

**A Study of School Responses  
to  
Violence and Harassment  
of  
Girls**

WORD RESEARCH OUTPUTS  
3678



Commissioned  
by

**UNICEF**

Researched and written  
by the

**National Research Programme on Child, Youth & Family  
Development**

at the

**Human Sciences Research Council**

Pretoria  
30 November 2001

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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	
<b>Executive summary</b>	
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> ..... 1
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Literature review</b> ..... 7
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Research methodology and procedures</b> ..... 9
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The communities</b> ..... 15
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Violence against girls in schools</b> ..... 21
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>School responses to violence against girls</b> ..... 28
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Solutions: Schools and communities speak out</b> ..... 34
<b>Bibliography</b>	..... 42
<b>Appendix 1</b>	A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a primary and high school in a Gauteng township ..... 43
<b>Appendix 2</b>	A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a primary and high school on the Cape Flats ..... 44
<b>Appendix 3</b>	A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a former model C primary and high school in Gauteng ..... 45
<b>Appendix 4</b>	A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a primary and high school in rural KwaZulu-Natal ..... 46
<b>Appendix 5</b>	<b>Research instruments</b> ..... 47

# Executive summary

## Background

Violence against women and girls is widespread in communities and schools across South Africa and recent research reveals that responses from schools and legal institutions are seriously inadequate (Human Rights Watch 2001). Despite proposals for changes and additions to existing policies and procedures, few recommendations appear to translate into action on the ground. Consequently there is an urgent need to understand all the factors that contribute to creating the current pattern of violence against girls in schools and why schools fail to address violence against girls. These understandings will enable the identification of key areas for intervention that rely less on institutional and systemic change and more on grassroots strategies for effective prevention of violence against girls.

## Aims

The aims of this study were to:

- Understand the nature and dynamics of violence against girls in schools.
- Examine school responses, both mechanisms and constraints, in dealing with and preventing violence against girls.
- Identify key areas for interventions to prevent violence against girls in schools.

## Methodology

In order to understand the nature and dynamics of violence against girls and the interplay of contextual, social, cultural, institutional and individual factors in contributing to this violence within schools and the constraints in dealing with the problem, we chose to do case studies of a primary and high school in four different socio-cultural contexts:

- A black urban township in Gauteng.
- A black rural settlement in KwaZulu-Natal.
- A 'coloured' township on the Cape Flats.
- Former white urban suburbs in Gauteng.

To create a picture, in these four different contexts, of what the average school experiences and how it responds to violence against girls, we chose neither the very best nor the worst schools. We did not want to present a pathologised and sensationalised view by seeking out the worst cases nor an unrealistic positive view. Instead, we wanted to show the lives and struggles of ordinary South Africans highlighting their achievements, shortcomings and problems in dealing with and preventing violence against girls.

To develop case studies of the eight schools, we used an ethnographic approach involving:

- Participant observation using one fieldworker per school for a period of one month.
- 304 single and group interviews with learners, parents, educators, principals, community members and organisations, and education officials.
- Informant diaries, writings and drawings about violence and safety.
- Documentary data such as school rules, codes of conduct, curriculum guidelines, and special prevention programmes.

## **Findings**

### **Violence and harassment against girls in schools**

The following patterns of violence against girls occur in all eight schools although levels of violence and harassment are lower within, but not beyond the confines of former model C schools:

- Bullying and beating of girls is the most common form of violence against girls and starts from first grade continuing up into high school.
- Boys commonly respond to conflicts with girls using physical violence.
- Sexual harassment involving touching, kissing and sexual remarks becomes common from Grade 5 and increases as girls enter high school. Girls at primary school are more at risk of rape in their communities than at school.
- Girls at high school are at risk of rape both in schools and in their communities. Rape is common but underreported.
- Educator/learner relationships and harassment of learners by educators and other staff are common in high schools.
- All girls are at serious risk of rape, sexual harassment, beatings and muggings going to and from school.
- Girls are similarly at risk in their homes and communities. Domestic abuse, rape and other forms of sexual harassment are common and impact on learners' performance at school.

However, we also found that boys experience high levels of violence and are also at risk both in schools and in their communities. Boys experience beating, bullying and muggings in school and going to and from school.

- Boys are at risk of sexual harassment and rape, particularly younger boys.
- Interactions among boys are characterised by aggression and violence. Boys, especially younger boys, are vulnerable to violence from other boys.
- Boys on the margins experience sexual harassment from boys and even girls.

### **Schools' responses to violence against girls**

Schools' responses to verbal abuse, sexual remarks, touching and beating range from zero tolerance in former model C schools with set disciplinary procedures and non-violent punishments, to no response, verbal reprimands, random corporal punishment or parental summonses in the other schools.

Criminal cases of rape and domestic abuse are taken more seriously. Some schools such as the former model C schools and the Gauteng primary school have set procedures, structures and established links with institutions such as social welfare and the Child Protection Unit (CPU). Others, such as the township, rural and Cape Flats high schools, operate in a more ad hoc fashion. Schools report that they do not always receive adequate support from relevant institutions such as the police, social welfare and education authorities. Lack of support for victims is exacerbated by educators ill-equipped to handle such cases. There is often no action when cases are handed to the police and schools fail to follow-up.

Key areas impacting on schools' capacities to respond effectively to violence against girls are:

- Levels of acknowledgement of the problem.
- Attitudes towards violence against girls.

- Degrees of specificity and level of implementation of policies, procedures and structures to deal with violence against girls.
- Scope and level of implementation of preventative procedures.

*Levels of acknowledgement* vary across schools. Generally, violence against girls is not of central concern. Some parents and educators, particularly males, appear unaware or deny there is a problem. Low levels of acknowledgement impact on the implementation of a unified and co-ordinated response to violence against girls and discourage girls from reporting acts of violence against them.

Except for the rural primary school, there is generally more official institutional acknowledgement of the problem at primary schools and at the former model C high school. However, learners report that only some educators take violence against girls seriously. While a few educators acknowledge the problem at other high schools, in general these high schools adopt a hands-off approach to the problem.

*Attitudes towards violence against girls* also impact on the ability of schools to co-ordinate a unified and effective response. Three predominant problematic attitudes emerged:

- School communities are often confused between what is socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards women and girls.
- Girls are usually blamed for provoking acts of violence against them based on the assumption that males are not responsible for their sexual drives.
- Violence in relationships may or may not be acceptable, but girls should have known better.

Such attitudes were common across all schools, although former model C schools adopt a zero tolerance policy to all violence no matter what the cause.

*Degrees of specificity and level of implementation of policies, procedures and structures* vary across schools. Violence against girls is more adequately addressed where schools have:

- Clear guidelines on what is unacceptable behaviour towards girls.
- Detailed policies on appropriate responses to acts of violence against girls.
- Established procedures and structures to deal with incidents of gender violence.
- Established channels of communication.

Unlike the former model C schools, township, rural and Cape Flats schools do not have sufficiently clear guidelines on unacceptable behaviour towards girls or appropriately serious responses to different forms of violence and harassment. While some level of established procedures exist for serious cases, these cases are not always adequately handled. Lack of communication within schools on both policy and action and between institutions is a serious problem.

*Scope and level of implementation of preventative procedures* also varies across schools. Four key factors impact on the ability of a school to prevent violence against girls:

- The ability of a school to deal effectively with incidents of violence.
- The level of external controls placed on learners such as separation across age and gender and monitoring of learners and places within the school.
- The level of public discourse in schools articulating values both through talk and behaviour on violence against girls and related issues such as violence, respect and sexism.

- Approaches to violence against girls and related issues such as sex, sexuality and equity in the curriculum.

In the township and rural schools and the Cape Flats high school, monitoring is non-existent. In the Cape Flats primary school both separation of learners according to age and gender occurs. In the former model C schools, younger learners are separated from older learners and extensive policing of learners occurs both in and outside classes. Levels of public discourse on violence against girls are relatively low across all schools. Former model C schools and primary schools emphasise it more than high schools. All schools claim to address violence against girls and related issues in their curriculum, but impact depends very much on individual educators. Learners in primary schools respond better to guidance lessons than those in high schools.

Where schools such as the former model C schools employ all four measures, violence is kept to a minimum. However, model C schools rely heavily on policing and succeed in driving violence and harassment underground rather than eradicating it.

### **Key areas for intervention**

The findings of this research point to four main areas of intervention:

#### *Facilitating individual change*

- Most informants in this study found it difficult to reorient their thinking away from the problem to possible solutions. They also tended to suggest large-scale solutions that are unlikely to happen or looked to others to solve the problem. Campaigns need to encourage people to think of solutions and promote local and small interventions and initiatives.
- Informants overwhelmingly rely on external controls to address the problem of violence. Rather than more policing, curtailing of individual freedoms, threats, high-handedness and teaching of behaviour, inculcation of internal motivation is needed. School communities need to engage with their own experiences, hurts and beliefs in a non-sanctioning environment. Learners need to speak openly to demystify feelings and to work out their own solutions to problems. Life-style programmes that use this approach to address issues of masculinity and patriarchy for boys and self-esteem for girls along with follow-up support in the form of counselling structures in communities were some of the suggestions on promoting individual change. Violence among boys as an integral part of male social structures as well as male attitudes towards women are key contributing factors. Education of perpetrators is therefore key to addressing violence against girls.

#### *Improving school and community responses*

- School management is a key area that needs improvement. Where schools are properly managed, educators adhere to professional standards, rules are consistently enforced, and there is respect for the school facilities and environment, lower levels of violence result.
- Schools need help to develop detailed guidelines and policies on appropriate responses to violence against girls.
- Schools also need assistance in developing set channels of communication and procedures.



- Intersectorial support in communities needs to be promoted. Schools need to collaborate with other schools and local organisations to pool resources and ideas on how to combat violence.
- Communities and schools need assistance in creating opportunities and activities for youth after school, particularly in impoverished environments.

#### *Making the most of human resources*

- Parents need education and encouragement to take on responsibilities such as sex education, communication with children, involvement in the school curriculum, support for schools, safety initiatives in schools and communities and in creating opportunities for youth.
- Educators need education on socially acceptable behaviour towards girls, attitudes towards violence against girls, professional responsibilities such as monitoring, and skills in how to deal appropriately with violence.
- Learners need to be seen as equal partners. They need encouragement to initiate their own campaigns and develop leadership skills. Peer counselling and support are also areas for development.

#### *Promoting awareness and knowledge*

- Maintenance of public discourse on violence against women and girls through multi-media information campaigns and edutainment is essential.
- Information on initiatives in other African countries should be disseminated throughout South Africa.
- Information on effective interventions by NGOs need wider dissemination at all levels to help both institutions involved in preventing violence as well as schools.
- Special events such as drama festivals, writing and painting competitions on violence need to be held on a regular basis.
- Publicising of successful initiatives by individuals, schools and communities is also an important element in promoting public awareness and knowledge.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Violence against women and girls is widespread in communities across South Africa (Lovell 2001; MRC 2000). Similar patterns of violence occur in South African schools (Human Rights Watch 2001; Vally 1998). Not only is rape, beating, touching and verbal abuse common experiences for many girls, schools are ill-equipped to deal with and prevent violence and harassment of girls. The Human Rights Watch report *Scared at school* highlights the inappropriate and inadequate responses of schools and legal institutions to serious cases of violence against girls. Identifying key weaknesses, the report provides a comprehensive set of recommendations to guide procedures at the level of institutional and systemic responses.

Despite the introduction of new policies and guidelines, studies reveal a significant disjuncture between policy formulation and actual implementation in schools (Chisholm & Napo 1999). The failure of policies to translate into action on the ground means there is an urgent need to address this crisis situation. How to intervene, what interventions would be most effective and what are the main areas of need are key questions.

These questions require understanding the nature and dynamics of violence against girls and the interplay of contextual, social, cultural, institutional and individual factors in contributing to this violence within schools. Previous research focuses predominantly on the scope and prevalence of violence against girls identifying gaps and inadequate procedures at the level of policy and institutional responses. Less research examines the interplay of factors that lead to high levels of violence and hence the identification of solutions that go beyond a reliance on policy, institutional and systemic responses. Consequently, there is little empirical work to guide the implementation of localised strategies for effective prevention of violence against girls.

### 1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to understand the nature and dynamics of gender violence and factors that impact on responses in schools within specific socio-cultural contexts in order to identify key areas for interventions and possible strategies to deal with and prevent violence against girls within schools. To fulfil this aim, required a detailed and contextualised picture in schools and their communities of:

- The dynamics of violence, both psychological and physical, against girls within the context of patterns of gendered behaviour, attitudes, sexual behaviour and violence across age, gender and social position.
- Schools' perceptions, responses to and prevention of violence against girls identifying mechanisms and constraints schools face in addressing this problem.
- Solutions for addressing violence against girls in schools through the initiatives and voices of members of these schools and communities.

### 1.3 Methodology and constraints

Using an ethnographic approach involving one month of participant observation, single and group interviews and informant writings, this research provides case studies of one primary and one high school in each of four different socio-cultural contexts:

- A black urban township in Gauteng.
- A black rural settlement in KwaZulu-Natal.
- A 'coloured' township on the Cape Flats.
- Former white urban suburbs in Gauteng.

Given the severe time constraints of this study, conducted and written over three months, we are able to provide an analysis of general features and patterns across all four sites and to identify broadly the most crucial areas for intervention. The main body of the report gives an overview of these trends across all four sites and the appendices provide detailed case studies of each site.

#### **1.4 Definition of terms**

The concept of violence is a social construction (McKendrick & Hoffmann 1990). What constitutes legitimate violence may differ across cultures. In this study, we work with a broad definition of violence proposed by McKendrick and Hoffmann (1990:3) that violence is 'destructive harm... including not only physical assaults that damage the body, but also... the many techniques of inflicting harm by mental or emotional means. It is generally understood as measures or exaggerated harm to an individual either not socially prescribed at all or else beyond established limits.' Since our focus is on violence against girls, we insert a further qualification that it is violence defined as above, but motivated by prejudice and discriminatory intent against females.

The United Nation Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against females as: 'Any form of gender based violence, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.' In this study, violence against females includes actual or threat of rape, other forms of sexual abuse, sexual harassment either physical in the form of touching or verbal, beating or the threat of being beaten and derogatory and discriminatory practices.

