

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This is an extension to a research study carried out in Zimbabwe during 1999-2000 (Leach and Machakanja 2000). The original study investigated the frequency and pattern of abuse of girls in four junior secondary schools in one region of Zimbabwe. As was pointed out in that study, there has been over the past decade or so considerable international effort to get more girls into school, given that it is estimated that girls constitute two-thirds of all out-of-school children. To achieve this, much attention has been paid to removing the external barriers to girls' schooling such as lack of school places, direct and indirect costs of schooling (fees, uniforms, books, domestic labour etc), distance to school, early marriage and parental resistance. However, very little attention has been devoted to examining barriers *within* the school that discourage girls who have entered school from staying on and achieving their full potential. This earlier study in Zimbabwe helped expose a school culture which tolerates abusive behaviour and violence, in particular towards girls, and contributes to low achievement and drop out.

The earlier study adopted a broad definition of abuse as including non-sexual abuse (in this context mostly corporal punishment by teachers, both male and female) as well as sexual abuse which could be verbal, physical, emotional or psychological.<sup>1</sup> 'Abuse' is a legal term that is recognised in most countries of the world. The term 'child abuse' applies to children and adolescents who are taken advantage of by an adult (and sometimes by another child) by virtue of his/her superior power and for his/her own benefit or gratification. This study is investigating the abuse of girls by male pupils, teachers and adult men in and around the school.

Male pupils who engage in aggressive and intimidating behaviour leading to assault and even rape of girls are guilty of abuse. Teachers who form sexual relationships with pupils are committing abuse *and* a disciplinary offence according to the terms of their employment, which in most cases will contain clear statements on professional behaviour and misconduct of teachers.<sup>2</sup> Such teachers are exploiting their position of authority in the school and failing in their duty of care towards children. Adult men ('sugar daddies') who prey on girls for sex in exchange for gifts or money in the vicinity of the school are also guilty of abuse. They have been included in the study because the school is not divorced from the community and school-based abuse is part of a broader pattern of abuse in society, directed in particular at females. Whoever the abuser, if the pupil is under the age of consent (16 in most countries) this will constitute a criminal offence. Particularly important in the context of this study is the fact that the adult abuser, whether sugar daddy or teacher, is usually misleading the abused (e.g. making promises of marriage) to lure the girl into a sexual relationship.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'abuse' has been used to describe much of the unacceptable behaviour described in the report as most of it is directed at children. The term 'sexual harassment' is used infrequently in this report as it is more usually associated with adult victims e.g. in the workplace or in adult education.

<sup>2</sup> In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Education uses the term 'improper association' for sexual relations between teachers and pupils.

This second phase of the study has involved further research into the abuse of girls in schools in two more African countries (Ghana and Malawi), the dissemination of findings from this and other research studies and projects, and the trialling of a limited number of strategies to address the problem in schools. At the time of the earlier study, the authors knew of no published in-depth research into this phenomenon although the media in a number of Southern African countries were routinely reporting high profile cases of teachers and head teachers sexually abusing and in some cases raping schoolgirls. The absence of research was perhaps not surprising because, until the mid 1990s, there was little public knowledge that this existed in an institutionalised form as opposed to a few isolated cases highlighted in the media. Those studies of sexual harassment and abuse that did exist were largely confined to higher education e.g. Zindi (1998), Gaidzanwa (1993), Kathree (1992) or to Western countries e.g. AAUW (1993), Stein (1999, 1995) in the USA. However, two reports did already exist which covered sexual harassment at both school and higher education levels (Hallam 1994 in the African context and Gouws 1997 in South Africa). Some early work on girls' low educational participation and achievement had also alerted an education audience to this phenomenon (e.g. Gordon 1993, Odaja and Heneveld 1995). Further evidence of extensive abuse was revealed by a number of small scale unpublished studies in related areas, e.g. Kaim's 1997 account of PRA work with adolescents in Zimbabwe exploring their views of sexual and reproductive health, Wood, Maforah and Jewkes' 1996 work in South Africa on adolescent violence and its significance in teaching about sexuality and sexual health, Mensch, Clark, Lloyd and Erulkar's 1999 study of premarital sex and dropout in Kenya, and recent research studies on the impact of HIV/AIDS on education by Bennell, Hyde and Swainson (2002) in Botswana, Malawi and Uganda, and by Mirembe (1998) in Uganda.

Nevertheless, this was on the whole uncharted territory in terms of in-depth ethnographic style research exploring with pupils, teachers and parents why and how the abuse of girls takes place in schools. Since the publication of the Zimbabwe report by DFID, a major study of violence against girls in South African schools entitled *Scared at School: sexual violence against girls in South African schools* has been published (Human Rights Watch 2001). There have also been several journal articles: one analysing reported incidents of child abuse by teachers in Zimbabwe (Shumba 2001) and another documenting the history of masculine sexuality as a political issue during the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa (Niehaus 2000), which shows that sexual liaisons between male teachers and schoolgirls were commonplace in the 1950s and continue to day. A third, in the medical journal *The Lancet* by Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga and Bradshaw (2002), reported on a 1998 study of the frequency of rape among a nationally representative sample of 11,735 South African women aged 15-49: this found that, of the 159 women who had been the victims of child rape (under the age of 15), 33% had been raped by teachers. There have also been various news reports on the internet and in print e.g. the Guardian Weekly (2001) reported on research by UNICEF in the Central African Republic which claimed that the main cause of the spread of HIV in schools was the widespread practice of teachers having sex with schoolgirls.

In the original Zimbabwe study, four junior secondary schools had provided the setting for the research. Three of the schools were co-educational while one was an all-girls school. Two were located in rural areas, one in a high density peri-urban area

and one in an urban area. In total 112 girls mostly aged 13-15, 59 boys, 27 teachers and head teachers, 37 parents and a number of government officials were interviewed. Towards the end of the study, a number of workshops using PRA methods were held with pupils to confirm the findings and encourage them to think of ways of reducing exposure to abuse.

### **1.1 Key findings of the Zimbabwe study**

For girls, the greatest threat of abusive behaviour on a daily basis comes from older male pupils in the school, in the form of aggressive sexual advances which at times - usually when the girl rejects the boy's advances - can turn to assault and sometimes rape. The researchers found that there was tremendous peer pressure within the schools for older boys to secure girlfriends among the younger girls and this competition was played out through a series of rituals, including the writing of 'love letters', giving of money or small gifts and accosting girls in corridors and empty classrooms. These activities could at times lead to violent acts against girls. A number of girls reported being victim of ambushes on the way to or from school by gangs of male pupils, being subjected to unsolicited physical contact such as touching or pinching on the breasts and buttocks, verbal abuse of a sexual and degrading nature, and being beaten or assaulted with stones, sticks or sharp implements. Abusive behaviour by teachers, in the form of requests or demands for sex (about one-fifth of the sample who were asked said that they had been propositioned by teachers), unsolicited and provocative or intimidating physical contact, and verbal abuse was also talked about. Although universally disapproved of, such behaviour appeared to be accepted as inevitable, even 'normal'. In schools where no action was taken to discipline teachers for such forms of misconduct, it could easily thrive.

The incidence of abusive behaviour of a sexual nature by teachers was lower in numerical terms than that of boys - despite the impression created by high profile reports in the media of teachers and head teachers impregnating, and in some cases, raping girls in their school. However, even if fewer in number, these cases are more shocking because of the position of trust that the teacher has been placed in and the fact that the relationship, whatever the age of the girl, is an illegal one. In the Zimbabwean co-educational schools, girls consistently named between two and four teachers as having propositioned them or as being known to routinely proposition or engage in affairs with girls. Boys thought the number was even higher. Not surprisingly, interviews with school heads and Ministry of Education officials revealed that the majority of cases went unreported, prosecutions were rare and few teachers were dismissed for having sexual relationships with pupils.

The abuse of girls in schools, whether by male pupils or teachers, is part of a wider problem of school-based violence (of which the illegal and excessive use of corporal punishment by school heads and teachers, and high levels of bullying are other manifestations) and is also a reflection of society-wide violence by males against females. This occurs in both the private (domestic) and the public domain, and is itself a consequence of the low social and economic status afforded women in the society. At the same time, interviews with male pupils revealed that domestic and school-based abuse of boys also exists, both physical and verbal, with beatings at home and in school being a frequent occurrence. In the peri-urban school in Zimbabwe in particular, there was much bullying of younger boys by older boys, some of whom

carried whips and sent boys on errands for them (reminiscent of the 'fagging' system which used to be common in boys' public schools in the UK). It is known that some sexual abuse of boys also exists both in the home and the school; in the latter setting, both female and male teachers may be involved and it is also likely that boys who reveal their homosexuality, or are suspected of it, may be subjected to violent acts and/or victimisation. However, no evidence of this emerged in the Zimbabwe study except for one instance of a boy who claimed that a female married teacher in his school had made sexual advances to a Sixth Form boy in another school. There is however some evidence emerging of sexual harassment and abuse of young female teachers by male pupils, in particular in rural schools in Ghana (Casely-Hayford 2001) and Botswana (Dunne, Leach et al, forthcoming). School-based sexual abuse of boys would appear to be a totally unresearched area in developing countries.<sup>3</sup>

## **1.2 Significance of the study for HIV/AIDS prevention**

In addition to the abuse of girls in school being a human rights violation, there are important implications of the presence of widespread sexual abuse in schools for the teaching of HIV/AIDS prevention. The school has been widely seen as an appropriate location for initiatives and campaigns to reduce high risk sexual behaviour and infection rates among adolescents, especially given that young people in the 15-24 age range are at highest risk of HIV infection; girls are particularly at risk, being five to six times more likely to be HIV positive than boys in the worst affected countries of Africa ([www.panos.org.uk](http://www.panos.org.uk)). However, it is now being acknowledged that reliance on the school as a vehicle for changing sexual attitudes and behaviour has been somewhat misplaced. Schools in countries such as Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa where there have been high profile government campaigns may have been relatively successful at passing on information about HIV/AIDS but these messages have largely failed to change sexual behaviour. According to Bennell et al's three country study of HIV and education (2002), only Uganda has shown some success in changing sexual behaviour through school-based interventions.

Various reasons have been advanced to explain this, including lack of materials, curriculum time and appropriate training for teachers, teachers' embarrassment and reluctance to teach the subject, cultural barriers and parental objections to sex education. However, the existence of sexual harassment and abuse in schools, most of it directed at girls, may provide an additional reason why schools are not particularly effective at educating young people about HIV/AIDS. Widespread sexual activity in conditions of intimidation, harassment and sometimes rape is likely to contribute to the spread of the disease, not its reduction. Furthermore, the prevailing school culture in sub-Saharan Africa is one that encourages the development of stereotypical masculine and feminine behaviours and promotes 'compulsory' heterosexuality (Mirembe and Davies 2001). This makes girls vulnerable to aggressive sexual advances, whether from male pupils, teachers or 'sugar daddies' within the vicinity of the school. There is therefore a contradiction between the school as a location for high risk sexual practice and the school as an effective forum for teaching about and encouraging safe sex.

---

<sup>3</sup> In the context of HIV/AIDS, Coombs (2000: 26) refers to literature which questions the reluctance to address the issue of same-sex relationships in developing our understanding of the epidemic and interventions to stem its spread.

These studies, and others (Mensch et al 1999, Bledsoe and Cohen 1993) suggest that in many poor countries the imposition of school fees under government structural adjustment programmes and other costs such as uniform and books have increased the incidence of transactional sex among schoolgirls; girls who are desperate to continue their education and whose parents cannot provide the necessary support are forced into sexual relationships with older partners, who will give them money for fees in exchange for sexual favours. It may be that in some cases parents accept the need for a daughter to be 'sponsored' in this way.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, an interesting argument is put forward (Bledsoe and Cohen 1993, Zabin and Kiragu 1998 cited in Mensch et al 1999) to suggest that the expansion in school enrolments in sub-Saharan Africa has led to increased sexual activity among adolescents as schooling removes young people from the supervision of traditional carers and exposes them to daily interaction with girls and to peer pressure. For some boys, opportunities for casual employment alongside schooling (e.g. farming, cleaning cars, portering etc) give them greater independence from their families and wider sexual access to young women. Since such income earning opportunities are largely absent for girls, they are placed in a dependent relationship with regard to men, which the latter can all too easily exploit.

### **1.3 Aims of the second phase**

The broad aims of this second phase were to gather more data about the abuse of girls, this time in two new national contexts (Ghana and Malawi), and to engage in efforts to bridge the gap between research and action in addressing this most serious of human rights issues.

Specific objectives were to:

1. Raise awareness of the widespread abuse of human rights in schools, in particular of girls
2. Disseminate information on studies of abuse and effective ways of tackling it to a global audience through both electronic and print media
3. Gather new information about the prevalence of abuse of girls in schools and its impact on their participation and achievement
4. Trial and monitor a range of strategies to counteract abuse in schools and identify those that were successful
5. Monitor mechanisms whereby policy and practice are changed as a result of such research.

Given these objectives, it was necessary to conceive of 'research' in broad terms, as encompassing empirical (field) work, information gathering, dissemination and the monitoring of strategies to address the issues uncovered by the empirical work. To achieve this, the study had three overlapping components:

---

<sup>4</sup> This is not just an African phenomenon. The UK *Times Higher Education Supplement* of 3 May 2002 reported that a large number of students in Thailand prefer to take a 'sugar daddy' as a means of financing their studies than to take a student loan.

**Information gathering and dissemination:** the intention was to engage in an extensive search of both print and electronic resources to find other research studies in the area of school-based abuse and gender violence in developing countries, or studies in related areas (e.g. studies of understandings of HIV/AIDS among adolescents, of adolescent sexuality) which would help uncover and explain the scale and nature of sexual or other abuse of children and young people. There was evidence during the Zimbabwe research that some agencies, mostly NGOs, were engaged in interesting work with schoolchildren and adolescents in this field and it would be advantageous to learn from these. Relevant findings on both research studies and project/programme interventions would then be disseminated to national and international audiences, including education policymakers, school personnel, teacher educators, health educators and international and national agencies working to promote gender equity in education. The DFID funded electronic resource id21, which is dedicated to communicating research-based knowledge on development to a global audience through both electronic and print media, was contracted to provide this service with a view to building up a network where information, experiences and lessons learnt about successful interventions could be shared. In Zimbabwe, a regional workshop was to be held to disseminate the findings of the earlier study.

**Extension of the original research:** the original study was to be extended to two further countries (Malawi and Ghana) where there was evidence that the abuse of girls in schools was extensive but was only just being discussed openly. These country studies were to build on but not replicate the methodology of the first study. This second phase would therefore consist of shorter country studies, making use of the experience with participatory rural appraisal (PRA) work, which took place at the end of the first study. This was now to be used at the start rather than at the end of the data collection period, as being a more immediate and effective method of bringing the issues into the open than a series of one to one interviews. Individual interviews would then be held with selective pupils as a follow up to the workshops. They would also focus on a slightly younger age group (starting from age 10/11 instead of 13 as in the earlier study). Three schools were to be taken as case studies in each country. Particular interests were to continue exploring the incidence and effects of sexual abuse by male teachers on girls (the most difficult area to investigate) and the impact of abuse on girls' continuing participation in education and on their achievement. There was also an attempt to find evidence of the abuse of boys (through both the workshops and the interviews).

**Trialling of small scale strategic interventions:** in Zimbabwe, as well as in Ghana and Malawi, a number of strategies which derived from the recommendations from the original study supplemented by insights from the new study were to be tried out. These were to be at the level of:

- the school (through pupils, heads, teachers, parents, parent-teacher associations and school development associations, in some instances using outside facilitators)
- teacher training institutions (through college principals, teacher trainers and trainees)
- policymaking, inspection, and advisory and counselling services (through the regional Ministry of Education, e.g. enforcement of policies on corporal

punishment, prosecution and dismissal of teachers accused of ‘improper association’, training of guidance and counselling teachers)

- links with other Ministry initiatives which target children at risk, e.g. the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare.

It was hoped that these strategies could be tried out first in Zimbabwe and then findings from these fed into Ghana and Malawi where they would be trialled once the first phase of data collection had been completed and then monitored over a 4-6 month period using measurable indicators. The intention was then to disseminate the findings of these strategic interventions as widely as possible among interested parties, feeding into the above process of information gathering and dissemination, and to monitor the mechanisms whereby the messages transmitted through dissemination and trialling (of strategies) influence policy and practice in the national context<sup>5</sup>.

#### **1.4 Anticipated outcomes**

These were:

- Increased awareness of the issues surrounding abuse in schools among a wide range of actors
- Wide dissemination of the findings of this study (both the original and the extension phase) and studies in related areas
- Identification and dissemination of successful strategies to counteract abuse, targeted at different levels of policy makers and practitioners (schools, colleges, ministries) and at those working in different sectors (education, health, social welfare)
- Further evidence of the level of school-based abuse in two new national contexts and within a lower age group
- Institutional research capacity-building in three countries (Zimbabwe, Malawi and Ghana). In both Malawi and Ghana, an experienced researcher would support someone less experienced and in Zimbabwe the principal researcher (Pamela Machakanja) would continue to work with Fiona Leach at Sussex University.

The research was conducted by two researchers in Malawi, Esme Kadzamira from the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT) and Eve Lemani from the Malawi Institute of Education. Alison Croft from the University of Sussex (whose doctoral research has been carried out with teachers in Malawi) and Pamela Machakanja (who carried out the original Zimbabwe study) contributed to the PRA workshops at the start of the research.

In the case of Malawi, the researcher would be located in the Malawi Institute of Education, which is working closely with schools and supported by the DFID-funded Malawi School Support Systems Programme; she would be supported by an experienced researcher from the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT) of the University of Malawi. This will contribute to the programme’s institution-building goals. In Ghana, the researcher was an academic attached to the University of Cape Coast who would be supported by an experienced social policy consultant who has done a range of consultancy work for the Ministry of Education in

---

<sup>5</sup> This did not in fact happen as there was insufficient time (see chapter 6)

Ghana, DFID and other development organisations. In both cases, in-country research capacity would be enhanced.

## 1.5 Methodology

In both Ghana and Malawi, three schools were identified for the research, one urban, one peri-urban and one rural. In both cases, these were referred to as School A (urban), School B (peri-urban) and School C (rural). In Ghana, interviews were held with a total of 48 girls mostly aged 11-15, 27 boys, 23 teachers (including head teachers) and 15 parents, as well as four education officials, the district social welfare officer and the officer who was second in command of the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police. The girls were taken from Form 6 of Primary School and Forms 1 and 2 of Junior Secondary School (JSS), the boys from JSS 1 and 2. The teachers came from both upper Primary and JSS.

In Malawi, a larger number of girls and boys were sampled (99 girls and 62 boys), in part to take into account the much larger size of the Malawi schools. The largest of the three schools in Ghana had 350 pupils, the smallest in Malawi had 1003. The Malawi researchers also wanted to extend the age range to include pupils up to 18, as it was believed that sexual activity was likely to be greater among the older pupils. The pupils were taken from Standards 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the Basic Education sector (equivalent to Primary 5 and 6, and JSS 1 and 2 in Ghana). There is much over-age enrolment in both primary and secondary schools in Malawi (although also common in Ghana, it is less extensive) and the ages ranged from 10-18 compared to 11-15 in Ghana. In Ghana, the schools were chosen at random from two districts using three categories (urban, peri-urban and rural) whereas in Malawi they were selected within one district according to the three categories but in this case on the basis of recent reports by primary education advisers of teachers sexually abusing girls.

In both countries, the researchers started with two day **workshops** using participatory activities based on PRA techniques. The aims were to:

1. Clarify understandings of abuse among female and male pupils, find out who perpetrates it, its frequency and its nature
2. Identify and prioritise the major problems girls experience at school, including abusive behaviour
3. Explore possible solutions to the problems expressed.

Similar activities were engaged in during both sets of workshops, drawing on the Zimbabwe experience. These included: exploring meanings of abuse through mapping their school and identifying where they felt safe and where unsafe; drawing 'abuse' spiders (to identify types of abuse) and 'cause and consequence' trees (to explore why girls have sex with boys and teachers and vice versa), constructing a 'problem wall' (to identify problems that girls face daily in connection with their schooling and prioritising these); and exploring possible solutions to these problems and at what level they should be addressed (individual, family, community or government). Boys were taken through some of these same activities separately.



The workshops were followed by one-to-one **interviews** (supplemented in the case of Malawi by focus group discussions). The aims of these were to detail specific incidents of abuse experienced by girls in and around the school and how it had affected them especially in terms of their studies (to include sexual abuse by male pupils, male teachers and sugar daddies, and corporal punishment). In the case of boys, it was to try to understand how they perceived the abuse of girls as well as the extent to which they also felt subjected to abusive behaviour (bullying etc).

Interview questions with girls covered: a) their home background, including family members they lived with, distance to school, domestic chores and parental support, b) their views of boys and the problems they experienced with boys c) beatings or sexual advances by teachers, and d) sexual advances by 'sugar daddies' outside the school. Also, in the case of Malawi school chores and punishments were explored in more detail, as these emerged as important issues during the workshops.

Once the interviews were complete and preliminary findings known, the researchers discussed with the school heads and the relevant authorities the types of small-scale interventions that they could trial with a range of participants and audiences, with a view to identifying suitable **strategies** for addressing school-based abuse. These dovetailed with those carried out in Zimbabwe, where the extension phase of the study started with a national dissemination workshop, at which action plans were developed and implemented by different parties (schools, teacher training colleges, regional and district education and social welfare officers, and NGOs).

Strategies which were initiated included seminars/workshops with pupils, parents and teachers in all three countries, and with government officials and NGOs in Zimbabwe and Malawi. In Ghana, a large scale community event was also held.

Finally, it should be noted that the design of this study gave the researchers a dual role: the first being that of the conventional researcher collecting data in a school setting around the topic of abuse, and the second being that of developing, facilitating and monitoring a range of strategies to address the type of abuse that they found. In Ghana and Zimbabwe, the researchers chose to work on their strategic interventions with some assistance from an individual or organisation experienced in participatory work with children (in Zimbabwe with the Child Forum Network and the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources, in Ghana with a children's NGO called Foundation Builders). In Malawi, the two researchers initiated the strategy formulation process (through workshops) themselves. Although there had been the intention to involve teacher training colleges in all three countries, as raising awareness and providing appropriate training to address abusive behaviour among those entering the teaching profession is crucial, this only happened in Zimbabwe; in the other two contexts, the timing did not allow it.

In all cases, the interventions appeared to have gone well, although monitoring was very limited. In Ghana, however, the researcher found herself in a difficult situation from the very start of the research, faced with incontrovertible evidence that the head teacher of one of the schools was preying on girls for sex in the school, from as early as Primary 3. The way in which she addressed this dilemma and handled the role ambiguity that the situation engendered is dealt with in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 2: INFORMATION GATHERING AND DISSEMINATION

Objectives 1 and 2 of the extension phase of this study are related. These are: to raise awareness of the widespread abuse of human rights in schools, in particular of girls, and to disseminate information on studies of abuse and effective ways of tackling it to a global audience. The first involved finding out if more work on the abuse of girls in school exists, especially where it might recommend ways of tackling the problem within the educational system; the second involved disseminating information in both electronic and print forms of any such studies and also of effective interventions to tackle abuse, thus helping to break the silence on the issue. This dissemination has been directed at national and international audiences working to promote gender equity in education and related areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention. In so doing, the study has sought to influence both policy and practice at the national and the international level. The search has not focused exclusively on Africa, although the little material that emerged during the earlier study originated from there.

