

In Focus: Addressing Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence in schools: Our collective responsibility

By: Florence Migeon, UNESCO

Gender-based violence in schools reflects violence that exists more broadly in society. Both call for collective social responsibility. This issue has increasingly become a challenge worldwide, undermining the capacity of the international community to meet the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. It has long-term implications, both in terms of financial cost and its consequences on individuals and society.



UNICEF/CHI00048/LI MING-FANG

USAID estimates that, worldwide, almost half of all female students and a sizable number of male students experience some form of sexual violence in an education context. A number of studies in South Asia indicate that violence at school, notably corporal punishment, leads to students dropping out. A recent USAID report, quoting a study in eight countries in South-East Asia, noted that corporal punishment was widely used in several schools in all eight countries. A survey in Nepal also found that 14 per cent of school dropouts can be attributed to fear of teachers.

Gender-based violence can take different forms: violent acts perpetrated by pupils on other pupils, by teachers on pupils (including corporal punishment), by pupils on teachers and also by teachers on other teachers (e.g. sexual harassment). Whether physical, verbal, emotional or psychological, this violence has severe educational and psychological consequences. Although girls are often more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, boys too are at risk. Experts agree that “gender scripting”, or stereotypical expectations for masculinity and femininity could play a role in the increase of school-related, gender-based violence. Such unchallenged gender scripting may have potentially harmful effects on the development of both boys and girls and may lead to the perpetuation of gender-based violence.

The violence girls experience in schools significantly accounts for gender inequality in education. Gender-based violence not only discourages girls from going to school but may also cause parents to keep daughters out of school for fear that they will be victimized. In Papua New Guinea, female students were found to be fearful of sexual assault and violence in and on their way to school. Girls confront many obstacles in terms of access, retention and success - stemming from family, cultural, social, educational, legal or political contexts. Gender-based violence in school should be considered as an additional obstacle.

The 2006 UN World Report on Violence against Children emphasizes the importance of developing rights-based and anti-school-violence policies and programmes. It states that “schools are uniquely placed to break the patterns of violence by giving children, their parents and communities the knowledge and skills to communicate, negotiate, and resolve conflicts in more constructive ways.” The report also notes that States should promote and protect the human rights of women and girls and address all forms of gender discrimination as part of a comprehensive gender-based violence-prevention strategy.

Measures against gender-based violence in schools do exist but they are too often limited. Greater mobilization is needed. No form of violence is justified and violence is preventable. The international community and the actors directly confronted with such violence (national and local public authorities; teachers and educational personnel; students; civil society and NGOs) should proceed together to make schools rights-based, inclusive and gender-sensitive, and overall safer environments for pupils and teachers - of both sexes.

Unite children to end violence

By: Plan International, Cambodia

Behind one of the Angkor-era temples that draw more than a million visitors to Siem Reap each year, a group of children have formed a network that is helping to rid their village, Svay Chek, of a form of violence that has been entrenched in Cambodian society and exacerbated by decades of civil conflict.

The frequency and severity of domestic violence is extreme in Cambodia, despite the enactment of laws that include tough penalties for spousal abuse as well as frequent awareness raising campaigns at the national level. Plan Cambodia's Child Protection Networks, however, operate at the local level. Connecting children to village and commune leaders as well as local police, it is resulting in changing behaviors so that homes and communities are becoming safer for children as well as adults.

This grassroots approach to countering violence has resulted in a 70% decline in reports of domestic abuse in the village, according to Svay Chek, commune police chief Ith Rasmey as well as the commune's women's affairs official, Chhorng Sokunthea. This steep decline is not isolated to this village but has been observed in almost all of the communities where Child Protection Networks have been established.



Ms. Chhorng believes the dramatic decline in domestic violence is the result of education, outreach, training in gender equality for both children and adults, as well as the involvement of committed, well-informed and properly trained police. Police chief Ith Rasmey has attended four training sessions since 2007 on issues relating to domestic violence and child protection, and has trained all his staff to put the lessons learned into practice.

What is most important, he stresses, is that people understand that domestic violence is not only a problem for a family, but for society as a whole. "Society cannot accept domestic violence. It violates the laws of society so it is violence against society," he said. "It leads to broken families, children suffer, they cannot go to school and they cannot find peace of mind. If they witness violence it makes them think they live in a violent culture," he explained.

