



# CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER 5 **Schools as protective environments**

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# CHAPTER 5

## SCHOOLS AS PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

**More than 50 per cent of children who die in earthquakes each year die inside their school buildings.**

- In Pakistan, more than 17,000 children attending early morning classes perished when their school buildings collapsed following the earthquake in late 2005.
- In developed countries, local schools and hospitals are typically designed to ensure survivability and are designated as safe shelter for affected community members.

**It is neither expensive nor technically difficult to structurally improve most school buildings.**

- The estimated average cost per school ranges between \$1,000 and \$1,500, assuming use of local labour and materials and low-cost design options.

*Source: Safe at School Campaign, Disaster Resource Network, an initiative of the World Economic Forum.*

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Millions of children attend schools that are reasonably safe most of the time. But schools in most developing countries fail to protect children from the consequences of natural disasters and accidents. At a time of increasingly unsafe environments, and as scientists predict with relative certainty that climate change will increase both the severity and prevalence of natural disasters, schools that cannot withstand catastrophes are unacceptable.

The problem, however, is not only with natural disasters and accidents.

There are many ways in which schools fail to protect the children entrusted to their care. The sources of risk and danger are many and complex. There are cases of children, especially girls, burned alive in boarding schools where doors are 'securely locked', ostensibly to protect them. In some countries, children risk being kidnapped for ransom or, in what is becoming a disturbing pattern among the youth population, caught up in gang-related violence. Schools are sometimes targets for violent attacks during civil conflicts, putting children at risk of kidnapping and

forced recruitment as child soldiers, labourers or sex slaves.

The *UN Study on Violence against Children* reveals that children worldwide are at risk of violence in and around the school. The threats range from rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and physical beatings to verbal abuse, bullying, taunting, stereotyping and other forms of humiliation. At times, teachers, school authorities and peers are the perpetrators of such abuse.

Sometimes schools fail to protect children from exposure to health hazards, such as pollution, toxic substances, noise and fumes, or may place them in unhygienic environments that compromise their health. Schools may be remiss by not adequately predicting, preventing and preparing for threats to children's health and safety in the face of a rapidly changing environment.

In child-friendly schools, attention should be given to these key elements:

- **Prediction:** School authorities need to foresee imminent risk or possible dangers that could affect children within the school, its vicinity or the wider community. These may range from seasonal influenza to more dangerous potential pandemics such as avian flu, or vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, which are emerging in colder climates as temperatures rise. They may be dangers posed by impending extreme weather or the school's proximity to hazardous sites. In some countries, political tension brings the risk of violence in the community. Schools that
- **Prevention:** School authorities should take precautionary measures to avert risks to children's health and safety. Giving flu shots and other vaccines to all children at the right time helps prevent serious illness. Designated traffic crossing points for children can prevent vehicle accidents. Community mapping of environmental risks and vulnerabilities to natural disasters can head off potential calamities. And using proper hand-washing procedures and following other health practices prevents the spread of disease. In the same way, prohibiting weapons in schools, providing appropriate supervision of play areas and designing classrooms so that activities within them can be easily observed from outside are ways to help prevent bullying, assaults and abuse in and around schools. Fencing off areas of potential danger, such as swimming pools or water wells, and clearing or spraying areas of stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed are all prevention measures that the school community can invest in to protect children and staff.
- **Preparedness:** Schools must have resources and procedures in place to deal swiftly and decisively with specific dangers to children's health and safety. Warning systems, from a simple school bell to more sophisticated tools

such as text messages, can allow schools to alert students, families and school personnel to a danger or emergency. Training teachers and students in simple first-aid skills, installing fire extinguishers and emergency lighting, scheduling evacuation drills and creating designated assembly points, safe areas and ways of calling for assistance can help prepare the school community to respond to accidents and emergencies.

Child-friendly schools normally have clear policies, plans, measures and budgets to address these elements.

They should review procedures constantly to make sure they keep up with any changes in the school or wider community.

This chapter details protection issues and the safety dimension of child-friendly schools. It explores expectations and realities of schools in promoting the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of children. Threat categories and risk assessments are identified as a basis for reviewing strategies and interventions to make schools healthy, safe and protective for children.

## 5.2 THE RIGHT TO LEARN IN SAFE, HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) spells out the obligations of governments to facilitate children's right to learn in a safe and secure environment, whether a conventional school or a designated learning space in an emergency. The CRC specifically calls on all States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure protection of children from all forms of violence, injury, abuse and neglect, to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the dignity of the child and to ensure children's right to the best possible health care. (See Box, page 4.)

Child-friendly schools and learning spaces should embrace these principles and standards in creating a learning environment where children are free from fear, anxiety, danger, disease, exploitation, harm or injury. They need to create a healthy, safe

and protective environment through the provision of school-based health, nutrition, water and sanitation services, and codes of conduct against violence.

### 5.2.1 Healthy environments

Child protection in school starts with a healthy child. Good health and proper nutrition are prerequisites for effective learning. Research shows that healthy, well-nourished children learn better, and school health and nutrition programming is recognized as a means of improving children's nutritional status, learning achievement and general well-being. Even short-term hunger can adversely affect a child's ability to learn. Deficiencies of iodine or iron have been shown to reduce children's cognitive and motor skills and even their IQ. Similarly, worm infestation causes anaemia

## CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO HEALTHY, SAFE AND PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

<b>Article 2</b>	Education must be provided without discrimination on any grounds.
<b>Article 19</b>	States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. Protective measures should include prevention and identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment.
<b>Article 24</b>	States Parties recognize the rights of children to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and agree to take appropriate measures to ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children, to combat disease and malnutrition, to provide adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution, to ensure that parents and children are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents.
<b>Article 28</b>	States Parties are obliged to take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity.
<b>Article 29</b>	States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; ... (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.
<b>Article 37</b>	States Parties shall ensure that children are not subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

and poor physical, intellectual and cognitive development, resulting in a detrimental effect on students' educational performance. Good health at school age yields long-term health benefits, reduces repetition rates and increases educational attainment.

Children are exposed to many physical and physiological threats that jeopardize their health and safety in school besides poor nutrition. Malaria, waterborne diseases, parasitic infestations (worms are a major cause of undernutrition in school-

age children), diarrhoea, cholera, dehydration and HIV and AIDS are just some of the physiological risks to children. There are also physical risks that threaten health and safety, such as traffic injuries incurred en route to and from school, lacerations, fractures and other injuries during play, drowning, physical violence (corporal punishment, assaults, etc.) and sexual violence.

Child-friendly schools and learning spaces mitigate these problems by creating a healthy school environment

that provides access to safe water for drinking, proper hygiene and sanitation facilities; by implementing life skills-based health, hygiene and environmental education; and by providing health and nutrition services as an integral part of schooling. School buildings must be free of hazards such as lead, asbestos or indoor air pollution, and the school compound and classrooms should be kept clean and free of harmful waste material. Separate toilet facilities should be provided for girls and boys (giving girls the privacy they require), along with sufficient water for hand washing in appropriate facilities. These are all important aspects of what child-friendly schools and learning spaces should offer as part of a safe, protective environment for learning.

Maintaining a culture of clean, healthy and safe environments means that school heads and teachers should be committed to programmes that involve children in maintaining sanitary hand-washing and drinking-water facilities and toilets. Typically, school heads and teachers work together with children to prepare and carry out a plan for monitoring and keeping up the facilities and helping children stay clean and healthy. In this regard, preventive maintenance should be adopted as a way to set standards and reduce costs, which tend to be higher when repairing and replacing parts. Prevention involves tasks as simple as oiling squeaky doors before the hinges fail, patching minor cracks in slabs before they become big faults in the wall, fixing leaking taps before they become flood hazards, changing parts in the water well pump before the whole system fails, painting regularly to protect the durability of buildings, scrubbing and cleaning regularly to prevent the build-up of grime and



waste in school facilities, and planting trees to provide shade and soil security. (See Chapter 3.)

To support a protective learning environment and accomplish a maintenance scheme, school heads and teachers can encourage children to start healthy environment clubs, where they organize maintenance tasks, set up competitions around these tasks and promote safe water, sanitation and 'healthy schools and healthy homes' messages.

