



Sudan, 2006, Children outside their classroom at Comboni Primary School in Rumbek, in Southern Sudan.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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“To avoid violence we need to be listened to, we need economic, work and educational opportunities. We need the chance to improve our quality of life and have the right to live in a violence free environment.”

Adolescent boys, Latin America¹

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INTRODUCTION

Children spend more time in the care of adults in pre-schools, schools, vocational training centres and other places of learning than they do anywhere else outside of their homes. Like parents, the adults who oversee, manage and staff these places have a duty to provide safe and nurturing environments that support and promote children’s education and development. They also have a duty to make sure such development prepares children for life as responsible adults, guided by values of non-violence, gender equality, non-discrimination, tolerance and mutual respect. These are the values that Governments embrace when they ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international human rights conventions, along with obligations to protect children from all forms of violence, in schools and elsewhere, including providing a clear framework of law prohibiting and deterring all forms of violence, and taking all other necessary measures to prevent violence.

Violence in schools can be prevented and must not be tolerated. The reality for many millions of children is that schools (used hereafter as the generic term for all education settings for children) expose them to violence and, in so doing, children are denied of their rights, including to education. In all of the Regional Consultations conducted for the Study, and in many of the reports received, children attested to the impact of violence on their ability to get to and from school, to learn effectively while in school, and to remain in school long enough to reap the benefits of education.^{1,2,3}

The public image of violence in schools has been coloured by the media’s focus on extreme events, such as school shootings; the targeting of schools for attacks and mass kidnappings. However, such events are very rare. More common are forms of violence that go unreported and may be so tolerated and perhaps so actively condoned by the public and by official policy and law that they are not deemed worthy of study, discussion or debate.

Where the social and physical environment of the community is hostile, the school environment is unlikely to be spared. The levels and patterns of violence in schools often reflect the levels and patterns of violence in countries, communities and families. These, in turn, reflect prevailing political and socio-economic conditions, social attitudes, cultural traditions and values, and laws and law enforcement. Where it is legal, considered acceptable and perhaps even commendable for men to control women, and the wealthy or privileged to control the poor and disadvantaged, and parents to control children through violence and the threat of violence, then it is likely to be legal, considered acceptable and perhaps even commendable for both adults and children to use similar methods in schools.^{4,5,6} By being victims, perpetrators and witnesses of violence, children learn that violence is an acceptable way for the strong and aggressive to get what they want from the comparatively weak, passive or peaceful.

Schools are uniquely placed to break the patterns of violence by giving children, their parents and communities the knowledge and skills to communicate, negotiate and resolve conflicts in more constructive ways. However, patterns of violence are often entrenched in school culture, sometimes as a matter of policy supported and promoted by certain theories about childhood development and learning.

Whether perpetrated by adults or children, almost all violence in schools reflects a ‘hidden curriculum’ that promotes gender inequality and stereotyping. For example, boys taunt each other about their lack of masculinity and harass girls with verbal and physical gestures that are sexual in nature. Corporal punishment of boys is more frequent and harsh than corporal punishment of girls. Sexual aggression by male teachers and boys is often dismissed as ‘just boys being boys’, while girls are blamed for ‘asking for it’. The implicit mes-

sages are that males should be tough, generally and sexually assertive and ready for life in a rough-and-tumble world but females should be passive, sheltered, and unassertive, particularly sexually. These stereotypes often make schools unsafe and uncomfortable for girls and are prominent among the reasons why, in some countries girls, particularly during adolescence, are less likely to attend school than adolescent boys.^{7,8,9}

Ensuring access to quality education for all children is integral to the Millennium Development Goals, and the related efforts detailed in the Dakar Framework for Action.^{10,11,12} To do this, schools must provide a safe and welcoming environment for girls and boys, which is free of the threat of violence (see box).

EDUCATION FOR ALL AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In April 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, adopted the Dakar Framework for Action to achieve six Education for All (EFA) goals.^{13,14,15} In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration established two of the EFA goals as being two of the eight Millennium Development Goals. Goal 2 states that, by 2015, all children should have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality. Goal 3 is to, by 2005, achieve gender equality in primary and secondary education and, by 2015, achieve gender equality in all levels of education. These two goals constitute a specific timetable for achieving “the right of the child to education ... progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity” required by the CRC.

HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

Reflecting article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights which enshrines the right of everyone to education, article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognises “the right of the child to education ... with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.” The first paragraph of article 28 lists States parties’ obligations, which include making primary education compulsory and free for all, encouraging the development of different forms of secondary education that will be free or financially assisted in case of need, and making higher education accessible to all on the basis of their capacity. Article 28 (2) states that: “States parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.” Conformity with the CRC requires, for example, protecting the child against “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” (article 19) and from “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (article 37).

Article 29 of the CRC addresses the aims of the child’s education. Paragraph 29 (1.b) calls for “development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” and paragraph 29 (1.d) calls for “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.” In 2001, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued General Comment No. 1 on the aims of education (CRC/GC/2001/1), emphasising that the education process itself should be based on and promote the rights guaranteed by the Convention. This means that States parties should take measures to ensure that all schools respect, for example, the child’s rights to non-discrimination (article 2), to freedom of expression (article 13), and to protection from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation (article 34). States must also ensure that children are fully protected from exposure to bullying and other forms of violence by other students. The Committee has noted that failure to protect students from such forms of violence could deny children their right to education (articles 28 and 29).¹⁶

“I have seen the harsh behaviour of teachers in schools and colleges. Every day there are severe punishments by teachers, so we remain very afraid in class. The teacher often makes a student stand up in class, scolds him with ugly words and teases him for being naughty or for not learning the lessons. It is very shameful as well as painful.”

Boy, 17, South and Central Asia, 2005¹¹

HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

General Comment No. 1 also states that: “...Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. Thus, for example, education must be provided in a way that respects the inherent dignity of the child, enables the child to express his or her views freely in accordance with article 12(1) and to participate in school life. Education must also be provided in a way that respects the strict limits on discipline reflected in article 28(2) and promotes non-violence in school. The Committee has repeatedly made clear in its concluding observations that the use of corporal punishment does not respect the inherent dignity of the child nor the strict limits on school discipline...”¹⁷

The Committee has reflected this interpretation in its concluding observations on States parties’ reports under the CRC, recommending that they should prohibit all corporal punishment. In June 2006 the Committee adopted its General Comment No. 8 on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment (articles 19, 28(2) and 37, inter alia; CRC/C/GC/8). The Committee states that the purpose of the General Comment is “to highlight the obligation of all States parties to move quickly to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment and all other cruel or degrading forms of punishment of children and to outline the legislative and other awareness-raising and educational measures that States must take.”

The Committee comments: “Addressing the widespread acceptance or tolerance of corporal punishment of children and eliminating it, in the family, schools and other settings, is not only an obligation of States parties under the CRC. It is also a key strategy for reducing and preventing all forms of violence in societies.”¹⁸



PERU, 2002, Two boys do arithmetic using calculators and coloured blocks in a school in the village of Los Angeles in the north-eastern department of San Martín in the Amazon.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Historically, many cultures have had hierarchical social structures where those higher up have controlled those lower down through violence and threat of violence. These structures and practices have extended to families and the relations between men and women and between parents and their children. They have also extended to schools and the relations between school staff and children.

In both families and schools, corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment have been widely favoured methods of ‘discipline’ perceived as ‘taming’ the unruly child, training the presumptuous child to take his or her ‘proper place’ in the social

order, and hardening the unseasoned child to the difficult, brutal and abrasive world. In Europe and North America, the idea of universal education, paid for by the State or subsidised by the State, to equip children for the working world, for their civic and family responsibilities and for their personal fulfilment did not emerge until the mid-19th century, when the industrial revolution was well advanced. From then until well into the 20th century, beating, humiliation and isolation were routinely used as methods of teaching and discipline.

Since the 1990s, the global economy and the economies of many nations have been experiencing unprecedented rates of expansion. The industrialised nations have moved into an era where knowledge-based industries are predominant and where economies benefit from all the workers they can get, *if* those workers are well-educated and flexible, ready to absorb new knowledge, adjust to new technology, move from job to job and place to place, and work with people of many different backgrounds. It is now widely recognised that everyone loses when people are excluded on the basis of gender, race, religious belief and other factors unrelated to their capability and potential. It is also widely recognised that the free-enquiry-and-personal-growth model is one that best serves everyone’s interests and that it requires safe and nurturing school environments.

“The teacher slapped the students that skipped his lesson because they wanted to go to the library to do some research. The noise was really loud in the corridor. I witnessed the scene and was scared. I still cannot forget the sound of the slaps on their face.”

Student, 16, Indian Ocean subregion, 2006^{III}

There are still countries where many leaders, educators and parents believe that education which teaches children to question and think for themselves brings children into conflict with the established customs upon which the family and community have been based for generations.¹⁹

Change in disciplinary practices in schools has been especially slow in some countries where resources for education are severely stretched at the same time as education systems are being asked to absorb ever-increasing numbers of school-goers. Laws are gradually improving²⁰ but even where laws ban corporal punishment they are not always effectively enforced and often not initially supported by prevailing social attitudes. Prohibition of corporal punishment needs to be accompanied by effective initial and in-service training in behaviour management and school organisation which respect children’s rights.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

While the status of every country’s progress toward abolition of corporal punishment in homes, schools and penal systems has been mapped, research and analysis pertaining to other forms of violence in schools is not nearly so far advanced.²¹ Most studies have looked at one or, at most, two forms of school violence and not at the multiple dimensions of that violence and the links between school violence and phenomena outside of schools, such as violence in families and society as a whole.

FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

The forms of violence found in schools are both physical and psychological, and usually occur together. Forms perpetrated by teachers and other school staff, with or without the overt or tacit approval of education ministries and other authorities that oversee schools include corporal punishment and other cruel and humiliating forms of punishment or treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, and bullying.

Forms of violence perpetrated by children include bullying, sexual and gender-based violence, schoolyard fighting, gang violence, and assault with weapons. Technology provides a new medium for bullying using the Internet and mobile phones, and has given rise to new terms such as ‘cyber-bully’ and ‘cyber-bullying’.

Physical and psychological punishment

The Committee on the Rights of the Child defines ‘corporal’ or ‘physical’ punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (‘smacking’, ‘slapping’, ‘spanking’) children, with the hand or with an implement. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices).²²

“She [the teacher] knows she is doing wrong, but she feels impunity. She will go unpunished and she knows this.”

Girl, 15, Europe, 2005^{IV}

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In the view of the Committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading. In addition to the physical aspects defined above, there are many other non-physical forms of punishment which are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the CRC. These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child. Corporal punishment, and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment used by school heads and teachers, were frequently brought to the attention of the Study by children during all nine Regional Consultations. The Children’s Consultation in Slovenia headed its list of messages to be taken forward to the Europe and Central Asia Regional Consultation with: “That there should be a prohibition of every kind of violence that happens in schools in every country and ... schools should be happy places in which children are eager to learn.”²³ Similar messages came from children all over the world.

The key set of studies on corporal punishment²⁴ and a series of regional reports developed for the Study²⁵ demonstrate a clear trend away from corporal punishment in schools in all regions, most notably in Europe. Of the 223 States and dependent territories tracked by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 106 now have laws banning corporal punishment in all schools and another seven have laws banning it in some parts of the country, for example where provinces of a federal State have their own laws, or in some schools, such as only those funded by the State.²⁶ However, laws banning corporal punishment are often not effectively enforced,

even in countries such as China where they have been in place for many years.²⁷ In Cameroon, a 1998 law bans corporal punishment in schools but a study covering four of Cameroon’s provinces, published two years after the ban, found teachers made no secret of using it for “cheekiness, disobedience and academic mistakes” and 97% of students reported that they had been physically punished.²⁸ The consequences of non-enforcement can be serious.

Other forms of cruel or degrading punishment, not involving physical violence, have been much less studied. The Children’s Consultations informing the Study revealed that other forms of humiliation are very much on the minds of children and lodged in the minds of many adults with painful memories of how they or their classmates were humiliated by the words and actions of school heads and teachers.

Cases have been reported of the use of corporal punishment for reasons entirely beyond a child’s control, such as failure of parents to pay school fees,²⁹ and also for academic failure or to correct misbehaviour. In many situations, it is not easy to disentangle these two motivations. Studies in Egypt,³⁰ Lesotho³¹ and Togo,³² and from Indian Ocean Island nations³³ show that corporal punishment is widely used to punish unsatisfactory academic performance, as elsewhere. Studies of seven Middle Eastern and North African countries reported that one-third of students said they had been caned because their class or school had not done well on examinations.³⁴ Collective punishment for unsatisfactory performance of a whole class or whole school was also commonly reported.

