

Democratising child sexual violence through YPAR:

Lessons from facilitating peer research with young „survivors“ in Albania

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Outline

1. Background and study aims
2. Research design
3. Findings from peer research
4. Learning from the YPAR process
5. Working in partnership with practitioners and youth

Background and study aims

“OUR VOICES TOO” youth advocacy project identified a key problem:

Retraumatization through support & justice systems



Dear Judge,

I struggle to write this letter for a long time, for my child, who is almost the age I was when I met you.

When I was 12, was called a „benevolent” rapist out of ignorance or to avoid getting you reduced everything to my word as a word as an adult man. In that moment, you gave me the choice. If only you knew how I spent those many sleepless nights I spent trying to understand, to find answers...

When I laughed at me, the doctor questioned my presence for the choice. If only you knew how I spent those many sleepless nights I spent trying to understand, to find answers...

I preferred to wash my hands off it — he had things to do. I was so ashamed... I felt lonely and unprotected.

to know that this nightmare is not the way the man who raped me didn't leave me with a bruised eye and didn't threaten me with a weapon. He didn't need to. We knew each other well. He was my father... He'd take me with him to bed at night, and during the day he'd take me as if nothing had happened. He'd hug, touch, and tell me that I'd like it. He'd buy me things. He'd tell me he loved me so much, and I had to be grateful that he cared for me. Do you know how many years it took me to find out that love and care look different?

These wounds did not „heal”, but I managed to make the suffering more bearable due to a person who noticed me, listened to me, and got involved. It made me feel protected. I'd like to believe that such people still exist, that things have changed. I'd like to believe that behavioral functions there are people who know how to do their job, because injustice hurts. Incompetence, indifference, irony... they all hurt.

Someone's life depends on your decisions.

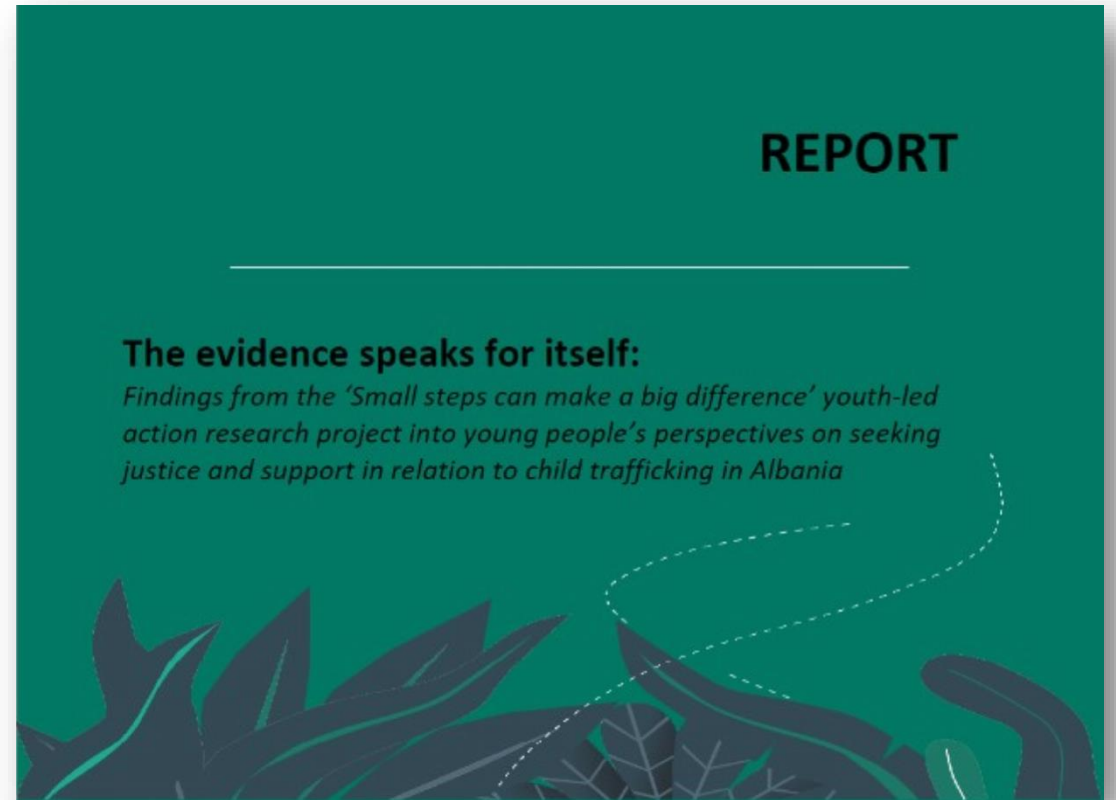
One in seven girls (14.6%) and one in twenty boys (5.3%) were sexually abused before they turned 18 years old. (MICS, 2011)

