

Situation of Child and Young Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova



We are members of a community called Children`s Platform whose aim is to advocate for child and human rights. Our community has had **40 members** since its creation in 2017, but more than 3000 children were consulted in its initiatives.

Our additional **aims**:

- Raising awareness of child/young human rights defenders, their challenges and recommendations.
- Empowerment - We as child/young human rights defenders have a voice and should be heard as well!

Our monitoring and advocacy **initiatives**:

- Right to hygiene, and sanitation in schools (2018)
- Right to have an opinion considered in schools (2019)
- Right to sexuality education in schools (2021)

In the previous UPR cycle, Moldova received and accepted **3 recommendations** - from Belgium, Poland, and Uruguay - to recognize the importance of human rights defenders and create a safe environment for them in line with Human Rights Conventions.

Unfortunately, no state made specific recommendations regarding child human rights defenders. We strongly encourage recommending States to formulate clear and specific recommendations focusing on creating safe and enabling environment for child human rights defenders.

Main issues:

Lack of child/youth friendly information on human rights, including protection mechanism, opportunities, and support for action, etc

Strong and widespread negative attitudes about children`s capacities and activities of child human rights defenders

“Students may know their rights, but adults in school do not create conditions in which children can exercise their rights - moreover, they rather violate children`s rights.”
(Group of CHRDs, 2021)

“In school we talk about activism, civic involvement, but the school does not support us to participate ... On the contrary, they stop us, marginalize us, set limits...”
(girl, 17yo)

- We mostly learn about rights and their realization from participating in activities with different NGOs and while volunteering; these programmes can involve only limited number of children.

“Stereotypes that teenagers are not able to express themselves and understand [human rights issues or decision-making processes].” (DGD 2018 submission)

- It is even worse for some children, for example children with disabilities, young children, children who experiment with hairstyles and clothing, children with low grades etc.
- As human rights defenders we are either not taken seriously or considered dangerous for our school, community etc.

A participant in a Fridays for Future protest told us *“This topic is treated superficially in the media. Nothing is said about the reaction of the authorities. Nor about the document we attached to the e-mail [as invitation]. And at the end, people in front of the TV see our protest like any other protest and some outraged young people.”*
(Girl, 18yo)

Impact:

“When they do not take us seriously and not inform us, they limit possibilities for action and expressing our opinions.”
(APSCF, 2018:5-6, [link](#))

Impact:

“Many young people give up their ideas because they are not taken seriously, they do not receive any response from the authorities or the school administration.”
(Girl, 18yo)

Not-functioning protection mechanisms

- Children who experience violence and suffer negative consequences due to their activities for human rights rarely seek any support or protection. They are not aware of the existing mechanisms or do not have trust that they will get the support and protection they need.
- A group of child human rights defenders told us that they announced their assembly at the local public authorities as according to the rules, but "No policeman was there to provide safety and security during the protest. A drunken man attacked a young man, and a woman swore at us. It was very humiliating." (Girl, 17yo)

Impact:

We don't feel safe and protected in general and even less so when we act for human rights.

Risks of violence and negative consequences is widespread

- Adults (including school staff) intimidate and threaten us when we express our opinions and raise human rights issues (including in students councils) or when we take part in protests. The more critical our views the bigger the risks including lowering grades or threatening with expelling from school:
- "After the strike, the administration of a school from which several students came to strike gathered everyone from the school to threaten to expel the students who participated in the strike during school. They threatened with expelling or not admitting to the final exam." (girl, 17yo; Submission to the HRC General Comment 37, [link](#))
- "We cannot express ourselves freely about LGBTQ in schools, community, because as a defender of the rights of the LGBTQ community, you are associated as a member of it and because this is a taboo in our country you get exposed to bullying, online and offline, including from school staff. And, people around you get involved in your personal life without permission." (Girl 20yo)

Impact:

These issues make it difficult or even stop us from getting active for human rights and put our other rights at risk.



Recommendations:

- ➡ Conduct an awareness-raising campaign to inform children, parents and everyone working for and with children (such as teachers, social workers, police), about human rights, and in particular children's rights, including what can be done if rights are violated.
- ➡ Establish an exchange platform between children's and youth organizations and government, creating a safe space and opportunities for child human rights defenders to express their views and develop policies considering them.
- ➡ Ensure that child human rights defenders have access to multiple, safe, child-appropriate mechanisms to report reprisals, violence, and abuse, seek redress for violations and receive support and care for physical and psychological abuse. .



Our initiatives are supported by Child Rights Information Centre from Moldova.

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