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## **Gender-based Violence in Education.**

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## **Gender-based Violence in Education.**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines how policies and strategies to address school-related gender-based violence have evolved since 2000, when gender-based violence within education was largely invisible. It traces remarkable progress in research, policy and programmes, particularly since the mid-2000s when evidence around the globe exposed high levels of many forms of violence. However, there is still insufficient knowledge about what works to reduce violence, and weaknesses in processes of policy enactment which inhibit effective action. Through four country case studies, in South Africa, Brazil, India and Liberia, this paper explores how different forms of violence are being addressed in varying contexts. It concludes that more attention is needed to the space between national and local policy enactments, and to tackling at national, district, school and community levels the norms and inequalities at the heart of gender-based violence.

## Introduction

School related gender-based violence (SRGBV) affects girls and boys across the globe, manifested in physical, sexual and psychological acts of violence, and underpinned by norms, stereotypes, inequalities and exclusion. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, gender-based violence in schools has increasingly come to international attention, in part because it is recognised as a barrier to achieving the fifth Education for All goal: *to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality*. The purpose of this background paper is to examine the evolution of policies and strategies to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) from the perspective of achieving gender parity and equality. In particular, the paper asks:

- What was the status of education policies and strategies on SRGBV in 2000?
- How have these policies and strategies, and associated programmes evolved in subsequent years? What has driven these changes? To what extent have they been successful in addressing challenges relating to this issue?
- What are the implications of the current status of policies and strategies for addressing challenges related to a possible post-2015 agenda?

The paper addresses these questions through an analysis of evidence of policy and programming linked to SRGBV, with a particular focus on evidence from the global south. I begin by discussing the challenges facing governments in relation to SRGBV in 2000, and go on to discuss how policy has evolved over the 15 years since Dakar. Four countries have been selected as case studies to examine in greater depth different aspects of policy evolution. I consider how sexual violence has been addressed in South Africa, community violence in Brazil, corporal punishment and the normalisation of violence in India, and gender-based violence in post-conflict Liberia. Particular attention is paid to the gender dimensions of these forms of violence, often neglected in the literature (Leach, 2006). For each of the case studies, we reviewed academic and NGO research literature. We conclude by considering the implications for policies related to a post-2015 agenda.

## Policy approaches in 2000: invisibility of gender-based violence in education

In 2000, SRGBV received very little attention in government policies and plans around the world. In contrast, following the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and associated campaigns for women's rights, violence against women was firmly on the global policy agenda, with progress in the development of international standards and norms on gender-based violence, including recognition of rape as a tool of war (1998), and the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which emphasises the protection of women in conflict situations and their role in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. Around this time too campaigns for children's rights met with some success, with the growth of movements to abolish corporal punishment in schools, and two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

(CRC) adopted in 2000, which provided more detailed protection for children from particular forms of violence, including the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography, and the involvement and rehabilitation of children in armed conflict. However, while international treaties like the CRC (1989) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1981) prohibit discrimination against the girl child, and provide a mechanism for evaluating countries' compliance, they have been criticised for paying insufficient attention to gender violence in schools (George 2005). The disconnects between movements for women's rights and those working for children's rights and EFA meant that gender-based violence in schools fell through the policy gap. Although the creation of 'safe' learning environments for girls was referred to in the Dakar Framework for Action (p.17), the main concerns of the EFA movement in 2000 were with increasing access to school and with gender parity, and gender violence was omitted from its quantitative indicators (George 2005).

Awareness of gender-based violence in schools around 2000 was also hampered by lack of evidence and by the way violence was defined. The dominant approach to understanding violence was from developmental psychology, with violence in schools understood usually as involving acts of aggression between individuals, and rarely viewed through a gender lens. The influence of psychological framings was evident in widely used definitions of violence focusing on acts and their effects on individuals: "Violence is defined as behaviour by people against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm" (Gulbenkian Foundation, 1995). Violence tended to be viewed as aberrations, perpetrated by individuals, with interventions including behavioural intervention plans for children displaying anti-social behaviour (Jimerson and Furlong 2006) or anti-bullying programmes using peers to adjudicate between victims and perpetrators (Naylor and Cowie 1999). The focus on individual acts meant that the ways in which violence is embedded within broader power dynamics and inequalities was neglected. Where gender-based violence was considered at all, it was seen predominantly as sexual violence, and there was little awareness about ways in which other forms of violence can also be gendered. Bullying in schools, for example, is often directed at children perceived as transgressing norms of masculinity or femininity. Corporal punishment may be used to enforce such norms – to 'toughen' boys, or to teach girls to be submissive (Parkes and Heslop, 2011). While school based studies using a gender lens were beginning to emerge around 2000 in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Leach and Machakanja, 2000; Mirembe and Davies, 2001) and in the USA (e.g. Thorne, 1993), they had not yet impacted significantly on policy making.