Links to discrimination and gender-based violence

There is evidence to suggest that corporal punishment in schools is sometimes administered with greater severity or frequency to children from groups that are subject to stigma and discrimination in the whole of society. In India, the 1998 Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) found that higher caste teachers were inclined to humiliate children from *Dalit* ('untouchables', or the lowest of the four castes) and other lower castes by labelling them as dull and incapable of being educated.³⁵ In the 23 states of the USA where corporal punishment in schools is still lawful, African-American children are more often victims than others.³⁶ Refugee children in Angola, Zambia and South Africa also feel singled out for corporal punishment.³⁷

In general, boys experience more frequent and more severe corporal punishment than girls but girls are far from immune. Surveys have found that in Egypt, 80% of schoolboys and 67% of schoolgirls had experienced corporal punishment in schools; in Barbados, 95% of interviewed boys and 92% of interviewed girls said they had experienced caning or flogging in school.³⁸ A survey covering 3,577 students in six provinces of China found that 17.5% had experienced one or more forms of corporal punishment by teachers before they were 16 years old; 15% had been hit, kicked or otherwise punished without the use of an object; 7% had been beaten with an object; 0.4% had been locked up in a small place, or tied up with ropes or chains; 0.1% had been choked,

burned or stabbed. The percentage of male students (26.9%) who had experienced one or more of those forms was more than 2.5 times the percentage of female students (10.1%) who had done so.³⁹

School heads and teachers may apply corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment in different ways, according to the sex of the child, and by so doing convey messages about what is expected of children and adults of each sex. In Botswana, for example, no male teacher but the head teacher can administer corporal punishment to a girl; and in primary schools, boys can be beaten on the buttocks but girls only on the backs of their calves and palms of their hands. Boys and girls may also be punished for different misdemeanours so that, for example, a boy might be punished for failure to perform an athletic feat in a physical education class whereas a girl might be punished for rowdy and 'unladylike behaviour' that might be forgiven in a boy. The fact that there are explicit or implicit gender policies applying to corporal punishment suggests that any strategies to eliminate corporal punishment should address gender differences, too.⁴⁰

Sexual and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence stems from gender inequality, stereotypes and socially imposed roles. Sexual violence, including sexual harassment towards girls may be motivated by the desire to punish or humiliate girls because of their sex or sexuality, or by sexual interest and bravado. It also serves to intimidate, humiliate and diminish girls. This is demonstrated by

“Violence against children has incalculable costs to present and future generations and it undermines human development. We recognize that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is linked to the status of women.”

The African Declaration on Violence against Girls, 2006^v

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the widespread practice of blaming girls who are victims of rape, and that where gender discrimination is an unquestioned norm, blaming girls may extend to almost any kind of sexual harassment, assault or exploitation.

Studies suggest that sexual harassment of schoolgirls is common throughout the world, to varying degrees by teachers themselves as well as by students, and that it may be particularly common and extreme in places where other forms of school violence are also prevalent.^{41,42,43,44,45} Teachers often see the sexual harassment among students – most often girls – as a normal part of school life, and therefore ignore it. Under these circumstances it is difficult for students to report it. In the Middle East, sexual harassment of girls is not commonly reported, perhaps because girls are commonly separated from boys in schools, or also perhaps because girls are reluctant to speak out.

Until recently, there was almost no public discussion of sexual abuse of schoolgirls in Japan and victims rarely came forward. Their shame was profound and they knew that if they talked about what had happened, their reputations would have been tainted for the rest of their lives.⁴⁶ Similar attitudes are still common in many countries. A study in Ethiopia, for example, found that students attributed the sexual harassment of girls to the way the girls dressed and not to boys’ attitudes toward girls.⁴⁷ In West and Central Africa, teachers justified sexual exploitation of female students by saying that their clothes and behaviour were provocative, and that the teachers were far from home and in sexual need.⁴⁸

In Europe and North America, revelation of the widespread sexual abuse of boys by male teachers (often clerics) in church-run schools has only occurred since the 1990s in the presence of better protections against, and systems of, reporting abuse – often decades after the abuse took place. Previously, children who were sexually assaulted or exploited by teachers were too ashamed to tell anyone what had happened, knowing that their stories would not be believed or that, if believed, they would be blamed for attracting the sexual attention of other males. A recent study found that nearly 4,400 priests (4% of all priests ministering during that period) had been accused of sexually abusing nearly 10,700 children, in acts that took place between 1950 and 2002, and that the vast majority of the children were boys.⁴⁹

Harmful cultural stereotypes that demean children because of their sex or their known or suspected sexuality create environments in which children can be abused with impunity, including by adults in positions of trust and authority such as clerics in religious schools. In 2004, Pakistan’s Minister of State for Religious Affairs stunned the nation by reporting that, so far that year, 500 complaints of sexual abuse by clerics in religious schools had been registered and that, in the previous year, 2,000 complaints had been registered, although there had been no successful prosecutions so far.^{50, 51}

HIV and sexual violence

In sub-Saharan African countries, the average rate of HIV prevalence among girls and young women 15 to 24 years old is now three times higher than the average rate among boys and young men of that age.⁵² Sexual violence is increasingly recognised, although still under-studied, as an important factor in these increases.

An analysis of data from the Global School-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS) found that in Namibia, 19% of both boys and girls answered 'yes' when asked if they had "ever been physically forced to have sex." In Swaziland, 9% of boys and 10% of girls said 'yes'; in Uganda, 13% of boys and 25% of girls; in Zambia, 30% of boys and 31% of girls; in Zimbabwe, 11% of boys and 14% of girls.⁵³ In 1999, research based on a sample of 10,000 schoolgirls in Kenya found that one-third were sexually active and that, of those, 40% said their first encounter was forced, usually by a male student.⁵⁴ More recent research in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda found, however, that forced sex and vulnerability to HIV infection were more prevalent among married adolescents than among unmarried adolescents.⁵⁵ In many sub-Saharan African countries, the majority of adolescent girls are not in school and between one-quarter and one-half of them are married, often to much older men.⁵⁶ In Ethiopia, girls often see attendance at school as a way to avoid early and unwanted marriage.⁵⁷

Forced sex is a risk factor for HIV/AIDS. This is a growing concern in the context of schools in Eastern and Southern Africa (as in other

regions), the Regional Consultation held for the Study identified sexual harassment and abuse by students and teachers, usually male, against female students as major problems. Participants of the Consultation attested to cases of teachers promising higher grades in exchange for sex with girls, and also that girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual abuse by teachers or students are often expelled from school. In some countries, marriage of a pregnant girl to her abuser may absolve him of legal responsibility, increasing the risks of forced marriage.

A study conducted by UNICEF found that such sexual abuse was common in all countries of West and Central Africa, and that Ministries of Education were aware of it and considered it to be one of the main reasons why girls drop out of school.⁵⁸ A Human Rights Watch study found that sexual harassment and abuse of girls by teachers and students in South African schools was widespread and that girls were raped in school toilets, empty classrooms, dormitories and hostels.⁵⁹ In a recent survey in Ghana, 6% of schoolgirls said teachers had blackmailed them, threatening to give them lower grades if they refused to have sexual relations. Two-thirds of them had not reported the incidents due to feelings of shame, advice that they should be tolerant, and their belief that no action would be taken against the culprits. A small percentage of boys had experienced sexual harassment, too. Of the boys, 24% admitted they had participated in rape, including gang rape. Of the girls, 14% said they had been raped by boys close to them.⁶⁰

"I took a folder, wrote down dates and times every time I was harassed. I took it down to the principal. He said, 'Son you have too much time on your hands to worry about these folders. I have more important things to do than to worry for what happened two weeks ago'. I told him, 'I wanted to give you an idea of what goes on, the day-to-day harassment. He took the folder away from me and threw it in the trash.'"

Student, North America, bullied for allegedly being gay, 2005^{VI}

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Elsewhere, more general studies into sexual abuse have found that teachers are among those who sexually coerce or abuse children and young people. In one such study, 6% of more than 2,000 college students in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China said they had been abused before they turned 17. Eleven was the average age at which the abuse had occurred and teachers were the abusers in 7% of all cases, although family members or family friends were more commonly identified as abusers.⁶¹ A UNICEF study covering Nepal found that 9% of children had experienced severe sexual abuse (kissing of sensitive parts, oral sex and penetration), and that 18% of the perpetrators were teachers.⁶² In a submission to this Study, the International Rescue Committee reported that sexual abuse against girls is a significant problem in refugee schools where the teachers are male.⁶³ The Regional Consultation in Latin America reported that girls in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama Nicaragua experience sexual coercion from teachers, sometimes with threats that their grades will suffer if they do not cooperate.⁶⁴

On the positive side, the Regional Consultation in Eastern and Southern Africa found that countries are responding with changes in law, policy and practice. In South Africa and Zambia, for example, 'defilement' of under-age girls is treated as a serious offence by courts of law, and may result in sentences of up to life imprisonment, while pregnant girls are given a leave of absence from school.⁶⁵

Bullying

Since the 1970s, there has been growing recognition of the threat posed by bullying in

schools to children's well-being, and a increasing body of literature examining its causes, prevalence and impacts on both victims and perpetrators.^{66,67} Although bullying is a worldwide problem, the literature pertains mostly to the industrialised world. Emerging from Scandinavia in the 1970s and then from the UK, Japan, Australia, and the USA, this body of literature has analysed the characteristics of bullies and victims, and the range of personal and social risk factors that contribute to bullying. It has also broadened the definition of bullying to include more subtle and complex forms of psychological violence, and extended analysis beyond examining the characteristics of bullies and victims to looking at their upbringing and their family and social environments, including school environments. Bullying is also distinguished from other forms of violence because it represents a pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated event. The literature also reveals how almost all bullying is sexual or gender-based. This has changed the way bullying is perceived, so that responses also target the pattern.

Bullying that targets the child's sex or sexuality

Teachers and other children commonly put pressure on children to make them conform to cultural values and social attitudes that define what it means to be 'masculine' or 'feminine'. A widespread method is to use words suggesting that a boy is acting like a girl or may be gay, and that a girl is acting like a boy or may be lesbian. Such words may be used jokingly, but nevertheless convey the message that it would be very bad or wrong if it were true. Such jibes

may be used maliciously, to punish or bully children because they are ‘too effeminate’, ‘too masculine’, or known or suspected to be gay or lesbian, or else just different in other disapproved ways.

When boys call girls ‘sluts’, ‘lesbians’ or similar terms that question girls’ sexual morals or sexuality, they may be expressing resentment of girls in general or anger, frustration or jealousy. A study in South Africa found that girls who complained of being sexually harassed or abused by male students were often called lesbians.⁶⁸ Similarly, boys may be called gay if they show too much respect for girls and do not participate in other boys’ sexual harassment of girls.

Bullying of known, suspected or alleged gay and lesbian students can take the form of taunts, obscene notes or graffiti, unwelcome sexual advances, and mock rapes and can lead to brutal physical attacks. Though such bullying is known to be common in many countries, most of the literature on the subject pertains to Europe and North America.^{69,70} In many countries, homosexual activity is a criminal offence or, at least, highly stigmatised with the result that bullying and other forms of violence towards these groups receives little official attention, and are driven underground.⁷¹

The extent of bullying

The 2001/02 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in developed and transitional countries in Central and Eastern Europe found that 35% of schoolchildren said they had been bullied within the

past two months, with the percentage ranging from 15% in Sweden to 64% in Lithuania (see Figure 4.1).⁷² Recent surveys done in developing countries as part of the ongoing GSHS found similarly wide-ranging percentages of children saying that they had been bullied within the past 30 days (see Figure 4.2).⁷³ The differing ‘past two months’ and ‘past 30 days’ time-frames mean that the findings are not strictly comparable but even where time-frames are the same, country comparisons should be made with caution because the reported incidence of bullying tends to increase as specialists in education and childhood development make the public more aware of the issue.⁷⁴

The 2001/02 HBSC survey found that bullying decreased as children grew older and that, while similar percentages of boys and girls said they had been bullied, more boys admitted to bullying others. While bullying within sex groups is common, when it occurs across sex groups girls are much more likely to be bullied by boys than vice versa.⁷⁵ Recent studies suggest that around half of all children involved in bullying are both victims and perpetrators, and that they are the most troubled of all children involved in bullying.⁷⁶

Bullying is just beginning to emerge as an issue in the Philippines, Thailand and other countries of the East Asia and the Pacific region. In a survey in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, 98% of girls and 100% of boys said they had witnessed bullying in schools and, while the precise nature or seriousness of the bullying was not clear, the victims were

Schools, that are supposed to be “places of learning, turned out to be a nightmare because there is violence and it is unbearable.”