#### **1.5 Structure of the report**

The report consists of a literature review (Chapter 2), a description of the research methodology and procedures (Chapter 3), descriptions of the research site communities and the kinds of violence experienced in these communities (Chapter 4), descriptions of the eight schools and an overview of the nature and dynamics of violence against girls across the eight schools (Chapter 5), schools' responses in dealing with and preventing violence against girls (Chapter 6) and, finally, key areas for intervention from our analysis with suggestions on possible solutions from learners, educators, parents and community members (Chapter 7). Case studies of each primary and high school in the four research sites can be found in Appendices 1 to 4. Appendix 5 contains the research instruments including interview schedules, research profiles and research schedules.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review

This chapter examines three areas:

- Current research findings on the nature and prevalence of gender violence among youth/adolescents in South Africa.
- Studies that examine the dynamics of gender violence and factors associated with violence against women and girls in schools and communities in South Africa and abroad.
- Evaluations of the impact and efficacy of interventions to prevent violence and gender violence.

Although there are systematic evaluations of the efficacy and impact of interventions in South Africa, most of these are done as internal evaluations by organisations involved in violence prevention and are not easily available. However, there is systematic research on the impact of violence and gender violence prevention measures in schools abroad and we draw on some of the lessons that these studies provide.

#### **2.1 Prevalence and nature of gender-based violence among South African youth**

There is a growing body of research indicating that various forms of gender-based violence are common among South African adolescents and young women (Lovelifield 2001; MRC 2000). The picture, which has begun to unfold, suggests that while girls frequently are coerced into sexual relations—and their early sexual experiences are very likely characterised by force and violence—they are at risk on multiple levels that include physical, emotional and economic or financial vulnerability. A number of South African studies have shown that sexual violence—or the experience of forced or coerced sex—is commonplace among adolescents and young women. A recent community survey of rural and urban youth in KwaZulu-Natal revealed that among sexually experienced girls 32% overall and 43% of urbanites had experienced some form of physically coercive sex. Close to 80% of these girls stated that an acquaintance or boyfriend had forced them (Varga 2000). Other studies among South African teenagers have recorded varying levels of sexual violence: all of them unacceptably high. In a case control study of teenage mothers in Cape Town, 30% reported their first sexual intercourse was forced, and 11% reported being raped (Wood & Jewkes 1998; see also Richter 1996 on urban youth). Lovelifield's national youth survey (2001) reports that 39% of girls report being forced to have sex.

Qualitative work confirms that coercive sex is characteristic of young people's sexual relationships. Physical violence in response to (often only attempted) refusal of sex is not only common, but also a frequently cited reason for girls not refusing sex and remaining in sexually abusive relationships (Wood et al. 1998). In a study among pregnant teenagers in rural and urban KwaZulu-Natal, Varga and Makubalo (1996) found that powerlessness, physical abuse, and emotional manipulation characterised study participants' sexual experiences. While most girls (72%) reported having attempted to refuse sex with their most recent boyfriend, the majority were unsuccessful in this endeavour and more often than not ended up being coerced into sex with their partners. While this was partly due to the threat of physical abuse, it was also a result of girls' fear of rejection or abandonment by their partners if they did not agree to have sex. Those who did not refuse sex cited similar reasoning.

Similarly, the lovelife survey found that 33% of girls said they were scared to refuse sex for fear of physical retribution.

Research also suggests that to a certain extent young people consider forced sex normal and acceptable, a male mandate, and even an indicator of (a partner's) love and commitment (Wood et al. 1998; Varga 1999). The lovelife survey found that 35% of boys disagreed with the statement "If my girlfriend says no to sex, I do not insist on having sex with her." In another study, close to one-third of adolescent respondents felt that under certain circumstances—such as infidelity or in the context of marriage—it was acceptable to force a woman to have sex (Varga 2000). An equally troubling finding was the fact that a significantly smaller proportion of female respondents than males rejected forced sex as unacceptable. Girls were adamant that coercive sex was a reflection of boyfriends' love. Thus physical coercion in relationships also has an emotional element—that its presence signifies to adolescents the stability and normality of an intimate love relationship.

Another important aspect of gender-based violence is young people's varied motivation for engaging in sexual relationships; and thus placing themselves at risk for coercive sexual experiences. A number of studies have revealed that young people have sex for many reasons other than desire. The lovelife youth survey (2001) showed that only 13% of youth between 12 and 17 years had sex for the sole reason that they enjoy it, suggesting that other factors play a role. Material coercion is often a feature of sexual relationships. The study also found that 43% of sexually experienced youth knew someone of the same age who had had sex for money. Sixteen per cent of sexually experienced girls in the study admitted having sex for money and other items. Twenty per cent of boys note they had offered money, food or gifts in exchange for sex.

School-based research on gender violence suggests that girls in South African schools experience similar forms, patterns and levels of violence to that outside the school setting (Booyens 1995; Else 1999; Flisher et al. 1993; Griggs 1997; HSRC 2001; Porteus et al. 1998; Van den Aardweg 1987). Among schoolgirls sexual violence, and fear of it, is a common phenomenon. Recent work by Human Rights Watch (HRW 2001) focuses on various aspects of sexual violence in schools, including some of the worst cases of rape and sexual abuse: often perpetrated by male educators and learners. A study by Jewkes (1999) suggests that educators are responsible for 30% of rapes of girls between 15 and 19 years.

Sexual relationships between educators and learners are widespread. A study of violence of Umtata youths' sexual relationships found that sexual relationships between educators and students were both common and characterised by gender-based violence (Wood & Jewkes 1998). The study found that when male educators' advances were rebuffed, female students subsequently suffered discriminatory treatment in the classroom from male educators, and even physical attacks after school.

The Human Rights Watch report not only highlights cases of sexual violence but also addresses the impact of school sexual violence on victims and the lack of institutional responses and systems to adequately deal with and prevent it. While the study does not measure prevalence, the shocking nature of the cases reported by HRW, exacerbated by the attitudes and responses of those responsible for helping victims, highlights the seriousness of the problem and its negative impact on girls' access to education.

## 2.2 The dynamics of gender violence

In an attempt to both explain the high prevalence of violence against women and understand its causes, researchers have examined the dynamics of gender violence in relation to gender identity particularly masculinity, gender power relations and the contribution of contextual factors including family and social structures, socio-economic and historical factors and other forms of violence. In this respect, social disintegration, desymbolisation, political instability, breaking of social ties and relations and separation of generations are some of the factors that have been found to promote violent behaviour (Campbell 1992).

Research has explored connections between notions of masculinity and gender violence mostly assault and coercive sex (Wood & Jewkes 1998). Jewkes et al. (2000) suggest that the roots of violence lie in a patriarchal society. Women are seen as inferior or as possessions and need to be guided or controlled. Control over women's sexuality is common (Jewkes et al. 2000). Adolescent men beat women for refusing a proposal, ending a relationship, having other partners or being warned not to have other partners (Wood & Jewkes 2000; Varga 2000). It is also likely that, as evidenced by the fact that both boys and girls see coercive sex as a normal phenomenon, to a certain extent gender-based violence is a culturally acceptable characteristic of masculinity. Note the words of a 14-year old urban Zulu girl in describing her older brother:

*In our Black community, it is [part] of traditional culture to beat a woman and force her to have sex. My brother sometimes beats his girlfriend and then feels so bad about it afterward. If I talk to him he gets back his senses [and sees that it is wrong], but later he will carry on and do the same thing [to her] again...*

Men beat women to maintain certain self-images and social evaluations (Wood & Jewkes 2000). Forms of violence to punish women are socially acceptable (Wood & Jewkes 1998). Other work has suggested that a combination of factors including political oppression under apartheid, changing household structures in which women take increasing decision-making power, and even social sanctioning of coercive male behaviour has led men to use physical violence against women and within the family context was a means of asserting (or attempting to regain) masculinity and sense of self-worth (Campbell 1992).

While studies look at the gender interaction and the role played by both parties in acts of abuse and violence, the studies cited here do lend some credibility to the notion that, for various reasons, gender-based violence may be socially sanctioned not only by men and their partners, but also within families and communities. That individuals and communities may act "in collusion" to tacitly support gender-based violence deserves further study before conclusions can be drawn. However, such a dynamic has significant implications for how interventions surrounding gender-based violence should be structured, and who within communities should be the focus of such activities.

In a comparative cross-cultural study, Reeves Sanday (1981) shows that a particular cultural configuration involving interpersonal violence, male dominance and sexual separation leads to high incidences of rape. Interpersonal violence and particularly violence against children is common in South Africa. In a survey of South African youth by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (Lovell 2001), many youth report experiences of child abuse and it is the third greatest concern after crime and HIV/AIDS for youth in South Africa today. Sixty-four per cent of Africans, 66% of coloureds and 59% of Indians name child abuse as one of their greatest concerns. Four out of ten Africans and three out of ten coloureds report being beaten

by an educator. Family violence is also high. In the same survey, 29% per cent of youth report beatings by mothers and 20% by fathers. Eight per cent have witnessed someone beat their mother.

Poverty seems to be a factor in family violence with 42% of youth reporting being beaten by their mothers where the household income is less than R1 000 per month (Lovelife 2001). Burnett (1998) in a study of school violence in an impoverished South African community found that emotional erosion, negative self-concept and reactive violence are common manifestations of poverty. Material impoverishment promoted violence both at home and at school with children caught up in a cycle of violence they perceived as a normal means of empowerment in their situation.

Not only sexual separation, but also knowledge and sources of knowledge about sex may play a role in sexual relations and sexual violence. Despite a lack of research in this area in South Africa on the relationship between the two, the Lovelife youth survey (2001) shows that 37% of youth learn about sex from friends, especially African youth at 41%. Eighteen per cent learn about sex from educators and only 14% learn about sex from a family member.

When examining the dynamics of violence and gender violence within schools, research shows that there are a number of factors that contribute to violence. Price and Everett (1997) report that principals in the United States believe that lack of parental supervision and family involvement with the school contribute to violence in schools. Another factor contributing to violence appears to be the 'school climate' or school culture involving the personality and characteristics of a school such as clarity and fairness of rules (Welsh 2000). In a study by Welsh (2000), school climate was a strong explanatory factor in levels of school disorder. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) also point to implicit ideologies within school practices that promote masculine hegemony and encourage violence.

### **2.3 Impact and efficacy of interventions**

While there is a growing body of literature in South Africa on the nature and dynamics of gender violence in communities and to a lesser extent in schools, less research has focused on researching and evaluating interventions that address this problem. Some programmes have had systematic evaluation, but these evaluations are usually in-house and not easily available.

With societal violence and violence against women a growing public concern, interventions by government, non-governmental organisations and international agencies are becoming increasingly common. Most interventions have focused on general violence with varying emphasis given to the problem of gender violence. However, with international emphasis on the rights of women and girls by the UN and UNICEF, the publication of the Human Rights Watch Report *Scared at school* in March 2001, and the alarming statistics and incidents of violence against women and girls in schools and communities, government departments, NGOs and CBOs have realised the urgent need to develop specific programmes around sexuality, gender discrimination and violence.

Many NGO's were originally trauma service providers focusing on addressing the consequences of violence. However, increasingly institutions and organisations are also looking at prevention. National government programmes include the Safer Schools Project and recent initiatives by provincial departments of education involving development and introduction of policies on how to combat and deal with sexual harassment and assault in schools. Several national, provincial and local NGOs provide programmes that address both

the consequences and prevention of violence. e.g. KwaZulu-Natal Survivors of Violence, Independent Project Trust, The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, to name a few. Other organisations such as the *lovelife* campaign address the problem of gender violence from a broader base in terms of gender relations and sexuality. Evaluations of their two-year old multi-faceted media campaign and community outreach initiatives have begun with communication impact and awareness studies showing a positive response to both the brand name and the *lovelife* approach among the 12 to 17-year old target audience. Central to their approach is to engage youth from a basis of talking about and dealing with their own sexual experiences and socialisation rather than beginning with issues of safe and correct behaviour. Further evaluations beginning in 2002 will examine behaviour change in response to *lovelife* interventions over time.<sup>1</sup>

Systematic research on the efficacy of a variety of approaches and interventions comes mainly from international sources. There are a number of evaluations of interventions by schools and individuals within schools in other countries that deal with violence and gender violence. These include both curriculum initiatives and specific school programmes that intervene in violence. From these two areas of intervention, two key findings have emerged.

Curriculum initiatives have moved away from simply awareness raising and teaching of moral behaviour to allow learners to work through experiences of violence. Examples of this approach include working through such experiences using poetry in response to acts of violence and writing of obituaries or performing acts of remembrance in the case of violent deaths of friends and community members (Johnson 1995). Johnson argues that effective interventions involve the educator shifting from the role of knowledge-giver to incorporate and thereby legitimate learners' knowledge and experiences. Following a similar approach that moves away from hierarchical relations between educator and learner, Pepinsky (2000) argues that learners need to engage in peaceful relations such as trust, responsibility, support, care, love, mutual sharing of ideas and experiences rather than learning about peaceful relations and the techniques of good behaviour.

Whole school programmes along similar lines as Pepinsky's study argue for the approach of 'peaceable schools' where there is less focus on discipline and more on encouraging learning (Caulfield 2000). Peaceable schools, however, need peaceable communities requiring the promotion of non-violent approaches to conflict by community-based support programmes where youth are involved in creating their own programmes.

In a study of violence and school culture, Anderson (1998) looks at factors that contribute to violence and factors that reduce violence in schools. Factors associated with violence include poverty and violence in families and communities. Evaluations of the effectiveness of initiatives such as curricular responses to violence, conflict resolution, administrative responses such as staff development, community responses such as outreach programmes, increased social services and joint projects with police are mixed. However, altering a school's internal culture appears to reduce violence even in schools located in violent communities. In addressing gender violence, Morrell (1998) argues that only a holistic approach that takes into account both the roles of boys and girls and the origins and complexities of gender inequality will be effective. Altering a school's internal culture needs to take gender equity issues into account.

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<sup>1</sup> In communication.



## 2.4 Conclusions

- Studies show that there are high levels of gender violence both in schools and communities in South Africa that impact severely on educational opportunities for females.
- Research reveals that a number of factors such as historical circumstances, poverty, high levels of individual violence, notions of masculinity, domestic abuse, male dominance, sexual separation and confusions about sexuality may play a role in contributing to high levels of gender violence.
- Current interventions focus mainly on general violence although gender violence is increasingly becoming a target for such programmes.
- Although some of these programmes have been systematically evaluated, evaluations are not readily available.
- Evaluations of interventions on violence in schools in other countries suggest that moving away from teaching about correct behaviour to engaging with learners' experiences and confusions as well as addressing the underlying school culture are key factors in reducing violence.

