Thematic Review

Addressing School Violence

March 2018

GEC Thematic Reviews

This paper is one of a series of thematic reviews produced by the Fund Manager of the Girls' Education Challenge, an alliance led by PwC, working with organisations including FHI 360, Nathan Associates and Social Development Direct.

The full series of papers is listed below:

- Understanding and Addressing Educational Marginalisation
    - Part 1: A new conceptual framework for educational marginalisation
- Understanding and Addressing Educational Marginalisation
    - Part 2: Educational marginalisation in the GEC
- Economic Empowerment Interventions
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- Addressing School Violence
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- School Governance

For further information, contact the Fund Manager at girlseducationchallenge@uk.pwc.com

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Executive summary

Global evidence has shown that there is a link between children's experience and fear of violence and lower attendance and learning outcomes, as well as higher drop-out rates (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). This is of increasing relevance for actors working within the education sector as schools are often cited by children as places where violence occurs.

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) was set up to support improved attendance and learning outcomes for up to one million marginalised girls as well as the development of an evidence base on what works in girls' education. Findings from GEC projects that attempted to measure the impact of violence on girls' attendance and learning, confirmed the link between girls' fear and/or actual experience of violence and its impact on enrolment, attendance and learning outcomes. Findings also confirmed that addressing violence in schools can contribute to improving attendance, enrolment and learning results for girls.

This paper highlights key lessons learned from the GEC related to school violence:

1. Whole school approaches to addressing violence against girls appear to be the most successful.
2. It is important to consider how violence impacts the most marginalised girls, including disabled girls, as they are often more vulnerable to violence.
3. Projects that took a gender transformative approach and included marginalised boys in at least some of their activities have been more successful at limiting backlash against girls benefitting from project activities. This highlights the need for projects to consider gender and power structures in order to limit potential negative backlash against girls.

This paper also explores some of the project interventions or approaches that have not been successful. During the course of the GEC, the Fund Manager intervened in a small number of cases where projects implemented activities to address school violence that could have potentially put children at further risk. This included projects that set up processes for girls to report violence, but did not establish follow-up processes to address the concerns raised or did not consider how poorly designed reporting processes may expose girls to further risk.

Children cannot be ready to learn if they are fearful. The paper concludes by suggesting several considerations for practitioners and policy makers. Firstly, those working in girls' education should consider carefully how school violence impacts on children's education, even if their initial hypothesis is that violence is not an issue or it is not a primary intention of the project to address this barrier specifically. Secondly, it is important that interventions work to reduce violence for both boys and girls and focus on both prevention and response to violence. This is crucial in order to both limit any adverse effects on children already affected by violence, such as children who have reported violence who are not receiving appropriate follow up support, and to enhance the effectiveness of interventions more generally. Finally, rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems should be designed that can evidence the impact of school violence interventions.

1. Introduction

This paper describes the main approaches used by GEC projects to prevent and address school violence. Whilst most projects considered school violence in some form, few implemented comprehensive strategies to address it. This paper therefore takes a wide view of the theme, as it attempts to draw out the extent to which school violence is a barrier to girls' education, and to outline the experiences of GEC projects in addressing it.

Addressing school violence, including the gendered aspects of school violence, is a fairly recent focus within the international development sector. However, a growing evidence base on the prevalence of violence against children (VAC) has led to greater attention being paid to school violence[1] and its impact. While global research suggests that most violence is experienced in the home, findings from national Violence against Children Surveys (VACS) suggest that violence also often takes place in and around schools.

In addition, the links between children's experiences of violence and attendance and learning outcomes are increasingly recognized in developing countries and there is a growing focus on the impact of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). There is now wide recognition that children cannot learn while being fearful. Although the evidence base on what works to prevent and respond to school violence is limited, examples of best practice are starting to emerge.

Box 1: A note on terminology

Various terms are currently used to describe violence taking place in and around schools. This paper primarily uses the terms violence against children (VAC) and school violence. However, it also recognises that a lot of violence perpetrated against children has a gendered dimension, so the term school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is also used. The definitions of these terms are below:

Violence against children: all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence perpetrated against a child below the age of 18. This can take place in the home, community or school.

School violence: any act of violence in schools such as bullying, corporal punishment, verbal and emotional abuse, intimidation, sexual harassment and assault, gang activity and the presence of weapons.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV): any act or threat of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics. It can affect both students (boys and girls) and teachers and occur in and around school including on the journey to and from school, in the home and online.

Source: Hillis et al, 2016; UNESCO, 2017a; UNESCO and UN Women, 2016

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[1] UNESCO and UN Women, 2016; Parkes et al, 2016; UNESCO, 2017b; Unterhalter et al, 2014.

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) was set up to assist up to one million marginalised girls to improve their attendance and learning. In its first phase the fund supported 37 projects in 18 countries implemented by a wide range of organisations. The focus of the GEC was to generate and share evidence about what works in girls' education and therefore all projects had a strong focus on rigorous evaluation, primarily through randomised control trials.