As very little accessible material on this topic had come to light during the first phase of the study, it was necessary to carry out a systematic global search for published or unpublished work, either research or project based. Studies in related areas such as adolescent violence, youth culture, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health might well document evidence of school-based abuse. Likewise, agencies working in related fields such as children's rights, gender/women and development, social welfare, community development, health and family planning could be uncovering evidence of children at risk of abuse and violence in an educational setting.

Unfortunately, the resources available for this project allowed us to only look for materials written in English. This was limiting, as we discovered in the more advanced stages of the project that there appears to be a large amount of interesting work done with adolescents in Latin America, although not necessarily in a formal educational context.

The intention was to disseminate suitable material in electronic and print versions in an easily accessible format (short clearly written summaries). To this end, a contract was entered into with id21, the DFID funded development research reporting service based at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex, which produces regular print, web and email material summarising UK funded research on development. Print material is included in six-sided features called *Insights*. For this study, id21 agreed to create a separate 'Gender violence in African schools' page<sup>6</sup> alongside its existing social development, health and education pages. This would feature a number of articles on this topic, the first 7-8 of which would also be contained in a special issue of *Insights*. Summaries of these articles called *Highlights* were also to be placed on the dedicated web page ([www.id21.org/gender\\_violence/index.html](http://www.id21.org/gender_violence/index.html)). The web page would also carry a selection of relevant News items such as conferences and other

---

<sup>6</sup> The title of the web page was chosen as 'Gender violence in African schools' rather than 'Abuse in African schools' as it was considered important to cover the broader range of activity associated with the former term. It was later adjusted to 'Gender violence in schools' to take into account the items on initiatives from outside Africa (see Appendix 3).

events, to be updated regularly. The material featured on the web page would also be disseminated in the form of email newsletters on gender violence, three of which were envisaged during the course of the project.

In this way, it was hoped to build up a network where information, experiences and lessons learnt about successful interventions could be shared. The special issue would be sent to all current *Insights* subscribers (c. 9000), who would be invited to subscribe to the follow up gender violence email newsletters. A research assistant, Caroline Nicolson, was recruited under the project to find and prepare the material for id21.

This component of the study involved id21 in some widening of its current brief, which could be of interest in considering further development of this service. In this instance, it was creating a specific ‘project’ web page on gender violence in schools and disseminating information on research that, although part of a UK funded project, was largely generated from elsewhere. It was also disseminating information on innovative projects and programmes as well as on research studies.

The process whereby information on research studies and interventions in this field was located and turned into *Highlights* is documented below. This is followed by a summary of the content.

## **2.1 Information gathering**

Accessing material was a major challenge. We already knew from the first phase that there was little published material on the topic which was internationally accessible and in English. However, we were aware that interesting work was going on, largely as small scale initiatives carried out by NGOs. Gathering information about such initiatives is difficult because NGOs do not necessarily have the resources to document and publish their experiences. The sensitive nature of the topic was also a potential barrier to individuals sharing information, especially as we were unable to meet with involved parties in person and could only make contact by letter, email and phone. We were therefore dependent on people’s commitment to exposing abuse wherever they found it as being sufficiently strong to motivate them to respond to our requests for information.

The initial approach was to send out a standard letter (**Appendix 1**) to approximately 150 individuals and organisations working with children and adolescents, requesting information about research or initiatives they had undertaken in this area. All DFID regional and London based education and gender officers were included, as were the British Council, the Forum of African Women’s Educators (FAWE), a range of international NGOs and their national partner organisations, universities and research institutions. We expressed an interest in project initiatives as well as research studies and in those that dealt with areas related to abuse such as HIV/AIDS work with schoolchildren and adolescents, bullying, teenage pregnancy and drop out. We offered to disseminate relevant work through the id21 web site and the special issue of *Insights*. Although our focus was largely on Africa, this being the location of the research component of this study, we were also interested in finding out about work done elsewhere. The letter was therefore also addressed to individuals and organisations working in other developing regions.

The response was however disappointing, with very few replies and few leads in terms of identifying specific research studies or programmes. Of the seven items featured in the special issue of *Insights*, only three (those by George, Shumba, and Wood and Jewkes) covered work not already known to us. The others had already been identified as possible entries prior to the mailing. The three new items came through random searches of the internet and personal contacts. We were especially surprised that approaches to agencies such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and Fawe yielded nothing. It was also the case that some initial contacts with individuals working in related fields (e.g. HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy) did not in the end yield anything substantial enough for an article. This was perhaps not surprising given that, as already stated, smaller agencies involved in innovative work do not often have the resources to document it fully.

The *Insights* special issue was published in hard copy in mid August 2001 (**Appendix 2**) and was also placed on the id21 web site in the form of *Highlights* (summaries) within a dedicated 'Gender Violence in African Schools' page (see **Appendix 3** for the latest version of this page). Each *Highlight* also contained links to other relevant web sites. These *Highlights* were subsequently sent out in an email newsletter (id21GenderViolenceNews Issue 1). The *Insights* special issue followed the conventional id21 format: an editorial, a number of short articles (seven in this case) and an end-piece entitled 'Site for Sore Eyes' which provides links to web sites on gender violence and other related topics. The web page, the *Insights* and the email newsletter all contained a request for news from people working on issues of gender violence within a school or community setting, with a view to disseminating appropriate items as further *Highlights* or News items. A further request for information appeared in the regular email newsletter EducationNews Issue 4 (November 2001). These requests produced a few additional leads.

A number of comments were received by us and by the id21 team as a result of the *Insights*. Samples are attached as **Appendix 4**. Most expressed appreciation that we had brought the issue into the public domain and concern about how widespread the problem appeared to be. A few, predominantly from those working in the area of men/masculinities and development, were critical of what they saw as the excessive simplification and stereotyping of African men and women. The importance of paying attention to the needs of men and boys (including addressing the abuse that they may also face) when seeking solutions to social, economic and political problems, and of working with boys and young adult males in counteracting violence against women and girls (and also in developing effective HIV/AIDS prevention programmes) is clear. The need to avoid the negative labelling of African men as the sole perpetrators of abusive behaviour towards children was already being dealt with in the follow up stage of the id21 work, which was seeking to move beyond sub-Saharan Africa to identify relevant work being carried out in other parts of the world. There was also the intention with the follow up items to move beyond summarising research reports on the abuse of girls to identifying innovative and effective interventions to address this abuse (reflecting the focus of the work being done on the ground in Zimbabwe, Ghana and Malawi, as detailed in chapters 3-5) and gender violence among adolescents more generally.

Taking on board the above criticism, it was decided to try to identify some projects and programmes working with boys and young men, or with boys as well as girls,

which were addressing gender violence both inside and outside the school context. We found a number which focused on changing male behaviour towards women and girls but not usually in a formal educational setting. It was therefore necessary to look at work in areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention with urban youth, school dropouts and street children. In this search, we did not find work dealing with the abuse of boys in educational settings, which suggests that there is a clear need to research gender violence directed *at* boys as well as *by* boys.

As the study progressed, we looked for evidence of the impact of the id21 items. We found that a number of items were taken up by other sources of electronic communication. For example, the email newsletter Pambazuka News [pambazuka-news@pambazuka.org](mailto:pambazuka-news@pambazuka.org) (previously named Kabissa-Fahamu-Sangonet [kf-newsletter@kabissa.org](mailto:kf-newsletter@kabissa.org)) which claims to reach 'over 8000 individuals in NGOs, international organisations and networks, funding agencies and foundations, governments and the private sector' has featured all the items from the *Insights* and at least two of the subsequent *Highlights*. Items have also been featured by the Gender AIDS Forum at [www.healthdev.net](http://www.healthdev.net), the South African Health Systems Trust at <http://new.hst.org.za>, Edufax at [www.edufax.co.za](http://www.edufax.co.za), which advertises education and training events by email, and the [www.learningchannel.org](http://www.learningchannel.org) based in India. The ease with which one web site or email list can reproduce material from another is evidence of the power of the internet to reach global audiences. There was also evidence of policy makers making use of the *Insights* or email newsletter material. For example, a news story on the [allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) web site ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)) reported a speech given by the Deputy Minister for Basic Education in Namibia in March 2002, which talked of 'the silence on sex abuse in schools as deafening', and cited extensively from the *Insights* issue (**Appendix 5**).

### **Subsequent Highlights and News Items**

To gather more information, a number of web sites were routinely searched. The most useful are listed in **Appendix 6**. A useful web site in searching for work being done with boys and adolescents and outside as well as inside the school setting is the Communication Initiative site, which was set up by Ruth Hayward of UNICEF in June 2001 ([www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)). This provides a database of 60 organisations worldwide working with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. This proved useful in assessing the scale of work being done with boys and male adolescents, and outside the school setting. One item which featured in the later *Highlights* came via this web site.

The 'Gender Violence in Schools' web page was updated with News items at regular intervals, usually detailing conferences and resources on violence against women. The main items are included at the end of **Appendix 7**. The request for information on interesting material yielded a small number of leads.

It was intended to send out the second email newsletter in November 2001 and the third in January 2002. However, as there was insufficient material, a decision was taken to send out only a second email newsletter consisting of nine items and to place these new items as *Highlights* on the web page as they became ready. The second email newsletter was sent out in April 2002. This was sent to the 123 subscribers who specifically asked to receive the Gender and Violence email newsletters, as well as to the 1000 or so subscribers who receive the regular Education email newsletters.

The nine new *Highlights* emerged from a number of sources: in response to the special issue, further trawling of web sites, further development of earlier contacts and further searches of articles and print media. A local TV news item in London on the launch of the 'Respect' programme in Thurrock, Essex led to the item on the Zero Tolerance Trust. In total 16 individual items from five continents, featuring six research summaries and ten programme interventions relevant to the topic of the abuse of girls were identified. It should be noted, however, that six of these items originated in South Africa, this being perhaps indicative of the heightened level of awareness of the scale of violence perpetrated against and by young people there, often in the context of schooling, and the perceived urgency to develop programmes to counteract it. It should also be noted that although there were only ten examples of programmes which were trialling strategies to tackle gender violence, each of these had very useful lessons to pass on about appropriate approaches to take with young people when seeking to change perceptions of male and female identity and of appropriate sexual behaviour. The aim to share information and ideas on how to deal with abuse in schools has therefore been realised.

## 2.2 Content

The items in the special issue of *Insights* in August 2001 specifically addressed the abuse of girls in African schools, this being the focus of the DFID funded study, whereas those in the follow up *Highlights* encompassed a broader field, geographically (beyond Africa) as well as substantively, by documenting interesting interventions as well as research studies, and involving boys as well as girls. The items are briefly summarised below. The full reports can be found on [www.id21.org/gender\\_violence/index.html](http://www.id21.org/gender_violence/index.html) (three examples are reproduced as Appendix 7).

### **The *Insights* items**

All but the last item was based on a research study. Three originated in South Africa. All the items focused on girls, although a number of the original studies looked at relationships and adverse situations affecting both boys and girls – but with girls being affected to a much greater extent (e.g. Wood and Jewkes on adolescent relationships; Shumba on cases of abuse by teachers in Zimbabwe; Mirembe, and Kadzamira and Swainson on HIV/AIDS and education). The one item which was not an account of a research study provided information on a training manual to address gender violence in schools (Mitchell).

A brief overview of each item featured in the *Insights* follows:

***The sugar daddy trap:*** this provides a brief account of the original Zimbabwe study into the abuse of girls in school, based on research in four junior secondary schools. It suggests that adolescent peer group culture within the school environment encourages male and female pupils to conform to certain stereotypical behaviours which make girls particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. Male peer pressure requires older boys to aggressively demand the attention of younger girls; having a girlfriend and competing over girls appears to be essential features of the adolescent masculine identity. Girls were also propositioned by male teachers and by 'sugar daddies' in the vicinity of the school, who try to lure them into sexual activity by promises of marriage and gifts or money. Girls were widely perceived to enter sexual relationships for money and to

acquiesce to male violence. There is therefore a need to encourage girls to be more assertive, to generate greater awareness of abusive behaviour among parents and teachers, for schools and education authorities to act decisively when cases are reported, and for ethical issues around teacher conduct to be dealt with explicitly in teacher training programmes.

***Criminal justice:*** the Human Rights Watch report entitled *Scared at School* documents extensively the scope and scale of sexual violence against girls in South African schools and the discriminatory impact on their education and health. This suggests much higher levels of violence than the Zimbabwe study revealed. Although male students are the main perpetrators, abuse by teachers and other staff is also widespread. Some male teachers regard sexual relations with students as a 'fringe' benefit and bribe girls with promises of better grades and reports. Poverty, deprivation and fear of retaliation make it difficult for girls to resist or complain, while school officials, police and prosecutors shift responsibility to each other, leaving perpetrators unpunished. The government needs to develop a proactive, coordinated, system-wide response involving schools, police, the judiciary, medical and legal systems.

***Dangerous love:*** in a study funded by the South African Medical Research Council 1998, Wood and Jewkes explore the role of violence in sexual relationships among youth in one township. In this environment, boys are found to use violence in sexual relationships to assert their masculinity, and physical assault, rape and coercive sex have become the norm. In these circumstances it is difficult for young women to protect themselves against unwanted sexual intercourse, pregnancy, HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. However, this reliance on excessive control by boyfriends belies their own vulnerability: the threat of girlfriends being unfaithful or leaving them is very real. To them, masculinity is defined by numbers of sexual partners, choice of main partner and ability to control girlfriends. This study reveals close parallels with some of the violent behaviour talked about by girls in the Zimbabwean schools.

***Mixed messages:*** a study of pupils in a government boarding school in Uganda (Mirembe 1998) revealed extensive gendered practices which themselves constitute a risk to sexual health. The context of male domination and power imbalances between men and women within the school culture means that the extensive knowledge that Ugandan school children have concerning HIV prevention counts for little. Discriminatory practices in the school with preference shown for male staff and students in leadership positions, restricted access of girls to high status knowledge (e.g. science), unchallenged sexual harassment of girls and aggressive dominance by boys of classroom interaction, are all in direct contradiction of the HIV curriculum. This teaches negotiation and partnership in sexual relationships as fundamental to HIV prevention. Endemic harassment and discrimination in school denies girls the right to negotiate relationships, to make choices or to voice independence.

***Child abuse by teachers:*** an analysis by Shumba (2001) of 246 reported cases of abuse by teachers in secondary schools in Zimbabwe between 1990 and 1997 identified the majority as cases of sexual abuse of girls by male teachers. In 66% of cases, this involved sexual intercourse but in others teachers were accused of writing love letters, fondling, kissing etc. There were four cases of rape and one of pornographic material being shown to pupils.

***Risky behaviour: can education help?*** a study of the impact of HIV/AIDS on education in Malawi found that transactional sex between young girls and older men, including teachers, is commonplace. Students engage in risky sexual behaviour involving multiple partners, despite being generally well informed about how HIV is transmitted. Poverty, fatalism, the desire to experiment, to have money, and peer pressure are all contributory factors. There is uncertainty as to whether condoms are effective. AIDS education is ineffectively taught and has failed to bring about substantive changes in sexual behaviour. At the same time there is reluctance by teachers to acknowledge that sexual harassment by teachers may be a problem in their school. Recommendations include: peer education and drama techniques, access to non-formal education for out of school youth and dropouts, life skills classes throughout primary and secondary school, and a greater use of child-centred teaching methods and practical training for teachers on how to communicate with pupils about the importance of safe sex are all necessary.

***Safe haven for girls?*** A training manual entitled ‘Opening our Eyes’ has been developed for use by teachers and other educationists in South Africa to address gender based violence in schools. It consists of eight interactive workshops intended to show staff what is happening in their schools and how they can respond to gender violence. The activities are based on the belief that teachers must first possess knowledge themselves in order to implement a curriculum of change. The workshops aim to heighten awareness of violence and sexual harassment in schools and why it happens, to provide tools and strategies to address the problem, to increase awareness of the links between gender violence and HIV/AIDS and to contribute to ‘whole school’ strategies for enhancing the culture of learning and teaching within a safe environment. Strong leadership with a clear vision, targets for implementation, financial support and cross country ‘buy-in’ are all prerequisites for successful nationwide training.

***Sites for Sore Eyes:*** this provides links to a number of web sites providing information on sexual harassment, HIV and adolescents, adolescent sexuality, and the role of men and boys in ending gender violence.

### **Follow up Highlights**

Following on from the special issue of *Insights*, the search was for items that documented innovative or successful strategies to counteract abuse in schools, including work in countries outside Africa and with boys and adolescent males as well as with girls. This resulted in nine new *Highlights* featuring items from the USA, UK, Nepal, India, Nicaragua and Brazil as well as three further items from South Africa. Several of these focused exclusively on boys’ or young males’ perspectives of violence. This search revealed that some of the most innovative work is in fact being done outside the school context, for example with street children, gangs and unemployed youth.

The nine follow up items address a number of themes. These help to take forward our understanding of gender violence among adolescents and how to tackle it in a number of ways. Several items offer accounts of innovative work with young men using a range of media to address their views of male and female sexuality and to encourage them to change their behaviour towards girls, e.g. drama, comic strip and radio in



South Africa, film making in South Asia, and popular education and awareness raising in Brazil and Nicaragua. Other items outline participatory research by schoolgirls in Nepal, curriculum work with schools in the UK, advocacy work in the USA on high school shootings, and teacher training in South Africa.

These items can be clustered into three categories of strategy targeted at raising awareness around gender violence and changing attitudes and behaviour: strategies that use the popular media, those that use research and those that use workshops and training courses. All adopt a participatory process-oriented approach. The work with young men shows how important their involvement is when trying to address issues of inequitable relationships and violence against women. Each of the items will be discussed briefly.

The full reports are to be found at [www.id21.org/gender\\_violence/index.html](http://www.id21.org/gender_violence/index.html).

### **Media: film, drama and comic strip**

Increasingly, educational programmes that target adolescents are looking to alternative media to get their message across. In so doing, they espouse the view that innovative methodologies which move away from formal didactic styles of teaching and learning and are experientially based are more effective in bringing about attitude and behaviour change.

In South Africa, *the Storyteller Group* has been using comic stories as a tool to explore the gendered dimensions of violence within adolescent dating relationships. In so doing, it has shown how it is possible to diffuse the conflict between the need to reflect the realities of young people's lives and the need to transform elements of their lives which encourage harmful behaviour. The work developed from an initial storytelling activity with a group of school students aged 16 to 20 who were asked to write a love story about a boy and girl in a rural village for a comic strip. Reflecting their own experiences, the students treated domestic violence, forced sex and having multiple partners within adolescent relationships as the norm. Using theatre techniques, however, they were encouraged to act out scenes from their own story and in doing this they started questioning and debating the legitimacy of the actions they had given the characters. The students explored previously undiscussed topics such as rights over one's body, male violence, sexual double standards, teenage sexuality, and traditional gender roles. Thus a new story, in comic form, emerged, which despite its educational agenda still retained its popular status by remaining true to the social conditions created by the students. The students in this way became active change agents in their own lives and those of young people around them by confronting the view that violence in adolescent relationships is the norm.

This work is reflected in the activities which have emerged from the South African Edudrama called 'Soul City', whereby a popular TV 'soap' is used as a starting point for developing educational materials seeking to change young people's views of sex, violence, HIV/AIDS etc. Soul City is now a multi-media project which aims to impact positively on people's quality of life through integrating health and development issues into prime time television and radio dramas backed up by print materials. Its offshoot projects include life skills materials and a children's edutainment vehicle called "Soul Buddyz". This deals with issues such as children's rights, AIDS, youth sexuality, accidents, disability, road safety, gender equality and bullying. Soul

BuddyZ consists of a television series, a radio series, a sex education video, a parenting booklet and life skills booklets distributed through schools to all Grade 7 pupils nationally. These materials have been adapted for use in other Southern African countries (Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Namibia), using popular language and real life scripts which tackle local issues.<sup>7</sup>

Work in South Africa also using drama techniques with adolescents has been carried out by *Dramaide*, a national NGO, and the University of Natal in Durban; groups of learners in two local schools developed plays designed to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and gender. A particularly interesting aspect of this work is the use of evaluative research in deepening the impact of the drama work. This evaluation process enables learners to evaluate themselves through a process of 'self-reconstruction'.

The project involved both boys and girls, using single sex as well as mixed gender interactions. Small single-sex focus groups discussed with a researcher/evaluator from the University team the impact of the drama work by focusing on the changes in their understanding about gender equality. This allowed the learners to reflect critically on their lives with new awareness. By building a strong rapport with the learners in this way, the team was able to challenge entrenched ideas about gender inequality.

The focus of the project was on male learners; however, the biggest impact of the drama work was among female learners. Girls were able to 'test' their new understanding, for example the realization that it was not obligatory to have sex with an assertive boy or to do the bidding of a fellow male learner. This allowed them to be much clearer about who they were, their rights, their position as women, the impact of gender inequalities on their lives, and they felt able to assert themselves more forcefully in social and educational contexts in the future. The girls became more expressive, outspoken and confident in challenging exploitative and uneven gender parameters within intimate relationships. They insisted on being consulted and respected by boys and by friends and teachers.

For the boys, the work led them to take more responsibility for their actions, to express their emotions better and to develop an understanding of the possibility of at least 'doing masculinity' differently. They became more reflective and open to ideas of gender equality in their own lives and relationships.

Film has been used in the pioneering *Let's Talk Men* programme in South Asia to challenge entrenched gender stereotypes (see Poudyal 2000 for an earlier account). Supported by Save the Children Fund and UNICEF, four films have been produced with the involvement and cooperation of children (one each in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan), aimed at raising awareness of HIV/AIDS among adolescents and violence against girls in the region.

In a society where parents rarely talk to their children about gender inequalities and sexuality, the absence of dialogue means that most children develop notions of gender and power through the cinema and television, which portray conservative images of

---

<sup>7</sup> A brief News Item appeared on the id21 Gender and Violence web page (see also [www.soulcity.org.za](http://www.soulcity.org.za))

women and men and the relationships between them. These four films aim to initiate discussions between boys and girls, help them understand how knowledge and femininity/masculinity are constructed, and challenge traditional images of men and women and the power relations between them.

In the Indian film, 'When Four Friends Meet', four boys who live in a working class district of Delhi share their secrets concerning sex, girls, their dreams, failures, frustrations and triumphs. After the screening, the facilitator leads a discussion focusing on certain issues such as: What roles do boys play during childhood? How does society view working women, and why? Should boys cry, can they feel anxious, is it OK to feel confused? The films present alternative male role models as well as a platform for discussion.

Behind the film project is the conviction that it is important for professionals to establish a culture of discourse with children and to discuss openly with them issues such as patriarchy, sexuality, masculinity, inequity, power, domination, abuse and violence. If interventions with children are to be successful, their views must be solicited and they should be encouraged to talk about their experiences. All too often professionals decide what is appropriate for children and then tell them what to do.