"There used to be cases when a husband would tie his wife by the feet and drag her down the road. Husbands would attack with knives and axes and sometimes they'd even burn down their own houses," he said. "Now, if they used to hit, they curse, and if they used to curse they just walk away," he said. "Domestic violence is not as big a problem for police anymore. Before, when we arrived at the scene, the victim was unconscious. Now we arrive when the warning signs are there because the children report them to us."

Seventeen-year-old Cham agrees that domestic violence is everyone's problem. "What the Children's Protection Network has achieved is that it has made residents fully aware that there are laws against violence and that even if it is confined to the home, these laws will be enforced. People who break the law will go to jail".

"We know the warning signs," explained Pheav, 17. "They include alcohol abuse, gambling, and drug use. Because wives usually keep household funds, husbands who gamble or drink too much fight with their wives if they are refused more money to continue gambling or drinking. These situations can escalate from arguments to violence. When the argument starts we contact the village leader or the police," she said.

Violence against children is also decreasing, said Cham. "Parents now understand the effects of violence. They know that children skip school, get involved in gangs or use drugs if they are beaten. There is a decrease in violence against children and a decrease in the number of children dropping out of school," he said.

Plan Cambodia also conducts training sessions about domestic violence in schools in partnership with Project Against Domestic Violence.

The Child Protection Networks receive training on sexual abuse and trafficking, though the focus of the children and youths who comprise the networks is on domestic violence because they have identified this as the priority in their communities.

Women's affairs official Chhorng Sokunthea stressed the importance of gender equity to ensure that the decline in domestic violence was sustainable. "Before gender roles were quite separate. Now, women are taking leadership roles and some men are willing to do what was once considered women's duties, like housework and cooking. If people have a better understanding of gender equity there will be fewer quarrels between husbands and wives," she said.

Pheav agreed, saying that when she finished her schooling she would like to be the women's affairs official in her commune.

For more information on this story, please contact Soleil Chantara Mom, Plan Cambodia.

Prevention and protection of children

By: Amalee McCoy, UNICEF EAPRO



UNICEF/MGLA00994/JIM HOLMES

The prevention and protection of children from maltreatment, including gender-based violence, is a fundamental right enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Child and which applies to all settings, whether in the home, the community, residential institutions, detention centers, or schools. The 2006 UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, the first comprehensive global attempt to describe the scale of all forms of violence against children and its impact, revealed that violence against children is prevalent in all countries and in every region. This is in stark contradiction to States' human rights obligations, with much of this violence remaining legal, state-authorized and socially sanctioned.

As part of the follow-up to the UN Study, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) launched a regional mapping initiative in late 2008 to map the current status of systems for the protection of children in educational settings in six countries: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, and Thailand. The country level research was conducted in 2009, often in partnership with government counterparts in the Ministry of Education, with the findings presented and country level next steps agreed on at a regional UNICEF workshop in October.

The country reports revealed that no comprehensive child protection policy for educational settings exists in any of the six countries, but that some legal and regulatory frameworks were in place which would apply to educational settings. Countries do not currently have information management systems that record and document incidents of abuse both in and out of the classroom, and school staff capacity and procedures for preventing, recognizing and responding to child protection concerns are either absent, weak or inconsistent. Procedures for vetting educational staff regarding their suitability in working with children are limited. Child Friendly Schools included in the mapping tended to demonstrate increased awareness of child rights and child-centered learning methods, but often stopped short of addressing the protection of children from neglect, abuse, exploitation and violence.

A regional synthesis report is being finalized, which will provide a basis for advocating for the development of national child protection policies by Ministries of Education, which should include a government position statement on its commitment to protect children in educational settings, a national Child Protection Policy, a code of conduct for staff, processes for school staff recruitment and monitoring, and procedures for responding to and referring child protection concerns, within localized guidance of the national child protection policy and procedures.