This paper explores how school violence has been addressed by the GEC. It builds on the midline learning paper which focused on how tackling VAC had been integrated in the GEC. This paper explores the nexus between violence and education. The GEC focuses primarily on girls, however where evaluations have also explored boys' experience of school violence, this has also been included in this paper. The paper is expected to be of interest primarily to education actors who have limited experience of working on school violence.

The GEC did not specify any particular interventions or approaches that projects should take to support girls' attendance and learning. However, the Fund Manager mandated that all projects receiving GEC funding put in place child protection policies to protect children coming into contact with project staff and contractors.[2] In a small number of cases, where projects established schools, or worked in their own established schools, these rules also became applicable to intervention schools. These included the PEAS project in Uganda and the community-based education (CBE) centres set up by projects in Afghanistan.

The paper concludes by making suggestions for how successful approaches to school violence can be better integrated into education programmes in the future. It suggests that education projects should always consider how school violence may impact on girls' educational experience, whether they intend to address this barrier or not. It also suggests that where projects intend to work more proactively on school violence, they should adopt appropriate data collection methods and tools to establish an accurate baseline. This in turn will contribute to the evidence base of the effectiveness of the intervention. The paper also suggests a number of good practices in working on school violence including the importance of working on both prevention and response and the need for a gendered approach to violence prevention.

Methodology and limitations of this paper

This paper is based on a review of the endline reports from the first phase of the GEC (and midlines for those that did not complete an endline[3]). The paper should be interpreted with a number of caveats, in particular around the reliability of the data on VAC. Global experience shows that the prevalence of violence is notoriously difficult to measure and quantitative methods in particular can underestimate the prevalence of many forms of violence (Ruiz-Perez et al., 2007). The GEC was not set up to measure school violence, focusing rather on rigorous quantitative measurement of attendance, learning and retention. Evaluations were, therefore, not designed to carefully consider the sequencing of questions relating to violence, or to probe different types of violence, and enumerators were not selected based on their ability to discuss sensitive topics with children. This is highly likely to have influenced the results generated by

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[2] A child protection policy is a document that outlines how an organisation commits to keeping children safe that they come into contact with. Key aspects of this include safe recruitment of staff and contractors, code of conduct for staff, establishing reporting mechanism to respond to cases of breaches in the code of conduct, and informing children and communities of their commitment to keep children safe.

[3] Raising Voices in Uganda and VSO in Mozambique

projects in relation to the extent that violence is a barrier to girls' education, and also the effectiveness of different interventions. It is important to acknowledge the high ethical standards that need to be in place when collecting sensitive information with children and the need to balance children's participation in data collection related to their experiences of violence with due consideration of child protection risks (Devries et al., 2016). If not, there is a real risk of harm to children, such as children becoming re-traumatised and their safety compromised (ibid.).

An additional limitation was the inability to aggregate data on this issue across the portfolio due to limitations around data quality and comparability. This paper, therefore, is able to draw limited conclusions from the lessons emerging from the GEC. In addition, many GEC projects used terms such as 'child-friendly', 'gender sensitive' or 'girl-friendly' to discuss their in-school interventions. However, it was not always clear whether these terms included a school violence element.[4] This paper has, therefore, only included interventions and findings that are explicitly identified as including school violence prevention and response.

This paper should be read with an understanding of these limitations.

2. Overview of the discourse on violence against children

The importance of addressing VAC and school violence

In recent years, VAC has gained increasing global attention and there is now a wide acknowledgement that addressing VAC is crucial from both a human rights and a development perspective. Much of the violence that children experience is gendered, with girls more likely to experience psychological bullying, online bullying, sexual violence and harassment, and boys more likely to experience corporal punishment and physical violence (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016)

Increasingly there is now also wide recognition that addressing VAC is important to further children's education. Global research suggests that the following links are particularly important:

1. National household surveys across a number of developing countries[5] have shown that VAC is highly prevalent and affects as many as one billion children every year: almost 80% of both boys and girls will experience some form of violence before turning 18 (Hillis et al., 2016; Ravi and Ahluwalia, 2017). Surveys have found that violence is frequently experienced in schools, or traveling to and from schools, with perpetrators being peers, teachers and community members. Evidence also indicates that sexual violence perpetrated by older male pupils and teachers is particularly prevalent in authoritarian and

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[4] As each project has used a slightly different definition of 'child-friendly', 'gender sensitive' or 'girl-friendly' there has not been scope within the timeframe of this paper to interrogate these concepts in detail.
[5] So far VAC surveys are available in Cambodia, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, with a number of others currently implemented or in the pipeline. See VAC Surveys from several countries here http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/vacs/publications.html

highly gendered school environments (Dunnet et al., 2005, cited in UNESCO, 2015). Other forms of violence which have been found to be common include corporal punishment, which is often targeted at boys in particular; bullying; physical violence and psychological violence (Pinhero, 2006). Research indicates that teachers, especially newly-qualified young women, also experience gender-based violence and abuse within education settings (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016).

