



too often in

SILENCE

Addressing violence in schools

Selected initiatives from
West and Central Africa



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INTRODUCTION

Following the release of the World Report on violence against Children¹, ActionAid, Plan West Africa Regional Office (WARO), Save the Children Sweden West Africa (WA) and UNICEF West and Central Africa (WCARO) joined forces in 2008 in an Education and Child Protection initiative, with the objective of strengthening and accelerating interventions against violence in schools in West and Central Africa.

This document presents a collection of some promising initiatives to address different facets of the problem in different contexts. Rather than best practices, this document therefore presents a collection of some promising initiatives that have been conducted in the region to address school-based violence.

The initiatives were mainly selected from the work of ActionAid, Plan WARO, Save the Children Sweden WA, UNICEF WCARO and their institutional and civil society partners at country level. They include experiences from both West and Central African countries, with different languages, and with different political and social contexts, including post-conflict countries and fragile states. The document presents initiatives from: Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Each narrative has been informed by documentation, when available, and by inputs from partners through short telephone interviews. As far as possible the initiatives are concrete articulations of the recommendations formulated in the regional desk review [Desk review of evidence on violence within educational settings in West and Central Africa, (Castle and Diallo, 2010)]. They include work from national to school levels.

The initiatives are organised around six of the seven core components of national education and child protection systems: Accountability mechanisms; Capacity; Co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration; Communication, education and mobilisation for social change; Service delivery mechanisms; Laws, policies, standards and regulations. The seventh key component which was not included in this document concerns financial resources.

By identifying emerging success factors, challenges and lessons learned, and sharing these, we believe governments, policy-makers and development partners can learn from concrete examples, contact resource persons in countries and inform the work that still needs to be done to change legislation, practices and attitudes to ensure all girls and boys access and complete an education of good quality which respects their fundamental human rights.

Acknowledgements

The collection of initiatives would not have been possible without the guidance and inputs from: ActionAid Democratic Republic of Congo, ActionAid International, ActionAid Ghana, ActionAid Gambia, ActionAid Kenya, ActionAid Nigeria, Centre de Guidance Infantile et Familial de Dakar (CEGID); Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Senegal; Gambia Teachers' Union, Plan WARO, Plan Togo, Save the Children Sweden WA, Save the Children Sweden Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF Gambia; UNICEF Liberia; UNICEF Mauritania; UNICEF Sierra Leone; and UNICEF WCARO.

¹ United Nations – Secretary General (2006). *Report of the independent expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children (A/61/299)*. New York, United Nations



LAWS, POLICIES, STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Supporting advocacy work at policy level

INITIATIVE

Making the grade: A model national policy for the prevention, management and elimination of violence against girls in schools

COUNTRY: Global.

PARTNERS: ActionAid International, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), education policy experts, teachers' unions, women's rights experts, civil society organisations from the Southern African Development Community region.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence against girls, including structural violence which negates girls' rights to education and protection.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2006 to 2007.

OBJECTIVES

The policy model aims to "engender respect for girls' rights to education in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals"². It is an overall framework, to be adapted to national contexts, with the following objectives:

- to develop a comprehensive policy framework that provides mechanisms and creates guidelines for protecting girls against violence in schools
- to co-ordinate and consolidate existing policy frameworks addressing violence against girls in schools
- to support the development, adoption and adaptation of legislation on issues of violence against girls in schools.

ACTIVITIES

The policy model is organised in three sections: (i) The role and responsibilities of stakeholders; (ii) Monitoring and evaluation; (iii) Review and revision. Stakeholders include:

- government and ministries
- school/institution-specific policies on violence against girls
- school boards/school governing bodies
- girls with special needs
- teachers and teachers' unions
- teacher training and in-service training.

The model is further articulated around five dimensions:

- prevention
- reporting and identification
- dealing with perpetrators
- assisting survivors
- capacity building.

² ActionAid International and OSISA (2007). *Making the grade: A model national policy for the prevention, management and elimination of violence against girls in school*. Johannesburg, South Africa, ActionAid International South Africa/OSISA.

RESULTS

The model policy, widely disseminated in Africa, is not a one-size-fits-all and has been successfully used by many countries as a reference in the mapping of legal and policy frameworks, especially in Malawi. The model policy was further discussed at a sub-regional workshop on violence against girls in schools in Senegal in November 2007. ActionAid is about to embark on a similar exercise in Ghana.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ActionAid International and OSISA (2007). *Making the grade. A model national policy for the prevention, management and elimination of violence against girls in school*. Johannesburg, South Africa, ActionAid International South Africa/ OSISA.

Available in English and French.

Contact: ActionAid International: internationaleducationteam@actionaid.org; www.actionaid.org

■ Developing national frameworks

INITIATIVE

National Strategic Framework on Violence-Free Basic Education

COUNTRY: Nigeria.

PARTNERS: Federal Ministry of Education and UNICEF

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological, sexual, gender-based and health-related violence.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007 to present.

OBJECTIVES

The *National Strategic Framework on Violence-Free Basic Education* is part of a range of activities conducted by the Federal Government and State Authorities with support from UNICEF in the area of violence in schools. It aims to ensure all children can access and complete basic education in Nigeria.

ACTIVITIES

Following-up on the *Assessment of Violence against Children at the Basic Education Level*, a draft national framework for action was devised in 2007 by the Federal Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF. Linked to the development of the framework, a range of activities have been implemented:

- sensitisation of teachers and students from selected primary schools on causes of violence in schools and possible prevention responses
- training of 100 education managers from the North Central and North Western regions on violence prevention in schools
- capacity building of education stakeholders (school management committees, parent teacher associations, teachers) to develop strategies on violent-free schools relevant to their own context
- development of guidance counselling in schools
- institutional capacity development activities in state colleges of education (South-West region) on guidance and counselling and violence prevention in schools and teacher development programmes (pre-service and in-service).

RESULTS

The draft *National Strategic Framework on Violence-Free Basic Education* presents strategies and implementation activities on:

- developing a vision for violence-free schools
- safe and friendly learning environment policy

- institutionalisation of counselling into basic education
- sensitisation and capacity building
- research promotion
- monitoring and evaluation.

It further identifies the role and responsibilities of duty bearers in all relevant sectors at federal, state and school level, including the role of the media.

The draft *National Strategic Framework on Violence-Free Basic Education* has been reviewed and approved by the Federal Government and is currently being utilised in the states.

The *National Strategic Framework on Violence-Free Basic Education* and the Minimum Standards for the Establishment and Management of Schools at the Inspectorate Division of the Federal Ministry of Education provide the basis for the formulation of a policy that addresses school-based violence in Nigeria.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Federal Ministry of Education/UNICEF (2007). *Assessment of Violence against Children at the Basic Education Level in Nigeria*. ISBN: 92-9186-074-3.

Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education (2007). *The National Strategic Framework on Violence- Free Basic Education in Nigeria*. Abuja, Nigeria, with support from UNICEF.

Contact: School Support Division, Federal Ministry of Education, Federal Secretariat Complex, Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria.

Standards of professional behaviour

INITIATIVE

Developing a school-based teachers' code of conduct

COUNTRY: Côte d'Ivoire.

PARTNERS: Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, regional education authorities, selected schools, teachers' unions.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, verbal, psychological and sexual violence against children in schools.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007 to 2009.

OBJECTIVES

Rewrite the Future is a Save the Children Alliance international initiative focused on securing quality education for children out of school in both conflict and post-conflict countries. In Côte d'Ivoire, one objective of the programme is to develop a safe and conducive learning environment for children. It is under this framework that the development of teachers' and school staff codes of conduct has been taking place, both in schools and at national level.

ACTIVITIES

The development of the code of conduct followed a staged bottom-up process.

- Following-up on training sessions on children's rights, protection and participation organised for teachers, school management committees, education officials and children, a pilot project was developed in partnership with local education authorities and school community actors. In the 12 pilot schools a code was developed then validated by the regional authorities. After dissemination of the code to all school stakeholders, a steering committee was established in each school to follow-up the implementation of the code at school level.
- After the establishment of the codes in individual schools, a similar approach was used to support selected regional education authorities to develop codes in the schools they are responsible for.

- At the national level, Save the Children supported teachers' unions to develop their own Code of Conduct which would be used nationally and be officially recognised by the Ministry of Education.

While the national Code of Conduct established by the unions provides ethical guidelines for the profession, the school-based codes are negotiated between children and school staff.

RESULTS

At school level the initiative resulted in genuine efforts from adults to encourage children's participation in the process of school-based code development and community engagement in education and protection issues. However, not all schools engaged in the process with the same enthusiasm. The pilot resulted in the identification of key elements to be included in a school code.

10 KEY ELEMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN A SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT

Codes must include issues such as:

1. Corporal punishment
2. Degrading attitudes
3. Sexual abuse
4. Discrimination
5. Alcohol and tobacco consumption in the learning environment
6. Chores and other tasks children are requested to undertake by teachers.

Codes must promote:

7. Respect for human dignity and children as individuals
8. Children's participation
9. Positive relationships between teachers and parents and between teachers and students
10. Appropriate clothing.

Source: *Teacher Code of Conduct: sharing experience, Rewrite the Future Côte d'Ivoire*. PowerPoint presentation.

The Code of Conduct developed by the teachers' union was validated by the Inspectorate. It is about to be officially adopted by the Ministry of Education. This will complement the decree enacted by the Ministry of Education in September 2009 which forbids degrading and corporal punishment and reiterates respect for the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child such as the best interest of the child and child participation.