## Chapter 3

### Research methodology and procedures

#### 3.1 Research approach

Using an ethnographic approach, this study involved one month of intensive fieldwork in eight schools using participant observation and self-report data in the form of informal and formal single and group interviews and participant writing using diaries, stories and drawings.

An ethnographic approach allows for detailed examination of patterns of behaviour within a particular social context. Close observation of every-day interactions facilitates insight into the social values and practices that create a specific social situation or phenomenon.

#### 3.2 Selection of research sites

In order to capture a cross section of educational situations and experiences, we chose four different sites that represent different kinds of communities and schools in South Africa. Selection of school research sites was based on the following criteria:

- Geographical location.
- Urban/rural profile.
- Socio-cultural characteristics.
- Level: both primary and high schools.

We chose a primary and a high school in each of the following four sites:

- A black urban township in Gauteng.
- A black rural settlement in KwaZulu-Natal.
- A 'coloured' township on the Cape Flats.
- Former white urban suburbs in Gauteng (the primary and high schools were located in different suburbs).

To create a picture, in these four different contexts, of what the average school experiences and how it responds to violence, we chose neither the best nor the worst schools. We did not want to present a pathologised and sensationalised view by seeking out the worst cases nor an unrealistic positive view. Instead, we wanted to show the lives and struggles of ordinary South Africans highlighting their achievements, shortcomings and problems in dealing with and preventing violence against girls.

Given the tight deadline and sensitivity of the research, we selected schools in Gauteng and the Western Cape where we already had established access through previous research. In KwaZulu-Natal, we worked in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence (PSV). Running interventions to support victims of violence and to prevent violence in schools and communities, PSV has extensive knowledge of patterns of violence in KwaZulu-Natal and access to many schools. Drawing on these existing links and knowledge provided important background data, insights and existing research relationships of familiarity and trust that take time to establish and would not have been possible given the one month fieldwork limit.

### **3.3 Selection and role of researchers**

Each site had one research supervisor and two fieldworkers, one fieldworker per school making a total of four research supervisors and eight fieldworkers. All eight fieldworkers fitted the cultural and linguistic profile of the research site communities. Either the research supervisor or fieldworkers were familiar with the schools from previous collaborations with these schools.

All four research supervisors were experienced researchers with qualifications and experience in educational and anthropological research. In KwaZulu-Natal, where we worked with PSV, they appointed a research supervisor from their organisation. Fieldworkers were either anthropology or education graduates with backgrounds and research experience in education and ethnographic work. All of the fieldworkers were women except for one male fieldworker. The male fieldworker was chosen on the basis that he is a highly experienced researcher and already had a good working relationship with the school in which the research was to be conducted. All fieldworkers were in the twenties and early thirties.

Under the supervision of the principal investigator (PI), research supervisors were responsible for:

- Approaching schools and gaining access.
- Co-ordinating the research process.
- Conducting weekly debriefing sessions with fieldworkers.
- Spending one day a week with fieldworkers in schools.
- Writing weekly reports on the progress of the research and submitting fieldworkers' data on a weekly basis.
- Gathering background information about the communities and schools.
- Identifying key participants beyond the schools from the community, NGOs and the Department of Education for interviews.
- Co-ordinating the transcription of taped single and group interviews.

Under the supervision of the research supervisor, fieldworkers were responsible for:

- Introducing and explaining the research to the school assisted by the research supervisor and the PI.
- Participating in the life of the school for one month.
- Observing and taking daily fieldnotes.
- Conducting informal and formal interviews.
- Attending different school activities.
- Facilitating discussions in the school.
- Gathering information about the school.
- Eliciting other forms of data such as diaries, drawing and writing.
- Giving verbal and written weekly reports.

### **3.4 Training of researchers**

The principal investigator conducted training in the Western Cape and Gauteng during the last week in August and in KwaZulu-Natal during the first week of September. Fieldworkers and research site supervisors underwent training in ethnographic and case study research. This included participant observation procedures and techniques, note-taking, interview techniques and methods of verification. Research ethics were also included in the training course. Fieldworkers were provided with detailed guidelines on drawing up school and community

profiles, handling and filing of data, interviews with subjects and writing of reports. Each fieldworker was provided with a research schedule.

### **3.5 Fieldwork**

#### **Duration**

Fieldwork began on 3 September in Gauteng and the Western Cape for a period of four weeks or 20 days ending 28 September 2001. Fieldwork in rural KwaZulu-Natal commenced on 17 September and was completed by 19 October making a total of four weeks or 20 days excluding the school holidays from 29 September to 7 October 2001.

#### **Access**

Research supervisors approached the principal of each school, submitting a copy of the research proposal and a covering letter outlining the purpose of the research. Research supervisors and, where possible, the PI met with principals and/or guidance teachers and in some cases, the management committee of each school.

In introducing the research to each school, emphasis was placed on solutions to violence rather than on diagnosis of the problem. Citing the recent Human Rights Watch (2001) report that presented serious cases of violence against girls in schools, we highlighted the importance of moving forward to find and implement solutions that work for different community contexts in South Africa. We stressed the importance of learning from each school and hearing the voices of educators, learners and community members about what they currently do in response to violence against girls and what they think could be done effectively in their communities and schools.

At each school, principals consulted with staff and the school-governing body (SGB) before granting permission. Simultaneously we approached both district and provincial departments of Education (DoE) for permission. Once granted, we handed letters of permission from the DoE to each school.

#### **Introducing fieldworkers**

Research supervisors introduced fieldworkers to the schools either during the week previous to the commencement of the research or on the first day of the research. Introductions began with the principal, management committee and key educators including the guidance educator. The principal selected a member of staff to introduce the fieldworker to school members, assist the fieldworker in getting to know the school and facilitate the research. In most cases, the principal introduced the fieldworker at a staff meeting, at assembly and, where requested, the fieldworker provided further briefings to school members about the research.

#### **Participant observation**

Participant observation involved each fieldworker contributing to the school by offering or contributing to academic, sport or cultural activities. In some cases, their participation involved assisting with lessons, helping with feeding schemes or taking a class if an educator was absent. Fieldworker participation in the life of the school facilitated their integration and made their roles as observers less prominent.

Fieldworkers observed before school, after school, during breaks and in lesson times. They took extensive notes on interactions in and outside classrooms, during breaks in staffrooms.

staff meetings, educational activities, extra-mural activities focusing on talk, actions and incidents relating to gender relations and violence, both physical and verbal. Where possible, fieldworkers taped informal interactions and discussions.

Fieldworkers documented boys and girls occupation of space in and outside the classroom as well as the position of educators and other staff at different times on school maps. Using writing among older learners and drawings with younger learners in each grade, fieldworkers identified spaces in and around the schools that pose particular problems for girls. Where it was possible to either write or keep diaries, learners from at least one class in each grade wrote about their daily lives focusing on all forms of violence, threat, issues of self-protection and safety they encounter both in and on their way to school. In this way, we will be able to track patterns of violence across different social spaces. Learners discussed their work with the fieldworker.

### Documentary data

Fieldworkers also gathered documentary evidence on safety initiatives, school responses to incidents and background information about each school. Fieldworkers obtained copies of school rules, codes of conduct, circulars from the DoE on violence and gender violence, documented cases of violence and gender violence and programmes to combat gender violence held at the school.

### Single and group interviews

Fieldworkers conducted single and group interviews as outlined in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1: Number of group and single interviews at the high school in each research site**

Grade	High schools				Total
	Group interviews		Single interviews		
	Females	Males	Females	Males	
Grade 11	1	1	2	2	
Grade 10	1	1	2	2	
Grade 9	1	1	2	2	
Grade 8	1	1	2	2	
Educators	1	1	2	2	
Parents			3	3	
SGB			1	1	
Principal					1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>
					<b>39</b>

**Table 2: Number of group and single interviews at the primary school in each research site**

Grade	Primary schools				Total
	Group interviews		Single interviews		
	Females	Males	Females	Males	
Grade 7	1	1	2	2	
Grade 6	1	1	2	2	
Grade 5	1	1	2	2	
Educators		1	2	2	
Parents			3	3	
SGB			1	1	
Principal					1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>33</b>

### Other interviews

Police—1

Local social services—1

Relevant community organisation/NGO— 1

Education officials - 1

Seventy-six single and group interviews, 39 in high schools, 33 in primary schools and 4 with community members/organisations were conducted in each site, making a total for this study of 304 interviews. In each school, fieldworkers interviewed the principal, a male and female member of the governing body, 3 male and 3 female parents, 14 educators (7 males and 7 females, single and in groups) and a total of 42 learners at primary school and 52 learners at high school (both equal numbers of male and female). Logistically it was not possible to conduct group interviews with parents, as they were seldom available at a mutually convenient time.

Group interviews allowed both for collective discourse on violence against girls where issues of contestation among participants could emerge and collective brain storming around solutions that stimulated discussion and ideas. Single interviews allowed informants to talk freely without fear of peer opinion or pressure and proved an important source of verification in comparing self-representation in group interviews.

Because of the sensitivity of the research, primary school learners in the first three grades were not interviewed. Fieldworkers acted on advice from the school authorities in conducting interviews. All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis.

Follow-up interviews were also conducted to clarify specific issues or events and further our understanding of responses to violence against girls. Fieldworkers also conducted interviews with local Department of Education officials, key community role players such as the police, health workers at local clinics and relevant community organisations.

### Verification of findings

Verification of findings is a key aspect of any research. In ethnographic research of this nature we adopted four strategies. Firstly, self-report data was verified by checking anonymously with other informants their opinions about what others said. This type of verification was

done by asking informants to comment on information gained in other interviews and going back to the same informants to verify comments. Secondly, participants' self-report data about themselves, their schools and communities were verified through observation of actual practices. Thirdly, and most important, fieldworkers identified key community informants among educators, learners and the community with whom they established an open and trusting relationship allowing them to have discussions from time to time about aspects of school life relating to gender equity and violence. These key informants were selected on the basis that they were able to reflect in some depth about their own and their community's social practices. Discussions with key informants allowed fieldworkers to raise issues and discuss evidence that appeared contradictory and to get further insight into the complexities relating to gender relations and violence. Lastly, research supervisors and the PI visited all eight schools observing and recording their own observations as well as contributing to both formal and informal discussions among informants on violence against girls and solutions. Comparison and discussion among the researchers also helped to identify previously unobserved behaviours and bring further insight to the research. These four strategies allowed fieldworkers to verify their own observations and interpretations as well as those of others.

### **3.6 Data analysis procedures**

Interviews were transcribed and, where necessary, translated. In line with case study methodology, analysis of data occurred first by site and subsequently across sites. For each case study, analysis of information from fieldnotes, research supervisors' reports, debriefing sessions with fieldworkers, documentary data and interview transcriptions produced a descriptive framework consisting of the following topics:

- Characteristics of the community.
- Violence in the community.
- Characteristics of the schools.
- Nature of violence against girls in schools.
- School responses to violence against girls.
- Solutions.

(See cases studies of each site in Appendices 1 to 4.)

Under each area, key issues and themes were identified and evidence from fieldnotes and interviews grouped accordingly. We could then identify the main features of the community and schools that appear to impact on forms and degrees of violence against girls.

These features were then compared across sites to identify similarities and differences. Out of this comparative analysis, the main approaches in school responses to violence emerged and key target areas for possible solutions identified.

## Chapter 4

### The communities

#### 4.1 The Gauteng township community

Motsemotle<sup>2</sup> is a black urban township outside Johannesburg. Established in the early 1960s to house black people forcibly removed from the nearby formally white town, it is today home to approximately 240 000 people. Motsemotle still bears the signs of apartheid deprivation with most people experiencing poor living conditions. A long-term housing shortage has resulted in severe overcrowding. Housing mostly ranges from shacks to small two-room and four-room box-shaped houses. Currently there are 30 000 formal units with an estimated average of eight people per house. Around the outskirts of the township, informal settlements are increasing. Residents with the economic means have extended and renovated their homes to give them a separate identity, while wealthier inhabitants have moved to formally white suburbs.

Recreational facilities are few. The main sports facility is a soccer stadium with additional facilities for boxing, judo, basketball and tennis. Officially demarcated sports grounds are virtual dustbowls with no amenities. There are no parks and no recreational equipment for children. Recently, Motsemotle has acquired a swimming pool. There are three community centres and one library with very few books. There are three shopping centres, several outdoor markets, a police station and five public clinics. There are very few recreational facilities for youth. Beauty, talent and music events at the local community hall are the main forms of entertainment. There are no theatres, restaurants, cinemas or music venues.

Unemployment, alcohol abuse and violence particularly crime are the major social problems in this community. No official figures are available on the unemployment rate, but it is probably between 50 and 75%. Residents who are employed often work in menial jobs for low wages. Men work mostly as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in local industries while women find jobs as domestic workers in nearby formally white suburbs. Some unemployed township residents depend on small local businesses for economic survival. Residents sell fruit and vegetables, chips, sweets and cigarettes from small make-shift stores on the street. Some run small grocery stores from their garages or set up telephone kiosks outside their homes. Other residents have opened taverns in their homes. Hairdressing salons, fixing cars, local taxis, catering and sewing are some of the ways residents make a living. Some families depend entirely on a grandparent's pension while others have no income at all.

Unemployment among youth is high and few matriculants find jobs. While young women can, to some extent, occupy themselves with daily household chores, out-of-school male youth have little to do but while away their time in groups on street corners, a feature of male urban youth culture across Gauteng townships since the early 1930s. High unemployment, inadequate schooling, few recreational opportunities and overcrowded homes have forced young men onto the streets where they have developed their own social structures, activities and ways of communicating. Many young men have become involved in criminal subcultures.

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<sup>2</sup> Not its real name. Names of schools and communities have been changed.