Child, Eastern and Southern Africa, 2005^{VII}

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mainly girls or children from ethnic minorities.⁷⁷ A study among primary school students in the fourth grade in the Republic of Korea concluded that bullying is common in schools and arises from social conditions and bullies' emotional problems.⁷⁸ Reports from South Asia indicated severe discrimination in the classroom, amounting to abuse and exclusion, against children from minorities or low castes. A consultation on violence in schools held through UNICEF's Voices of Youth forum also confirmed the widespread experience of bullying in schools in the Middle East and North Africa, and led to calls from children to stop it.⁷⁹

The most common forms of bullying are verbal and, if left unchecked, verbal bullying can lead to extreme violence. Some of the recent impetus for studies of bullying came from the notorious school shootings in the USA and Canada during the late 1990s. One investigation found that an inability to cope with social ridicule and personal rejection may have fuelled those outbursts.⁸⁰ A study in Israel found that bullies' feelings of suffering, humiliation and anger often explain why they move from verbal to physical violence.⁸¹

The Internet and mobile phones have provided new opportunities for bullying through e-mails, online chat lines, personal web pages, text messages, and transmission of images.^{82,83} A survey of students in Canada found that boys confessed to cyber-bullying more often than girls, and were also more frequently the victims of cyber-bullying.⁸⁴ Unique aspects of cyber-bullying are that it allows perpetrators

to remain anonymous, it allows for quick distribution and replication of messages, and it can turn masses of children into bystanders or witnesses of non-physical bullying of a highly malicious nature as perpetrators hide behind their anonymity.

How schools fail to discourage bullying

Strong leadership, an ethos of caring, and clear and consistently enforced policies can reduce the incidence and severity of violence in schools of all kinds and even prevent it from happening. Unfortunately, most schools apply quick-fix solutions or deal with the problem superficially. They may expel perpetrators rather than attempt to change their behaviour, which only transfers the problem to another school or the wider community. They may include anti-violence material in non-compulsory courses or ad hoc lessons, but it is usually insufficient to impart the knowledge and skills teachers and students need to understand and prevent violence.⁸⁵

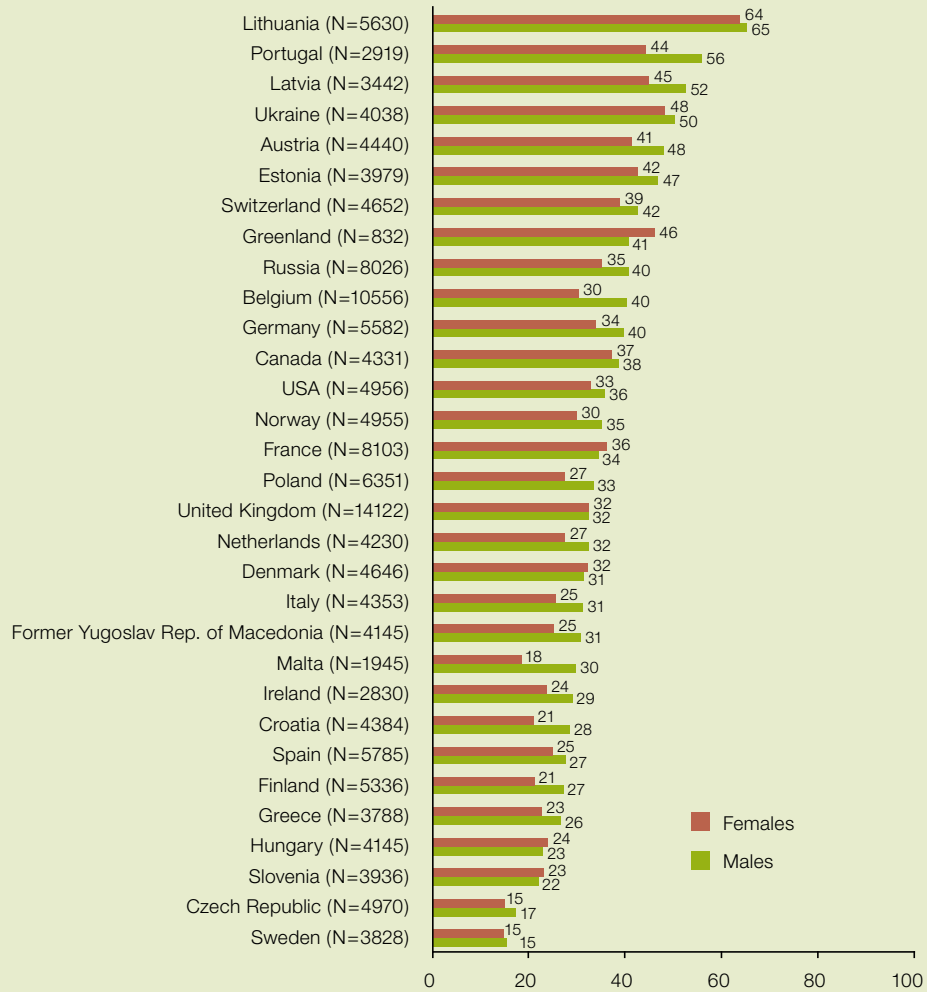
School bullying usually occurs when no teachers are present and when student bystanders neither intervene nor inform teachers or other school staff. A Canadian study found that in 57% of cases where bystanders intervened the bullying stopped.⁸⁶ North American children participating in Children's Forums held as part of this Study suggested turning bystanders into defenders through peer support schemes.

Fighting, physical assault, and gangs

Fighting generally involves conflict generally involves two or more people where it is not easy to make distinctions between perpetrators and

FIGURE 4.1

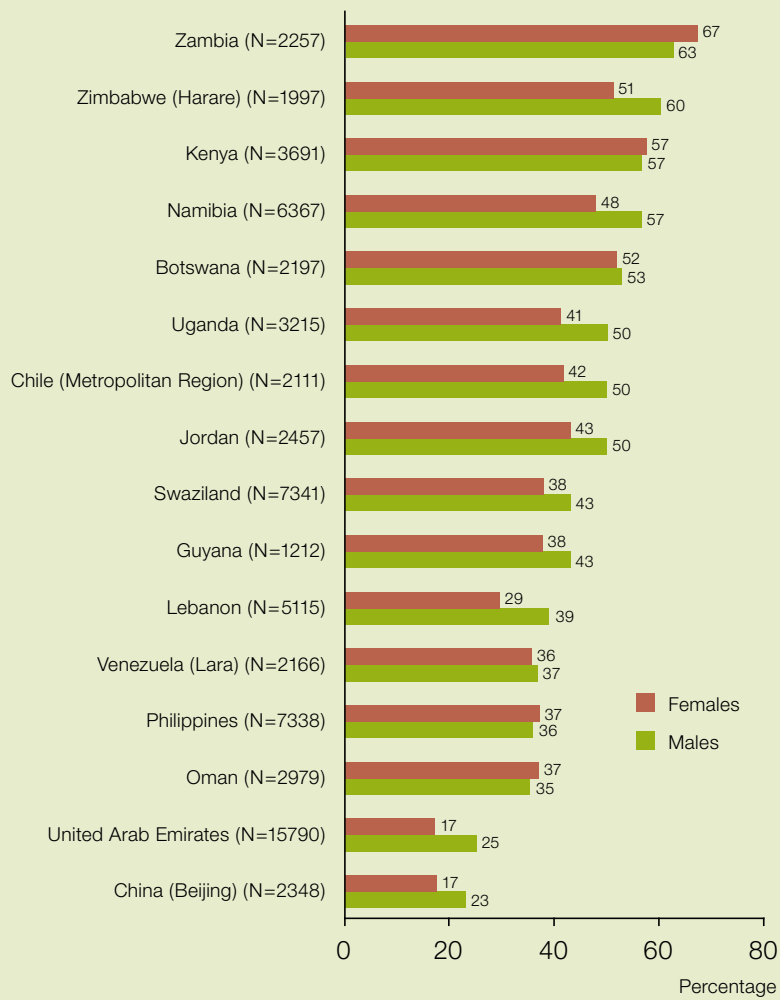
The percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 years who reported having been bullied within the past couple of months



Source: Analysis of data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children: a WHO Cross-National Study 2001/2 (<http://www.hbsc.org>) and Currie C et al. (2001). Health Behaviour in School-aged Children: A WHO Cross-National study. Research Protocol for the 2001/2002 Survey. Edinburgh, Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit, University of Edinburgh.

FIGURE 4.2

The percentage of children aged 13–15 who had been bullied at least once within the last 30 days



Source: Analysis provided to the Study by the Global School-Based Student Health Survey: The World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/chp/gshs> or <http://www.cdc.gov/gshs>) for surveys conducted in 2003–5

“Two kids were fighting and one of them pulled out a gun...because there were too many people around them...he didn’t do anything, but I think he would have shot him if there was no one around.”

Boy, 11, North America, 2005^{viii}

victims. Bullying can lead to fighting, with or without weapons. Physical assault can occur as a separate phenomenon, as in the case of an attack by one person on another driven by inflamed feelings of anger or jealousy. It may also be driven by general feelings of rage, frustration or humiliation unprovoked by anything the victim may have done, as in the case of violent sexual assault and random shootings.

Analysis of data from the 2001/02 HBSC survey revealed that anywhere from 25% of school-aged children in Finland to 49% of school-aged children in Lithuania had engaged in physical fights during the past 12 months and that physical fights were far more common among boys than girls (see Figure 4.3).⁸⁷ Analysis of data from more recent surveys done as part of the GSHS suggests that, in developing countries, fighting is more common, and girls from developing countries are more likely to participate in it than girls in developed and transitional countries (see Figure 4.3).⁸⁸

Boys tend to engage in physical fighting and assault against each other as they seek to live up to stereotypes of males as being powerful and strong.⁸⁹ Students at a Kenyan university were asked to record their ‘Memories of Childhood Violence’. What they recalled most vividly was violence by teachers, but they described bullying and fighting among children in ways that suggested they were barely worthy of recollection and just accepted parts of school culture.⁹⁰

Homicide and serious injury

Homicide and assault resulting in serious physical injury— is comparatively rare in

schools, and accounts for only a tiny proportion of criminal violence in the whole of society. Media attention to extreme events such as knifings or shootings in schools has created a distorted impression of the prevalence of such violence, but it has also prompted enquiry into the connections between violence in schools and criminal violence by juveniles and adults outside schools.

