

Sustainable Strategies to End



Violence Against Girls in Schools

Conference Report



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ACRONYMS

AAI	ActionAid International
CSOs	Civil society organisations)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIET	Community Information Empowerment and Transparency
EI	Education International
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EFA	Education for All
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GMR	Women's Global Monitoring Report
HRW	Human Rights Watch
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
VAG	Violence against girls
UNSRVAW	United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women
UPE	Universal primary education
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDA/C	School Development Association/Committee
SH	Sexual harassment
VAW	Violence against women

1. INTRODUCTION

For girls around the world, exercising their right to education is sometimes a very risky enterprise. While some strides have been made to enhance gender parity in education, little attention has been paid to some of the structural barriers that keep girls out of school, impede their performance in class as well as their overall retention. Among these structural barriers is **VIOLENCE** in its various forms.

Violence against girls takes place in the wider context of patriarchy, gender-based discrimination, unequal power relations, exclusion and poverty. AAI conducted scoping studies in a few countries where it works, on Violence against Girls in Schools, (VAG), in early 2004. The findings showed that the violence faced in and around schools was a significant factor in forcing girls out of the education system. Examples that were highlighted include:

- Sexual harassment in the school environment by education staff, teachers and school boys;
- Girls being employed as child labour, bearing the main burden of housework and taking on the role of caring for younger siblings. There was repeated evidence that excessive housework impacts on girls' performance and attendance in schools, resulting in physical and mental fatigue, absenteeism and poor performance;
- Corporal punishment and public shaming by school authorities and teachers, which perpetuates the cycle of absenteeism, low self-esteem and violence at home and in schools;
- Patriarchal practices, cultures and traditions, such as early marriages;
- Poverty leading to vulnerability to trafficking and transactional sex, especially with older men;¹
- Limits to girls' mobility, along with fear of violence on the route to school, which can prevent girls from even reaching school;
- The exclusion from school of girls who are married (even where they have been forced into early marriages against their will); having their 'periods' for the first time (some traditions demand that they do not leave their huts for a whole month) or pregnant.

Schools ought to be safe environments. It is possible to make schools into effective oases of peace even in the midst of a violent society. Schools can create policies to address violence against girls.

The stakes are now higher than ever, as gender inequality and violence exacerbate women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. In many countries, the HIV and AIDS prevalence rate is high in younger women. Challenging violence in this context can really be a matter of saving lives.

It is against this background that ActionAid International (AAI), and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, (OSISA), hosted a conference on VAG in the Southern African sub region, (SADC). As AAI Head of Women's Rights, Everjoice Win, explained in her opening remarks, the conference brought together five key constituencies;

1. educators (represented by national and regional teachers' unions)
2. government ministries/departments of education (represented by senior officials responsible for developing/monitoring policy)
3. national education coalitions (advocating for Education for All – EFA)
4. women's movements/girl child rights organisations
5. the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), which specifically focuses on girls' rights to and in education.

The conference was a unique opportunity to analyse the problem collectively, learn from one another and create new bonds. As donor agencies and international NGOs also play a crucial role, several were represented at the conference, and ongoing efforts by various CSOs, as well as previous work by organisations such as UNICEF, PANOS, and DFID were acknowledged.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

OSISA Deputy Director Grace Kaimila-Kanjo outlined the main purpose of the conference: to review research on VAG carried out in several countries and to analyse its impact and the ways in which it militated against Education for All (EFA) and the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Discussions would identify what SADC countries are doing about VAG; what the best practices might be; what challenges arise and whether they are surmountable. Ultimately, the conference was a forum to develop concrete action plans on ways to influence policy and legislative change in the Southern Africa region, programmes that could be implemented on the ground with girls and communities at large, as well as networking amongst the various constituencies.

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Key point

OPENING REMARKS FROM ANCEFA**Jennifer Chiwela the SADC focal point for the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) welcomed this initiative by AAI and OSISA.**

ANCEFA is a campaign network of civil society coalitions across Africa, first mooted during the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000. The main purpose of the network is to promote, enable and build capacities of EFA coalitions by encouraging constructive policy dialogue and engagement with ministries of education.

Today, ANCEFA has 30 national coalitions and loose networks across Africa, 10 of which are in Southern Africa. The secretariat based in Dakar, Senegal works through focal points in countries on a rotational basis. Current focal points are Nigeria and Niger for West Africa; Zambia for Southern Africa; Burundi for Central Africa; Uganda for Eastern Africa; and Egypt for North Africa.

EFA goals:

- Expansion and improvement of comprehensive early childhood care and education development;
- Achievement of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015;
- Meeting basic learning needs for life skills of all youth and adults;
- Halving adult illiteracy by 2015;
- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in all education levels by 2015;
- Improving quality of education at all levels especially literacy and numeric skills.

ANCEFA believes that the EFA goals and MDGs are indivisible frameworks that rely on each other for attainment. Three out of six EFA goals show concern for the female gender. These are UPE (particularly for girls), halving illiteracy (especially for women) and eliminating gender disparities in education, while the MDGs targets gender equity and equality. Thus, the achievement of EFA and the MDGs remains a pipe dream without gender parity. This will not be possible if girls are not accessing education or completing school because of VAG. Experience shows that, despite commitments to gender parity goals, implementation efforts have largely failed.

ANCEFA emphasises the need to build synergy and efforts towards accelerating gender parity as part of wider targets for education, social development and poverty reduction on the continent.

Civil society, as demonstrated by AAI in collaboration with OSISA, needs to remain vigilant to identify endemic and underlying causes of the non-attainment of EFA goals, especially in the education of girls. Civil society must follow trends constantly, and initiate research for inputting into relevant and implementable policies. CSOs should exploit opportunities and strengths that are found in working together as coalitions or networks in order to build a bigger voice for education of girls in particular.

OFFICIAL CONFERENCE OPENING

Unlike the traditional opening ceremony presided over by a male political figure, usually a high-ranking government official, two 16-year-old girls officially opened this conference.

Nomsa Mpofu, an orphan, lived with her paternal aunt and her husband in Zimbabwe's second largest city of Bulawayo when the abuse began. Her uncle and his domestic worker raped her. When she told her aunt about the rape she was beaten up, which caused further trauma. When the rape continued, she reported it to the police. Her uncle was arrested but the other perpetrator ran away. By this time, Nomsa was already infected with sexually transmitted diseases and had genital sores. She also had a miscarriage and has been unwell since.

Her aunt blamed Nomsa for her husband's arrest and sentence, and chased Nomsa away. Nomsa tried but failed to find her brother who was working in Harare. She became destitute and was rescued by the Girl Child Network – an NGO based in Chitungwiza, outside Harare. The organisation referred her to the department of social welfare.

"I am only 16 and want to go back to school. I want to be able to look after myself. I have no money for food and clothes and no source of income," said Nomsa, breaking into tears.

Another heart-rending story was that of Pamela Jere whose mother died when she was only eight. Rejected by her uncle, sister, stepmother and other relatives, she became homeless. With pregnancy, her tragedy became acute. Like Nomsa, Pamela also wants to complete her education, find a job and be able to look after her child.

These two young women's stories demonstrated in a visible way the ways in which violence and violation of girls' rights impacts on their education and their whole lives. Their words challenged delegates to redouble their efforts at finding solutions to VAG.

2. VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS - WHAT RESEARCH SHOWS

AAI's research findings on VAG were presented in two parts: the scoping studies, which were global, and two country case studies, Malawi and Mozambique. All the studies found that VAG was cross-cultural and prevalent in most countries. While some governments have passed legislation against VAG and violence against women (VAW), these laws were not effectively enforced (Scoping studies 2004).

SCOPING STUDIES 2004

The studies took a global look at why girls were excluded from education through violence on the way to, within and through education. Methods included internet searches, studies and scoping reports from Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti/Dominican Republic, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. The studies looked into the scope and prevalence of VAG, its forms, impact, contextual factors and current strategies.

Extent and magnitude of VAG

Statistics about the prevalence of VAG are hard to find. Because the focus is on enrolment, there is a gap in global data. Systematic data collection, regular monitoring and evaluation are needed. Contexts, definitions and methods differ, with the result that no single, reliable measure exists, so it is difficult to make comparisons. Nonetheless, it is apparent (for instance from the PANOS and UNESCO research), that VAG remains under-reported and largely unaddressed. For cultural reasons, some aspects are seen as "normal" and girls accept school violence as an extension of what they face in families. Meanwhile, teachers see boys' behaviour as a 'normal' – aspect of growing up and of teenage culture. Parents, teachers and girls themselves do not disapprove of older men having sexual relations with girls (Human Rights Watch – HRW, and PANOS).

While hard data is lacking, HRW research indicates the prevalence of VAG in most South African schools. Research by Community Information Empowerment and Transparency (CIET) in 2000 revealed that one in three girls experiences sexual harassment (SH), of whom only one in three (36%) report it.