## 4.2 The Cape Flats community

Hopeville is a formally coloured area on the Cape Flats. There are 44 000 people residing in Hopeville, of which half are under 21 years of age. Hopeville was established in 1966 as a result of the Group Areas Act which forced thousands of families from District Six to re-settle in areas, such as Hopeville, Heideveld, Manenberg, Bonteheuwel, Lavender Hill, Elsie's River, and Mitchell's Plain—generally known as the Cape Flats area. The majority of families living in the area originally came from District Six, while other residents have moved to Hopeville from other Cape Flats areas. The impact of forced removals led to previously close-knit families and communities being scattered across various areas on the Cape Flats—while some went to Hopeville, others left for Lavender Hill. Destruction of families and communities left many people feeling isolated, insecure and abandoned leading to a variety of social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, family violence and gangsterism.

Overcrowding remains a severe problem in Hopeville. It is not unusual for twelve people to live in a house or flat consisting of two bedrooms. Even bathrooms are sublet to boarders or extended family members. Similarly any available space in the backyard is used to erect a structure or wendy house. The types of housing in the area consist of three-storey blocks of flats, semi-detached and single houses. The number of bedrooms per dwelling ranges from one to three. The general standard of housing in the area is not good. Windowpanes are either broken or missing; the majority of houses and flats are in dire need of paint and maintenance, and pieces of zinc and wood are often attached to the front, side or back of the dwelling in order to create more space. The overwhelming image of the area is stark and miserable. Where the factory-like blocks of flats are not dirty, they are defaced by graffiti.

There are very few recreational facilities in Hopeville, and the few in existence are either vandalised, or a hangout area for gangsters. Certain parks are known domains for gangsters or gang fights. There is no shopping centre in Hopeville as businesses find it too risky to operate in the area. There is one clinic in Hopeville, several mosques and a number of churches. Weekend activities amongst adults involve smoking dagga, playing dice, or drinking alcohol. These activities are often conducted outside—in the backyard, next to a block of flats, or in the parks. Children usually occupy themselves by going to the local swimming baths, playing games at the shops, going to the nearby dam, or playing in the streets. Some of the youth, who can afford it, leave the area to go to nearby shopping centres. While certain children actively participate in sports, such as soccer and netball, others are involved in youth activities organised by the local church or mosque. There are also children who participate in gang activities.

Poverty is a serious problem in Hopeville and the rate of unemployment is high. According to the principal of the high school, gathering from the school's learner population, 45% to 50% of the parent community are unemployed. This high rate of unemployment has led to many men and women standing around in the streets or in front of blocks of flats. Every shop corner is a hang-out place—the men huddle in groups, either playing dice or smoking dagga. Alcohol is also a serious problem among both women and men. In most homes it is more likely for the women to be employed. The majority of the women, who are fortunate enough to have employment, are chaps, domestic workers, factory workers, or cleaners at shopping malls. Some are fruit and vegetable hawkers. Types of employment for men range from cleaners, factory workers, council employees, labourers, fruit and vegetable hawkers, taxi drivers or guards, or gardeners. In most instances, where an elderly person lives, his or her pension is the only income supporting an entire family.

Most families are single-parent, and more specifically single-mother, households. Where there is a male figure in the home it is normally a step-father or a live-in lover. In the opinion of the principal of Rainbow Primary School, the mere presence of an adult male in the house represents some measure of economic and physical protection. Women need physical protection against harassment from gangsters. A man is necessary even if that same male constitutes a threat to everyone else in the house. The general breakdown in family life both with forced removals and the current socio-economic situation is often cited as the cause of gangsterism. Joining a gang provides the infrastructure of a family where there is none—either on a physical or an emotional level.

While the general population of Hopeville is poor and while many families experience lives of alcohol, substance, physical, verbal and psychological abuse, there are families, who strive to live good lives. Many residents are very religious and honest people. But to many people gangsterism, the smoking of dagga, abuse—physical or any other kind—is a totally normal part of life. Abuse of alcohol is the main destabilising factor in the community. Although Hopeville has been the childhood home of a number of talented South Africans, the successes of the area are far and few between—not because of the lack of talent or potential, but because of a shortage of resources, little or no parental involvement, gangsterism, erratic school attendance, and few role models.

### **4.3 Two formally white urban Gauteng communities**

#### **The primary school community**

The inner city community around the school is over a hundred years old. The buildings consist of flats, shops, churches, a hospital, a clinic, hotels and offices. The population was historically white but since 1994 the community has become predominantly black. Most learners stay with their parents and a few with grandparents. Most are single-parent families.

Socio-economic status varies from low to average. Some residents are professionals while others have menial jobs or are unemployed. On average five people stay together in a two-bedroom flat. The community is slowly becoming overpopulated because of an influx of foreigners from other countries and taverns that have opened. Over the weekends the streets are full of people moving up and down until the early hours of the morning. Some of the shops stay open until midnight and life continues as if it is daytime. There are a lot of adult/sex shops in the community. The streets are full of street children and teenage males direct motorists to parking and opt to wash their cars for some cash. There are many drug dealers in the area. Alcohol abuse is a problem as well as drugs. Drug dealers target school children and use some of them to push drugs into schools.

There are a few recreational facilities in the city centre. These are mostly parks and a big swimming pool. These places have become target areas for rape, mugging and drug dealing and most people especially girls do not feel safe to be there unaccompanied by an adult. There are a lot of different churches. There is a community library that is well-equipped and other libraries. There are two police stations, a clinic and a hospital. There are also forms of entertainment like movie theatres, restaurants and taverns.

#### **The high school community**

Somerville is a small suburb near an industrial area. Large iron ore and metal industries offer employment to local people. The school is about four kilometres from a large casino resort and about a kilometre from the Central Business District (CBD). The community is about 53

years old. It was historically for whites only, but since the abolishment of the Group Areas Act, it is mixed. The community is predominantly a residential area with only a few small shopping centres. Near the local high school is a large tertiary institution that draws students from all the provinces and across all racial groups in South Africa.

#### 4.4 The rural KwaZulu-Natal community

Ilanganani is a small rural village north of Durban surrounded by mountains, forests and sugar plantations. Missionaries played a major part in the history of this community and in its development. They contributed to education in the community and built a hospital and a church.

The community is still recovering from the political violence that affected the whole country and particularly KwaZulu-Natal before 1994. Between 1991 and 1994 the community experienced severe violence between the supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). A parent remembers that political violence was terrible and many people died. Children in the community were victims of the political violence and the primary and high school were severely affected with both learners and educators being murdered. The young were exposed to extreme acts of violence and death. Parents hold the view that these schools have still not returned to normal after the political violence. Learners are no longer controllable and educators do not do their work.

Added to the trauma of violence, is the number of people dying of AIDS. There are on average five funerals every week, but there is still denial and silence on the issue. Youth do not seem to be fully aware that people are dying of AIDS in their community. Community members believe the spread of the virus is due to people living recklessly combined with high rates of rape and sexual abuse and lack of employment. Parents claim that more than ten learners have died of AIDS this year.

Houses are mainly traditional round houses made of mud and wood. These houses consist of only one room that is used for all purposes i.e. as a kitchen, bathroom, living room and bedroom. About eight to ten people on average share this one room. The community has electricity, but not every household has managed to get it. There is no running water and people have to stand in long queues at the river to get water that is not guaranteed to be clean. Clean water is a big problem and many residents have been cholera victims. There is no sewerage system and toilets are mostly pit-toilets.

One of the major problems in this community is unemployment and poverty. A number of children suffer from malnutrition due to lack of healthy eating. Most men seek work in either Johannesburg or Durban and return once or twice a year. Young men having finished school also leave to find work in the cities. Families often rely on migrant workers in their families as the only source of income. Some people work on local sugar farms as casual labourers. Locally, community members engage in gardening projects, small shops and phone businesses.

There are no recreational facilities. People's main form of recreation is going to church and engaging in gospel singing groups. Some community people, such as religious ministers, try to keep the children busy by organising concerts and beauty contests for them and they also organise HIV/AIDS awareness workshops. Sometimes workshops are conducted to teach the youth how to write their CV's and apply for jobs.

Traditional values and structures are still strong in Hlanganani. The chiefs, indunas and councillors handle governance and law and order as the community still upholds strong cultural values. Male and female roles are clearly demarcated and leadership roles are reserved for men. Girls are expected to clean, fetch water and to look for wood in the forest while boys look after goats and cattle.

Crime in this community has increased since 1994. This follows a great influx of people into the community. People no longer feel safe especially at night as most of the crime takes place at that time. Drug and alcohol are major problems. Learners, who complete matric and are unable to continue their education or find jobs, become frustrated and resort to alcohol and drugs. Dagga is a popular crop in Hlanganani and is an important part of the economy. The police know about the large fields of marijuana. They claim to go on raids and apprehend the dagga growers and smokers, usually elder men, out of school youth and high school children.

#### **4.5 Violence in the communities**

The Gauteng township, Cape Flats and KwaZulu-Natal communities all experience high levels of poverty, community impoverishment, unemployment, violence and gender violence. The schools in formerly white suburbs draw the learners from a number of different communities including townships, inner city areas and suburbs that range from middle to low income communities with varying degrees of impoverishment and violence.

Criminal violence is a problem across all sites and residents experience a high degree of uncertainty, fear and vulnerability. The threat of murder, rape, hijacking, robbery, mugging and petty theft affects everyone and residents continually negotiate their lives around potential threats to their safety. People are often at risk of theft and gratuitous violence in their homes and in public spaces and are often exposed to violence even if they are not victims. Policing is generally substandard with residents across all four communities complaining about lack of policing, particularly the slow time taken to respond to incidents of crime and violence, the ineptitude of police in dealing with cases and the lack of follow-up. Reports of collaboration with crime syndicates and gangs particularly in the Gauteng township community and on the Cape Flats are common.

Levels of interpersonal violence vary across all four sites, but are particularly high in the township, rural and Cape Flats communities. All sites report a high incidence of gratuitous criminal violence and, in township and Cape Flats communities, adults and children often witness violence among criminal elements and gangs in their communities. In many cases such violence also endangers ordinary residents' lives. Residents also witness violence and aggression among male youth subcultural structures such as gangs and street corner groups. Beatings and ritual violent acts are often part of male youth social structures and male status is often linked to displays of physical power over peers. Increasing abuse of alcohol and particularly drugs are exacerbating factors in relation to interpersonal violence among male youth. Social gatherings within communities also often turn violent resulting in fights and verbal abuse heightened by alcohol and drugs. Daily exposure makes such patterns of interaction and levels of violence seem normal to both young and old. Young boys act out what they witness among their peers and against girls resulting in high levels of aggression and violence from a very young age.

High levels of gender violence particularly verbal abuse, beatings, sexual harassment and rape are present in all of these communities to varying degrees. Male relatives, neighbours, boyfriends and male youth subcultural groups and gangs are the most likely perpetrators of

sexual violence. Strong patriarchal attitudes of male superiority and entitlement, along with high levels of gratuitous violence among men and in the community are characteristic of all sites where gender violence is particularly high. Male status and conceptions of masculinity are often tied to visible actions of violence in relation to women. Often such violence is seen as a normalised part of relationships.

Across all four sites, women and girls do not feel safe in their communities nor in their homes. Of particular concern are male relatives, lodgers, neighbours and men and boys' groups or gangs on the streets. Rape, by someone known to the victim is common. Often, these cases are not reported because the perpetrator is a member of the family and provides economic support. In some cases, perpetrators threaten the victim with violence if she reports a case. Coercive sexual relations are also common between boys and girls. Domestic abuse in the form of beating and neglect of children is also common. Schools across all four sites report having to deal with such cases as well as sexual abuse cases. Violence in these communities impacts on learners at school in various ways. Not only do schools have to deal with many cases, but violence at home and in the community often translates into violent behaviour at schools impacting on academic performance particularly among girls.

## Chapter 5

### Violence against girls in schools

#### 5.1 The schools

##### The Gauteng township schools

###### The primary school

Palesa Primary School<sup>3</sup> is situated in one of the oldest sections of Motsemotle. The school is tidy and the grounds neat. Despite being fenced off, the school leaves its gates open. A close relationship with the surrounding community means that local residents keep a close watch on the school and protect learners and educators from crime. Palesa has 1 184 learners and 31 educators. Most of the learners come from poor families and only about 25% of parents are employed. The community considers Palesa to be one of the best schools in Motsemotle. Strong leadership from the principal and deputy principal ensures that the school is reasonably well managed with various committees responsible for all aspects of the school. The principal monitors educators attendance and teaching, but educators do not do much monitoring of learners. Violence and conflict among learners often occur during unmonitored times. Discipline is still mainly instilled through educators using random physical violence. Despite lack of monitoring, the underlying philosophy of the school is that educators and learners are a family. Most educators show a great deal of care towards learners and their families and do much to assist them where possible. Learners feel that some, but not all educators are adequately involved in caring for learners at school. Parental involvement is low, but better than many other schools in the township. Grandparents have initiated an aftercare facility for learners whose parents work or who come from backgrounds where there is abuse.

###### The high school

Motshitshi is situated in one of the newer sections of Motsemotle. The school grounds are unkempt and neglected. Over the uneven and stony surface, the grass grows wild, and litter lies strewn across the school grounds. The buildings are in reasonable condition, but vandalism is evident. Graffiti, broken windows and doors contribute to Motshitshi's slightly abused and neglected appearance. A fence surrounds the school and the gate is locked during school hours. However, holes in the fence allow learners to move in and out and drugs are smuggled into school this way. There are 1 640 and 49 educators. Most of the learners come from poor families. Although the principal tries to enforce discipline, educators mostly adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude towards school management and discipline. Educators are often late for school, avoid teaching where they can and seldom make any attempt to monitor learners. Learners do not trust most educators and there is a general lack of communication between principal, educators, learners and parents. Many educators still use random physical violence and verbally abuse learners. Involvement of parents is very low and many parents are unaware of what their children do or the problems they encounter. Boys and girls smoke dagga on school premises and gamble. Gangs operate more or less at will in the school, although the principal does from time to time call the police to arrest those who gamble and use drugs. Both girls and boys are generally scared at school and violence and verbal abuse among

<sup>3</sup> Not its real name. Names of all schools have been changed.

learners is common particularly in the toilets. Both female educators and learners are afraid to stay after school for extramural activities or classes because of violence from outside elements. There is a general lack of respect for one another and boys often intimidate girls and female educators in classes.