The weak evidence base at that time was also because research on gender-based violence, especially with children, is fraught with ethical and methodological difficulties (Lee and Stanko, 2003). Statistics on gender-based violence are notoriously unreliable, with crime figures collected by police only picking up a tiny proportion of more extreme cases. Asking children about violence can cause distress and harm. Gaining informed consent may be difficult in a context where children feel unable to refuse authority, and children may feel constrained to give responses they think adults want to hear (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). They may also be unfamiliar with terms used to describe violence, particularly sexual violence. In contexts where child protection systems are weak, there may be a lack of support available when a child

discloses violence to a researcher. While there has been considerable effort to find ways to overcome these problems, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), much of this work has taken place since 2000 (e.g. Save the Children 2004).

In 2000 therefore, school related gender-based violence remained largely invisible.

## **Policy evolution since 2000**

In the years since 2000 there has been a marked increase in policy, research and action on gender based violence in schools. A number of key reviews were published in the mid-2000s, most influential of which was the UN World Report on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro, 2006), which documented how violence against children is a global phenomenon, with most violent acts carried out by people they know. The report drew attention to everyday physical violence and also psychological violence, including insults and humiliation, neglect, maltreatment and discrimination, and to its harmful short- and long-term repercussions for children's well-being. Schools were viewed both as having an important role to play in protecting children from violence, but also as settings where they may be exposed to corporal punishment, fighting and bullying, often linked to discrimination associated with poverty, disability or appearance.

Other reviews published in the mid-2000s also exposed high levels of violence, and stressed the limitations on our knowledge base on patterns of SRGBV. In their analysis of research evidence around the world, Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2003) found that much work ignored gender; work in Latin America was concerned with gangs, guns and drugs; in Asia with corporal punishment; and in Europe and North America, with bullying by pupils, usually seen in gender-neutral terms. Only in Africa was there a clearly gendered lens, with increasing attention drawn to the high prevalence of sexual violence. Here, research related to the HIV/AIDs pandemic as well as the drive to increase education for all began to shed light on very high levels of sexual violence. The review traced important links with power, emphasising how unequal gender relations combined with inequalities on the basis of age, poverty, ethnicity and sexuality were frequently at the root of acts of violence. They distinguished between explicit and implicit gender violence (Leach 2006). Explicit gender violence includes overtly sexual acts, like sexual harassment, including touching, groping or verbal abuse, and forced sex or rape, assault and intimidation. Implicit gender violence includes everyday institutional structures and practices that reinforce gender discrimination, like teachers' toleration of boys' domination of classroom space, or of gender differentiated punishments in which girls do cleaning while boys do gardening. These practices, in reinforcing unequal gender relations, may increase the likelihood of explicit acts of gender violence. A further review of policies and programmes at that time similarly highlighted the gendered dimensions of much violence in schools, with corporal punishment often more severe for boys, and sexual harassment and violence overwhelmingly experienced by girl pupils at the hands of boys or male teachers (Jones et al., 2008). These analyses signal the importance of viewing acts of violence within gendered and authoritarian school and community cultures.

The growing awareness about violence in schools stemming from this accumulating body of evidence, and particularly the 2006 World Report on Violence Against Children, have helped to bring SRGBV onto the international policy agenda and had some impact on policy making at regional and national levels. Following the 2006 Report, an Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children (SRSG) was established to assist governments, international organisations, civil society and research institutions to work towards ending all forms of violence against children. There have been a number of significant regional initiatives on abuse and exploitation of children, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Africa Child Policy Forum, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), and the Keeping Children Safe network of 27 NGOs from Europe, Asia and Africa. The African Protocol on the Rights of Women (2004) contains provisions to eliminate female genital mutilation and marriage under 18 years. However, a recent review of policy and programming carried out for UNESCO found that initiatives which specifically address violence in schools are less common (Leach, Dunne and Salvi, 2014).

National governments have also begun to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks, with the main area of progress being an increase in the number of countries banning corporal punishment, influenced by high profile campaigns like the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (UN 2011). Governments have passed legislation to make sex with children by teachers and other professionals an offence, and correspondingly to strengthen Teachers' Codes of Conduct. Policies on allowing pregnant school girls and adolescent mothers to attend school have been developed in some countries, and Ministries of Education have in some cases provided guidance to teacher training programmes on ethical teacher conduct (Leach, Dunne and Salvi 2014). However, in 2011, five years after the launching of the Secretary General's report, the UN global update on violence against children presented a depressing picture of very slow progress worldwide in eliminating violence against children (UN 2011). Recent reviews conclude that implementation of laws and policies on SRGBV has been patchy, and that our knowledge of what makes programmes successful remains woefully inadequate (Leach, Slade and Dunne, 2012; Leach, Dunne and Salvi, 2014; UNESCO, 2014). Overall, these recent reviews indicate that there remains a lack of evidence that the increased awareness about multiple forms of gender-based violence is translating into effective policies and school based interventions that reduce violence.