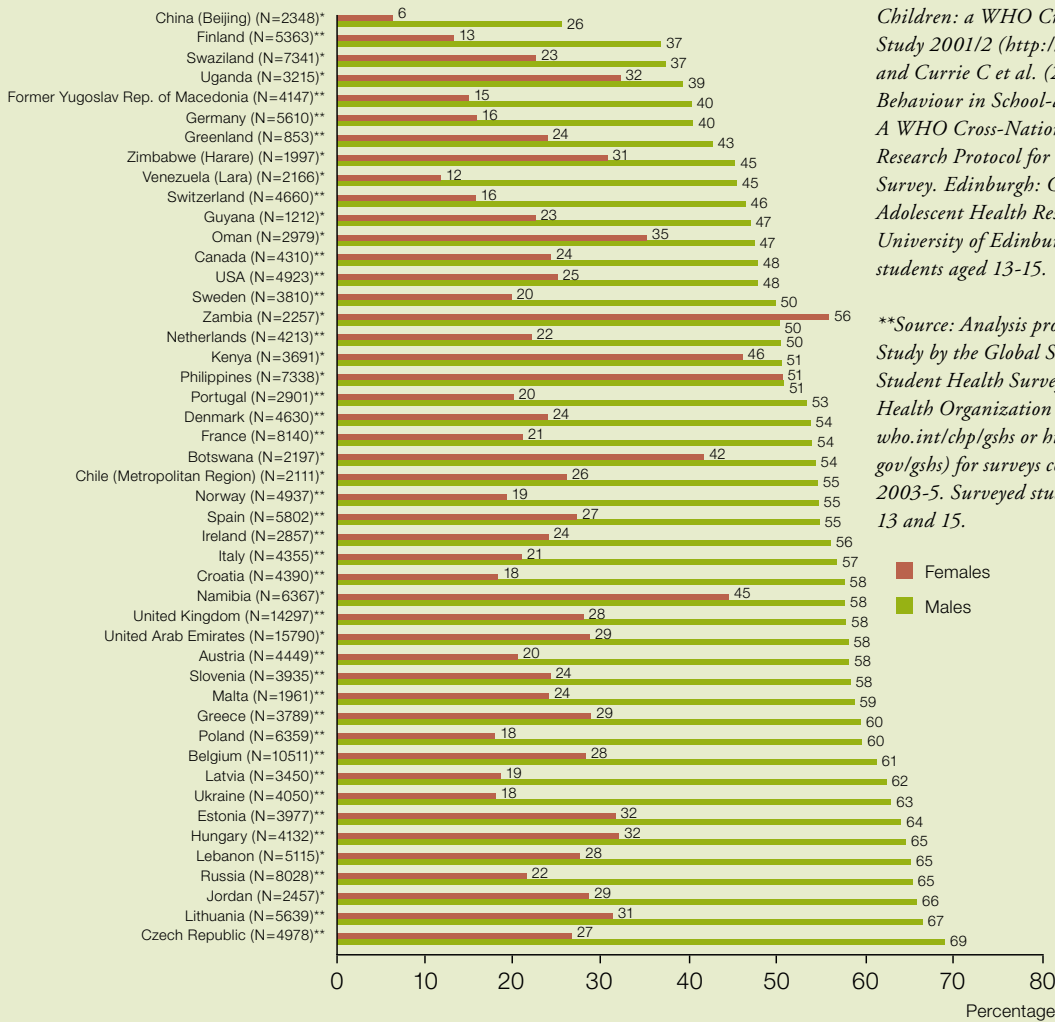
The testimony of children, parents, teachers and others during the Children’s Forums and Regional Consultations held as part of this Study suggests that extreme violence in schools needs to be studied more thoroughly. A study in Jamaica found that 61% of students had witnessed acts of violence at school, 29% of those acts had caused injuries, and that many children felt unsafe in schools.⁹¹ In Jamaica, the homicide rate was 55 per 100,000 in 2004, and 25% of those arrested for all violent crimes were school-aged children, mainly boys. Most of those crimes took place away from schools; however, a separate study has concluded that crimes that did occur in schools were due to factors in wider Jamaican society, suggesting the need for comprehensive solutions.⁹²

Weapons in schools

A recent nationwide study in the USA found that from 3% to 10% of students carried weapons on school property, while 12% to 25% carried weapons outside school. The same study found that 13% of students had been involved in fights on school property at least once in the previous year and 33% had been involved in fights outside school. The study found that 5% of all students had stayed away

FIGURE 4.3

The percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 years old who reported having been in a physical fight within the last 12 months



*Source: Analysis of data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children: a WHO Cross-National Study 2001/2 (<http://www.hbsc.org>) and Currie C et al. (2001) Health Behaviour in School-aged Children: A WHO Cross-National study. Research Protocol for the 2001/2002 Survey. Edinburgh: Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit, University of Edinburgh. Surveyed students aged 13-15.

**Source: Analysis provided to the Study by the Global School-Based Student Health Survey: The World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/chp/gshs>) or <http://www.cdc.gov/gshs> for surveys conducted in 2003-5. Surveyed students aged 11, 13 and 15.

■ Females
■ Males

from school for at least one of the previous 30 days because they were worried about their safety.⁹³ In the USA, some research has suggested that in schools where boys are carrying weapons, girls are also more likely to carry weapons.⁹⁴

Studies from Canada suggest weapon-carrying in schools is as common in Canada as it is in the USA.⁹⁵ An analysis of school suspensions in Nova Scotia found that around half were due to carrying a weapon. Whether weapon-carrying is a rising or decreasing phenomenon in North American schools is a subject of debate. The same is true of Western European schools, though evidence suggests that physical violence of all kinds has remained fairly constant.⁹⁶ In other regions, weapons are often associated with gang violence.

The development of peer groups is a natural part of school life, but gangs also develop in the school environment. These groups are distinguished from other peer groups by more formal structures and rituals. Gang violence in schools would appear to be most prevalent in places where violence in the whole of society is common. Participants in the Caribbean Regional Consultation for this Study reported that gangs, gang violence outside schools and gang violence in schools have all grown in parallel. These participants reported that gang violence in schools includes severe beatings, stabbings and shootings, and tends to be more severe than other forms of violence in schools because it is associated with trafficking of illicit drugs.^{97,98} Participants in the Latin American Regional Consultation reported similar par-

allel growth in gang violence in and outside schools.⁹⁹ (See the chapter on violence against children in the community.)

IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL

This section outlines the possible impacts of violence at school. However, it is important to note that these consequences are not inevitable. In fact, they are largely preventable and can be significantly reduced by effective interventions, which are discussed in subsequent sections.

HEALTH IMPACTS

Violence in school can have a physical impact, cause psychological distress, permanent physical disability and long-term physical or mental ill-health. Physical impacts are the most obvious and may include mild or serious wounds, bruises, fractures, and deaths by homicide or suicide. Sexual assault may lead to unwanted and early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.¹⁰⁰ The psychological impacts may include immediate impairment of emotional development and long-term mental distress and ill-health, which can contribute to physical ill-health as well.

A number of studies have shown correlations between corporal punishment and poor mental health.¹⁰¹ While most have focused on corporal punishment within families, some have focused on corporal punishment in schools. One European study on personal histories of depressed children found that corporal punishment in schools was the strongest past pre-

“Tolerance of violence against children is a major obstacle to health and development in Europe. We cannot afford to let this violence continue unchallenged; we must act now to change the conditions that lead to the victimization of children.”

Dr Marc Danzon, Regional Director for Europe, WHO

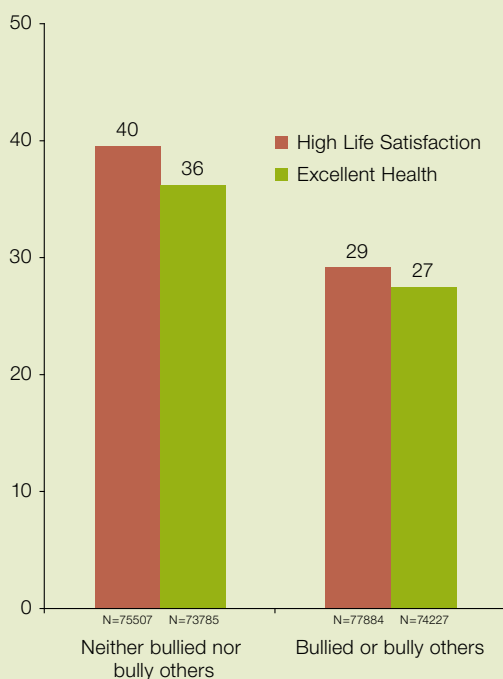
4

dicator of their current depression.¹⁰² It is now recognised that peer violence among school-children also has significant impacts on both

physical and mental health, especially if that violence is repeated or severe, and if victims lack adequate support.^{103,104}

FIGURE 4.4

The percentage of children reporting to have a ‘high life satisfaction’ and ‘excellent health’ among children aged 11, 13 and 15 years



Source: Analysis of data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children: a WHO Cross-National Study 2001/2 (<http://www.hbsc.org>) and Currie C et al. (2001). Health Behaviour in School-aged Children: A WHO Cross-National study. Research Protocol for the 2001/2002 Survey. Edinburgh, Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit, University of Edinburgh.

A study of bullying in 28 European countries found that physical symptoms of being bullied included headache, stomachache, backache, and dizziness, while psychological symptoms included bad temper and feeling nervous, lonely and helpless. The same study found that, according to children’s own reports, the more often they had been bullied, the more symptoms of ill-health they had. This ‘dose–response’ relationship was similar in boys and girls.¹⁰⁵ An analysis of data from 30 industrialised and transitional countries covered by the HBSC study found that children who said they were bullies or the victims of bullying were significantly less likely than other children to say that they enjoyed ‘excellent health’ and a ‘very satisfied life’ (see Figure 4.4).¹⁰⁶ Children who said they were both bullies and victims of bullying were the least likely of all to say they enjoyed either of these things.

SOCIAL IMPACTS

Studies from many different countries confirm that the social impacts of corporal punishment and all other forms of violence against children at school are invariably negative. A recent study in Cameroon, for example, found that corporal punishment in home and school is likely to block the development of social skills. Victims of corporal punishment are likely to become passive and overly cautious, and to fear free expression of their ideas and feelings while, at the same time, they may become perpetrators of psychological violence.¹⁰⁷

“I didn’t go back to school for one month after I came forward. Everything reminds me, wearing my school uniform reminds me of what happened. I have dreams. He is in the classroom laughing at me. I sometimes have to pass down the hall where his classroom was. I thought I could see him, still there. I was scared he’ll still be there.”

Girl, South Africa, 2001^{IX}

Some research suggests that children who are physically punished are less likely than other children to internalise moral values. They are less inclined to resist temptation, to engage in altruistic behaviour, to empathise with others or to exercise moral judgement of any kind.¹⁰⁸ They are more inclined to engage in disorderly and aggressive conduct such as hitting their siblings, parents, schoolmates and boyfriends or girlfriends.¹⁰⁹ And they may become adults who use corporal punishment against their own children, and so pass on the habits of violence.¹¹⁰

North American and European studies suggest that school bullying, whether the children are victims or perpetrators or both, can be a predictor of future anti-social and criminal behaviour, including intimate partner violence, involvement in fights and self-destructive behaviour such as smoking and drinking to excess.^{111,112}

EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS

In the Regional Consultations for this Study, physical and psychological punishment, verbal abuse, bullying and sexual violence in schools were repeatedly reported as reasons for absenteeism, dropping-out and lack of motivation for academic achievement. In a Save the Children submission to the Study, children from Bangladesh said that physical and cruel or degrading punishment affected their school performance and that they valued kind and comforting teachers who explained rather than drilled.¹¹³ The educational impacts of bullying have been less well researched than other psychological and social impacts, but it is known that both victims and perpetrators tend to get

lower marks than other children.¹¹⁴ There also appears to be a relationship between bullying, absence of bonding with other children, and absenteeism.¹¹⁵

An analysis of data collected by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) focused on eighth and ninth grade maths and science students in 49 countries, and found that in schools where there was a heavy emphasis on competition and large gaps between high and low scorers, students were more likely to engage in violence against each other.¹¹⁶ Another analysis of the same data found no strong relationship between this violence in schools and the patterns of violence or lack of social integration in the wider society.¹¹⁷

A number of studies in South Asia indicate that violence at school, notably corporal punishment, leads to students dropping out of school. A study in Nepal, where harsh corporal punishment is routine, found that 14% of school dropouts can be attributed to fear of teachers.¹¹⁸ A Save the Children submission to this Study found that children in South Asian countries were unanimous in their opinion that corporal punishment is a major reason why children drop out of school. They also said that regular beatings result in a loss of interest in studies, and a drop in academic performance.¹¹⁹

Studies have found that, in South Africa, victims of sexual violence are greeted with such hostility after they report the violence that they leave schools for periods of time, change schools or quit schools entirely, while the teachers or students accused of abusing them remain in place.^{120,121,122,123} In most African, Asian and

Caribbean countries, pregnancy resulting from sexual assault and coercion often forces girls to quit school and miss out on opportunities for education and compromises their future.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VIOLENCE

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors make it more likely that a child will be a victim or perpetrator of violence in schools, while protective factors make it less likely. Both individual and external characteristics (including beyond the school), are relevant to increasing or decreasing the likelihood that a child will be involved in school violence or seriously harmed by it when it occurs.^{124,125,126}

Research on risk factors for violence against children specific to schools is lacking for the full range of international contexts, and tends to focus on peer violence. In general, research from mainly industrialised countries suggests that influences tend to change with developmental stage: for example, the influence of family is stronger for young children, while the influence of peers is stronger for adolescents.¹²⁷ Consistently emerging from research as significant risk factors specific to schools are poor academic performance, high absenteeism, leaving school early, and unstructured free time.^{128,129} In addition, many of the factors identified in research about other aspects of life are also likely to be relevant to schools – for example, pro-violence attitudes, risk-taking, weak social ties, affiliation with anti-social peers, poor parent–child relationships, drug

abuse, harsh, lax or inconsistent discipline, or poor parental monitoring.