SUCCESS FACTORS

At school level:

- the wide range of content integrated in the codes and the varied practices around the composition and remit of the steering committee in charge of implementation follow-up have led to a rich mixture of experiences based on which key elements of codes' content and structure have been identified for scaling-up the project
- support from high level authorities such as regional education authorities was key in the success of the initiative and its buy-in from schools and communities.

At national level:

- bottom-up process: appropriation of the code by unions which resulted in their initiative to present the code to the Ministry of Education for approval
- unions can mobilise and engage teachers and professional staff across the country effectively.

CHALLENGES

At school level:

- resistance of school staff and communities to recognise the problems faced by children in schools
- resistance of some teachers to engage in the development of the Code of Conduct
- ensuring the best interests of the child at all stages of the development, implementation and monitoring of the code.

At national level:

- some individual and corporate resistance, linked to varied political agendas, to be overcome to ensure total ownership of the document by the entire teaching population.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons shared by the partners include:

At school level:

- ensuring codes are concise and clear for both adults and children
- clarifying the implementation period of the codes and their revision process
- detailing sanctions and penalties for every breach of the code
- ensuring codes are widely disseminated and publicly displayed in the school and classrooms
- codes should include specific information on monitoring mechanisms.

At national level:

- engaging with unions is critical in advocating for institutional measures to eradicate school-based violence
- disseminating the same information to all stakeholders (unions, ministry officials, inspectors, etc) at all levels (national, regional and local/school) is key in clarifying the objectives of the intervention
- taking into account the political agenda of the country while engaging with teachers and unions on school-based violence related issues is important to avoid possible confusion between different agendas
- supporting unions in promoting children's right to education and protection through training in parallel to the development of the Code of Conduct.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Teacher Code of Conduct: sharing experience, Rewrite the Future Côte d'Ivoire. PowerPoint presentation.

Rewrite the Future website (global) www.savethechildren.net/alliance/what_we_do/rewritethefuture/index.html

Contact: Save the Children Sweden.

INITIATIVE

Developing a national code of conduct for teachers

COUNTRY: Sierra Leone.

PARTNERS: UNICEF, Ministry of Education, Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU), Council of Principals, Council of Head Teachers, academic institutions, NGOs.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, sexual and psychological violence against children in schools, especially girls.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008 to 2010.

OBJECTIVES

Violence in schools, in particular sexual abuse of girls, is explicitly recognised as a barrier for achieving Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals in Sierra Leone. As a result, one of the key objectives of the Education Sector Plan (2007 to 2015) for achieving universal primary education and completion is "to ensure that schools provide a safe environment for all children especially with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse and discrimination³". Implementation strategies are:

- provide nationwide sensitisation on issue
- revise the terms and conditions of service of teachers to ensure the protection of children
- enact and enforce legislation criminalising sexual harassment by teachers and agree on a Code of Ethics with the SLTU
- provide a safe environment for girls including separate toilets
- institute severe penalties for child abusers.

It is under this framework that development partners and national stakeholders supported the development of a professional Code of Conduct and its implementation and enforcement in schools.

³ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2007). *Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan 2007–2015: A road map to a better future.*

ACTIVITIES

Based on two existing documents, a draft Code of Conduct from the SLTU and a draft code developed by the Ministry of Education with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), all stakeholders joined forces to develop, with support from UNICEF, a first draft of the national professional Code of Conduct. Multi-stakeholder consultations were organised in all regions and districts of the country to inform the development of the final version of the code, then approved by the Ministry of Education. The code was launched in October 2009, nationally and in each region.

In parallel, UNICEF supported the development of a training manual on the content and role of the Code of Conduct for school stakeholders (teachers, union representatives, NGOs, school management committees, etc). Training of trainers (selected inspectors and head teachers) took place and it is foreseen that every school in the country will receive training on how to implement the Code of Conduct in 2010/11.

RESULTS

The wide participation in consultation activities carried out for the development of the Code of Conduct resulted in increased awareness among a range of education stakeholders that violence in schools, especially sexual violence, is a violation of children's rights and a major obstacle to achieving education for all, and needs to be urgently addressed.

The training manual provides sessions for a three-day workshop on the Code of Conduct and related field, including:

- classroom and positive behaviour management (alternatives to corporal punishment, classroom management techniques, etc)
- commitment and attitude to the profession (components of the Code of Conduct and their role)
- human and children's rights
- child exploitation and abuse, including sexual abuse
- Governance, accountability, corruption and record keeping.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Factors that contributed to the success of the activities included:

- close collaboration between Ministry of Education and the SLTU in developing the code
- the role of the SLTU in implementing and enforcing the code at national and local levels
- community support to the initiative ensured through consultation.

CHALLENGES

The enforcement strategy, in the absence of a Teacher's Commission, is in line with procedures applicable under the laws and regulations of Sierra Leone. Although the Ministry of Education recently established a Complaint Section to monitor and document cases of abuse and complaints, the operationalisation modalities are yet to be tested. Questions therefore remain regarding access to justice and transparency of procedures when dealing with cases of abuse. Similarly, it is foreseen that school management committees will appoint a sub-commission responsible for recording and following-up complaints in each school, but this strategy has not yet been implemented in practice.

LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the process, partners confirmed the importance of:

- recognising that one of the causes of sexual abuse in schools is poverty and that enforcing a Code of Conduct for teachers should go hand in hand with efforts to improve their working conditions
- ensuring teachers' unions lead the Code of Conduct development and implementation process. In Sierra Leone, this has been enabled by the SLTU's proactive role in presenting the Code of Conduct as a tool supporting the professionalisation of teaching and a way to positively respond to the discredit of teachers by public opinion.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2007). *Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan 2007–2015: A road map to a better future*.

(2009). *The Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel in Sierra Leone*.

A Training Guide for Facilitators on the Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel. Adapted from the Emerging Issues Training Guide.

Contact: UNICEF Sierra Leone.

INITIATIVE

Developing a code of professional ethics and conduct for teachers

COUNTRY: The Gambia.

PARTNERS: Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU), ActionAid, Ministry of Education, Police child welfare unit, National Assembly Committees on children and women's affairs and education and training, Child Protection Alliance, Parent-Teacher national association, representatives of teachers and students, university student unions.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, sexual and psychological violence against children in schools, especially girls.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008/09.

OBJECTIVES

With an increasing number of media reports of cases of sexual abuse against girls in schools, the GTU felt the need for a response which would both protect children and teachers. With support from ActionAid, the GTU engaged in the development of a Code of Professional Ethics and Conduct in a bid to increase professional standards in schools.

ACTIVITIES

The development process was bottom-up. The GTU facilitated cluster meetings with teachers and school staff throughout the country to discuss issues of ethics of teaching and professionalisation of the teaching profession. Based on the information collected at the outset, the GTU developed a draft code which was discussed in a multi-stakeholder national forum before finalisation and validation.

RESULTS

In addition to the development of the code, the initiative has strengthened partnerships for education at national level and has demonstrated that the GTU could be a powerful ally. Fewer cases of sexual abuse have been reported to the GTU Secretariat since the adoption of the code but in the absence of monitoring mechanisms this could be explained by the fact that cases are dealt with at regional rather than national levels.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Factors that contributed to the success of the activities included:

- the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the consultation
- the technical support from organisations such as ActionAid or Education International and their sharing of practices from around the world.

CHALLENGES

In addition to some resistance from teachers who perceived the code as a restraint on their freedom and from communities where speaking out about issues of school-based and gender-based violence was difficult, the main challenge has been to reach schools and communities to disseminate the code and raise awareness of its principles.

Financial constraints have not enabled the GTU to fully undertake its planned promotion and dissemination activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the process, partners confirmed the importance of:

- developing ethics and conduct principles in parallel to secure the support of the teaching profession
- reiterating the constitutional foundations of the union (commitment as professionals, commitment to the community, commitment to the children)
- generating debate and addressing communities' questions when disseminating the code in schools and clusters
- conducting evaluations to collect evidence on the impact of the code on the reduction of violence in schools, especially against girls.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

GTU (2009). *Code of Professional Ethics and Conduct for Teachers, The Gambia*. Available from www.gtu.gm

Contact: General Secretary, Gambia Teachers' Union.

Working with religious leaders

INITIATIVE

Fatwa against corporal punishment

COUNTRY: Mauritania.

PARTNERS: UNICEF, Imams and Ulema Coalition for the Rights of Women and Children in Mauritania (RIODEF) and other Imam networks.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Corporal punishment.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2009.

OBJECTIVES

The initiative has been taking place within a broader partnership between UNICEF and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Traditional Education aiming at strengthening the management and teaching capacity of Koranic schools at pre-primary and primary education levels and at raising awareness about children's rights in traditional education settings. Its main objectives were:

- to raise awareness against corporal punishment of children in schools and the home ('Mahadras' or Koranic schools) and clarify the position of Islam vis-à-vis corporal punishment
- to develop pedagogical standards for Mahadras
- to develop a guide on children's rights for Koranic teachers.