There are a number of interlinked reasons for the lack of progress in policy and programming. Firstly, there has been insufficient attention to processes of policy enactment. The term 'policy enactment' is used here in preference to 'implementation' to signal the importance of multiple actors at national, provincial, district and local level, and of contextual dynamics in understanding how laws and policies are understood, used or ignored (Ball, Maguire and Braun 2012). There is a growing literature highlighting the gaps between global norms linked to gender, national laws/policies and local enactments (Eyben, 2008; Unterhalter et al., 2008; Wilkie, 2012). There is no straightforward linear relationship of translation between national laws and policies, and practices concerned with gender-based violence in and around schools. Whether and how a teacher adopts a particular policy, for example, will be influenced not just by the existence of a law or policy, but also by material conditions and location of the school,

and the professional cultures, values and experiences of teachers (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012).

A second reason for slow progress concerns the policy focus on acts rather than the roots of violence. The increase in laws and policies on SRGBV is indicative of increased political will at national levels to address violence against children and women, particularly where there is a wide degree of consensus, as in the case of child rape, but there may be less motivation to address more controversial areas around, for example, gender and sexuality (Reilly, 2009). Policies have focused on child protection, or corporal punishment, or (less often) bullying, without addressing the intersecting inequalities, norms and exclusionary practices at the root of these practices. For example, creating child protection systems that punish perpetrators, while an important step, does not address the restrictive gender norms that may prevent girls from being able to speak out about violence or to gain sexual and reproductive health knowledge and provision (Parkes et al., 2013). A few recent pieces of research in the South have addressed forms of violence still surrounded by taboos, including homophobic bullying (Dunne, 2007) and sexual violence of children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2005), but the particularly high levels of violence experienced by some of the most marginalised and discriminated against groups of children need much more attention in research and policy.

A third explanation for lack of progress concerns the weak and fragmented evidence on what works. At local levels, there has been a huge increase in programming on gender-based violence, but often these are small, piecemeal NGO led interventions, facing problems of sustainability and scale up. There are few robust studies of these programmes, with many evaluations measuring changes in knowledge or attitudes post-training, without assessing whether behaviours have changed or whether change is maintained over time (Ricardo, Eades and Barker 2011; Leach, Slade and Dunne 2012; Lundgren 2013). Interventions have often been short-term, involving single inputs rather than multi-level interventions, often addressing one kind of violence, such as corporal punishment, without attending to school cultures or whole school approaches (Leach, Dunne and Salvi 2014). At local level, as at national level, many studies have pointed out the difficulties of shifting deep-seated norms around gender, sexuality and childhood (Unterhalter et al 2008; Dunne 2007; Murphy Graham 2009; Parkes et al 2013; Parkes 2015).

Finally, key to policy enactment, along with national and local actors, are the actors at district level, including officials in education, health and welfare, and the police, as well as NGO workers. This group has been described as the 'missing middle' (Unterhalter 2013), reflecting the lack of attention paid to their role in translating policy into action in schools. A number of recent studies have examined the ways in which the capacity of these groups to support policy enactment is influenced by stereotypes and norms around gender, equality and poverty, and stress the need for better training and resourcing (Unterhalter et al 2008; DeJaeghere and Wiger 2013; Sharma, Verma and Arur 2013). The need for more 'joined up' approaches between institutions working on poverty, gender, health and violence has been well documented (Parkes and Heslop 2013; Leach, Dunne and Salvi 2014).

In order to examine these complex processes of policy evolution in greater depth, I turn now to

four case studies, each of which explores contextualised processes of policy enactment related to gender-based violence in schools.

### **Case study: Sexual violence in schools in South Africa**

The case of sexual violence in schools in South Africa illustrates some of the challenges of policy enactment in a context with a historical legacy of inequalities and violent social relations. Violence against girls has been a major concern in South Africa since studies around 2000 started to document extensive levels of sexual violence, including in young people's relationships with intimate partners (Wood, Maforah and Jewkes, 1998) and in school by teachers and students (HRW, 2001).

Through an impressive legislative and policy framework the government of South Africa has attempted to address this gender-based violence, underpinned by the much lauded Constitution (1996), which enshrines rights to dignity, privacy and equality, the right to a basic education, protection for children from maltreatment, neglect or abuse, the right to bodily and psychological integrity, and the right to be free from all forms of violence whether from public or private sources. With gender parity of access to primary and secondary school already achieved by 2000, policy in South Africa appears to have been driven more by the human rights framework and the growing concern about levels of violence than by EFA goal 5. The South African Schools Act (1996) holds that every learner has the right to privacy, respect and dignity, and that learners are entitled to an environment that is supportive of education, where there is no violence, no harassment and freedom of expression and security is respected. Where a learner has committed an act of sexual violence, such a learner may be suspended. Dismissal of teachers for sexual abuse was enshrined in the Employment of Educators Act (1998), and the South African Council of Educators (SACE) Act (2000) put in place the Code of Professional Ethics for Teaching Professionals. The democratic transition was characterized by a period of intense negotiation, in which gender activists helped to shape the democratic discourse to one of rights and equality (Meintjes, 2003). Gender violence was a major concern of the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT), and their report combined with the constitutional mandate to ensure gender equity led the Department of Education in 2003 to claim that it would take swift action to reduce gender based violence and harassment in the education system (Chisholm and September, 2005).