In Botswana, UNICEF research in 2000 reached 800 students, of whom 422 were girls in 13 schools. Of this sample, 38% reported sexual touch without consent, 17% intercourse, 50% forced intercourse and 34% intercourse for money/gifts/favours. Of those sexually active, 48% did not use condoms.

From a research sample of 560 students in Botswana the following year, 67% reported SH by teachers and 11% were considering dropping out because of harassment. Accord-

ing to the research SH was high (68%) in junior secondary schools, 18% in senior and 14% in primary schools.

In Zimbabwe, in a 2000 sample of 112 girls and 59 boys aged between 13 and 15 years, 47% of the girls reported VAG (sexual, intimidation and physical assault by older boys); 50% of girls reported sexual contact by strangers on their way to school; and 92% had been propositioned by older men, some of which turned into 'sugar daddy' relationships.

Who is affected?

From all studies, it is clear that VAG:

- increases and intersects with other forms of vulnerability: disability, HIV/AIDS orphans, HIV+, migrants, caste, those 'out of school' and child labourers;
- increases with age – adolescent girls are more vulnerable than pre-adolescent girls;
- affects girl children more than boys. In studies of child sexual abuse, violence is between 1.5 and 3 times higher amongst girls than amongst boys (PANOS 2003).

Forms

Research confirms that the same forms of violence that women report throughout their life cycles are evident from girlhood. These include physical, sexual and psychological violence, including threats/coercion, in public and in private. Both direct and indirect VAG is intensified by the unequal allocation and distribution of resources by gender, with boys prioritised and given preference.

In situations of poverty, girls use their bodies as an economic asset in transactional sex in order to buy food and sanitary towels, pay school fees or obtain gifts. This leaves them even less choice over the use of condoms.

In South Africa, for example, VAG takes the form of rape, sexual abuse, sexualised touching, verbal degradation and emotional abuse in school environments, among other manifestations. In 2001, HRW reported that girls were abducted by taxi drivers in South Africa and offered to clients for sex in exchange for money. In Nigeria, common forms of VAG include early marriage, forced prostitution and trafficking.

Impact

HRW's 2001 research found that VAG interrupts girls' education by causing physical and emotional trauma, low self-

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Key point

esteem, anger, depression, anxiety, guilt and hopelessness. Girls who report VAG experienced secondary victimisation by teachers, while some parents even dismiss allegations. Suicide can result, for instance in Vietnam, along with unwanted pregnancy, STIs including HIV (HRW 2001), under-performance by girls and forced school drop out because of rape or early marriage, despite provisions to allow girls to continue with school after pregnancy (African Charter on Human and People's Rights Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In Kenya, Guinea, Malawi, Zambia and Botswana, boys and men who impregnate girls go scot-free (Women's Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2003/4). Research indicates apathy on the part of parents, alongside a reluctance to send girls to school.

Perpetrators

Within schools, male pupils/teachers are the perpetrators, either directly or indirectly by promising better grades or marks, money or dating relationships. Male employees and visitors in schools are also involved.

Out of school, perpetrators tend to be young men, male family members and 'sugar daddies' or school guards.

In the 2001 HRW survey, 37 rape survivors (7%) said a school-teacher or principal had raped them. Research in Ethiopian secondary schools in 2002 found that 33% of boys believe they can get whatever they want from girls by charming or forcing them, while 21% admitted they were perpetrators of VAG.

Location

The most common place for SH and coercion is at school (WHO 2002). Research in Zimbabwe and South Africa shows institutionalised VAG, with schools playing a complicit role by failing to discipline perpetrators, denying abuse and fostering an authoritarian culture. Toilets, empty classrooms, hallways, hostel rooms, dormitories and tuck shops are often no-go areas in a school compound, according to HRW (2001), while many women and girls are assaulted on public transport. In South Africa - girls avoid walking alone or near male staff rooms, while their choice of subjects is determined by the need to avoid teachers who are known and experienced as harassers. Common roles for girls – cleaning classrooms, fetching water, cleaning and cooking for male teachers – lead to VAG. This is exacerbated by the use of drugs and alcohol, as well as force in discipline, all of which lead to VAG by teachers, employees, students (as reported in India and Vietnam).

Factors underlying and shaping VAG

A culture of violence in schools, at home, and in the community is shaped by gender inequality, the unequal power relations between men and women. This affects the way people see and name violence. In South Africa, for instance, a large proportion of both girls and boys state that forcing sex with someone you know does not constitute sexual violence (CIET 2000). Similarly, PANOS reports that increasing numbers of young people in the UK, France and India be-

lieve that sexual violence is "permissible". Zimbabwean girls were less certain that SH by teachers is wrong if they believe it may lead to a serious relationship and marriage (PANOS 2003.) Culture and tradition socialise girls to believe they are inferior to boys and men, and these beliefs are reinforced by structural violence – the gendered division of labour at home and unequal access to and control over resources in the family, market, state and community.

Powerful religious and cultural rites and beliefs confirm the subordinate position of girls in society. 'Honour killings', for example, send a powerful message to society, for example in Egypt, Morocco and Pakistan. Each year, 1,000 Pakistani women die this way (United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women) UNSRVAW.

Global patterns

Around the world, fundamentalisms of all kinds – cultural, religious, economic and scientific – challenge and threaten girls' and women's rights.

The intensifying brutalisation of society due to conflict or war, increased access to weapons, economic decline and social frustration is played out on women's and girls' bodies (Amnesty International). Violence against women and girls is used to "settle scores" between warring students, cults, castes and communities (India and Pakistan). Religious, ethnic and political violence often takes the form of gang rapes and kidnapping (UNICEF). Common to most if not all cultures is the silence on VAG.

Current strategies

Current strategies (mainly by NGOs) are limited and inadequate as they fail to identify or track abusive teachers, to provide reporting mechanisms or to protect complainants. Overall, coordination and communication policies are lacking (HRW).

To be effective, the focus should be on curriculum development, peer education/youth leadership, teacher education/staff training, local and global advocacy and policy development. VAG can be addressed by linking it to broader strategies on ending violence against women (VAW) and HIV/AIDS. Ending unequal power relations, poverty and exclusion as well as attitudinal and legislative change through a rights-based approach, can achieve desired results.

The following are recommended steps:

- Break the silence;
- Track VAG and treat it as a violation of human rights;
- Transform communities and schools and their culture;
- Build attention and action to end VAG as a global education issue through policies and enforcement;
- Strengthen girls'/women's networks campaigns to end VAG through life skills and sexuality education.

Key issues were raised during the conference plenary. Participants felt that sentences imposed on perpetrators of VAG are too lenient. In some instances, teachers are amongst the perpetrators instead of being role models. Although teaching has become a feminised profession, patriarchy has been

internalised by women as well as men, so girls may not have support from their women teachers.

Noting that under-reporting of cases can be the result of culture and tradition, conference participants affirmed that VAG is a human rights violation that needs to be addressed.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

In order to bring the analysis closer to home, research reports from two countries were presented - Malawi and Mozambique. The reports affirmed the findings of the global scoping studies.

MALAWI

Of the population of 11.9 million, 51% are female and over 50% are children below 18 years. Whilst the average adult literacy rate is 60.9%, illiteracy is highest among women at 68%. Malawi is signatory to: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which recognises education as a basic right for all children; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979; the Jomtien Declaration (EFA) 1991; The Dakar Declaration (EFA) 2000; and the MDGs (Goals 1 and 2; Universal Primary Education and Gender Parity in Education (2005, 2015).

In addition:

- Malawi's constitution establishes education as a basic right for all children;
- A 1994 law established free primary education;
- The government is committed to 50/50 enrolment of girls and boys at all levels;
- Malawi's Poverty Investment Policies have integrated girls access to education;
- The country has a National Gender Policy as well as an education strategy on HIV/AIDS.

Malawi missed the 2005 EFA target of achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education. The next challenge is to achieve UPE by 2015 as per the next EFA target and the MDGs. One key issue is the country's low investment in education. The current budget allocates only 13% of national spending to education. The implications include:

- High ratios of pupils: teacher (83: 1) and pupils per classroom ratios (104:1);
- Inadequate teacher housing;
- 20% of the teachers classified as temporary;
- Unclear budget allocations to adult literacy and early childhood education.

All of these weaknesses impinge on girls more than on boys. Direct gender disparities in education include:

- A higher drop out rate for girls than boys from primary school;
- Lower numbers of girls than boys enrolled in secondary schools;

- Lower rates of selection for university, where fewer than 25% of students are girls.

VAG is rampant in the country and has been reported in the press and in research reports. In a study carried out by the

Spaces	%	Perpetrators	%
Home	60.9	Fellow or older male pupils	50
School	17.9	Unknown persons	8
On the way to and from school	12	Teachers	5.4
Market, river, maize mill	4	Relatives	5.4
Religious functions	3.2		

UK's Department for International Development, for example, 65% of girls reportedly experienced violence as compared to 35% of boys.