Child-friendly schools and learning spaces typically address malnutrition through 'food for education' – providing in-school meals or snacks and take-home rations for vulnerable children, orphans and girls. These strategies encourage parents to send children to school regularly, and they may also encourage communities to prepare and serve meals and support

## NICARAGUA: WATER AND SANITATION IN CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

In Nicaragua, where 80 per cent of primary schools lack satisfactory water supplies and adequate sanitation facilities and where educational quality is poor, the Healthy and Friendly Schools Initiative is an integrated approach to school sanitation and hygiene education. The initiative aims to improve the school environment by addressing health, school hygiene, environmental sanitation and human rights in a comprehensive way linked to quality learning. It is based on the idea that schools can help transform families and communities by promoting positive practices among pupils during their formative years. Participating schools have new hand-washing facilities and chlorinated water, as well as appropriate sanitary units separated by both age and gender. There are smaller seats or toilets for preschool children, urinals for boys and one latrine adapted for children with disabilities. Life skills education and hygiene promotion have contributed to improved knowledge and the beginning of behavioural change. The initiative intends to ensure long-term sustainability by combining education, promotion of suitable hygienic practices and improvements in school infrastructure – all with the active participation of the educational community, the surrounding community and the children.

school garden projects. In addition, they promote nutrition education for students, with instruction on cooking methods, menu preparation, use of local foods and balanced diets. This not only provides children with good nutrition in the short term, but also helps them develop the attitudes, knowledge and values they need to make appropriate dietary decisions throughout their lives.

Child-friendly schools support school-based deworming programmes, usually as an integral part of a more comprehensive school health programme. The Essential Package, partnered by UNICEF and the World Food Programme, and the Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) framework, launched by UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and World Health Organization in 2000, are good examples of such health programmes.

Their key elements include:

- Health policies in school that advocate and facilitate the teachers' role in promoting good health practices and helping to make schools healthy learning environments;
- Adequate sanitation and access to safe water to reduce disease, worm transmission and waterborne illnesses in the school environment;
- Skills-based health education that promotes good hygiene, avoidance of disease, prevention of worm infection and other illnesses;
- Basic health and nutrition services that include school meals and deworming.

In some countries, child-friendly schools provide a prevocational orientation by establishing school gardens or laboratories near

or around the school so that students can engage in small-scale animal husbandry, fish farming, bee-keeping, fruit tree cultivation and staple food production. Such endeavours can provide prevocational agricultural knowledge and skills related to food production and environmental protection, as well as offer more immediate nutritional support for children (World Food Programme & UNICEF, 2005). In this time of chronic droughts and food shortages, it is important for children and their families to understand and, where possible, support locally grown food.

### 5.2.2 Safe and protective environments

The physical environment of a school or learning space, including its surrounding neighbourhood, is crucial to children's safety and security. To increase school safety, fences should be built to protect children from harmful outside influences, such as drug peddling, sexual harassment or physical violence. Constant supervision of the school and schoolyard is usually necessary. Expansive schoolyards with many large buildings or unprotected areas may need additional staff or other security measures, such as emergency notification or alarm systems that can alert students and teachers to an ongoing emergency.

The journey to and from school is another potential source of danger. Child-friendly schools typically identify safe ways for children to travel to school and back, such as

secure walking paths in remote rural areas or protected streets in urban centres when walking to school is feasible. Parents may volunteer to help children cross busy streets in the vicinity of urban schools. Where distance is a problem, children should be provided with safe transportation, such as an organized school bus service or fare-exempt travel on public buses that go past the school. In remote locations where children live long distances from school or face risks in their school journey, such as crossing streams or rivers or risking physical attacks (particularly against girls), child-friendly schools can work with the community to arrange for students to travel together (safety in numbers) or be accompanied by responsible adults (escort pooling).

For child-friendly schools to be safe, protective learning environments, they need to deal with more than the obvious issues of physical danger and health risks. Attention should also be given to the children's emotional, psychological and physical well-being, protecting them from verbal and emotional abuse and the trauma of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, ethnic prejudice or intrusiveness by teachers and peers (Attig & Hopkins, 2006). Schools that are child-friendly must protect students from the psychological harm that can result from various kinds of punishment perpetrated by peers or by teachers, including verbal abuse, name-calling and other forms of humiliation. School authorities must also appreciate that children can be affected by prejudice and biases that result in isolation and exclusion by their peers. In countries prone to



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An older school building in the Rubingo Primary School complex in Rwanda (top). The bottom photo shows a new CFS building in the same complex.



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internecine violence or environmental risks, children may face the threat of another debilitating form of trauma – the persistent sense of imminent emergency.

Child-friendly schools greatly reduce or eliminate common physical

threats and other types of violence found in and around schools and learning spaces, such as corporal punishment by teachers, student-on-student violence, gang fights, bullying, sexual attacks, other forms of gender-based violence and school attacks by external groups. (See Box, page 10.)

Violence and abuse may occur as a teacher-on-student phenomenon, as with corporal punishment, or as a student-on-student phenomenon or even a student-on-teacher phenomenon. In many instances, the forms of violence overlap. It is important to understand and recognize these links.

Some forms of violence may be 'hidden' and need to be exposed. Sexual assaults, rape and verbal or physical harassment of girls, for instance, are often minimized or dismissed with comments such as "boys will be boys." Other forms of violence, including corporal punishment, may be locally accepted by families and society at large, making them difficult to confront in child-friendly schools. Unless these forms of violence are challenged, children's welfare and their rights will be compromised.

Child-friendly schools need to work with parents and local communities to prevent violence. There must be clear, transparently enforced policies and procedures and firm interventions to protect children from physical harm and verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Schools must educate parents and local communities in order to eliminate acquiescence to or tolerance of violence against children. Child protection and safety can be extended to homes and communities, reinforcing the accepted codes of conduct adopted by schools. Special attention must be given to children who are particularly at risk, such as orphans, children with disabilities and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. Additionally, schools

and communities must be alert to highly traumatic situations, such as civil conflict, in which children may require special counselling and psychosocial care.

Girls and boys need to speak freely about protection concerns that affect them or others. In child-friendly schools, teachers and principals should make a point of listening to children's anxieties about violence in their lives. Together, adults and children should set up systems to generate solutions to violent environments. A system may be as simple as a box in school where children can leave anonymous notes about abuse at home or violence at school, or it may be a more formal complaint mechanism. The point is that authorities in child-friendly schools should be proactive in identifying child abuse and neglect and should be prepared to act in accordance with national child protection legislation and procedures, including mandatory reporting to the police or other legal bodies.

The role of the school in regard to serious child protection issues is not to investigate them but to recognize situations needing attention and refer them to the appropriate child service agencies. Child-friendly schools should be prepared to identify, refer and assess children in need, including those who have suffered, are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm. The schools should have procedures in place to ensure quick professional responses to disclosures or suspicions regarding harm to a child.

## FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Corporal punishment refers to beatings, canings, whippings and other forms of physical punishment used by teachers and managers. Few countries have banned corporal punishment outright, and there are still many countries where corporal punishment is a regular part of schooling.

Both girls and boys are subjected to various forms of sexual violence in and around schools. The violent acts can be perpetrated by teachers or school administrators or, in other instances, by students (mostly male) against female students and sometimes even against teachers. Gender violence also includes harassment and abuse based on heterosexism and homophobia.

Bullying refers to the repeated negative actions of one or more students against another. It can include taunting, teasing and other forms of verbal abuse, physical violence and other harmful actions, and can also be expressed through new technologies – cyberbullying, for example.

While some forms of gang violence may also be categorized as bullying, the main differences between the two are the structural features of organized gangs and their use of weapons. Gangs and gang conflict may be located within a school or between schools, or they may exist outside schools but have a major impact on what happens inside schools by way of drug use, drug trafficking, extortion, gang rape and so on.

School as a ‘target’ refers to the ways that the school itself might attract such forms of violence as arson, vandalism and destruction of teachers’ property, and how it features in less common forms of violence, such as spree shootings, hostage-taking by terrorists and kidnappings.

**Source:** United Nations, *UN Study on Violence against Children*, New York, 2006.

## 5.3 CHILDREN AT SPECIAL RISK

While all children may be exposed to threats to their security and well-being in and around school, some are at particular risk. The most vulnerable groups include children with special needs, disabilities or health impairments; those affected by abuse, discrimination, exploitation, war or natural disaster; orphans and children affected by HIV and AIDS; minority children; those in remote, rural areas or urban slums; and girls.

Children who face a combination of these factors are at an even higher risk of discrimination and physical and psychological violence, exploitation and abuse (United Nations, 2006).

Child-friendly schools pay particular attention to these groups, promoting inclusiveness and developing special measures to ensure that children’s rights to health, safety and

protection are fulfilled. Child-friendly schools and learning spaces rely on the community to help identify these children and bring them to school. To better address their needs once they are in school, teachers must be trained in specific educational methodologies and disability assessment tools. Additionally, the school must provide teaching and learning aids, supportive services such as counselling, and training in social and psychological parenting; must encourage community participation in planning, implementation and monitoring; and must sensitize communities, parents and children to the rights and needs of children with disabilities and the benefits of inclusive education.