### **Research**

Involving young people in participatory research can also be empowering. Save the Children Fund has been supporting a *Safe Spaces* project in Nepal that facilitates research by girls to explore ways to claim back unsafe spaces for themselves. Girls carried out the research themselves, exploring and analysing the types of space they occupied, determining the characteristics of a safe environment and developing an action plan to 'take back their space'. They used PRA tools to map unsafe spaces within their village, venn diagrams to illustrate their mobility, and team building tools; boys were involved in the process only when the girls felt it was necessary. They identified what was needed to reclaim their 'space', e.g. for parents to recognise the importance of girls' education, to avoid conservative traditions such as gender discrimination within castes and between sons and daughters, and early marriage. In particular, the girls demonstrated their ability to raise issues of girls' rights and equal opportunities within the community and to lobby people to speak out against injustices and the oppression of girls. By sharing the findings of their research and interacting with local government, school teachers, and parents, the children were able to begin to mobilise support and change. This is remarkable in a socio-cultural context where girls are usually confined to the private arena and rarely given a public voice.

As an advocacy tool, such a process can help girls and boys to influence those around them, whether at the school, the community or the government level. Children clearly have enormous potential to improve their environment and take control of their own lives. As a result of the project in Nepal, changes have been identified within communities, which are paying greater respect to girls than was hitherto the case. Boys who were initially teasers have become supportive of girls' efforts to manage change. Girls' groups have been consulted by community members on various cases of abuse or mistreatment of girls, and support groups for girls who have faced abuse have been established in some communities. Local government bodies often cite the groups as success stories, inviting them to events related to girls' rights and safety, and in one case providing financial support for future work.

Research has also been used by the *Instituto Promundo* in Brazil to identify young men who show relatively gender sensitive attitudes and behaviour. In Latin America in general, male involvement in what are seen traditionally as women's issues, such as reproductive health and child care, is limited; men generally feel that they are entitled to sex from women and tolerance of violence against women is fairly widespread. Among the 25 men aged 15-21 included in the study, however, there were some who showed more 'gender equitable' characteristics than others, i.e. they were respectful in their relationships with young women and they sought relationships based on equality and intimacy rather than sexual conquest; they sought to be involved fathers and to assume some responsibility for reproductive health issues, and they did not use violence against women. These men manifested certain skills of self-reflection and to analyse their circumstances as men critically.

In response to the research, a programme was developed to promote the attitudes and behaviours described above. For example, group discussions about life histories were held to help the young men see the 'costs' of traditional masculinities. Courses in Afro-Brazilian dance, computing and health promotion aimed to encourage vocational and cultural competencies which would buffer traditional masculinities. Community awareness raising about domestic violence targeted men and women whilst group formation to tackle such issues was initiated and encouraged. The programme showed that it was important to promote public awareness of gender equity at the macro-policy level as well as at the community and individual level, to overcome the institutional barriers to working with young men on issues relating to sexuality, reproductive health and gender, to challenge preconceived notions of young men as always disruptive and aggressive.

### **Training**

The above example from Brazil shows how research with young men can lead to the development of effective programmes to promote gender equity by raising awareness and changing attitudes and behaviour. In Nicaragua, training courses on masculinity and gender have also been developed which encourage men to examine, question and change traditional male values and behaviour. The *Association of Men Against Violence (AMAV)* has run workshops for young men from street gangs in poor neighbourhoods of Managua. Typically, the association first approaches the gang leader and tries to convince him to participate and to involve other gang members. Then discussions are held to ascertain what issues the boys would be interested in addressing. Violence, both in the home and between street gangs, sexuality and family communication are the most popular topics. Sexuality is a taboo subject in the home and at school. The association uses popular education methods and techniques, including personal history and experiences, games, debates and film. Course participants are encouraged to focus on their own experiences: to examine and 'unlearn' society's rules and expectations about being a man. The young men are encouraged to question male stereotypes by reconstructing the process of learning male behaviour and the role that different groups play – the church, media, school and family – in this. Although men face strong pressure not to change, their concern with gender issues and their willingness to reflect and change presents a new opportunity.

This work shows how important it is to promote men's participation in the analysis of male power in public, private and political organisations. The popular education

model so strongly advocated in Latin America facilitates change, in this case by using men's own situation as a starting point. It provides spaces for reflection and analysis where men can think about issues that they rarely discuss, engage in collective articulation of proposals for change and consider how to support one another. In so doing, the process emphasises solidarity with women as well as men's own processes of 'unlearning' machismo. From this work it is clear that men must take the ultimate responsibility for promoting and consolidating change processes in themselves and in other men.

The training of teachers in appropriate skills to engage in the process of facilitating attitude and behaviour change among young people is also crucial, as the 'Opening Our Eyes' item in the *Insights* (detailed above) makes clear. Teachers who have been trained in largely didactic methods of classroom delivery within the formal educational system are ill equipped to do this. In South Africa, where gender violence in schools and in the community is reputed to be at historically high levels, the School of Public Health at the University of the Western Cape has developed a ***Gender and Conflict*** component for the primary school curriculum. This offers two training models to help teachers incorporate the issue of gender-based violence into the curriculum. These are the 'whole school' approach and the 'train the trainer' approach and both have been piloted in six primary schools. The models focus on identifying and challenging teachers' own knowledge and attitudes towards gender and violence, on encouraging teachers to reflect on the messages they send to students, and on identifying strategies to address such violence.

An evaluation of the training provided to teachers by the pilot project revealed that prior to the training 30 percent of teachers felt that schools could play a meaningful role in addressing gender violence but after the training 70 percent of teachers thought this to be the case. 85 percent of teachers felt that this was a significant problem in their schools, and 95 percent of teachers before training (100 percent post-training) felt that Grade 5 (age 9-10 years old) is an appropriate stage to begin addressing the issue of gender violence. Among the teachers, a separate and optional confidential questionnaire completed by 26 teachers (17 women and nine men) revealed that a number of the women teachers had experienced sexual harassment from a colleague or physical or sexual abuse from an intimate. Of the nine male teachers, several admitted to having been physically or sexually abusive.

It is important to recognise that teachers can be key instruments for change. They are role models for school children but also have their own experiences as gendered beings. To play an effective role in addressing gender-based violence in schools, teachers need to understand and confront their own attitudes and experiences regarding gender and violence. Given that the role of teachers as perpetrators of abuse was highlighted in the original Zimbabwe study and is further confirmed by the current work in Ghana and Malawi (chapters 3-4), it is important that strategies to address gender violence in schools acknowledge and address the attitudes and experiences of teachers themselves.

Violence in adolescent relationships and abusive behaviour in schools are not just the prerogative of the developing world. Work by the ***Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust*** in Scotland shows that similar programmes exist to address similar youth problems. In the UK, the government is committed to reducing teenage pregnancy, yet it seems to

ignore the fact that abusive sexual relationships may be a contributory factor. According to the Trust, effective strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy need to tackle gender violence amongst youth and to help develop solid foundations of respect and self esteem in adolescent relationships. A study carried out by the Trust into young people's attitudes towards violence, sex and relationships in Scotland and England showed that, among many of the young men who participated, it was considered acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex if they had been going out for a long time or if 'he is so turned on he cannot stop', also if he had spent a lot of money on the girl or if the girl had slept with lots of men. While hitting women was regarded as 'unmanly' or 'cowardly', 'provocation' such as nagging was sometimes seen as a justifiable excuse for violence. 36 percent of the young men thought they might use violence in future relationships in the belief that women often provoke it. At the same time, boys expressed feelings that they were victims of their own sexuality as a result of peer pressure.

Zero Tolerance has developed an innovative approach to challenging such attitudes among young people, based on the view that group norms and peer pressure encourage a continuum of abusive behaviour. It uses participatory techniques to explore the meaning of respect, power relations, and violence in relationships. The primary school pilot programme called 'Respect' uses games, jigsaws, role play and discussion to explore communication, cooperation, respect, difference, power, being a girl, and being a boy. Issues of gender violence are explored more deeply in secondary school.

Working in partnership with the Zero Tolerance Trust, the South Essex Rape and Crisis Centre has used interactive theatre techniques, in which plays performed by young people explore girls' and boys' vulnerability to peer pressure which pushes them into sexual relationships. Using incidents of abuse and violence as a starting point, pupils discuss possible alternative actions or types of behaviour that the characters might have enacted and, as the play is presented a second time, pupils can 'freeze' the action and themselves act out their alternative ideas. Alongside such curriculum interventions, a mass media campaign aims to challenge conventional viewpoints. Slogans such as 'Boys must always be tough, girls just need to be pretty, says who?' are placed on buses, in youth centres and in other prominent places throughout the community; posters promote consent in relationships rather than power and dominance.

This programme shows that a whole school approach is necessary to ensure that the messages of respect are consistent and reinforced by teachers and pupils alike. Also, links with social services need to be developed to ensure support for teachers dealing with disclosures from pupils. Primary health care officials, social services and the education sector should build on such school curriculum initiatives as an effective way of addressing issues of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse. The core principles and approaches of 'Respect' should be taught within the teacher training curriculum.

In the USA, another manifestation of gender violence in schools is to be seen in the high incidence of high school shootings, which have attracted much media attention and much panic within communities. However, as the *Wellesley College Center for Research on Women* in the USA has pointed out, the national and educational media

reporting on these acts has focused exclusively on the role of gangs, guns and drugs in these school shootings, and has failed to recognise and identify gendered relationships as a factor. In fact, most attacks were carried out by white boys upset about the break up of a relationship with a girl friend, rejection by a girl, or because they did not meet traditional community expectations of masculinity. Peer to peer sexual harassment is also rampant in American schools. According to findings from the latest survey by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (AAUW) in 2000, 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys in 8-11<sup>th</sup> grades have experienced sexual harassment in school, while 54 percent of students admit that they have sexually harassed someone during their school life. Yet, when educators and policy makers consider interventions to curb youth violence, they overlook gender violence.

In response, Wellesley College is developing and promoting the notion of 'gender safety' in schools. This aims to shift the national media attention from a singular focus on gangs, guns, drugs and threats of violence to include acknowledgement of the gendered dimensions of threats to safety. These are not currently being measured or disaggregated in research or addressed in school or social policy. A landmark case involving a 5 year-long lawsuit filed by the parents of a 10 year old 5th grade female student who had endured months of sexual harassment by a male student (being grabbed in her crotch and breasts and spoken to in a vulgar way), resulted in the Supreme Court's ruling in May 1999 that officials in all publicly funded schools are liable for peer to peer sexual harassment. This decision charts a sea change in attitudes towards addressing sexual harassment in schools. This case revealed how school staff often witness incidents but fail to confirm the girl's experiences or to take action because they do not 'label' them as 'sexual harassment'.

Current school reforms addressing school safety focus on the creation of a 'zero tolerance' approach - 'one strike and you're out'. Yet, concerns have been raised that with the increased vigilance towards sexual harassment since the Supreme Court ruling, infractions will end up in outright expulsion and suspension of offenders (mainly boys), without addressing the root causes of the problems. The Wellesley College programme seeks to replace 'zero-tolerance' with 'zero-indifference', i.e. school staff should notice, comment on, and intervene in students' behaviour, and take progressive disciplinary action. There is an urgent need for a large scale research study to be carried out exploring the relationship between harasser and victim in the school setting, this being an almost totally unresearched area.

## **2.3 Outcomes**

This id21 initiative has been largely successful in achieving the first two objectives of this research, namely to raise awareness of the abuse of girls in schools in Africa and elsewhere and to gather and disseminate information on studies of school-based abuse and effective interventions to a global audience. In seeking out such studies, it has uncovered associated work outside the school context, especially with men and boys, which is of potential interest and relevance to those trying to reduce violence and abuse within schools. In particular, it has identified participatory approaches using a range of media such as theatre and film which appear to be effective in bringing about attitude and behaviour change among young people; there are lessons and suggestions here for those seeking to address the abuse of girls within educational institutions. The use of electronic media has allowed awareness of the severity of the issue of gender

violence in schools to be raised among a wide audience of policymakers and practitioners in education and related fields. In identifying useful approaches and interventions and in disseminating research findings, it has also progressed the debate around men, women and development.

**Particular outcomes are:**

- Current research on the abuse of girls in schools and other related themes has been disseminated to a wide audience in both printed and electronic forms (16 items). This has shown that violence against girls in schools is a worldwide problem.
- Details of a range of interesting and imaginative strategies to counteract the abuse of girls, and evidence of their effectiveness in bringing about change, have been disseminated (nine of the 16 items document innovative work and suggest specific strategies)
- The silence on the topic of abuse of girls in schools continues to be eroded and awareness raised of the enormous scale and the institutionalised nature of the problem (one which was barely recognised even a few years ago)
- It has helped progress the debate beyond a concern with the abuse of girls to a realisation that it is necessary to explore and address violence in schools more generally and sexual violence in particular. This includes examining violence against boys and discussing issues around notions of masculinity and femininity with boys and girls. It also requires moving away from an analysis that simplistically views girls as victims and boys as perpetrators. Some of the articles stress the importance of involving boys (and men) in stamping out violence against girls in school as this requires them to actively seek to change their own behaviour and that of other males.
- It has helped move the debate on men and masculinities beyond the theoretical level of Gender and Development (GAD), where it has been largely contained to date, and beyond its concern with vulnerable men, men as victims and the empowerment of marginalised men. It suggests that it is necessary to strengthen both women's and men's rights through the transformation of gender relations and that men need to see the benefits to themselves as well as to women of pursuing gender equity. Some people working within the GAD framework fear that the involvement of men in gender and development issues will not improve women's rights but will instead lead to the further empowerment of individual men. However, working with men in isolation will repeat the same mistakes as have been made with women.
- It has provided some practical examples of how men and/or boys are being involved in projects with girls (e.g. in the UK, South Africa, Nepal). These are however very few; most work either with boys or with girls. At the same time it has exposed the absence of information into the impact that such projects have on gender relations and pointed to the need for process-oriented research and evaluation in this area.

It is to be hoped that this id21 initiative will persuade international agencies of the importance of placing the elimination of gender violence in schools high on their agenda in terms of working towards the International Development Targets on gender equity and universal primary education. For smaller agencies, a focus on gender violence may well assist them in lobbying for funds to focus on improving the quality of schooling and ensuring the safety of girls at school.



## 2.4 Limitations

This approach to information gathering and dissemination would appear to be particularly effective where the issues (whether about development, education, health etc) are of interest to a wide inter-disciplinary audience. However, it is labour-intensive: searching for items on web sites, in journals and through personal and professional contacts was time-consuming and frequently failed to produce the desired results.

The objectives relating to this component of the study did not quite fit with the id21 format, given that the latter's mission is to disseminate UK based development research findings and their implications for policy. In contrast, we were looking to disseminate not only research findings but also ways in which these findings have been translated into strategic actions for change, i.e. summaries of innovative interventions and methodologies. However, given that DFID in common with other development agencies is anxious to close the gap between research and action, a broadening of the id21 reporting remit might be welcome. If the insights generated by research are to inform policy *and* practice, id21 has a useful role in reporting on effective interventions informed by research.

The study was restricted by the lack of opportunity to access non-English material. Despite intensive trawling of the internet, it only became apparent in the later stages of the research that there was considerable activity to address gender violence among adolescents in Latin America, although mostly related to work on masculinities outside the school context supported by NGOs. NGOs are less likely to have the resources available to translate their work into English and place it on the internet; it may also be the case that international development agencies which are more likely to produce reports in English and to place them on their web sites are less active in Latin America than in the poorer regions of South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa; hence there is less material to draw on.

## **CHAPTER 3: GHANA**

### **3.1 The research context**

The formal educational system in Ghana consists of four levels: primary (Forms 1-6), junior secondary (JSS), senior secondary (SSS) and tertiary education, with automatic transition between primary and junior secondary, and a competitive national examination determining entry to SSS. In the mid 1990s the Ghana government launched a reform programme for Free, Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) intended to increase access and participation, especially of girls, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning through community involvement in the ownership and management of schools, revised curriculum materials and improved teacher training.

Ghana has made among the most concerted and comprehensive efforts in Africa at educational decentralisation with the aim of bringing the decision-making process closer to the people. The district Directorate of Education, which reports through a regional Directorate to the central Ghana Education Service (GES), has overall responsibility for the management of education in the district. A Girls' Education Unit has also been created in the GES and Girls' Education Officers appointed at the regional and district levels to oversee improvements in girls' participation. Despite these efforts, education in Ghana remains in a parlous state: in some rural areas there is declining demand for schooling, low achievement and continuing low enrolment and high dropout among girls.

Ghana has not as yet experienced an HIV/AIDS epidemic but there are concerns that it is reaching the point at which the disease will take off. There is relatively low awareness of the risks of HIV/AIDS among young people because there has not been any systematic government campaign.

#### **The case study schools**

The research was carried out in three government schools in one region of Ghana (referred to as Schools A, B and C). All three were co-educational and were located in two districts within the selected region. School A was situated in an urban community, School B in a peri-urban community and School C in a rural community. In all cases, schools were chosen which combined a Primary and Junior Secondary School (the basic education cycle) under a single head teacher. The schools were selected from a list provided by the District Education Office within the chosen study area, stratified into urban, peri-urban and rural schools according to population size, social amenities/infrastructure, and the general socio-economic development of the community. One school was then selected randomly from each of the three strata. All three schools had male head teachers. Originally, an urban school had been selected which had a female head, but when it was discovered that this school was being used for another research study, it was replaced by a comparable school in the same community, this time with a male head. In all cases, girls were selected from classes in the upper Primary School and the JSS, as being those classes which were likely to

hold the relevant age group of girls (10-15). Boys were selected from JSS 1 and 2 only.

The study began with PRA workshops in the selected schools in May and June 2001. These were followed by interview based fieldwork from July to August 2001. The interviews, consisting of mostly open-ended items, were conducted with 48 girls attending Primary 6 and JSS 2 classes and 27 boys in JSS1 and 2. 16 girls and 9 boys were drawn from each of the three schools. In addition, interviews were held with 18 teachers (8 females and 10 males) from the three schools (both primary and JSS), together with the school head and the Guidance and Counselling (G&C) teacher in each of the schools (a total of 23, as one head also served as the Guidance and Counselling teacher). Interviews were also held with: 15 parents (five from each school), two senior officials from the Ministry of Education (the Director of Girls' Education and the Director of Teacher Education), the regional Guidance and Counselling officer, the education welfare officer from one of the district education offices, a district social welfare officer and the second in command of the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police.

The ages of the girls interviewed ranged from 11 to 17 years, with the average age of the total sample being 13.9 years (only two girls were 16 and one 17). It was clear from the earliest stages of the research that girls in all three schools had relevant information and experiences that they might be willing to share with the researcher, some of it relating to themselves and some to their friends. Respondents for interviews were selected according to a purposive sampling method, with pupils identified according to early indications that they had information to share or because they were named by a friend already interviewed. Interviews were more extensive and targeted in School B because early informal interaction during the PRA workshop suggested that girls in this school in particular had important stories to tell. Some were chosen because their names came up during interviews with their friends as having had some unwilling sexual encounter – usually with the head teacher – and other forms of unpleasant experiences in and around the school. Primary school girls from all three schools were included in the sample because both the workshops and the early interviews revealed that they were also exposed to abusive behaviour, mostly sexual in nature, from either male students or teachers in the school.

Interviews were strictly one-to-one and were held away from the main classroom block where no other person could hear them sharing their experiences. This made them relatively relaxed in expressing themselves.

This period of primary data collection was followed by the trialling of small scale strategic interventions. These involved:

- formation of clubs in all three schools with the aim of developing in girls the confidence to talk about abusive actions by adults, with support from a local NGO advocating children's rights.
- a workshop for parents and teachers organised in Schools B and C in collaboration with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC).

- organisation of a *durbar*<sup>8</sup> in the community where School B is located, aimed at raising awareness about abuse within the community. This involved the girls in performing a play based on the main issue raised during interviews (abusive behaviour by a head teacher).

These activities took place between September and November 2001, and were monitored up until the schools closed in December 2001. A further brief monitoring exercise took place in March/April 2002.

The analysis of girls' and boys' perspectives of abuse in section 3.3 below is based primarily on findings from the interviews, supplemented in some instances by information gleaned from the PRA workshops. The pupils' perspectives are then followed by those of the teachers, parents and government officials interviewed.

### **Background to each School**

**School A** is located in the centre of a tourist community situated on the coastline of the Atlantic ocean. The current population of the town according to the 2000 census is 119,340 (58,916 males and 60,424 females). The traditional economy has evolved around fishing and commerce. The town now boasts a number of fine hotels and beach resorts, which play host to innumerable tourists. The problem of 'tourism child labour' in the country is most prevalent in this town. Most of the children involved in child labour can be found serving as tourist guides, in the production and sale of arts and crafts, and in the 'entertainment' industry, in particular prostitution, which poses particular risks to young girls. While some parents (especially mothers) due to poor socio-economic conditions, encourage or 'push' their daughters into sexual relationships with male foreign (usually Western) tourists, some male tourists openly offer cash and gifts to tempt girls. It is common to see young girls soliciting in broad daylight on the beaches.

The school is strategically located on a hill. It is housed in a two-storey building which appears to be in a bad state of repair and the effect of erosion on the compound poses a serious threat to the foundation of the building. The ground floor houses the early years (Nursery to Primary 4) while the older pupils (Primary 5 to JSS 3) occupy the first floor. The building in fact houses two schools, called the A & B stream, each with its own head teacher and staff. They operate a morning and afternoon shift system which rotates every two weeks. This study focused on the 'A' stream because when the researcher first visited the school, this stream was on the morning shift. There were 163 boys and 193 girls registered in the 'A' stream at the start of the year, totalling 356 pupils (see Table 1) and 11 teachers, including the head teacher who was male and was responsible for both Primary and JSS. There were six teachers, all female, in the Primary school and five in the JSS, of whom two were female and three male. All the teachers were trained and they commuted daily from their homes. In addition to the 5,000 *cedis* (50 pence) that pupils paid as the annual school fees, they

---

<sup>8</sup> A 'durbar' is a high level community meeting of traditional rulers and council, government/ministry officials, district officials, policy makers, people in the community, NGOs and many others who meet to discuss issues that affect the development and general well-being of a community. Such meetings are used to identify mechanisms and procedures to seek redress on matters of concern. They are also used to educate and sensitise communities on developmental and socio-economic issues. In this case, the district assembly showed its support by providing 1000 chairs for the event.

also contributed 200 *cedis* (2 pence) a day as study fees. The school had electricity, pit latrines and a urinal.

There are considerably more girls enrolled in this school than boys but with a slightly higher dropout of girls (9 girls and 6 boys) at this stage in the year (May). The main reason for this gender imbalance is that many of the boys play truant and prefer going fishing than going to schooling. Most of the girls in the school according to the

**Table 1: Pupils School A, 'A' stream**

Primary	Start of year		Current (May 2001)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>1</b>	15	14	15	13
<b>2</b>	16	28	16	28
<b>3</b>	15	23	15	23
<b>4</b>	26	21	20	17
<b>5</b>	16	19	16	19
<b>6</b>	17	23	17	23
<b>JSS1</b>	23	21	23	17
<b>JSS2</b>	18	22	18	22
<b>JSS3</b>	17	22	17	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>184</b>

teachers come from Moslem households. Such girls, although more academically able than the boys in the school, are often forced into early marriage and this accounts for the relatively higher dropout of girls. The G&C teacher during an interview talked about a very intelligent Moslem girl in JSS2 whose mother wanted her to leave school and get married. The mother stopped paying her daughter's school fees but the G&C teacher together with some other teachers intervened to pay her school fees until she completed JSS3.