The plethora of legislation has been accompanied by programmes and guidance, including the provision of 'Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Violence and Harassment' (2008) in public schools, which sets out a complaints procedure for educators and learners on sexual harassment. More recently the Department of Basic Education 'Handbook for learners on how to prevent sexual abuse in public schools' (2010) includes information for students around rights and reporting. Training on bullying in schools has recently been rolled out (Burton and Leoschut, 2013). Safe schools initiatives have focused on school safety through provision of gates and lighting, and training programmes (Geisler, Mokgope and Svanemyr, 2009). A collaborative partnership protocol between education and the police services in 2011



linked schools with their local police stations as a way of improving integrated responses to crime and violence (Burton and Leoschut, 2013). Mncube and Harber (2013) advocate setting up school safety committees, but stress that more important in countering violence in school is the existence of well-organised, inclusive and well run schools that enable teachers and learners to take pride in their school communities.

A considerable amount of attention has been therefore been paid to school violence in policy and programming, yet gender-based violence in South African schools continues to be widespread (Jewkes and Morrell 2012; Mncube and Harber 2012). Socio-economic and gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched. The language of rights and gender equality enshrined in the Constitution and legislative frameworks is not shared across the population, and some have been critical of its association with elites and with western influences, signalling that the development of policy in different spheres has neglected to have a broad public deliberative process (Hassim, 2009: 70). A recent analysis of sexual violence by educators in Gauteng Province concluded that a crucial cause for the persistence of such sexual violence is the inadequacy of processes and structures to ensure educator accountability (Centre for Applied Legal Studies 2014). At national level the report drew attention to some inconsistencies in the law. For example, if a teacher is found guilty of a sexual offence by the Department of Basic Education, but found not guilty by the South Africa Council of Educators, they will be dismissed but not struck off the teacher register, and so free to teach in another school. The national guidance discussed above has not been distributed to all school, nor are schools legally required to adopt the guidelines. The report also criticised the biased attitudes, inadequate training and insufficient resourcing for justice system actors. Interventions at provincial and school level have been criticised for being piecemeal and disjointed, with decentralisation policies leaving the onus on provincial education systems for implementation (Burton and Leoschut, 2013). At the middle level of policy enactment, officials tasked with implementing plans linked to gender and education have tended to view gender narrowly as numbers of girls/boys enrolled or achieving learning outcomes, thus neglecting girls' experiences of discrimination or violence (Unterhalter, 2012). Teachers and school administrators have been reluctant to report abuse by fellow teachers, resulting in impunity for those teachers who abuse learners (Centre for Applied Legal Studies 2014).

At local levels, policy enactment has been hampered by intersecting inequalities and norms. Studies with boys and young men have traced how, in contexts with high levels of socio-economic inequality and social exclusion, violence may become a marker of masculinity, with bullying and sexual violence commonplace in schools (Bhana, 2005; Liang, Flisher and Lombard, 2007; Parkes, 2007). A study of rural male teachers in Kwazulu-Natal found that age and gender norms intersected in their condoning violence against women and girls, which they viewed as an outcome of threats to masculinity associated with increasing female empowerment (Bhana, de Lange and Mitchell, 2009). Deep seated beliefs about the necessity of physical punishment for orderly learning and a legacy of authoritarian education practices lead to persisting use of corporal punishment in schools (Morrell, 2001). Research in schools in 6 provinces found that codes of conducts for teachers in some schools were not visible or used, and that teachers often feared for their own safety because of violence from pupils in schools

(Mncube and Harber, 2013: 28). Moletsane (2005) draws attention to the intersection of poverty, HIV and violence, arguing that implementation plans need to take into account the additional constraints on poor women and girls, who have fewer resources to report violence or negotiate within relationships (Moletsane, 2005).

The South African case study shows intense legislative and policy activity to counter gender-based violence in and out of schools, but also reveals the magnitude of the task in a context of persistent violence and inequality. The continuing high levels of violence appear to suggest that the policies and programmes are not yet succeeding in reducing violence, though the lack of systematic evaluations of programmes make it difficult to know whether and which programmes may be proving more effective. The clash of beliefs and practices and weak accountability at national, middle, and local levels of policy enactment signals the need for coordinated action, dialogue and deliberative reflection at all levels to address intersecting inequalities and gender-based violence.

### **Case study : Community violence and schools in Brazil**

Until recently, there has been relatively little attention to policy and programming on gender based violence in schools in Brazil (Morrison, Ellsberg and Bott 2004) and the evidence base on SRGBV in Brazil is slim (Ação Educativa 2011). There has, however, been a relatively long history of concern about youth violence, stemming from an explosion of crime in the 1980s and Brazil's ranking as one of the most violent countries in the world (Imbush, Misse and Carrion 2011). These concerns have generated considerable attention to community based programmes, including some holistic programmes, like *Rotas de Fuga* (Escape Routes) and *Luta pela Paz* (Fight for Peace) that aim to transform youth lifestyles through psychological, professional, academic and material support (Wilding 2012). Much of this work focuses on issues relating to masculinity, with boys and young men, particularly in poorer neighbourhoods, seen as more at risk both as perpetrators and victims of violence, including extremely high levels of homicide (Barker, 2005). Reviews of some of the programmes, like Program H, which aims to help young men question traditional gender norms, have demonstrated shifts in attitudes to gender and lifestyles of young men (Pulerwitz et al 2006; Leach 2007; Moetsue, Moetsue and Muggals 2013). However, the attention in policy, media and community programmes to young men has been criticised for neglecting the concerns of girls and young women, who are also affected by gang violence in public spaces and domestic violence in the home (Wilding 2012).