2. Global research has shown that children who experience or witness violence have lower school attendance and higher rates of drop-out (ibid.). Furthermore, when they are in school they have lower concentration levels, are more disruptive and have poorer school performance (ibid.).

3. There is significant evidence which demonstrates the links between witnessing or experiencing violence and children's learning outcomes from developed countries including in the UK[6]. Evidence is also emerging of this link in developing countries (Kibriya et al., 2016; Parkes et al., 2016). For example, an analysis of 'The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study' (TIMSS) data from 48 countries showed that children who reported being bullied weekly at school scored lower in mathematics compared to non-bullied children (Jere, 2015).

4. Teachers may use verbal or physical violence to entrench gender inequality by punishing girls who are not obedient or sexually compliant, whereas physical punishment against boys is used as a means of asserting male authority and 'toughening' boys up (Leach et al., 2014). Undermining a boy's masculinity or a girl's femininity is a way to not only hurt children but to further entrench gender inequality (a driver of gender based violence globally). However, there is also growing global evidence that schools and, in particular, curriculum approaches can help prevent violence against children in and out of school and change attitudes and behaviour. These include civic education, comprehensive sexuality education and life skills education, as well as approaches to manage aggression, develop bystander skills (eg. how to identify, speak out about or seek to engage others in responding to violence), form healthy relationships, and address bullying. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that curriculum approaches that promote gender equality can help prevent future violence against women and girls (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016).

In addition to the above links between education and violence, research has established a number of long term impacts of violence on children, including an increased risk of depression, low self-esteem, risky sexual behaviour and substance abuse (CDC, undated). Furthermore, research indicates that experiencing violence in childhood has long-term consequences including impacting on future income earning opportunities and thus increasing the risk of living in poverty as an adult, heightened risk of re-victimisation especially for women, and becoming a perpetrator of intimate partner violence, for men (UNICEF, 2014; Guedes et al., 2016). Therefore, ending VAC, including school violence, is important in the fight against both GBV and poverty.

What works to prevent and address school violence

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[6] Royal College of Psychiatrists' Child and Family Public Engagement Editorial Board, 2017; UK Department for Education, 2017

There is currently a lack of rigorous evidence about what works to prevent and address school violence. A recent literature review of SRGBV found that the majority of studies available were related to short-term programmes of less than a year, and the findings were primarily drawn at the end of the programme (Parkes et al., 2016). In addition, few interventions have been rigorously evaluated, and those that have been are often of poor quality (Unterhalter et al., 2014) More rigorous research is needed to better document what works.

Overall, the literature identifies the following promising interventions in developing countries:

- **Whole school approaches** to safety that include specific behaviour-change techniques for staff, students, and administration can be effective in improving students' feelings of wellbeing and safety at school.[7]

- **Curriculum approaches** that support young people to unpack and reflect on gender identities, norms and inequalities that shape the risk and experience of violence. These types of interventions need to be supported by highly skilled and supported teachers and peer mentors if they are to be effective. Activities that only target girls, such as girls' clubs, also need to be combined with other interventions to engage a wide group of stakeholders in order to challenge gender norms and ensure the onus of change is not placed too heavily on girls (Parkes et al., 2016).

- **Interventions that combine girls' clubs with community dialogue and in-service training for teachers and school management committees** may lead to changes in attitudes to gender and violence, and greater knowledge about how and where to report incidents of violence. However, this may not necessarily translate into increased levels of reporting of violence by girls (ibid.).

- **Establishing mechanisms in schools for reporting violence** increases the likelihood that girls will report violence (Sperling et al., 2016). It is essential to accompany this with efforts to strengthen referrals between schools and service providers and ensure that teachers know how to respond when violence is reported to them.

- **Increasing the number of women on school management committees** and greater activity by school governance structures in relation to gender equality and social inclusion can lead to increases in girls' confidence in reporting violence (Unterhalter et al., 2014).

3. Addressing school violence in the GEC

Within the GEC portfolio VAC, and school violence in particular, has not featured prominently in theories of change and activities. Violence was often mentioned by projects in their contextual analysis, but not to the extent that it was identified as a 'barrier' to girls' education.

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[7] Devries et al., 2015; Parkes et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2017b: Fulu et al., 2015

This section outlines the different activities that projects have undertaken with regard to VAC. A few projects took a whole school approach, with the view of trying to address several different manifestations of violence in their project contexts. For example, in Afghanistan, Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Education Success (STAGES), set up community-based education centres to reduce the distance that girls had to travel to school in order to reduce the actual or perceived safety issues on the journey to school. The project also trained teachers and shura (school council) members in alternative discipline and managing violence between children. The PEAS project in Uganda took a similar approach but with a stronger focus on supporting girls' safety by implementing a Girls' Policy, in addition to their child protection policy, and by making infrastructure improvements in their mixed-sex schools. Raising Voices in Uganda took a comprehensive approach to addressing school violence by focusing on the underlying power dynamics that drive gender inequality and gender-based violence. The project also worked with community-based service providers to effectively respond to reports of violence from children.