This violence takes a number of forms, including the touching of private parts, forced sex, beating and bullying, corporal punishment and verbal abuse. The study's findings are in the table above.

Over 50% of cases were not reported because:

- Authorities and parents do not take action on reported cases;
- Students fear the consequences;
- No reporting structures exist;
- Some parents respond violently;
- Some girls do not know that such acts are abusive.

Reflecting on the impact on their education, 38% of the girls in the sample reported that VAG incidents affected their education. The psychological impact took the form of anger, lack of concentration and reduced performance in class. Meanwhile, 3.2% of the sample dropped out, 8% fell pregnant and 40.7% were exposed to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Most CSOs' work on VAG in Malawi is on awareness campaigns. Efforts are disjointed as there is no coordination. Legal frameworks with regard to VAG are insufficient and the government does not enforce current policies and procedures. Laws protecting the girl child from abuse are also not clear. For example, in a recent case, a 40-year-old man who defiled four girls aged between eight and 12 was sentenced to only four years' imprisonment.

All in all, the study provided evidence that VAG contributes to low performance and participation in schools. If Malawi is to achieve EFA and meet the MDGs, strategies must be developed to address the problem, along with emphasis on improving coordination and collaboration in implementation at all levels.

MOZAMBIQUE

“Although there is no mother who wants to expose her daughter to abuse, there are instances in which society forces her to act otherwise. In such cases mothers quietly look for the perpetrators and ask them to marry their daughters. The mothers think that it is better to deal with the abuse in a simple manner at family level because society is not prepared to tackle sexual abuse. This is our reality.” (Mozambican mother).

Gender equity in education is yet to be achieved in Mozambique. UNDP’s Human Development Report (2001) shows that; from the total enrolment that year, only 8.7% of girls completed the two levels of basic education (EP1 and EP2) compared to 17% of boys. In 193 schools of EP1 with 64,675 pupils, 37,575 are boys and only 27,099 are girls. At six schools of EP2 with 2,412 pupils, 1,702 are boys and only 708 are girls.

The disparity is caused by a number of factors. When families cannot afford to continue paying fees for all their children, they tend to choose to educate boys rather than girls. Sexual abuse, which violates girls’ childhood innocence and exposes them to rape and HIV infection, often leads to school drop outs. Many girls are pushed into early marriages as a way of boosting family income. The death of family breadwinner/s, diseases in the family and other factors mean that girls are forced to assist their siblings, especially their younger brothers.

Forms of VAG identified in the Mozambican study include:

- Abuse and sexual harassment (among the most common forms);
- Overwhelming levels of work within the family;
- Non-prioritisation of access to education for girls
- Prostitution;
- Forced and early marriages and early pregnancy;

The study identified a range of factors that encourage VAG. Gender issues are not reflected in current policies and legislation, and perpetrators tend to go unpunished. Educational models in use entrenched patriarchy thus under-privileging the majority of girls. Community attitudes give rise to tacit acceptance of violation and gender based violence, while girls themselves are uninformed about their rights. The mechanisms that do exist to deal with VAG are weak and disconnected, while institutions lack knowledge about the issue as well as confidential systems of handling complaints. Both government and civil society lack strong, clear and concrete measures to prevent and confront the problem.

Reflecting on the case study, certain key points emerge. In Mozambique, the coercive force of traditional authority is powerful and to obey adults is the norm. Even when adults abuse their authority, a girl is supposed to respect them. The majority of perpetrators are persons such as educators or family members who interact with girls in unequal relationships. Neither the education nor the legal/judicial systems

offer the confidentiality that would make it easier for girls to make complaints.

In most cases, violated girls do not go back to school and as a consequence remain semi-literate. With no capacity to acquire professional skills, they end up in low-level jobs, earning low salaries or become housewives.

Girls are exposed to a variety of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS. Mozambican teachers are one of the groups most affected by HIV – between six and seven out of 10 are HIV positive – and a large number have died of AIDS. In a forced marriage, the girl must accept her violator as her husband, father to her children and a life companion. Other girls are forced into prostitution to make money to feed their siblings and parents and to continue with their studies.

In all provinces where the study was carried out, violated girls are seen as guilty because it is assumed that they encouraged the men. To justify violent actions against girls, the old argument that it is cultural is brought into play and the issue becomes untouchable.

Many schools are situated far from residential areas and girls walk long distances without adequate security. Some boarding schools lack secure conditions for girls and this gives room to violations by classmates and teachers. In some rural schools, girls are forced to do housework for teachers thus exposing them to abuse.



Liba Taylor/AAI

◆ *In most countries young girls are not informed of their rights*

3. SHARING COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Group work on sharing country experiences showed that VAG was common in most SADC countries and the issues and challenges confronted were the same. Perpetrators were largely the same people who were supposed to give protection to girls such as parents, relatives, family friends, older men, teachers and taxi drivers.

In most countries there were no specific laws to deal with VAG. Under the current scenario neither EFA nor MDGs could be achieved. Countries face challenges that include lack of political will and capacity by governments and educators to deal with VAG and OVC, inadequate resources, absence of psychosocial support and limited research on women's rights issues.

Country	Type of VAG	Prevalence	Perpetrators
Angola	Sexual abuse, harassment, cultural practices and taboos, prostitution	VAGE exists but there are no statistics	Family, teachers, colleagues, taxi drivers
Botswana	Physical, cultural practices	High	Teachers, community
Lesotho	Sex work, child labour, cultural and religious beliefs, ignorance	High	Parents, relatives, teachers, principals
Malawi	Sexual harassment, early forced marriage, rape, defilement, touching of private parts, verbal, emotional, physical, domestic	High (65%)	Older boys, teachers, relatives, other men
Mozambique	Sexual abuse, cultural practices, prostitution	High	Community, teachers, older boys, family
Namibia	Psychological, physical, economical, verbal	Medium	Sugar daddies, male students, relatives (uncles/brothers), male teachers
Nigeria	Excessive domestic work, religious, cultural practices	High	Parents, community
South Africa	Sexual, emotional, verbal, physical	High	Male learners, teachers, non-teaching personnel, communities
Swaziland	Sexual abuse, corporal punishment, abuse due to maintenance law, sex work, religious practices, bribes for OVC support	High	Parents, relatives, teachers, principals
Zambia	Psychological, emotional, physical, sexual	High	Police, teachers, family, fellow students, chiefs, ministers
Zimbabwe	Sexual, verbal, corporal punishment, rape, incest, religious & cultural practices, vulnerability due to HIV and AIDS such as heading households and being orphans	High	Sugar daddies, teachers, non-teaching workers, older boys, relatives

Policy/legal frameworks	Impact on EFA goals	Challenges
<p>Angola & Mozambique</p> <p>In both countries gender policies are not specific to VAGE, scholarship programmes & free schools especially in Mozambique. School networks in both countries have improved girls access to education. No penalty for incest in Angola, integration of VAGE into law absent. Laws progressive in women's rights issues but SH only punished at the work place.</p>	<p>MDGs will not be achieved</p> <p>Sexual abuse has a negative impact on girls' education</p> <p>Increased poverty impedes girls' education</p> <p>HIV & AIDS increase girls' & women's vulnerability.</p>	<p>Accountability by governments & private sectors in education</p> <p>Increased budgets to expedite policy implementation</p> <p>Research VAGE in Angola</p> <p>Improve policies/legislation</p> <p>Support girls' networks/clubs</p> <p>Train teachers (improve conditions) & lawyers on women's rights issues.</p> <p>Improve School Council monitoring of VAGE.</p>
<p>Botswana</p> <p>Syllabus gender sensitive</p> <p>Re-entry policy after pregnancy in place</p> <p>Policies in place against abuse - governs teachers, police</p> <p>Fundamentalism in policy & legislation processes and frameworks.</p>	<p>Less emphasis on quality but numbers, UPE financing not addressing intricate issues like sanitation that leads to absenteeism, lack of psychosocial support for girls</p> <p>Inadequate teacher capacity, skills & exposure.</p>	<p>Girls heading households</p> <p>Structures in society orientate women to be subordinate to men.</p>
<p>Lesotho</p> <p>Constitution protects individual rights, allows free & compulsory education</p> <p>Maintenance law criminalises failure to pay child support by father</p> <p>Sexual Offences Act 2003 deals with most sexual offences including rape</p> <p>Compulsory registration of OVCs</p> <p>Adolescence Youth Policy, Social Welfare Policy, Married Persons Bill; Child Welfare and Protection Bill</p> <p>National Coalition on the Rights of Children, Child & Gender Protection Unit; Education Act of 1995 abolishes corporal punishment.</p>	<p>In Lesotho there is now more boys than girls in primary schools perhaps because they are heading household</p> <p>There is a higher dropout rate of girls in secondary in both countries though there are still more girls</p> <p>Distances to school affect girls more adversely than boys due to fears of violence.</p>	<p>Domestication of international conventions</p> <p>More research on the incidents and results of violence against girls</p> <p>Open access and allocate more resources to education beyond primary</p>
<p>Swaziland</p> <p>Dual legal system problems (customary law & RDL), politicians also perpetrators & media reporting more cases, conventions signed but no enforcement (same with maintenance law), limited free legal services otherwise expensive</p> <p>Girl child can't inherit parents estate (law being changed) & Education Act doesn't protect her from arbitrary expulsion</p> <p>Sexual offences & Domestic Violence Bill, Marriage Bill (limits age to 18),</p> <p>Constitution provides for UPE only Birth & Death Certification by Government & UNICEF</p> <p>Teachers' code of conduct set by MOE and to be observed by all teachers</p>		<p>Develop and maintain an OVC data bank</p> <p>Include desegregated indicators on VAG in Education Management Information Systems (EMIS)</p> <p>Provide institutional arrangements for psycho-social support to girl children who have been violated & improve institutional coordination;</p> <p>Capacity building of stakeholders in VAG management</p>

Who will stop the madness?

