



CHILD PLAY-BASED ASSESSMENT TOOL

Bulgaria Red Cross

CASE STUDY





Photo description: Child participating in Bulgaria Red Cross pilot project
Photo credit: Bulgaria Red Cross

Background

Sesame Workshop and IFRC have formed a strategic partnership to create content and programs focused on the safety, early education, and mental health of children aged 4-8 years.

Bulgarian Red Cross Youth tested the play-based assessment as part of a global pilot in October 2024.

Financial and technical support was provided from the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) as part of PGI programming with displaced people from Ukraine now living in Bulgaria.

Who was Supported and How

The Bulgarian Red Cross Youth piloted the play-based assessment activities with 50 children from Plovdiv kindergarten and 10 of their caregivers. In order to prepare for the pilot implementation a dedicated training around how to apply the tool in kindergarten settings was organized. A total of 44 youth Red Cross volunteers took part in this training.

After the completion of the training, the activities were implemented with over 50 children; the results were recorded for a total of 36 children.



Photo description: Child participating in Bulgaria Red Cross pilot project
Photo credit: Bulgaria Red Cross

Successes

There were a number of successes that resulted from the pilot. In particular:

- Kindergarten teachers were well organized for the pilot activities and were involved in the planning. For example, they prepared print-out material provided by Sesame Workshop and decorated with Sesame Street themes the rooms where the piloting would occur. The teachers appreciated the activities and the tool, as well as the youth volunteers participation and the youth-led workshop.
- Children enjoyed the warm-up games as well as the feelings check-in exercise. The volunteers created a safe space that allowed children to be open and to freely express both positive and negative emotions.

Challenges and Difficulties

In addition to successes, the project also experienced some challenges. Key challenges included:

- The parents questionnaire was filled by 10 caregivers. Key observations include:
 - caregivers preferred not to answer some of the questions, such as around their income/resources.
 - some questions were not considered very relevant to Bulgarian context; for instance, access to clean drinking water, heating, transportation, mobile phone, internet.
 - the lower number of caregivers participating in the survey may have been due to their reluctance to reveal information, also due to caregivers being busy or because they were not familiar/used to participating in such activities.
- In terms of activities with children, the animal dance game, was mostly understood by the children, however, children quickly lost interest in the activity.

Lessons Learned

The piloting built on existing capacities and experience working with young children from within the Bulgaria Red Cross. As such, the piloting was more easily built into existing areas of work.

In addition, for data collection the tools and training that was provided for the youth volunteers allowed for more effective data collection and management.

Youth volunteers shared that having specialized training and preparation support is essential when implementing new and innovative tools.

In terms of specific tools:

- Warm-up games as well as the Feelings Check-in exercise were very well prepared and explained in the toolkit. These activities were observed as the most interesting for the children;
- The purpose of the Animal Dance was not entirely clear for the children and this resulted in some of them quickly losing interest; and
- The questions in the parents' questionnaire should be adapted to the local context.