## **The Cape Flats Schools**

### **The primary school**

Rainbow Primary School is situated in an area notorious for gang fights, taxi wars and car hijackings. The school is well maintained and efforts are made to keep the gardens attractive with flowerbeds and lawn. High fences and razor wire right up to the classrooms along with locked gates keep gang fights out of the school. There are 818 learners and 21 educators of which five are males. The school is well managed, but mostly by male educators. Female educators do not seem to play much of a leadership role. The majority of learners are from poor families and some suffer neglect and abuse. Most educators are very caring and the school has a reputation, particularly the principal, for helping both learners and families in need. Most educators regard dealing with social problems in the community as part of their responsibility. However, male educators are less likely to acknowledge and deal with social problems such as violence in the school and community. Discipline, manners and morals are part of everyday discourse and educators monitor learners. As part of the monitoring, the playground is divided into sections for younger and older learners and boys and girls are separated. However, when educators are not there, learners become unruly and violence is common. Some educators still use physical violence such as pinching and bumping learners and beatings occasionally occur. Educators tend to shout at learners, make them stand outside the classroom or send them to the principal's office. There are no guidance counsellors, but two educators have received counselling training from the provincial education department. Parent involvement is generally low and women are usually the only parents involved.

### **The high school**

Mission High School is surrounded by barbed-wire fencing and excludes some of the playing fields in an attempt to make it safe from gangs in the community. At the locked gates, a security guard monitors access. Despite locked gates, learners leave and arrive as they please through holes in the fence. The school, surrounded by empty tracts of land, is completely separated from local residents. The school is not well kept, the grounds are not well maintained, litter is strewn around the school and graffiti covers the walls. There are 1 148 learners and 31 educators. Learners are mostly from poor homes where there is overcrowding, severe unemployment and alcohol abuse. Although there are many management and support structures in place only some educators use these effectively and try to inculcate discipline. Other educators adopt a *laissez-faire* approach not coming to class nor making sure learners attend. Such an approach makes it difficult for a strong culture of learning to develop despite the dedication of some educators. Some educators verbally abuse learners. Educators generally do not monitor learners and incidents of violence are high. Many learners feel unsafe in classrooms and walking around the school, particularly in the toilets. Many educators appear to have no clear plan on how to manage learners and respond to violence. Low parental involvement and lack of response by parents when learners give problems adds to the generally low level of learning and safety in the school.

## **Gauteng former model C schools**

### **The primary school**

The primary school is located in an inner city area in Gauteng. Formally a white school, its learners are now black, although all the educators have remained white. The school is well-maintained and there is no litter in the well-kept gardens and playing areas. The school is completely fenced and gates locked during school hours. Learners may not be disturbed during school hours, not even by parents. There are 614 learners and 18 educators, three of which are black. Most learners come from middle-class homes in and around the inner city and only three learners in the school are identified as poor. The school is well managed and there are set structures and procedures to deal with every aspect of the running of the school.

Communication within the school and with parents also functions well with regular circulars and meetings. Despite this communication, parent involvement is still low. School attendance is strictly monitored and no learner may be absent without a doctor's certificate. Rules govern every aspect of school life and discipline is rigorously and consistently enforced. There are specific areas where children must be dropped off and educators monitor learners' arriving and leaving the school. Educators monitor learners in classes, in the corridors, in the toilets and during breaks. Specific areas are out of bounds and no more than one learner is allowed in the toilet at any one time. The code of conduct stipulates every rule and everyone knows the punishments given for different offences. Learners and parents have to read this code of conduct and sign it when they are accepted into the school. Educators regard enforcement of discipline and maintaining their own professional standards of behaviour as a priority. The school is very caring and the relationship between learners and educators is one of trust. Many learners feel more comfortable talking to their educators about problems than talking to their parents. Rules and punishment are part of every-day discourse in the school and there is zero tolerance for misbehaviour and violence of any kind.

### **The high school**

The high school is located in Somerville a suburb on the outskirts of a large town in one of the industrial heartlands of Gauteng. The school draws its 638 learners from surrounding suburbs and townships. The learners are predominantly black with approximately one-fifth of learners being white. About 84% are from working class backgrounds, about 15% from middle-income families and about 1% are considered poor. There are 25 educators, 22 are white, one is Indian and two are black. Six of the educators are males. The school is well-maintained and surrounded by a high steel fence. Access is strictly controlled and the gates are locked at all times. The school is well managed and there are committees and procedures for running every aspect of the school life. There are also set procedures for communication between management, educators, learners and parents. There are strict policies regarding attendance and discipline. The code of conduct is made explicit to learners and parents who must sign it on admission. Learners are clearly informed about disciplinary measures and that these are always carried out according to set rules and procedures. Educators adhere to strict professional conduct, attending classes and respecting time. Educators monitor learners at all times and certain areas are out of bounds. Educators approach misbehaviour in a calm and rational manner, first establishing the facts and then going through the set procedures in dealing with each case. There is a culture of learning and learners and educators appear to have good relationships although some educators complain of lack of discipline among learners and some learners feel that educators are racist.



## **The KwaZulu-Natal Rural Schools**

### **The primary school**

The community built Funda Primary School in 1986. They obtained funds from a local sugar mill and built it themselves with children fetching water and mixing cement. The condition of the school does not impede learning, but the roof leaks and some classrooms need fixing. The school has toilets that are clean and usable. However, conditions at the school are poor when compared to their urban township counterparts. The school grounds are well maintained and care is taken to make the school neat and attractive. The school is fenced and the gates are locked except during breaks. There are 445 learners in the school and most come from very poor families in the local area of Hlanganani. Most families depend on grandparents' pensions and parents are often absent as they find work in either Johannesburg or Durban. There are 11 educators, four of whom are males. The principal manages the school reasonably well and makes sure educators are in the classroom and do not come late to school. However, educators do not supervise or monitor learners during breaks and bullying and fighting are common. Educators frequently respond to issues of discipline with random physical violence. The school's public discourse in assemblies and classes does emphasise that violence is wrong and educators try to instil respect. Participation by parents and grandparents is low.

### **The high school**

Juba High School is about two kilometres from Funda Primary School. Conditions at the school are poor. Classrooms are run down and there is no office or staffroom for the educators. Toilets are situated far from the school and are not maintained. The school appears chaotic, with litter in and outside classrooms and no attempt has been made to create gardens or look after the environment. Although there is a fence around the school and a security guard is supposed to monitor access, this does not happen. Instead learners move in and out of school during school hours and buy alcohol from a local spaza shop outside the school gates. Educators make little attempt to monitor learners or enforce discipline. The principal does not seem to be able to control either the educators or learners. Educators and learners arrive late and leave after two hours. Violence is common among learners and educators also use random physical violence to enforce discipline. There is flagrant disrespect and verbal abuse between educators and learners. Learners sometimes do not attend school for most of the year and simply come and write exams. In previous years the matric pass rate has been nil.

## **5.2 Violence against girls at primary schools**

All four primary schools experience less general violence and gender violence than high schools. However, general violence and violence against girls is still common in most primary schools except in the former model C primary school where close monitoring of learners keeps violence within the school to a minimum.

Among learners, bullying and beating are the most common forms of violence in all four schools. Most learners, except in the model C school, respond to situations of conflict with immediate physical violence and threats. Conflict and violent physical interactions involving pushing, pulling, hitting and swearing featured prominently particularly in the Cape Flats, townships and rural primary schools. Accounts of older learners bullying, teasing and threatening younger learners and taking their possessions are common particularly in the township, rural and Cape Flats schools. During our observations, serious incidents of violence such as stabbings with scissors and beatings that resulted in a boy needing stitches occurred in all the primary schools except for the model C school.

Among educators, physical violence remains the most common form of maintaining discipline except in the former model C school where school authorities have designated specific non-violent punishments for different offences. In the rural, urban township and Cape Flats' primary schools, educators continue to respond to misbehaviour including violence with physical violence from taps on the head to proper beatings with canes. Verbal threats of punishment including physical punishment are also common means of control. Overall, maintaining discipline continues to rely on external forms of control through rules, threats of punishment and physical violence rather than inculcating internal motivation and an alternative school culture.

Although educators believe that gender violence is more common at high schools and serious incidents of violence do not occur at primary schools, we observed serious sexist attitudes, patterns of gender discrimination and violence particularly in the urban township, rural and Cape Flats schools. Bullying and beating of girls is the most common form of gender violence beginning from the very first grades. Conflicts between boys and girls usually involve violent physical retaliation from boys. Although initial provocation in the form of taking possessions, interfering or verbal insults may come from both sides, boys express strong antagonism towards females and inevitably retaliate with violence while girls tend not to fight back for fear of further retaliation from the boy concerned and other boys.

When boys talk about beating girls, they express a sense of entitlement as males to beat females. Simultaneously, they express disdain for females because they are weaker. This sense of entitlement over females and their bodies begins at about Grades 5, 6 and 7 to translate into sexual harassment involving squeezing of breasts, touching of girls' private parts, forced kissing, voyeurism and sexual remarks.

Experience and exposure to violence and gender violence for primary school learners increase beyond the confines of the schools. Across all four sites, the majority of primary school learners report that they feel safer at school than at home or in their communities. Experiences of violence within primary schools from outside elements were common particularly in the gang-ridden Cape Flats and rural area before the introduction of security fences. However, since physical enclosure of schools, the most direct negative impact from the community is stealing of school property after hours. In the case of the Cape Flats primary school, gangster violence occurs around the school after hours and on weekends leaving bullet holes and bullet shells lying around the school grounds.

Despite less direct experiences of violence from outside elements during school hours, many learners suffer the impact of violent experiences in their local communities and homes. High levels of criminal violence and gangsterism particularly on the Cape Flats make communities and homes unsafe. Educators report that learners have been shot in gangster violence on the Cape Flats and learners have witnessed shootings, murders of parents and other community members in all four sites particularly during the civil strife of the early 1990s in Gauteng townships and KwaZulu-Natal communities. This violence impacts on learners' academic performance and on levels of violent behaviour within schools.

High levels of domestic abuse, often alcohol related, are common across the four sites. Girls are also vulnerable to sexual abuse from fathers or other male partners, male relatives, lodgers and neighbours especially where there is overcrowding, apathy among parents and neglect or little parental presence at home after school. On the Cape Flats and in the rural community, crowding is so severe that children witness sexual acts at home. Educators believe that gender

violence at school is directly linked to what children see and experience in their homes and communities. The Cape Flats school reports that many children come to school in a state of agitation on Monday after a weekend of violence either in the home or community or both. Township, rural and Cape Flats schools deal with several cases of abuse and violence in homes every month. Some of the most serious cases of domestic violence come from the Cape Flats where, for example, a learner witnessed her mother stab her father to death with a kitchen knife before school.

Travelling to and from school poses problems for all learners, but particularly for girls across all four schools. While girls feel safe in the former model C primary school, once they leave the school premises they are harassed by their peers. Learners, especially the young, report that they are at risk of being mugged and having their money and possessions stolen by their older learners or by criminal elements in their communities. When travelling to and from school, girls face verbal, physical and sexual harassment including the threat of rape on a daily basis. Most vulnerable are girls who walk long distances to school. Girls are most at risk where areas are sparsely populated, particularly in rural communities. In some cases this stops them from coming to school.

### **5.3 Violence against girls at high schools**

At high schools, violence and gender violence in particular increase dramatically both in seriousness and frequency. Corporal punishment and random physical violence by educators continues in the Gauteng township and KwaZulu-Natal rural schools and verbal abuse between educators and learners is common except in the former model C high school.

High schools appear to be focal points for gangsters and out-of-school youth in local communities. They often gather at the school gates when school ends waiting for friends and girlfriends. Consequently learners report that they do not feel safe leaving the school grounds nor do they feel safe walking home. Both girls and boys fear being robbed by criminal elements and girls particularly fear the possibility of rape. Both girls and boys try and walk home in groups.

Often conflicts within and between gangs and groups of boys play out in school. Learners and educators worry about their safety as such groups often bring weapons onto school property. In the Gauteng township and Cape Flats schools, gangs operate on school grounds gambling and smoking dagga. These gangs are often particularly violent towards girls.

Beating, bullying and stealing of money are common across all four high schools. Younger girls and boys are most vulnerable. Swearing and verbal abuse are also common among learners. Verbal abuse, jeering and public humiliation are common among learners and in the township and rural high schools verbal abuse and humiliation of learners is also common among educators.

Most girls do not feel safe at school and girls have to be careful where they go on school property. It is dangerous to be alone particularly in places such as toilets that are not monitored and deserted areas. Bullying, threatening and beating are the most common forms of gender violence against girls. Boyfriend/girlfriend relationships are also often characterised by violence.

Verbal abuse and touching are also common forms of sexual harassment in all four schools. Boys comment on girls' bodies and also try to touch their breasts and private parts. Refusals to proposals by boys are often met with violence.

Although rape is underreported, it is not uncommon. Many schools are confused about what should be considered rape. Most schools have experienced cases of rape on school property and report cases of girls having suffered rape in their communities. Girls have to negotiate their daily lives around the threat of rape across all four schools. Staying after school for extra-mural activities or extra lessons is often dangerous with fewer people around and the school gates open.

Allegations of learner/educator affairs occurred in the Gauteng township and the rural KwaZulu-Natal schools and there were also reports of harassment by staff at the Cape Flats high school. Such relationships are a serious problem for girls. Refusal usually means failure at school. However, some girls have relationships with male educators for economic gain or status. Sometimes, boys resent male educators as they feel a sense of entitlement towards their female peer group. Conflicts sometimes arise between male educators and boys. Younger male educators often see high school girls as peers.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In summary, the following patterns of violence against girls occur in all eight schools although levels of violence and harassment are lower within, but not beyond the confines of former model C schools:

- Bullying and beating of girls is the most common form of violence against girls and starts from first grade continuing up into high school.
- Boys commonly respond to conflicts with girls using physical violence.
- Sexual harassment involving touching, kissing and sexual remarks becomes common from Grade 5 and increases as girls enter high school. Girls at primary school are more at risk of rape in their communities than at school. Girls at high school are at risk of rape both in schools and in their communities. Rape is common but underreported.
- Educator/learner relationships and harassment of learners by educators and other staff are common in high schools.
- All girls are at serious risk of rape, sexual harassment, beatings and muggings going to and from school.
- Girls are similarly at risk in their homes and communities. Domestic abuse, rape and other forms of sexual harassment are common and impact on learners' performance at school.