(After every stanza participants sang chorus:
Stop violence against girls)

Yes, we have agreed
That rape is criminal and barbaric
Girls, innocent children victimised
By mambas, vipers
Masquerading as humans

Who are the perpetrators?
Fathers, brothers, bishops
Fellow students, teachers alike

Yes, we have agreed
The region faces a problem
What have the protocols, conventions done
People have talked, sung about rape
Victims have been invited to talk at fora

Yes, you have clapped, said sorry
Given money to offset their plight
Yes, they go back to the world of
Marauding lions and hyenas

Yes, young girls mutilated, torn apart
Cry in pain
Infected with STIs and HIV
The region grows in pain

Yes, the cancer
Yes, a demon
Yes, violence, yes abuse

In Angola girls face both the landmine
And the rapist
After every 24 seconds a girl in school
Is being raped in the region

Yes, the print media highlights the problem
Yes, the electronic media has spoken of VAG
Yes, NGOs, Churches have produced reports
Yes, it seems the problem continues

With unparalleled propensity
Who will stop the madness, this sickness?
Is it the advocates and laws of the land?
Castration and threats to kill perpetrators?
Zero tolerance towards the crime?

Awareness campaigns to humanise perpetrators?
Should we turn to media advocacy?
Drafting codes of conduct
Breaking the silence on VAG
Conferencing and discussions
In five star hotels

What of political will?
Or politicians are some of the perpetrators?
Is it about the feminisation of the crisis?

By Raymond Majongwe, Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe

Policy/legal frameworks	Impact on EFA goals	Challenges
Malawi Signed all the conventions PIF, EFA plan, FPE Malawi Growth & Development Strategy Code of Conduct for Teachers Gender Policy HIV and AIDS policy Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (New 2006) – little or doubtful enforcement.	60% index on gender parity.	Poor implementation of policies some of which are not implemented at all due to attitude/lack of political will. Archaic policies RBA challenges. Inadequate awareness of rights issues/high illiteracy. Influence from culture and traditional/religious beliefs. Disjointed efforts (coordination and capacity lacking).
Namibia Signed all international conventions <i>Policies:</i> Gender policy Namibian Education Code of Conduct (teachers/learners) Pregnancy re-entry policy, EFA Plan Teachers Union policy Policy on education for OVC. <i>Legal</i> Children Act, Combating Violence Against Children Act Child Protection Act (under discussion) Married Persons Equality Act (highly enforced) Women and Children Protection Unit Labour Act Most of the legal provisions are highly enforced but legal proceedings in court take long.	Disparities: More girls in primary school but a huge number of girls drop out as they go up the education ladder.	Limited resources (human & financial) Male support lacking Attitudes change Rural and urban disparities in everything High HIV prevalence – leads to more OVC
South Africa Signed all conventions (CEDAW,CRC) TRISANO – Education policies (Very little enforcement on the ground) Child Care Act Sexual Offences Bill SA Schools Act Educators Employment Act (Enforcement of these legal provisions is to some extent).	94% index on Gender Parity (EFA) goal 5	Translating policies into practice Culture versus attitude change Girls do not understand rights Poverty eradication Unemployment.

Policy/legal frameworks	Impact on EFA goals	Challenges
Zambia & Zimbabwe Neither country has anything specific for the girl child. Zimbabwe has ratified a number of international instruments and made some domestic laws such as: (CEDAW, UN convention, convention on the rights of the child) Legal statutory instrument of 2000 Secretary Circular of 5 2000 Children's Protection and Adoption Act Guardianship of Minors Act Ratified a number of International Instruments The Corporal punishment policy for Zambia	"Two steps forward one step back" High drop out rates for girls attributed to violence and violations sited (push outs/pullout) The 2005 target was missed can also be attributed to having constitutions that do not guarantee human rights Reinstatement of pregnant girls improving girls opportunities HIV prevalence higher for girls aged 15-25 Girls' performance poorer not surprising given the highly patriarchal system in education Insecure schools Teenage pregnancies and "child parents"	Gap between policy & implementation Inadequate resources/competition for resources by NGOs working in VAGE Implementers & community not complying Inconsistency between customary & statutory law, traditional practices are couched in patriarchy Constitutions do not guarantee HR Gross lack of quantitative data, (statistics are on children/women) Laws should encompass school's proximity and reporting cases is still an ethical responsibility Institutional corruption & solidarity in abuse leading to selective prosecution of perpetrators Invisibilisation of girls ("What you do for us without us is against us")

Take a break from VAG

Take a holiday at Holiday Inn
Take a break from violence, every day in our homes
Take a break on the road, to, at, in, away from school
In public and private places aim to stop the violence
And keep the girl child safe, at home, at peace
Your sister, daughter and niece in school

Effects of violence are many: *Nomsa* is crying
As *Pamela* is screaming:
"Stop violating me, touching my privacy and hurling insults
Stop the beating, raping me, giving me AIDS
Impregnating me and forcing me into labour
Stop killing me and my future".

Boys, teachers, uncles, sugar daddies
Take a break from violating the girl child
ActionAid, FAWE, OSISA and ANCEFA
Take the Gospel to SADC

And email it to the world
Governments, unite with civil society, the unions
And development partners
Tell them to fight violence and not the girl
By *Limhani Nsapato, Malawi*

4. ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN EDUCATION

Research findings stimulated debate on what could be done to address VAG and how to close gaps that exist in current strategies. On the second day of the conference attention turned to analysing what policies and laws exist in selected countries. Government officials from Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe shared their experiences in this regard.

LESOTHO

Critical policy issues in Lesotho include promoting enrolment and completion of schooling by all girls whatever their circumstances, protecting them from violent threats in and out of school and resilience in the event of violation and deterring potential violators through education and harsh punishment.

Current Policy Context

Poverty limits girls' access to quality life and education and forces orphaned girls to perform adult roles. Violence against vulnerable girls is pervasive in Lesotho as a culture of respect for human rights, liberties and the rule of law is still in formative stage. Legal literacy and capacity for law enforcement is limited and government is only beginning to assert an egalitarian view of education as a human right and social good.

Where are key policy gaps?

At the moment there is no official acknowledgement that girls are insufficiently protected in schools and no association has been made between VAG and girls' enrolment and retention in schools. This could be a consequence of government's narrow perspective of what comprises VAG/VAW? School level policy development, dissemination and enforcement is insufficiently resourced and monitored. Reporting mechanisms on VAG at school, local and national levels are highly deficient.

What are current policy initiatives?

Laws and policies that protect children against hostile adults and economic deprivation are only beginning to emerge. The Child Protection and Welfare Bill is an example. The Education Amendment Bill will make primary education free and compulsory and protect children from arbitrary suspension, expulsion and institutionalised violence.

Life skills school curriculum development is underway to provide learners with survival and resilience skills against threats such as HIV, poverty, and orphan hood. A school health policy has been developed and is waiting approval from government. There is a great drive at national level to affirm women in decision-making positions in the public sector.

Key Policy Challenges

Law and policy enforcement capacity at local school level is being strengthened and social dialogue on policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is being institutionalised. There is also a strategy to optimise political buy-in on VAG and VAW.

NAMIBIA

In Namibia VAG is legislated against in article 8 of the constitution, in the abolition of corporal punishment and the Children's Act. But there is no direct policy that deals with VAG. Some patriarchal systems allocate female children to men before the girl is even born. Society also fears reporting prominent people who perpetrate VAG to law enforcement.