Child-friendly schools must also be sensitive to how gender differences put children at risk. In general, girls and boys are threatened differently. For example, research suggests that boys are more likely to suffer from corporal punishment, while girls are more likely to be victims of sexual violence.

Schools need to focus on a growing phenomenon, the risk faced by children affected by or infected with HIV. These children, together with the category referred to as 'orphans and vulnerable children', are often subjected to stigmatization and discrimination due to lack of knowledge about the disease among teachers, parents and other children. They are often excluded from school and, if in school, can be subjected to harsh treatment that may cause psychological and physical trauma. School authorities need to work closely with parents and communities to protect orphans and other vulnerable children in and around school and within the community.

Child-friendly school principles and practices provide a unique opportunity to identify and respond to the psychosocial needs of children orphaned by AIDS and other children in especially difficult circumstances. Using data on students' family situations, health, personal environment and learning achievements as tracked by the school-based information system, schools can tailor support measures to meet the needs of specific students.

Special measures to protect orphans and other vulnerable children include:

- Teacher training in counselling, building self-esteem and helping children deal with death;
- Life skills camps for orphans and guardians to foster communication, especially through art therapy;
- Collaboration in planning for the child's future;
- Peer-helping and counselling programmes;
- Livelihood skills training incorporated into the curriculum to support orphans' income-generating skills;
- Drug and sexual abuse resistance training;
- After-school interest clubs (Life Skills Development Foundation, 2000).

These types of psychosocial support measures have proved successful in integrating orphans and vulnerable children into the school community, resulting in improved mental health, reduced behaviour problems and drop-out rates and higher completion rates (Attig & Hopkins, 2006).

One of the first steps towards creating a safe, healthy and protective school environment is to conduct a systematic assessment of the extent to which girls, boys, teachers and staff feel safe and secure at school and at home. The school must evaluate current and potential threats to the children's physical and psychological well-being.

Assessment questions about healthy, safe and protective learning environments include:

1. What are the physical risks to girls and boys as they travel to and from school and while they are in school? What harm might they encounter in the school structure or from other schoolchildren?
2. What are physiological threats that may affect children's learning? Hunger? Communicable illnesses or childhood diseases? Dehydration or frostbite? HIV and AIDS?
3. What are the psychological risks faced by girls and boys in school? Bullying? Sexual violence? Discrimination? Conflict or natural disaster?
4. What are the environmental risks to the health and well-being of children and their families? Deforested terrain prone to floods? Drought? Lack of fuel for cooking? Air pollution? Unsafe, polluted drinking water?
5. Do children spend their time in activities that put them at risk of exploitation or harm?

As answers emerge, the school can determine its 'risk index', which involves understanding:

- How a community and society define risks, violence and threats to vulnerable children;
- Different forms of violence that are present;
- Ways in which a school needs to develop its protective environment, such as where school personnel and communities must watch for child abductions or where road accidents are likely to occur.

Schools need to develop strategies that mitigate these risks and reflect the demands and concerns of the wider community, so that protection extends beyond the risks faced within the school alone. The assessment helps determine how much is being invested and how much more needs to be invested to make the school a safe, protective environment for all children and staff. Links with families and the community are critical in this phase.

Table 5.1 illustrates the physical, physiological and psychological risks children may face, interventions that schools can develop and the cost of implementing them. Such a table can systematically assess the risks associated with the school environment and how that environment may impact on a child's success in school. It can also compare the intervention costs and, in an environment of scarce resources (people, time, finances, etc.), set priorities for comprehensively dealing with actual and potential threats or risks to children. The list is by no means complete. Each school must thoroughly assess its risks, its environment and its school population to determine and develop appropriate interventions.

**TABLE 5.1: ASSESSMENT OF RISKS, INTERVENTIONS AND COSTS IN A CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL**

Risk	School intervention	Cost
<b>Physical</b>		
Traffic injuries or fatalities en route to school or home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach traffic safety</li> <li>• Assign older children or adults to accompany younger children through traffic</li> <li>• Build barriers between recreation and traffic areas</li> </ul>	Minimal except for fencing, which can be expensive
Lacerations or other injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that corners of furniture are rounded and well sanded, especially for younger children</li> <li>• Ensure that furniture is sturdy and well maintained</li> <li>• Keep school grounds clean, paying special attention to hazards such as broken glass, needles, blades (instruct younger children to request assistance from an adult to remove such items)</li> <li>• Make first aid available in the school (train teachers in basic response)</li> <li>• Prepare a map of environmental risks and an evacuation strategy to be used in the case of a sudden onset natural disaster</li> </ul>	No direct costs
Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properly cover all wells</li> <li>• Closely supervise or erect barriers to ditches or bodies of water deeper than 10 centimetres near schools</li> <li>• Teach swimming and water safety with consideration for flood-related drowning</li> </ul>	Minimal (purchase and installation of barriers)
Violence (beating, hitting, weapons injuries, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance institutional ethos of zero tolerance of violence</li> <li>• Establish and implement policies against corporal punishment; support alternative forms of discipline</li> <li>• Establish and implement rules with consequences regarding pupil-to-pupil violence</li> <li>• Engage law enforcement personnel as needed</li> <li>• Hold dialogues in the school to empower children to protect themselves</li> <li>• Provide adult supervision during break periods and intervene as necessary in children's arguments</li> </ul>	Minimal (prevention is cheaper than treatment)
Sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop transparent physical environment (children visible in classrooms and around school )</li> <li>• Establish and enforce policy of zero tolerance of teacher-to-child sexual violence</li> <li>• Empower children, especially adolescent girls, to identify and reduce risks and report incidents</li> <li>• Evaluate whether distance or remoteness of school facilities (water, school garden, latrines) puts children at risk</li> </ul>	Minimal
Abduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish appropriate procedures (all adults register upon entering schools, etc.)</li> </ul>	–

Risk	School intervention	Cost
<b>Physiological</b>		
Malaria (acquired at school or impacting attendance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate standing water in school grounds and surrounding area</li> <li>• Educate children on malaria prevention, such as use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets (collaborate with public health officials to increase supply of mosquito nets to children and their families)</li> <li>• Teach children and teachers to recognize malaria symptoms and seek early treatment</li> <li>• Engage children in community education to reduce standing water, increase use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets.</li> </ul>	Minimal
Hunger and undernutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor children at risk</li> <li>• Establish school feeding programmes, organize regular checks by health workers for malnutrition</li> <li>• Support school gardens</li> </ul>	Free, if organized through partner and supported by the community
Common childhood diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with health sector to ensure complete immunization coverage for all children in school</li> </ul>	–
Worms, diarrhoea, cholera (diseases spread through faecal-oral transmission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a source of safe drinking water</li> <li>• Provide sex-segregated latrines</li> <li>• Teach and encourage good hand-washing practices</li> <li>• Provide water for washing near the latrines</li> <li>• Provide a sanitary location for food preparation and distribution</li> <li>• Educate children regarding disease prevention</li> </ul>	Establishment of water and sanitation facilities, maintenance costs
Acute respiratory illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access to clean energy for cooking in homes and schools (smokeless or solar stoves)</li> </ul>	–
Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a source of potable water</li> <li>• Teach water hygiene</li> <li>• Educate teachers on ways to identify symptoms early and how to respond to fainting, seizures, etc.</li> </ul>	–
HIV and AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop collaborations to ensure that the special needs of children with HIV and AIDS are met</li> <li>• Provide safe storage area for medications</li> </ul>	–

Risk	School intervention	Cost
<b>Psychological</b>		
Trauma of sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that physical injuries are dealt with</li> <li>• Provide counselling and support</li> <li>• Protect confidentiality</li> <li>• Empower children through prevention</li> <li>• Remove risks (such as the presence of a perpetrator in the school)</li> <li>• Develop mechanisms for reporting incidents and deal with complaints effectively to instill confidence in the process</li> <li>• Enforce zero tolerance rules</li> </ul>	–
Bullying (can also be a physical risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide counselling to deal with children’s damaged self-esteem and feelings of fear and humiliation</li> <li>• Establish anti-bullying programmes, if appropriate</li> <li>• Provide adult supervision before and after school and at breaks</li> <li>• Enforce rules with regard to treatment of peers</li> </ul>	–
Trauma caused by an emergency, conflict or forced migration due to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess children for effects (such as loss of concentration, change in achievement levels, frequent distracting thoughts)</li> <li>• Reduce risks to children and build their sense of security in their environment</li> <li>• Develop counselling programmes with professional counsellors</li> <li>• Train teachers to identify and support children at risk</li> </ul>	–
Prejudice or exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support ethos of inclusion and respect</li> <li>• Encourage dialogue regarding differences and develop understanding</li> <li>• Build teachers’ capacity to identify equity issues</li> <li>• Develop mechanisms for reporting incidents and deal with complaints effectively to instil confidence in the process</li> </ul>	–

### 5.4.1 Mapping safe spaces

Unlike school mapping, which determines if there are enough schools for pupils in a community (see Chapter 8), mapping safe spaces enables a school community to assess the violence children may experience in and around school. Girls’ and boys’ participation in violence prevention and mapping safe spaces should be at the core of a child-friendly school’s protective environment. When boys, girls and young people map out safe and unsafe environments, there is

often a difference between what girls, boys and young people perceive as safe space.