ACTIVITIES

A national study on corporal punishment against children in the Islamic Law (Sharia) was conducted by RIODEF with UNICEF's support in 2009. It aimed at identifying the causes leading to corporal punishment and clarifying the position of Islam on violence against children. The study concluded that corporal punishment was not allowed by Islam. Following the validation of the study by the national authorities and Imam networks, UNICEF and RIODEF hosted a workshop in April 2009. Among the participants were 30 Imams from the Adrar and Inchiri regions and UNICEF representatives, who gathered together to discuss the possibility of enacting a fatwa (religious edict) against corporal punishment of children.

RESULTS

Religious leaders enacted the following fatwa against corporal punishment in the school or the home:

"In view of all of the foregoing, it is necessary to desist immediately and finally from beating children, regardless of the pretext given. This is not only required by law and piety, or in accordance with the principles and purposes of the glorious Sharia, but it is also essential for the good of the child, the educator, the family and society. It is also necessary to adopt scientific educational methods in the upbringing of children, following the example provided by the first educator and teacher, Mohammad may God be merciful to him, whose teachings are all kindness, love and goodness."

The fatwa is currently being disseminated throughout the country in Koranic schools, but also more generally in formal education and family settings. It is used to invite Imams to reflect on corporal punishment and, more broadly, on children's rights.

CHALLENGES

One of the challenges has been to familiarise local religious leaders and ensure appropriation of the fatwa. A similar process will then have to take place between the local religious leaders and the communities. The fatwa, enacted by influential Imams, has to be seen as relevant and necessary in community contexts.

LESSONS LEARNED

More than a result, the fatwa is a starting point to engage in meaningful discussions around children's rights and corporal punishment with religious leaders, and communities, across the country. It is a key cornerstone in the development of an enabling environment to look holistically at children's rights.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Cairo Conference, 2009, was held to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Its central theme was the CRC and Islamic Jurisprudence. The Cairo Declaration that resulted from the Conference includes a range of recommendations and calls for action for member states to follow-up. On the issue of corporal punishment the Cairo Declaration stipulates:

“Participants to the Conference recommend that OIC member states prohibit all corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment or treatment of children, in all settings including within schools and within the family, linking law reform with the promotion of positive, non-violent forms of discipline.”

The Cairo Declaration is available from: www.crc20anniversary.com.eg/uploads/files/English%20Cairo%20Declaration.pdf

Hademine Old Slack (2009). *Etude sur les Châtiments corporels contre les enfants dans la Sharia Islamique*. Mauritania, RODEF/UNICEF.

UNICEF website: www.unicef.org/protection/mauritania_49593.html

Contact: UNICEF Mauritania. Coalition for the Rights of Women and Children in Mauritania (RODEF).



SERVICE DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Mechanisms at community level

INITIATIVE

Networking to stop violence against girls in schools

COUNTRY: Ghana.

PARTNERS: ActionAid Ghana, Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC, national advocacy partner), Songtaba (community-based partner).

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence, discrimination and structural barriers that negate girls' rights to education and protection.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007 to present.

OBJECTIVES

In the Nanumba District, many girls cannot access child protection services because these are located in the district capital, away from their own communities. Under the framework of the *Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools campaign* in Ghana, ActionAid and Songtaba's activities aim to facilitate the formation and strengthening of community structures to support and complement law enforcement and child protection.

ACTIVITIES

ActionAid and Songtaba work in close collaboration with decentralised child protection agencies including the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Police (DOVVSU), the Department of Social Welfare, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the National Commission on Civic Education.

Together with the decentralised agencies, partners build capacities and provide support to:

- Community Advocacy Teams (CATs) that are responsible for protecting womens' and girls' rights and to lead child protection processes in their communities to complement the work and services of the state against the abuse of girls
- District Education Directorate, head teachers, counsellors, circuit supervisors and girls' education officers, who received specific training on violence against girls in schools, gender responsive teaching and learning and mainstreaming girls' protection in school practices.

RESULTS

By linking community structures to decentralised agencies, prevention and support for girls has increased in Nanumba. CATs offer a safe space and support to girls, helping them to gain the confidence to speak up. This results in an increased number of reported cases of abuse. With communities serving as referral points for the child protection commissions, decentralised agencies that do not have the financial or human resources to visit communities to follow up girls' complaints, commissions have become more visible, active and able to facilitate redress for girls' abuse cases.

SUCCESS FACTORS

This networking initiative is conducted in parallel to other initiatives such as the *Peer Parent Educators*, groups of parents mandated to advocate for girls' education and girls' rights in the community, community awareness-raising through drama (on the topic of forced marriage and early pregnancy to increase the understanding of girls' obstacles to education and protection rights), and *girls' clubs* (see page 34). By working at different levels and with different actors, ActionAid and Songtaba have created a real momentum at community level, with interventions mutually reinforcing each other.

CHALLENGES

The network that links project communities, CATs and decentralised state agencies working on child protection has not yet been formalised, and duplication of efforts and lack of effectiveness of existing mechanisms have been identified as weaknesses by the partners. It is envisaged to bring all agencies and groups together to create the Nanumba District Child Protection Network.

LESSONS LEARNED

This initiative has only recently been set up and it is too early to identify lessons learned.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: ActionAid Ghana.

INITIATIVE

Prevention and response to sexual abuse at community level

COUNTRY: Senegal.

PARTNERS: Centre de Guidance Infantile et Familial (CEGID), Saint-Louis' local authorities and communities.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Sexual violence, abuse and exploitation against children.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2000 to present (sporadically).

OBJECTIVES

CEGID has been working in communities around Saint Louis for 10 years. The initial pilot project, a research action, aimed to increase the understanding of sexual abuse against children, to explore communities' perceptions of sexual abuse against children, and to develop prevention strategies. Over the years the initiative has evolved, building on new knowledge, learning from implementation lessons and working with different community groups.

ACTIVITIES

Main activities include:

- training activities for a range of actors (school staff, women's groups, magistrates and lawyers, social workers) on how to identify child victims of sexual abuse and how to support them at different stages of their rehabilitation
- development of a booklet on how to talk about sexual abuse with children, aimed at parents and educators and used in awareness activities for parents, teachers and school managers
- awareness-raising through community media (mainly radio), drama and songs
- development of supportive structures for children victims of sexual abuse (healthcare, legal assistance, psychological assistance, rehabilitation).

RESULTS

Women created specific groups (*brigades de surveillance*) in their communities to identify and denounce cases of sexual abuse against children and provide support to victims and their families. Fifty schools benefited from awareness-raising and training activities on sexual abuse against children. Child victims of abuse have been supported psychologically, financially and legally over the period.

CHALLENGES

Some of the challenges in tackling child sexual abuse have included:

- negotiating resistance from community members to put family and community cohesion at risk when investigating cases of children abuse
- staff turnover in social services. Training activities had to be multiplied over the lifespan of the project, using resources initially allocated for other activities

- the cost of access to healthcare centres for child victims of abuse. The project made provision for victims to benefit from low cost health checks and healthcare (HIV tests, care, medical certificates, etc). Providing such a service has been resource intensive and a key threat to sustainability.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project, funded by UNICEF Dakar in 2000–02, has encountered financial difficulties over the years. With support from UNICEF and Italian and Spanish co-operation, the CEGID has now developed a new project for a deprived area of Dakar, based on some of the lessons learned in Saint Louis, among which:

- the importance of handling information about sexual abuse against children very sensitively to prevent additional trauma or stigma for the victims
- the need to strengthen mechanisms in parallel with awareness raising and information dissemination activities. Functioning mechanisms are only useful if children and their families are aware of them
- the need to work strategically with schools to ensure they are fully part of prevention and protection mechanisms and are included in institutional cross-sectoral networks at district level
- the importance of establishing strong partnerships at the onset of the project, based on clear Memorandum of Understandings
- the need to secure institutional support in sharing costs for children's healthcare in case of abuse.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Centre de Guidance Infantile et Familial, Dakar, Senegal.



COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND MOBILISATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

■ Campaigning against school-based violence

INITIATIVE

Learn without Fear: Global Campaign to End Violence in Schools

COUNTRY: Global.

PARTNERS: Plan International, Plan WARO, Plan country offices and national partners.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008 to 2011.

OBJECTIVES

The overall campaign aims at:

- persuading governments to outlaw all forms of violence against children in school, and to enforce those laws
- working with school leaders and teachers to create violence-free schools and promote alternative discipline methods to corporal punishment
- creating a global momentum for change, including increased resources from international donors and governments to tackle violence in schools in developing countries.

The campaign was launched regionally in West Africa then nationally in all countries where Plan works. Each national campaign has its own specific objectives.

ACTIVITIES

In West Africa, activities undertaken under the framework of the campaign include:

- formalisation of partnership with ministries and national institutions (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea)
- development of multi-stakeholder national action plans for the campaign (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Togo)
- building partnerships and engaging with national development partners (Benin, Cameroon, Mali, Ghana)
- working with media on children's rights and the campaign, through training or joint actions (Benin, Cameroon, Ghana)
- 'Kid waves' radio programmes on violence in schools created by children (Cameroon, Guinea)
- studies (or support for studies and their dissemination) on violence in schools (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Liberia, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone)
- work on alternative methods of discipline (Senegal, Togo)
- Awareness-raising activities at community level (Ghana, Togo, Sierra Leone, Mali).

RESULTS

The campaign has not yet been evaluated at regional or national levels. However, mobilisation in each country has been significant, the media have reported on violence in schools, and singers and other artists have performed to ensure general public awareness of the phenomenon. Partnerships and action plans have been developed and are being implemented. National studies have been published (Ghana) or are about to be finalised.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Plan's credibility regionally and nationally has been critical in establishing the dialogue between Plan and ministry representatives on the issue of school-based violence. Good communication and information sharing on the campaign with stakeholders at national and regional level has strengthened the co-ordination of activities.