Concerns about peer violence in communities have also extended into school spaces, particularly in relation to weapons and drugs brought into school premises, and to the effects on relationships in school of high levels of community violence. Studies have examined how violence may be seen as a normal part of socialisation, including within school cultures where verbal aggression, including sexual harassment and homophobic bullying, are commonplace (Dunne, Humphreys and Leach 2006; Carvalho Malta et al 2010). One study, for example, found that for some boys in urban public schools in Brazil, inflicting physical pain became a code of honour, condoned within the school cultures, and racist attitudes were common among

teachers and pupils (Abramovay 2006). Attempts to address homophobic bullying through the school curriculum have met with resistance from conservative forces, reportedly hampering the capacity of these initiatives to achieve their goals (Diniz Junqueira 2009; Seffner 2013).

At a national level, education policies have been steered by an emphasis on children's rights and child protection enshrined in the Constitution and legal frameworks. Brazil's Child and Adolescent Statute (199) set up Councils for the Rights of Children at federal, state and local levels. Currently, a Bill to amend the law is under discussion, including a proposal to abolish all forms of corporal punishment<sup>1</sup>. The National Plan for Education (2011-2020) promotes training on rights and responsibilities, including addressing gender and racial stereotypes in the media. In several states, bullying is addressed through legal and policy frameworks. There has been slow process of harmonizing laws on gender equality with education laws and plans, but while education laws refer to equality, the framework has been criticised for not providing specific plans on how to address gender equality in the school curriculum (Uriza 2013).

The Federal Government has implemented some large scale school-based violence prevention programmes. Since 2004 *Escola que Protege* (School that Protects) has trained education professionals to prevent, recognise and mitigate violence involving children and adolescents (Henriques 2007). *Escola Alberta* (Open School Initiative) offers workshops for young people during the weekend, in an attempt to counter the particularly high levels of violence in urban communities outside school. Cultural, artistic and sport activities are combined with workshops on diversity, rights and citizenship (UNESCO 2004; 2009; Nascimento y Alves 2007). Both projects are government initiatives, with partnerships with NGOs and, in the case of *Escola Alberta*, with UNESCO-Brazil. *Escola Alberta* has been evaluated through small scale qualitative (Aniceto França et al 2013) and larger quantitative studies (Waiselfisz and Maciel 2013; Aniceto França et al 2013), with positive findings indicating a reduction in some forms of violence in school, including threats and theft, though one recent study raised concerns about whether having the programme on the school premises increased gang presence in schools (Aniceto França et al 2013).

While violence in public spaces continues to be a major concern in Brazil, influencing policy making and programmes, these projects illustrate a growing focus on schools as spaces for intervening to prevent violence. As with the community based programmes, the concern with youth violence may steer attention towards boys and young men, with more attention needed to address gender-based violence experienced by girls. While there has been attention to how the curriculum can address diversity issues, and some gender issues especially related to sex education, there remains a need to develop sensitive programming that challenges exclusionary and discriminatory perspectives relating to gender and sexuality, to address the ways violence shapes masculine identities, and to promoting inclusive school cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/reports/brazil.html> downloaded 2.3.14

## **Case study: Corporal punishment and the normalisation of violence in and around schools in India**

Concerns about school related violence in India have focused mainly on the issue of corporal punishment, with a range of studies over time highlighting the extremely high prevalence of physical punishment in schools (Plan 2006; Kacker et al 2007; National Commission of Protection for Children's Rights 2012). The first national study on child abuse in 2007 found that more than two in three children (69%) reported experiencing physical abuse, including corporal punishment in the form of slapping, kicking and being beaten with a stave or stick. Among children who reported physical abuse by people other than members of their family, the incidence of physical abuse by teachers was reported highest (Kacker et al., 2007).

At national and state levels, there have been considerable attention to building a legislative framework, but in the decentralised education system, policy enactments at state level have been variable. The National Policy on Education (1986, modified 1992) stated that "corporal punishment will be firmly excluded from the educational systems." The Child Rights Charter of India (2003) specifically states that "all children have a right to be protected against...corporal punishment...violence and degrading punishment". India's Supreme Court also banned corporal punishment but state response was piecemeal and contested; three states completely banned it (Delhi, 2000; Andhra Pradesh, 2002; Goa, 2003) while three other states sought prohibition (Chandigarh, 1990; West Bengal, 2000; and Tamil Nadu, 2003).

From 2005, alongside the growing evidence base about the extent of violent punishments, the prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment in schools was identified as a priority in the 2005 National Plan of Action for Children, and the report on child protection in the National Plan for 2007-2012. Corporal punishment was prohibited in 2009 in schools for children aged 6-14, but remains legal in Jammu and Kashmir (Article 17 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009). Designed to support the legislation, India's National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) provides schools with guidelines to encourage 'positive engagement' with children, including strengthening teacher training and reducing class sizes.