After the ‘risk index’ is completed, the most at-risk groups accounted for and interventions decided, a child-friendly school needs to develop an emergency preparedness plan. Such plans may be more elaborate for schools in earthquake or flood zones, but all child-friendly schools need a plan so that everyone in the school will know what to do in case of a health threat or other emergency.

## SOUTH AFRICA: SAFETY AND RISK FACTOR RESEARCH

In 2004, UNICEF and the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) contracted the University of Pretoria to conduct research in Limpopo (South Africa) that examined issues related to safety and threats for learners at the foundational (Grades R through 3), intermediate (Grades 4 through 7) and senior (Grades 8 through 12) phases.

The research was to provide baseline data and potential strategies for longer-term school-based and community-based programmes to develop child-friendly schools and schools as 'centres for care and support' in Limpopo. The study also was to identify environmental (school, family, community) and individual risk factors that threaten healthy development of the individual, and the protective factors perceived to be essential in supporting and building resilience. The research was to ultimately promote learners' healthy development. The protective factors could focus on learners while the environmental and individual risk factors could simultaneously be examined and alleviated.

Three districts in the province – Bohlabela, Sekhukhune and Vhembe - were selected as research sites by the LDoE based on data related to poverty, location and number of learners. Schools within the districts were selected to participate.

Learners were selected through random sampling. Their ages ranged from 3 to 21 years. In all, 2,391 children participated, 1,200 girls and 1,191 boys. Community forums, composed of various stakeholders involved in safety and children's issues, were conducted in two phases.

The survey's overall findings indicated that the respondents felt safe at home (87 per cent), at school (86 per cent) and in the classroom (85 per cent). Fewer learners felt safe on the playground (66 per cent) or on their way to school (61 per cent). This generally matched the results from open-ended questions, which found that the children from Grades R through 12 in all three districts felt that the community had the most to offer with respect to safety and

assets for children, followed by the family and school. However, school was also seen as having the most potential danger to safety.

All learners in the three districts mentioned specific ways to improve their safety. Mentioned most frequently was facilitation of learning in schools, followed by individual emotional aspects, and availability of structure and channels for involvement in the community and schools. Facilitation of learning included providing environments conducive to teaching and learning; engaging and well-trained teachers; schools that encourage community and family involvement, offer extramural activities and life skills programmes, and are characterized by an academic climate of high expectations as well as mentorship and mutual respect.

Overall, the most common theme regarding threats to safety was the exposure to and threat of crime. On a community level, and reaffirmed by the community forums in the three districts, this sub-theme signals awareness of high crime levels and such acts as murder and kidnapping. In terms of the family system, the sub-theme referred to active encouragement of criminal behaviour and a fear of crime and exposure to weapons. The lack of future orientation, poor role models, sexual behaviour, and HIV and AIDS were identified with the least frequency by the children as threats to their safety.

HIV and AIDS and sexual behaviour were hardly mentioned by the learners, both boys and girls. It was interpreted from participant responses that HIV and AIDS are still too stigmatized to discuss openly. In this regard, participants identified the family as being a risk factor and related sub-themes documented the effects of the pandemic on the family: discrimination and labelling, related chores (unsafe, too many, burdensome), emotional neglect (insufficient care or love, rejection), absentee or uninterested parents, and a lack of supervision and protection.

Community forums also emphasized individual, school and community factors. The community forums, in the second phase, helped identify possible strategies to create conducive and safe environments for children/learners.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The findings suggest that there is value in the creation of child-friendly schools and schools as centres of care and support for children. This is especially relevant in the current context, where children indicated that the home and family are not always a place of safety. Rather, the community and schools were seen to provide protection. However, schools have to first deal with the numerous threats that children feel in order to be effective as protective places. Based on the findings, the following practical arrangements are suggested:

- Strengthen intersectoral community forums that were established as part of this research to further the recommendations and develop safety plans for children and schools;
- Fast-track the infrastructure development for schools, especially in those areas that affect security, such as school fencing and repair of broken windows;
- Organize pickup points where children can be picked up and taken home at the end of the day, and organize safe transport or walking clubs so that children can walk home in groups rather than alone;
- Ensure that there is adequate teaching staff at school at all times, for example, one or two teachers to supervise children during breaks and on the playgrounds;
- Ensure that teachers know who is authorized to pick up the child, ensuring that the learner is only allowed to leave the school premises with a specified adult;
- Train guidance counselors and teachers to be able to provide psychosocial support and referrals for children at risk.

Because children identified the importance of community, various stakeholders (members of non-governmental and community-based organizations, community leaders and others) should be trained on early identification of children and households in distress and where to make referrals for such families or children;

Extension of an integrated plan for early child development to the intermediate and senior phases should be considered. (Feasibility

should be examined in terms of required resources, financial and human, to determine if it is practical).

Because children relied heavily on positive interpersonal skills and traits as coping and safety themes, communication skills should be taught through a 'life orientation' part of the new curriculum. There is a need to fast-track the training of teachers on 'life orientation' or, in the interim, allow non-governmental organizations to provide such teaching.

In Sekhukhune and Vhembe, especially at the senior grades, children feel less safe on the school premises. There is the need for future research to determine the factors contributing to these feelings and to devise ways of addressing these concerns and making the schools safer for the learners, both boys and girls

Failure to mention HIV and AIDS directly is also a matter of concern. Children, even those in the higher grades, did not acknowledge HIV and AIDS as a threat. With current figures indicating that young people – especially girls – are most at risk and the fastest growing proportion of the population infected with HIV, this must be addressed urgently. Students' not directly referring to HIV and AIDS implies that there is not a welcoming environment for those in crisis to feel comfortable discussing problems, such as being infected with HIV or having a sick parent at home, with teachers. One of the purposes of life skills is to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and responsible sexual behaviour for young people; given that 'life orientation' is now mandatory and a key learning area, it needs to be re-examined to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

The need for integrated HIV-awareness campaigns, including dealing with stigma and discrimination and providing appropriate messages and improving teachers' expertise in discussing issues related to HIV and AIDS (for example, without judgements), is clear. This means that teachers need to confront their own biases about HIV and AIDS. This can result from ongoing HIV training and interventions for educators as well as from creating an environment conducive for teachers to seek assistance if and when they need it themselves.

**Source:** Construction of Safety and Risk Factors by Learners in the Limpopo Province, 2006.

### 5.5.1 Legal frameworks

An important guarantor of a healthy, safe and protective environment is the legislative framework that guarantees children's rights to quality education and protection. The CRC, along with many other international instruments, offers guidance to governments on legislative and policy reform needed to ensure children's rights to health, protection and well-being.

Strategies and interventions to shore up healthy, safe and protective

environments begin with a review of existing legislation to make certain that all forms of physical and psychological violence against children in school and at home are prohibited and that suitable mechanisms for recourse and complaint by children and parents are in place. The legislation needs to guarantee children's rights to health and development.

Where adequate legal provisions exist, assessment of how rigorously they are being implemented is required. If the assessment shows a

#### SETTING SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS IN SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

111. Bearing in mind that all children must be able to learn free from violence, that schools should be safe and child friendly and curricula should be rights based, and also that schools provide an environment in which attitudes that condone violence can be changed and non-violent values and behaviour learned, I recommend that States:

- (a) Encourage schools to adopt and implement codes of conduct applicable to all staff and students that confront all forms of violence, taking into account gender-based stereotypes and behaviour and other forms of discrimination;
- (b) Ensure that school principals and teachers use non-violent teaching and learning strategies and adopt classroom management and disciplinary measures that are not based on fear, threats, humiliation or physical force;
- (c) Prevent and reduce violence in schools through specific programmes which address the whole school environment including through encouraging the building of skills such as non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, implementing anti-bullying policies and promoting respect for all members of the school community;
- (d) Ensure that curricula, teaching processes and other practices are in full conformity with the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, free from references actively or passively promoting violence and discrimination in any of its manifestations.