The most distinctive feature of the campaign has been the participation of children and young people. By engaging with children, through school clubs, radio programmes and national workshops, the campaign has enabled children to frame the debate in their communities and to actively contribute to shaping the campaign's activities and implementation strategies.

CHALLENGES

Addressing the topic of school-based violence holistically, while focusing on certain forms of violence, has been a challenge in some countries. The low level of preparation of some governmental partners resulted in resistance towards the campaign activities.

At local level, developing sustainable strategies to engage meaningfully with communities and ensure their continuous participation in the campaign to end violence in schools has also proven difficult.

LESSONS LEARNED

The research carried out by Plan at global, regional and national level has made a valuable contribution to the knowledge and understanding of school-based violence and enabled Plan to guide and improve its programmatic work to tackle the issue and to engage with national and local duty bearers.

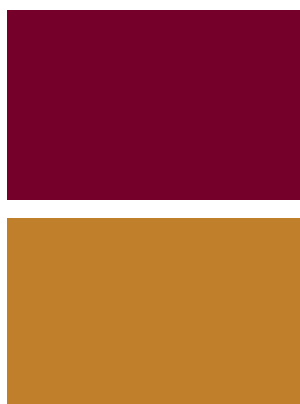
Changing laws and policies requires time. It is Plan's experience that political will and the commitment of key stakeholders in different sectors (health, education, police, judicial, social services) is necessary to meaningfully engage in legislation or policy reform. Working with the media, from community radios to national newspapers, also contributes to the development of an enabling environment within which children, parents and communities can express demands to local and national governments for tackling school-based violence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Plan (2008). *Break the Silence: Prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in and around schools in Africa*. Dakar, Senegal, Plan West Africa.

Plan West Africa (2008). Increasing visibility and promoting policy action to tackle sexual exploitation in and around schools in Africa. A briefing paper with a focus on West Africa. Written by Nicola Jones, Overseas Development Institute, commissioned by Plan.

Contact: Plan West Africa Region Office.



■ Translating global campaigns into national action

INITIATIVE

Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools: the Ghanaian Campaign

COUNTRY: Ghana.

PARTNERS: ActionAid Ghana, Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC, national advocacy partner), Songtaba (community-based partner).

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence; discrimination; and structural barriers that prevent girls' rights to education and protection.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008 to 2013.

OBJECTIVES

The Global Campaign *Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools* is implemented primarily through a programme of activities in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique, focusing on creating girl-friendly learning environments, stakeholder training and capacity building, awareness-raising and advocating for change in policy and practices.

In Ghana, the objectives of the campaign are to raise awareness of violence against girls in schools, build partnerships, strengthen institutional mechanisms and take action on related issues at the national and community levels in order to facilitate attitudinal change in parents, teachers, boys and girls and other school stakeholders for girls' education. ActionAid's Model Policy (see page 5) will be used as a guideline to analyse existing laws and policies in Ghana and make recommendations for improvement.

ACTIVITIES

ActionAid and GNECC build on international initiatives, such as 16 days of activism against gender violence (running from 25 November, International Day Against Violence Against Women, to 10 December, International Human Rights Day) and International Children's Day (June 1) to create momentum and focus public and institutional attention on eliminating violence against girls in schools.

Partners further strengthened institutional collaboration, engaging with the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Police Service and the Girls' Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service to review and improve existing approaches and mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in schools.

These activities complement a range of additional initiatives at community and school levels, described further in this document on page 14.

RESULTS

Awareness has been raised on the types of violence experienced by girls and how these interfere with their right to education. For instance, links were established between lack of appropriate school infrastructures such as latrines, prevalence of violence against girls, and girls' drop-out.

Institutional will was asserted from the DOVVSU and the Girls' Education Unit to engage in collaborative work and to co-ordinate a school outreach exercise on preventing and managing school-based gender violence. ActionAid and partners facilitated and supported this partnership development to ensure police, judiciary and social services would join forces to accompany girls in their journey to denounce and report violent acts perpetrated against them.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Partnering with national education membership coalitions, such as the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition, offers a range of opportunities to raise awareness, disseminate campaign messages and follow-up actions through a range of partners across the country. It also enables tackling both institutional and behavioural changes.

The campaign has been enriched by combining three strands: research, advocacy and community intervention. Community intervention and needs inform research, the outputs of which feed into advocacy. By influencing community and national decision-makers, advocacy should result in improvement at community level.

ActionAid's work was timely complemented by Plan Ghana's *Learn without Fear campaign*. This contributes to the creation of national momentum and partnership strengthening between international and national NGOs to eliminate school-based violence.

CHALLENGES

One of the key challenges faced by the campaign has been the lack of supportive data on the prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence against girls, especially sexual violence, abuse and exploitation in and around schools, partially explained by DOVVSU's reporting system not providing a section for school-based gender violence.

Another identified challenge is the lack of collaboration between DOVVSU and the Ghana Education Service and their respective level of bureaucracies, which has limited DOVVSU's interventions in schools on prevention and response to gender-based violence. Working across sectors, in particular with police, education, health services and judiciaries, has generally proven difficult.

LESSONS LEARNED

Addressing the issue of school-based gender violence requires institutional collaboration between several ministries and harmonisation of policies, practices and implementation mechanisms. Necessary change to strengthen reporting systems or improve the quality of response to gender violence in schools might not be drastic, but instead comprise small shifts in institutions' ways of working. Strengthening individual capacities does not suffice to tackle institutional and organisational change.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: ActionAid Ghana.

■ Engaging and empowering communities

INITIATIVE⁴

Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria (TEGIN)

COUNTRY: Nigeria.

PARTNERS: ActionAid, Community Action for Popular Participation, local authorities, religious leaders, girls, boys, school-based management committees, and the wider community.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence; structural violence; and denial of girls' education and protection rights in general.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008 to 2012.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of TEGIN are to increase girls' opportunities to access a good quality education. TEGIN works holistically on issues of education, discrimination, gender-based violence, conflict, and HIV among others. TEGIN targets 72 schools in 56 communities in Northern Nigeria.

ACTIVITIES

Specific activities to tackle violence against girls in and around schools include:

- support to girls' clubs to provide girls with a safe space to talk about violence and discrimination and to build their capacities in relation with understanding and dealing with violence
- capacity building of girls' club facilitators using the TEGIN toolkit
- training of school-based management committees on the different forms of violence girls may be experiencing throughout their education and ways to overcome it

4 The full title of this Comic Relief funded project is *Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania* – TEGIN.

- engaging with religious leaders to support them defining what constitutes violence against girls and addressing such violence in their sermons and other community interactions
- engaging with boys on issues of gender discrimination and gender-based violence in and beyond education.

These activities complement a wider range of actions aimed at improving access to quality education such as advocacy for better infrastructures and more qualified teachers, work with teachers' unions, and work with judges, lawyers and the police forces on violence against girls' issues and justice for children.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The holistic (working with adults, boys and girls) and multi-level approach (working at school and community level) of the project simultaneously tackles several causes of violence against girls, be they cultural or structural. While working on the causes of violence, the intervention has also addressed the responses to violence at individual, community and institutional levels.

Open dialogue with all categories of community members, girls, boys, parents, religious and traditional leaders, school teachers and representatives of judiciary, police, education and health authorities has ensured that the issue of violence against girls is seen as a social issue rather than a girls' only problem.

CHALLENGES

The main challenges emerging from working with communities include:

- denial of violence and discrimination against girls in education
- reluctance to allow children's participation
- tackling misconceptions that lead some Imams and religious leaders to perceive the project as 'anti-Muslim' or 'pro-Western'.

LESSONS LEARNED

On engaging with traditional leaders, partners have learnt that greater understanding of issues around violence against girls is made through one-to-one interface rather than group meetings. Although the latter are necessary for leaders to discuss among themselves and agree on principles and actions, one-to-one sessions are able to overcome resistance more easily.

Identifying role models among religious leaders for them to advocate against violence against girls has also proven a very successful strategy that has mitigated some stakeholders' perceptions that the sudden focus on violence against girls resulted from an external push rather than an internal need.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Tweedie, L. and Thomas, L. (2008). *Draft framework for a uniting methodology toolkit: A basket of tools for Transforming the Education of Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania*. Maarifa ni Ugungo, Tanzania; Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), Nigeria; ActionAid International.

Contact: ActionAid Nigeria.





Des fois, quand elle essayait de se défendre, Nyaro la battait ...



Si jamais tu repousses encore l'un de mes amis, je te tue !!

D'ailleurs tu ne mangeras pas pendant 3 jours.

Al secours!!

CO-OPERATION, CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Working in partnership

INITIATIVE

Sub-regional meeting between teachers, unions and NGOs on violence against girls in schools

PARTNERS: Africa Network Campaign on Education for All, ActionAid International, ActionAid Ghana, ActionAid Kenya, ActionAid Mozambique, ActionAid Senegal, Amnesty International, Amnesty Togo, Amnesty Ghana, African women network (IWN Africa), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Plan West Africa, Plan Mali, Plan Burkina Faso, Plan Ghana, Save the children, Save the children Cote d'Ivoire, UNICEF, World Vision International, Education International Africa Regional Office, African Women in Education Network, national teachers' unions' representatives.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Violence against girls in schools and, more broadly, violence against all children.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2009 onwards.