A study in the USA interviewed 1,467 children from 12 to 17 years old about experiences of victimisation over time. The study suggested that some children may be ‘poly-victims’ (victims of different types of violence), who reported, for example, corporal punishment by parents, sexual abuse by a relative, physical assault by a peer, and bullying by peers in school. Persistence of poly-victimisation was associated with the child scoring high on anger and aggression scales, family problems, and having experienced recent life adversities. Having more friends was associated with decreased levels of violence.¹³⁰

Violence in schools tends to be less about isolated incidents and more about patterns of violence. Without proper systems in place, these patterns become normalised and can escalate. No single factor or combination of factors protects children from violence. Risk factors do not operate in isolation, and their impact can be mediated by protective factors. The concept of resilience involves a number of protective factors, and has emerged in the literature as important in preventing violence and a number of other risk behaviours.

RESILIENCE AND OTHER PROTECTIVE FACTORS

A child’s resilience can be defined as the child’s capacity “to cope successfully with everyday challenges including life transitions, times of cumulative stress and significant adversity or risk. Typically, resilient children are recog-

“If they [kids] are beaten at home, they are going to beat, that is, if their parents ill-treat them or don’t talk to them, kids will beat others because they are beaten. They are going to drag with them what they see at home. This is the basis of violence.”

Adolescent girls, Latin America, 2005^x

nised by their high self-esteem, internal locus of control, optimism and clear aspirations, achievement and goal-orientation, reflection and problem-solving capacity, healthy communication patterns, and the capacity to seek out mentoring adult relationships.”¹³¹

Schools can play a critical role in building children’s resilience and feelings of well-being, which have also been linked to the reduced likelihood of being victimised.¹³² Adults and peers in children’s families and communities begin building, or failing to build, children’s resilience from birth. Good parenting in stable family units is critical. The power of early parent–child bonds established within warm and supportive family relationships, along with high levels of parental care during early childhood, are important in building resilience.¹³³ But even when families or communities fail, schools can compensate, especially when they provide strong support from the early years. Schools can also provide bridges between children and their families and communities, helping families and communities to understand how they affect children and to acquire the skills to become more supportive.

Studies from Australia suggest the importance of comprehensive and whole of school approaches in reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors simultaneously. Support from teachers, parents and other adults has been identified as important, as well as having supportive peers and belonging to supportive pro-social groups. Such a whole of school approach has also shown improvements in student mental health.^{134,135}

Many of the protective factors identified in other settings are also relevant to the school environment, although research across international contexts is lacking. For example, relationships with caring and mentoring adults appear to promote resilience through modelling of pro-social behaviour, providing guidance, and offering protection – all of which good teachers do on a daily basis.¹³⁶ Having the perception that clear sanctions will follow transgressions at school is also protective, underlining the importance of having clear codes of conduct and making sure they are enforced. In addition, schools can promote the development of strong peer group and social bonds to build resilience, as well as build empathy, conflict management skills and critical thinking.^{137,138}

SYSTEMATIC RESPONSE TO PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE

While support from their families and peers is critical to making children less vulnerable to violence in schools, an increasing body of research confirms that the systematic attention to the behaviour of the school heads, teachers and other school staff is also critical. If they engage in abusive behaviour and show disrespect for the rights, comfort and safety of others, then children will follow their example. Many North American studies have found a direct correlation between their lack of firm intervention and the prevalence of violence among children.¹³⁹ A study in Yemen found the same correlation.¹⁴⁰ Studies in Botswana and Ghana have found that when teachers tolerate sex segregation and tension between the

sexes, they help to sustain cultures of bullying and sexual and gender-based violence.¹⁴¹

In the Americas, South Africa and places of violent civil conflict such as Nepal and Sierra Leone, however, much of the violence among children in schools enters from the violent world surrounding the schools. Social upheaval and displacement combined with low academic achievement may lead to students becoming violent. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Algeria, boys who transfer from other schools and repeat grades are more prone to violence than their peers.¹⁴²

There is evidence to suggest that fierce peer competition, gender-based violence and gang violence within schools are all, to some extent, related to the stresses that go with modernisation and industrialisation. These phenomena are all more commonly reported from the urban areas of industrialised or rapidly industrialising countries than from rural areas of less developed countries. Country responses to questionnaires distributed to Governments by this Study indicate that countries in rapidly industrialising regions, such as East Asia, are just beginning to become concerned about bullying and other forms of violence among children.¹⁴³

CHILDREN WHO ARE VULNERABLE TO VIOLENCE

Children's vulnerability to violence changes as they grow older. During infancy and young childhood the child's cognitive ability is less developed and activity level is high, so training to avoid danger and self-harm or to behave

in a manner acceptable to adults is more likely to be administered by threats, slaps and other physical means.¹⁴⁴ As early as pre-school age, children develop attitudes to others, including discriminatory attitudes, and these tend to become more pronounced during primary school, perhaps evolving into bullying (or being victimised). There may also be gender-based violence of a verbal nature at early ages, and it may evolve until, towards or after puberty, it becomes threats of physical violence. Simon's story illustrates how each child's experience of violence is unique but changes over the years (see box).

Individual characteristics of the child can also increase vulnerability. According to North American researchers, children with disabilities and learning difficulties are often targeted for exclusion, discrimination and bullying.¹⁴⁶ Children with speech defects or whose movements are affected by conditions such as multiple dystrophy are also frequent targets of bullying. Much of the evidence, however, derives from schools for children with special needs. Schools with explicit policies of integration and inclusion tend to focus more on reducing stigma, discrimination and bullying of these children, although conclusive evidence is not yet available.¹⁴⁷ Data from developing countries are sparse, but a study from South Asia found that children with disabilities are sometimes referred to by their disability as if it were their name.¹⁴⁸ Studies covering seven countries in the Middle East and North Africa found that children with learning difficulties were at high risk of being both the victims and perpetrators of bullying inside and outside schools.¹⁴⁹

SIMON'S STORY: A CASE STUDY ON A CHILD'S LIFE-CYCLE AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Day-care centre: "I hated the girls and used to tease them."

"My mother enrolled me in a nursery school. Immediately I became rational, I preoccupied my mind with constructive things, (like) building my own toy cars as I had learnt from other children. I hated the girls and used to tease them. On seeing me, they would run away because I could beat one for no reason. A Catholic sister came to our nursery to teach. She introduced common games like hiding and seeking, songs in which we played together with the girls. Surprisingly, I came to love all the girls and even sang songs praising their names and comparing them to roses."

Middle primary school: "We always anticipated being beaten for the slightest error."

"Sometimes we were beaten for having dirty collars on our shirts, (or) long nails. The punishment was very severe. (It is impossible for) the shirt of an active standard 4, 5, 6 student to be sparkling white at 4 p.m. unless the boy/girl is sick. My maths teacher in class eight made us kneel on a Saturday for 2 hours for failing a sum. We could be told to kneel on pebbles."

Upper primary school: "Students had to speak English all the time to avoid teachers' wrath."

"In my fourth year in my primary school, there was a declaration that all students of upper level (4–8) had to be speaking English. On speaking mother tongue, one's name was written down by the class prefect and the list of those who spoke Kiswahili or mother tongue forwarded to teachers. A meeting was called and those appearing on the list punished by receiving six strokes of the cane for class 4 pupils, 7 for class 5 and 10 for class 6 to 8. The teachers stood in a row and each could whip you with all his might. Surprisingly, no female teacher could join the male teachers nor be around. Tears could be shed and all forms of struggle and screams. There was nothing but fear and hatred."¹⁴⁵

“My classmates knew my parents had died, they caused problems for me. I was segregated. I was known as ‘The Son of AIDS’ and ‘TASO Child.’ The kids wouldn’t want to sit next to me.”

Boy, receiving assistance with school fees from the AIDS Service Organization, 2004^{XII}

4

‘Outsider’ children, including those who are refugees or from indigenous minorities, are especially likely to be excluded, discriminated against and bullied. Evidence from Australia suggests that Aboriginal students are more likely to be recipients of verbal abuse from teachers and from non-Aboriginal peers than the others.¹⁵⁰ In Botswana, research by authorities has found that the dropout rates of Basarwa (or San) children are unusually high, and that they drop out largely because of prejudice and bullying, though also because the corporal punishment meted out in schools is alien to their culture.¹⁵¹ Children from nomadic communities may miss formal schooling altogether or else be excluded, discriminated against, or bullied.

In South Asia, children from official castes and indigenous tribes suffer from exclusion, discrimination and bullying in schools. In Latin America, as elsewhere, indigenous children are frequently banned from wearing traditional clothing and hairstyles.¹⁵² In industrialised countries, children of minorities or those who wear faith-related garments, such as a hijab or burka, also face discrimination by State or educational authorities. Such discrimination may be called a form of psychological violence insofar as it conveys the message that children are somehow less worthy because they are different, and that what makes them different must be suppressed.

Orphaned children are more likely to drop out of school or to repeat grades, and the contrast between the attendance of orphans and non-orphans is greatest in countries where atten-

dance is already low.^{153,154} In Africa, children orphaned or otherwise affected by HIV and AIDS may suffer stigma in school while they are also shouldering extra burdens of grief, poverty and sibling care. A recent Human Rights Watch report into the impact of HIV and AIDS on affected children’s access to education in Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda, documents how stigma in school leads to taunting, and makes it difficult for children to communicate with their teachers about illness in the family.¹⁵⁵ Within the context of silence and shame that surrounds HIV infection, the fear of stigma, discrimination and possibly violence can lead to HIV-infected and affected children withdrawing from school or being excluded, as reported not only in Southern Africa but elsewhere, including Bolivia, El Salvador, Ghana, Haiti, India and Nepal.¹⁵⁶

The special situation of girls

In many places, there are local schools for young children, but children have to leave home for boarding schools, or to live with relatives for the higher primary grades and secondary school. This is often the case in regions where populations are scattered through rural areas, perhaps in mountains or other hard-to-access locations. Parents fear that their girls may be assaulted on the way there or back, on the road, or in crowded buses. A World Education study in Peru found that as the distance a girl travels to school increases, so does her chance of being molested. The risks of sexual harassment, rape and unintended pregnancy keep many Peruvian girls home and increase absenteeism, grade repetition and dropout.¹⁵⁷

*"As my father could not go to pick up my sister from school one day, she had to come home alone.
On the way home four boys touched her but she could not talk to her father about that.
But she told me, and even I could not tell father."*

Boy, South Asia, 2005^{VIII}

The EFA campaign has shone a spotlight on the fact that girls still have less access to schooling than boys in most developing countries, that the discrepancy increases sharply after the primary grades, and that there is a strong correlation between low levels of education for girls and women and low levels of national development.^{158,159}

In some societies with low levels of girls' education, the seclusion of girls at home after puberty is still common, and the same is true of early marriage, for example, in many parts of South Asia and the Middle East. Even where seclusion is not practised, research shows that parents fear for their girls' sexual safety in school. In sub-Saharan Africa, this fear is exacerbated by fear of HIV infection. In 2001, a Human Rights Watch study on gender-based violence in schools found alarming levels of sexual violence against schoolgirls, and a frightening degree of tolerance and collusion by teachers.¹⁶⁰ Such evidence all too often results in pressure on girls to leave school.¹⁶¹

RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

In the many children's forums, Regional Consultations and submissions that contributed to this Study, clear messages came from the world's children:

- They want the violence to stop.
- They want teachers and other school staff to give them firm guidance while



AZERBAIJAN, 2004, *Two children from an 'internat' (boarding school) in the town of Sheki.*

accepting them for whom they are, respecting their rights and helping them to express themselves constructively and to develop their full potential.

- They want teachers and other school staff to help them get along with each other and to develop the habits of mutual respect and empathy that will see them through lives of constructive citizenship.