**Source:** United Nations, *UN Study on Violence against Children*, New York, 2006.

failure of adequate legal provisions, strong advocacy to incorporate child protection into legislation is necessary.

The *UN Study on Violence against Children* offers concrete recommendations in this regard. It calls on countries to strengthen national and local commitments to end violence, enact legislation that prohibits all forms of violence, prioritize prevention through policies and programmes that address risk factors, promote non-violent values and awareness, build capacity of those who care for children through such mechanisms as codes of conduct, ensure child participation, create accessible reporting systems and address gender dimensions of violence.

One way to ensure that a government's legislation reflects its commitment to realizing the rights of children as expressed in the CRC is through the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Each year, this body reports on the progress of countries in upholding their obligations to protect children.

### **5.5.2 Policy frameworks and setting standards**

Child-friendly schools are dependent on national, regional and school-level policy frameworks and standards to institutionalize healthy, safe and secure measures. Policies and standards should provide essential services for children, including school health programmes, micronutrient supplementation, deworming, vaccinations, school-feeding initiatives, and HIV and AIDS care and support. In many developing

countries, services and social institutions, including the family, hospitals and health centres, and water and sanitation infrastructures, are under siege from poverty, political conflict, natural disasters and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Therefore schools are forced to step up when other institutions cannot.

Some governments have introduced Learning Plus, an initiative that has expanded school functions to include social services delivery to children. This entails collaboration among government ministries, such as health, social welfare, water, local government and lands, women's affairs and justice, in systematically assessing risks to children's health, safety and security in and around schools. In countries such as Lesotho, Rwanda, Swaziland and Zambia, Learning Plus is part of child-friendly schools because it is understood that providing essential social services for children through schools is critical to learning.

At this juncture, it has become clear that effective policies are the backbone of legislation that guarantees children's right to quality education. Although the CRC has been almost universally ratified, the effective protection of children against violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination is not yet a reality in many places. Despite improved legislation, often policies and government practices do not change significantly. Countries need to strengthen policies and institutional frameworks and set standards for education quality that include specific guidance on health, safety and security (hygiene and sanitation, first aid, safety of school furniture and equipment, protection from violence). In addition, policies

## FOCUSING RESOURCES ON EFFECTIVE SCHOOL HEALTH (FRESH)

A framework developed by four UN agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank) identifies four essential health components to be available in all schools in order to ensure child-friendliness. These are:

1. **Health-related policies** in schools that help ensure a safe and secure physical environment and a positive psychosocial environment, and address all types of school violence, such as the abuse of students, sexual harassment and bullying, and that help maintain the education system in the face of HIV and AIDS.
2. **Provision of safe water and sanitation facilities**, as first steps in creating a healthy school environment that reinforces hygienic skills and behaviours; providing separate sanitation facilities and privacy for girls is an important contributing factor in reducing dropout during and before menses.
3. **Skills-based health education** that focuses on the development of knowledge, attitudes, values and life skills needed to make appropriate positive decisions, to establish lifelong healthy practices, and to reduce vulnerability to substance abuse and HIV/AIDS.
4. **School-based health and nutrition services** that are simple, safe and familiar, and address problems that are prevalent and recognized as important in the community, including the provision of counselling to cope with the AIDS epidemic.

**Source:** *Assessing Child-Friendly Schools: A guide for programme managers in East Asia and the Pacific*, UNICEF EAPRO, 2006.

need to be in place to guarantee the right to education to children with disabilities. These policies need to be developed with full participation of all stakeholders – communities, parents and both children and adults with disabilities – and should include international best practices and local values and realities (UNICEF EAPRO, 2003).

Child-friendly schools do not exist in a vacuum, but rather in the context of local, district and national education systems and other sectors and ministries such as health and justice. To support schools, education systems need to develop policies and set standards that support the dimensions

of a child-friendly school. They must establish the policies needed to ensure that buildings are safe and clean, employ a fair ratio of female and male teachers, and enforce codes of teacher conduct. The education system should also institute school guidelines for safety and security that are known by all stakeholders and enforced by school management. Standard practices should also be established and used by teachers so that children can speak up freely and safely if they are aware of violence.

Beyond the education system, state laws and government administrative rules that criminalize abuse of students and support prosecution of violators



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must be utilized.<sup>1</sup> Policies should proactively address suspected abuse, sexual harassment, violence and bullying, as well as guarantee that pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers can continue their education. At the national level, media attention and civil society can help by publicizing child protection issues and contributing to a broader understanding of child protection in society.

In creating healthy, safe and protective environments, governments need to coordinate efforts through a sector-wide approach, ensuring integrated

government policy. Life skills education for HIV prevention, for instance, should be included in wider education sector plans and become firmly rooted in the official curriculum and related teacher training. This could be done within a support framework that, alongside life skills education, addresses issues of children affected by HIV and AIDS, care and support interventions including protection, counselling and treatment, and solid workplace policies that ensure that teachers and other staff are able to take care of their own lives and those of the children and young people in their care.

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<sup>1</sup> The six elements of UNICEF's Protective Environments Framework are a governmental commitment to fulfilling protection rights; legislation and enforcement; attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and practices; open discussion of, and engagement with, child protection issues; community capacity; and children's life skills, knowledge and participation. How protectively these elements function and how they interact differ from one society to another and may vary in relation to different types of abuse. Programmatic, policy and advocacy approaches need to be tailored accordingly.

## PHILIPPINES: AN UNRULY SCHOOL BLOSSOMS INTO A CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

When Faviolito Alberca became principal of Cebu City Central School (CCC) in 2002, the public school was a place to avoid. Rowdy gang wars rocked dirty, smelly classrooms that housed more than 6,000 students. Faculty and students lacked discipline, and tardiness, petty squabbles and poor learning were common. Parents who had escorted their children to school roamed the corridors freely, even after classes had begun. Gossip and shouting matches among parents were common. Principals did not last; there had been three in just two years.

Instead of quitting, Mr. Alberca took immediate steps to rectify the situation. Guided by the vision of a 'child-friendly school', he led the school in developing an improvement plan that set specific goals, policies, standards and actions. The plan was regularly monitored to achieve consistent day-to-day performance results from teachers, parents, pupils and other school personnel.

After a profile of the student body, including information on their families and home circumstances, showed stark poverty, with more than 80 per cent of parents impoverished, jobless or engaged in marginal work and unable to take on school activities, CCC went an extra mile. Believing that impoverished parents meant malnourished children who perform poorly in school, the school initiated skills-training courses for parents. Teachers helped some parents find jobs. Other parents were hired by the school to repair broken windows, paint and fix plumbing, using their new skills.

News travels fast in densely populated communities. Central's concern for the poorest was quickly noted. And the poorest families reciprocated by supporting the school wholeheartedly. They provided free labour, fixed and cleaned the surroundings, supported their children, helped teachers and raised resources for the school. They are also the proudest when declaring that CCC is now comparable to a quality private school.

Adapted from 'Grime, Cloth Slippers and Hope', Mercado, J., *Sun Star, Mindanao Bulletin, Gold Star Daily, Zambaonga Scribe, Visayan Daily Star, Visayas (Philippines)*, 1 March 2005.

## 5.6 SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

In protective environments, the school ethos and culture should enable teachers to organize and manage their classrooms in ways that encourage children to participate in the learning and teaching process. For instance, certain successful mother-tongue literacy programmes used in Africa have been structured in ways that allow

teachers and students to interact on a daily basis, even in large classes. School managers and parents are trained to support and reinforce this approach from a management and governance perspective. Where there is meaningful child participation and teacher engagement in support of the learning process, there tends to be less violence in schools.

Children and teachers in Malawi reported that as their teachers learned to do continuous assessment and regularly involve students in monitoring learning progress, the teachers felt proud of their teaching and refrained from using corporal punishment in the classroom (Miske, 2003).

Children's membership on school committees and participation in school government or parliaments, anti-drug and crime prevention campaigns, or after-school activities including sports and the arts produced alternative forms of discipline and contributed to a violence-free learning environment.

### 5.6.1 Teachers' roles and responsibilities

In child-friendly schools, teachers should strive for relevant and child-centred teaching and learning. First,

teachers must learn about healthy, safe environments and in turn teach key concepts to children. School heads should organize the schools, and teachers should organize their classes to support a clean, healthy, protective environment for learning. For this to work as efficiently as possible, each classroom should do a risk assessment and prepare and maintain a disaggregated register of students, teachers and key community partners. Teachers should note orphans and other vulnerable children, in particular. A similar register or database should be compiled and kept at the national level.