OBJECTIVES

The overarching objective of the initiative is to build a strategic partnership between NGOs and teachers' unions to prevent school-based violence in general, and gender-based school violence in particular. Such strategic partnerships are necessary for the achievement of Education for All (EFA).

The workshop's objectives were to:

- explore the most adequate approach for an efficient engagement of the teachers' unions in stopping violence against girls
- explore opportunities for joint activities to stop school-based violence together with unions
- identify ways of building teachers' capacity to identify and address violence against girls in school in particular, and school-based violence in general
- lay the foundations for a long-term strategic and institutional collaboration with teachers' unions through a minimum set of common actions to be taken in the different sub-regions.

ACTIVITIES

The sub-regional workshop was the result of a follow-up action from a 2006 meeting in Johannesburg between Education International and ActionAid. It formalised a strategic partnership between both organisations for the achievement of EFA by 2015. The partnership focused on seven issues: i) Education financing; ii) Non-professional teachers; iii) Violence against girls at school; iv) Education and HIV; v) School governance; vi) Privatisation and public education; and vii) Code of ethics.

RESULTS

Outputs from the workshop included a range of in-country actions to be carried out jointly by NGOs and teachers' unions including:

Training and capacity building:

- development of a capacity building package on violence for teachers' unions, in collaboration with the unions.

Advocacy:

- advocacy for implementation and enforcement of legislation to protect children against violence in and around schools
- promotion of children's rights and learning-friendly school environments.

Awareness-raising:

- creation of a national platform on violence against children and girls, within national education coalitions already in place in countries to organise awareness-raising campaigns at community level for teachers, children, policy makers and community members.

School governance:

- mapping of work on violence against children in schools
- training school management committees, parent teacher associations, community children's groups on how to prevent and how to respond to school-based violence
- establishing referral and reporting mechanisms.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Several success factors were identified for this initiative. The workshop provided an opportunity to:

- discuss openly on the issue of school-based violence and gender-based violence at school, to build a consensus on the concept, and to have a clear and shared understanding of the nature of violence, where it can happen, the contributing factors, the perpetrators, and possible activities to curb the problem
- promote critical dialogue between partners on the issue, to understand different positions, and to provide an entry point for building trust between NGOs and unions to discuss how to move forward.

CHALLENGES

Challenges related to efforts to end violence against girls and children in schools include:

- upholding the status of teachers while unethical practices are observed by professionals
- developing efficient mechanisms to protect children from violence in and around schools, including mechanisms to protect girls from sexual harassment and abuse by teachers, and to ensure teachers are on board as partners to monitor these mechanisms
- developing partnerships with parents and community members to tackle the issue of school-based violence
- addressing the increased recruitment of non-professional staff in schools
- building trust between NGOs and teachers' unions.

LESSONS LEARNED

There are issues to consider when embarking on challenging partnerships. In this context, defining violence and violence against girls was a key starting point. It was also necessary to agree at the beginning of the workshop on the difference between teachers' unions and perpetrators of violence, among whom we find individual teachers. Although partners had different agendas, working with a wide range of coalitions is an opportunity to give more visibility to the issue.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Education International/ActionAid International (2007). The need for quality teachers to achieve EFA. Building strategic partnerships between teachers' unions and NGOs. Education International, Brussels, Belgium; ActionAid International, Johannesburg, South Africa. Available at: <http://download.ei-ie.org/docs/IRISDocuments/EI%20Campaigns/EFAIDS%20Programme/2007-00202-01-E.pdf> and www.actionaid.org/docs/aa_teachers.pdf

Contact: ActionAid International, Plan West Africa Regional Office, Education International.

CAPACITY

■ Promoting alternative discipline

INITIATIVE

Guidelines on Alternative Discipline for Teachers

COUNTRY: The Gambia.

PARTNERS: Ministry of Education, UNICEF, Child Protection Alliance, Save the Children Sweden.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Corporal punishment.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2006 to present.

OBJECTIVES

Based on the results of the survey on corporal punishment conducted by the Child Protection Alliance and Save the Children Sweden in 2005 and the enactment of the new national Children's Act (2005), UNICEF's programmatic response was to support the Ministry of Education to develop a booklet on alternative discipline and to train teachers and inspectors on its use.

ACTIVITIES

The booklet on alternative discipline was developed in 2006 and revised in 2008. A task force comprising the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, the Child Protection Alliance and other NGO representatives was set up to supervise the development of the booklet. Teachers' unions were also involved. Children did not participate directly in the development of the booklet. However, their views, presented in the survey on corporal punishment, served as a starting point for the initiative.

RESULTS

The booklet is based on three forms of discipline.

- *Preventive discipline* and how to prevent misbehaviour. This is explored through the participatory development of classroom rules, procedures and organisation systems.
- *Supportive discipline* and how to use positive reinforcement and praise to create opportunities for students to feel successful, to increase students' self-esteem, to motivate students to be well-behaved, and to create a classroom environment conducive to learning.
- *Corrective discipline* and how to suppress and positively redirect misbehaviour when it occurs, based on a series of real class situations.

The booklet also provides tips for teachers to prevent and manage their anger.

Since 2007, 100 teachers and cluster monitors (inspectors) have been trained annually on alternative discipline methods as part of their professional development at school or cluster level. Future activities will include the development of teacher training modules around the booklet for dissemination in teacher training colleges and use in pre-service training.

Training has led to the revision of the school inspection checklist in the Upper River Region to include monitoring corporal punishment in schools.

SUCCESS FACTOR

Change has slowly been taking place in teachers' practices, building on good practices from a few convinced teachers who have been acting as champions in their schools. The support of inspectors has been key in helping teachers to change their behaviour and practices.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge has been to work against teachers' beliefs that corporal punishment is an educational virtue since the practice is deeply rooted in teaching and parenting practices. Removing the notion of corporal punishment from the concept of discipline has proved difficult, despite the clear articulation in the booklet of different forms of discipline and their roles.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned by the partners covered the following areas:

- the importance of disseminating widely alternative discipline methods to ensure all teachers are targeted and understand the pressing need for changing practices. It is critical to develop teacher training modules for pre-service training to maximise the coverage of trained teachers
- the necessity of using a multi-level approach and to target school management committees, parent teacher associations and children in training activities to build a common understanding of expectations around teachers' behaviour and practices
- the need for a holistic approach to school-based violence when engaging with inspectors in order to work within a clear framework that includes compliance vis-à-vis corporal punishment, sexual harassment and other forms of violence all together
- without evaluations the impact of initiatives, such as the booklet on alternative discipline, cannot be assessed and evidence of outcomes and impact are only anecdotal. This is a missed opportunity to learn from experience and to improve both the booklet and its mediation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Child Protection Alliance (2005). *Beating the Misconceptions, Not the Children: A Survey of Corporal Punishment in The Gambia*. Funded by Save the Children/Sweden Regional Office West Africa.

(2006). *Guidelines on Alternative Discipline for Teachers in The Gambia*.

Contact: UNICEF Gambia, Child Protection Alliance, Save the Children Sweden.

INITIATIVE

Teacher training module on non-violent learning methods

COUNTRY: Togo.

PARTNERS: Plan Togo, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy, Blitta Inspectorate, Teacher Training College of Notse.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Corporal punishment and exploitative chores.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007 to present.

OBJECTIVES

Building on a girl-friendly school project started in 2007 in 10 pilot schools which, among other objectives, aimed to tackle the issue of violence in and around schools, and on activities undertaken under the framework of Plan International's *Learn without Fear* campaign, Plan Togo collaborated with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy to develop a national training module on non-violent learning methods.

ACTIVITIES

The project started with the development of the training module, followed by training activities for teachers, inspectors and teacher trainers. The module was developed by inspectors and trainers from the Notse teacher college. It was presented for dissemination at the annual conference of inspectors. It is understood that the module will be modified and further developed in each region.

These activities complement a range of other activities conducted by Plan to address violence against children in and around schools, including:

- national advocacy and lobbying against corporal punishment and other forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence against children in schools
- children's awareness-raising on non-violent school discipline and children's rights and duties
- working with the media (radio) on programmes tackling school-based violence and children's rights
- support to participatory (including children) development of school regulations and school-based teachers' Codes of Conduct
- teacher professional development on child-centred and active learning.

RESULTS

Thirty-five teachers of primary teacher training centres were trained using the module. They are now responsible for training their peers in their schools. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy adopted the non-violent methods of learning module in the main teacher training programme. In addition all inspectors and pedagogical advisers trained in autumn 2009 were sensitised to non-violent learning methods.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The political will of the Togolese government was critical in the series of actions taken to reduce the phenomenon of corporal punishment in schools, namely a ministerial circular on the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools in March 2009, the development of the training module in July 2009 and the inclusion of the module into teacher training colleges nationally. The circular and the training have been mutually reinforcing.

Another success factor was Plan's multi-level approach. Plan Togo undertook parallel activities at school level (working with children's clubs and school-based teacher training), community level (through awareness-raising campaigns and work with mothers' clubs), and regional and national levels with awareness-raising activities from the *Learn without Fear* campaign conducted through the media and advocacy towards government officials and civil society organisations. This has contributed to the creation of an enabling environment to discuss and tackle violence against children in general.