AT A GLANCE: CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

- 115 million or 18% of children of primary school age were not in school in 2001/02. Of these, 61.3 million (53%) were girls, 45 million (39%) were in sub-Saharan Africa and 42 million (36%) were in South Asia. Most likely to be out of school were children in West and Central Africa (45.3%), Eastern and Southern Africa (38.5%), South Asia (26%) and the Middle East and North Africa (18.7%) and in all of these regions girls were more likely to be out of school than boys. The greatest disparity between boys and girls was in the Middle East and North Africa, where 15.4% of boys but 22.1% of girls were out of school.
- Boys and young men still have far better chances of going to school than girls and young women. Of the 86 developing countries for which data are available, 50% have achieved gender parity (where a girl's chances of going to school are equal to a boy's) in primary education but only 20% have achieved gender parity in secondary education and 5% in tertiary education.¹⁶²
- In much of the world, secondary schooling is a luxury. Gross enrolment in secondary education (number of children and adults of any age in secondary school as a percentage of the number of children of official age for secondary school) is less than 40% in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, East Asia and Pacific, and North Africa and Middle East and less than 60% in many other countries in these regions and in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁶³

- They want their parents and other adults outside schools to play constructive roles in their education, promoting and supporting violence-free schools and giving them violence-free homes and communities.¹⁶⁴

The many contributions to this Study have also shown that there is good reason for hope that the dreams of these children can and will be realised, if only countries will commit themselves to accelerating and sustaining their prog-

ress toward violence-free schools. There is now widespread and rapidly growing awareness of violence in schools and of the harm it is doing to children and to all of society. Many countries in all regions are taking action to counter that violence, and there is mounting evidence to suggest which approaches work best.

Unfortunately, there are no simple or single strategy solutions. To be effective, it is important that approaches address overall prevention, for example through life skills-based education, as

well as early intervention when problems arise, and safe and supervised activities and facilities for children and young people.¹⁶⁵

This Study has concluded that the most effective approaches to countering violence in schools are tailored to the unique circumstances of the schools in question, but that they also have key elements in common. Specifically, they are based

on recognition that all children have equal rights to education in settings that are free of violence, and that one of the functions of education is to produce adults imbued with the non-violent values and practises.

The overall approach can be called ‘rights-based’ and ‘child-friendly’. It is consistent with the CRC, other international conventions on

THE UNITED NATIONS GIRLS’ EDUCATION INITIATIVE (UNGEI) ROLE IN PROMOTING GIRLS’ PARTICIPATION

In 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan showed his strong commitment to girls’ education by launching the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), a partnership for girls’ education and gender equality. It is emerging as an effective strategy for the prevention of violence against girls. In countries where UNGEI is established, partners work together to strengthen interventions that promote girls’ access to quality education. Interventions which include those that accelerate and encourage the participation of girls and boys in their own empowerment. For example, the Girls’ Education Movement (GEM) operates in Botswana, Lesotho, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe as an important aspect of UNGEI. When GEM was launched in 2001, it was conceptualised as a pan-African education initiative through which girls would become leaders in the transformation of Africa and agents in the decision-making processes concerning their educational chances. In Uganda, GEM is very active in making sure that orphans and other vulnerable children access school, and work with local authorities and traditional leaders to address the issue of early marriage. In Botswana, GEM has done a baseline study on safety in schools which is being edited for publication. In South Africa, GEM works through Public–Private Partnerships to support the education of girls in mathematics, science and technology and, sponsored by UNICEF, has a number of different activities for ensuring that the voices of girls and young women are heard, particularly in relation to policy-making. Girls’ Parliaments, sponsored by GEM, in conjunction with the National Department of Education in South Africa, have offered girls the opportunity to contribute to policy-making around issues of sexual violence in schools. The first Girls’ Parliament in South Africa took place in 2003. It is worth noting that GEM in South Africa has also developed posters addressing gender violence, and a chat line for girls to speak out.¹⁶⁸

human rights and the EFA goals, and widely endorsed by international organisations. Most importantly, it answers children and young adults around the world who say they want the violence to stop.

The basic principles of a rights-based child-friendly school are that it should be^{166,167}:

1. **Proactively inclusive.** The school seeks out and enables the participation of all children of both sexes, and especially those who are different ethnically, culturally, linguistically, socio-economically and in their abilities or disabilities.
2. **Academically effective and relevant.** It meets children's needs for life and livelihood knowledge, attitudes and skills.
3. **Gender-sensitive.** It creates environments that foster gender equality, and it meets the needs for knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure gender equality.
4. **Healthy and protective.** It promotes and protects children's emotional, psychological and physical well-being by providing a healthy and protective educational climate.
5. **Engaged with the family and the community.** It seeks out and enables the participation of children's families and the community in the development and implementation of all aspects of school policies and programmes, including those designed to protect children from harm and to teach children to appreciate the rights of other children to the same protection.

LAWS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

International conventions, regional agreements and national laws that address corporal punishment, sexual harassment and assault, and other forms of violence are essential steps in the movement toward violence-free schools. Experience has shown, however, that many countries are slow to meet their international and regional obligations and slow to enforce their own laws.

Since the UN General Assembly adopted the CRC in 1989, a substantial number of countries have taken steps to ban corporal punishment in schools, even though they have often been lax in enforcing their laws. High-level courts in many regions and countries including Namibia (Supreme Court, 1991), South Africa (Constitutional Court, 2000) and in the courts of various parts of federal countries – for example, Delhi, India (Delhi High Court, 2000), and Canada (Supreme Court, 2004)¹⁶⁹ – have condemned corporal punishment in schools and required its prohibition.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child notes in its recent General Comment No. 8: “Where, despite prohibition and positive education and training programmes, cases of corporal punishment come to light outside the family home – in schools, other institutions and forms of alternative care for example – prosecution may be a reasonable response.”¹⁷⁰ The threat to the perpetrator of other disciplinary action or dismissal should also act as a clear deterrent. It is essential that the prohibition of all corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading punishment, and the sanctions that may be imposed if it is inflicted,

should be well disseminated to children and to all those working with or for children in all settings. Monitoring disciplinary systems and the treatment of children must be part of the sustained supervision of all institutions and placements. Children and their representatives in all such placements should have immediate and confidential access to child-sensitive advice, advocacy and complaints procedures and ultimately to courts where necessary, and legal assistance. In institutions, there should be a requirement to report and to review any violent incidents.

Many countries have laws or, at least, policies that prevent sexual harassment in the work-

place and these often apply to educational workplaces, such as schools, and may serve to protect both teachers and students. In South Africa, for example, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 (2000), defines harassment as “unwanted conduct which is persistent or serious and demeans, humiliates or creates a hostile or intimidating environment or is calculated to induce submission ... and which is related to sex, gender or sexual orientation.” The Government of South Africa has taken steps to make the investigation of alleged rapes more sensitive to the concerns of victims and, therefore, more likely to result in successful prosecutions. In addition, South Africa’s Department of Education has

SOUTH AFRICA’S GUIDELINES TO STOPPING TEACHERS FROM SEXUALLY ABUSING STUDENTS

In 2000, South Africa’s Department of Education issued guidelines noting the prevalence of sexual abuse of students by teachers and the consequent high risk of HIV transmission. The guidelines explain the law and the consequences of violating the law:

- Educators must not have sexual relations with learners. It is against the law, even if the learner consents. Such action transgresses the code of conduct for educators, who are in a position of trust.
- Strict disciplinary action will be taken against any educator who has sex with a learner.
- Sex that is demanded by an educator without consent is rape, which is a serious crime, and the educator will be charged. If an educator has sex with a girl or boy who is under 16 years, he or she will be charged with statutory rape and may face a penalty of life imprisonment.
- If you are aware of a colleague who is having sexual relations with a learner, you must report them to the principal or higher educational authorities, and if the boy or girl is under 16, to the police. If you do not do so you may be charged with being an accessory to rape.¹⁷²

TWO COUNTRIES WHERE NATIONAL COMMITTEES DEVELOP AND ENFORCE ANTI-VIOLENCE MEASURES

The Republic of Korea's Act on the Prevention of School Violence requires that a new plan for preventing school violence be drawn up every five years. A National Committee has responsibility for coordinating and monitoring implementation of the plan and for overseeing the five-year reviews and updates. Every school is required to hold regular sessions to review their contributions to the implementation of the plan, and to recommend whatever actions may be called for within the school or beyond.

In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education requires all schools to establish committees to address needs for “prevention and confrontation of violence in the family and school environment.” These committees are empowered to receive and investigate complaints of violence before passing them on to the appropriate authorities.¹⁷⁴

issued special guidelines applying to sexual relations between students and teachers in schools (see box).¹⁷¹

Under-reporting of all forms of violence is a chronic problem in most countries. Reasons include lack of confidence in the capacity of authorities to intervene in constructive ways, and fear of repercussions to victims and their families and even to perpetrators, since so much violence occurs within circles of people who know each other.

Government responses to the questionnaire sent out as part of the Study¹⁷³ show that a few countries have reformed laws and improved law enforcement to address school violence in more holistic ways, as part of broader efforts to promote and support rights-based child-friendly education for all children (see box).

RIGHTS-BASED SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

A large number and variety of policies and programmes to counter school-based violence have been introduced in all regions of the world. Only a few of these have been rigorously evaluated – and mostly in industrialised countries – but the results are encouraging, and show that effective solutions exist, although they are not widely implemented.

UNESCO has found promising anti-school-violence programmes in eight countries –Australia, France, Israel, Japan, Northern Ireland, Norway, South Africa and the USA. These programmes are well-regarded by administrators, teachers, students and parents and show early indications of being effective in reducing violence in schools. A small body of research evaluating these programmes indicates that they not only reduce violence, but help students

develop better social skills, higher self-esteem and a greater sense of personal control over their lives, and also help students attain higher levels of academic achievement.¹⁷⁵

During the past 10 years, profound concern about violence in North American schools has led to considerable research and experimentation with different interventions, and there is now a large body of literature documenting and evaluating different approaches.^{176,177} As a result, there is now evidence of approaches that work in Canada and the USA. Similar research and experimentation is underway in many other countries and, where there are evaluations, they are demonstrating that these countries are finding approaches that work, too. There is no reason to doubt that, with the will and resources (often minimal), any country, community or school can find effective ways of reducing violence in schools.

The following discussion focuses on particular areas of intervention and provides examples of promising practices from all regions of the world.

LEADERSHIP AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policies to tackle school violence should recognise that schools are, above all, places of learning and can play an important role in equalising power and eliminating abuses of power. Schools can be guided by the highest human rights standards in everything they do, and use alternative, non-violent methods of communication, negotiation and conflict resolution.

A growing body of research has considered schools as social systems and sought to identify parts of the systems that might be changed to reduce violence. The conclusion has been that effective school leaders (e.g. the heads of education authorities and of individual schools) can go a long way toward improving the quality of school life by working with the other stakeholders to develop and implement policies governing the conduct and discipline of teachers and students and building community confidence in schools.^{178,179} A study of schools in Botswana and Ghana found that the most common feature of safe and high-achieving schools is strong management.¹⁸⁰

A review of programmes to address violence in Latin American and Caribbean schools pointed to the importance of building positive attitudes and behaviours from as early an age as possible, sustaining the effort to build those values right through school, and doing this through such means as giving students opportunities to participate in making the decisions that shape their school environments.¹⁸¹ Ensuring such continuity calls for action by authorities that oversee all schools, whether at national, district or local level.

A longitudinal study in Norway has found a causal link between good classroom management techniques and reduced peer violence.¹⁸² In addition, the curriculum should promote the values of social equality, tolerance toward diversity and non-violent means of resolving conflicts.

What happens outside the classroom is also critical. Education authorities should pro-

"If teachers talk badly to us, if they do not take care about what they say and do not respect us, how do you expect us to respect them? They are not good role models for us."

Student, Indian Ocean subregion, 2006^{XIV}

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vide guidance and support to school heads and teachers, helping them shape the climate outside the classroom by changing the way in which the school is managed. Codes of conduct should be developed and enforced through processes that give a voice to every stakeholder, for example through student councils and parents' associations. The climate thus created within the school can spill over into the wider community when, for example, students carry home the values and habits they learn in school and then carry them through their lives, into their workplaces, relationships, and so on.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL STAFF

There are almost 43 million teachers at the primary and secondary school levels around the world, in addition to an unknown number of teachers in pre-schools and other educational settings, and their potential to act as role models is immense.¹⁸³ Teachers are among any country's most important agents of social development and change, since they make essential contributions to the emotional and cognitive development of current generations of children and thus to future generations of mature and responsible citizens. Even when children are subject to violence in their homes and communities, teachers can provide them with models of non-violence from a very early age.

Good teacher recruitment and training should be at the very root of any country's long-term and comprehensive strategy to reduce violence, not just in schools but in the whole of society. In reality, however, many countries undervalue teachers, pay little attention to

recruiting the best candidates, and then offer them insufficient pre- and in-service training, low salaries and poor working conditions, often in overcrowded and ill-equipped schools and classrooms. In most countries, teachers are already overburdened, but they are under increasing pressure to take on more responsibility for addressing violence in their schools, though they often lack the training and expertise for this added responsibility. If, despite all this, schools attract good teachers, they then have difficulty retaining them.