16 girls were interviewed in this school, drawn from Primary 5 and 6, and JSS1. Their average age was 13.88 years. Six lived with relatives other than their biological parents, five lived with their mothers only and five with both parents. Only three girls travelled more than 2 kilometres to school each day. Apart from one girl who said she travelled by taxi to school, the rest of the girls walked to and from school each day. Half the girls in the sample claimed that in addition to the usual domestic chores (fetching water, sweeping, cooking etc), they also sold in the market or the community before and after school each day. The girls spent an average of four hours a day on household chores, before and after school.

**School B** is located on the outskirts of a peri-urban community with 2,234 inhabitants (1040 males and 1194 females). Survey data shows that it consists of 425 houses and 537 households. It is located three kilometres off a major highway linking the country to the Ivory Coast, along a dirt road. It is about two kilometres from the nearest large town. There is no electricity in the community and water is drawn from hand-dug wells, boreholes and from streams. The local economy is primarily subsistence agriculture. In recent times, some older boys and male adults engage in the brewing of *akpeteshie*, a local gin. This exposes young children in the community to substance abuse from alcohol intake.

Single parenthood is prevalent in this community. This results in child abandonment by fathers and child trafficking by the adult population. There is a high incidence of 'floating' parents, especially mothers, who migrate to the Ivory Coast in search of non-existent jobs. This situation often culminates in the 'transfer' of girls to the Ivory Coast to serve in the tourism industry as prostitutes and to engage in other forms of child labour. Lawlessness was also a problem: during the PRA workshops, the girls said that there have been one or more murders in the community recently and a nine year old girl in Primary 3 had been raped by a man the previous year.

The school comprised 212 pupils at the Primary level (117 boys and 95 girls) and 78 at the JSS (48 boys and 30 girls). There were five teachers at the JSS level, all male and all trained, and five teachers (three females and two males, both national service personnel) at the Primary level, all of whom were untrained. The male head teacher managed both the Primary and JSS levels. He had been in the school for 14 years and had served three years in this position. The head and the only long serving female teacher were the only married teachers in the school. There was a high incidence of pregnancy in this school, with five cases in 2001: two in JSS3, one in JSS2, one in JSS1 and one in Primary 6.

The Primary and the JSS schools are located side by side. They are situated on a slight incline off the dirt road, with a large open area containing a football pitch in front of the buildings. The buildings have recently been renovated by the district assembly and they look in good albeit basic condition. The classrooms are adequately furnished with new desks, chairs and blackboards (provided by DFID). There is no decent place of convenience apart from pit latrines and a urinal, and many pupils use the bushes for this purpose. The school receives local support from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), with parents paying monthly dues to the school and providing communal labour for construction work, and also from the School Management Committee (SMC), which assists in managing the school and mobilising the community to support school activities to improve effectiveness and quality.<sup>9</sup> According to the pupils, an annual fee of 5000 *cedis* (50 pence) is levied, plus a monthly contribution of 1000 *cedis* (10 pence). This latter is supposedly to pay for additional teachers but the pupils said that there was no sign of any. Pupils who were unable to produce this

**Table 2: Pupils School B**

Primary	Start of year		Current (May 2001)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>1</b>	29	18	29	17
<b>2</b>	35	15	35	15
<b>3</b>	32	17	31	15
<b>4</b>	27	16	25	18
<b>5</b>	28	13	28	14
<b>6</b>	19	16	17	14
<b>JSS1</b>	21	8	20	9
<b>JSS2</b>	14	13	14	11
<b>JSS3</b>	13	9	completed	completed
<b>Total</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>113</b>

<sup>9</sup> This is a USAID pilot scheme under what is referred to as the QUIPS programme. USAID/QUIPS is in the process of scaling up the activities of SMCs in all communities but especially in deprived areas.

monthly payment on time were beaten. As we were running the workshops at the end of the month, we witnessed some instances of beating.

This school is noticeable for its very low enrolment of girls as compared to boys (125 and 218 respectively, a difference of 93). The drop out rate is difficult to assess because the JSS 3 group had already had their leaving examinations when the field work started and no figures were available; also, more girls seem to have entered the school during the year in Forms 4 and 5 and JSS1. This can probably be explained as girls returning from a period of absence with their mothers in the Ivory Coast or having been given out as house helps as a result of marriage breakdown in the family.

The average age of the 16 girls interviewed was 13.94 years. Seven of these girls lived with relatives other than their biological mothers, another five with their mothers, and only four with both parents. All walked to school, with only one girl walking more than 0.5 km. Ten (63%) out of a sample of 16 said that they did not get enough food to eat each day either before or after school and four said they were not satisfied with the provision of basic needs (uniform, fees, books, transport etc). All the girls in the sample said they engaged in household chores, with two of them also selling goods in the market or hawking in the community after school. The time spent on household chores and/or selling before and after school was high, averaging five hours per day.

**School C** is located on a small hill on the outskirts of a rural community with a population of 1,373 (649 males and 724 females). It is situated along a dirt road about seven kilometres off the main highway linking two regional capitals. There is no electricity and water is obtained from hand dug wells, boreholes and streams. The economy is predominately subsistence farming, and is surrounded by some cash crop farming by inhabitants from the nearest semi-urban community. The JSS is one of very few in the area and serves about three other communities.

The Primary school and the JSS are situated on the same site, on very uneven terrain. The buildings are old, have uneven dirt floors and are generally in a worse condition than those of Schools A and B. They do however have some new wooden furniture and blackboards, provided by DFID. The head teacher, who was male, had spent 12 years in the school and served four years in this position. There were five teachers at the Primary level (4 males and 1 female), all trained. The only female teacher, who was recently trained and unmarried, was from outside the community. She lived in the only teacher's house in the school grounds. She told the researcher that she was looking to be transferred away from this rural area as soon as she had served two years because the community did not value education – a not uncommon view among teachers posted to rural areas. The JSS had four teachers, all male. Two were married, and one was untrained. The incidence of pregnancy was relatively high in the school but declining. In 1997 the school recorded six cases, three cases in 1998, and two each in 1999 and 2000 respectively. In this school, the enrolment of girls is also much lower than that of boys (144 and 210 respectively, a difference of 66) and girls' drop out is higher (12 girls and 7 boys).

**Table 3: Pupils School C**

Primary	Start of year		Current (May 2001)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>1</b>	26	20	24	18
<b>2</b>	29	24	28	22
<b>3</b>	25	20	24	17
<b>4</b>	23	13	23	13
<b>5</b>	28	19	27	19
<b>6</b>	29	10	27	9
<b>JSS1</b>	22	17	22	16
<b>JSS2</b>	11	9	11	7
<b>JSS3</b>	17	12	17	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>132</b>

The average age in the sample of 16 girls is 13.94 years. Five girls walk a distance of 3.5 or more kilometres to school each day. Apart from the usual household chores, nine girls said that they also go to the farm after school and do some selling both in the mornings before school and in the evenings at home. The girls spend a significant time each day on domestic chores, averaging 6 hours a day. Three girls said that they were not satisfied with the provision of the basic items provided by their families and half said they do not get enough food to eat and sometimes go hungry. The school has no toilet facility except a urinal. Pupils pay a fee of 4500 *cedis* (45 pence) annually as a contribution to the school.

### 3.2. The PRA workshops

Two-day workshops were held in each school during May 2001. Working in English presented problems except in the urban school (School A), so in Schools B and C a mixture of local language(s) and English was used. The first workshop was run by the Ghanaian researcher, Vivian Sarpomaa Fiscian, and the consultant, Leslie Casely-Hayford, the second and third by Vivian S. Fiscian and Fiona Leach. In each case between 14 and 17 girls and 12 and 13 boys participated.

All the workshops were conducted in a part of a building away from the main classrooms and away from prying eyes. Refreshments were provided. The workshops always started with ice-breakers (songs and games) and with the researchers explaining that they were looking at girls' problems in schools. The activities chosen built on those used in the Zimbabwe workshops, as outlined in 1.5 above. Pupils worked with large sheets of paper, coloured marker pens, coloured stickers and sticky dots, coloured 'post-its' etc. Their drawings were posted on the walls when it came to plenary discussions. Pupils were guaranteed confidentiality. The pupils always started nervously but slowly relaxed and all seemed to find them enjoyable.

A summary of two of the workshops is provided in **Appendix 8**.



### 3.3 Perspectives of Abuse

The PRA workshops and the interviews combined to provide a picture of the girls' and the boys' perspectives of abuse. Both sources are drawn on in the following account.

#### 3.3.1 Girls' perspectives

##### **Girls' problems in school**

As in the Zimbabwe study, these one-to-one interviews failed to reveal any girl who was ready to admit to a sexual relationship with a teacher in the school, although some mentioned others whom they said were having affairs. It was interesting that, as in the Zimbabwe study, they were usually ready to talk about others as having had sexual experiences or having been victims of abuse rather than about themselves.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, there was enough evidence in all the schools to show that some level of harassment and abuse, both sexual and non-sexual in nature, existed and that it was mostly girls who were at risk, whether from male pupils and teachers within the school, or from older boys and men outside. This was particularly the case with girls in School B.

The interviews covered the girls' background and their views of abuse. The extent to which abuse was experienced as a problem by girls in and around the school had already been explored during the PRA workshops at the start of the research, where the participants identified, prioritised and discussed their problems through drawings. Before moving to an analysis of the girls' interviews, therefore, the problems which emerged during the workshops are summarised below for each school.

In **School A** (the original urban school selected), problems that emerged for girls were: absenteeism by teachers, teachers' laziness and poor teaching, being required to walk to school, punishments at school, beatings, insults by teachers, expulsion from school due to lack of money for fees, inability to study privately at home, insults by parents, poor parental care and money related issues. When asked to prioritise, they listed in decreasing order: poor teaching, walking to school, punishments, beatings, insults and expulsion from school for not paying fees. Girls also said that boys in the senior secondary boarding school next to their school sometimes exposed themselves to them and that boys would come into their own compound to smoke marijuana and cigarettes.

The girls complained of poor performance by teachers; as one girl said 'Sometimes the teachers are tired and when we go and call them, they tell us to read our books until they come but they do not show up. Teachers at times give us notes but do not explain them to us'. They also saw corporal punishment by teachers as a problem. Walking to school was also seen as a big problem; most of them said that they had to walk to school (however, only three lived more than two kilometres away). This

---

<sup>10</sup> Mensch et al (1999: 7) in their study of premarital sex and school dropout in Kenya point out that young people are embarrassed to be questioned by adults about their sex lives and that girls in particular find it difficult to admit to sex outside marriage within an interview situation. Boys on the other hand may over-report sexual activity as it is considered a badge of honour and a rite of passage to male adulthood.

affected their learning because they get tired, they were scorched by the sun and got 'body pains', and it also led to lateness, which resulted in being punished.

In **School B**, which was located in a peri-urban area, the most common problem cited was lack of money for school fees but problems relating to their studies were also important. A few also admitted that teachers propositioning them was a problem. The problems were prioritised as (in decreasing order): school studies, stealing/rape/killing and school fees (equal importance), boys and men proposing, shouting, beatings at home and household chores. The girls explained that if they were unable to pay their fees, they were not allowed to attend and so their studies suffered. This is significant because this school charges a 1000 *cedis* monthly fee in addition to the annual fee of 5000 *cedis*, the monthly fee being ostensibly to pay for additional teachers (but none were forthcoming). The girls also said they needed exercise books, which they could not pay for. They also had to work before and after school either selling goods or carrying out domestic chores (on average five hours a day), and for those in JSS, this meant that they did not have time to read and revise for each subject and so they fell behind. Also a problem, but less so than in School A, was the shortage of teachers and teacher absenteeism. They felt that the teachers did not help them; if they didn't understand or couldn't answer, the teacher would just cane them. Sometimes they didn't come to school because the teacher frightened them.

Boys were also seen as a problem, especially those from JSS2 and 3: if a boy proposed (by telling her he likes her, he will buy her anything she wants etc.) and the girl did not accept, he might victimise her by beating or insulting her. A boy might wait along the way for a girl and then beat her or pinch her breasts. A girl could be mocked or verbally abused because she didn't have a boyfriend.

In **School C**, most problems related to parents lacking money for basic items such as fees, sandals, uniform and school bag. This was not surprising given that this was a rural school in a community with the lowest socio-economic conditions of the three (although no additional monthly fee was levied in this school). The girls here also said that they had problems with their studies, English especially, and verbal abuse. Boys, teachers and parents also beat them and boys touched and harassed them. They prioritised their problems as being (in decreasing order): boys touching and harassing them, school fees, school studies, beatings at home, insults and one teacher who touches them (all equal), boys and teachers beating them. When asked to identify the most frequent problem, however, they listed (in decreasing order): the teacher touching them, followed by school studies, beatings at home, insults, school fees, boys touching them, boys and teachers beating them.

It is clear, therefore, from the PRA workshop that abusive behaviour, consisting of excessive beatings, insulting language, propositioning by teachers, physical attacks and 'touching' by male pupils and teachers, were problems that girls experienced at school. In the case of boys, beatings and verbal abuse were also common. However, poverty and its consequences for their schooling, and the low quality of teaching were seen in most cases as more serious and pervasive problems for them in trying to secure a good education.

### **Sexual activity in the schools**

It was obvious that some girls did respond to sexual advances by boys and by male teachers. However, as noted, the girls were not willing to talk freely about their own sexual experiences but preferred to talk about the activities of others. Interestingly, 12 out of the 48 girls (25%) interviewed said that they knew of some teachers who were having sex with girls in their schools; ten out of these 12 girls were in School B. In the same school, five girls said they knew of a girl in their class having sex with a teacher. This was not the case in the other two schools, although one girl in each school said she knew of a girl elsewhere in the school who was having sex with a teacher. However, when asked if they knew of a girl who was impregnated in their school by a teacher, six replied in the affirmative; of these, three were in School A and three in School B. It was impossible to verify whether the above statements were based on fact or on rumour.

**Table 4: Sexual relations and pregnancies**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total = 48</i>
Know at least one teacher having sex with a girl in the school	1	10	1	12 (25.0%)
Know a girl in their class having sex with a teacher	-	5	-	5 (10.4)
Know a girl in their class having sex with a boy in the school	7	8	3	18 (37.5)
Know a girl in the school who got pregnant by a boy in the school	7	15	8	30 (62.5)
Believe girls agree to have sex with teachers, older men and boys	-	1	4	5 (10.4)
Believe girls are trapped or raped	15	12	8	35 (72.9)
Don't know whether girls agree or are trapped/raped	1	3	4	8 (16.7)
Know of a girl in the class having sugar daddies or older boys as boyfriend	4	5	4	13 (27.1)
Know a girl who got pregnant by a man/boy outside school	7	2	9	18 (37.5)

During interviews, girls pointed to their friends as the target of sexual advances by teachers. In cases where a girl who had been named by a friend was then interviewed, she was not ready to talk about her own sexual activities, but would instead point to another friend. Although only six girls had said that they knew of a girl who had become pregnant by a teacher at their school, 30 girls (62.5%) said they knew of a girl who became pregnant by a boy in the school and 18 (37.5%) knew of a girl who got pregnant with a boy or man outside the school (although only 13 in total had said that they knew of a girl in their class with a sugar daddy or older boyfriend outside the school). Even from this small sample, it is possible to infer that teenage pregnancy and subsequent dropout were problems within this community.

Only five of the 48 girls indicated that they thought the girls agreed willingly to have sex, whether with teachers, students and older boys/men. 35 (72.9%) were of the view that the girls had either been raped or forced (trapped). The view was that they were primarily trapped by money: 27 (56.25%) thought the desire for money was the main reason why girls had sex with boys and older men, although they acknowledged that peer pressure also played a part.

Although the majority of the girls (90%) claimed to know how people contracted HIV and AIDS, when asked what a man/boy should do to protect himself and his partner, only 16 girls could give accounts of what they might do. This included abstaining from sex, having a single partner, using condoms and not sharing razor blades. 31 girls offered suggestions for how girls could prevent getting AIDS: they should refrain from sex before marriage, not wear revealing dresses or go out in the evening, not 'give in to men' and not share razor blades. However, of the remainder who claimed not to know, this professed ignorance could well be the result of embarrassment or reluctance to show that they knew about such matters.

During the PRA workshops at the start of the research, the perceptions of boys and girls as to why young people have sex at a young age were explored in the school setting. In their separate groups, they were asked to draw a 'cause and consequence tree', illustrating firstly why they thought girls had sex with boys and with teachers, and also why boys and teachers had sex with girls (the roots of the tree). They were subsequently asked to reflect on the consequences of such sexual relationships (the branches of the tree). The findings relating to the causes are summarised below. In all three schools, but especially in the rural school, it was clear that poverty was a major factor in influencing girls into relationships, whether with boys or teachers. On both sides, it was widely believed that girls expected money and gifts from a sexual partner. Love and a desire for marriage appeared less significant. Peer pressure was also important, especially so in the case of boys, where much status was attached to having one or more girlfriends. This helps explain why boys may be aggressive in their sexual advances towards girls, and also why girls might enter into relationships with teachers.

**Table 5: Why girls have sex with boys**

<i>Girls' views</i>	<i>Boys' views</i>
For gifts and money	The way girls walk - some boys want to rape them
To have a child	The girl may want to have sex
Lack of parental care	Girls wear short dresses
For money or gifts or dresses	It's natural/girls like sex
To get clothes like her friends	To get money
To get money for school fees	Girls are weak
For peer influence	If the boy has done something nice for the girl
Her parents have no money so she wants to marry him	Because she is from a poor home
Because her friend already has a boyfriend	She may be in a relationship with a boy
For love (this only after prompting)	

**Table 6: Why boys have sex with girls**

<i>Girls' views</i>	<i>Boys' views</i>
Peer influence	For pleasure
Pleasure	To show love to the girl
To show love	Get something (gift, money) from the girl

To give them money and sweets Because of a girl's beauty They get attracted to boys Boys are lustful The girl may force herself on him To practise the things they see on video Girls wear sexy clothes/short dresses He wants her to wash and cook for him To boast to his friends To prove to her that he wants to marry her	Because of the way girls dress Because of girls' beauty Peer influence Because boys are lustful Because girls sometimes entice boys Because of the way girls approach boys To boast to their male friends To prove to the girl that he will marry her To practise things they see in films
---	--

**Table 7: Why girls have sex with teachers**

<i>Girls' views</i>	<i>Boys' views</i>
So that teachers won't punish them For money, gifts or clothes To get help during exams/for special teaching She hopes he will marry her Lack of parental support The teacher may entice her with money and gifts Because of promises teachers give to girls When the teacher is not from the town some girls will like to befriend him	Threats by teachers (if the girls refuse) Teachers help them to pay their fees Teachers give them the exam questions in advance Teachers help them to pass the exams To avoid getting punished in class

**Table 8: Why teachers have sex with girls**

<i>Girls' views</i>	<i>Boys' views</i>
Girls go to them and ask for money and gifts Because she has no money If a girl is a high performing pupil Because they admire girls A teacher invites a girl for private lessons at home	Girls stick out their buttocks to attract the teachers The way they dress/they wear short dresses Girls go to teachers' houses for extra lessons They taunt and flirt with the teachers They provoke and attract the teachers When teachers misunderstand girls' actions Teachers ask girls to go to their house to work/they call girls for errands Girls shake their bodies at teachers

### **Abusive Encounters**

It was clear that abuse of girls in and around the school was a hidden problem and that the victims were reluctant to talk about it openly. As elsewhere, it appeared that it was male pupils who were the main perpetrators and who often intimidated girls. However, girls did not necessarily act the role of passive victim of aggressive male attention. As shown in Table 5, some actively seek boyfriends, whether for financial support, love or status. This parallels the findings in Zimbabwe, as does the finding that many of the boys saw girls as 'asking for it', as 'weak', as only interested in money.

### ***Abusive behaviour by boys***

Just over a quarter of the girls (14) in the sample of 48 said that they had been propositioned by boys in the school but a much larger number (38 girls or 79.2%) were troubled by male pupils. Boys who were said to be aggressive engaged in

touching a girl's intimate body parts (breast and buttocks) and teasing. Even though only 15 of the 38 girls (39.5%) claimed such things affected their behaviour in class and their school studies, all indicated their displeasure at boys' behaviour. Only four girls said they had received at least one love letter from a boy but 20 girls (41.6%) said that they had received money or gifts from a boy. 23 thought boys were serious when they said they were in love (perhaps contrary to the workshop findings).

**Table 9: Abusive behaviour by boys**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (n= 48)</i>
Girls propositioned by boys	5	4	5	14 (29.2)
Girls troubled by boys' behaviour	12	12	14	38 (79.2)
Of whom:				
Girls whose studies are affected by this	6	4	5	15 (39.5)

### **Harassment hot spots**

Against this backdrop, it was clear that there were places within and around the school which constituted 'harassment hot spots'. During the PRA workshops, both boys and girls were asked to identify and mark places on the school map that they had drawn where they felt safe and unsafe. Girls felt much less safe than boys. Particularly unsafe places were: the toilets, where boys would come to smoke *wee* (marijuana) and would try to kiss or touch them, where someone could frighten or harm them, or where a girl could fall into the pit, the school playing field where boys played football and would chase them away, the teachers' quarters, especially the male teachers', as they may ask them to come to their house, and the road where a pupil might get hit by a vehicle. The Primary girls also said the JSS block was unsafe for them as the seniors may bully them.

### **Abusive behaviour by teachers**

Although no girl interviewed admitted having had a sexual relationship with a teacher, some gave accounts of pressure for sexual favours and demands, as reproduced below. Almost as many girls said that they were propositioned by teachers (13) as said they had been propositioned by boys (14). However, ten of these 13 girls came from School B and eight of them named the school head as the chief offender. One striking feature in School B was that during the PRA workshop and subsequent interviews with the girls, nine out of ten girls in Primary 6 made it known that the head teacher had propositioned them (only one girl denied it). The girls were clearly frightened of these approaches, and it was noticeable how nervous they were at the start of the workshop.

**Table 10: Abusive behaviour by teachers**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (n=48)</i>
Propositioned by a teacher	2	10	1	13 (27.1)
Of whom:				
Told her mother about this	-	2	-	2 (15.4)
Told a friend about this	-	2	-	2 (15.4)
Know of at least one friend propositioned by a teacher	4	10	1	15 (31.3)

Only four of the 13 girls (all in School B) who had been propositioned by a teacher said they had told someone about the incident: two had told their mother while the other two had told their best friend. In both cases where they had told their mother, she had said not to 'mind him' but that if he were to repeat this they should report the incident to them or to their class teacher. When the interviewees were asked if it was acceptable for a teacher to propose love to a schoolgirl, all said it was not. According to them, such teachers were irresponsible and did not respect themselves. In their opinion, the teacher has the responsibility to counsel them to refrain from sexual relationships, rather than to lure them into them.