CHALLENGES

Resistance to change from teachers has been common. Violent discipline is transferred from the home to the school and deeply anchored in people's behaviour. Deconstructing attitudes and gendered discipline (use of different discipline and types of sanctions for boys and girls) has been a key challenge.

Constraining factors have also included large class sizes, resulting in teachers' stress and doubts that new classroom management and discipline practices would enable them to cope and instil discipline, and the overall lack of teacher training and preparedness (the majority of primary school teachers are neither trained nor qualified) that compromises the quality of education.

Lastly, the content of the training module on non-violent learning methods itself would benefit from additional iterations and inputs to propose a holistic approach to non-violent forms of discipline aligned with children's varied needs.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned from the Plan Togo experience include:

- the need to transform children's and parents' perceptions and expectations of what constitutes a good teacher while working with teachers on alternative practices around discipline. Non-traditional teaching styles and practices must be deemed valid by children and the community for teachers to feel confident in adopting them
- working through teacher training colleges provides an entry point that enables wide dissemination of modules and a rapid training of a critical mass of teachers
- multi-level interventions reinforce each other and maximise results.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ENI Notse (2009). *Module de Formation. Méthodes éducatives non violentes à l'école*. Ministère des Enseignements Primaire Secondaire et de l'Alphabétisation, Plan Togo.

Contact: Plan Togo.

INITIATIVE

Training on child rights, child protection and alternative methods of discipline

COUNTRY: Côte d'Ivoire.

PARTNERS: Save the Children Sweden, relevant directorates of the Ministry of Education, teacher training colleges, General Inspectorate.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Corporal and degrading punishment.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008 to 2010.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the initiative was to develop and integrate a training module on children's rights and alternative methods of discipline in the teacher training curriculum nationally.

ACTIVITIES

A series of workshops were held to develop, pilot and validate the training module on children's rights and alternative methods of discipline. Psycho-pedagogy trainers were trained before the piloting of the module in five teacher training colleges. Teachers, trainees and trainers contributed to syllabus amendments in terms of content, expected competencies and criteria for their evaluation.

RESULTS

Key results of the initiative included:

- amendment and finalisation of the psycho-pedagogy syllabus to include topics on children's rights and alternative discipline methods, and guidelines for lesson plans and activity sheets development
- a draft note promoting the generalisation of the module to all training colleges for the Minister of Education to sign and take action upon.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The success of the initiative can be attributed to the following elements:

- *Partnership.* A wide and strong partnership was established from the beginning of the project, including all relevant directorates from the Ministry of Education and representatives of the Inspectorate and teacher training colleges. This resulted in an open, participative and fruitful development process
- *Political will.* The Ministry of Education enacted a decree to abolish degrading and physical punishment in schools in September 2009, providing a strong legislative basis for teacher training colleges and teachers to buy into the module on children's rights and alternative discipline methods
- *Sound piloting process.* The piloting of the module was made so that a sufficient number of colleges (5), trainers (15) and trainees (161 female and 280 male) could provide feedback on the module. Detailed questionnaires were developed and analysed to inform the revision and finalisation of the module
- *Multi-level interventions.* Save the Children's inputs in tackling violence against children in Côte d'Ivoire include other activities through the Rewrite the Future initiative, such as the support to the development of a teachers' Code of Conduct. All these activities have contributed to raising awareness on violence against children and to build capacities of different categories of professionals throughout the education system to ensure coherence in the response.

CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges was the proven difficulty for trainers and trainees to fully understand and internalise children's rights concepts (around children's participation and legislation) in the allocated short timeframe.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons that can be shared from this initiative include:

- *On the pilot.* The short time frame for the pilot reduced the opportunities of trainees to test some of the materials in their class. Extending the piloting period would enable trainees to reflect more on their individual teaching experience
- *On the module.* The density of the content and materials of the module did not allow full coverage in the indicative time frame. Developing a modular presentation of the content through the use of different sections, annexes, etc, would give more flexibility to the trainers in how to use the module. Providing summary documents (rather than full text) for international and national rights instruments would also lighten the materials without losing the content.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ministère de l'éducation nationale (2009). *Atelier de restitution et de validation de l'expérimentation du module relatif aux droits de l'enfant et aux alternatives aux punitions physiques et humiliantes*. Agboville, 17–20 août 2009. Direction de la pédagogie et de la formation continue, Ministère de l'éducation nationale.

Contact: Save the Children Sweden.

■ Tackling sexual abuse in and around schools

INITIATIVE

Guidelines for the prevention, detection and reporting of sexual abuse

COUNTRY: The Gambia.

PARTNERS: Ministry of Education, UNICEF, national NGOs.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Sexual harassment and abuse.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007 to present.

OBJECTIVES

Based on the recognition that sexual abuse in and around schools leads to school drop-out, of girls in particular, the Ministry of Education took several steps to address the issue, among which the development and endorsement of guidelines, which aim to:

- translate existing policy documents into a teacher-friendly and child-friendly format
- break the silence and raise awareness of all school stakeholders on the issue of sexual abuse in schools
- define sexual harassment and sexual abuse in order for children to recognise its varied forms and try to avoid getting into situations of vulnerability
- identify mechanisms to prevent schools from covering up instances of sexual abuse when they occur.

ACTIVITIES

Following up on the participatory development of the guidelines, training sessions were organised in schools by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education (through NGOs) for teachers, parent teacher associations and students (working with school councils). In addition, one-off training sessions were conducted for Imams and other religious leaders on the topic of sexual abuse against girls in order for them to include messages against sexual abuse of girls in their sermons.

RESULTS

The guidelines for the prevention, detection and reporting of sexual abuse in Gambian schools were revised in 2007. They include sections on:

- the definition of sexual abuse and sexual harassment and examples of different forms
- the identification of signs and symptoms of a sexually abused child (physical and behavioural)
- reporting mechanisms for child abuse and examples of sanctions for perpetrators
- teaching children to be assertive and to identify risky situations
- legal provisions against sexual abuse of children
- organisations to contact for child victims of sexual abuse and education professionals.

More than 300 teachers were trained in the last three years (2007 to 2009) using the guidelines. There is anecdotal evidence that reporting on sexual abuse in schools has increased.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Although the guidelines are primarily aimed at teachers they are also addressing children and other education professionals' needs. By training all school stakeholders, together or in parallel, using a common framework and tool, a common understanding of child sexual abuse was developed across the school community. This has contributed to the development of coherent responses to child abuse in schools.

CHALLENGES

Partners identified the following elements as key challenges of the initiative:

- *Low level of prosecution.* Despite increased reporting, the number of cases followed up with prosecution is very low due to lack of evidence and cross-sectoral co-operation between health, police and judiciary services
- *Cultural barriers.* The pressure on girls to keep silent and the active efforts of the perpetrators to cover up abuse by marrying victims or settling the problem through payment of bribes are major barriers to tackling sexual abuse in schools.

LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons learned throughout the implementation of this initiative include:

- working with teacher training colleges at the onset of the project to ensure that a critical mass of teachers is trained, and to enable teachers to discuss a very sensitive issue in a non-threatening environment. The initiative would have benefited from an even more systematic approach to teacher training from the national level
- the need to conduct evaluations to inform practice and collect data to support the validity and usefulness of a given intervention.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Gambian Ministry of Education/UNICEF (2007). *Guidelines for the Prevention, Detection and Reporting of Sexual Abuse in Gambian Schools*. Second Edition.

Contact: UNICEF Gambia.



INITIATIVE

Empowering community to promote girls' rights

COUNTRY: Democratic Republic of Congo (South Kivu).

PARTNERS: ActionAid, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA).

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence; structural violence; and denial of girls' education and protection rights in general.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2009.

OBJECTIVES

Empowering Community to Promote Women's and Girls' Rights in South Kivu aimed to:

- bring about behaviour and attitudinal changes in communities in relation to women's and girls' rights by increasing people's understanding of these rights and encouraging women's participation in decision-making processes
- raise awareness and develop strategies to tackle school-based violence, especially against girls
- provide psychological, legal and financial support to the survivors of violence in three villages in South Kivu.

ACTIVITIES

Schools were the entry point of the initiative, as it is believed that eliminating violence against girls in schools would have positive effects on the overall elimination of violence against women. Twenty-seven primary and secondary schools were targeted with a total school population of 4,337 boys and 2,861 girls.

Activities included:

- training of peer educators, including 70 per cent of children (50 per cent of whom were girls)
- training of counsellors from local partner organisations, on psychological issues around violence (causes, detection, consequences) and on protective legislation for girls and women
- information sessions and awareness-raising of education authorities and school representatives, including teachers, head teachers, local education authority officials. This was done through presentations from teachers and pupils on violence in schools
- a school competition, gathering 24 out of the 27 participating schools, where children performed songs, poems and plays on the topic of violence against women and girls
- community awareness-raising through community radio debates involving teachers and students
- recruitment of two female lawyers to provide legal assistance to victims of violence and facilitate the development of the violence-free school policy
- organisation of consultation meetings with school staff, local authorities, teachers' unions and parent teacher associations to develop and validate the violence-free school policy.

RESULTS

Concrete results of this initiative include:

- development of a violence-free school policy and submission to provincial authorities for action
- increased number of pregnant or lactating girls accepted in schools
- school staff's Code of Conduct established in 27 schools
- restructure of parent teacher associations.