Like in most developing countries, urban people are more informed on VAG than their rural counterparts. Scholarships exist for rural girls and those who become pregnant are allowed back into school after a year. This applies to both the girl and her partner. But in practice the boy returns to school while the girl faces the burden of child care alone.

SWAZILAND

In Swaziland there are school based health policies that give psycho-social, care and support to girls. There is also universal primary education up to Grade 4. Pupils have access to free stationery. Community-based caregivers are trained to assist violated girls. Other initiatives include women who act as guardians for children. However, policies on OVC are still in draft form.

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe's gender equity policies are part of the country's national goals and the government hopes to attain them through attainment of some MDGs. Priority areas are eradicating poverty, gender inequality and combating malaria and HIV and AIDS. Government also recognises education as an inalienable human right for every girl child.

At primary school level there are more girls than boys. The same applies to the lower forms one and two. From form three onwards fewer girls go to school due to a range of social, cultural and environmental factors. The government is signatory to a number of UN conventions and has adopted some UN guidelines on stopping child sexual abuse. A policy that deals with teachers who violate girls in schools exists. Sensitisation campaigns by government target the community, teachers, children and parents.

Based on the presentations, participants agreed that; consolidation of policies, formulation of new laws specific to VAG, increased law enforcement, adherence to codes of conduct by educators, empowerment programmes for the girl child, teacher training and community awareness were the main challenges.

Key point

Key issues raised in plenary

Based on these presentations, participants agreed that; consolidation of policies, formulation of new laws specific to VAG, increased law enforcement, adherence to codes of conduct by educators, empowerment programmes for the girl child, teacher training and community awareness were the main challenges.

The plenary session also noted that despite a litany of policies in some countries, there were gaps in enforcement, ownership, monitoring and reporting of VAG cases. Inadequate implementation was caused by governments' half-hearted attempts and lack of political will. There were suggestions to use the Nepad peer review mechanism to track adherence to international instruments. In general there is no link between VAG and VAW in government policies. Some teachers' unions blamed governments for going it alone in policy formulation and implementation on VAG issues and suggested that a more consultative process was desirable.

EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

Educators play a key role around the issue of VAG. In some instances they are perpetrators, while in others they protect girls' rights. Because educators act *in loco parentis* when they violate this position of trust, communities and the learners, rightly get much more outraged. The question was therefore asked what are educators doing about VAG and what could they be doing?

SOUTHERN AFRICAN TEACHERS ORGANISATION

A Southern African Teachers' Organisation (SATO) representative urged teachers' unions to share information, knowledge and experiences so as to strengthen professional development. He also called on governments to recognise teachers as professionals. IMF/World Bank privatisation prescriptions adversely affect education. Research has shown that some IFI policies have led to the engagement of untrained teachers.

Partnerships between teacher unions and parents teachers associations (PTAs) are critical, despite the latter not being recognised by law in countries such as Botswana. Cooperation with health workers in reproductive health issues is also crucial.

SATO gave Botswana as a case study and bemoaned disparities between the poor and the rich. The country's constitution guarantees liberties and at international level Botswana is a signatory to most conventions and treaties. However, there is little implementation on the ground. For example, progress is slow on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In most cases government tries to implement policies on its own without involving NGOs, trade unions or other stakeholders.

Recently the government announced its intention to introduce school fees. At present there is free education from standard one to matric. It is feared that this move will disad-

vantage the majority of women who have no money to pay school fees for their children thus denying the children's rights to education.

The existence of two authorities responsible for education in Botswana is another area of concern for SATO. Local councils, responsible for primary education, are not carrying out their mandate as expected. Some primary schools are neglected to the extent that there are no functional sanitary facilities. Regulations on pre-schools are non-existent and most of the schools are run for profit by private players who employ untrained teachers to cut costs.

Sexual harassment is rampant especially by boys who want to exert their physical authority over girls. In some households the girl child is a caregiver to family members living with HIV and AIDS. This situation is not made better by Botswana's outdated laws such as the Child Act. The country is yet to formulate a specific policy on VAG. Current policies lack the scope to deal with the problem and as a result perpetrators are left off the hook.

SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC TEACHERS' UNION

The Constitution of South Africa outlaws discrimination against women and calls for measures to redress past imbalances. There are several laws and regulations to buttress this position. These include the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 which attempts to overcome discrimination and sexual harassment in the work place and the South African Schools Act that explicitly prohibits sexual abuse of learners. The SACE Code of Professional Ethics does not tolerate any kind of abuse of learners and the Employment of Educators Act stipulates that educators be dismissed for any sexual activity with learners.

The Child Care Act stipulates that it is the duty of all including dentists and educators to notify the authorities if they suspect any physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a child and prohibits sexual activity with a minor.

Other laws in the offing are the Sexual Offences and Children's Bills. The latter will replace the Child Care Act and will have clauses on physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children.

The Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) was set up by government to address issues of gender equity in education. The GETT report (1997) raised concerns about the pervasiveness of gender based inequity, harassment and violence in schools. A Human Rights Watch report titled, "Scared at School – Sexual Violence Against Girls in South African Schools" (2001), remarks that girls regularly encounter violence in school, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and assault by male classmates and teachers.

A Human Sciences Research Council report titled "National Household HIV Prevalence and Risk Survey of South African Children" (Brooks, Shisana and Richter, 2004) also indicates that sexual harassment at schools is a serious problem. Two fifths of children surveyed report that boys sexually

harass girls and 15% of children report that male educators propose relationships with girl pupils.

South African Demographic and Health Survey asked women about rape in childhood, and found that school teachers (33%) were those most commonly responsible (Jewkes and Wood, 1997 cited in EFA 2004). The data shows that approximately one in 200 South African women aged 15-49 was raped by a school teacher before the age of 15.

What has SADTU done?

South African Democratic Trade Union (SADTU) has publicly acknowledged the problem and called for zero tolerance and has a code of conduct for its members. Some of its activities include the girl child campaign and an advocacy and training programme called "Know your Boundaries." Curriculum and teacher development programmes continue to take centre stage in the union's work.

SADTU believes that the failure to integrate gender equality as a core imperative increases the gender gap in education. Policy and practice need to challenge gendered assumptions that continue to place girls/women at risk such as structural and socio-cultural issues. Although teaching in South Africa is feminised, schools remain patriarchal arenas and female teachers are often victims of sexual harassment from male colleagues at school. Despite curriculum in schools being more gender sensitive gendered patterns of performance still persist. Therefore, there is need for a strong and active women's movement that works closely with civil society to mobilise and agitate for change.

TEACHERS UNION OF MALAWI

Teachers are responsible for the girl child when she comes to school and are expected to play both the role of a parent and educator. Teachers in Malawi accept that VAG is a challenge that needs a multi-sectoral approach.

Interventions

Malawi CARER – a Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) project started in 2000 and was carried out in six districts. Programme activities include awareness campaigns and training that targets school boys, girls, teachers and PTAs. Newsletters and magazines constitute publicity materials that are distributed and school clubs have been formed to curb VAG.

Stakeholders have approved a draft code of conduct which will be presented to parliament. TUM is a member of a joint taskforce on VAG chaired by the Ministry of Education and has written a memo to the president of Malawi and his cabinet lobbying for political will. Police members of the joint taskforce are involved in VAG awareness campaigns in schools. The Teachers Union started a collaboration with Action Aid International Malawi on VAG in January 2006. This will see research results being disseminated.

Educational International and AAI- TUM

At a meeting in South Africa attended by all regional, national and international teachers unions, resolutions were made

between AAI and Education International. The resolutions which are known as the Parktonian recommendations decided on the following course of action:

- collaborate to break the silence on VAG;
- build conceptual understanding around the wide scope of direct and indirect violence affecting girls at home, on the way to school and in school;
- undertake joint research and agree on clear positions;
- ensure Gender Based Violence is addressed seriously in teacher training colleges;
- influence curriculum and review processes to include gender issues such as violence;
- campaign jointly for zero tolerance towards VAG and bring perpetrators to justice and;
- facilitate ownership of VAG issues by everyone and not just by women or women's groups.

Challenges

TUM faces challenges such as limited financial and human resources. There are also capacity limitations and insufficient legal frameworks as well as attitudes that the union has to deal with. For example, a misconception of TUM's agenda by government.

ZIMBABWE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Zimbabwe Teachers' Association (ZIMTA), represents 58 000 members in the education sector and stands for the rights of teachers and learners and quality public education in the context of EFA.

ZIMTA does not condone any form of violence against children and girls in particular. As a professional teachers' organization, ZIMTA ensures that a high level of discipline and educational standards are maintained by both teachers and pupils so as to create a safe learning environment. Common forms of VAG in Zimbabwe schools include rape, indecent assault, and verbal and emotional abuse. Violence inhibits effective learning among the affected learners.

Responses

ZIMTA is involved in a number of membership education programmes, which have a bearing on combating violence against learners. However, it has not yet embarked on VAG specific activities.