In the interviews, some of the girls from School B described the circumstances under which they were approached by the head teacher:

*He sent for me to come to his office, he said ' I have nurtured you since your lower Primary days now you look special and I want to "walk" with you'. He promised to give me money if I accept his proposal.*

*He asked me to drop his books home after school, when I entered his house compound he dragged me into his room and pushed me to his bed and whispered into my ears 'me hyew wo' (I will burn you). He fondled me but I screamed so he allowed me to go.*

*He invited me to one of the empty classrooms and said ' I want you for a friend' and he said that he would buy me a schoolbag, books and panties. He did this twice and assured me that if I agree to his proposal, he would not let the other teachers know about it.*

*It was morning break time at about 9.30 am and he asked me (a girl in Primary 3) to accompany him to his house but I dodged him. It was the first time.*

*He pretended he had something to tell me but he did not want to say it to the hearing of other people around. He took me to a quiet place in the school and then told me 'I want you for a special relationship'.*

*I was thirsty and going to my sister in another class for water, I met him on the way and he asked me to follow him to his office for water. After drinking the water he offered me, he asked me to take some papers from the cupboard for him. He then held me from behind and touched my breast and said 'Today the two of us will be together after school' – he used his fingers to signal 'love making'.*

Another two pupils (one from School A and one from School C) said:

*I was in Primary 4 and he asked me to bring a clock to his house after school, I met him at his home and he proposed love to me.*

*He sent for me during school break time and asked if I could be his 'special friend'.*

It should be noted from the above that a girl in Primary 3 in School B was approached by the head (this group would normally be aged 9-10). It is not known whether the teachers referred to in the last two statements were still in their schools (A and C).

In addition to the above, 32 out of the 48 girls claimed teachers used abusive language towards them. They used words such as *twerp*, *esisiefo* (useless people), *nkurasefo* (villagers/bush people), *ehiafomba* (children of the poor) and many others. This was common in Zimbabwe and Malawi too. Teachers' talk was also full of innuendo: for example, when responding to questions in class, girls reported that teachers would tell them not to talk to them as if they were their boyfriends, or sometimes when sweeping or dusting the teachers' table and chair, the teacher who was not satisfied might say 'Is that how you clean your boyfriend's room?' In School B, girls said that sometimes when the head is beating them (on the buttocks) he will feel them 'there' and remark or whisper to the girl concerned 'So you are wearing beads/not wearing beads around your waist' (in the Ghanaian cultural context, beads connote romance or sexuality). The girls strongly indicated that verbal abuse also affects their behaviour in class and their full participation in school life.

45 of the 48 girls said that they had been beaten by a teacher on at least one occasion. However, when asked whether they approved or disapproved of corporal punishment, the majority (37 or 77%) said they approved. They gave reasons such as: beatings helped them to be serious about their studies and to deter truancy, lateness and general misconduct in school. All of them however objected to teachers caning them just because they did not understand what he/she was teaching them. It is interesting to note that in all three PRA workshops, beating by teachers was identified by the girls as either a problem or a form of abuse. However, in most cases it was ranked as less serious than other forms of abuse, which suggests that on the whole they accepted it provided it was given in moderation and for a valid reason.

**Table 11: Beatings by teachers**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (n=48)</i>
Beatings by teachers				45 (93.8%)
Of whom:				
Male	-	6	13	19 (42.2%)
Female	4	-	-	4 (8.9%)
Both	11	10	1	22 (48.9%)

Note: School A had more female teachers (eight) than Schools B (three) and C (one only, who had recently qualified). The female teachers in School A were mostly in their forties and were long-serving trained teachers, whereas in School B they were all untrained. This might suggest that long serving teachers are more prone to using corporal punishment and/or newly trained teachers are less ready to use it (but may succumb over time).

### ***Abusive behaviour by men***

20 (41.7%) of the 48 girls interviewed had had men outside the school propose sex to them. This was more than those girls who had been propositioned by either teachers or male pupils. However, half of these girls came from the urban school, which suggests that this problem is worse in urban settings. Four out of these 20 were propositioned in their house or compound (by a male relative or family friend), whereas for the majority this happened when they were in a public place e.g. selling or buying in the market or running errands for their parents/guardians. Being accosted by strange men in public places, who were often drunk, seemed to be a common occurrence.



**Table 12: Abusive behaviour by men**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (n=48)</i>
Propositioned by men	10	5	5	20 (41.7%)
Of whom:				
In the house or compound	4	-	-	4 (20%)
In a public place (e.g. market, bus terminal)	6	5	5	16 (80%)

Statements from girls included the following:

***School A - urban***

*I sell after school and during school holidays at the main bus terminal and these men usually propose love to me before they buy from me.*

*It was in the evening at home. I was playing outside with friends and this man sent for me and proposed to me.*

*He has a store close to ours. He will wait until I am alone in the store selling to sneak in and ‘misbehave’ – he mostly will touch my buttocks and even attempt touching my breast and say all sort of silly things to me.*

*I went to their store to buy something and he proposed to me there. He went on to tell me to go and drop the items at home and meet him in his house.*

***School B – peri-urban***

*I was walking on the same road as a man on my way home after an errand. On the way he walked close to me and whispered to me ‘I want you to become my special friend’.*

*I was going to the market and this man called and proposed to me. He promised me many things if I accept to become his girlfriend.*

***School C – rural***

*I was sent to a corn mill in the next town and this man called me and said ‘I will marry you’. He then gave me money.*

*I was returning from the farm in the evening and this man was walking along the same direction with me. He engaged me in a conversation and told me I should agree to become his ‘special friend’.*

Evidence also emerged, as in the Zimbabwe study, of sexual abuse in the home by male relatives or neighbours and in public places such as markets and other commercial places. There were several cases of girls interviewed who had experienced possible attempts of rape (or who might in fact have been raped). One girl gave an account of her uncle who on several occasions sneaked into their house at a time when she was alone to demand sexual favours from her. The girl said that on one occasion she had pulled a knife on the man. Another girl gave an account of a

labourer working for her aunt's husband. According to this girl, she was asleep one night and woke up to feel someone 'fondling' her. She found one of the labourers on her sleeping mat. Some of the girls talked of a girl in Primary 3 who had been raped by a neighbour.

In conclusion, it can be noted that abusive behaviour by male pupils and teachers was a problem in these schools, but no more so than poverty, poor quality of teaching and absenteeism among teachers. This does not detract however from its severity, in particular with regard to teachers. There was also some evidence that the girls' fear of being accosted or propositioned in intimidating circumstances by male pupils and teachers was greater than the reality, except in School B where many had experienced it at first hand from the head teacher. Being accosted by strange men was also relatively common, especially in the urban setting. The consequences of the head teacher's abusive behaviour towards girls in School B were clearly devastating, with low enrolment (Table 2) and attendance (there were fewer girls in school on the days visited than appeared on the register), and a poor quality of learning environment. Despite better physical conditions, the level of achievement in School B based on knowledge of English and skill at carrying out set tasks, seemed to be lower than in the less well equipped rural school.

### 3.3.2 Boys' perspectives

Twenty-four (88.9%) in the sample of 27 boys interviewed acknowledged that they face problems with beatings, basic school items such as exercise books and pencils, school studies, lack of food and/or pocket money, and teachers' dislike and 'poor attitudes' towards them. 25 boys also acknowledged that girls face problems such as school and examination fees, basic school items, harassment and bullying, beatings, boyfriends, lateness and irregular school attendance. Only two boys said that in their opinion girls do not face any problems in school. Interestingly, 23 (85%) confessed that boyfriends are a major problem for schoolgirls, whereas only three (11%) said girlfriends are a major problem for boys.

**Table 13: Boys' views of girlfriends**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (n=27)</i>
Boyfriends are a problem for girls	5	9	9	23 (85.2)
Girlfriends are a problem for boys	2	1	-	3 (11.1)
Has a girlfriend	2	-	-	2 (7.4)
Knows a boy in his class with a girlfriend	9	7	7	23 (85.2)
A lot of girls in school have boyfriends	8	9	7	24 (88.9)
Girls prefer older boys and men	7	8	9	24 (88.9)
Know a boy in his class having sex with a girl	6	7	6	19 (70.3)
Know a girl in his class having sex with a boy	8	8	7	23 (85.2)
Know of a teacher in the school having sex with a girl	1	7	-	8 (29.6)

As with the girls, the boys were more eager to talk about their friends' sexual relationships than their own. Only two of the 27 boys admitted that they had girlfriends but 23 (85.2%) of them claimed they knew of at least one boy in their form who had a girlfriend. Again, when asked if they thought that a lot of girls in their school had boyfriends, 23 (85.2%) said yes. Twenty-four (89%) out of the total sample, however, said girls preferred older boys and men outside the school.

Interestingly, a higher number of boys (23) said they knew of at least one girl in their form who is having sexual relations with her boyfriend than those (19) who said they knew of at least one boy in their form having sexual relations with his girlfriend. When asked where they thought the girls' boyfriends were, 21 (78%) said they were outside the school and only five (19%) said they were in the school. Likewise, 19 of 23 boys who claimed to know of a boy in their form with a girlfriend said that she was outside the school. Whether this was the reality or whether they wished to downplay the level of sexual activity between male and female pupils was not clear. It was clear however that the boys thought that girls were sexually promiscuous: 26 (96.3%) thought that girls started having boyfriends between 12 and 16 years of age but 23 (85.2%) thought boys started having girlfriends at a later age, between 14 and 18 years.

A small majority of interviewees (14) felt girls were more serious about their relationships than boys, ten said that it was boys who showed seriousness, with only two saying that both sexes were equally serious. However, when asked which sex they thought was more serious about their studies, 25 (92.6%) said boys, with only one boy saying that girls were and one boy saying both sexes.

**Table 16: Boys' views of who is more serious about their relationships**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (=27)</i>
Boys	4	2	4	10 (37)
Girls	2	7	5	14 (51.9)
Both	2	-	-	2 (7.4)
Cannot tell who is more serious	1	-	-	1 (3.7)

**Table 17: Boys' views of who is more serious about their studies**

	<i>A</i> <i>Urban</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Rural</i>	<i>Total (=27)</i>
Boys	7	9	9	25 (92.6)
Girls	1	-	-	1 (3.7)
Both	1	-	-	1 (3.7)

Concerning their views on girls having affairs with teachers, 13 (48.1%) out of the 27 boys were of the opinion that it is the teachers who take advantage of the girls, whereas nine (33.3%) claimed the girls are 'bad/spoilt'. The view of the remaining five (19%) was that the girls lack parental support and care. However, when prompted as to whether they knew of teachers in their school having affairs with schoolgirls, only eight (29.6%) said yes. Seven of the eight boys were in School B.

Regarding boys harassing girls, 15 (55.6%) in the sample of 27 boys confessed that they sometimes used threatening behaviour towards them. The remainder denied this. All the boys were however able to provide examples of ways in which boys propositioned girls. These included:

*You take a girl you would want for a girlfriend as a playmate and if possible engage this girl in evening studies at home.*

*Say 'sweet words' to the girl and sometimes save money to use in convincing her you have money.*

*You degrade/undermine your competitor: say he has no money and can't provide for your needs.*

*Boys sometimes fight over girls, stop talking to each other.*

*You buy items such as snacks, earrings, panties, underwear etc for the girls.*

*You give girls special gifts on Valentine's Day and on their birthdays.*

Some boys also claimed that the girls may make a sexual advance:

*If the boy is clever or good in sports, some girls will buy presents and sweets for him..*

*Such girls will go all out to attract the boy to their side for a relationship.*

When asked about whom the boys thought received the most beatings in school, 17 (63%) of the interviewees said it was boys, eight (29.6%) thought it was girls while only two thought there was no difference.

In conclusion, the boys' interviews confirmed the Zimbabwe findings that boys see obtaining girlfriends as a competitive game and that many think that girls behave provocatively and on occasion lure the boy into the relationship. They almost universally believe that boys are more serious (and more intelligent) in their studies. At the same time, the data reveal that boys accept that both boys and girls experience many problems at school, girls more so than boys.

### **3.3.3 Teachers' and head teachers' perspectives**

Interviews were held with 18 teachers, six from each school (10 males and 8 females altogether) and with the three head teachers, all of whom were male. Of the ten teachers in JSS, eight were male and two were female (both in School A). Eight teachers were in Primary (2 male and 6 female). Schools B and C had no female JSS teachers. The majority of those interviewed thought the problems of girls in school are mainly lack of parental care and support, largely resulting from the high incidence of 'broken homes' in the communities. This leads to girls facing financial difficulties in meeting basic school requirements such as fees, uniforms, books, pens and pencils. Teachers in School A further added child labour as one of the worrying problems that girls have to contend with. Many girls serve as 'house-helps' and are made to do some selling before and after school. All the teachers interviewed claimed that problems are widespread among schoolgirls, but that the most affected are those from relatively poor homes.

Teachers largely confirmed that girls do experience abuse of both a sexual and a non-sexual nature in and around the school. They thought the most frequent forms were physical (beatings, bullying) and verbal. Boys also experienced abuse in school,

bullying being the most common form. All the teachers believed that abuse of whatever type affects the academic performance of pupils, although most thought that it affects girls' performance more than boys. When asked why, eight gave reasons such as girls are 'weak', 'soft' and do not have the strength to withstand these problems while the remaining nine thought that they are more sensitive and emotional than boys, and as a result they do not overcome these experiences so easily.

The teachers also acknowledged that corporal punishment was practised in their schools but the majority did not consider it as a form of abuse if administered reasonably. One female teacher quoted the biblical saying 'spare the rod and spoil the child' in support of her argument. Many of the teachers thought the administration of corporal punishment on pupils was not gender discriminatory and that both boys and girls were punished equally. Most did however believe that male teachers used it most. The researcher observed that all three schools practised corporal punishment, but it appeared to be exercised with greater moderation and less frequency in School C.

Although they wished to downplay the scale of sexual abuse compared to physical and verbal abuse, most of the teachers confirmed that sexual harassment and abuse did exist in their schools. However, they thought that the biggest problem was abusive behaviour towards girls by male pupils, with Primary 5 to JSS3 levels being where the problem is the most serious. Most exhibited some sense of unease when it came to discussing abuse perpetrated by teachers. As with both the girls and the boys, they wanted to de-personalise it, to distance themselves from its manifestation in their own immediate professional context. All were more comfortable talking about incidents that happened in other schools. Ten teachers (55.6%) admitted to having heard of at least one case from another school of a teacher who had sexually abused a schoolgirl. Two were in School A, five in School B and three in School C. They also accepted in some cases that there had been teachers misbehaving with female pupils in their school in the past. However, in School B, only one female teacher admitted this and said that the teacher had been transferred, and another acknowledged that sexual harassment and abuse was particularly bad with Primary 3 pupils and that male teachers were responsible. On the whole, however, all those interviewed preferred to give examples of male pupils in the school or in other schools who had made girls in their school pregnant. Only four teachers (one in School A and three in School C) admitted either on the basis of rumour or fact that there were cases in their schools where a male teacher had made a schoolgirl pregnant. It is interesting to note that neither male nor female teachers in School B were ready to speak openly about teachers and girls in the school (despite the evidence of serious misconduct by the head teacher). They were either covering up for each other or fearful of the head teacher. They were however very open in discussing girls' sexual relationships with boys in the school and at home.

Teachers confirmed that schools do not have specific policies towards male teachers who sexually abuse girls. However, many pointed out that the Ghana Education Service has a professional code of ethics, which spells out the punitive measures in dealing with such cases of misconduct<sup>11</sup> but which unfortunately does not provide a clear set of guidelines or procedures that the abused can follow to make an allegation

---

<sup>11</sup> Part V, category 'B': Penalty for misconduct

and seek redress. Most of them thought that young male teachers, especially the unmarried, are the most likely abusers. The head teachers in their concluding statements suggested the following actions to address the problem:

- Establish a unit at Ministry and/or District level which will be solely responsible for dealing with cases of abuse in school
- Empower parents financially to enable them to provide the basic needs of their children
- Develop a specific school syllabus to address all forms of abuse and children's rights
- Conduct a nation-wide campaign against sexual abuse of schoolgirls by male teachers
- Hold regular workshops on abuse for all stakeholders involved in education.

56% of the teachers interviewed said they did not teach any lessons which explicitly addressed the issue of abuse within and outside the school. Of the remainder, they taught lessons within Religious and Moral Education, Science, Ghanaian Language, and Social Studies which have topics such as children's/human rights, reproduction in humans, and causes of divorce. This allowed them to teach related issues of abuse and sexuality. Very few of them however thought that the school curriculum, even through Moral and Religious Education, explicitly addressed harassment, abuse or bullying in school. Nevertheless, they did point out that the weekly morning school worship was used to educate children about moral behaviour.

### **3.3.4 Guidance & Counselling teachers' perspectives**

The three guidance and counselling (G&C) teachers interviewed (one female in School A and two males in Schools B and C, with the head teacher carrying out this role in School C) indicated that they saw their roles as an opportunity to meet with pupils and counsel them. They believed that broken homes were the main cause of children's problems in school. Whereas in Schools A and B they thought that they received some support from their colleagues, head teachers and parents in carrying out their duties, in School C the head teacher was critical of the lack of support from parents.

Interestingly, while the two male G&C teachers said that they do get some pupils coming to them with problems, the female G&C teacher said none of the pupils come to her with their problems. In fact she was very dismissive of what might constitute a 'problem' for girls – boys touching them or troubling them did not appear to be considered as serious. Predominant among the problems that pupils took to the male G&C teachers were pocket money for school and (perhaps surprisingly) pregnancy. Both teachers in Schools B and C talked about the problem of pregnancies among schoolgirls. They also said they got complaints about boys and men outside the school who bother girls at home. Although they both acknowledged that abuse of schoolgirls by teachers exists in their schools, the pupils did not bring this to their notice. They only hear about such cases through parents and people in the communities. The G&C teacher in School C (who is also the head teacher) cited a case that was reported to him by a member of the community. According to him, 'there was a teacher in the school who was doing that ... he once "slept" with one of the girls and this became an issue, so we (the teachers) had to go to the parents of the girl with a bottle of schnapps

to plead on behalf of the teacher involved'. (It seems that the teacher is no longer in the school.) This example illustrates the way in which such cases tend to be dealt with, with the school trying to hush it up by negotiating a settlement with the family (with as little as a bottle of alcohol as compensation) rather than reporting it to the education authorities and seeking a prosecution. It is not surprising, therefore, given such a weak response that sexual abuse by teachers is able to flourish.

According to the G&C teacher in School A, it seems that the most common form of abuse that girls and some younger boys experience is bullying by older boys. This is perhaps not surprising as this is an urban school in a low socio-economic area (higher levels of bullying were also found in a similarly located school in the Zimbabwe study). In Schools B and C, they thought sexual harassment by older boys outside the school was the greatest problem for girls. When asked whether the school authorities took any action against abusers, both teachers in Schools A and C said yes. However, the teacher in School B said no, justifying this by saying that most abuse cases of a sexual nature involving schoolgirls do not constitute rape, hence he did not see how the school can take any action against the offender. According to him, even in cases where a schoolgirl is impregnated, there is little that the school can do. This is an extraordinary statement, especially from a G&C teacher, which shows a complete lack of awareness of the ethical conduct required of teachers.

In their view, if a teacher was involved in a sexual relationship with a schoolgirl, the school would try to handle the matter with the girl's family. Only the female G&C teacher conceded that if it transpired that he had forced or raped the girl, then the school authority should hand him over to the police. All three expressed the view that such behaviour affected school performance and made the victim unhappy and withdrawn. It could also lead to sexually transmitted infection, pregnancy and in some cases abortion, all of which contributes to girls dropping out of school. Despite this, they seemed to accept the situation as one which did not need urgent action.

When asked about the training or preparation they received for their role as G&C teachers, they said that the district education office organised annual one-day workshops for them but they were not sufficient. They were all of the opinion that to tackle cases of abuse adequately, the Ghana Education Service (GES) must ensure the following:

- The role of a Guidance and Counselling teacher should be made a full time position
- Separate times or days must be set aside for pupils as counselling sessions in school
- The Ministry of Education should make funds available to very needy pupils who come to school without food or pocket money and examination fees

In their recommendations to the government, the G&C teachers suggested the following:

- Parents must be educated about their roles and responsibilities toward their children's education
- There must be intensive public education on the nature of abusive actions against girls and who the potential abusers are

- The government must provide more incentives to strengthen G&C programmes in school
- The government must take stringent measures against offenders.

### **3.3.5 Parents' perspectives**

Interviews were held with fifteen parents and guardians of girls in the selected schools, of whom two were uncles and 13 were mothers. Like the other interviewees, they acknowledged that girls have more problems to grapple with in and around the school than boys. Most of them believed that their daughters/guardians had been exposed to incidents of bullying, harassment, threats or beatings by older boys both in school and around the home. When asked for details, the general response was that daughters do not report such cases to them but they hear about them through a third party. It was noted during interviews that they were reluctant to talk about male teachers propositioning their daughters/wards. However, when asked whether they knew of cases where male teachers had propositioned schoolgirls, eight out of the fifteen answered yes. Of these, three had children in School A, four in School B and one in School C. Once again, parents and guardians were more willing to talk about other cases of abuse than those directed at their own children.

When asked whom they would blame if a schoolgirl became pregnant, they saw parents themselves as largely responsible. So many teenage girls became pregnant because parents failed to take proper care and responsibility for their teenage daughters. However, lack of parental control was compounded by the inadequate provision of basic needs by some parents due to financial constraints. There is indeed no doubt that family poverty makes girls vulnerable to all forms of exploitation.

When asked if a girl who got pregnant should be punished, most thought she should not be. However a few expressed the view that 'the girl must be left to suffer' because they did not have the money to take care of 'two people'. Most agreed that she should be allowed to return to school after she had had the baby. It must be noted, however, that although the GES has a policy which allows girls to go back to school after delivery, most head teachers do not follow the procedure.

Most thought that schools were not doing enough to protect the girls. In their view, teachers should be responsible for monitoring girls who 'go out' in the evening and punish them later in school. Schools should do more to teach pupils about morality. However in the case of School B, they felt that the teachers were the schoolgirls' 'main problem'. One parent in an angry tone said 'How can the school protect girls if teachers are those who trouble our daughters?' It seemed that parents in this school were aware of the behaviour of some male teachers both past and present but that they had failed or been too afraid to do anything about it. It emerged during the investigations by the District Education Office overseeing School B (see below) that whenever a question was raised about the head teacher and a schoolgirl, he would threaten them that if they complained to the district authorities and he was dismissed or transferred, they would not get a replacement.

The interviewees thought that unlike girls boys did not face any particular problems, although in Schools B and C they said that boys had to do 'by-day' on farms (i.e. offering one's labour for a daily wage) to earn an income to pay for their fees and buy



basic school items. When asked ‘Why do girls not also do ‘by-day’ to get money for their basic needs?’, they said that ‘girls are not as strong as boys and cannot offer their labour on farms – it’s hard work’. It is clear that the lack of opportunity for girls to earn any sort of income puts them at particular risk of sexual abuse.

### **3.3.6 Government officials’ perspectives**

Two officials from the central Ministry of Education (the Director of Girls’ Education and the Director of Teacher Education) were interviewed, as were the regional G&C officer, the district social welfare officer, the district education welfare officer, and the second in command of the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police. Despite several efforts, the GES Director responsible for Basic Education could not be interviewed.

Both the Directors of Girls’ Education and Teacher Education viewed abuse within the school context as the exploitation of pupils by school authorities and teachers for their own needs – both sexual and non-sexual. The Director of Teacher Education stated that despite the absence of statistics, they knew that cases of defilement (sex with a child under 16 years of age) and rape by teachers went on in schools. She cited instances of her personal involvement in dealing with such cases and acknowledged that it was difficult to get to the bottom of cases because most educational officials condoned and connived with the perpetrators and as such would not want to expose their colleagues.