However, we also found that boys experience high levels of violence and are also at risk both in schools and in their communities:

- Boys also experience beating, bullying and mugging in school and going to and from school.
- Boys are at risk of sexual harassment and rape, particularly younger boys.
- Interactions among boys and male social structures are characterised by aggression and violence. Boys, especially younger boys, are vulnerable to violence from other boys.
- Boys on the margins are feminised as a form of degradation by being sexually harassed.

## Chapter 6

### School responses to violence against girls

In examining school responses, we identified four areas that play a key role in schools' ability to respond effectively to violence against girls:

- Levels of awareness and denial.
- Understanding the nature and causes of violence against girl.
- Policies, procedures and structures for dealing with violence against girls.
- Scope and implementation of preventative measures.

#### 6.1 Levels of awareness and denial

While learners at all eight schools have detailed knowledge about the kinds and levels of violence against girls that take place in their schools and communities, awareness and knowledge vary considerably among educators and parents.

Some educators are fully aware of the nature of gender violence perpetrated in their schools and extremely concerned. Female educators are usually the most aware and concerned. They are often involved, at an individual level, in helping girls who come to them with problems. However, male educators, except in the formal model C schools, are generally reluctant to talk about violence against girls. Distancing themselves from engaging with the issue, they often claim to be unaware of any problems, directly deny that violence against girls occurs or try to minimise the problem. These attitudes impact the ability of schools to co-ordinate a comprehensive plan of action to deal with violence against girls. Educators' denial also discourages girls from reporting violence against them.

Parents vary greatly in their degree of awareness, knowledge and concern over violence against girls. Often parents, particularly of learners in the township and rural schools, claim to have no knowledge or experience of violence against girls in their communities or schools and demonstrate a serious lack of awareness or knowledge about their own children's activities, schooling or problems. Many parents adopt a passive *laissez-faire* approach to parenting. A minority of parents are actively involved in their children's schools and work with their children's schools to try and protect learners running aftercare centres or accompanying children to and from school. However, the vast majority of parents across all eight schools make little effort to assist schools to ensure their children's safety.

#### 6.2 Understanding the nature and causes of violence against girls

Informants' understandings of the nature and causes of gender violence also vary. Most agree that historical factors such as apartheid and socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment contribute to high levels of violence in their communities. Also frequently noted are social factors such as crime, male social structures such as gangs, subcultures and street corner groups, boredom and alcohol and drug abuse.

Educators overwhelmingly feel that patterns of violence and violence against females originate in the home. In their experience, learners from violent homes usually display violent behaviour at school. Attitudes to women are also learnt at home. Even when learners are not directly exposed to violence against females in their homes, they are often exposed to high levels of violence against females in their neighbourhoods. In rural areas, many parents point

to the inability of families to transmit traditional values and practices because of the absence of parents in rural communities.

Parental apathy and reluctance to talk about sex and gender relations means learners have no clear guidelines on what is normal and acceptable behaviour in relation to the opposite sex. Educators feel lack of good role modelling, parental guidance and involvement is a key factor in high levels of violence against girls.

However, educators particularly in township, rural and Cape Flats schools, where random physical violence and corporal punishment are still used as forms of discipline, do not consider how these violent responses might contribute to the cycle of violence and violence against girls in schools. Educators also fail to recognise that attitudes of male educators towards female educators and gendered roles and responsibilities within schools also impact on learners' attitudes and behaviour. Gendered roles such as females leaving males to enforce discipline through violence, overt threats and harassment from male to female educators reported in township schools or the treatment of female educators and learners as sexual objects, also set the tone for gender relations and violence in the school.

Some educators do recognise that schools contribute to distorted views and behaviours between the sexes when they fail to give adequate guidelines about what is unacceptable social behaviour between boys and girls. A minority of educators also recognise the mixed messages and signals that schools provide when staff do not adopt a unified, consistent and serious response to gender violence and where policies and clear guidelines with unambiguous consequences to acts of gender violence are not communicated and consistently and publicly enforced.

Except in the rural community, informants, mostly female, also identify social attitudes, particularly patriarchal attitudes, within communities as a key cause of violence against girls. Both female educators and learners point out that assumptions of male entitlement to specific roles, privileges and status contribute to violence against girls. They point out that women are seen as inferior and weaker and therefore not worthy of respect. Male learner attitudes reveal that respect is usually accorded to those who are stronger than oneself rather than based on mutual respect for individuals. Such attitudes are prevalent in male social structures in both township, rural and Cape Flats communities and translate into abuse of girls.

Despite informants' understandings of some key causes of violence against girls, there were three areas of confusion that emerged across all schools but less so in the former model C schools. Firstly, learners and educators are often confused as to what behaviours are socially unacceptable. Socially unacceptable behaviours such as touching girls are often seen as normal play rather than sexual harassment. In some instances, boys express the belief that girls like to be touched and teased. Secondly, talk among informants often reveals an assumption that the male sexual drive is uncontrollable and men cannot be held responsible for sexual actions. Such beliefs often underlie blaming the victim of sexual violence. Even very young boys hold girls responsible for provoking sexual harassment and the male sexual drive, and it is not uncommon for male and even female educators to hold similar views. Such beliefs are common even among the strongest opponents of gender violence at schools. Thirdly, violence against girls, when perpetrated by a boyfriend or suitor, is frequently understood as a normal part of such a relationship. If a girl complains, it is her fault, as she should have known that would happen when engaging in such a relationship.

Understandings and beliefs about the nature and causes of violence against girls impacts how schools approach and deal with the problem. High levels of violence against girls occur in schools and communities where the above three confusions are widely held beliefs. In schools such as the former model C primary school where there is zero tolerance for violence no matter what the cause, violence against girls is kept to a minimum.

### **6.3 Dealing with violence against girls: Policies, procedures and structures**

Reporting is crucial for schools to deal with violence against girls. All schools officially claim that they encourage learners to report incidents of violence and violence against girls. However, in practice, schools vary in the degree to which they encourage reporting both explicitly in every day discourse and by creating conducive conditions in which girls can report incidents of a sensitive nature.

There are many factors that make schools less conducive environments in which to report violence against girls. Firstly, learners are reluctant to report violence against girls where educators are not clear about what is socially unacceptable behaviour, do not take violence against girls seriously or blame the victims. In township and, to a lesser extent, Cape Flats schools, learners often rely on only a few educators to take such incidents seriously and to protect them. In rural schools, learners report that almost no one takes reports of violence against girls seriously.

Secondly, girls often fail to report acts of violence to educators because they claim educators do not keep reports confidential. Trust is a crucial element. Trust between learners and educators is often more evident at primary schools where educators consider their roles to be not only pedagogical, but also parental. While many learners trust their educators, learners may still require extra encouragement to report issues of such a sensitive nature. At the former model C primary school, they have introduced a care system where learners can talk to educators in private about their problems and the educator may not inform anyone of what is said without the learner's permission. However, at high schools the relationship between educators and learners is often antagonistic and authoritarian. Educators often have a *laissez-faire* approach to learners leaving them to their own devices. Lack of concern for the welfare of older learners and insensitivity result in mistrust making it difficult for learners to report gender violence especially sexual violence.

Thirdly learners are often reluctant to report gender violence where educators and schools are inconsistent in their responses, do not provide adequate support to victims or do not follow through with punishing the perpetrators. Learners report that they are reluctant to report violence for fear of retaliation from the perpetrator(s) particularly where schools do not have mechanisms to protect victims. In social environments with high levels of violence, schools are not able to protect learners especially if such threats can be carried out beyond the school. While schools may be able to protect victims within the confines of the school, fear of retaliation in the community often prevents learners reporting violence.

In actual practice, primary and high schools are often inconsistent in their responses to violence against girls except in the former model C schools. In township, rural and Cape Flats schools, responses to verbal abuse, bullying, hitting/beatings and touching range from proper disciplinary procedures to being ignored. In many cases, educators, particularly males, do not take reports seriously. They ignore the complaint, blame the victim or reprimand the perpetrator, but no further action is taken. Even in cases of injury, schools respond inconsistently. Often violence between boys is taken more seriously. With cases that schools

deem to be serious, educators use corporal punishment or call in the parents. Some schools have committees to deal with disciplinary cases, but often the manner in which they are handled is ad hoc and inconsistent.

Although these schools' policies state that forms of violence such as sexual harassment are not allowed, schools do not specify nor adopt a unified policy on what constitutes sexual harassment or unacceptable behaviour towards girls. Neither do they have detailed guidelines of procedures to follow in responding to different forms of violence against girls. Consequently, educators and learners are unclear as to what level of response is appropriate for different offences, educators cannot adopt a unified response and learners remain confused about the seriousness of their actions and the consequences.

In contrast, former model C schools have set policies and detailed guidelines as to what is socially unacceptable behaviour towards girls and what responses are appropriate. The school and educators are consistent in applying policies and these policies are clearly communicated to both learners and parents. There are set procedures and proper structures such as disciplinary committees that handle cases in a consistent manner and clearly communicate the outcome of each case. There are even set procedures as to how policies and actions are communicated to educators and learners. Thus learners are aware of what is violence against girls, the consequences and that rules governing their behaviour are consistently applied.

Where criminal cases of violence against girls such as rape or child abuse occur either in the school or at home, most schools, except the rural ones, have committees and procedures to deal with such cases. Some schools appear to provide adequate support for the victims while others do not. Educators are not usually trained or experienced to deal sensitively and appropriately with serious cases and in some cases victims experience further trauma as a result. Schools investigate each case and then the appropriate support institutions such as the Child Protection Unit (CPU) and social welfare are called. In many cases, there is insufficient support from these institutions usually because of lack of personnel to deal with such cases. Support from these institutions often depends on the principal's ability to establish support networks with individuals within these institutions in order to obtain adequate responses. However, follow-up on cases is often a problem. Lack of communication between police, district offices of education, social welfare and the schools means schools do not always hear about the outcome of cases. Misinformation about the outcome of cases such as perpetrators going free means educators and learners lose confidence in the system discouraging them from reporting and dealing adequately with other cases of violence.

#### **6.4 Preventing gender violence: Scope and implementation of preventative measures**

Dealing with violence against girls through facilitating reporting, having a unified and consistent application of rules and appropriately serious sanctions are a crucial part of prevention. In addition, there are three other avenues through which schools work to prevent violence against girls:

- External control and monitoring of spaces and people.
- Prominence of messages within the school's discourse.
- Presence in the formal curriculum.

Where schools make maximum use of all four, violence and violence against girls is kept at a minimum within schools.



## **External controls**

All the schools in this study, with two exceptions, are fenced off from local communities and access is restricted during school hours. Gates are locked and, in some cases, security guards or intercoms, are used to monitor and restrict access. These exclusionary measures have prevented violence in the community from impacting on schools to some extent. (The schools that do not control access are the rural high school where the security guard does not restrict access and the township primary school whose location and close relationship with the surrounding community provides a measure of safety.)

Within schools, spatial exclusions, spatial separation and monitoring of learners' movements and behaviours vary. In township schools, neither spatial separation nor monitoring of learners occurs. Although some spaces are declared out of bounds, township schools do not enforce these restrictions. Learners are very much left to their own devices during breaks and, in the high school, often during class time. Spaces within schools can be relatively unsafe and unpredictable. In the rural schools and the Cape Flats high school, a similar pattern is evident.

However, in the Cape Flats primary school and former model C schools, younger and older learners and boys and girls are separated during breaks and educators monitor learners. Schools restrict learners' access to certain spaces either all the time or at certain times. In former model C schools, learners cannot move anywhere without permission during class time, movement between classes is monitored and access to toilets is strictly supervised.

## **Public discourse**

Public discourse on violence against girls includes foregrounding the issue in every-day talk, in assemblies and classes, through special programmes and events and in the every-day practices and behaviours of the school community. In all four primary schools, the issue of violence against girls and related issues such as respect are part of public discourse in the schools. Some primary schools, namely the township and rural schools, address violence against girls within the general discourse on respect and violence while others, particularly the Cape Flats and model C schools more explicitly emphasise that violence against girls is not acceptable. Except for the rural school, all primary schools have special programmes and days that highlight social issues including violence and safety within schools and communities. However, the township school and model C primary schools are the most proactive in this regard. The former model C high school has a similar approach.

However at the other three high schools, there is little public discourse on preventing violence against girls and schools do not appear to have as many specific initiatives and programmes on social issues. Educators speak less on moral behaviour and often are abusive both verbally and physically to learners. Educators in these three schools often do not adhere to minimum standards of professional conduct such as attending classes or punctuality. They make little effort to create a peaceful and respectful learning environment, or to inculcate a sense of pride in teaching and learning. This creates a sense of lawlessness that is conducive to violent behaviour and violence against girls.

Where schools and particularly educators adhere to professional standards, take pride in their profession, respect learners by talking to them instead of hitting them, adopt a caring attitude and encourage learners to take pride in who they are violence is reduced. A school's approach expresses itself in small every-day practices of kindness and respect to people, respect and care of school buildings and the environment and in ritual procedures that instil in learners an intrinsic motivation to respect themselves and others because it is right.

## **Curriculum**

Guidance classes across all schools address gender violence, violence, safety, crime, drugs and sexuality. However, guidance classes do not take place in the rural schools. How much focus there is on violence against girls and how effectively the problem and related issues are addressed depends on the guidance educators. Girls and boys at primary schools appear well informed but this does not always translate into behaviour change. At high school, learners learn about rights and responsibilities but do not take gender issues and violence seriously. Discussions often lead to arguments between boys and girls and girls withdraw for their own safety. On their own, guidance classes have limited impact. Learners particularly at high school dismiss them as a waste of time while educators say that high school learners are more receptive to information that comes from people other than educators.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Schools where there are lower levels of violence against girls and where violence of this nature is more adequately addressed have the following characteristics:

- A respect for the local physical environment and a pride in the appearance of their school.
- Educators that display high standards of professional behaviour.
- Educators that appreciate the serious nature of violence against girls.
- A well-managed school with strong hands-on leadership.
- Educator participation in all aspects of the school especially monitoring of learners' behaviour.
- A widely accepted view of the aims and ethos of the school.
- A strong ethos of caring.
- Specially constituted structures to deal with social problems such as violence.
- Clear and well-communicated procedures to deal with different forms of violence.
- Unified, consistent and adequate responses to different forms of violence.
- Strong and clear messages about how to behave and what is unacceptable behaviour.
- Public emphasis on the seriousness of perpetrating violence against each other and especially girls.
- Strong anti-violence messages from educators.
- Higher levels of parental involvement.
- A good and active relationship with the surrounding community.