Challenges

ZIMTA is unable to reach out to more male learners, teachers and other adults because of shortage of time, financial and material resources such transport. Extreme poverty increases girls' vulnerability to exploitation as some parents or guardians are bribed and end up shielding abusers.

Key issues raised in plenary

A number of important issues were raised in plenary such as resource limitations of teachers' unions, privatisation of education and absence of a common code of conduct for teachers in SADC countries. Overall many participants felt educators should do a lot more to address VAG.

5. GOOD PRACTICES

Although the overwhelming picture was that VAG is not addressed in many of the countries represented, there are a few examples of good work that is being done. In an effort to provide some lessons, FAWE, AAI-Kenya and the Girl Child Network of Zimbabwe shared their experiences.

FORUM FOR AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATIONALISTS

FAWE's vision is to significantly reduce gender disparities in education through greater access to schooling, completion of studies and better performance at all levels by girls. FAWE's work is founded on the notion that education for all is a human right and that girls' education is a pre-requisite to its achievement. MDG 2 and 3 see education for girls and women as the major route to women's empowerment. FAWE sees empowerment of girls as critical in eliminating gender inequalities.

Through the 32 National Chapters (NCs) work on the ground and the influential positions of its members, FAWE has influenced African education ministries to make their systems more responsive to the specific education needs of girls. An enabling policy environment has been created that demonstrates effective strategies and approaches to increase girls' access, retention, improved performance and achievement in education.

Lessons learnt

FAWE NC interventions that have been effective in addressing VAG include centres of excellence, school clubs, *tuseme*, bursary schemes, gender responsive pedagogy, community support groups and provision of safe lodging.

FAWE has established centres of excellence - institutions, which clearly and effectively demonstrate a holistic and integrated approach towards addressing the problems facing girls' education through their interventions - in 13 NCs.

Tuseme strategy

The Tuseme - 'Let us speak' - strategy is an empowerment process designed to make girls aware of their subordination and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome marginalisation. The strategy enables girls and boys to understand gender constructs as well as identify and analyse emergent problems and how they hinder their academic and social development. Tuseme empowers girls with skills to take action to eliminate problems impeding their academic and social development.

Nine FAWE NCs in Ethiopia, Namibia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe are using the Tuseme methodology to address girls' education is-

sues. Tuseme school club interventions are scaling at a very fast pace in primary, secondary and institutions of higher learning.

In Zambia, the Students' Alliance for Female Education has incorporated the 'communication box' - an intervention that has opened communication channels between pupils and school management - into their work.

Tuseme's impact is found in empowered girls and boys who understand why gender relations are the way they are and 'speak out' on various issues, such as violence. Girls and boys develop a positive gender attitude when they acquire knowledge on child rights, reproductive health, adolescent sexuality and HIV/AIDS. This equips young people with life skills to help them defend their rights and to live responsibly. Tuseme has produced 'whistle blowers' who report cases of violence. Adult and peer mentors are taught to realise that violence can be avoided.

Challenges

One of the challenges FAWE faces is the absence of data on the extent of VAG and its impact to implement policies and enforce regulations that protect girls from violence. Under-representation of women in education management and unclear indicators on what constitutes violence are other thorny issues.

GIRL CHILD NETWORK

Zimbabwe-based Girl Child Network (GCN) was formed in 1999 to be 'a voice of the voiceless' for girls in the 0-16 age group. Its mission is to support the empowerment of the girl child at home, school and in the community. GCN defines girls' empowerment as a process of providing, facilitating and instilling the means to address issues impeding their development. It envisions a society where girls enjoy economic, social and political rights and walk in their full potential as future women.

Strategies

GCN, which boasts of a membership of at least 20 000 girls from 350 clubs run by girls for themselves, documents and disseminates information and also implements a number of strategies to counter VAG. These include the women as role models strategy. The role models are a support group that assists marginalised girls through scholarships and subsistence.

Empowerment villages for OVC have been established together with child abuse monitoring committees. Strong networking relationships with traditional leaders exist. GCN has also submitted its Child Sexual Offences Bill to the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

Successes

After receiving leadership-training, an executive committee of 11 girls from different parts of the country was set up.

This increased the number of empowered girls who confidently tackle challenges in child abuse issues, are assertive on VAG and jealously guard their rights and self-esteem.

GCN publishes a monthly newsletter called Newsflash which has a print run of 20 000 copies. Other successes are found in multimedia campaigns on halting child abuse through collaboration with the police, the department of social welfare and the courts.

Community HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns and sanitary towel procurement for disadvantaged girls are other areas in which GCN is active.

Challenges and gaps

Processes and requirements of reporting cases are financially and emotionally taxing on girls and delays in handling of court cases erode evidence and confidence in the judiciary. Some perpetrators are murdering girls to conceal evidence of abuse while efforts by GCN to bring culprits to book have created enemies for the organisation. On the other hand, policy makers lack political will and commitment to impose stiffer penalties on rapists and other violators. Eradicating institutionalised violence against girls in churches and traditional norms remains a mammoth task.

Orphan hood caused by HIV and AIDS continue to increase girls vulnerability. Girls are becoming heads of households and home-based caregivers at tender ages. There are also economic challenges emanating from hyperinflation which is impacting negatively on GCN's capacity to meet the high demands for its clubs and other services.

AAI KENYA

"Girls are equal to boys but completely different from them"

Girls' forums were started in 2001 at Kilimangodo primary school in Kwale as a pilot project and are now replicated in over 30 schools in the coast region of Kenya.

The forums were started to sensitise girls on VAG issues such as abusive language, sexual, physical, cultural and psychological violence both in and out of school. Unfriendly environments for girls in schools such as poor infrastructure, insufficient sanitation facilities and inadequate teachers needed to be addressed.

Other issues included poor performance of girls in examinations and low retention and completion rates of between 20%- 40% and free primary school education which did not improve girls' access to education.

The aim of the forums is to provide safe space for girls to address issues affecting them and opportunities for sharing experiences and accessing information on life skills, adolescent sexual reproductive health, academic advancement, relationships and communication skills.

Activities

The main activities include capacity building through understanding of child rights, using stepping stones methodology in VAG, making use of the Children's Act and engaging school management committees. Psycho-social support is given by trained counsellors and it comes in the form of guidance, counselling and trauma management for both teachers and girls. The forums also rescue and refer cases of abuse and rights violations to relevant institutions.

Joint activities highlight the plight of girls and sharing of local interventions with partners such as Plan Kenya, World Vision, Kensip (an Aga Khan foundation Project) for the sanitary towel campaign. Strategic linkages have been created with organisations such as FIDA (women lawyers organisation), CRADLE and CLEAR for capacity building of the clubs, school management committees and child rights activists.

Talks on career development and exchange visits between girls have been organised. Behaviour change in relation to HIV and AIDS and STIs for both teachers and girls is also promoted.

Key learning and achievements

There has been marked improvement in participation of girls in education in strategic areas such as enrolment, retention, completion and performance. Over 94% of girls are currently in secondary schools in the programme areas – up from 58%. Information provision has enhanced parental responsibility and community responsiveness towards rights' protection.

Children are gaining more focus and respect as partners in development as the girls' forum has become a fundamental component in the "16 days of activism" calendar. Given a chance girls can also provide peer support.

Challenges

Challenges can be divided into three categories. These are institutional, legislative and school-based.

Institutional challenges faced include police and health care providers who are unsupportive and ignorant of GBV issues. Government capacity is also lacking as staff is thin and more inclined to personal conviction than professionalism. Inadequate support from teachers caused by low staffing, few female teachers and limited skills impact negatively on the programme. Teachers' unions are also always siding with teachers who violate girls at the expense of the child.

Challenges are also found in the judiciary system where cases take too long and penalties are lenient. Current legislation is not matching violation with penalties.

There is resistance to change in the school environment as a result of socio-cultural influences. In addition, poor conditions in schools such as lack of sanitary pads, toilets and water affect girls disproportionately. Poverty continues to affect the transition of girls by perpetuating retrogressive practices such as early marriages.