Preservice and in-service training should be offered to teachers on life skills, child-centred and participatory teaching methods, peer education and ways to promote gender-sensitivity in classrooms. This may involve such simple strategies as teachers asking students to keep track of how many times the teacher calls on girls or



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boys during a lesson to ensure equal opportunities for students to participate. In Kenya, for instance, where the Government initiated a nationwide policy endorsing child-friendly schools and free primary education, the child-friendly approach includes teacher training in child rights and protection. In South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Foundation supports the child-friendly school approach and focuses on preventing violence and fostering a creative learning environment.

Teachers and other school personnel need to be educated on the many forms of violence and ways to assess violence in and around schools. With such training and preparedness, teachers will recognize early signs of domestic violence through children's behaviour changes or physical injuries. Because of their regular contact with children, teachers are

often the first persons to whom children will disclose abuse and exploitation. Teachers can help report and refer such cases in order to prevent further abuse and provide necessary health care or psychosocial support. Early warning signs of violence and abuse may include absences, disappearances or dropping out of school.

Most teachers show the girls and boys in their classes the same protective care they show their own children or siblings. But there are cases of teachers harassing girls or boys and violating children's rights. Schools must have a zero tolerance policy for such harassment or violence by teachers against girls or boys. Policies should be in place and enforced so that teachers who violate children will be prosecuted and expelled from teaching, not simply transferred to another school as occurs in some countries.

## FEMALE CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

Most teachers in schools for refugees in Guinea and Sierra Leone are men, as few women have completed higher teacher education. To address concerns of gender violence against girls in the schools, the International Rescue Committee recruited and trained female classroom assistants to work alongside male teachers in some refugee school classrooms in these countries. An evaluation of this pilot project found that the presence of the classroom assistants led to significant decreases in pregnancies and dropouts and increases in girls' attendance and academic achievement. In addition, girls – and boys, too – reported that they felt more comfortable in their classrooms. The students also said they were pleased that the classroom assistants were reaching out beyond schools and following up in homes.

**Source:** The International Rescue Committee, *Classroom Assistant Professional Development Training Manual*, July 2003.

## 5.6.2 Children's participation

Active participation is important for children, teachers and the community in child-friendly schools. For children, participation may involve peer learning, various other child-to-child initiatives, school clubs (health or sport clubs), student government or children's school parliaments. Such activities can help children shape the teaching-learning process and encourage them to take home and share messages on good practices related to health, safety, nutrition and so forth.

How children spend their time in and out of school is important in determining their safety and protection. Rather than allowing unstructured time to possibly result in negative or dangerous behaviour, children's free time in school can be spent on constructive activities. Children and teachers can routinely take 'safety walks' around the school during free time to see what needs to be fixed and cleaned. They can do their part in maintaining and improving the school environment.

Worldwide, governments define the standard time for teaching specific primary-level material at "usually 850–1,000 instructional hours or 180–220 days per school year." In poor countries, however, teaching time is often lower because of a "40 per cent loss in instructional time and reduced learning outcomes" due to overcrowded conditions and split shifts (Abadzi, 2007). In Latin America, studies have shown that public school students received between 550 and 800 hours of

class time compared to an estimated 1,000 hours for private school students, and also that the content was "not connected to the reality of the students" (Portillo, 1999). A simple calculation reveals that in the best cases, only an estimated 11 per cent of a primary schoolchild's life involves school-based learning. This translates into children having a significant amount of additional hours for other learning and participatory activities.<sup>2</sup>

### ETHIOPIA: GIRLS' EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Communities in Ethiopia have established Girls' Education Advisory Committees (GEACs) to increase girls' access to education of a high standard. GEACs have organized girls' clubs that are safe places for girls to talk, where they are encouraged to speak about problems of harassment and abuse and to report those problems to the committees. Other GEAC activities include disciplinary committees to hold teachers accountable, 'police' to protect girls on their way to and from school, separate latrines for girls, promoting the use of female teachers, training boys and girls on how to treat each other respectfully, counselling girls and enlisting religious and clan leaders to stop abductions and child marriages.

As a result, in one primary school, 217 girls were added to the rolls in 2003 and the drop-out rate of girls fell from 57 per cent to 19 per cent.

**Source:** World Report on Violence against Children, United Nations, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> This calculation is a rough estimate based on dividing the estimated number of instructional hours per year by the total number of hours in a year.

At the most basic level, children need to be free to speak about child protection concerns that affect them or others. Teachers and school personnel need to listen to girls and boys to be aware of the violence they experience. Systems must be set up that take children's voices into account and involve girls and boys in developing remedies to violent or potentially violent environments. Children should learn how to protect themselves and be involved in formulating appropriate school rules and disciplinary measures for infractions, including alternatives to corporal punishment.

For children to be less vulnerable, girls and boys need to know their right to be free from abuse and need to be warned of the dangers of trafficking, sexual exploitation and other threats to their safety. A child who knows about these risks will less likely fall victim to abuse.

Beyond the school level, child-friendly schools can influence decision-making and be agents of change within society. In a protective environment, teachers and children are free to discuss issues of child marriage or child labour and thus contribute to changes in norms and practices regarding violence and child abuse. Schools can have an impact on gender relationships in the society by ensuring that schools are safe and that girls have good

role models, such as senior female teachers and female head teachers.

During a humanitarian crisis, the social and political context is likely to be threatened or destroyed. Innovative strategies are needed in these circumstances to guide and support adolescents in contributing to community life and the protection of younger children. Young people (10 to 24 years old) and their organizations should be considered key partners during crisis and post-crisis times. In Colombia, the Return to Happiness programme invites adolescents to provide psychosocial support to younger children through play therapy. Colombian refugee communities across the border in Panama have also implemented the project in child-friendly spaces inside the camps. (See Box, page 27.)

Participation of children and adolescents in school and community life is the most effective way to develop their potential and increase their protection, especially during times of conflict and crisis. Young people need the opportunity to express themselves and contribute their opinions and ideas to the social dialogue. This builds self-esteem and helps them find their role in the community. Further, children and adolescents infuse the social agenda with creativity, energy and resourcefulness.

## COLOMBIA: RETURN TO HAPPINESS

In the mid-1990s, in the context of the prolonged civil war that was tearing the country apart and causing massive population displacements, the Return to Happiness programme was introduced in Colombia to provide urgent psychological support to children affected by violence. A crucial component enabled families and communities to take part in the recovery process. Adolescent volunteers, supervised by teachers, were central to this endeavour. Young volunteers were trained in 'play therapy' and taught how to encourage the trust and hope of younger children through games, art, puppetry, song and storytelling. A 'knapsack of dreams' was prepared that included handmade materials, such as rag dolls, puppets, wooden toys, books and songs. Parents, teachers, church volunteers, health workers and community leaders assisted as supervisors or trainers. The programme enriched children's lives and created safer, more supportive families and communities, even in the midst of war.



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## MALI: CHILD PARTICIPATION THROUGH CHILDREN'S GOVERNMENTS

A major challenge for primary schools in Mali is access. In 2004–2005, the gross enrolment rate was 73 per cent, with a 21 point gap between girls and boys. Completing the school cycle is also an uphill climb. A poor, rural girl, for instance, has a 17 per cent chance of completing Grade 6. A third challenge is reinforcing classroom knowledge and life skills, since 75 per cent of Mali's teachers are contract employees with minimal training and whose teaching methods remain traditional and non-engaging.

For children, other issues are important as well: improving school conditions, especially in areas of hygiene, health and protection; learning about and practising equality between boys and girls; lowering the absentee and drop-out rates. Anchoring life skills, such as taking initiative, personal responsibility, helping others, self-esteem and citizenship, is also important.

Child government helps provide concrete responses to these challenges by enabling children to take active roles in the life and management of their schools. After a two-month training course on child rights, child-friendly and girl-friendly schools, children analyse their school. They choose areas in need of attention, form committees for each identified problem area and elect ministers, half of whom are girls. The committees are made up of students from all grades, and each committee develops its own set of activities and puts it into practice. The child government meets regularly with teaching staff and frequently with the parent association. A new child government is formed every year.

Child government is a teaching tool. Children's participation through role playing promotes change in living conditions and behaviours in school. The student government is a learning exercise on such interdisciplinary issues as education, health and protection; with teachers' support, students are the actors and decision makers. Regional teams of school counsellors train teachers in the schools, who in turn train their students. A child government guide adapted for children was provided to students and teachers. By October 2005, 1,500 out of approximately 7,000 schools in Mali had a child government. Today, it has become a nationally approved strategy of the Ministry of Education.