## Chapter 7

### Solutions: Schools and communities speak out

In this chapter we focus on solutions. We spoke to many informants, from education officials to grandparents, about their ideas on how to solve the problem of violence against girls. Many people had difficulty thinking of solutions. Others were already actively doing something to deal with this problem and some schools have found ways of dealing effectively with the problem. As people shared their problems, needs and suggestions, new solutions emerged. All of their ideas are recorded below.

We have grouped the main problems, possible solutions and recommendations under four key themes:

- Facilitating individual change.
- Improving community and school responses and resources.
- Making the most of human resources.
- Promoting awareness and knowledge.

Under each theme we highlight in bold key problems and needs followed by a brief explanation and informants' suggestions and recommendations in italics.

#### 7.1 Facilitating individual change

##### **Talking about the problem is often easier than thinking of solutions.**

Many participants are able to provide detailed descriptions of the problems of gender violence in their communities and, in some cases, insights into the nature and dynamics of the problem. However, many participants were often at a loss when asked to think of solutions.

- *Campaigns that focus people on thinking solutions are vital if people are going to move from apathy to activity.*

##### **Many people look to others and institutions to solve the problem of violence against girls.**

Few informants focus on their individual potential or responsibility in creating and implementing individual or local community interventions no matter how small the impact.

- *Public recognition and focus on individual and community initiatives may empower local people to initiate their own or similar ideas.*

##### **Many people think mainly in terms of large-scale social and economic interventions as solutions to this problem.**

Most informants talk about the need to address poverty and crime and to improve policing. Such options are not viable either in the short or long term. A minority of informants recognise that local changes are also essential and can make an important contribution to solving the problem of violence against girls. Often informants seemed discouraged by the enormity of the social problem, lack of institutional support, community apathy and the small impact of local initiatives. They often find it difficult to recognise the often small, but significant successes of small initiatives or to see the potential of turning local initiatives into wider programmes. Instead they concentrate on the difficulties involved in maintaining such interventions in the face of a seemingly unsolvable and relentless problem.

- *Highlighting successful local interventions will also encourage individuals and communities to implement similar ideas.*

**Informants overwhelmingly look to external controls and sanctions to combat gender violence.**

Schools with resources and strict systems of monitoring by educators do succeed in keeping violence to a minimum although it does not fundamentally change sexist attitudes. However, such control is difficult to enforce in many schools. Informants often feel that solutions lie in:

- *Greater yellow presence and monitoring with support from the army particularly at times when learners walk to and from school.*
- *Exclusion of schools from communities through enclosure with electric fencing as ordinary fencing is not working.*
- *Division of boys and girls into separate schools, classes or areas.*
- *Introducing and increasing security guards and class prefects.*
- *Searching learners and educators.*
- *Using surveillance systems such as video cameras.*

**Emphasis is on forcing people to behave through external sanctions rather than on the need for internal motivation.**

Punishment and even violent punishment is seen as an effective deterrent. Educators, for example, feel that corporal punishment should be used against learners involved in gender violence and see no contradiction in this response. Only learners point out the contradiction in punishing violence with violence. Parents, educators and learners stress that people *must* learn to respect and that messages need to emphasise the impact of violence and the consequences for those who perpetrate it. However, continually telling people what to do or teaching them about desired behaviours, as part of the curriculum does not seem to have the desired effect. While informants talk about restoring moral order often through religion, it seems that a deeper level of engagement is necessary. While some level of control and sanction are a necessary part of preventing violence against girls, a small minority of informants suggest that:

- *Rather than only dictate behaviour, schools need to engage with educators' and learners' experiences, beliefs, hurts and hates, understandings of their own humanity and how they relate to others in a non-sanctioning mode to unpack the dynamics of gender relations and violence with learners in homes, communities and schools.*
- *Learners need to work through their feelings, emotions and uncertainties. This engagement helps learners to work out and establish their values. This approach they believe helps people to be comfortable with who they are and their responses in difficult situations. The chance to speak openly, demystify feelings, and find ways of channelling their feelings in a positive way also help learners to establish the boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not particularly in terms of sexuality.*
- *Learners need to solve their own problems. Learners are continually hearing from others about what they should/shouldn't do, but don't get a chance to solve their own problems with the support of adults. They hear other people's input and they have to carry it out, but it doesn't necessarily solve their problems.*
- *Life-style camps with this underlying approach followed by peer support and counselling at schools is one way of implementing this kind of intervention but informants also believe it can be done in schools. Informants believe that this approach*

*where learners can talk freely about gender issues is the only way to tackle issues of masculinity and patriarchy and respect for the opposite sex.*

- *Some informants suggest that life-style camps that include traditional cultural elements can play an important role in replacing some of the traditional elements that have been lost among urban male youth in the transition from boyhood to manhood.*
- *Informants also suggest that such programmes should target girls in relation to self-respect and self-esteem as part of counteracting violence against girls.*

A minority of informants believes that personal reflection and development approaches are more likely to solve violence than more structures and committees. Institutional approaches need to move away from policing, threat and high-handedness to valuing and respecting people through courteousness, support and a positive approach that recognises people as human beings of worth and the dignity of education both as an educator and as a learner. The crux of the problem of violence and violence against girls lies in rebuilding people first in order to rebuild the social fabric of schools.

### **The attitude of men towards women and boys towards girls is a key problem both in communities and schools.**

Violence among boys and as an integral part of male social structures as well as male attitudes towards women are key factors. Education of perpetrators is key to addressing violence against girls.

## **7.2 Improving community and school responses and resources**

### **Informants found it difficult to put forward ideas on what structures could be set up and how co-ordination and use of existing resources could be improved both in communities and schools to prevent gender violence.**

Most focused on the need for more institutional support from the police, social welfare and the Department of Education. They feel there should be special structures and more personnel from these institutions to assist educators in dealing with gender violence.

- *Schools need to focus on making maximum use of existing resources rather than relying on unlikely additional resources.*

### **Boredom and lack of facilities for youth at schools and in communities is seen as a crucial problem.**

Informants feel that extramural activities are an important way in which youth can be creative, constructive and stay off the streets.

- *Schools need to promote extra-mural activities.*
- *Youth care centres either at schools or in the communities should be available to youth during the week and on weekends where they feel safe and can engage in meaningful activities.*
- *Special centres for girls could be introduced where they feel safe and continue learning after school.*

**Some schools do not always use or consider the potential of partnerships with local community organisations and their local communities.**

Where schools make an effort to involve community organisations and the surrounding community, these co-operative relationships with the community protect learners, educators and the school and help to prevent violence against girls.

- *Schools should be encouraged to think of and implement ideas on involving local communities and establishing local partnerships to prevent violence against girls.*

**Schools do not make maximum use of Department of Education support and initiatives and there is often a lack of communication.**

Local district offices do not appear to have systematic monitoring of violence against girls and arrangements with schools on dealing with violence are ad hoc with the DoE dependent on principals reporting cases.

- *Systematic monitoring of violence against girls and notification are important to understand the scale of the problem and for district offices to respond adequately.*
- *More adequate ways of communicating with district offices and provincial departments, perhaps appointing a school liaison officer, will help schools benefit from DoE initiatives on dealing with and preventing violence against girls.*

**Schools within communities do not communicate with each other.**

Primary and high schools have little to do with each other.

- *Schools should be encouraged to work together to share ideas, policies and joint interventions to combat violence against girls.*

**Educators often lack the necessary skills to deal with violence against girls and the capacity to cope with numerous social problems they encounter on a daily basis.**

- *Educators need to draw on the skills of local organisations.*
- *Educators need support and training from both educational institutions and other sources.*
- *District offices should consider creating specific posts to help schools deal with violence against girls.*
- *Clusters of counsellors possible from local communities who are trained to listen and help learners at local schools could also be set up.*

**Lack of unity about what is unacceptable behaviour towards girls and lack of guidelines on how to treat different forms of gender violence means schools are inconsistent and do not treat such violence appropriately.**

- *Schools need to develop specific policies and detailed guidelines and appropriate punishments or responses.*
- *Educators need to respond similarly and consistently to violence against girls.*
- *Guidelines and punishments need to be communicated to learners, educators and parents.*
- *Learners need to be reminded of the guidelines and consequences on a regular basis.*

**Lack of communication in the schools and between support institutions and schools on how cases of violence against girls are dealt with result in a loss of faith in the system.**

Learners often lose faith and trust in educators. Although informants realise that policies, ideas, information and feedback on incidents of violence are not effectively communicated within and across schools and other institutions, few participants realise the extreme negative impact of inadequate communication and most are unable to think of strategies to improve it.

- *Interventions on effective communication are needed.*

### **7.3 Making the most of human resources**

Most informants believe a key solution to addressing violence against girls lies with educators, parents and learners actively working together. Informants identified a number of crucial roles that parents, learners and educators need to fulfil.

#### ***PARENTS' ROLES***

**Parents are not always aware of what their children do, nor do they play an active part in their children's school lives.**

Parents found it difficult to think of ways in which they could play a role in assisting the school in preventing violence.

- *Parents need to be encouraged to play a more active role both in terms of guiding learners and in actively preventing violence.*
- *Education programmes for parents are essential.*

**Parents often do not talk about sex and relationships with their children.**

Educators and learners feel that parents need to talk about sex and sexuality and the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour towards girls so that learners begin to understand sexuality and what is sexual harassment.

- *Parents need workshops on these issues and on how to communicate with their children.*

**Parents' involvement with their children's schools is limited.**

Educators and learners feel that parents need to be involved with the school in preventing gender violence. Educators felt parents also need to stop protecting their own children who commit acts of crime and violence, but could not give any suggestions on how to do this.

- *Parents need to be involved with the school in disciplining learners who are violent against girls.*
- *Parents need to be part of the planning on violence against girls and related issues in the curriculum as a way of educating parents and gaining support in reinforcing what is taught at school.*
- *Learners and educators suggest that unemployed parents can become more involved in schools helping schools to prevent violence against girls by providing aftercare, monitoring children after school and assisting with learning and extra-mural activities.*
- *Unemployed parents can implement systems of accompanying learners to and from school.*

**The absence of parents in many communities, for purposes of work or because they have died of AIDS, means grandparents often become primary care givers.**

Largely ignored, often marginalised and sometimes unable to see the contribution they as older people can make, respondents feel that there is a need to find ways to value the knowledge and skills of this generation.

- *Grandparents and the elderly should also be encouraged to play active roles in schools and communities.*
- *Valuing story telling and cultural knowledge and other skills grandparents have will help them regain their roles and value within their communities.*

### **LEARNERS' ROLES**

**The potential of learners to find solutions was largely overlooked by adult respondents who focused almost exclusively on how learners should behave.**

- *Adults need to realise that learners can play a responsible role in combating violence against girls.*

**Many learners did not appear to see any role they could play in preventing gender violence.**

Some learners look to adults to solve this problem, while others believe they have a responsibility to stop violence.

- *Some learners feel that they could form their own groups and initiate campaigns.*
- *They also felt that, as learners, they need to exert peer pressure on others to stop violence and that they could become role models.*
- *Some learners suggested bringing in former learners and celebrities as role models to talk about non-violent approaches.*

**Learners expressed a strong need for schools to fully involve educators, discuss issues of violence and develop policies and solutions.**

Learners also stressed the importance of parents and educators working with them as equal partners to solve violence against girls.

- *Youth can be involved in safety projects in their communities and schools in partnership with the police and other role players.*

**Learners feel that there is a crisis of leadership among youth.**

The current failure of LRC's and lack of leadership skills is of concern to learners.

- *The development of leadership skills among learners is a key felt need.*
- *Learners suggest that learner leadership needs to work in partnership with educators and parents.*

**Learners believe that parents and educators do not really understand what is happening in their lives and there is great deal of mistrust between them.**

Communication, understanding and trust between adults and learners are important elements in combating violence against girls and especially for encouraging reporting.

- *Counsellors and a person responsible for promoting reporting, communication and co-operation with all parties in dealing with violence should be appointed at each school by the DoE.*



- *Peer and community counselling for youth were also suggested.*

### **EDUCATORS' ROLES**

**Educators commonly use random physical violence as a form of discipline.**

- *Educators need to be educated about alternative forms of discipline.*

**Some educators, particularly male educators, do not take violence against girls seriously and often respond inconsistently.**

- *Educators need education on what is socially unacceptable behaviour and to deal with it consistently and appropriately.*

**Male educators sometimes respond violently to female educators and principals.**

- *Educators need to undergo gender sensitivity workshops as well as working through their own responses to conflict.*

**Relationships between male educators and learners occur.**

Some male educators do not seem to be fully aware of what is socially acceptable behaviour for educators.

- *Encouraging reporting and policies that protect victims is needed to combat sexual abuse.*

**Educators often adopt a hands-off approach towards learners.**

Lack of monitoring, no response to misbehaviour and not taking proper professional responsibility to teach and make sure learning happens, are common and contribute to higher levels of violence.