There is little evidence, however, that these policy reforms have reduced practices of corporal punishment in schools. Social norms around how children should be raised, authoritarian school practices, low status and poor quality training of teachers, and overcrowded, under-resourced classes combine in leading to widespread flouting of laws (Saath Charitable Trust/Plan 2006; Kumar 2010). One recent study carried out for Young Lives<sup>2</sup> in Andhra Pradesh,

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<sup>2</sup> Young Lives is an ongoing longitudinal study investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in four countries: Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam. The study follows two cohorts of children (born in 1994/5 and 2000/1), their households and communities over 15 years (2001-16). Led by a team in the Department for International Development at the University of Oxford it is funded by DfID, UK (2002-17) (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>).

where corporal punishment has been banned, found that 82% of 7-8 year old boys and 72% of girls had experienced physical punishment in school in the past week (Morrow and Singh 2014 forthcoming). Among 14-15 year olds, 41% of boys and 27% of girls had been physically punished in the past week.

While little attention has been paid to the gendered dimensions of corporal punishment in India, Morrow and Singh's study illuminates how punishments are not inflicted evenly among children. While a normative part of child rearing for girls and boys, for boys in particular physical punishments are associated with 'toughening up' young men (Morrow and Singh 2014 forthcoming). In their study, poorer children also suffered the highest rates of corporal punishment. Caste further influences patterns of violence, with one study finding that traditionally excluded *dalit* or *adivasi* pupils experienced widespread verbal abuse by upper-caste teachers in primary schools (Balagopalan and Subrahmanian 2003).

The broad acceptance of corporal punishment at school is part of a wider tolerance of violence at home and in communities (UNESCO 2014), with half of women (52%) in South Asia viewing beating by their husbands as justified in some circumstances. Another Indian study found widespread acceptance among adolescent boys in cricket teams of other forms of violence, with a third of the boys reporting having witnessed violence by their peers against girlfriends and female friends, a similar proportion having witnessed their fathers beating or abusing their mothers, and 78% condoned some sort of violence (Das et al., 2012). However, until recently there has been very little attention in India to gender-based or sexual violence in schools (Leach and Sitaram 2007). The public and media reaction to recent high profile cases of extreme sexual violence, including the death of the young student, 'Nirbhaya' (Without Fear) in December 2012, following gang rape on a bus, has dramatically shifted the spotlight. The public outcry has prompted numerous women and girls to speak out about their experiences of sexual violence (Kabeer 2013). In 2013 the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2013) brought in measures for faster trials and harsher punishments for rape and other forms of sexual violence, (Bhattacharyya, 2013). While this may go some way towards challenging notions of impunity, such legislation does not tackle deep rooted cultural norms. Frequently violence is seen as acceptable, with women seen as to blame for the clothes they wear (Bhattacharyya 2013) and wife-beating seen as justified by just over half of girls and boys interviewed as part of India's Demographic and Health Surveys (cited in UNICEF, 2012).

The normalization of violence in all different spheres of children's lives has been addressed through the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), a school based movement that promotes gender equality among adolescent women and men, with an emphasis on working with young men<sup>3</sup>. An evaluation of GEMS interventions in Mumbai with more than 8000 students showed shifting attitudes pre- and post-intervention towards using gender discriminatory language, and a decrease in reported violence. In addition, girls in the GEMS

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<sup>3</sup> GEMS was developed by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with the Committee of Resource Organisations for Literacy (CORO) and the Tata Institute for Social Sciences, with funding from the MacArthur Foundation and Nike Foundation. The project has been implemented in public schools in Goa, Mumbai and Kota, and has recently been extended to Vietnam.

cohort also were more likely to say that they would complain or protest about sexual harassment (Bhatla, 2012). There are also a number of local campaigns, such as *Must Bol*, which organises violence awareness workshops led by young people, and *Bel folio*, a cultural and media campaign calling on men and boys to stand against violence; and *ECHOS*, an online campaign encouraging young people to report violence and harassment in schools (UNESCO 2014). These campaigns are raising awareness about multiple forms of violence in and around schools, including sexual harassment and bullying by adults and peers.

At local levels, therefore, there is growing activism that extends beyond corporal punishment to challenge other forms of gender-based violence in and around schools. National laws and action plans have been developed, but mechanisms to support policy enactment are weak (UNESCO 2014). The growing information about patterns of violence in India highlights how norms about gender and childhood, as well as complex issues linked to caste and class, need to be addressed at all levels – including the ‘missing middle’ of education officials and NGO staff (Sharma, Verma and Arur 2013; Unterhalter 2013) - in order to shift normative practices of violence.

