could have been better? Have you been able to apply any lessons you learned? How?
- What is the role of teachers in the CRC training for students? Do you find this way of organising the training inputs good? Which improvements could be made?
- Have there been any effects of these training inputs? Which ones? (1. Regarding teacher and/or pupil behaviour, abuse, bullying etc. 2. regarding teaching methods and curriculum 3. establishment of new mechanisms, such as student councils, systems for reporting abuse 4. other changes?)
- Which training methods are used? Have these methods (and training materials) developed over time? Is there a need for change in your opinion? If yes, why and what changes?
- Have the contents of the training inputs been changed? Is there a need for change in your opinion? If yes, why and what changes?

Questions for students

- Why are the CRC training inputs carried out, how are they financed? What are the objectives?
What do you think of these training inputs? Have they benefited you in any way? If yes, how? If not, do you have any suggestions for improvements?

In your opinion, how does the training relate to the situation and actual problems in your school? Do you see any connection? What problems are there in the school?

Have there been any effects from these training inputs? Which ones? (1. Regarding teacher and/or pupil behaviour, abuse, bullying etc. 2. regarding teaching methods and curriculum 3. establishment of new mechanisms, such as student councils, systems for reporting abuse 4. other changes)

Any suggestions about changes regarding 1. methodology and 2. contents that could be made in order to make the training inputs more beneficial? Would it, for example, be a good idea to include parents?

Questions for parents

What do you know about the CRC? What is your opinion about the CRC training that your son/daughter receives at school?

Do you know why the CRC training inputs are carried out? Objectives? (How are you as a parent involved in, or receive information about, the situation in the school?)

Have you noticed any changes following the training inputs? (Regarding behaviour of your daughter/son, teaching methods in the school, other things?)

What changes in the school environment and the curriculum would you like to see?

Do you think that parents should also receive training on the CRC? Why/why not?
Appendix 2

People interviewed

Moldova

Gavriliuc, Cezar, CRIC
Moldovanu, Iosif, CRC trainer, Board Member of CRIC
Olaru, Valentina, School Inspector, Chisinau Municipal Department for Education
Parlicov, Eugenia, Ministry of Education
Stepan, Aliona, CRIC
Timofte, Ludmila, School Inspector, Calarasi District Department of Education

Pre-study: Principals, teachers, students and parents of Hirova and Bravicea School in Calarasi District, Biesti School in Orhei District and Lapusna School in Hancesti District.

Romania

Adam, Cristina, Salvati Copiii
Alexandrescu, Gabriela, Director, Salvati Copiii
Cherciu, Radica, Ministry of Education
Crai, Eugen, UNICEF
Cruceru, Irina, High level group for Romanian children
Grigori, Cristina, House of Teachers
Manole, Mihaela, Salvati Copiii Centre for Information and Research
Negreanu, Mirella, National Centre for Staff Training and Staff Development
Nicolaescu, Dana, High level group for Romanian children
Onu, Diana, Salvati Copiii Centre for Information and Research
Preda, Nicoleta, National Authority for Child Protection
Revbenciul, Mihai, House of Teachers

Pre-study: Principals, teachers and students of School 86 in Bucharest, School I-VIII in Ploiești and telephone interviews with principals, teachers and students of four more schools in Bucharest. In addition volunteers carried out interviews in one school.

Serbia

Golic, Milena, Child Rights Centre
Ispanovic, Veronika, child and adolescent psychiatrist, member of Child Rights Council
Ivkovic, Aida, Save the Children Norway
Petrovic, Marija, Child Rights Centre
Radic Dudic, Radmila, Civic Initiatives
Vranjesevic, Jelena, consultant
Zeravcic, Andrea, Save the Children Norway

Pre-study: Principal and teacher of Ratko Mitrovic School, Belgrade

**Estonia**

Elken, Anete, Estonian School Student Councils Union
Hallimäe, Malle, Estonian Union for Child Welfare
Keskpaik, Mari-Liis, Estonian Union for Child Welfare
Mikiver, Käthlin, Estonian Union for Child Welfare
Poiklik, Erle, National Examinations and Qualifications Centre
Soosaar, Piret, Estonian Union for Child Welfare
Valdemaa, Sulev, Jaan Tönisson Institute

Pre-study: Teachers, a social pedagogue and students from Viimsi School, and Haapsalu Wiedemanni Gymnasium and two parents.

**Sweden**

Rostock, Lena, Save the Children Sweden
Swärd, Susann, author of the Swedish pre-study

Pre-study: Principals, teachers, students and members of Save the Children Sweden local branches in Gammelby, Hedemore, Partille, Ronneby and Örsköldsvik municipalities.

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Child rights training in schools in Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Estonia and Sweden
Appendix 3

Literature

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Florin, O., Thelander, N., Integration av Mänskliga Rättigheter I svensk utbildning 2002-2004, en kommentar med fokus på den obligatoriska skolan, Save the Children Sweden, 2004 (only available in Swedish)
Jacomy, S., Back to basics, Overview of reporting by 10 European countries on the implementation of the aims of education enshrined in the UN Convention on the rights of the Child, Save the Children Sweden, 2007
Swärd, Susann, ”Det är ju inte så att vi går tillbaka och hänvisar till barnkonventionen”, Save the Children Sweden, 2008 (only available in Swedish)
UNICEF, Education for some more than others? Regional study on education, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNICEF, 2007
Project proposals, reports and other relevant documents relating to child rights training inputs in schools from partner organisations in Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Estonia.
Save the Children Sweden fights for children’s rights. We influence public opinion and support children at risk – in Sweden and internationally.