The violence-free school policy presents prevention and response strategies from national to school level. It identifies the role and responsibilities of duty bearers: governments and ministries, school management committees, parent teacher associations and students' committees. Lastly it provides templates for school regulations/charters (including student's Code of Conduct), violence records and violence monitoring reports.

SUCCESS FACTORS

By targeting all school actors and stakeholders, from pupils and teachers to local and provincial education officials and parents, the project was successful in raising awareness about violence in schools. Although gender-based violence was at the heart of the project, students' performances provided them with an opportunity to flag other types of school-based violence such as corporal punishment which also affects boys.

CHALLENGES

During the lifespan of the project only four cases of women's abuse were reported to the community structures, none of which involved school girls. Two of these cases only led to action in court. Despite the awareness-raising activities and the provision of legal assistance through the project, families are still reluctant to submit cases to the court and prefer amicable settlements.

LESSONS LEARNED

The lifespan of the intervention was too short to tackle the cultural and social causes of violence against women and girls, in and outside schools, in a region where community violence is still part of daily life. Similarly, engaging in legal assistance for victims requires more time and different strategies to ensure that they are protected throughout the process, that families recognise the potential benefits of going to court, and that the judiciary system is able to process these cases transparently and with respect for the victims.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ActionAid Democratic Republic of Congo (2009). *Projet de politique pour l'élimination des violences en milieu scolaire : « école sans violences, pays des droits, société de paix ».*

Contact: ActionAid Democratic Republic of Congo.

Action research

INITIATIVE

Participatory Action Research on Violence in Schools

COUNTRY: Senegal.

PARTNER: Girls Secondary School J.F. Kennedy in Dakar, Save the Children Sweden, Eden and Graines.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Verbal, physical, sexual and psychological violence.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: The action research took place during 2008/09.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the initiative were to support an enabling environment for girl students of the Kennedy Secondary School to express themselves on the issue of violence, to equip girls against all forms of violence, to raise the awareness of teachers in issues of violence, and to identify key activities to implement in the school to address violence.

ACTIVITIES

This Participatory Action Research was conceptualised, implemented and evaluated by students. It had three components:

- *Education:* Through participation and expression of the girls' voices this project reinforced their ability to participate into society and become responsible citizens
- *Research:* Girls developed the research and identified the roots and manifestations of violence in their environment
- *Action:* Participants devised action plans and activities to address the problems identified during the research.

An Action Research Group (comprising 20 girl students, 11 teachers and 5 administrative staff – including 8 women) was set-up and trained in research methodology and data collection. Students were selected according to criteria including age (no more than 18 years old) and school performance. Training was conducted by the project leader. Students, teachers and administrative staff took part in surveys and focus groups. Data was processed, analysed and results were disseminated to the whole school.

RESULTS

Beyond the results of the research itself, an action plan was developed by the Action Research Group, articulated around four axes: (i) Violence perpetrated by students against students, (ii) Violence perpetrated by teachers and/or other educational staff against students, (iii) Violence perpetrated by students against teachers, administrative and other staff; and (iv) Violence perpetrated by people external to the schools against students.

The action plan identifies activities, expected results, indicators and means of verification.

Examples of suggested activities given by the action plan to address school-based violence include:

- the revision of the school regulations to include sanctions against violence perpetrated in the school
- the publication of articles on school-based violence in the school newspaper to increase students' awareness on the topic
- the creation of a web-blog for students and teachers to discuss violence related issues
- training sessions for teachers and staff on legislation, listening skills, gender and children's rights
- staff workshop to discuss issues around violence
- establishment of an information unit to provide documentation and advice on school-based violence to the school community.

Students in the Action Research Group participated in the realisation of a video on children's rights which is broadcasted on Senegalese television.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Data collection and analysis was the most successful activity. All students felt they had something to contribute since violence is part of their daily lives. Teachers took the opportunity to discuss the topic in their classes. Through the research activities the topic of violence has been discussed widely in the school and to some extent at home.

The action research had positive impact on students' communication and presentational skills and on their school performance. Their self-esteem has increased as a result of being considered experts on violence issues by their peers and their teachers.

CHALLENGES

The key challenges during the implementation of the action research were the male teachers' feelings of threat and some resistance to change from other staff. This was overcome through open and effective communication.

The action plan was due to be implemented from September 2010 but to date activities have not yet started due, in particular, to change in school leadership and lack of funding to implement the identified initiatives. With new school managers on board, awareness-raising on the importance of the project must be repeated.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned by the school include the need to:

- involve local education authorities at district and regional level, including inspectors, from the design phase of the project to ensure support to the initiative, advocate for the topic to be taken seriously and prepare the ground for possible institutionalisation of the research outputs
- ensure teachers and school management are committed to children's rights and include participatory methodologies in learning and teaching and school planning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lycée J. Kennedy, Save the Children Suède (2009). Recherche action participative sur les violences : Rapport du groupe de Recherche action Lycée John F. Kennedy de Dakar.

Contact: Lycée J. Kennedy, Dakar. .

Children's and youth clubs

INITIATIVE

Girls' clubs

COUNTRY: Ghana.

PARTNERS: ActionAid and Songtaba.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence; structural violence and denial of girls' education and protection rights in general.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007 onwards.

OBJECTIVES

Under the framework of the *Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools* campaign, girls' clubs were created, aiming to:

- support girls' empowerment through building their confidence to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools
- report incidents
- create peer support networks to facilitate the achievement of girls' education rights.

ACTIVITIES

Girls' clubs have been established in 13 schools of the Nanumba District. Key activities include:

- training of selected male and female teachers to act as mentors. Training comprised sessions on children's and girls' rights issues, with a specific focus on protection, participation and the link between these, gender, violence and participatory facilitation methods
- debates, drama, sports, reading competition, symposia and excursions to enable girls to build confidence to explore, understand and speak out against attitudes that perpetuate violence
- participation in regional and national fora aiming at raising girls' awareness of their rights, providing them with opportunities to meet role models and decision-makers and to practice public-speaking and advocacy skills to claim their education and protection rights to regional and national authorities.

These activities complement other campaign activities presented on page 14 and on-going efforts to create girl-friendly school environments by increasing the number of female teachers, training teachers in gender responsive strategies, improving school infrastructures by creating separated latrines for girls and boys and teachers and students, and establishing child-friendly school reporting mechanisms for cases of abuse.

RESULTS

Girls' clubs have provided:

- safe and supporting environments where girls meet to share their experience, access information about health, education and gender-based violence
- peer support mechanisms for girls who are experiencing trauma, need assistance or want to report cases of abuse
- opportunities for girls to advocate for better education and violence-free schools through the media, community awareness-raising and interaction with policy-makers.

There is evidence of girls' clubs succeeding in cancelling forced marriage for school-aged girls through dialogue with girls' families and support from the Community Advocacy Teams (see page 14).

LESSONS LEARNED

There have been discussions on whether to associate boys to the clubs or to provide boys with their own structures for them to work on the issue of violence. How to involve boys meaningfully in the process needs careful thought.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: ActionAid Ghana.

INITIATIVE

'TUSEME' clubs

COUNTRY: Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea (and other countries in East Africa).

PARTNERS: Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence; structural violence and denial of girls' education and protection rights in general.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 1996 onwards.

OBJECTIVES

FAWE believes that for meaningful transformation of gender relations, girls must participate in efforts to eliminate the discrimination and inequalities they face within their schools and communities. TUSEME (*Let Us Speak Out* in Swahili) was initiated in 1996 at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and enhanced by FAWE with gender-in-education and life skills components. The objective of the TUSEME initiative is to empower girls and to support them to:

- identify and understand concerns that hinder their social and academic development
- take action to solve problems that affect them.

ACTIVITIES

Within the safe space created by TUSEME, girls can talk about their problems and explore gender issues in society. Topics include school-based violence, early marriage, female genital mutilation and many others. TUSEME uses theatre-for-development techniques and creative arts to foster girls' participation. Through a range of participatory and creative activities, girls are given the opportunity to explore in-depth issues that affect them. With a better understanding of the notion of violence, aggressive behaviour and of the factors of school-based violence, girls are able to find their own solutions to respond to the issue.

During the initial four-day training workshop in which girls participate, action plans are developed. FAWE provides a small budget to each club to start the implementation of activities. It is expected that matched funding can be secured from schools, local authorities and community organisations.

RESULTS

TUSEME contributes to the improvement of girls' self-esteem, and their leadership, social and life skills, and to teachers' positive attitudinal change towards girls. In some schools, sexual harassment has decreased.

SUCCESS FACTOR

The establishment of TUSEME clubs requires a sustained will and a strong back-up from the school administration and from school staff to be fully effective. Working hand in hand from the onset of the project is critical for its sustainability. The implementation process of TUSEME clubs in schools stresses the importance of information meetings and training of staff. This has been a successful strategy to ensure buy-in of school staff, parents and children.

CHALLENGES

Overcoming teachers' and school staff's resistance and developing appropriate strategies to include boys in activities have been common challenges across countries.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although TUSEME clubs targeted secondary school girls, some countries have recently adapted the approach to engage with primary school children, with great success. This shows that with appropriate tools and skilled facilitators, young children can meaningfully participate in the TUSEME process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

FAWE News (2004). *Stop the Abuse: Combating Gender Violence in Schools*. Volume 12, Number 3. FAWE Kenya.

Contact: FAWE Senegal.