### **Case study: Gender-based violence in post-conflict Liberia**

After 14 years of civil war, Liberia has emerged to become one of West Africa’s more stable countries. However, the long conflict has left a legacy of high levels of violent crime, large numbers of child soldiers facing unemployment, a patchy infrastructure, and high levels of gender-based violence (Government of Liberia/ UN Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2011; Vinck and Pham, 2013). Sexual violence was widespread during the war, with, for example, 42% of female ex-combatants and 33% of male ex-combatants in one survey saying that they had experienced sexual violence (Johnson et al., 2008). In assessing the causes of the civil war, Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission signalled that the limited educational opportunities through political and social systems based on privilege, patronage and politicisation was a potent source of violence (cited in UNESCO 2011: 158). The ensuing civil war destroyed much of the country's education infrastructure (UNESCO 2011: 166), and the primary net enrolment rate was just 35% when the war ended (UNESCO 2011: 225). A study of reasons for persistent high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia concluded that high levels of domestic violence arose from the attempts of men unable to meet rigidly patriarchal societal expectations to reassert power in their households (Government of Liberia/ UN Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2011).

Though there is a lack of robust data on gender-based violence in schools in Liberia, there is some evidence that forms of sexual coercion are commonplace. For example, a recent study of SRGBV in four counties in Liberia found that 30% of girls and 22% of boys reported that they had been forced to have sex when they did not want to; and nearly a third of girls and 17% of boys had been asked for sex in return for money or help (IBIS, Concern, NRC and Save the Children 2014). Abuse was committed most commonly by peers, but almost one in five children

spoke of abuse by teachers and other school staff. The age and power differentials within school classes, due to the large numbers of older young people returning to school to continue their education after interrupted schooling due to fighting, limited infrastructure and displacement, may render girls vulnerable to sexual coercion by older young men in school (Davis 2013). Transactional sex, in which girls exchange sex for grades or gifts, is widespread (Save 2006; Davis 2013). In one study with 212 children in urban, semi-rural and rural districts, almost a third of the children said they had had transactional sex in order to pay for school materials (Antonowicz, 2010). In another study girls in Monrovia explained that they exchanged sex for financial rewards and to earn respect, sometimes encouraged by parents, and with some teachers requesting sex for grades (Atwood et al 2011). The power differential makes refusing sex extremely difficult.

Gender-based violence is often taken for granted, with, for example, the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey reporting that 59.2% of women between 15 and 49 thought a husband beating his wife could be justified (Davis 2013). In another study, 46% of boys and 34% of girls agreed that sexual violence was a normal part of relationships between men and women (IBIS et al. 2014). The normalisation of violence means that frequently children do not report violence, and when they do they are often blamed, and there is little expectation that cases will be followed up by police or other services. In other words, there remains a 'culture of impunity' (IBIS et al. 2014).

Since 2006 when the post war government was inaugurated, there has been a massive reconstruction and recovery programme, including strong Government commitment to addressing gender-based violence through its legislative and policy frameworks. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's leadership in efforts to address sexual and gender based violence has been widely praised, and seen as helping increase awareness of gender-based violence in local communities (Government of Liberia/ UN Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2011). The Liberia National Gender Policy (2009) was developed by the Ministry of Gender and Development as an instrument to achieve gender equality in Liberia over 5 years (2010-15). It includes strategic actions on gender and violence such as establishing gender focal points, providing gender and human rights training, enacting and enforcing laws against sexual harassment, increasing the gender capacity and data collection of the police (Griffiths and Valasek, 2011). The Gender and Sexually Based Violence Act (2008) aimed, through strengthening the criminal justice system and public awareness campaigns, to reduce gender-based violence by 30% by 2011 (Griffiths and Valasek, 2011), though its action plan paid little attention to schools (UN, 2012) and there is no data collection system in place to enable monitoring of changes in prevalence at a national level (Davis 2013). The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008) included prioritising the security of women and girls, and promoted gender sensitive modules in curricula of security institutions (Griffiths and Valasek, 2011). Liberia's National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2009) includes outputs and indicators under the four pillars of protection for women: prevention, participation, empowerment and promotion. However, one study found that the system for monthly reporting and monitoring of progress with the plan was not taking place, signaling a continuing need for training at the middle level of policy enactment (Dunne 2011).

While there has been considerable policy action on gender-based violence against women and girls, much less attention has been paid to violence in school settings. Within education, the emphasis has been on increasing girls' and boys' access to basic education, and there has been considerable progress in increasing school enrolment since 2004, when basic education became free and compulsory, and plans were put in place for cutting secondary school fees. At primary level, the gross enrolment rate is now 94%, though the gender parity index of 0.75 shows that girls are far less likely to be enrolled than boys (UNESCO 2012). There have also been efforts to increase secondary enrolment, with the transition rate to secondary school in 2010 at 62% (UNESCO 2012), though competing fiscal demands have hindered implementation of these secondary school initiatives (Atwood et al., 2011). The 2006 Girls' Education National Policy included objectives relating to ending impunity for SRGBV by teachers, but has been criticised for its clause that teachers who abuse or impregnate girls should be suspended/dismissed "unless they are timely married out of remorse or conscience" and for permitting teachers who have been suspended to return to teaching once their 5 year sentences have ended (Dunne 2011). The National Policy for Girls Education 2013 focuses on supporting girls' access and retention in schools. The 2010-2020 Liberia Education Sector Plan, in an attempt to increase girls' motivation to attend secondary school, gives the Ministry of Education responsibility for enforcing legal action against teacher and pupil perpetrators of sexual violence, and has developed policies on codes of conduct for teachers. The 2011 Education Reform Act also refers to protection of girls from sexual violence (Davis 2013).