Most projects only implemented one or two activities to address school violence (such as girls' clubs, reporting mechanisms in schools or teacher training). This can perhaps be explained by the primary focus of GEC on learning outcomes. On occasions, some of these activities were not planned in a holistic way and led to, in a small number of cases, the Fund Manager having to intervene to reduce potential harm to beneficiary girls. For example, a project may have worked on encouraging girls to report violence but did not consider what referral paths were in place to support any case management needs that may result. In such cases, the GEC Fund Manager supported projects to re-design this part of their project, and encouraged projects to link up with other organisations with greater expertise in child protection or to hire a child protection specialist to support programme implementation. In these cases, the Fund Manager also closely monitored project performance in relation to school violence.

The GEC experience highlights that organisations that are new to the field of girls' education and child protection, and sometimes even established organisations, often benefit from being supported to think through their theories of change in relation to how violence affects girls' attendance and learning, and how to proactively incorporate violence prevention and response into their theory of change. This is not to say that all education projects should include prevention and response activities but rather that practitioners should be aware of how school violence relates to attendance and learning in the context in which they are operating. In addition, where education projects are implementing activities to address school violence, these activities should be grounded in best practice such as addressing social norms; incorporating both preventative actions and response processes if violence does occur; and taking a whole school approach, which targets boys, girls and school staff.

Figure 1 shows some of the main activities carried out by GEC projects in the different spheres to address VAC. These activities are described in more detail below.

Note: None of the projects in the first phase of the GEC identified online violence as an issue either at baseline or in their contextual analysis and so no project activities have been designed to address violence in this sphere.

Figure 1: How GEC projects address violence in different spheres (adapted from Jere, 2015)
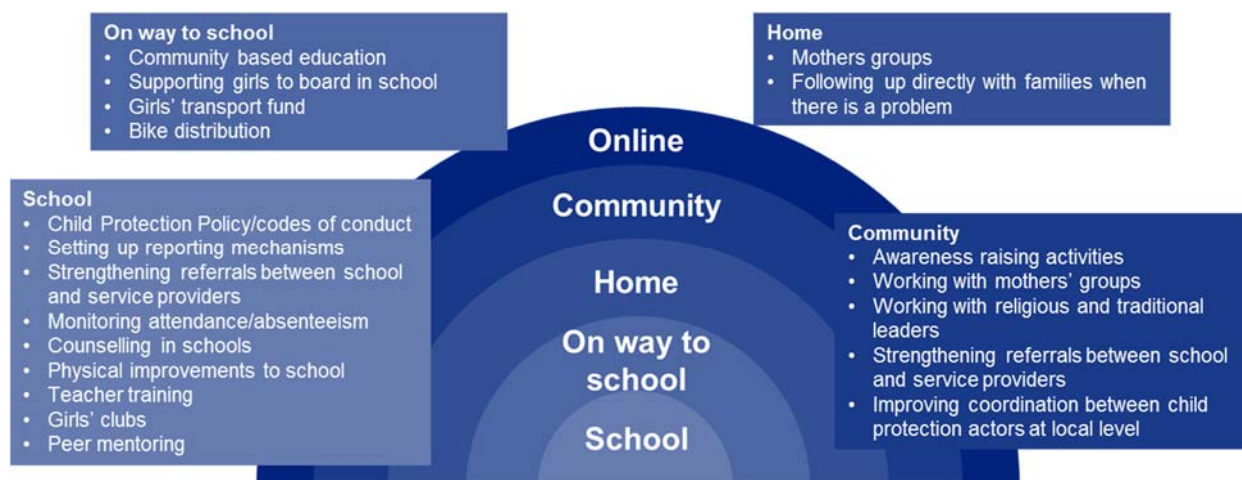
School based interventions

Unsurprisingly, during the first phase of the GEC, most projects focused their violence prevention and response activities in schools. Some of the most common strategies were:

- **Reporting mechanisms in schools** – the most common in-school activity was developing mechanisms for children to report violence safely, often using female teachers as key participants to encourage reporting. Many projects found a particularly urgent need for this following introductions of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) sessions in girls' clubs, and awareness raising sessions in schools on child rights.[8] In some cases, a comprehensive analysis had not been conducted prior to awareness raising activities with children, leaving some projects unprepared for an increase in reporting of violence.[9] This had the potential to lead to direct harm to the girls the projects were aiming to support, as an inadequate or absence of response can put children reporting violence at risk of backlash, teasing and in the long term can discourage further reporting. Some projects facilitated reporting of violence by establishing anonymous complaint boxes.[10] However, these have numerous challenges such as ensuring confidentiality of reported cases (when children do indicate their names on the notes left in the box), being able to respond appropriately if the complainant is anonymous and effectively linking the mechanism to an appropriate referral system. This last issue is even more pertinent in fragile contexts where services are fewer and more difficult to access.