INITIATIVE

Violence against Children pilot project: Support Advocacy Efforts of Children and Youth against Violence

COUNTRY: Sub-regional: Togo, Ghana, Benin, Guinea, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and The Gambia.

PARTNERS: Save the Children Sweden, Plan Finland, Plan Norway, and Plan WARO.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Physical, psychological and sexual violence in school, at home and in the community.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2008 to 2011.

OBJECTIVES

Following-up on the issues raised by the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, Save the Children Sweden, Plan Finland, Plan Norway, and Plan WARO developed a joint project, Violence against Children (VAC), aiming to widely disseminate among young people, caretakers and policy makers in West Africa the content and follow-up mechanisms of the UN study and to promote the participation and representation of children and youth in regional/national advocacy efforts to address violence against children.

Specific objectives include:

- to increase knowledge and capacity of youth group members to participate in advocacy efforts
- to support children and youth to produce quality materials on violence against children for children and youth
- to increase the level of exchange and co-operation between youth advocates involved in the project as well as their participation in youth campaigns
- to empower children and youth to act as advocates on VAC issues by using social media in strategic ways to achieve project goals
- to facilitate youth access to decision makers to influence high-level policy making, including government officials and the UN Special Representative on Violence against Children.

ACTIVITIES

Activities include:

- training of the youth groups in advocacy training and development of advocacy plans
- sensitisation on the issue of VAC through comic book training and production of youth groups in Senegal, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo
- young people exchange and sensitisation activities through radio, meeting and art and social mobilisation events.

RESULTS

As a result of the activities comic books developed by the children were distributed to young people and adults in the sub-region, Africa's children and young people magazines published booklets and articles on the issue of VAC (*Planète enfant*, *Planète jeune* and *Planète parent*). With the launch of the VAC website, <http://vac.plan-childrenmedia.org>, child media productions are widely disseminated and discussion forums have taken up. Some youth group members also participated in international conferences such as the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in New York and interacted with international leaders and policy makers.

Positive results were also reported in the daily lives of participating youth and children who have gained skills to break the cycle of violence and have modelled positive behaviour for peers.

"[T]hanks to the knowledge I have gained from it, [the project] has helped me put an end to the violence that I used to carry out against my sisters, brothers, and sometimes other children. My parents have also changed – they are no longer violent towards me." (N'Talé, female student, Togo.)

SUCCESS FACTORS

The project identified the participating children through existing youth/children's groups. Working from the outset with organised groups in a pre-established climate of trust using familiar rights-based and participatory approaches helped the activities to take off quickly.

CHALLENGES

There is still resistance, from adults and authorities, to accept children's views and include their perspectives in their work. This has been the main challenge of the project. Addressing the issue of violence holistically has also proven difficult, since the focus has tended to be on the location, or type of VAC. Implementing countries also had difficulties in finding partners interested and capable of working with young people in the intervention areas.

LESSONS LEARNED

After two years of implementation, partners were able to draw useful lessons learned that could inform the programming of similar activities in other countries:

- *Partners and trainers.* It is important to identify national (and local) facilitators at the very beginning of the project to ensure they benefit from training (facilitation skills, child protection, etc) that will enable them to better work with young people and to better respond to cases of abuse they may identify
- *Gender issues.* The topic of VAC is complex and requires a careful attention to gender issues at all stages of the project and in all processes and activities
- *Information.* By informing community groups, parents and NGO partners about the project chances are that adult support will be strengthened and that the outcome of the project activities will last longer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: <http://vac.plan-childrenmedia.org>

Plan (2008). *Informing and mobilizing youth to advocate against Violence Against Children (VAC)*; Plan (2009). *VAC Follow-up Pilot Project to support Advocacy Efforts of Children and Youth against Violence.*

Contact: Plan WARO.



ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

■ Developing reporting and data management systems

INITIATIVE

Multi-level interventions to tackle sexual abuse and violence against children

COUNTRY: Liberia.

PARTNERS: UNICEF Liberia, Ministry of Gender and Development, Ministry of Justice, Liberia National Police, UN agencies, NGOs (Child Fund and others), communities.

TYPE OF VIOLENCE TACKLED: Sexual and gender-based violence.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2006 to present.

OBJECTIVES

In 2006, the Child Fund and UNICEF developed the *Program to Prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse among Liberian Youth*. Based on a survey of perceptions of sexual exploitation and abuse against children in five north-western counties, a pack for prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse was developed by the Child Fund with support from UNICEF, endorsed by the National Gender-based Violence task force and used in capacity building activities. In 2008, the Government and UN Joint Programme to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Gender-Based Violence was initiated, providing a framework for all UNICEF activities in (i) development of prevention; (ii) monitoring and reporting system in schools and community; (iii) training and capacity building of key actors/duty bearers; (iv) rehabilitation of victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence; and (v) support to women's and children's protection sections in the Liberian National Police.

ACTIVITIES

Ministries, UNICEF and implementing partners have engaged in a range of activities, including the development of systems for prevention, monitoring, reporting and response to sexual and gender-based violence in schools and communities.

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the County education authorities, schools have been assisted to identify structures that can be strengthened through training to enable them to provide sustained and intensive sensitisation on protection against and response to sexual and gender-based violence and to create systems that will monitor instances of sexual violence and how to report cases.
- Child Welfare Committees have been standardised by the Ministry of Gender and Development. They are expected to improve documentation and reporting of child rights' violations and response mechanisms at the community level.
- Students, teachers, school administrators and parent teacher associations in public and private schools have also been trained on sexual exploitation and abuse prevention in eight counties.
- Development of a Code of Conduct on the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence in all schools.
- Support to safe houses providing temporary shelter for survivors who cannot return to their communities and families.

UNICEF and the Liberia National Police established the Women and Children Protection Section within the National Police in 2005 to provide a specialised service to women and children who are victims/survivors of gender-based violence.

Steps have also been taken to increase co-ordination between the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Welfare, and Gender and Development, Justice and Child Welfare Committees. Clear procedures and guidelines are being developed at the community level for the early identification of cases of violence and receiving complaints. A reporting system for cases of violence in all community settings, including schools, is being established. It will feed into reporting mechanisms from county to national level where records and data will be held in a single database.

RESULTS

To date, results have included:

- signing of Memorandum of Understandings between UNICEF implementing partners and the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Education
- identification of focal points for sexual exploitation and abuse monitoring and reporting in each school. These focal points include a representative of the students, teachers, parent teacher association and school administration
- strengthening and training of Child Welfare Committees' members (700) to provide care and support to vulnerable children, including child rights monitoring and response
- 2,858 teachers, 1,440 parent teacher association members, 30,000 students in 300 schools in 334 communities trained on prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse in schools
- 2,125 Peer Educators trained on prevention, monitoring and referral of gender-based violence cases in 334 communities
- a total of 207 Women and Children Protection Section Officers received specialised training on the handling and management of sexual violence against women and girls and juvenile offenders' cases.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Families have progressively recognised their rights and responsibilities with regard to the care and welfare of children. This has resulted in a better understanding, at community level, of children's rights to protection, which has been important in supporting the activities of the Child Welfare Committees, initiatives in schools and the participation of children.

CHALLENGES

Child Welfare Committee members are community volunteers. Retaining members and sustaining their work has been a challenge and partners have been thinking about ways to recognise their work (a letter of recognition from the Ministry of Gender and Development for instance) and to build their personal capacities. Volunteer activities, for women in particular, can be rewarding but can also conflict with income-generating work in poor communities.

Although the Child Welfare Committees are in place in many communities, systems and mechanisms need to be strengthened for the Committees' work to be effective. Linking community sexual exploitation and abuse reporting and response systems to county systems and then to national systems has been a challenge. Technical and organisational capacities are weak at both county and national level, which has constrained so far the effectiveness of response mechanisms.

LESSONS LEARNED

Early lessons learned by the partners include:

- ensuring that Child Welfare Committees are properly supported and equipped to fully play their role in identifying, reporting and providing a first response to violations of children's rights and of sexual abuse in particular
- the need to build capacities of all actors at community, county and national levels in parallel with system strengthening activities. By training police officers in priority, partners have both addressed pressing capacity needs and secured support of key actors at the interface between victims, the communities and government institutions
- the importance of addressing issues of common laws in legislative reviews to ensure recommendations will address the possible contradictions between national and common laws.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Republic of Liberia (2008). Government and UN Joint Programme to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Gender-Based Violence.

Contact: UNICEF Liberia.

This publication has been developed and designed together by UNICEF, Plan West Africa, Save the Children Sweden West Africa and ActionAid as part of their conjoined efforts to end all violence against children – in education settings, families and communities.

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and HIV. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. Plan works to achieve lasting improvements for children living in poverty in developing countries, through a process that unites people across cultures and adds meaning and value to their lives.

Save the Children Sweden fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide. Save the Children works for a world which respects and values each child, which listens to children and learns, where all children have hope and opportunity.

ActionAid fights to end poverty and the injustices that cause it by helping poor and excluded people secure and exercise their rights.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Too often in silence: a report on school-based violence in West and Central Africa

Too often in silence: Addressing Violence in Schools – selected initiatives from West and Central Africa.

The cartoons featured in this report were created by children and youth groups from Benin, Togo, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana and Guinea – advocating with Plan and Save the Children Sweden to end all violence against children.

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First published May 2010

British Library Cataloguing in Public Data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
ISBN 978-1-906273-13-2

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