Next steps

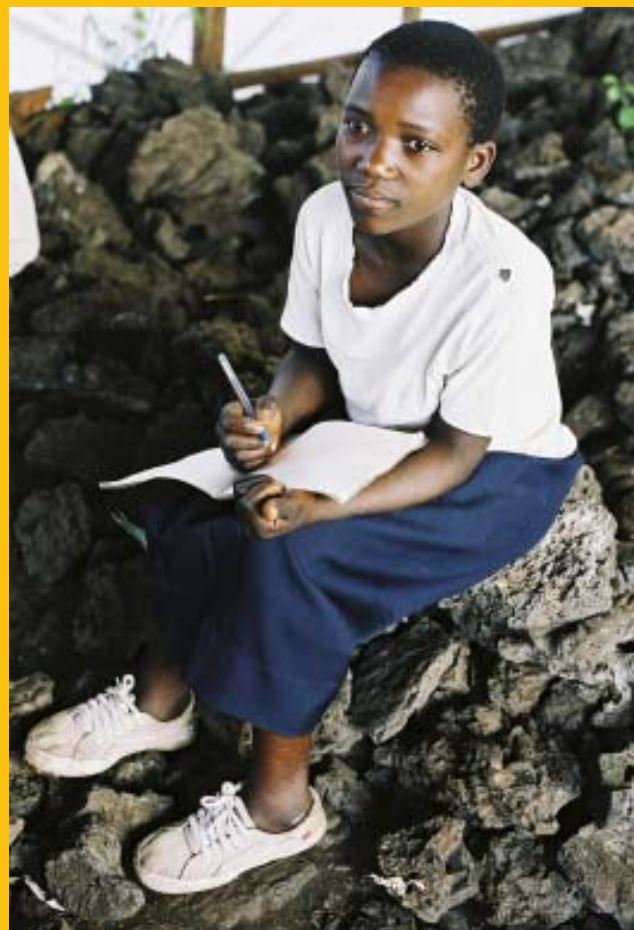
The sanitary towels campaign will be made a policy issue and rights clubs in schools will take into account boys concerns and allow for their appreciation of girls' issues. The burden of peer support will be taken off teachers as girls' forums will play that role. Training of service providers such as the police and health care workers will continue.

Key issues raised in plenary

Plenary debated at length capacity gaps within NGOs in dealing with government arms such as the judiciary? Questions were raised on whether NGOs involved in VAG were networking with others carrying out similar work or not? Other queries were on insufficient advocacy work with ministries of education on critical areas such as promoting sex education in schools. Although all the issues could not get sufficient answers, they were however addressed when strategies to stop VAG were discussed.

Plenary debated at length capacity gaps within NGOs in dealing with government arms such as the judiciary? Questions were raised on whether NGOs involved in VAG were networking with others carrying out similar work or not?.

Key points



From left to right: Mark Phillips/AAI, Kate Holt/Eyevine/AAI

◆ *Sex education in schools should speak to girls and infrastructure should be adequate for girls' needs*

6. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Most of the gaps in addressing VAG are in policies and legislation that countries have formulated and promulgated but with little or no enforcement on the ground. Some countries use both statutory and customary laws thus compromising strategies to end VAG.

In most instances customary laws perpetuate patriarchy and the continuance of practices that promote VAG. The same can be said of some religious practices and outdated laws.

Country caucuses agreed on the imperative to consolidate laws that deal with VAG and come up with specific laws. Political will by government is crucial together with other strategies such as educational and awareness campaigns, changing attitudes and perceptions and VAG training for lawyers and teachers.

Tables on page 17 and 18 summarise country caucuses' discussions and resultant action plans.

Angola

Priorities	Strategies	Responsibilities	Resources
Build a national coalition on VAG Work for an adequate legislation on VAG issues Raise awareness in the community Build capacity of all stakeholders on VAG issues and how to deal with it	Research on VAG Dissemination of the results among all stakeholders Training & information sessions on VAG all over the country to strengthen the coalition Organise advocacy & mobilization campaigns Lobby government, women MPs and parliament for adequate legislation on VAG	The coalition on VAG Ministry of Education Ministry of Family & Women's promotion Teachers' Unions and the Journalist Association Parliamentary Women's Group	Human Materials (Leaflets, pamphlets, brochures, posters)

Botswana

Priorities	Strategies	Responsibilities	Resources
Collection of Data	Survey through existing structures, Department of Statistics, Planning and Research to provide logistics	Mrs P Sethare	Human Time Finance for travelling
Teacher & Stakeholder Capacity Building	Workshops for Staff Development Coordinators and Guidance & Counselling Teachers on VAG issues. Involve TT & D to take responsibility on workshoping of teachers TT & D in conjunction with CDE to check Teacher Training Institution's Curriculum Share information with stakeholders using existing structures and newsletters.	Mrs P Sethare Mr Radibe Mrs Mazwiduma	Human Financial Time
Raise Public Awareness - all Stakeholders	Public Awareness through: Parents teachers Associations Kgofa meetings BFTU and BOCONGO Newsletters	Mr Radibe	Human Financial Time
Review of policies and legislation on VAG	Review of policies and laws through: Existing structures, Education Act and Pastoral task forces Social Services (Local) Teacher Unions and BOCONGO Police officers and the attorney General's office	Mr Radibe Mr Mazwiduma	Human Financial Time

Lesotho

Priority	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Expedite enactment of legislation & approval of policies related to VAG Capacity building & developing partnerships Gathering information on VAG Creating & sustaining public awareness	Lobbying government departments to expedite policy reform Establish national dialogue format on VAG Commission research on VAG Develop data collection tools for VAG Public campaign against VAG Provide training of trainers on VAG awareness	FIDA Lesotho The Lesotho Team MOET, LAT, NGOC	Human resources, equipment, transport, stationery

Malawi

Priorities	Strategies	Responsibilities	Resources
Policy formulation and legislation	Advocacy Review & formulation Implementation & awareness Monitoring	Joint taskforce CSOs, Government	Skills in policy analysis & advocacy, National Steering Committee in Child Protection Monitoring and evaluation skills
Capacity Building	Awareness Skills development Community and stakeholder mobilization & empowerment Resource mobilisation	CSOs & government	Information, education & communication materials (IECs), media Technical support
Sustainability	Coordination/collaboration Partnership development Resource mobilisation	Joint task force	IECs, media & joint taskforce

Mozambique

Priority	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Legislation	Date collection to assess current situation Identify types of VAG Dissemination of information Dialogue between NGOs & Teachers Unions Legal integration Advocacy Dissemination, implementation & monitoring	MULEIDE, AMMCJ, AAI Mozambique & UNICEF Teachers Unions, FAWEMO, Women's Forum, CAME AMMCJ, MULEIDE & MLSA Mozambique Women's Forum, Teachers Unions	Human, financial & technical
Training	Regional workshops targeting teachers, school councils, students (girls & boys), women & youth associations, community leaders, counseling service providers	FAWEMO, Teachers Unions, AAI Mozambique & OSISA WLSA, CAME & MULEIDE	Human, financial & technical
Capacity building	Strengthening associations & networking in girls education especially among NGOs & Teachers Unions	AAI Mozambique, OSISA & FAWEMO	Human, financial & technical
Financial resources & Office equipment	Writing a proposal to submit to donors Lobbying	FAWEMO, Teachers Union, MULEIDE & AAI Mozambique	Human, financial & technical

Namibia

Priority	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Mini-survey (By June 2006)	Government to carry out research on VAG Encourage institutions to carry out research Popularise the findings	Government & relevant stakeholders	Government
Policy formulation & implementation (Aug/Sept.06) Dissemination (Nov/Dec.06)	Identify key roles & stakeholders Stakeholders workshops Formulate draft policy	Government, FAWENA, NANTU & all stakeholders	Government, Global Fund, Action Aid, OSISA
Capacity building for all stakeholders	Training of stakeholders such as girls, boys, teachers, school boards, parents, traditional leaders, & community	NANTU, FAWENA, government, stakeholders	FAWE, government, Global Fund
Implementation	Resource mobilization, continuous training, monitoring, evaluation & review	Government, relevant stakeholders	Government

South Africa

Priority	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Advocacy	Awareness campaign of the extent of VAGE issues in South Africa Lobby government and agitate for policy formulation	Government: DoE; DoH; DoJ; DoSD; Civil Society: NGO's; CBO's; Teacher Unions; Social Movements; Learner Representative Councils; SGB's Higher Education: Teacher Education Research Institutions: HSRC; Wits EPU; CDE etc. Business Sector: CSI; NBI	Political Support Parental Support Financial Support Human Resources at provincial and local levels Traditional leaders
Policy Development	Develop a policy that deals specifically with VAGE policy will be aligned to all existing legislation and acts Ensure consultation with major stakeholders in policy development Workshop the policy with relevant stakeholders	As above	As above
Policy Implementation	Develop an implementation plan with all stakeholders Cost the implementation plan and ensure it comes with the necessary budget and resources Each stakeholder to circulate and discuss the implementation plan with its constituency to ensure buy-in	As above	As above

Swaziland

Priority	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Legal framework: (i) Domestication of international conventions e.g. CRC Review of teachers Code of Conduct	Lobby Education Parliamentary Forum Conduct community campaigns Radio Jungles Popularize and create awareness of the instruments Simplify and produce TEC materials	WLSA	Financial & Technical support
(ii) Constitution Research on VAG	Popularise children issues especially the girl child	WLSA, Ministry of Education, FAWE	Financial & technical
(iii) Review of Teachers Code of Conduct	Conduct sensitization workshops & consultative meetings	SNAT	Financial & technical
Research on VAG	Data collection and report writing on VAG	FAWE, MLSA & MDE	Financial & technical
VAG occurs in all locations	Presentation & dissemination of information Capacity building for teachers, child protectors, teacher and peer educators	FAWE, MLSA & MDE	Financial & technical