UNESCO's online discussion on "Gender Equality, Education and Training"

By: Keiko Nowacka and Lydia Ruprecht, UNESCO

UNESCO's online discussion on "Gender Equality, Education and Training" closed on 8 February after four weeks of lively debates and exchanges. Each week of the discussion was organized around three main themes related to the Strategic Objective B of the Beijing Platform for Action, "Education and Training of Women". Specifically, week one looked at "Disconnections: missed opportunities for progress and lessons learned", week two looked at "Silences and hidden challenges", and week three focused on "Crises and new opportunities".

Gender-based violence in and around schools emerged as an important topic during Week Two's look at "Silences and hidden challenges". There was a widespread consensus, drawn from professional experiences, that this remained a taboo topic for many communities. It was widely acknowledged that while boys are also victims, girls remain more vulnerable to violence committed by teachers as well as peers. The often long distance to schools also further increased girls' vulnerability to violence outside of the classroom.

Some participants collectively called for greater action on behalf of authorities and communities to tackle gender-based violence and to break the taboo and silence that surrounds it (in particular in official reporting and treatment of cases). Several participants shared community-based initiatives (teacher training, training courses at the community level including men and boys) targeting gender-based violence in schools which were having important inroads in challenging attitudes and behaviour, and increasing social protection of girls (establishing supervised hostels located near schools). Participants from Argentina also suggested that girls should receive special courses on their sexual rights in order to protect them from abuse, reduce teen pregnancy, and encourage both male and female victims to seek social and legal support.

Due to its success and dynamism generated, **UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality** will prolong the online discussion until the High-level Event by the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010. The online discussion will broaden its focus to look at "**Transformative policies and initiatives: promoting gender equality in all spheres of life.**"

Discussion website: <https://communities.unesco.org/www/beijing15>. For more information please contact: Keiko Nowacka (k.nowacka@unesco.org) or (bsp.wge@unesco.org).

Ribbons (From Youth Say No: The Student Network Against Gender-Based Violence)

By: Tanya Kunwongse, Senior at Ruamrudee International School



She had many ribbons tied to her hair
Ribbons of color, size, and shape
She would wear them like the expression on her face-
A permanent smile, frozen in its place.

The ribbons would bounce up and down
As she was flung from one side of the room to the other
Arms casually tugged
and Legs carelessly squeezed.

Her cheeks were slapped red but
She never made noise.
Her lips were molded together.
She was told that dolls do not speak.

Today the ribbons in her hair finally rot off,
When overexposure to violence and oppression made her scream.
She stood up for the first time and walked out the door.

She never looked back.

<http://www.youthsayno.org/>.

East Asia Pacific Regional Gender Workshop, Nha Trang, Vietnam

By: EAP UNGEI

Gender issues in the EAP Region are complex and multi-faceted. While progress has been made on issues such as gender parity and access to education, attention to issues related to achieving gender equality must be strengthened. Recently, the World Bank hosted an East Asia Pacific Regional Gender Workshop in Nha Trang, Viet Nam on 1-2 February 2010. The UNGEI working group had the opportunity to participate in this event to underscore its experiences and perspectives on gender, particularly, gender in education.

Structured as a combination of plenary and parallel sessions, the workshop highlighted a number of key interventions taken at the regional level to tackle gender disparities and address inequality. The session promoted discussion on how to mainstream gender and establish partnerships.

Chemba Raghavan, David Clarke, Maki Hayashikawa and Sena Lee attended the meeting on behalf of UNGEI. The panel also included Anupma Jain (Asian Development Bank) who presented on some of the gender initiatives in the education sector in the Asian Development Bank (ADB). A primary goal of this session was to increase the understanding of specific gender-related activities, issues and concerns in the education sector and to highlight the mutual impact of larger social/economic development on the one hand, and education, on the other, for boys and girls in the region.

In their presentation, Chemba Raghavan and Sena Lee gave an overview of the global and regional UNGEI movement - highlighting the historical background of the initiative's establishment, principal activities and the partners and who serve as active voices for gender in education in the region. Recent research and East Asia Pacific-specific statistics were shared to provide a broad picture of trends in gender in education in the region. Recommendations were made to address multiple levels of bias, close the gender gap against boys and bridge the gender divide.