All of these factors should be taken into account when assessing needs to change the way teaching candidates are recruited, trained, and supported. Teachers cannot carry the whole burden, so any assessment of their needs should look at ways in which education authorities, school heads and other school staff, parents and communities may be undermining teachers' work, and at ways in which they could be doing more to support it.

Most Governments that responded to the Study questionnaire¹⁸⁴ reported that they, NGOs or partnerships between the two were supporting teacher training programmes that addressed violence. However, this training was often not continuous, systematic and sustainable. Most of the training programmes addressed prevention and protection; some addressed rehabilitation of victims or offenders; only a few countries mentioned redress (Gambia, Nigeria, the Seychelles, Singapore, Switzerland, and Thailand), penalties (Cameroon, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, and Thailand), methods for educating students in violence prevention

IN CROATIA, A CAMPAIGN FOR 'SAFE AND ENABLING' SCHOOLS ACHIEVES EARLY RESULTS

In the spring of 2004, after broad consultations with Government ministries, civil society organisations and others, UNICEF launched a five-phase campaign 'For a Safe and Enabling School Environment' in Croatia. Before the launch, a national survey covering students, parents and teachers established baseline data on violence in schools. The campaign was scheduled to last for 18 months. After 12 months, an evaluation found that it was surpassing expectations.

More than 4,500 teachers, twice the number targeted, had received training in non-violent methods of teaching, discipline and intervention in violence among children. The campaign had covered 121 schools including more than 60,000 children, 20% more than targeted, and this had been achieved with 15% less than the projected budget. More than 92% of Croatian citizens had become aware of the campaign, while more than 80% of funding was now coming from individual donors and corporations within Croatia. Most importantly, there had been significant decreases in some forms of violence and increased awareness of others. For example, children and teachers were better able to recognise all forms of bullying and better prepared to stop it. More than 80% of students knew the rules against school violence, and knew of an adult they could turn to for help.

There were, however, challenges ahead. Teachers felt they were more competent to deal with violence but, while students felt safer, they still did not consider that schools provided them with enough protection against violence. The evaluation concluded that there was need for more parent involvement and for the strengthening of peer support for non-violence among students.¹⁸⁵

and protection (Bulgaria, Estonia, Indonesia, the Netherlands), or methods for integrating human rights and non-violence into the school curriculum (Brazil and the Seychelles). While these efforts are all moving in the right direction, clearly more radical and sustained improvements in teacher training for non-violence are needed.

THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN

Involving children in developing and implementing programmes is important in building personal knowledge, attitudes and skills, ensuring programme relevance and ownership, and ultimately in improving programme outcomes.^{186,187} A study by the United Kingdom Department for International Development

CHILD RIGHTS CLUBS EMPOWER ZAMBIA'S SCHOOLCHILDREN

The Zambia Civic Education Association (ZCEA) works to promote and protect children's rights through civic education. Through its Child Participation Programme, it supports Child Rights Clubs that empower children by raising their awareness of their rights under the CRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and other instruments. At least 300 Child Rights Clubs in primary and secondary schools operate throughout Zambia.¹⁹⁵

covering Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Zambia found that teaching environments that put children at the centre of the learning experience, so that teachers listen to their concerns and needs, are more likely to address violence effectively than other schools.¹⁸⁸ Another international study by World Vision found that, in communities where children participate in discussing and addressing violence, discussion is more open and more likely to result in specific strategies.¹⁸⁹

Save the Children has had a number of first-hand experiences working with partners in the establishment and support of child-led organisations and initiatives whereby children hold adult decision-makers and caregivers accountable, and work with them on addressing school violence.¹⁹⁰ Research in the USA suggests that the best initiatives tend to be those in which students and teachers work together on developing and implementing strategies to make schools safe for everyone. Peer mediation and peer counselling, for example, are more effective when students and teachers work together in developing and assessing appropriate mediation and counselling methods.¹⁹¹

Exploratory studies and experience in all regions have identified benefits, some unexpected, of involving children in the development and implementation of programmes to address violence in schools.¹⁹² Children can provide a comprehensive snapshot of their experience of violence in their schools, thus giving staff information they need to take action. Involving children serves as effective intervention in itself, in that it helps to heal children through the disclosure of experiences and sharing of feelings, and it teaches the staff about children's experiences and feelings, and this in turn changes staff attitudes and behaviours.^{193,194}

WORKING WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Many countries have a tradition of involving parents and communities in school life. In North America, there is a long tradition of Parent-Teachers' Associations (PTAs). Typically, these have branches in every public school within a community, plus an umbrella PTA covering the whole community, and they enable parents' rights to monitor schools and intervene as they see fit. In the USA, the Safe

Schools Coalition of Washington was set up out of concern about violence against gays and lesbians in Seattle schools, but it and similar Safe Schools Coalitions in a number of other states now serve as public–private partnerships through which many Government organisations and NGOs collaborate to address violence and other safety issues in schools.¹⁹⁶ Many other countries have similar organisations through which parents and community-based organisations address a wide range of issues in schools, in collaboration with education authorities, school heads and teachers.¹⁹⁷

Elsewhere in this section, a number of examples are given of ways in which parents and

communities get involved in addressing the full range of violence issues in schools. Where such involvement is not already taking place, there may be existing mechanisms for securing that involvement. In Lesotho, the United Republic of Tanzania and a number of other sub-Saharan African countries, for example, there are now local committees that involve a broad range of stakeholders in addressing the full range of issues related to HIV and AIDS. Mexico City, Nepal, and Kenya provide examples of what major cities or whole countries can do to involve parents and communities (see boxes).

IN MEXICO CITY – ‘COMBATING VIOLENCE: EDUCATION FOR PEACE’ PROJECT

In Mexico City, social inequalities, poverty and other factors have contributed to increasing violence in homes, schools and the whole city, and school violence has been linked to high rates of early dropout. Currently, more than 1,500 of the city’s schools and 450,000 of the city’s students are participating in a project called “Combating Violence: Education for Peace – For Me, You, and the Entire World.” The project consists of training workshops that build the capacity of school administrators, teachers, students and parents to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner. Follow-up in schools aims to ensure that the lessons have been absorbed and put into practice, and to provide support to individuals charged with the responsibility for continuing to build the capacity of each school’s population to resolve conflicts peacefully. The project owes its launch and success to leadership and enthusiastic support from the Secretary of Education and, mostly importantly, from school heads. The hope, now, is that the project will become a permanent programme after the city’s next general elections.¹⁹⁸

IN NEPAL – GIRLS TAKING ACTION TO END SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In Surkhet, Nepal, Save the Children has supported girls as they educate men and boys and make their schools and community safer. Boys and male adults (including education officials and village leaders) were unaware that girls perceived their ‘innocent teasing’ as sexual harassment and discrimination until the girls mapped the places where they felt unsafe. By examining and discussing the maps, males were able to recognise that these were the places where girls were regularly subject to such teasing. In addition, the girls have developed networks throughout the village and district, with links to girls’ groups in other villages, local police, teachers’ and women’s groups, and the district child welfare committee.¹⁹⁹

IN KENYA – ‘BE A CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN’ CAMPAIGN

In the spring of 2006, a campaign to stop violence against children was launched in Kenya, with support from UNICEF. The campaign called upon families, schools, faith-based organisations, the private sector, the mass media and all other elements of Kenyan society to collaborate (with financial and other support) in efforts to ensure that every home, school and community in the nation was committed to stopping violence against children. The campaign aims to rally everyone against violence and to empower them with information about what they can do to help create environments in which all Kenyan children can reach their potential. It has also raised funds to support:

- A core package of child protection services for the most vulnerable communities.
- Hotlines where both children and adult victims of violence can call for help.
- Safe houses for those who need to escape violence in their homes.
- Training for counsellors to help victims and also to help families and other perpetrators of violence break their patterns of violent behaviour.
- Training for teachers, health workers and police in how to reduce violence and intervene when it occurs.
- School-based programmes and youth programmes to reduce violence.
- Publicity to raise awareness and mobilise ever greater commitment.²⁰⁰

CONSTRUCTIVE CHILD DISCIPLINE

The rights-based, child-centred approach requires that there be codes of conduct accepted by all members of the school community, establishing moral and social reference points and emphasising the values that underpin them, including the values inherent in the CRC and in other human rights conventions. Discipline should aim at positive reinforcement, constructive criticism, clear guidance and instruction. Except in extreme cases it should not promote measures that may impede a child's cognitive and emotional development.

Recent research on disciplinary regimes has made a distinction between what are termed pro-active and reactive regimes. Those that are pro-active focus on prevention, and are generally based on careful research into what works, and they establish a legal framework, clear policies, clear rules of conduct and mechanisms for enforcement. Those that are reactive are often based on ill-informed 'blanket statements' or assertions, and call for 'zero tolerance' and harsh punishments. They often involve suspending or expelling children, which only displaces the problem to another school or to the wider community while doing little to help the child. Such measures contravene a child's right to education. Firm but fair discipline can correct unacceptable behaviour without resorting to violence.²⁰¹ The consensus among leading educationalists is that reactive regimes are ineffective in the long term.²⁰² In this context, UNESCO has outlined basic principles which should govern school discipline of children which emphasise constructive criticism, clear guidance and instruction as well as the principles of the CRC.²⁰³

BULLYING: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

With its Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme, Norway has been a pioneer in efforts to stop bullying in schools. Monitoring of four cohorts of 600–700 elementary school students each found that, within two years, the programme had reduced bullying by 50% or more. It also had reduced rates of truancy, theft, vandalism and other antisocial behaviour, and the reductions were consistent across genders and grades.²⁰⁴ The Olweus approach has been tried and proven to work in several other countries, including Australia, Germany and the USA.²⁰⁵ It has not been tried in non-industrialised countries, mainly because bullying has not risen to prominence as a matter of public concern in these countries.

The Olweus approach has achieved a considerable degree of success and also identified important issues requiring ongoing attention, such as, the need to build the commitment of stakeholders, to sustain leadership over time, and to monitor and understand motivations and interlinking causes of violence while addressing all forms of violence at school. Introducing a human rights framework into bullying prevention programmes can also meet these challenges.²⁰⁶ (see box).

For children who are at high risk of bullying, whether as victims or offenders, it may be desirable to provide intensive one-on-one strategies that involve home visits, counselling and skills development for both children and parents.

KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE, RIGHTS-BASED AND CHILD-CENTRED ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMMES

While anti-bullying programmes may vary widely in specific details, the most effective programmes are rights-based and child-centred. Common characteristics include:

- They involve children at an early age, before their attitudes and behaviours become fixed in permanent patterns.
- Schools involve all key stakeholders and focus on prevention of violence – heads, teachers, students, parents and the wider community – in development, implementation and monitoring.
- There is a leadership group that sustains momentum and initiates adjustments in the light of changing circumstances.
- There are educational components that increase the knowledge and improve the skills of all key stakeholders; and components are integrated into the regular curriculum, so that children learn about human rights and develop the skills to communicate and resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner.
- There is increased monitoring of student behaviour, with thoughtful attention paid to how students relate to each other, especially when there is evidence that bullying may be taking place.
- There are mechanisms for reporting, intervention, recovery of victims and rehabilitation of offenders.
- Interventions are consistent, so there can be no perception of negligence or unfairness.^{207,208}

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

The whole school climate should welcome girls and all children who may be considered different because of their known, suspected or alleged sexuality. Schools should be safe and comfortable places, and all children encouraged to take full advantage of all opportunities for cognitive and emotional development. To do this, sexual and gender-based underpinnings of violence must be addressed directly,

providing children with an understanding of the issues, attitudes, and a grasp of the skills to avoid it or cope with violence when it occurs.

The concern that sexual coercion and abuse put girls and young women at extremely high risk of HIV infection has given rise to many different responses globally, especially in Southern Africa. Some of the initiatives by international NGOs extend beyond schools. For example, ActionAid's 'Stepping Stones' training programme aims to prevent HIV transmission and, in doing so, addresses related sexual and

gender-based violence in hundreds of communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁰⁹ Parallel workshops are held for males and females in order to provide safe and supportive environments in which both can feel comfortable talking about sensitive issues, but participants from male and female workshops also come together periodically to share concerns and insights. Themes include “why do we behave as we do” and “how can we change.” Results have included safer sexual behaviour, reduced domestic violence, more sharing of household tasks by men, improved communications between couples and parents and children, especially about sensitive issues that pertain to sexual health.