- **Capacity building of teachers and school management** – while teacher training was a common feature across the GEC portfolio, the number of projects that included school violence prevention and response as a core part of this training was limited. When it was included, training tended to focus on introducing and strengthening the use of non-violent disciplining methods and introducing codes of conduct or child protection policies, rather than specific training to identify children who have experienced violence and what to do

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[8] For example, Discovery Communications, BRAC Maendeleo Tanzania, World Vision Zimbabwe, REK South Sudan
[9] For example, IRC and Discovery
[10] For example, World Vision Zimbabwe, VSO Mozambique, Child Hope

in such cases. School violence prevention was also incorporated into capacity building programmes for school management committees to support them to develop child-friendly and gender sensitive school environments.

- **Girls' clubs** – another popular strategy used by projects was to organise girls' clubs and other safe spaces for girls. While the content taught in the clubs differed slightly, it usually included teaching girls about their rights including SRHR, building their self-esteem and encouraging friendships. There was often also an element of building strong trust with the facilitator, usually a female teacher at the school, so that girls felt safer reporting violence.
- **Safety in boarding schools** – considering the long distances to many secondary schools, bursaries for boarding schools were provided by two projects to facilitate girls' access to school. However, with families far away and safety features often lacking, improving safety in boarding houses emerged as an area for attention.[11] Approaches to address it included improving student awareness of violence and gender equality; fostering improved interactions and friendships; introducing reporting mechanisms, building capacity of matrons; and improving infrastructure in the boarding facilities, such as improved lighting around sanitary facilities. Good practice also included conducting thorough child protection assessments of the schools before facilitating access for girls, and close monitoring and follow up with girls while they were at school.

Approaches to working with safety on the journey to school

GEC projects used three main approaches to promote children's safe access to schools:

- **Building schools closer to communities to reduce the distance children had to travel** – this approach of setting up community-based education initiatives is particularly popular in Afghanistan where it is seen as an effective approach to reassure parents that it is safe for their daughters to attend school without leaving their communities.
- **Facilitating children's mobility through provision of bikes or school buses** – the logic behind bike distribution is often not safety, but rather the long distance and the duration it takes children to travel. However, making the journeys easier and quicker also makes them safer.
- **Improving unsafe areas of a child's journey to school –** this was done by working directly with communities to identify areas that are unsafe for children during their journey to and from school and advocating for appropriate measures to address these.

Approaches to working in the home and with communities

- **Dissemination of positive messages** – community awareness activities about VAC were often part of a wider set of messages aimed at parents and community members, such as the importance of girls' education, access to information on disability and the importance of delaying marriage for girls. These activities took place through a variety of means such as community conversations, engagement with traditional and religious

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[11] For example, Save the Children Mozambique, PEAS

leaders and groups, through media including radio, television and films or by training key groups to cascade information and knowledge.

- **Building capacity of local service providers** – a second approach taken by projects was to work with service providers, including one-stop service centres[12], safe houses/shelters or district level stakeholders such as Ministries of Social Welfare, Ministries of Education, law enforcement agencies etc. Activities included building the capacity of these stakeholders to respond and document cases of VAC, and introducing good practices in child safeguarding, such as using child protection policies. Another aspect of this was to facilitate coordination between state actors especially at the district level, considering that a response to VAC often needs interagency cooperation in order to be effective.[13]
- **Strengthening community-based support** – a third approach employed by projects was to strengthen the community response to violence including supporting mothers' groups to follow up with children who drop out of school or who they know are experiencing violence.

4. Key findings

Most GEC project evaluations were not designed to measure whether girls' experience or fear of violence impacted on their attendance or learning. Despite this not being a requirement of the GEC, a small number of projects did attempt to do it. However, it's important to highlight that the evidence is anecdotal rather than conclusive. Drawing firm causal links from the endline data is difficult due to the holistic nature of most project interventions, and in some cases, the absence of a control group.

The fear or actual experience of violence is linked to lower attendance and learning outcomes

Findings from the six projects that looked at the link between the fear of, or actual experience of, violence and its impact on girls' education confirm the literature's[14] findings that they lead to lower attendance and learning outcomes. Three GEC projects looked specifically at how school violence impacted girls' attendance. ChildHope in Ethiopia found that girls' reports of an incident of violence in school over a 12 month period had a significant negative association with attendance. Relief International in Somalia found that the perception of violence affects both boys' and girls' attendance, but that girls were particularly affected by the fear of violence. Results from the Theatre for a Change (TfaC) project in Malawi also confirmed that whether a girl perceives school to be a safe place significantly affected her likelihood of enrolling and was also a predictor of school attendance.

A further three projects linked school violence to learning outcomes. Analysis conducted by STAGES in Afghanistan found that the absence of both corporal and verbal punishment in classes (particularly the former) was related to girls' better learning outcomes. This was

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[12] For example, VAC Prevention Centres supported by Raising Voices in Uganda
[13] For example, Camfed Zimbabwe and Tanzania, World Vision Zimbabwe
[14] UNESCO and UN Women, 2016; Kibriya et al, 2016; Jere, 2015

backed up by qualitative data collected from community members which suggested that physical punishment of students lead to lack of confidence, lack of motivation to study and poor school attendance. I Choose Life (ICL) in Kenya conducted a regression analysis and found that girls who said they had experienced violence were likely to perform less well than other girls. The endline report also highlighted that girls whose parents reported that violence against girls in school was a major problem were likely to perform less well on the literacy test than their counterparts. Health Poverty Action (HPA) in Rwanda also found a link between girls' perception of school safety and oral reading fluency: its endline evaluation found that for each additional point on the perceptions of school safety score girls were able to read an additional 7.2 words per minute. They concluded that this strongly supported the project's assumption that creating safe schools improves learning outcomes.