The story told by the WAJU police officer was no different. She dealt with cases of rape, defilement, abduction, unnatural carnal knowledge (non-penetrative sex), indecent assault (touching of private parts), child abandonment (desertion/withdrawal of maintenance) and others. Most victims were girls and most cases involved rape or defilement. She provided national data on cases reported to the Department of Social Welfare. Figures for the period January – May 2002 revealed 216 cases of defilement, 584 of assault, 65 of rape, and 583 cases of child desertion/non maintenance. These are very high figures – an average of 15 child rapes a month nationally.

She invited the prosecuting officer to join in the interview. The latter explained the frustrations of dealing with such cases: WAJU would do everything to process cases and bring them to trial, but parents of the victims would at the last moment, sometimes a day before the prosecution, send in a withdrawal letter for the case to be dropped. Several accounts were given by police officers of instances where the complainant would aid the accused to run away or the relatives of the victims would collect huge sums of money from the accused and then come to withdraw the case. The two welfare officers interviewed also said that they dealt with cases of parental neglect, child trafficking, excessive beatings by parents, rape and defilement. Some cases were reported to the district assembly by parents and victims, others the social welfare and education welfare officers got to know about from pupils during visits to schools.

All the officials were sure that there was more abuse than actually got reported. In their opinion, both parents and school authorities covered up cases in order to save the ‘image’ of the offenders and the victims’ family reputation. Girls also did not report cases because they were intimidated, not believed and frightened of stigmatisation.

They believed that the effect of abuse on the abused, especially girls, made them embarrassed, withdrawn and depressed and they developed low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in themselves.

The Director of Girls' Education acknowledged that despite the MOE policy on teacher misconduct, this was not enforced adequately. According to her, it varied from school to school depending on the kind of professional cooperation that existed between the head and the staff. Apart from the punitive measures stated in the professional code of conduct for teachers, the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) also collaborated with NGOs and other organisations to implement sanctions aimed at deterring all kinds of men from taking undue advantage of innocent schoolgirls.

The G&C officer also echoed the above and stated that his office designed programmes and offered leadership in providing guidance services. G&C teachers in schools were supposed to receive in-service training once a term (the frequency of training however depended on availability of funding) and to update their knowledge through seminars and workshops. Not many cases of abuse reached his department but he did hear about them through informal discussions. He also confirmed that most schools preferred to deal with cases internally to keep the good name of the school. He was of the opinion that 'home-room' sessions (group sessions to discuss gender issues) and 'assertiveness drills' for girls at school were invaluable in helping address abuse in school. Unfortunately, the school timetable did not provide space for such important activities. If girls sought help when abused, existing laws and policies were enforced, and counselling teachers were given professional training in dealing with abuse cases, all this would help eliminate all forms of school based abuse.

All the officials interviewed recognised that abusive behaviour by teachers was a problem, that all too often prosecutions were dropped and schools colluded with the offenders to make sure that any misdemeanours did not become public knowledge. The result is apathy and officials who can all too easily apportion blame to others.

### **3.4 Strategic interventions**

The second phase of the current study involved the researcher working with others to trial a series of small scale initiatives to address abusive behaviour towards girls in schools. It began with some networking: the researcher met with the Director of the Girls' Education Unit in the MOE, the regional Director of Education, regional and district officials in charge of girls' education, the district assembly members, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC) of Schools B & C, and also with a local NGO advocating the practice of children's rights called Foundation Builders. This networking was necessary in order to get as much cooperation and participation as possible from all stakeholders for the small scale interventions. In consultation with the regional and district officers responsible for girls' education, it was decided to run a PTA/SMC sensitisation seminar in the schools and a community awareness *durbar* in School B. The NGO would help run girls' clubs in the schools. It was also proposed to run workshops in one teacher training college in the region; however, this latter activity was not possible because of the timing (the college vacation).

It was clear from the earliest stages of the research (the PRA workshops) that all the girls in School B were at risk from the head teacher, who preyed routinely on them for sexual favours. This placed the researcher in a predicament, as to whether to reveal the situation to the education authorities or not. However, during discussions with district education authorities over what might be suitable ways of trialling strategies to counteract abuse, it became clear that the head teacher's behaviour was well known to some education officers, to the executive bodies of the PTA and the SMC and indeed to the majority of the community. The latter had known about it long before the research started but they had not made any official complaint. The education authorities had learnt about it from informal discussions with community members and rumours. Some parents subsequently admitted to the researcher that the presence of the research team in their community was a relief to them and their daughters, as they hoped that something would now be done. Members of the SMC discussed openly with the researcher some incidents which confirmed what the girls had told her earlier.

In discussion with the authorities, an appropriate strategy seemed to be to stage a community event which would raise the issue of abuse of schoolgirls generally, without naming any individual perpetrators. This would hopefully empower both the girls and the School B community to take action. It was therefore agreed that an awareness raising *durbar* should take place. In this way, the researcher found herself moving rapidly from the role of researcher gathering data in the school to one where she was involved in staging an event to expose a case of serious sexual misconduct. This role shift raises issues - not considered when the study was being planned but not unfamiliar to researchers - of how to act when confronted with new knowledge which incriminates somebody as a wrong-doer and exposes individuals, in particular children, to risk, while still trying to ensure confidentiality. To have walked away would not have been acceptable. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

The interventions in the three schools therefore consisted of:

**1. Formation of Clubs.** The aim of this was to empower the younger girls, to help them to be confident in themselves, build up their self-esteem and develop the ability to talk about or report abusive actions against them to adults. These clubs were set up in consultation with the school heads. The NGO 'Foundation Builders' was contracted to form the clubs and teach the lessons with the researcher. There were eight hourly lessons provided once a week immediately after morning assembly. Five schoolgirls were selected to attend from each class (P1 – JSS 3) making a total of 45 girls aged 6-18. However, other girls came peeping through the windows, indicating that they wanted to join their colleagues. So all the girls in the school were included in the end. In all, six team leaders were nominated in the school: two from Lower Primary (1-3), two from Upper Primary (4 –6) and two from JSS (1-3). The researcher provided an education kit (two booklets originally sponsored by DANIDA).

## Activities

### **The Foundation Builders' club**

**Lesson One:** the girls were taken through some basic principles relating to children's rights and safety, e.g. definition of a child, welfare principles relating to the care and protection of children, their right to the basic needs of life and to education.

**Lesson Two:** they were educated about the 'private areas' of the body. The girls were taught not to permit anybody to touch them unless it was a very young child whom for example an adult in the family was bathing. They were given information on child sexual abuse, based on two sets of educational materials provided by the researcher – 'Child Sexual Abuse: what everyone should know' and 'Students acting against sexual harassment'.

**Lesson Three:** they were taken through a detailed discussion of 'Who a stranger is' and were taught not to accept or demand 'unnecessary' gifts from male adults in and around the school. They were also led to understand why they must not enter the rooms of male adults or follow older boys to obscure places in and around the school and home.

**Lesson Four:** they talked about who the victims and offenders were in cases of abuse. Explanations of why children do not complain when abused were raised and discussed. Some of the explanations suggested by the pupils were: they would be beaten by their parents and even by the culprits, they might be threatened with death, they would not be believed, they would be afraid of being victimised, ridiculed and stigmatised in society.

**Lesson Five:** it was explained to them that any form of sexual abuse is a very big crime, which they should report without fear to teachers, parents, adults in the community, the police and social welfare. They were made to understand why they should not allow their parents or adult relations to take money from the culprits and settle the matter at family level – adults should see to the prosecution of offenders.

**Lesson Six:** they were then taken through 'what everyone should know' as listed in one of the booklets provided by the researcher and each item was explained to them. Girls in Schools B and C were later given 40 copies of the booklets to keep in their library. They also talked about some of the excuses that offenders and abusers give: e.g. she urged me on, she demanded gifts/money from me, she enticed me with her short/revealing dress and she came to lie on my bed.

**Lesson Seven:** This was devoted to awareness on HIV/AIDS and other STDs. The pupils were taken through them it was explained to them that the main means of getting these diseases is through sexual relationships. The girls added that they knew that all forms of sexual relationships – whether rape, under-age sex and sex based on mutual agreement - can lead to early pregnancies.

**Lesson eight:** schoolgirls in both Schools B and C on separate sessions discussed what they had learnt on the Regional FM radio during the Saturday morning children's programme. The children featured in the programme shared their experiences of abuse at both school and home. They passed on information about places where girls are commonly abused by boys and older men, and what is said to them. They told their fellow listeners to: learn to scream/shout for help in cases of sexual abuse, avoid walking alone in obscure places, not to enter rooms full of boys or men and to report cases of abuse to an adult relative. Girls were also advised not to stay out late in the evenings. They made an appeal to parents to listen to them when they tell 'their story'. The programme was also fused with biblical teachings.

2. **The PTA/SMC workshop** for parents and teachers. This was held in October and November 2001 in Schools B and C, with 63 parents of pupils in School B and 35 parents of pupils in School C attending.<sup>12</sup> Both heads attended throughout, and teachers attended for part of the time as their teaching duties allowed. The aim was to expose to the participants the way in which their own actions may be abusive towards schoolgirls and the way in which abuse affects girls' participation in school. It was also intended to encourage parents and teachers to listen to younger girls. Pupils' drawings of 'abuse spiders' and 'cause and consequence trees' prepared at the PRA workshops were used (anonymously) as resource material.

3. **The *durbar***. This was held in early November 2001 in the community where School B is located. The aim was to talk about the abuse of girls openly within the community and to create awareness of the abusive experiences that girls encounter in and around the school. It was also intended to expose the plight of schoolgirls more generally through publicity in the media and to press for explicit guidelines and procedures for handling reported cases other than at the family level. The girls in the school performed a play written for them by the researcher after which invited guests answered questions from the audience. The guests included the regional Deputy Director of Education, the regional social welfare officer, the district Girls' Education Officer, teachers, the Regent of the community, the district planning officer and coordinating director, a children's rights advocate and the researcher. The audience was also given information about the bodies responsible for handling cases of sexual abuse and was urged not to let abusers go unpunished or to accept money from them. The series of events surrounding and following the *durbar* are illustrative of the difficulties faced by communities in seeking redress against an offender 'from within', and of the lack of clear procedures for education authorities, communities and parents on how to deal with abusing teachers. This is therefore covered in some detail in the following section.

#### **Circumstances surrounding the *durbar***

Preparation for the event was not trouble-free. As the centre piece was the play on the theme of a head teacher asking girls for sexual favours. A copy was given to the Director of Girls' Education and the coordinating director at the district assembly for comments before the rehearsals. A local teacher recommended to the researcher by the district planning officer and the district Girls' Education Officer agreed to rehearse the play with the pupils of School B prior to the *durbar*. She was an experienced teacher from the nearest urban community, who along with her husband (also a teacher) knew something about this school head and felt that a sensitisation *durbar* would encourage the community to wake up and act. As for the pupils, both boys and girls responded positively to the suggestion. Indeed, it was difficult selecting the main characters because so many wanted to take on roles which would allow them to dramatise what they had been experiencing in school.

A few days before the *durbar*, however, the head teacher of School B asked the teacher who was rehearsing with the girls what the play was about. Once he learnt its content he protested and wanted to stop the performance. The researcher sought advice from the chairpersons of the PTA and SMC and from several district education

---

<sup>12</sup> It was unfortunately not possible to obtain the cooperation of School A for these workshops.

officers, who decided to visit the school. After discussing the matter with the Regent, the officers told the head that there was nothing obscene about the play and thought that the pupils should go ahead with it. The attitude of the head 'raised eye brows', although as indicated above some officials and the PTA and SMC chairpersons already knew why the head was objecting to the play.

The event was very well attended by people from the School B and neighbouring communities. The PTA/SMC, the district and regional Girls' Education Officers, the district assembly member and the Regent of the community had all helped to mobilise support and ensure that every community member was present at the *durbar* grounds. Nobody was allowed to go to the farm that day, this being a Wednesday (the traditional community taboo or meeting day). Several thousands attended and the event was covered in the newspapers and discussed on FM radio, this latter being a 'phone-in' organised by the researcher with school children as guest speakers who answered questions from the public. The activities were also captured on video, which had the potential for being used as educational material during workshops and seminars for children, teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

After the event, when two newspaper articles appeared (**Appendix 9**) and the radio discussion had been held, the head and three of the male teachers in School B protested that, as the *durbar* had been held in the community where they were teaching, it was clear who was being referred to in the media. They threatened to leave their posts and ask for a transfer. The district education office subsequently sent an investigation team to the community, which confirmed, as the data already gathered by the researcher had shown, that the school head (a member of the community) is the number one sexual abuser. The team learnt a great deal from the elders of the community about what the girls encountered at school. As already indicated, this was an 'open secret' but community members had not known how to handle the matter. Several of the other male teachers were also mentioned as sexually harassing and abusing schoolgirls. In response to this, the district office ordered that no teacher should leave his/her post until the office had completed its investigations.

In response to the teachers' protest, the District Director of Education (who was not present at the *durbar*) expressed her annoyance that it had gone so far in exposing the teachers' misdemeanours as such public exposure tarnished the image of the teaching profession and led to teachers losing society's respect. Other members of the district education office did not support this line and thought that the Director should be more concerned about the plight of schoolgirls in the face of HIV/AIDS than the image of the teaching profession. It was hoped that the Director would take up her retirement after Christmas, which was due. This in fact happened and her deputy took over as Acting Director.

### **Impact of the *durbar***

In addition to the 'unmasking' of the head teacher, there were other direct consequences of the *durbar*. One small incident occurred immediately after the event, with a woman approaching the researcher to tell her that 'there is a female teacher who has been "preparing" schoolgirls for the male teachers as girl friends'. From her description, the researcher realised that it was a long serving untrained teacher from the community. This woman requested that the researcher ensure that the school authorities transfer the teacher, even though she is a member of the community. As

yet, no action has been taken on this but it does suggest that complicity exists within schools even with female teachers to allow abusive behaviour to continue unchecked.

According to the education welfare officer, a few weeks after the *durbar*, a case was reported to her office by a parent regarding a teacher in another school just two kilometres from School B who had impregnated her daughter at that school. The teacher had sought and received a transfer to another school after realizing the girl was pregnant. This parent had learnt from the *durbar* about the procedures that the authorities should follow in dealing with such cases and about what parents should do to report such a case. It was therefore only after the *durbar* that she lodged her complaint, by which time her daughter was eight months pregnant, as she had not known what to do earlier. In response, the district office sent a message to the teacher's new school, informing the head of the teacher's behaviour and instructing him as to what action to take against this teacher.

On following up the situation at the end of March 2002, the researcher learnt from a member of the investigating team that the school head and four teachers also suspected of abuse had been summoned to meet individually with the disciplinary committee of the district education office. Only the head had admitted his offence after pressure was brought to bear on him, including an intervention from the Regent. The other teachers all denied any sexual liaison with girls in the school. The committee was due to return later in April to meet with the traditional Council made up of the Regent and elders of the community and the SMC. It was expected that the head would be transferred to an all male school. The district education office had since the *durbar* also learnt that three girls in the JSS were pregnant and it was currently investigating who was responsible. There had been no reports of victimisation of the girls in School B following the events. The teachers had been warned that any complaint from the pupils or their parents would be dealt with severely. The girls were in fact safer than before the *durbar* because the situation was now openly discussed.

This member of the investigation team expressed concern that the incident had made it clear that no explicit mechanisms existed which education officials could use in handling such cases. In his opinion, a special unit within the GES should be set up to deal specifically with cases of abuse in schools.

### **3.4.1 Impact of the strategic interventions**

It was clear that the *durbar* had had a major impact on the School B community in raising awareness of the seriousness and prevalence of sexual abuse in the school, and had also raised the issue nationally through the media reports. The teachers were under Ministry scrutiny and the head at least was likely to be transferred. It was clear to the research team that holding a *durbar* was an excellent means of raising awareness and mobilising communities to act, without placing the girls at risk of retaliation.

Evidence from School C<sup>13</sup> revealed a positive impact of the intervention strategies implemented (school club and sensitisation workshop). Two follow up visits to the school took place, in December and April, both providing evidence that negative attitudes and treatment by both teachers and parents towards the girls had changed considerably. Below are some of the small successes recounted to the researcher.

The Head commented favourably on a number of changes. Firstly, there were usually two or more pregnancies every year but since the research started in May 2001 there had not been a single pregnancy. Secondly, during his 12 years in the school (four years as head) he had never had a schoolgirl come to him to complain of sexual abuse; yet a girl in JSS had told him about a newly posted male teacher in another school, located near her own community, who was sexually harassing her (propositioning her); she had asked the head for a copy of the booklet on 'Child Abuse' distributed by the researcher so that she could give it to this teacher to read. He had been surprised by her behaviour but realised that such initiative was to be encouraged.

During the April visit, the head also told the researcher that parents who were previously not paying their children's school fees regularly were now making prompt payment. Moreover, previous attempts at organising extra tuition for the pupils had failed because parents were not prepared to pay the 'study fee' and preferred having their children on their farms after school. The sensitisation workshop, however, had positively changed the perception that parents had of their children's education. Most were now paying the weekly fee for extra classes.

From the girls, there was evidence that the researcher's workshop with parents had also been productive. One reported that she used to go to the family farm after school to work every evening and return home very late, usually around 6:30-7pm. But now she was sent earlier and spent less time there, returning at around 4 pm when the road was safer. Another girl commented that her mother used to send her on errands after 6pm but now she sent her earlier and also made sure that she went to bed early and was not allowed to go out at night.

Other stories showed how for some girls excessive beating, insults and other abusive actions by either their stepparents or guardians had reduced considerably since the interventions. For example, one girl who was deformed in one hand told the researcher that her stepmother had been maltreating her by beating and insulting her regularly, and sometimes refusing to give her food. However, there had been a positive change of attitude towards her since the *durbar*. She appealed to the researcher to have regular meetings with parents. During both visits, it was clear to the researcher that the girls appeared to be more confident and assertive than before.

The above provides some evidence of small scale impact of the interventions on pupils, parents, teachers and officials. The latter had become very aware of the

---

<sup>13</sup> It was difficult to trial strategies in School A. This however had an existing school club formed by the same NGO (Foundation Builders) so the girls were taken through the lessons on abuse. Organising a PTA/SMC workshop proved more difficult due to limited cooperation from the authorities. Given that this was an urban community, it is likely that many listened to the FM radio discussions after the *durbar*.



shortcomings in the system for reporting and handling cases of teachers' sexual misconduct and the need to strengthen procedures. Parents had acquired information about the appropriate channels for complaints and had realised that it was possible to assert their right as parents to a safe school environment for their children and to insist on the prosecution of abusers.

### **3.5 Conclusions and recommendations**

The Ghana study shows that, as elsewhere, abuse is a sensitive area to research because it involves sexual abuse, a taboo topic and one which most of us would prefer to ignore. Abuse of schoolgirls remains largely hidden because the victims are reluctant to talk about their experiences to teachers and parents and those in authority are quick to find excuses for inaction. From this research, it was clear that everyone preferred to talk about abuse as experienced by others. Nevertheless, it revealed that abusive behaviour by male pupils and teachers, relatives and sugar daddies did exist in the Ghanaian school context, it took the form of aggressive sexual advances, harassment, intimidation and threats, bullying, physical assault and verbal abuse.

As in the Zimbabwe study, it was worrying that girls appeared to accept such behaviour by older boys and teachers as an integral part of their daily school life, thus allowing abusive actions to go largely unchecked. Evidence was provided to suggest that where victims or parents did make official complaints about abuse, the schools often failed to discipline offenders. As in the case of the district Director of Education's reaction to the *durbar*, some school authorities show defensiveness in discussing cases of abuse if the offender is a teacher and, in an effort to protect the image of teachers, they are reluctant to expose and discipline such individuals. In so doing, they are shielding perpetrators and helping to perpetuate serious sexual misconduct. In cases where education authorities do mete out punishments, they are not a sufficient deterrent to prevent abusive actions occurring again, with the transfer of the teacher to another school being the most common action. It appears that even the head of School B will not face prosecution, despite his offences over many years. Similarly boys are rarely disciplined within the school when they assault girls. Such attitudes have encouraged the abuse of girls in school to flourish unchecked and to become a 'normalised' part in society. This poses a threat to girls' education at all levels.

Unfortunately, when girls come forward with allegations, they are often not listened to or believed. In most cases, they prefer to report abusive experiences only to their best friends. Girls who try to report to the school authorities are often victimised, ridiculed and stigmatised by pupils and teachers. Such attitudes continue to foster an authoritarian culture where the behaviour of boys and male teachers cannot be questioned by schoolgirls. Consequently, most girls suffer the effects of abuse in silence which in turn damages their confidence and self-esteem and retards their educational progress and achievement. The negative consequences of one head teacher's misconduct are informative, as despite efforts to delegate powers of educational decision-making to regional and local bodies and to give political voice to the people through district assemblies and bodies such as SMCs, it appears that there is no easy way of gaining redress - not at least until clear procedures, adequate information and institutional support are available.

In terms of **recommendations**, there is an urgent need for a more coordinated, proactive and system-wide response to combat the problem of school-based abuse. It requires a holistic approach. The following are suggested for consideration by stakeholders at every level of the education system.

**Ministry of Education (MOE):**

*The study revealed weaknesses in terms of linkages between the district education office and the national level response to abuse in the school environment.*

The MOE should:

- Develop and adopt a plan of action on school-based abuse of girls. This should be done in wide consultation with all stakeholders including parents, pupils, teachers, social workers and NGOs, offering advocacy and support services to abusers and government officials.
- Establish a special unit for children's rights and protection (a suggestion already made by teachers and education officials) within the Ministry and GES. GES should report and document all cases of child abuse to WAJU and the Ghana Police Service, and GES should work with the police to identify proper procedures for handling cases.
- Develop a stronger and more transparent national policy on handling cases of abuse and authorising district disciplinary procedures. The teachers' code of conduct should be revised to take into account new legal and disciplinary procedures. Teachers should be suspended during criminal investigations and not transferred until cleared of all charges.
- Set out guidelines for schools providing details of appropriate action in cases of abuse and create easily accessible procedures by which girls can make confidential complaints. Legal provision must be introduced to protect schoolgirls who may be abused.
- Create an independent Task Team at both regional and district levels to monitor cases of abuse in schools and oversee adequate response to reported cases. Such a body must be empowered to take steps to sanction head teachers or education officers who may fail to act in accordance with the provisions/guidelines.

**The Ghana Education Service (GES) should:**

- Organise regular participatory community *durbars* to sensitise communities on children's rights and legal procedures to follow in cases of abuse in school, especially if it is sexual in nature.
- Hold Parent-Teacher workshops in schools to raise awareness of issues of abuse and parental responsibility toward children's education, and to develop community-based action plans to handle allegations of abuse.
- Revise the PTA and SMC training manual to incorporate procedures for reporting cases of child abuse.

- Strengthen the role of the District Education Office Disciplinary Committee in investigating and taking action when complaints are made against teachers
- Strengthen the District Education Oversight Committees and Disciplinary Committees so that they also act as a support mechanism for parents and communities when reporting issues of child abuse. This will ensure that issues are taken up by a wider body and not limited to action by the District Education Director.
- Develop specialised curricula on abuse in school and provide gender-based training courses and workshops for all teachers and for trainees in training colleges.<sup>14</sup>
- Train district officers and head teachers to deal with incidents of abuse in and around the school in accordance with explicit guidelines. Such training programmes must be geared towards reducing gender and power bias in dealing with abuse of schoolgirls.
- Appoint and train child protection officers who will work from the District Education Office (or train existing welfare officers to handle cases relating to child abuse, children's rights and protection). Some officers could be appointed directly by the District Assembly.