In Ethiopia, communities have taken the initiative in establishing Girls’ Education Advisory Committees (GEACs) that address the whole problem of providing girls with access to education of a high standard. GEACs have established Girls’ Clubs that serve as safe places for girls to talk, encourage them to report problems about harassment and abuse. Other GEAC initiatives include disciplinary committees to hold teachers accountable, ‘police’ to protect girls on their way to and from school; constructing separate latrines for girls; insisting on female teachers in schools; training boys and girls on how to treat each other respectfully; providing counselling for girls in safe places; and enlisting religious and clan leaders to stop abductions and child marriages. As a result, in one primary school the dropout rate for girls fell from 57% to 19%.²¹⁰

CURRICULUM: WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT AND HOW?

The curriculum, teaching methods and the whole school climate should teach, illustrate and reinforce the principles of gender equality, human rights and non-violence and the skills to apply these principles in day-to-day life. They should also serve to increase children’s resilience, so they can cope with violence and recover when it occurs.

Traditionally, school curriculum has been very ‘content’ focussed (what), with less attention paid to learning skills and processes (how), such as inquiry, problem-solving, and decision-making. There is increasing recognition that, in a rapidly changing world, it is necessary to teach children the *how* of constructive human behaviour so that they can protect themselves from harm, and take action to avoid harm to others. This kind of education is often called ‘life skills-based education’.

Life skills-based education should be part of a package that includes education on the principles of gender equality, human rights and non-violence and how and why these principles have evolved and can be put into practice.^{211,212} This may involve dealing with highly personal and sensitive issues relating to the unique characteristics of each child, that child’s family background, religious and cultural traditions, and subjects that were once considered taboo in discussions involving children. Dealing with such issues requires development not only of the curriculum but of appropriate teaching methods. This involves going beyond traditional rote learning to encouraging children to ask ques-

tions, including of their teachers, to relate their own experiences, and to express their own feelings and ideas as part of the learning process. For example, in South Africa, the Curriculum 2005 programme emphasises flexible teaching methods that encourage and accommodate children's active participation in learning experiences and helps them develop critical thinking skills.²¹³

From 1998 to 2004, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education collaborated with UNESCO to produce the *Manual on Rights-based Education: Global Human Rights Requirements Made Simple*.²¹⁴ It states that the child has both a right to education and rights in education. This means that schools have to protect the rights of their students, and also teach them how to respect the rights of others. The rights-based approach to education makes education the very foundation of the long-term campaign against violence of all kinds, including violence against children. Children raised in schools free of violence and taught to respect the rights of everyone to live in violence-free environments are the best hope for a violence-free future.

In the USA, for example, an NGO called The Committee for Children has developed three sets of curricula – *Second Step*, *Steps to Respect* and *Talking about Touching* – designed to give children the knowledge and skills necessary to prevent bullying, sexual abuse and other forms of violence. These sets aim to help children stand up for themselves, talk rather than fight, and think about issues from others' perspectives. A 1997 assessment of the impacts of *Second Step* in more than 10,000 elemen-

tary schools in Canada and the USA found that it had decreased aggressive behaviour and increased positive social behaviour in classrooms, playgrounds and cafeterias.²¹⁵

Some sensitive issues might best be addressed in a wider context. When asked their opinion about how best to address sexual abuse, for example, children in Canada, Columbia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Syria, and Uganda said that the subject of sexual abuse should be raised in the context of learning about children's rights and child protection, rather than singled out on its own.^{216,217} A feature of effective life skills-based education is that the teaching and learning methods are interactive and allow children to share their ideas. Effective life skills education often involves children in addressing real issues in their own schools and contributing to the development of policies and programmes.

CREATING SAFE AND WELCOMING PHYSICAL SPACES

A number of studies have asked children to map danger or safety zones in their schools and school playgrounds and these have pinpointed areas where girls feel unsafe, such as areas where boys congregate or where male teachers who sexually harass them have their classrooms.^{218,219,220} A study of a high school in Durban, South Africa, found that its spaces were extremely gendered. There were many private spaces for boys, where they were left alone and transgressions such as smoking were tolerated, and for male teachers, who declared

“When children grow up they keep what was done to them in mind and in the end they also do the same to those younger than them, especially at school. Some people become mentally disturbed.”

Boy, 14, Eastern and Southern Africa, 2005^{xvi}

their spaces strictly off limits to female teachers and girls. The only private spaces for girls were the toilets, and their privacy was compromised by missing doors. Female teachers found it difficult to find spaces that were not policed, or intruded upon, by males.²²¹

Where a school is not welcoming or visually appealing, it is more difficult to build staff morale and help children develop a positive outlook towards learning. Improving schools does not necessarily require significant expenditure of money, and can be done also as an extra-curricular activity involving school staff, students, parents and others in the community. In low-income areas of rural India, for example, staff and students have worked together to redecorate classrooms and develop school gardens using the simplest of materials at hand, though they have found that this works best when schools are secured and protected from vandalism.²²²

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

All functioning education systems have mechanism that gather data, down to the individual school level, and many have regular inspections that provide additional opportunities for gathering data. The quantity and quality of this data vary widely, however, and rarely provide sufficient basis for making even the most approximate estimates of the prevalence of different forms of violence in schools and how the prevalence may be increasing or decreasing over time. One reason for this is that most schools have no staff trained in data collection and analysis, and the same is true of most

local and district school authorities and some national school authorities. Since such data are essential in order to evaluate interventions and whether they are contributing to reductions in violence, it is highly recommended that district school authorities develop their capacity to collect, analyse and report data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Agreed standards, universally accepted definitions and classifications of different forms of violence in schools are needed, but local issues should be integrated into these as well. There are models for such definitions and classifications, including the *International Classification of External Causes of Injury*.²²³ There are also *Injury Surveillance Guidelines* that would help any education authority at national, district or at school level, to develop its own definitions and classifications and, also, simple forms and mechanisms for gathering, analysing and reporting data.²²⁴

The most widely applied instruments for gathering global and national data on violence in schools are the GSHS,²²⁵ covering an increasing number of developing countries, and the HBSC study, covering mostly industrialised countries and some transitional countries.²²⁶ Other existing instruments are Demographic and Health Surveys and similar surveys periodically undertaken by ministries of health (and other sectors) in order to determine, for example, the prevalence of HIV infection and behaviour that may contribute to infection.

Monitoring and evaluation will help to identify which interventions work best and how interventions might be improved. Also needed



IRAQ, 2003, Children at Youth House in the Adhamiya neighborhood, Baghdad.

are more in-depth studies into particular forms of violence and the links between different forms of violence, their risk and protective factors, and the effectiveness of intervention programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is a key agent of change capable of breaking the cycle of violence, not just against children but among adults, too. It can encourage children to learn self-respect, respect for others and how to express their feelings and negotiate for what they want without resort to physical or psychological violence.

The following recommendations are intended to support Governments, education authorities, school heads, teachers, students, parents and communities as they seek to create non-violent schools. The recommendations are guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and informed by Regional Consultations for the Study, expert inputs, public submissions, and an evidence-based understanding of the causes of violence and its prevention, including its virtually universal link with gender. The recommendations are designed to ensure that education methods, curricula, programmes and services uphold the norms established by the CRC, and that their design and implementation are consistent with social and cultural diversity, as well as economic and practical realities.

Prioritise prevention

- 1. Ensure universal access to violence-free learning environments, where the rights of all children are respected and promoted.** Consistent with the global call for ‘Education for All’ (i.e. EFA), Governments must ensure that primary and secondary schools are rights-based, and offer safe and healthy, gender-sensitive, inclu-

sive, and effective learning environments for girls and boys. Promoting non-violence in and beyond the school should be a clear goal with policies and well-publicised procedures for enforcement.

2. **Prohibit violence in schools.** Governments have the obligation to explicitly prohibit violence against children by law, and to ensure the implementation of related policies and procedures at the school level – specifically putting a stop to corporal punishment and other humiliating or degrading treatment, bullying and other sexual and gender-based violence.
3. **Prevent violence in schools with specific programmes which address the whole school environment.** Governments should implement violence prevention programmes comprehensively across the education setting for all staff and students, while being sensitive to the special needs of vulnerable children.
4. **Prioritise attention to gender issues and their links with violence.** Governments must acknowledge the pervasive impact of entrenched gender stereotypes on the nature of violence in and around schools. Male students, staff and community members, must be actively encouraged as strategic partners and allies; and along with female students, staff and community members, must be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding of how to stop gender discrimination and its violent manifestations.
5. **Give special attention to vulnerable groups.** Governments must implement specific strategies to ensure that the special needs of vulnerable children are addressed, and that discrimination in particular is stopped. Staff must understand and be able to systematically respond to the situation and particular risks experienced by minority groups, children with disabilities, children without parental care or affected by HIV, or children reintegrating into school communities such as refugee and displaced children, or former child soldiers.
6. **Provide safe physical spaces.** Governments should ensure that safe physical spaces are provided to ensure that both girls and boys have equal access to facilities and can participate fully in school life. Schools must have adequate toilet facilities for girls and boys. All facilities must be clean and safe, accessible by girls and boys, and free of negative interference from the community.

Build capacity

7. **Establish and implement codes of conduct reflecting child rights principles.** Clear codes of conduct reflecting child rights principles, which are harmonised with the law, should be established and promoted widely for all staff, students and their families and communities. It is the Government's responsibility to put in place mechanisms and protocols to ensure that schools have trained and trusted adults, within or independent of the school, to whom students can safely and confidentially report incidents of violence and receive advice.

“There is new awareness about the prevalence of violence against children in Africa, and its effects, both on those who experience it, and on the society at large. We need to translate this awareness into prevention, based on successful strategies from this and other regions. To delay this response is to betray the trust invested in us to protect the vulnerable.”

Dr Luis G. Sambo, Regional Director for Africa, WHO

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8. Ensure that school heads and teachers use non-violent teaching and learning strategies and disciplinary measures.

Governments should ensure that teaching and learning strategies and disciplinary measures are used that are not based on fear, threat, humiliation or physical force. All school staff should be trained and supported in the use of non-violent and respectful classroom management strategies, as well as specific skills to prevent patterns of bullying and other gender-based violence and to respond to it effectively.

9. **Listen to students and encourage participation.** Governments and their partners should actively promote and support the involvement of students in the design, development, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes, including through access to confidential complaints or reporting mechanisms. Participatory, gender-sensitive, and inclusive school management structures should be promoted and students should be equipped with the necessary skills and given opportunities to be involved, with special attention given to the participation of vulnerable children.

Strengthen knowledge and skills for non-violence

10. **Revise the curriculum to model non-violence and gender equity.** Governments should ensure that the curriculum, textbooks and teaching methods promote child rights, support diversity and indigenous knowledge, and emphasise tolerance,

respect, equity, non-discrimination, and non-violent conflict resolution.

11. Implement life skills education to enable students to build personal skills.

Governments should ensure that rights-based life skills programmes for non-violence should be promoted in the curriculum through subjects such as peace education, citizenship education, anti-bullying, human rights education, and conflict resolution and mediation; with emphasis placed on child rights and positive values such as diversity and tolerance, and on skills such as problem-solving, social and effective communication, in order to enable girls and boys to overcome entrenched gender biases and to prevent and deal with violence and harassment, including sexual harassment.

12. Promote school–community partnerships, and present schools as a resource to the community.

Governments should acknowledge the school as a community resource and facilitate closer school–community linkages to address violence in and around schools, involving students, staff, parents and other partners such as police, health services, social services, faith-based groups, community recreation groups, and cultural groups.

Build information systems

13. **Strengthen data collection systems on all forms of violence against girls and boys.** Data collected should ensure that the views of students and potential stu-

dents are considered along with those of teachers, parents, and the wider community, with a special focus on the experiences of vulnerable children. Governments should ensure that the information yielded should be disaggregated by age and sex at a minimum, and should be incorporated into existing education management information systems established at local, district and national levels.

- 14. Develop a national research agenda on violence in and around schools.** Governments should put in place a set of national priorities for research that can supplement data collection systems (described above) with in-depth qualitative and quantitative research that is ethical and child-centred. Data must be disaggregated to make visible the scale and scope of the experiences of girls and boys of different ages related to violence and overcoming it, their situations, and to make their risk and protective factors more evident.

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