Addressing violence in and around school can contribute to improving attendance, enrolment and learning results for girls

While the evidence is not conclusive, emerging findings from the GEC suggest that addressing school violence can contribute to improving enrolment, attendance and learning results, particularly literacy results. For example, Raising Voices in Uganda, a project that had VAC as a core issue and worked with different groups – boys and girls, parents, teachers and service providers – to address it, reported a significant impact on literacy results. The project model was based around the implementation of a Good School Toolkit which, while it included teacher training and other school-wide activities, was primarily focused on reducing corporal punishment. ChildHope in Ethiopia also found that where girls reported that there was a Letter Link box to report violence in schools, there was a positive association with nearly all outcomes including attendance, numeracy and literacy.

PEAS introduced a number of girl-specific protection activities in their schools in Uganda. These included improvements to infrastructure such as erecting perimeter fencing and lighting in girls' dorms as well as implementation of child protection protocols to address harassment and violence perpetrated by boys and teachers. They found that this explicit focus on girls' protection appears to have led to the schools becoming more appealing to adolescent girls. At endline the project was enrolling twice as many girls in school as at the start of the project. They also found that girls' enrolment had outpaced boys' enrolment, a significant achievement in the context of rural Uganda where boys' enrolment at lower secondary level outweighs girls (EPDC, 2014).

It is important to note that these three projects have been effective at putting in place a mechanism which not only allows children to report experiences of violence, but also to act on reported incidences. In its midline report, Raising Voices reported that 1179 girls (and 1137 boys) were provided services through the VAC Prevention Centres (community-based protection mechanisms). ChildHope put in place an effective mechanism that included a counselling team and a child protection specialist who followed up on all reported cases, while PEAS had a designated Child Protection Specialist who followed up on each case in their school.

The Afghanistan projects (STAGES, BRAC, ACTED and Child Fund) which addressed the issue of safety on the journey to and from school for girls, found that reducing the distance

girls had to travel led to enrolment in CBE classes. In addition, these projects worked to make classrooms safer by training teachers in alternative discipline methods and other key child protection issues to support safe and conducive learning environments in schools. These projects recorded large learning gains for girls. Additional measures to improve girls' safety on the journey to school, such as BRAC's introduction of *khalas* (aunts) to accompany girls to school appear to have been less successful. At endline, only two out of 20 girls who received a stipend indicated that they were sometimes accompanied by *khalas* when traveling to schools. Instead most girls reported walking alone to school or with family member, though it is not clear whether this was only possible because of the now closer proximity to the education facility.

Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) Mozambique also had a significant focus on addressing violence and a strong emphasis on setting up a reporting and response mechanism in school (as well as supporting girls' empowerment through girls' clubs) but had marginal impact on literacy and no impact on numeracy. At midline, the external evaluator report highlighted qualitative findings regarding girls' reluctance to use the reporting mechanism and, in some cases, backlash including beatings from boys when they used it to report violence perpetrated by boys. This highlights the importance of good contextual analysis, including of stakeholder capacity and gender norms; a clear theory of change to understand the causes and the manifestations of violence; and high-quality implementation of project activities.

5. Key lessons

This section looks at what we have learned about the design and implementation of school violence interventions. Despite the lessons we draw out, it should be noted that most endline evaluation reports do not include a strong focus on these aspects. One reason for this may be that addressing violence is not considered to be a core intervention area; another may be that disentangling the effects of VAC interventions from other related interventions such as teacher training and school governance has proven difficult for external evaluators; yet another may be related to the challenge of measuring the results of these interventions.

This finding mirrors a wider trend in literature, with many evaluations of SRGBV interventions in developing countries being poorly monitored and evaluated, with little focus on impact. The GEC evaluations, while rigorous, focused primarily on learning outcomes and attendance.

 Much of the evidence below draws on qualitative data from GEC projects.

Lesson one: Whole school approaches appear to be the most successful at addressing violence against girls

A small number of projects took a whole school approach to addressing school violence. These include Raising Voices and PEAS in Uganda, STAGES and BRAC in Afghanistan, CAMFED in Tanzania and Zimbabwe and to some extent HPA in Rwanda.

These projects used multiple approaches which included raising awareness of school violence amongst pupils; working with students to question social norms underpinning violence; supporting the establishment of a school child protection policy; vetting and assessment of teaches, where relevant; training teachers in alternative discipline techniques; training

members of school management committees or parent teacher associations; designating (or supporting the designation of) a child protection focal point at the school level; and supporting case management of children reporting violence.