**Girls should:**

- Move in and around the school in the company of other girls to prevent any attempt at harassment or abuse.
- Form clubs to discuss and learn about their basic rights and how to respond to abusive behaviour or harassment.
- Refuse to go to male teachers' quarters or rooms on request except with other girls.
- Be empowered to report abuses they experience to their parents, teachers and adult relations.
- Receive information on child abuse, children's rights and protection at the basic education level, through the life skills curriculum and other materials on children's rights.

**Boys should:**

- Be provided with gender awareness training to eliminate negative perceptions about girls and treat them with respect.
- Report cases of abusive actions that they themselves encounter.

---

<sup>14</sup> World University Service of Canada is in the process of publishing eight story books on child rights and abuse for teachers and children at basic level of education.

**Parents must:**

- Be encouraged to listen to what their daughters tell them and refrain from blaming girls when they make allegations.
- Be encouraged to provide their children, especially girls, with basic school items.
- Be sensitised to refrain from using abusive language towards their children.
- Be encouraged to show interest in their children's progress in school, monitor their attendance at school and discuss their education with teachers.

## References

- American Association of University Women (AAUW) (1993) *Hostile Hallways: the AAUW survey on sexual harassment in America's schools*. Washington DC: AAUW
- Appiah CD and Cusack K (eds) (1999) *Violence against Women and Children in Ghana: report of a national study on violence*. Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, Ghana
- Bandawe C and Forster D (1996) AIDS-related beliefs, attitudes and intentions among Malawian students in three secondary schools. *AIDS Care*, 8,2, 223-232
- Bennell P, Hyde K and Swainson N. (2002) *The Impact of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic on the Education Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Brighton: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.
- Bledsoe CH and Cohen B (1993) *Social Dynamics of Adolescent Fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington DC: National Academy Press
- Brock C and Cammish N K (1997) *Factors Affecting Female Participation in Education in Seven Developing Countries*. Education Research Series, No. 9, London, ODA.
- Casely Hayford L (2001) *The Needs of Female Teachers in Rural Deprived Areas of Ghana*. Accra: Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service.
- Colclough C, Rose P and Tembon M (1998) *Gender Inequalities in Primary Schooling: the roles of poverty and adverse cultural practice*. IDS Working Paper No 78, IDS, Brighton.
- Community Information Empowerment and Transparency Foundation (CIET) (2000) *Beyond Victims and Villains: the culture of sexual violence in South Johannesburg*. Johannesburg: CIET.
- Coombe C (2000) *Managing the Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Education Sector*. Pretoria: mimeo
- Dunne, Leach et al (2002, forthcoming) *Gendered School Experiences: the impact on retention and achievement*. London: DFID
- Gaidzanwa R (1993) *Gender Violence and Governance in Universities: the University of Zimbabwe*. December.
- Gordon R (1993) *Causes of Girls' Academic Underachievement: the Influence of Teachers' Attitudes and Expectations on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Girls*. Harare: HRRC, University of Zimbabwe.
- Gouws, A (1997) *Report on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Secondary and Tertiary Education*. Gender Equity Task Team, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Guardian Weekly (2001) 'Teachers blamed for Aids crisis in schools' by Lucy Jones in Bangui. Guardian Weekly, August 30-September 5, 2001, p.3

Hallam S (1994) Crimes without Punishment: Sexual Harassment and Violence against Female Students in Schools and Universities in Africa. Discussion Paper No 4, Africa Rights, London.

Human Rights Watch (2001) *Scared at School: sexual violence against girls in South African schools*. Human Rights Watch, New York

Hyde, K, Ekatan A, Kiage P and Barasa C (2001) *The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Formal Schooling in Uganda*. Brighton: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.

Jewkes, R, Levin, J, Mbananga, N and Bradshaw, D. (2002) Rape of girls in South Africa. *The Lancet*, 359, 319-320, January 26.

Kadzamira, E, Banda, D, Kamlongera, A and Swainson, N. (2001) *The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Formal Schooling in Malawi*. Brighton: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.

Kaim B, Chingwena P and Gwata S (1997) Light on Learning: Using PRA to Explore School-Going Adolescents' Views on their Sexual and Reproductive Health. Adolescent Reproductive Health Education Project, Training and Research Support Centre, with support from Ford Foundation, October.

Kathree F (1992) Sexual harassment and sexism: some perceptions from students and academics at the University of Natal, Durban. *Agenda*, 13, 1992.

Leach, F and Machakanja, P (2000) *A Preliminary Investigation into the Abuse of Girls in Zimbabwean Junior Secondary Schools*. DFID Education Research No. 39. London: DFID.

McAuliffe E (1994) AIDS: the barriers to behavioural change. Zomba: Centre for Social Research/UNICEF (Malawi)

Mensch BS, Clark WH, Lloyd CB and Erulkar AS (1999) Premarital Sex and School Dropout in Kenya: can schools make a difference? World Bank Working Paper No 124

Mirembe, R and Davies, L. (2001) Is schooling a risk? Gender, power relations and school culture in Uganda? *Gender and Education*, 13 (4), 401-416

Mirembe R (1998) AIDS Education and Gender in Ugandan Schools. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham

Mlamleli O et al (2001) *Opening our Eyes: addressing gender based violence in South African schools*. A module for educators. Canada-South Africa Education

Management Programme/Directorate for Gender Equity, National Department for Education, Pretoria

MoEST (1999) Basic Education Statistics Malawi. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

National AIDS Control Programme (Malawi) (1999) Sentinel surveillance report: HIV/Syphilis seroprevalence in antenatal attenders. Lilongwe: National AIDS Control Programme

Niehaus I (2000) Towards a Dubious Liberation: masculinity, sexuality and power in South African Lowveld Schools, 1953-1999. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 3, 387-407

Odaja A and Heneveld W (1995) *Girls and Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Technical Paper No. 298. Washington DC: World Bank.

Phiri et al (1997) HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes and practices of secondary school students in selected districts in the Northern region of Malawi. Zomba: unpublished draft report.

Poudyal R (2000) Alternative masculinities in South Asia: an exploration through films for schools. *IDS Bulletin* 31,2 April

Shumba A (2001) Who guards the guards in schools? A study of reported cases of child abuse by teachers in Zimbabwe secondary schools. *Sex Education*, 1,1

Stein N (1999) *Classrooms and Courtrooms: facing sexual harassment in K-12 schools*. New York: Teachers College Press

Stein N (1995) Sexual harassment in K-12 schools: the public performance of gendered violence, *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, 2, 145-162

UNESCO (1998) *World Education Report*. Paris: UNESCO.

Wolpe A et al (1997) Gender Equity in Education. Report of the Gender Equity Task Team. South Africa.

Wood K and Jewkes R (1998) Love is a dangerous thing: micro-dynamics of violence in sexual relationships of young people in Umtata, Medical Research Council Technical Report. Pretoria

Zabin LS and Kiragu K (1998) The health consequences of adolescent sexual and fertility behaviour in sub-Saharan Africa. *Studies in Family Planning*, 29, 2: 210-232

Zindi F (1998) Sexual Harassment in Zimbabwe's Institutions of Higher Education. *Perspectives in Education*, 17, 2, July.

### Comments from readers of Insights

*I have just come across your 'Conspiracy of Silence' article on the ID21 education website. I am familiar with the research of Katherine Wood and Rachel Jewkes (and others) in SA, but did not realise the extent to which the same challenges are being experienced in other southern African countries. (offered to write about his work in this field).*

**South Africa**

*Just to let you know that I had a chance to view the Gender Violence Special Issue. It looks great, and is just so jam packed with useful information! I have already been to 'site for sore eyes'. We are just in the process of developing a website for our research group "Gender, Adolescent Sexuality and HIV/AIDS" and will definitely be adding in both the various websites and of course a link to ID21.*

**Canada**

*Thank you for the two copies of Insights. The information included is both very interesting and educative. Most encouraging, is your effort to break the conspiracy of silence on this very important issue of violation of human rights; sexual harassment and abuse, which is very dangerous for the young people, especially the young girls.*

*It is very encouraging to see you get out into the open, and denouncing this very evil practice. It gives us hope and courage to also following your footsteps. The information availed will be used in our resource center, for the benefit of the entire membership, and readership.*

*Thank you, and we hope to continue working with you.*

**Uganda**

*I read with interest your special issue of August 2001. Your effort in bringing to surface core gender-sensitive issues thru this publication is commendable. I am passionately working in the field of human development for the past 12 yrs in ..... I'm one of the founder-members of Men Against Violence & Abuse, a voluntary organisation run by a core group of sensitive, concerned men from diverse fields, working for the past 8 yrs on gender issues(which have been seen largely as women's issues). One of our projects is an annual publication, brought out in vernacular language, consisting of expressions/write ups exclusively by men on gender issues. Any other relevant material on gender issues, esp. efforts by men from various parts of the world in tackling issues of violence and abuse against women sent by you will be highly appreciated.*

*Thanks for this - I will keep a closer eye on the site.*

**India**



*I read with great interest your special number on sexual harassment and abuse – this is obviously a very important subject these days. However, I find that almost all authors who contributed assume that to reduce or eliminate such harassment and abuse education etc must focus almost exclusively on the male offenders. I want to alert you to the fact that in many cases women are extremely willing victims. For instance, in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea women are convinced that to be beaten by their male partners is a sign of their love. A number of my male informants told me that their female partners left them because they did not beat them and they were told that they therefore do not love them.*

*I therefore suggest that in programmes that aim to reduce sexual harassment the focus needs to be also on the women concerned. If I were to do this I would begin by conducting "Culturally-Adapted Social Market Research" to discover how the concerned women and men perceive what has been happening and what their change aspirations - if any - really are. This would then provide the basis for an effective Social Marketing Strategy.*

**UK**

*I did receive the Gender in Violence email - it was of particular interest as it reflected our son's experiences - he has just returned from teaching (18-25 yr olds) in rural Ghana. The pregnancies from this gender violence resulted in high risk, induced abortions in the unsupervised girls' hostel being commonplace.*

**UK**

*What has been so significant for me about the publication is its economy/succinctness and comprehensiveness at the same time. I have referred to so many people to it and have used it in countless presentations. Its genre makes it so accessible and allows one to make a point very quickly about the far reaching effects of gender based violence. I know that the internet itself is also contributing to how people get a sense of what's going on, but a hard copy document like this also does that.*

*My work at the moment is very much concentrated on getting a gendered analysis on HIV and AIDS both in North America and South Africa. I am working on a couple of research projects related to youth culture, gender and HIV prevention - and that newsletter has been a key document.*

**Canada**

*The latest Insight is on an important topic and I was interested to read a number of the research results. This said, I was left a little uneasy by several aspects:*

- 1) The risk that the headline implies that no African country or school system is willing to recognize and take action on the problem. Though you specifically acknowledge that this is not a new nor an exclusively African problem, I thought this headline is somewhat overdone, especially as the various articles inside this issue of Insights describe several African countries which have for a number of years been running programmes designed to tackle such abuse.*
- 2) There is also the risk that criticism which is seen as mostly coming from outsiders will generate a negative reaction. I wished that more of the articles had been written by Africans - or that the four African authors or co-authors of nine items had been given more prominence on the front cover. I know from UNICEF's work on genital mutilation, admittedly a very different problem, how important it was for nationals of the countries concerned to be seen to be taking a lead, if one was to avoid counter-productive reactions.*
- 3) I wish there had been more reports on action being taken which seems to be succeeding. Instead of leaving the impression that little if anything is being done, I would have liked to see more descriptive and analytical pieces on programmes underway - as indeed you note that some of the web sites (listed on the back page) report on. Last year in a UN session on Gender based violence, two young men from Kenya and Malawi (?) spoke absolutely brilliantly about their local programmes. Like the White Ribbon programme, hearing about such actions both sets out an agenda of what can be done -and empowers and motivates the reader to consider what he or she might do.*

UK

---

### Websites visited

[www.endvaw.org](http://www.endvaw.org)

John Hopkins University Center for Communication Programmes  
End Violence against Women

[www.girlsrights.org](http://www.girlsrights.org)

Working Group on Girls

[www.sdn.org.mw/gender/girls\\_danida\\_study.html](http://www.sdn.org.mw/gender/girls_danida_study.html)

Girls Situation

[www.wcwonline.org/harassment](http://www.wcwonline.org/harassment)

Wellesley Center for Women

[www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)

The Communication Initiative

[www.speakout.org.za](http://www.speakout.org.za)

Speak Out

[www.mapev.org](http://www.mapev.org)

Men as Partners for Ending Violence Against Women and Children

[www.asia-initiative.org](http://www.asia-initiative.org)

[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

UNESCO – world AIDS Campaign, United Nations Girls Education Initiative

[www.unicef.org/programme](http://www.unicef.org/programme)

UNICEF Gender, Partnerships and Participation programme aimed at gender equity and ending violence against women and girls

[www.womenkind.org](http://www.womenkind.org)

Womenkind

[www.safenetwork.net](http://www.safenetwork.net)

Safenetwork for Girls

[www.cedpa.org](http://www.cedpa.org)

CEDPA

[www.ngosatunicef.org](http://www.ngosatunicef.org)

[www.tarsc.org](http://www.tarsc.org)

Training and Research Support Centre

<http://women3rdworld.about.com>

Scared at School Report

[www.mrc.ac.za](http://www.mrc.ac.za)

Medical Research Council, South Africa

[www.whiteribbon.ca](http://www.whiteribbon.ca)

White Ribbon Campaign

[www.undp.org/unifem](http://www.undp.org/unifem)

UNIFEM

[www.elimu.org](http://www.elimu.org)

Elimu Education campaign

[www.amref.org](http://www.amref.org)

African Medical Research Foundation

[www.thurrock.community.org.uk](http://www.thurrock.community.org.uk)

South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre

[www.zerotolerance.org.uk](http://www.zerotolerance.org.uk)

Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust

[www.scf.org.uk](http://www.scf.org.uk)

Save the Children

[www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/gender/mandmweb/contents.html](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/gender/mandmweb/contents.html)

Bradford University, Men, Masculinities and Gender Relations in Development.

[www.oneworld.org/panos](http://www.oneworld.org/panos)

PANOS

[www.womenkind.org.uk](http://www.womenkind.org.uk)

Womenkind

[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wywatch.country.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wywatch.country.htm)

Youth at the United Nations

[www.popcouncil.org](http://www.popcouncil.org)

Population Council

[www.soulcity.org.za](http://www.soulcity.org.za)

Soul City

### Story telling for change

Violence in dating relationships has increasingly become an accepted social norm for men, women, boys and girls in South Africa. How can aspects of popular culture support work in schools and convince adolescent youths that it's cool not to be cruel?

The Storyteller Group in South Africa has carried out groundbreaking work, using comic stories as a tool to explore the gendered dimensions of violence within adolescent relationships. Innovative methodology shows how it is possible to diffuse the conflict between the need to reflect the realities of young people's lives and the need to transform harmful behaviour.

Within a storytelling group, students (aged 16 to 20) from Acornhoek High School in Mpumalanga Province were asked to write a love story about a boy and girl in a rural village. Reflecting their own experiences, the students treated domestic violence, forced sex and having multiple partners within a relationship as the norm. Using Boal's Forum Theatre techniques, however, the students became active agents of change: acting out scenes from their own story, they started questioning and debating the legitimacy of the actions they had given the characters. The students explored previously undiscussed topics such as rights over one's body, male violence, sexual double standards, teenage sexuality, and traditional gender roles. Thus a new story, in comic form, emerged, with an educational agenda, yet still retaining its popular status by remaining true to the social conditions created by the students.

The Storyteller Group is developing two youth, sexuality and gender violence projects that seek to explore participatory methodology in materials development further. The simultaneous development and publication (for sale in cheap mini-comic format) of parallel narratives by two production teams, one all-male, the other all-female is one idea. The second aims to explore interactive story development on a mass scale by involving the readers - also community radio station listeners - in its development. Working with local radio not only provides publicity for reading in a country with very low reading levels but also a forum to stimulate discussion about the issues being raised.

The Storyteller Group urges students to:

- Get real! Media messages on HIV/ AIDS are sterilised. The media needs to address inequitable gender practices in sexual relationships and take a proactive stance in denaturalising male sexual violence against women.
- Picture it! The delivery of development communication resources can effectively capitalise on the power and dynamism of the comic strip.
- Listen up! The credibility of a message lies not only in its veracity but whether it sounds right. Creative collaboration with the target audience will produce lively, popular lingo, and real-life scripts.
- Act out! Storytellers and media workers can use 'Theatre for Development' to create stories with an educational agenda. Improvisation allows people to reflect, to criticise, and harness their own power as agents of social change.

**Contributor(s):** P. Shariff and Neil Verlaque-Napper

**Source(s):**

'Dialogue gender and performance: producing a rural South African comic beyond the learner paradox' PhD Thesis, University of Witwatersand, South Africa by P. Shariff, 1998

**Funded by:** The Storyteller Group

**Date:** 28 January 2002

**Further Information:**

P. Shariff

PO Box 92234  
Norwood 2196  
Johannesburg  
South Africa  
**Tel:** +27 11 4830 585  
**Email:** [pwatson@iafrica.com](mailto:pwatson@iafrica.com)  
Neil Verlaque-Napper  
The Storyteller Group  
P.O. Box 146  
Muizenberg 7950  
Cape Town  
South Africa  
**Tel:** +27 21 788 8771  
**Email:** [storyteller@icon.co.za](mailto:storyteller@icon.co.za)

## **Challenging masculine stereotypes: focus on Brazil**

Much research and thinking on adolescent boys focuses on the negative aspects of their behaviour such as violence, delinquency, callous attitudes towards young women and unsafe practices. What can we learn from research on the differences of socialisation of young men with more gender equitable attitudes and behaviour?

Building on an initial study in 1999 by the Instituto Promundo in Rio de Janeiro, a one-year qualitative research project was carried out with a group of young men, some of whom were identified as having a higher degree of gender equitable behaviour and attitudes towards young women. 25 young men aged 15-21 from a low-income urban setting participated in the project. In general, male involvement in reproductive health and child care is limited; men generally feel that they are entitled to sex from women; tolerance of violence against women is fairly widespread.

Although very few of the young men interviewed achieved all four characteristics below, the term 'gender equitable' refers to young men who:

- are respectful in their relationships with young women and seek relationships based on equality and intimacy rather than sexual conquest
- seek to be involved fathers - those who were already fathers believed they should take financial and at least responsibility for the care of their children
- assume some responsibility for reproductive health issues and do not use violence against women in their intimate relationships
- are opposed to violence against women.

The research aimed to identify factors at three levels – that of the individual, the family and the wider social setting. It was clear that some of the young men interviewed possessed more gender equitable attitudes than others:

- They had self-reflective abilities and an ability to see the cost of traditional masculinities.
- They had vocational and cultural competencies that buffer traditional masculinities.
- Adults associated with the boys offered alternative masculine roles.
- Their families intervened when faced with men's domestic violence or rejected it outright.
- The young men had access to a more gender equitable male peer group.

In response to the research, a programme was developed to promote the attitudes and behaviours described above, including some of the original research subjects. For example,

group discussions about life histories were held to help the young men see the 'costs' of traditional masculinities. Courses in Afro-Brazilian dance, computing and health promotion aimed to encourage vocational and cultural competencies. Community awareness raising about domestic violence targeted men and women whilst group formation was initiated and encouraged.

In terms of programme development, education and counselling, there is a need to:

- promote public awareness of gender equity at seminars, at the macro-policy level, and to form alliances with similar organisations
- encourage gender equity among young men and the people they associate with: families, girlfriends, community organisations, schools, adults all represent or reinforce gender inequity at different levels
- overcome institutional barriers to working with young men on issues related to sexuality, reproductive health and gender
- challenge institutional resistance to working with young men and preconceived notions of young men as disruptive or aggressive
- encourage adult men to act as mentors and positive role models
- provide spaces where young men can learn new cultural and vocational skills and find meaningful, social identities
- for therapists, counsellors and educators to view boys as having potential, rather than being seen as 'walking deficits', to listen and encourage boys to talk about issues that too often remain hidden.

**Contributor(s):** Gary Barker and Marcos Nascimento

**Source(s):**

'Gender-equitable boys in a gender inequitable world: Reflections from qualitative research and programme development in Rio de Janeiro' Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 15/3 by G. Barker, 2000

**Funded by:** John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; SSL International

**Date:** 22 March 2002

**Further Information:**

Gary Barker / Marcos Nascimento

Instituto PROMUNDO

Rua Francisco Serrador 2/702

Rio de Janeiro RJ 20031-060

Brazil

**Tel:** + 55 21 2544-3114

**Fax:** + 55 21 2220-3511

**Email:** [promundo@promundo.org.br](mailto:promundo@promundo.org.br)

[Instituto Promundo, Brazil](http://Instituto Promundo, Brazil)

## Safe space for girls?

Many parents in Nepal refuse to send their daughters to school, fearing girls are at risk from being abused which will affect theirs and their families' reputations. How can children, especially girls, change their environment and make it a safer place to be and study? How would this impact on their educational lives?

Save the Children supports projects in Nepal that facilitate research by children exploring ways to claim back unsafe spaces for themselves. By sharing findings and interacting with local government, school teachers, and parents, the children can begin to mobilise support and change. An advocacy tool, the process can help girls and boys to influence schoolteachers, students, parents, government, and NGOs: children clearly have enormous potential to improve their environment and take control of their own lives.

Girls in the Surkhet district of Nepal, for example, expressed strong feelings of vulnerability in their community. Save the Children-UK developed a project in which the girls carried out the research themselves, exploring and analysing the types of space they occupied. Using Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, the girls were able to determine the characteristics of a safe environment and developed an action plan to take back their 'space'. The girls used PRA tools to map unsafe spaces within their village, venn diagrams to illustrate their mobility, and team building tools; boys were involved in the process only when the girls felt it was necessary.

In order to reclaim their 'space', the girls identified the need:

- for parents to recognise the importance of girls' education
- to avoid conservative traditions such as gender discrimination within castes, between sons and daughters, and early marriage
- for girls to be able to demonstrate their ability within the community
- for people to speak out against the injustices and oppression of girls
- to raise awareness of girls' rights and enable their access to equal opportunities

As a result of the process changes have been identified within the community:

- The girls' group was consulted by community members on various cases of abuse or mis-treatment of girls. In one case, a local policeman kidnapped a local 11-year old girl. In collaboration with other children's groups, the girls wrote a letter to the local police commissioner, copying it to the village chairperson, local NGOs, the Chief District Police Officer and the Chairperson of the District Child Welfare Board, asking them to take immediate action. The 11-year old girl was freed and the Chief District Police Officer is conducting an investigation.
- Teachers and boys within schools and the community are paying greater respect to girls than was hitherto the case. Boys who were initially teasers now support girls' efforts to manage change. Boys are beginning to advocate respect for girls through drama. Support groups for girls who have faced abuse have been established by local communities.
- Local government bodies believe the community groups provide a strong support system for girls often citing the groups as success stories, inviting them to events related to girls' rights and safety, and in one case providing financial support for future work.