Small Steps (2020-2022)

- 6 female young researchers (aged 17-26); 4 professionals
- Peer research design engaging 12 female respondents (aged 15-25)
- 18 structured peer interviews
- Process evaluation: approx. 50 workshops, group discussions & reflective sessions

Findings from youth peer research

- Victim-blaming & prejudice
- Lack of safety when dealing with police
- Inappropriate interview practices
- Lack of communication, transparency, trust
- Impunity, corruption, poor governance

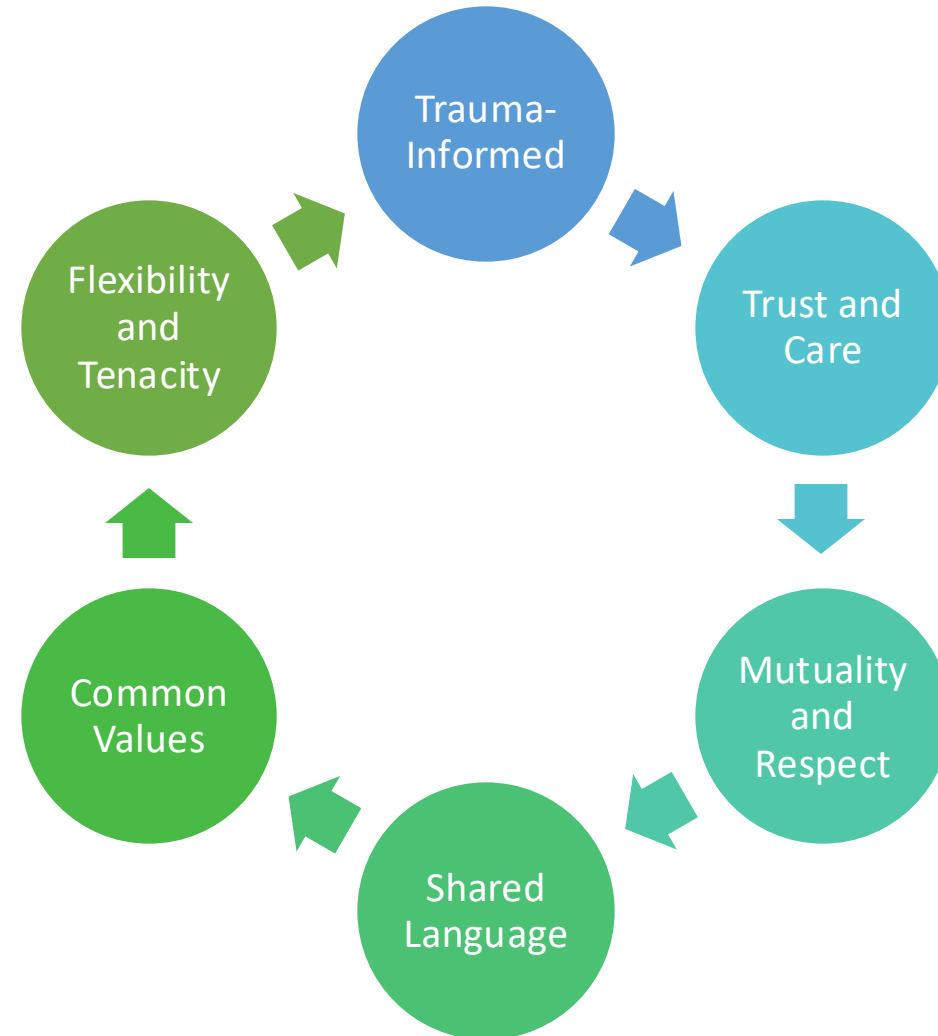


Available as download on: <https://differentandequal.org/en/english-research-report-the-evidence-speaks-itself/>

Key learning from the YPAR process

1. Creating opportunities for young people to influence decisions
2. Thoughtful planning, adequate time and resources
3. Capacity-building
4. Highly skilled facilitation and ongoing support
5. Willingness to take and manage risks

Principles of strong partnerships



Thanks for listening! Any questions?



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Further Reading:

Bovarnick, S. with Meshi, M. (2023) *How effective research-practice partnerships can support children and young people's safe involvement in child sexual abuse research*. (Accessible at: <https://www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc/current-programmes-and-projects/learning-together/blogs-and-case-studies/effective-research-practice-partnerships/>)

Bovarnick, S. (2021) *Investing in young people – not just in their voices*. (Accessible at: <http://www.svri.org/what-we-do/being-heard-webinar-involving-children-and-young-people-participatory-research-sexual>)