David Clarke presented on the "Equity and Inclusion Tool" which is part of the UNGEI EFA Fast Track Initiative. He emphasized that equity is related to securing all children's rights to, within and through education so they can release their potential aspirations; while inclusion is a process to address and respond to the needs of all learners. The Equity and Inclusion Tool is 'work in progress' which has been piloted in selected countries in Asia and Africa. It is intended for use by governments, development partners and civil society organisations to support a more holistic and evidence-based approach to addressing educational disadvantages in sector policy making and planning. For more details, please visit: http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/Equity_Inclusion_tools_4-08.pdf

Maki Hayashikawa introduced the "Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA) Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education". This evolving toolkit is now in its fourth edition and serves as a set of resource materials to train and help users advocate for and promote gender mainstreaming in education. It aims in particular to support the development of monitoring and evaluation of EFA National Actions Plans and programmes. The toolkit most importantly trains users on how to bring a gender lens and focus into their work. To download the toolkit: http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/efa/Publications/GENIA_Toolkit_2009.pdf.

Anupma Jain presented on gender initiatives in education projects in ADB's Southeast Asia Department. She presented key gender issues in education, process for preparing a gender analysis for a project, broad strategies used to address issues of gender inequality in education, and steps to improve implementation and monitoring of gender actions in education projects. She explained elements of the "ADB Gender in Education Checklist," which guides users in identifying the main gender issues in the education sector. She presented detailed information on ADB's gender action plans that have been prepared for education projects in Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Cambodia. She concluded by presenting ways in which ADB, and specifically, the Southeast Asia Department disseminates its best practices in gender and development. For more details on the ADB Gender in Education Checklist, please visit: http://www.adb.org/documents/Manuals/Gender_checklists/Education/default.asp.

The presentations and subsequent discussions were well received by participants and further opportunities for collaboration between UNGEI and the World Bank will be explored in the future. Taken as a whole, this event was a good opportunity for UNGEI to project its profile and share its accomplishments to date with World Bank gender specialists and staff from a range of sectors.

More information about this workshop can be found at: <http://eapgenderworkshop.wikispaces.com/>.

International Women's Day - Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All

By: EAP UNGEI



EAP UNGEI members at the IWD exhibition booth.

This year's International Women's Day event was celebrated under the theme: "Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All. Women Speak Up: Voices from the Informal Sector". To mark this occasion, the EAP UNGEI issued a joint statement urging the renewed commitment to uphold education as an inalienable human right. This has special significance for girls and women – particularly those working in the informal sector - where opportunities and access to education is limited and often times scarce.

The EAP UNGEI actively contributed and participated in the regional International Women's Day events. On 8 March a ceremony was held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Bangkok. The one-hour programme included a video message of the Secretary-General, youth performance by the Patravadi Theatre and films on empowerment of women and girls.

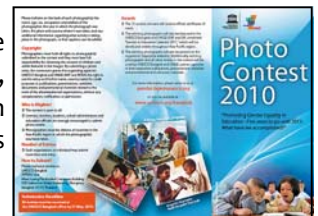
On 25 March, a special commemorative session was also held at UNCC consisting of a panel discussion and exhibition. This event had the honour of welcoming the keynote address speaker, H.E. Dr Saisuree Chutikul, former Minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office, Royal Thai Government, and current Member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A panel discussion was also held entitled "Women speak up: Voices of the informal sector".

EAP UNGEI joint statement: http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/files/statement_2010_03_ungei_iwd_final.pdf.

Upcoming events

Photo Contest 2010 on Promoting Gender Equality in Education

UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) and the Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), is pleased to invite entries for the 2nd photo contest on promoting gender equality in education 2010, with the theme of: "Promoting Gender Equality in Education - five years to go until 2015: What have we accomplished?"



Contest closes on 31 May 2010

For more details: http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/library/edocuments/photocontest2010.pdf.

Global UNGEI@10 Conference. May 2010. Dakar, Senegal

EFA Global Action Week. April 25 – May 2

Key resources

Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA) Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education

http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/efa/Publications/GENIA_Toolkit_2009.pdf

2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR): Reaching the Marginalized

http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/efa/Publications/2010_EFA_GMR_FullReport.pdf

East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI brochure

http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/files/brochure_final1.pdf