**Contributor(s):** Irada Gautam, Sulochana Pokharel, Jasmine Rajbhandary

**Funded by:** Save the Children (UK)

**Date:** 28 January 2002

**Further Information:**

Jasmine Rajbhandary  
Save the Children (UK)  
Jawalakhel

Lalitpur  
GPO Box 992  
Kathmandu

Nepal

**Tel:** + 977 1 535 159

**Fax:** + 977 1 527 256

**Email:** [j.rajbhandary@sc-uk.org.np](mailto:j.rajbhandary@sc-uk.org.np)

[Save the Children, UK](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)



## News items that appeared on the web page

### [Quality Education for girls](#)

This week (13-17 August) in Uganda, Carol Bellamy, [UNICEF's](#) Executive Director attends the launch of the Girls' Education Movement for Africa (GEM). Conceived by the Government of Uganda and supported by UNICEF and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), GEM is focusing on galvanizing action for girls as a strategy for Education for All.

[International coalition to mark World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse September 19th 2001](#)  
[Women's World Summit Foundation](#) (WWSF) is to launch an international coalition at the [UN Special Session on Children](#), September 19th -21st, to mark World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse (November 19th) and the World Day of the Rights of the Child (November 20th). The coalition aims to amplify the voice of organisations and individuals concerned about the massive increase in children who are trafficked and sexually exploited around the world. In joining the coalition the name of each organisation will be printed on the official 2001 poster announcing the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse and sent to thousands of relevant institutions, organizations and community groups working to prevent and raise awareness of the illegality and harmful consequences of child abuse and exploitation.

### [Men aren't from Mars: masculinities and non-violence in Latin America and the Caribbean European Tour 1-19 October 2001](#)

A group of men from Central America and the Caribbean will visit Europe in October 2001 to talk about reducing violence against women by challenging deep-rooted masculine attitudes and behaviour. The tour, facilitated by CIIR and ICD involves four men from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic who will discuss their pioneering popular education work at a series of meetings in Britain, Ireland, Spain and Belgium. The meeting will examine how concepts of masculinities can promote and legitimise physical and psychological violence. Looking at root causes, the tour will share innovative work from Nicaragua with men's and women's organisations, NGOs, gender networks, community projects, government and law-enforcement officials based in Europe. [Click here for details.](#)

### [Working with men to end gender-based violence: An interchange for global action](#) (October 8th -12th 2001) Rockefeller Bellagio Conference Centre, Italy

This meeting in October aims to bring together men and women in the forefront of work with men in ending gender-based violence. It will focus on men as partners against violence, working for its prevention, rather than as perpetrators, and will attempt to assess what really works to change the attitudes and behaviours underlying gender-based violence. It is expected that most participants will be from community-based organisations, researchers, and those involved in public policy. Contact Ruth Finney Hayward, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, [Gender, Participation and Partnerships Section, UNICEF](#) [rhayward@unicef.org](mailto:rhayward@unicef.org)

### [Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#)

JHU/CCP launches a new web site dedicated to ending violence against women on Oct 1 for Domestic Violence Awareness month. It will include journal articles, reports, training materials, brochures, posters, and links to other organisations.  
Contact [Patricia Poppe](#)

### [Safe and Secure: Eliminating Violence Against Women & Girls in Muslim Societies](#)

This training manual assists women to identify sources of violence in the family, community, society, and state. Contact: [Sisterhood is Global Institute](#)

### [The Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium](#)

has launched a comprehensive bibliography on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This is meant to serve as a resource for reference information related to SGBV issues in refugee, internally displaced, and post-conflict settings. For further information, email [Jeanne Ward](#)

5 November 2001 is [White Ribbon Day](#) - International Day Against Violence Against Women. WOMANKIND Worldwide is co-ordinating events across the UK in connection with the day, including a joint awareness-raising campaign with the YWCA: 'Blow the Whistle on Violence Against Women'.

#### Discussion on Peace, Gender and Conflict

Pehchaan, Gender Resource Center at Rozan in Pakistan is organising this discussion on Tuesday 13th November at House # 04-A, Street # 34, F-8/1, Islamabad.

Mr. Dale Buscher (Director of Operations, ICMC, Geneva) and Ms. Rakhshanda (Aurat Foundation, Peshawar) will briefly introduce the subject followed by discussion. This will focus on the differential impact of conflict situations and peace making efforts on women and men in terms of security concerns, risks involved, vulnerability, labour exploitation etc. Some refugees residing in Pakistan will narrate their stories to enrich the discussion. Please confirm your participation by 9th November to [Pehchaan](#)

#### [South Africa: Gender Based Violence and Health Conference](#)

17 - 20 April 2002

SAGBVH plans to host an annual conference on gender based violence and health in April 2002. Set to become an annual event, the conference will attempt to raise awareness about intersection between gender based violence and health and to find creative ways of building a violent free society. A call for papers will be issued in November 2001.

For further details contact: [Naomi Webster](#)

#### [Mapping a global pandemic](#)

Review of current literature on rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment of women, sexual violence against women. This review from the [Global Forum for Health Research](#) is based on an extensive survey of recently published literature

#### [Soul City](#)

Soul City is a South African multi-media 'edutainment' project, which aims to impact positively on people's quality of life through integrating health and development issues into prime time television and radio dramas, backed up by print materials.

Soul City has a number of offshoot projects including life skills materials and a children's edutainment vehicle called "Soul Buddyz" launched in August 2000. This deals with issues such as children's rights, AIDS, youth sexuality, accidents, disability, road safety, gender equality and bullying. It consists of a television series, a radio series, a sex education video, a parenting booklet and lifeskills booklets distributed (through schools) to all Grade 7 pupils nationally. For more information, contact [Sue Goldstein](#) or [Aadielah Maker](#).

### Workshop summaries

**School A:** This school (the original one selected) had a female head and a teaching staff of 11. Seven girls and six boys were selected at random from each of the two streams of JSS 2 (C and D), using the school register, to make a total of 14 girls and 12 boys. Pupils were between the ages of 13 and 16. The activities were conducted in an empty classroom. When the substitute school was identified, the researcher spent time in the Primary 5 and 6 and JSS 1 classes in order to take the pupils through several of the activities. As in the other schools, they were informed of the purpose of the research and discussed the meaning of ‘abuse’.

The workshop was run by the Ghanaian researcher, Vivian Fiscian, and the local consultant, Leslie Casely Hayford. It started with the 14 girls, who in two groups were invited to draw a school map, marking with red and green stickers places where they felt unsafe and safe respectively. They seemed to enjoy this activity. They then came together to explain the location of their stickers. Unsafe places were identified as: the playing fields as boys would chase them away and they had nowhere else to go; teachers’ quarters, especially the male teachers’ quarters, as teachers may ask girls to come to their house to do something for them; the road way as they may get hit by a car; the toilet area as boys from the neighbouring (boys’) school would come to smoke ‘wee’ (marijuana) and cocaine, and would try to kiss girls or touch them up; the boys’ school (‘boys stand naked and call out for girls’); the ocean because of the risk of drowning; and storm drains because of the risk of falling in.

The girls then moved on to drawing an ‘abuse’ spider, labelling the legs with the types of abuse that exist in and around the school, and then placing coloured sticky dots where they thought the abuse was most serious. The girls became very excited by this activity. They then came together to discuss the forms of abuse they had identified and why they chose to put the dots where they did. Types of abuse identified were: beatings or rape by boys who have smoked ‘wee’ in the market; boys forcing a girl who becomes pregnant to take some medicine to abort the baby (girls reported at least two cases of girls dying as a result); boys paying money to have sex with a girl, forcing a girl to have sex; threatening behaviour from men at the community market place when they sell food at weekends or after school (some claimed to have seen women beaten and raped in the market); men cheating them when they sell food stuffs in the market place; beatings by parents when they do not do their chores; beatings by teachers when they misbehave, don’t complete homework or come late to school; boys touching their breasts at home and at school; boys using abusive language to girls (‘if you tell the teachers, the boys will threaten and beat you’); domestic chores; unhappiness due to divorce or separation. The most serious forms of abuse were considered to be: abuse in the market place, drug abuse, insults by parents, beatings and abuse by teachers and sexual abuse.

On the second day, the girls started in groups to draw a ‘cause and consequence’ tree, with one group working on ‘Why girls have sex with boys/why girls have sex with teachers’ and the other on ‘Why boys have sex with girls/why teachers have sex with girls’. Girls were thought to have sex for gifts, money, to show love to boys, for love and to have a child. Boys have sex with girls for peer influence, pleasure, to show

love, to get something from girls, to give them money and sweets, because of a girl's beauty. As for consequences, the girls listed HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, getting thrown out of the house by parents, dropping out of school, abortion, and being a teenage mother with no father to take care of the baby. The girls seemed to have a practical knowledge of HIV/AIDS: they were aware of the need to use condoms, to avoid having sex and to be faithful to one partner.

Similar activities were then carried out with two groups of boys (12 in total). One group worked on the school map and the 'cause and consequence' tree answering why girls have sex with boys/why boys have sex with girls, while the other group worked on the 'abuse' spider and the 'cause and consequence' tree answering why girls have sex with teachers/teachers have sex with girls. The groups then came together for a discussion. They did not have any place where they felt really unsafe apart from the road and the ocean side, although some spoke of abuse of other boys in the science block by those who do not want to learn. As for types of abuses, they thought that rape is the most serious, drug abuse and child abuse come next, followed by insults and bullying, and then beating.

On 'Why teachers have sex with girls', they thought this was because girls stick out their buttocks to attract the teachers, because of the way they dress, girls going to teachers' house for extra lessons, and taunting and flirting with the teachers. The boys blamed the girls for provoking and attracting the male teachers, sometimes forcing themselves on them. On 'Why girls have sex with teachers', they listed threats by teachers (if the girls refuse), teachers helping them to pay their fees, teachers giving them the exam questions in advance or helping them to pass their exams, and to avoid getting punished in class. As for consequences, this will bring about disgrace to the girl, the whole world will be against the girl, other teachers will support him and defend the teacher if he is caught, STDs and HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, and the girl being expelled from the school.

The boys knew a lot about rape and explained that they had watched this on television, read about it in the newspapers and heard it on the radio. They were also familiar with abortion. They believed that girls abort babies because their parents are poor. They thought that the girls feel unsafe in the Science block, canteen and classrooms and behind the toilets because this is where they are verbally harassed. It also became apparent that the boys knew they were not letting the girls play on the field but they did not have any valid reason for this. They were aware of the problems these abuses create for girls: disease, preventing them from attaining higher levels of education, hurting the girls, and disgrace. They did not however mention that it was against the basic rights of the girl.

The boys spoke of the abuse they experienced in their own lives. Some parents beat them regularly and insulted them without any reason. One boy had witnessed a rape after school behind the toilets and told another boy who said he should not tell anyone. They had learned about teachers wanting to have sex with girls through story books, TV, radio, newspapers and youth magazines. They also knew a lot about STDs through the radio and books and 'sometimes university students come and teach us'.

The girls then returned and started work on constructing a 'problem wall'. They were asked to write one problem each that they face at school on a 'post-it' and to stick it

on a large sheet of white paper stuck to the wall. The girls took turns to stick their post-it to build up the wall. The whole group then discussed the problems and prioritised them with the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom.

Problems that emerged were prioritised as follows: absenteeism by teachers, laziness and poor teaching, walking to school, punishment at school, beating, insults, expulsion from school due to lack of money to pay fees. When asked to do the activity a second time, they added inability to study privately at home, insults by parents, poor parental care and money related issues. When asked to prioritise, they listed poor teaching, walking to school, punishment, beating, insults and expulsion from school for not paying fees.

Most of the girls said that they had to walk to school. They believe this is a big problem because it affects their learning, they get scorched by the sun, get body pains and it leads to lateness, which results in being punished. They complained of poor performance by teachers; one girl claimed that 'sometimes the teachers are tired and when we go and call them, they tell us to read our books, they will come but they do not show up. Teachers at times give us notes but do not explain them to us'. They also saw problems in being beaten at school by teachers and in the way teachers behave towards teaching.

The girls then prepared and performed two role plays: the first involved boys from the neighbouring boys' school propositioning girls and trying to kiss them, this then turning into a dangerous situation, the second involved boys in the school aggressively touching the girls on the breasts and buttocks. The girls confirmed that such things happen.

The researcher then led a discussion on how the girls can protect themselves: e.g. when the boys call them, the girls should ignore them; they should use a different path away from the boys, they should walk faster; if other girls are around they should shout. Girls should be careful when boys are around, they must not wear fitting or revealing dresses, they should walk in a smart manner. This led into an activity to draw solution circles, identifying who was responsible for resolving certain problems ('me', the school or the community). Beatings, punishments, insults and showing seriousness in their studies (e.g. doing their homework, doing what the teacher says and stopping telling lies) were issues that they saw as their own responsibility. With their studies they thought this was the joint responsibility of themselves and the school, 'We should behave seriously at school so that teachers would know that we are serious about our studies'. It was noticeable, however, that the girls tended to see themselves as solely responsible for their problems.

**School B:** This workshop was run by the Ghanaian researcher, Vivian Fiscian, and Fiona Leach from Sussex University. All the JSS1 and Primary 6 girls present in school that day were invited (eight and nine respectively). Their ages ranged from 12 to 16, with the average for the Primary school girls being 13.6 years and for the JSS 14.1 years. We ran the workshop in the JSS3 classroom as this was empty. There were language difficulties throughout, although the girls seemed to grasp what was required of them better than the boys, and the local language was used much of the time. Out of the 12 teachers on the staff, we say only five on the first day and six on the second.

The first day started with ice breakers (gospel songs, poems and hand clapping). The researcher explained that we were looking at girls' problems in the school. We started the activities with the school map, with the Primary 6 and JSS 1 groups working separately. They were shy and nervous and worked slowly on a very detailed drawing. They then placed their green and red stickers. Unsafe areas were identified as: the school field where boys played football during break time, the road where vehicles could knock you down, the toilet where you could fall into the pit, or someone could frighten or harm you after school, and the trees because a snake may bite you. The Primary group said that the JSS block was unsafe for them as the seniors (girls and boys) may bully you.

The two groups then went on to draw spiders, the legs of which they labelled with different forms of abuse. These were: child abuse, insults, beatings, rape, proposing and touching (breasts) and drug abuse. They were more relaxed now. They explained that strange men accost them in the market, and boys on the road touch them on the buttocks and breasts. One girl said a boy clasped her round the neck. Already at this stage, they acknowledged that teachers approach them for sex. Examples given were: if you carry the teacher's bags for him from his car, he starts asking you for sex, he calls you to his house for the same reason. One girl said one teacher did this, another said two teachers (it turned out to be the head teacher and one other teacher).

The girls then placed coloured sticky dots on the spider's legs according to how serious they considered the abuse to be. The rough order was: rape, touching, beatings, proposing, child abuse and insults.

The third activity was drawing a 'cause and consequence' tree. The Primary and JSS groups were mixed for this, the first group addressing the question 'Why do girls have sex with boys?' and the second group 'Why do boys have sex with girls?'

Causes for why girls have sex with boys were: lack of parental care, for money or gifts or dresses, to get money for school fees, to show love, for peer influence. Consequences were: she will get HIV/AIDS, will get "baba so" (STDs), will get pregnant, will suffer, the boy will leave her, she cannot take care of the baby, parents will ask her to go to her boyfriend, the baby will not have a father. Causes for why boys have sex with girls were: to practise the things they see on video, girls wearing sexy clothes, he wants her to wash and cook for him, to boast to his friends, to prove to her that he wants to marry her. Consequences were: pregnancy, diseases (HIV), he will be forced to marry her, he will have to look after her and the baby.

The two groups then went on to address the questions 'Why do teachers have sex with girls?' and 'Why do girls have sex with teachers?' For the former, causes were: girls go to teachers and ask for money and gifts, because she has no money, if a girl is a high performing pupil, when they misinterpret the actions of girls, because they admire girls, when a teacher invites a girl for private lessons at home. Consequences were: the teacher will be sacked, will be punished, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, the girl will stop school, the teacher will be disgraced. As to the latter, causes for girls having sex with teachers were: so that teachers won't punish them, for money, gifts or clothes, to get help during exams, she hopes he will marry her. Consequences were: she will stop school, she will get pregnant, diseases.

The second day started with a problem wall. The girls were asked to write each problem on a 'post-it' and to stick it on the wall. Most related to lack of money for school fees and problems with learning their lessons. After some hesitation, three girls wrote about teachers propositioning: 'my teacher has been calling me to his house', 'my teacher has been insulting me for not giving in to him' and 'I hear that my headmaster after school sends a girl to his house and sleeps with her'. (Three girls came later to the researcher individually outside the room to tell her that the head teacher was propositioning them. They were clearly reluctant to write this on their post-its.

Problems were clustered and later prioritised as: 1. school studies, 2. stealing/rape/killing and school fees, 3. boys and (men) propositioning, 4. shouting, 5. beatings at home and 6. household chores. In the subsequent discussion, they explained that school studies were a problem because pupils don't attend regularly as a result of not paying fees. They also have to work for money (selling in the market) and they need to buy exercise books. Also, in JSS they don't have time to read/revise each subject and so fall behind. There is a lack of teachers and teacher absenteeism. Primary 6 has no teacher and sometimes the head fills in. Also, the teachers do not help them; if they don't understand or can't answer, the teacher canes them. Sometimes they don't come to school because the teacher frightens them.

As for boys, if one proposes and the girl doesn't accept, he will victimise her by beatings or insults. A boy may wait along the way for a girl and then beat her or pinch her breasts. A girl may be mocked or verbally abused because she doesn't have a boyfriend. A boy propositions a girl by telling her he likes her, they should start a relationship, he will buy her anything she wants etc. These were mainly boys from JSS3 and from the village, but also boys from JSS2.

The girls then stuck sticky dots according to how frequent the problem was: propositioning, school fees, school studies and shouting were marked as the most frequent.

The second activity was drawing solution circles to address the problems already identified. The girls discussed where the solution to each problem lay (in terms of 'me', the school, the family or the community). School studies were seen as the responsibility of both the individual and the school, school fees as both the individual and the family, boys and teachers propositioning as both the individual and the family, and rape as the community's responsibility. As with School A, it was striking how the girls saw themselves as primarily responsible – their problems were their own fault.

They then went on to perform a role play based on issues that had emerged during the workshop. The topics were:

- boys lie in wait for girls and snatch them, clutching them and trying to kiss them
- two teachers summon girls to tell them to go to the market to buy something for them, and when they return they try to seduce or rape them
- girls are sent by their families to trade in the market, where male strangers try to touch them aggressively etc

## Zimbabwe School-based Strategies with Girls

### Poetry

In order to help the girls to express themselves freely the researcher asked them to do this through poetry and story telling. The following are some of the sample writings of the girls from three of the schools.

#### *Child Abuse / Harassment*

I tried to concentrate but to no avail  
My classmate's drunken father had returned  
It had been the tenth time she had screamed in agony  
Every morning she looked like a rotten tomato  
Because of the consistent beatings she received  
The father is always sorry the next morning  
But it is painful to see her in such a state

Every morning she receives a portion of the beatings  
Once she was admitted into hospital  
She refuses to believe that her father is abusing her  
It seems child abuse has triumphed over her and many others  
Child abuse has become the gateway to her relationship with her father  
A way of showing his anger and excuses for his own problems  
I know many children are like her  
They are at the receiving end of their parents' frustrations

My friends let me tell you this  
Even a word can destroy a child's future  
Why are we as children taken as punching bags  
We are always in agony, but I find no one to soothe my pain  
I hear many speeches against child abuse  
But the battering continues  
The pain continues  
Hope is something the abused child has lost

#### *Child Abuse / Harassment*

Children walking in the streets  
Looking for something to eat  
Scraping in bins for a scrape of food  
How can we help them  
As they asking for money  
We just ignore them  
As though they are not people

Men and women won't you help them  
They are also people like you and me  
We should treat them as our own children



Just the way you treat your own children

Don't harass them  
Don't abuse them  
They will grow up  
They will remember it all  
Treat them like your own children

Why can't we all live as a family  
As children we hate being abused  
As children we hate being harassed  
We are all children of God  
When will this abuse stop

### ***Child Abuse***

Working in the harsh weather  
With heavy tools which I can hardly lift  
Trying to stretch my back  
Which is now as hot as charcoal  
Since I have been bent for the past hour

"Do not just stand there doing nothing  
Do you want your breakfast?  
If you just stand there my dear  
I am going to beat you up  
And just forget about your breakfast

That was my uncle giving orders  
After he had had his heavy breakfast  
And what I hope to get from him  
Is just a cup of black cold tea  
And a small piece of stale bread

I have heard some say  
This is child abuse  
But to me this is my life  
Why such harassment?  
To an innocent little soul

### ***Abuse I Hate You***

Abuse, Abuse that word Abuse  
I walk in the streets asking for food  
People looking at me and whispering in each other's ear  
If it was not for you Abuse  
I would not have been in this mess

My mother left me when I was five  
Now I am ten

My father is using me as a slave  
Yes he is using me as wife  
Abuse, Abuse that word Abuse

He tells me to go into the streets  
Asking for food and money  
When I bring the money home  
He says give it to me  
I want some beer  
Abuse, Abuse that word Abuse

He a pot and hits me with it  
I try to run but he grabs my hand  
I try to scream but no one hears  
He tears my pants and does what he wants  
Abuse, Abuse how I hate you

### ***My Life as a Street Kid***

I am a well child  
They call me Filthy, Dirty, Mad  
Yes that's my name

They laugh at me  
As if they are seeing a movie  
Yes that's what they do to me

They know where I sleep  
In the drain, on the pavement  
Yes that's what they know about me

They know what I wear  
Rags, scruffy clothes and no shoes  
Yes that's what I wear

No one wants to help me  
No one wants to be my friend  
Yes but I bring them joy in laughing at me

### ***Orphan***

Pupils in my school know me as an ORPHAN. No one seems to know what that means to me until I told them that I have been;

O - Ordered to do things against my will  
R- Raped  
P- Punished  
H – Harassed  
A -Abused, Abandoned  
N - Neglected

### ***Who Am I?***

I am a girl child  
I don't know my father  
They say my mother abandoned me at birth  
I try to ask about my parents  
No one seems to care  
Or even to find out  
My life is at the mercy of other people  
Life is just as I live it by the day  
Tomorrow is just a distant far  
Yes, I am a girl child  
That's me, a girl child

### ***What Is It Like To Be Born A Girl?***

To be born a girl is the most beautiful thing in a family but at the same it is the most difficult time. To be a teenager is the most difficult thing in a girl's life. When it comes to household chores all the burden is put on girls. But Why? Besides doing the household duties girls are the ones who are given the most difficult advice every now and again. Maybe elders or adults think that girls have little minds, that is why they keep a close eye on us.

But why is it that boys are allowed to do as they please. They are not blamed for anything. They are allowed to go out to movies or even come home late. Do parents know what the boys will be doing? Even if they are harassing other girls parents say, 'Boys will always be boys'. If a boy harasses a girl, adults say it was the girl's fault. What was she doing with the boys?

Girls do not even have the chance and time to read, play like other children or even visit places of interest. Asking to go out would be as if you have committed a crime. They ask you with a barefooted face, What is the purpose of going out? With whom are you going out? They see you walking with your class mate, they want to know about the relationship. You tell them that he is just a friend, they say you are lying.

I do not understand the life of a girl. It is full of complications and suspicions from the adults. These complications will always follow us in later life. You try to get married, the husband says I have bought you. He expects me to pay back heavily by having as many children as I can. If the children are all girls, life is complicated further. Who will continue with my name. Yes, to be born a girl is something else. Life is full of complications.