The emerging evidence from Liberia shows how in the aftermath of conflict, poverty and gender norms combine in creating conditions for sexual violence to flourish. One of the world's poorest states, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has sought to establish security, institutionalize electoral process, and attract foreign investment and Aid. The dependence on Aid has steered resources to short-term assistance, including building on infrastructure, with insufficient funding towards the education budget (UNESCO 2011: 231). Legal frameworks focusing on reporting mechanisms and systems of punishment are to be welcomed, but policies and action plans need to address the ways poverty and gender intersect in shaping violence and discrimination, as in the case of girls forced to miss school to provide labour for families, and in transactional sex. Given the unexpectedly high rates of abuse of boys in this context (see especially IBIS et al. 2014) Attention is needed to boys' as well as girls' experiences of sexual violence. While the legislative framework is indicative of political will by the national government to reduce gender-based violence, there is little evidence currently that laws and policies are being implemented successfully or making an impact in reducing violence. Concern's report 'From Incident to Conviction', for example, compared the four steps in the Government's official referral pathway to 27 steps in the unofficial pathways described by education, health, gender, police and justice officials, demonstrating a clear disjuncture between national and local policy actors (Dunne 2011). Guidelines and training are needed on how schools should respond to violence and to strengthen the use of the code of conduct for teachers (IBIS et al. 2014). At national, district and local levels of policy enactment, there is a need for coordinated action between education, health, gender and poverty reduction initiatives, and for addressing the norms and practices that perpetuate violence in the legacy of conflict.



## **Conclusion: Key priorities for policies related to a post-2015 agenda**

The four country case studies demonstrate a remarkable increase in concern about gender-based violence in and around schools in recent years. The nature of the concern and the impetus for change varies between countries, according to its distinct histories and its current political, economic and social climate. In some countries, as in the case of India and other South Asian countries, where gender disparities in access to education have been marked, the EFA movement has been a driver for change, while in others, like Brazil and some other countries in Latin America, governments' commitments to human rights have been influential. Policy in South Africa, as in Brazil, has been driven more by its human rights agenda than by the EFA framework, unlike most of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Liberia, where taking action on violence against girls has been closely related to the impetus to increase girls' access to and achievement and completion in school. Histories of conflict, socio-economic inequality and inequitable gender norms shape the patterns of violence and policy responses. In all four countries, there has been considerable work in building national legislative and policy frameworks to address forms of violence. In the four countries, there have also been strides at the local level of policy enactment, in building SRGBV programmes, often led by NGOs, though sometimes in collaborations with governments. These cases are indicative of a wider global trend in advancing policy and practice on SRGBV.

However, there remains a lack of evidence that these national and local actions have led to significant reductions in gender-based violence. Indeed often violence levels appear to be on the increase, though this may be because people are speaking out more. This poses a major challenge for evidence gathering on SRGBV. For example, the endline study carried out for ActionAid's project to Stop Violence Against Girls in School in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique found little change overall in levels of violence over the five years of the project, but that girls were more likely to report experiences of violence to someone, and the researchers concluded that their increased capacity to speak out may be masking possible reductions in the amount of violence taking place (Parkes and Heslop 2013). For the post-2015 agenda, we need better evidence about what works, including more robust systems for measuring levels of and responses to gender-based violence, intersecting inequalities and patterns of exclusion. There is a long way to go in building the knowledge base, but the strides in research within this field over the past decade have taken us a considerable way forward. Conceptual work on violence as embedded within everyday interactions, school cultures and broader socio-political, cultural and economic contexts can help to frame more effective policy and programming approaches, which address the roots of violence as well as its effects. Many forms of violence are still shrouded in silence, including homophobic bullying in many contexts, and sexual violence experienced by boys and by girls with disabilities. More research is needed to inform policy on these areas.

Also for the post-2015 agenda, we need to strengthen processes of policy enactment. While this report has documented a number of weaknesses with national level policy formation and with local policy enactments, the key gap it identifies is in the space between the national and

the local. It is important to map out the full range of actors tasked with translating policies into plans and actions, and with feeding back local knowledge to influence policy formulation. Teachers, district education officials, health workers, police, NGO staff and many others have important roles to play in addressing SRGBV, and we need to better understand their perspectives, what constrains and enables them in taking action, and to provide support with training and resources for these groups at the 'missing middle' (Unterhalter 2013).

Finally, the case studies each reveal the critical importance of tackling the deep-seated norms, prejudices and inequalities surrounding violence. These areas need to be addressed in schools and communities, with young people, their teachers and parents, and also at the district, provincial and national levels of policy enactment. The commitments demonstrated over the past decade provide strong foundations upon which to take action, but only by working at multiple levels can we address the magnitude of the task of challenging the many forms of violence in girls' and boys' everyday lives.

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