In May and June 2005, an evaluation of child governments in 45 schools found that there was gender parity in general, but that tasks were conducted and tested in an unequal manner. In the child government context, children were easily capable of expressing themselves. Enabling girls to make their voices heard and take on more responsibility has had a positive effect on the psychology and behaviour of all children. Students developed new competencies, in particular relating to health and hygiene (managing drinking water and washing hands, for example) as well as in educational and school support activities. These attitudes reinforced student groups and also facilitated communication between students and teachers.

Several areas were found to be needing improvement. Child government initiatives were not correctly or sufficiently implemented by teachers within the curriculum to reinforce students' learning and life skills. Teachers and school staff together needed to become more involved in students' initiatives so that they could provide teaching and technical support to the students. Training also needed to be redirected to focus on pedagogic aspects and the role of the teacher.

Despite these shortcomings, child governments have allowed children to become aware of their rights and learn that these rights have practical implications for themselves, their schools and their communities.

### 5.6.3 Protective aspects of the curriculum

The curriculum in a child-friendly school must be well designed and well implemented. The children entering the school should be confident that they will acquire basic tools for learning and a range of knowledge and skills in various subjects that enables them to know about, participate in and contribute to their community and society. The skills-building curriculum should include critical information on nutrition and health, water and sanitation, environmental education for sustainable development, climate change adaptation and ways to deal with HIV and AIDS. Students should also participate in peace education within a non-discriminatory school culture.

A curriculum dedicated to Learning Plus helps countries tackle major challenges such as HIV and AIDS. (See Box below.) Interventions for prevention, protection, care and support of children in schools require various government ministries to



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#### LESOTHO: FOCUS ON HIV AND AIDS, SCALING UP AND INTERSECTORAL COOPERATION

The development of child-friendly schools in Lesotho is undertaken within a broader vision of access and completion of quality education for all children. The overall goal is to break the cycle of deprivation, poverty, discrimination and exclusion. With adult HIV-prevalence at almost 30 per cent, HIV and AIDS awareness is of particular importance, especially for children and young adults, who make up the highest proportion of new infections. Therefore, mainstreaming HIV and AIDS awareness, life skills and protection issues within schools and learning opportunities is a specific feature of the child-friendly school framework in Lesotho. Important efforts for scaling up these activities are under way. The National Curriculum and Development Centre is reviewing and revising the national curriculum to ensure it is HIV- and AIDS-responsive, gender-sensitive and life skills-based, and it is collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to formulate a comprehensive, holistic school health policy.

work together to ensure that children have access to essential services.

Life skills curricula enable children to develop listening and speaking skills, communication and negotiation skills, assertiveness and empathy. They learn self-protection, ways to recognize perilous situations, cope with and solve problems, make decisions and develop self-awareness and self-esteem.

When life skills include human rights education, children come to understand the nature of basic rights as set forth in the CRC and to apply human rights standards to real situations, from interpersonal to global levels. Children begin to think critically, grappling with dilemmas presented when people's rights come into conflict, such as in disputes caused by safe water scarcity or other environmental problems. Two other life skills components with implications for the curriculum and human rights are non-discriminatory education and peace education.

Non-discriminatory education challenges children's stereotypes of groups of people based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability and other characteristics. It aims to prevent children from stigmatizing particular groups and end the pernicious effects of stigmatization on those ostracized groups. For example, if children from one ethnic group hear that children from another group are dirty or lazy, they may believe the rumours without questioning. Additionally, marginalized groups may internalize the stereotypes.

In non-discriminatory education, children confront stereotypes as they learn to understand, accept and appreciate cultural, class, gender and

ability differences. They learn to ask questions about the knowledge passed on to them by books, the media, adults and other children. For example, if a science or mathematics textbook shows mostly pictures of men, children will learn to ask routinely, "Where are the women?" They will learn to challenge the false belief that girls and women cannot perform well in mathematics and science or that boys cannot do certain handicrafts. Finally, teachers and students openly explore issues of discrimination and the denial of human rights in the context of the underlying power structures that create inequality within a society.

In peace education, girls and boys learn how to avoid conflict and how to mediate and resolve conflicts. They learn to understand and challenge images of others as 'the enemy' presented in books, television and other media. Students begin to examine the causes of conflict, the relative merits of cooperation and competition and the place of trust within positive interpersonal relationships. The peace education curriculum pays attention to interpersonal violence, such as child abuse, bullying and harassment, which typically involve both direct and indirect violence including psychological violence.

Peace-building and conflict-resolution skills can be relevant and useful when such resources as water, food and household energy are scarce. Additionally, peace education provides information about telephone hotlines, medical care and other services for victims of abuse, and about the risks of exploitation and trafficking.

Since the school day is short and topics are many, teachers and those

who set national curriculum timetables must find ways to integrate these essential life skills into the curriculum along with health, nutrition, peace-building and non-discrimination. Time must be set aside for specific lessons in these areas.

In emergency situations, standard curriculum practices may be disrupted and key teaching and learning materials may be lost. In conflict or post-conflict situations, the curriculum may no longer appear acceptable or relevant for the changing circumstances. This frequently creates an opportunity to develop a different curriculum, better adapted to the new situation and local needs. In

constructing this new curriculum, the emergency situation is considered. A curriculum that integrates healing activities, such as dance, storytelling and music, not only affects children's ability to learn but also their capacity to heal and recover from the post-traumatic stress of being a victim or perpetrator of violence. Throughout an emergency, it is important for teachers and community workers to organize recreational opportunities for children.

### BATIK PAINTING IN THAILAND: A LIFE RESTORED THROUGH ART

After narrowly escaping death in the tsunami that struck his home on Thailand's Phi Phi Island on 26 December 2004, Songklod took solace in batik painting, a healing form of art in which the bright colors he splashes on the cloth canvases help blot out bad memories.

"I was depressed after the tsunami about losing my house and seeing my parents lose their jobs," says Songklod, a shy 14-year-old. "Batik painting helps cheer me up, calm me down and improve my concentration."

UNICEF and the Thailand Ministry of Education's Non-Formal Education Department introduced batik painting to promote psychosocial recovery for children at the Nong Kok temporary shelter, home to more than 70 households from the island.

The batik centre has slowly grown into a small community business from which children can earn income to help their families. Paintings made at the centre

are sold for 100 to 1,000 baht (US\$2.50 to US\$25).

Naturally talented, Songklod is one of the centre's most promising painters. He is pleased that he can earn money to help his family while his father looks for work. The money also makes it possible for him to go to school, which his family could not afford before the tsunami.

"It's so good to go back to school where I have friends and can practice drawing and painting during the art class. My art teacher always gives me tips and new techniques to improve my painting skills," he says.

When asked about his plans, the usually reticent Songklod eagerly explains: "I want to continue doing batik painting. I really enjoy it. And I hope one day to open a batik shop in Krabi." In the meantime, he enjoys going to school and painting batik – two opportunities that came his way after the tsunami.

**Source:** Rodraksa, Natthinee, *Building Back Better*, UNICEF, 2005.

### 5.6.4 Partnerships with the community

All stakeholders are needed to support and sustain a protective environment. The relationship between the school and the community is reciprocal. For instance, child-friendly school students bring lessons of daily care and health, hygiene and environmental education to their families and communities. Families and communities in turn provide financial and other support to maintain and repair the school facilities. Teachers, parents and community members are actively involved in the planning and implementation of educational monitoring and evaluation via parent-teacher associations and other groups. In child-friendly schools, families

and community members participate in school activities, after-school programmes and curricula preparation.

One challenge in developing a child-friendly school is violence prevention. Violence as defined by some families, communities and countries is considered acceptable behaviour in other areas. For example, corporal punishment – beatings, canings, other physical punishment – has been banned in some countries, while many countries still consider it to be an essential part of school discipline.

By bringing girls, boys, families, teachers and community members into the discussions, child protection issues – such as corporal punishment, sexual abuse, early marriage, child



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labour and other forms of exploitation – can be brought to the fore. Schools can influence attitudes and behaviours and can help break the silence around sensitive topics. By advocating for child rights and protection, school officials, teachers, parents and children can become catalysts for positive change in the lives of individual children, in communities and within society as a whole.

Child-friendly schools work with families, communities, and medical and legal professionals to support children in need of special protection and help parents understand and respect children's rights. At the community level, health workers, teachers, police, social workers and others must be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to identify and respond to child protection problems.