While projects struggled with measuring the impact of their school violence approaches, three projects that adopted a comprehensive approach to school violence have all been able to show some results in terms of reduction in violence against girls. For example, PEAS activities, which included both improvements to infrastructure (such as girls' dormitories and sanitary facilities) and the implementation of both a school child protection policy and a Girls' Policy, saw a reduction in girls reporting harassment from boys and/or teachers from 27% at baseline to 7% at midline, to under 3% at endline. Data is unfortunately lacking to consider the impact on violence against boys.

At endline, STAGES in Afghanistan found that the project had been able to influence classrooms to become free from physical violence. However they noted that they had been more successful in their own community-based education (CBEs) centres than in Government run schools. The evaluation noted that while some gaps remained such as prevalence of corporal and verbal punishment (particularly by male teachers against male students), overall the project appears to have been effective at reducing corporal punishment. It also highlighted instances of STAGES taking strong action such as replacing staff in CBEs when concerns around violence being perpetrated by teachers were identified.

Raising Voices in Uganda, taking a broad view of violence by trying to tackle some of the underlying norms and power structures associated with VAC, also made some progress in addressing violence against girls. The project targeted schools, families and communities, and also worked with community-based stakeholders to support case management. The project found that levels of physical violence experienced by girls were lower in schools that had been involved in the initiative for longer. In addition, girls in the intervention group reported that teachers were less likely to use violence, and students were less likely to fear teachers due to violence, than at the start of the project, indicating that some norms are starting to shift.

Lesson two: It is important to consider how violence impacts on marginalised girls, including disabled girls, as they are often more vulnerable to violence

GEC projects such as Cheshire Services and Viva-Crane in Uganda and Leonard Cheshire (LCD) in Kenya who worked with very marginalised girls, particularly girls with disabilities, identified stigma and violence as a barrier to education more frequently than other projects. Girls and caregivers who participated in data collection at baseline with these projects were highly likely to identify stigma, physical and sexual violence as key problems. For example, only 3% of disabled girls sampled in Kenya said that they were never afraid in school (LCD, 2014). This is in line with global data, which suggests that disabled children are more than three times as likely as their peers to suffer physical violence in schools (Plan International, 2016), and that women and girls with disabilities suffer up to three times greater risk of rape. They are also twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence; are likely to experience abuse over a longer period, and with more severe injuries than women and girls without disabilities; and are less likely to be believed when they do report violence and thus access support (Ortoleva and Lewis, 2012; UNDP, 2009).

Case study: Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD)'s experience of addressing violence against girls with disabilities

LCD worked with schools and local communities to raise awareness of violence and abuse against children with disabilities. The project established child-to-child clubs in each school partly to tackle issues within the school that affect children with disabilities, including verbal abuse from other children. The project also trained and deployed Volunteer Children Officers to identify and report cases of child abuse at the community level as well as Community Resource Workers to raise awareness of violence or abuse within the community and how cases can be reported. While these activities led to an increase in reported cases, many cases of child abuse went unresolved, highlighting how difficult it can be to work on referrals in a context where there are significant weaknesses in the formal referral system.

It is critical for projects to consider the high risk of violence against girls with disabilities and to implement appropriate activities. In the next phase of the GEC, LCD plans to train local administrators, medical professionals, the police and the judiciary to raise awareness of the higher risk of, and how to respond to, violence against girls with disabilities to ensure reported cases lead to action and that communities are not discouraged from reporting cases in the future.

There is emerging evidence that very marginalised girls without disabilities are also at higher risk of violence. For example, Camfed found that girls identified as marginalised compared to their peers[15] in both Zimbabwe and Tanzania were more likely to say that their journey to and from school was unsafe. In Zimbabwe, only 42% of marginalised girls said they felt safe on their journey to school compared to 55% of non-marginalised girls. A similar finding was observed by Plan International in Sierra Leone where a household's ability to meet basic needs was found to be a significant factor affecting girls feeling of safety in school. Amongst these households, 21.5% of girls reported feeling afraid at school compared to 14.9% amongst those in other households. We do not have insights into why this might be the case.

Lesson three: There is a need for projects to consider gender and power structures in order to limit potential negative backlash. Projects that carefully explained the rationale behind their focus on girls and included boys in at least some of their activities were successful in addressing boys' discontent.

At both midline and endline, five evaluation reports[16] picked up on issues with girls being targeted by boys who felt excluded by project activities. Across these projects, girls reported being threatened by boys, being called prostitutes, experiencing physical violence, having their access to project activities blocked and having their school material stolen. All external evaluators attributed this to boys being jealous of girls often citing equal poverty and their own

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[15] Camfed developed a series of commonly occurring aspects of marginality in the contexts of rural Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Their definition identified a girl as marginalised if her situation corresponded to one of the 20 scenarios, but they found that most of the girls identified as marginalised fell into one of three categories: a) a child whose parents/guardians cannot pay the school costs and so is often sent home or drops out of school; b) a child living in a household with very low income so that they cannot afford even the basic needs; c) a child who spends most or all of their leisure time working to make some money.
[16] IRC in the DRC, ChildHope in Ethiopia, VSO Mozambique, VSO Nepal and WUSC in Kenya

needs. This backlash and jealousy from boys seem to have been worse with the introduction of financial resources rather than activities such as girls' clubs.