Zambia

Priority	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Advocate for comprehensive policy on VAG	Draft specific policy on VAG which will incorporate relevant international instruments Review teacher training curriculum to integrate VAG	ZANEC secretariat FAWEZA Ministry of Education Teachers Unions	International instruments, human resources, workshop materials & time
Strengthen role of schools in addressing VAG	Pre and in-service teacher capacity building in GRP & VAG Expand boarding facilities & provide scholarships for vulnerable girls	Ministry of Education, Teachers' Unions, FAWWEZA, CAMFED	Manuals, trainers workshop materials, scholarships, building plans & materials
Greater community involvement in dealing with VAG	Training of community based groups, FBOs, EMBs, traditional leaders Create networking structures to deal with VAG	PAF, PANUKA, FAWWEZA, ISRL, ZANEC	Manuals Workshop materials Human resources Networking guidelines

Zimbabwe

Priority Areas	Strategies	Responsibility	Resources
Policy formulation and implementation: Consolidation, creation of and amendment of legislation with respect to VAG KAP: Training and sensitization of service providers, communities, schools, traditional leadership. Advocacy and lobbying targeted at political, faith based organizations leadership Framework of stake holding: Identification and networking	Identifying gaps in policy Borrow best practice models from SADC & other regions e.g. PPC, traditional leaders & faith based organizations and engage relevant policy makers Lobby for consolidation/ implementation of current policies & legislation on VAG through negotiation & consultation Capacitate & empower stakeholders for policy implementation/monitoring Identify celebrity/influential personalities and real life stories of the affected to spearhead awareness media campaigns. Identify artists to profile VAG (Multi-media campaign) Community mobilization	Girl Child Network – Capacity Building FAWEZ1 – Best practices identification and matching Musasa Project – Policy formulation Teachers' Unions – Consolidation of existing legislation and multi-media campaign CAMFED and FAWEZ1 – community mobilization.	Other EFA networks, such as OSISA, AAI, ANCEFA to help with identifying technical capacity and resources for campaign design and implementation, material development and multi-media campaign FAWE - Zimbabwe and teachers' unions (ZIMTA & PTUZ) to coordinate Zimbabwe programme.

7. CONCLUSION

/// A conference dealing with such a weighty issue, which intersects with many other weighty problems can never reach a stage of finality. Questions can be raised on what stakeholders will do when they get back to work. Is this going to be another conference where there will be “no change or moral outrage - where we become intellectuals, and our ideas will only be known in our social and political constituencies? How then do we grow into a movement and re-humanise?” These were some of the points raised for continued dialogue by Brian Kagoro, ActionAid Africa Policy Manager, in his closing remarks.

Overall, the conference met most of its objectives as it dealt with the entire spectrum of issues pertaining to VAG such as its forms, impact and responses from key stakeholders’ points of view. Gaps that need filling were identified, especially in government policies and legal frameworks. Further research, monitoring and awareness of VAG are necessary for strengthening NGO and government responses.

As part of concretising the ideas and action plans drafted during the course of the conference, a team of experts was appointed to work on a model policy to be used in VAG initiatives in individual countries. The model policy can be used as an advocacy tool and can be adapted to each specific context.

ANNEXES:

1. COMMUNIQUÉ: HARARE DECLARATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN EDUCATION

We, the (75) representatives of the Ministries of Education in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states, members of Teachers' Unions, policy makers, leaders in the national, regional and continental non governmental organizations concerned with the rights of girls to quality and safe education and advocates for women's human rights, gathered in Harare, Zimbabwe from 8 to 10 May, 2006, for a sub-regional conference on Violence Against Girls in Education hereby declare the following:

Understanding that Violence Against Girls in Education (VAG) is occurring on a wide scale in our region and that it takes many varied forms including those of a sexual, physical, verbal, emotional and psychological nature.

Acknowledging that VAG happens in many different private and public locations such as at home, school, education campuses, in public transport, on the walk to school and elsewhere.

Recognising that there are multiple perpetrators of violence against girls, whether it occurs in private and public places, including; relatives and community members, authorities within schools' educational and administrative systems;

Disturbed by the knowledge that girls in our countries are at least three times as likely as boys to experience a form of violence that affects their ability to fully enjoy their rights to and in education, be it at the primary level or at tertiary institutions of learning;

Concerned at the blanket of silence that covers the pervasive issue of VAG in our societies. In our region, there is little or no official acknowledgement that girls are insufficiently protected in schools.

Deeply concerned that this critical problem is often sanctioned by customary, religious and traditional practices that endorse or condone the violation of young girls. These include abuse through early marriages and in cases where girls are raped, marriages are negotiated. Also very concerned that Violence Against Girls is occurring in a context where the risk of infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections is extremely high and has a deeply profound impact on the lives of the region's girls;

Noting with concern the paucity of data to assess the extent of VAG and the concomitant lack of systems in place to assess changes in attitudes or behaviours;

Recognising that our governments have made commendable moves and signed various international and regional human rights instruments that commit our countries to providing, protecting, and advancing the rights of girls to high quality and safe education;

Mindful of the fact that some governments in the region have made exemplary efforts at fulfilling their obligations by putting in place policies for the re-entry into school of girls who had dropped out due to pregnancy;

Having, on this occasion listened to the testimonies of young girls whose education rights were disrupted by crimes of a violent sexual nature committed against them;

We call upon our governments to, among other things, ensure that a safe environment exists for girls to pursue their educational goals and dreams and benefit fully from the rights they have to and in education, be it at the primary, secondary or tertiary levels by;

Leadership:

Governments, in collaboration with the various stakeholders in the education sector, such as Teacher's Unions, child rights movements and institutions, Non Governmental Organisations, and women's rights organizations, must declare zero tolerance for VAG. This will require that the relevant Ministries in government take up leadership on developing an appropriate policy, attitudinal and administrative

environment to protect girls from violence in the education system. We urge relevant government Ministries to collect sex disaggregated data on the prevalence and incidence of violence in schools. This will provide them with the necessary tools for policy development, and monitoring change.

Safe Educational Environments:

Governments must make concerted efforts to make schools and the communities surrounding them safe and comfortable. By protecting learners from harm and all forms of violence, governments will enhance girls' performance and achievement in schools and tertiary institutions.

Legislation:

Parliaments and governments in the SADC region should develop, enact, and ensure effective implementation of laws that prevent the violation of girls. These laws should have very stiff penalties for perpetrators.

Judiciary:

Governments should ensure that judicial systems are friendly to and supportive of the girls who have survived crimes committed against them. Not only should the courts be survivor friendly, but they should also be speedy and efficient.

Customary Laws:

Negative customary practices and harmful traditional practices should be eliminated and not be used as excuses for violation of girls' fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Policy:

Legal and policy provisions should be harmonized to ensure that threats to girls' education are minimised. Legislation and policy should empower schools to take stern action against those who violate girls. Governments, with the co-operation of Teachers' Unions, should lay out very clearly the policy procedures for dealing with perpetrators such as teachers, administrators and learners.

A clear regional policy framework must be put in place so that procedures across the region are synchronised, preventing perpetrators from finding hiding places within SADC.

Counselling and Support Services:

Governments and school authorities must provide counselling and support services to survivors of violence. This must also include support with access to HIV testing and counselling should this be requested. In cases of sexual violence, girls should be provided with free Post Exposure Prophylaxis, given the high risks of HIV infection in this sub-region. In cases of unwanted pregnancy, girls should have the right to exercise their reproductive choices.

Resources:

Governments must ensure adequate resources and budgetary support for policy and legislative implementation.

The role of Schools:

School authorities should ensure adherence to policies and procedures where these exist. In particular school heads must promote and protect the rights of female learners.

At the school level, systems must be put in place to monitor the prevalence of violence and measures taken to raise awareness amongst teachers, learners and surrounding communities.

Teachers and Teachers' Unions:

Teachers and their unions have a critical role to play in enhancing girls' rights. We call upon teachers' unions in the region to develop and or strengthen CODES OF ETHICS that would guide healthy teacher – learner relations.

Parents and School development Associations/Committees

Parents and SDCs/SDAs must take proactive roles to promote and protect the rights of girls. Of importance is that these structures must develop mechanisms for monitoring incidence of violence in schools.

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Footnotes

- 1 Amnesty International's report *Women, HIV/ AIDS and Human Rights* refers to 2004 reports of young girls in the DRC agreeing to have sex in exchange for food and other basic needs.
- 2 All members of the S A D Community were represented except; DRC, Mauritius, Tanzania and Seychelles.



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