### 5.6.5 Monitoring and evaluation in protective environments

A healthy, safe, protective environment for children requires an effective monitoring system that tracks children's health and health care, monitors school safety records, registers the incidence and nature of child abuse and has informed and strategic responses. The monitoring and evaluation system is more effective when it is participatory and locally based. Schools can monitor children's absence or disappearance from school and can intervene early if, for instance, a child enters the labour force. Schools can specifically monitor girls' attendance and drop-out rates, which often are influenced by child marriage or female genital mutilation/cutting.

#### PHILIPPINES: MONITORING PUPILS THROUGH STUDENT PROFILES

In Francisco Benitez Elementary School, a public school in a poor, congested community in the heart of the Tondo district of Manila, teachers are constantly concerned about students who are absent, at risk of failing, involved in gang wars or unruly, rebellious and disruptive in behaviour. Student profiling, an innovative activity that is part of the child-friendly school approach, revealed to teachers that the students encountering difficulties often came from families facing extreme poverty and other difficult situations. Moreover, most of the students who were frequently absent and at risk of failing worked in the evening as vendors and scavengers. Likewise, they found that a number of the children having problems in school were victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.

With this knowledge came an understanding and resolve to work with parents, communities, social workers and lawyers to help children at risk. As a result, child abuse cases were filed in court; abused children were referred to social workers for psychosocial counselling; and working students were placed in afternoon sessions and provided with tutorial classes so they were able to complete the school year and move on to the next higher grade. Teachers, on the other hand, became more sensitive and responsive to students manifesting attitudinal and behavioural problems. One teacher commented, "Now I know that there is no such thing as a problem child – only a child with a problem."

For further details, see <[www.unicef.org/teachers/forum/0302.htm](http://www.unicef.org/teachers/forum/0302.htm)>.

In emergency situations, the government, UNICEF and other agencies monitor educational activities run by governments and non-governmental organizations as implementing partners. Monitoring and evaluation may involve working with partners to develop simple ways of collecting and updating data on children in and out of school or identifying teachers and other resources who can contribute to the re-establishment and further development of primary and secondary education. Soon

after classes are up and running, partners review how programme interventions are progressing and identify areas for improvement.

Normal monitoring criteria may not apply in an emergency. Class sizes can be exceptionally large and lessons may not be given in a traditional classroom setting. But children learn, and monitoring continues to be important for both education quality and community-building around the educational process.

## 5.7 CHILD-FRIENDLY EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

Violence is an overwhelming psychosocial blow to children and families. The social, psychological, moral and emotional losses suffered, the unrelenting fear of loss and the actual death of parents and caregivers can be as damaging as not having sufficient food, water and health care. One of the most urgent tasks when conflicts loom is finding ways to protect children. Protection in this sense means not only defending children against physical aggression, but also ensuring that their full range of rights and needs is respected and fulfilled.

The strategy UNICEF and its partners use to ease trauma and bolster children's well-being in unstable conditions is to establish safe and protective learning environments. In an emergency, the child-friendly space approach offers a protective environment by engaging various sectors and charging them with the

main objective of providing children with protection and access to basic services. Based on the whole-child approach of the CRC, child-friendly spaces integrate all the components that contribute to the protection and fulfilment of a child's rights.

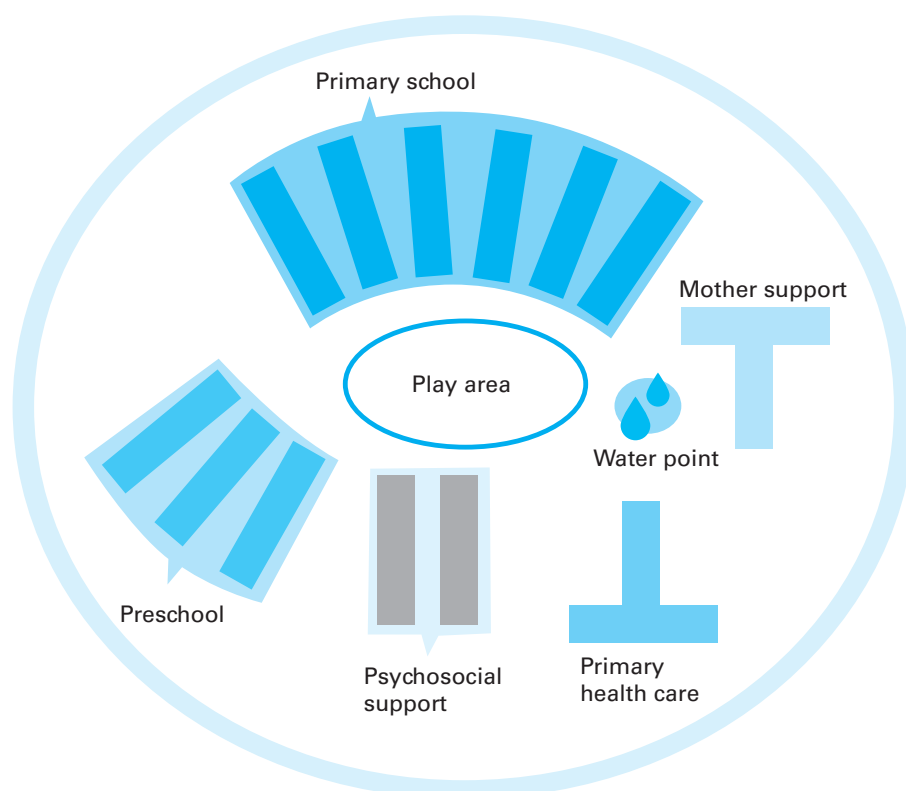
The child-friendly space approach integrates health services, primary education, childcare, nutrition, psychosocial development, environmental education and structured recreation in a protective environment that is both family-focused and community-based. (See diagram, page 35.) The centres have programmes for preschool children, primary-school-age children, youth and parents.

A key to the success of the child-friendly space approach is that children, their families and their communities are all partners in planning camp and community

## TURKEY: RESPONSE TO A CATASTROPHE

In response to the massive earthquake that struck the Marmara region of Turkey in 1999, the child-friendly school/environment initiative was developed as an integrated package including health and nutrition, hygiene, water and sanitation services, early childcare and mother support, primary education and recreation activities, and psychosocial support and youth activities. A set of minimum standards was established based on average tent camp populations. Education components included temporary tent facilities, educational kits and materials, including special needs kits, teacher-support activities and psychosocial training support. Early childhood activities and youth activities were also included. The reactivation of the school system emerged as an effective channel for other relief activities, with the school system used to distribute nutritional supplements, offer psychosocial support, and help register and locate survivors.

### EXAMPLE OF CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Minimum standards per 1,500 population: primary schooling space, 300 square metres; preschool space, 150 square metres; primary-health-care space, 110 square metres; mother support space, 110 square metres; psychosocial support space, 110 square metres.

activities, so planning itself becomes a healing activity. Child-friendly spaces also focus on empowering families and communities worn down physically and emotionally by armed conflicts or natural disasters and facing increased poverty. Identifying and training teachers from within the displaced population motivates refugee and displaced communities to be committed to child protection, especially for children without family support. Those living without caregivers are then integrated into communities instead of being placed in institutional care.

Although most children will never have to live through a natural or human-made disaster, all schools need to have emergency preparedness plans. As schools develop such plans, child-friendly dimensions must be in the forefront.



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### IRAN: BAM EARTHQUAKE

On 26 December 2003, a devastating earthquake killed 30 per cent of Bam district's 32,443 schoolchildren and 33 per cent of their 3,400 teachers. The earthquake destroyed 67 of 131 schools, and many of those remaining were damaged beyond repair. The Ministry of Education, UNICEF and partner organizations responded by setting up temporary learning spaces and supporting the reopening of schools and recreational activities. They provided learning and teaching materials, recreational items, school office equipment and school furniture, mobile libraries, psychosocial support for teachers, psychoeducation and group counselling for children, teacher training on how to use new items and librarian training. To support the resumption of quality education, they introduced the child-friendly school concept and established community services. Library books for primary and lower secondary school were reviewed, and a catalogue of culturally appropriate and relevant books was developed. Special emphasis was given to girls, who are more likely victims of sexual violence, abuse and economic exploitation. (Education is not perceived as a priority for girls when urgent basic needs must be met. In fact, forced and early marriage is sometimes seen as a way of protecting girls, and they often cannot voice their fear and insecurity or share their hopes and feelings.) As a result of these interventions, 14,949 primary and lower secondary schoolchildren registered and resumed school in the 2004 school year.



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