One of the projects that identified this problem early was ChildHope in Ethiopia. Following reports of jealousy at midline, Childhope introduced clubs just for boys – Good Brother clubs. This not only helped curb jealousy from boys but has also provided the project an opportunity to discuss girls' education with boys and to engage them on gender equality issues. The project also made sure that there was a separate Letter Link box for boys to report violence and concerns in schools, which reinforced the notion that it is equally important to respond to boys' experiences of violence. These strategies seem to have had some success as reports of violence and jealousy decreased by endline. In a focus group discussion, when asked if boys felt excluded, one community member responded "boys understand why girls in the community need special attention".

In the DRC, qualitative data collection at endline revealed that there were instances of girls being threatened by boys, being called prostitutes, being beaten and having resources stolen because they were associated with the project. The project used two different types of approaches: scholarships had been handed out to girls only; while other interventions such as additional tutoring and accelerated learning programmes, 'prioritised' girls, but allowed boys to participate. The external evaluator found that the activities that prioritised

> **Vas-Y Fille! project in the DRC Endline Report**
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> "In the future it is suggested to prioritise girls, but not provide girls-only services, as they may be disruptive and lead to adverse effects for both boys and girls. For example, school supplies could be provided to all (boys and girls), but the 'kit' for girls could be more substantial".

girls were seen as a lot less controversial by boys and the community generally. This suggests that girls' education projects could maximise boys' and communities' support for girls' education by including boys where appropriate without losing the focus on girls. Indeed, global research has shown that, when trying to change gender norms which disadvantage girls and women, it is often more effective to include men and boys rather than placing much of the onus on girls and women to claim their rights in contexts where wider norms around the acceptability of VAWG and men's sexual entitlement and control over women and girls remain prevalent (Edstrom et al., 2015).

The examples above highlight two key lessons. First, the need for a thorough analysis of gender and power relations in the communities where projects operate, in order to understand how best to engage stakeholders to support girls' education and gender equality without causing jealousy. Secondly, they highlight the need for careful monitoring of any adverse impact that may occur as a result of trying to impact on gender inequalities in communities, so that projects can adapt and respond to potential threats to girls who participate in project activities.

6. Considerations for practitioners and policy makers

This paper has summarised some of the key ways addressing school violence has featured in the GEC portfolio and has highlighted lessons learned. The paper finds, in line with global evidence, that violence has been difficult to measure for most GEC projects but where projects have managed to do so, there are indications that violence affects attendance and learning. Initial findings also suggest that addressing school violence can contribute to improved educational experiences and learning for girls. However, due to evaluation design, findings are primarily qualitative and tend to be anecdotal which makes it difficult to establish causality.

This paper suggests that education programmes should:

1. **Carefully consider how school violence might impact on children's, and especially girls' and more marginalised children's, experiences of school**. This should include specifically designing data collection methods and tools to collect sex disaggregated data on children's experiences or fears of violence, and should include different types of violence including physical, sexual and emotional (including bullying). It is important that data collection is carried out to high ethical standards and by individuals that are specifically trained to conduct sensitive research with children. These findings should be positioned within a wider theory of the causes and manifestations of violence in order to design a programme that addresses the causes and not just the manifestations of school violence. Education projects, whether they intend to address school violence as a primary objective or not, should ensure that they understand this barrier so that their project interventions do not inadvertently increase girls' experiences of violence in or outside of schools.

2. **Carefully consider gender and power dynamics at the onset and throughout the life of projects in order to understand entry points to address school violence and minimise risk**. This should include a gendered approach to addressing school violence, acknowledging that both girls' and boys' experience and perpetration of violence are important to address but that girls face particular vulnerabilities. Projects also need to closely monitor who they are excluding from project activities and the related implications. This should be accompanied by monitoring to ensure project activities do not unintentionally *increase* (the threat of) violence to project beneficiaries.

3. **Ensure that projects include both the prevention of and responses to school violence.** It is crucial that education projects think carefully about the response side as referral systems in developing countries are often weak. Therefore, it is important that education programmes have a clear understanding of the education system's role within the wider protection system to support the wellbeing of children. In developing countries, coordination between child protection stakeholders is often weak and development partners need to be aware of the limitations of referral services and programme appropriately to ensure that children who report violence in school as a result of programme activities are supported appropriately.

4. **Design rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems that can evidence impact of school violence interventions.** This should include a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods and be designed both to high ethical standards, and to fill key gaps in the literature around effectiveness.

These recommendations highlight the importance of drawing on relevant expertise at crucial stages in project design and implementation phases to address school violence and support girls' attendance and learning. It is important to remember that for organisations with limited capacity in relation to school violence, a partnership with a child protection organisation working in the same area might be more effective than trying to implement school violence activities while relying on staff without the designated expertise.

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