- *Systematic monitoring by educators urgently needs to be put in place in many schools.*
- *More work on effective school management is vital to reduce violence against girls in schools.*

## **7.4 Promoting awareness and knowledge**

**Informants stressed the need to continue to raise the level of public awareness, knowledge and discourse around violence against girls both in communities and schools.**

- *Knowledge of one's rights, how to exercise those rights, what resources to utilise, and who to call upon especially when the police do not help, were key areas of need that informants identified.*
- *Schools need to continually stress in public discourse that violence against girls is not tolerated.*
- *Informants stressed the need to maintain debate around violence against women and girls through multi-media campaigns including television and video, radio, newspapers, booklets, posters and other visual material and special programmes in schools as well as continued curriculum initiatives on gender, sexuality, violence and values.*
- *Informants who are aware of UNICEF's work in other African countries would like to see sharing of visual material and voices from other countries about the fight against gender violence.*

- *They also believe that many excellent and effective initiatives by small NGOs such as the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's school programme on violence, KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence's interventions in schools, and the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand's recently published work on alternative forms of discipline to corporal punishment need to reach educators and learners. They suggest that NGO programmes, where suitable, should be reworked into accessible and informative packages for wider audiences and distributed through various media including videos, pamphlets, talks and workshop campaigns with educators. For example, wider dissemination through the media and in the form of manuals and pamphlets on alternative approaches to discipline other, than punishment that is physical or demeaning would fill a need among educators who still cling to corporal punishment as the only way to enforce discipline. In particular, they feel that visual impact is strongest where learners and educators can see and compare situations involving the use of violence or alternative forms of discipline rather than just reading or hearing about these in pamphlets or workshops.*
- *Special campaigns that harness the creative skills of learners such as drama festivals on gender violence, writing and painting were also suggested.*
- *Exemplary cases of non-violent schools and approaches and educators, learners and community members who have made a contribution in small ways should be publicised and made more widely known.*

## **7.5 Conclusion**

It is clear from our work in these communities and schools that the pattern of automatic violent-responses to conflicts exacerbated by sexist attitudes towards females is one of the key problems and an important challenge. Additionally there needs to be a balance between adequate external controls such as monitoring behaviour and internal motivation of individuals to behave with respect and tolerance towards one another. Too much reliance on external controls does not solve the problem of violence against girls. It either drives such behaviour underground or into other social spaces. No external controls makes for a situation of anarchy and much still needs to be done on school management across schools in South Africa. Finally, the challenge to make violence against girls and gender equity of central concern in every-day life remains. Putting this problem at the top of the public and schools' agenda is important if women and girls are to have equal access to education. Adequate education for girls and women remains a crucial factor in South Africa's development.

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## Appendix 1

### A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a primary and high school in a Gauteng township

#### The community<sup>4</sup>

Motsemotle is a black urban township outside Johannesburg. Established in the early 1960s to house black people forcibly removed from the nearby formally white town, it is today home to approximately 240 000 people. Motsemotle still bears the signs of apartheid deprivation with most people experiencing poor living conditions. A long-term housing shortage has resulted in severe overcrowding. Housing mostly ranges from shacks to small two-room and four-room box-shaped houses. Currently there are 30 000 formal units with an estimated average of eight people per house. Around the outskirts of the township, informal settlements are increasing. Residents with the economic means have extended and renovated their homes to give them a separate identity, while wealthier inhabitants have moved to formally white suburbs.

Recreational facilities are few. The main sports facility is a soccer stadium with additional facilities for boxing, judo, basketball and tennis. Officially demarcated sports grounds are virtual dustbowls with no amenities. There are no parks and no recreational equipment for children. Recently, Motsemotle has acquired a swimming pool. There are three community centres and one library with very few books. There are three shopping centres, several outdoor markets, a police station and five public clinics. There are very few recreational facilities for youth. Beauty, talent and music events at the local community hall are the main forms of entertainment. There are no theatres, restaurants, cinemas or music venues.

Unemployment, alcohol abuse and violence particularly crime are the major social problems in this community. No official figures are available on the unemployment rate, but it is probably between 50 and 75%. Residents who are employed often work in menial jobs for low wages. Men work mostly as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in local industries while women find jobs as domestic workers in nearby formally white suburbs. Some unemployed township residents depend on small local businesses for economic survival. Residents sell fruit and vegetables, chips, sweets and cigarettes from small make-shift stores on the street. Some run small grocery stores from their garages or set up telephone kiosks outside their homes. Other residents have opened taverns in their homes. Hairdressing salons, fixing cars, local taxis, catering and sewing are some of the ways residents make a living. Some families depend entirely on a grandparent's pension while others have no income at all.

Unemployment among youth is high and few matriculants find jobs. While young women can, to some extent, occupy themselves with daily household chores, out-of-school male youth have little to do but while away their time in groups on street corners, a feature of male urban youth culture across Gauteng townships since the early 1930s. High unemployment, inadequate schooling, few recreational opportunities and overcrowded homes have forced young men onto the streets where they have developed their own social structures, activities and ways of communicating. Many young men have become involved in criminal subcultures.

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<sup>4</sup> This section is drawn from Brookes (2000).

Like all townships around South Africa during the apartheid era, Motsemotle experienced severe political violence and social upheaval. Political turmoil during 1976 and the mid-1980s increased levels of violence in this community. Simultaneously during the 1980s, the lifting of influx control led to sudden and massive increases in the local population. Without the necessary expansion of infrastructure to accommodate these increases, existing meagre resources and services came under increasing pressure. Massive retrenchments in the industrial sectors led to increasing unemployment. These economic and social circumstances combined with political tensions between Inkatha hostel dwellers and ANC township dwellers in the early 1990s led to virtual civil war in this and surrounding communities. Encouraged by *agent provocateurs* known as the third force, township residents experienced some of the worst violence in South Africa during that period.

After the first democratic election in 1994, political violence subsided giving way to large criminal gangs that terrorised township residents. The police services, involved in restructuring as well as criminal activities, could not and did not have the will to counter wide-scale criminal activities. Conflict among criminal gangs within the police force provoked wide-scale killings of gang members with the co-operation of the police leading to the eventual elimination of some of these gangs and the emergence of organised crime syndicates that control crime in this community with the co-operation of the police services.

## **Violence in the community**

### **CRIMINAL RELATED VIOLENCE**

Crime is high in Motsemotle. Hijacking, burglary, mugging and petty theft are common. Crime syndicates, often involving township male youth, carry out armed heists, hijack cars and burgle houses in and beyond the township. Street corner youth rob residents of cell phones, jewellery and money. Community members report that poorer residents also steal from neighbours leading to suspicion and mistrust among township residents.

*Hijacking has become the worst amongst them all. It can happen any time... Also stealing has become a problem. This thing can happen any time even during the night when the occupants of the house are still around. (Female community member.)*

*Normally people from poor families tend to look at other houses and think that those people who live in those houses are rich and they break in those houses, among other things, furniture and other valuables in the house are stolen. (Female educator.)*

*Criminals get information from the people in our community. That is why they do whatever they do and kill our parents. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

Crime has become a normalised way of making a living particularly for youth. Parents mostly turn a blind eye to youth who suddenly acquire possessions beyond what they can afford. Children's activities often mean food on the table for some families and parents do not question the source. Even when neighbours know the identity of perpetrators of robbery and murder, they are reluctant to come forward and give information for fear of reprisals. An ineffective police service adds to feelings of insecurity and lawlessness.

High levels of crime mean most residents experience, witness and continually feel the threat of violence. Gratuitous and extreme violence is often part of criminal acts and both young and old consistently express feelings of fear and vulnerability.

*Where I stay at night around 9, you will hear shooting of guns next to the circle where they normally take other people's things, where other people's cars are hijacked. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

*At night I don't feel safe. When my father comes home late, we lock the door, turn off the lights and watch TV and pretend as if nobody is in the house. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

*We don't feel safe in our community. At night we hear shootings of guns near the bushes... I no longer feel safe to play with my friends near the bushes. We have lots of gangsters and older boys who have guns, so we just feel threatened by this. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

*As a single parent and being a woman, I feel threatened with violence. I am selling during the day at school and after school business continues at home. Sometimes I feel threatened because these people can rob me inside my house, many people are wanting to buy even strangers. So I am always threatened with violence. (Female parent.)*

Criminal violence affects everyone. Young and old, male and female automatically negotiate their daily lives around potential threats to their safety.

*It affects the community a lot because you can't walk alone during the night as most of it happens during the night... I'm safe where I stay even though I don't know what will happen the next day. (Male educator/SGB member.)*

*The community is not safe for both boys and girls. Crime is not strictly affecting girls. It also affects boys. (Female parent.)*

*I don't think that boys and girls feel safe. like for instance, if boys visit their friends, they make sure that they are not later than 6 o'clock, otherwise on their way home they might be robbed of their clothes, cell phones, and for girls I can say they don't because there is a freeway around, so they think that if they are passing sometimes they might be grabbed and raped, so they always feel threatened. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

Police response is generally so poor that residents have given up hope and no longer expect the police to respond. In many cases police take from four hours to two days to respond to reports of hijacking, burglary, theft and murder and often the police do not respond at all.

*The police usually don't respond. When we call the police, they take their time to come: sometimes they don't come at all. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

*The police don't respond in time and when we act, we get blamed for our actions. (Female parent.)*

*The police tend to be biased towards perpetrators of violence. They favour criminals more than us as the community. Many cases have been reported. However, police never responded (Male community member.)*

*The problem is that even though, the police know the suspect, they don't arrest them. (Male educator/SGB member)*

The police allegedly collaborate with crime syndicate gangsters in the township and do not respond to hijackings or reports of stolen cars. Reports of stolen cars in the neighbourhood are simply ignored by police until the car has been stripped and burned. Not even a murder arouses a response from the police. The bereaved usually have to report murders at the police station unless the person who was murdered happened to be an exceptionally important person in the community. When reporting missing children, parents are often told to go and look for their children themselves and police increasingly demand that complainants do their own police work.

### INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Residents are not only victims of criminal violence but also witness severe interpersonal violence among criminals and other members of their community. In interviews, young children reveal frequent exposure to extreme violence.

*In most cases, they [thugs] like teasing, fighting one another, and at the end, the person is killed. My area is not a safe place because we are surrounded by a dumping area, with wasted water, and almost every Friday, a person is killed and dumped at that place. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

Community members also describe fights that break out between older boys and young men who gamble on street corners.

*The most common violence that boys in our community experience is that of crime, fighting each other when gambling. I have seen older boys gambling and afterwards they fight each other. (Female parent.)*

*The most common form of violence against men and boys is when they are gambling with dice. (Female educator.)*

*The boys always fight each other, smoke dagga and drugs and they drink alcohol. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I have seen boys where I stay fighting each other after gambling and one was seriously injured because he was stabbed. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

Aggression and violence not only occur among criminal elements, thugs and gamblers, but are also central features of township male youth culture. Survival on the township streets is a key problem for all young township men (Brookes 2002). To be safe on the streets amongst his peers, a young man must not only appear a potential physical threat to other young men, but he must also maintain the core township masculine image of being streetwise and city slick among his peers. Being streetwise involves knowledge of the latest township lingo, the ability to perform and hold the attention of his street corner group, knowledge of what is happening on the township streets and the capacity to engender respect among his peers on the basis of fear. Young men who cannot or choose not to conform to this image of township masculinity are often targets of ridicule, verbal abuse, threats and beatings (Brookes 2002). Threats and beatings even come from friends and acquaintances fearing that by association with a young man who does not conform, they may also become targets for other young men in their street.

*Like a former friend of mine, Thabo, smokes dagga, robbed people. He once wanted to rob me. He said if I give him the money to buy alcohol, he will release me, and then I*



*said I don't have the money to kill you. He sees me as a stupid thing, because I'm always carrying the Bible and going to church.* (Male learner, Grade 10.)

Beatings are an important part of male status on street corners. Giving a beating enhances a young man's status within his corner group and among the corner groups on his neighbourhood street. Receiving a beating is both humiliation and emasculation that means a young man becomes an object of ridicule, a target for beatings by other young men and is no longer safe in his neighbourhood. The collective neighbourhood memory remembers this beating and may ridicule him for years. With so much at stake, the dynamics of street corner groups can involve intense rivalry and dislike. Personal grudges become group conflicts as young men involve their friends in attacks on other boys and groups.

*It is unsafe, because [the neighbourhood] is unsafe because it is full of hatred, if one hates the other, he will form the gang (a group) with other rivals and fight the person who is hated.* (Male learner, Grade 10.)

Young men also direct their aggressive behaviour towards bullying younger boys who report they do not feel safe. Younger boys report that they also fear rape and some educators confirm that rapes of boys do occur.

*As a boy, I don't feel safe around my community. There are older boys who like to beat younger boys. They always accuse us of things that we haven't done... Also younger boys are being raped.* (Male learner, Grade 5.)

*Boys are being sodomised by older boys.* (Female educator.)

Emulating the older boys, young boys engage in similar aggressive behaviour towards one another. Young boys report that they fight over minor issues, provocation is common in interactions and boys often hold grudges that result in physical violence.

Alcohol and increasing use of dagga and harder drugs make criminal elements more dangerous and aggravate conflict between other young men making them more volatile and aggressive.

*Like in my street, you will find the boys standing/sitting in groups smoking dagga and after they get drunk, they will start insulting people, argue and fight.* (Male learner, Grade 10).

Alcohol and dagga also contribute to violence between residents in local neighbourhoods. Particularly on weekends, brawls involving guns and knives break out at local taverns spilling out into the street causing damage to residents' property and endangering their lives.

Aggressive and threatening behaviour between neighbours and among other community members also occurs. Conflicts between neighbours lead to verbal abuse, threats of violence and violence sometimes forcing residents to flee their homes. Verbally abusive interactions and abusive acts are common.

*But what I can tell is that to insult someone on the location is like it is a normal language because if he does not get what he likes he will insult in return...* (Female parent.)

*Vulgar words are daily bread in our community.* (Male educator/SGB member.)

*If you try to talk to them... if you try to calm them, they will spray your house and write sex or love on your wall, or leave condoms inside your yard. (Male parent.)*

Children also use abusive language and bully others especially younger children.

*For example, last year in December, we were shooting crickets and these girls swore at us saying 'Ntho tsesimang mashishi' (You things without pubic hair). We never responded because we were afraid that they might beat us. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

Lack of institutional protection and enforcement of laws creates added tensions in the community resulting in people taking the law into their own hands.

*There are community meetings sometimes where they discuss how to deal with community violence. They even resort to taking the law into their own hands because police are not responding to the reported violence. (Male educator/SGB member.)*

## **GENDER VIOLENCE**

Gender violence features prominently in every-day township life. Widely held conceptions of male superiority and entitlement combined with a normalised pattern of violent response to conflict translate into violence being accepted as a normal and even expected aspect of gender relations. A man's self-concept is intimately bound up with social conceptions of masculinity that are directly tied to his status in relation to women. Masculine status rests strongly on the symbolism of visible actions that women are obligated to perform. Accordance of separate and privileged spaces, specific norms of politeness reserved for males and preferential treatment within a strong hierarchical order sustain the sense of male superiority and entitlement necessary to masculine identity.

A similar but cruder dependence on the exercise of male status through relations with women exists among young men. A young man's status among his peers fundamentally depends on the ability not to be weak or a 'softy' in relation to females. A girl, who answers back or tells a boy what to do or insults him, especially in front of his peers, delivers the ultimate humiliation to his masculinity. If a girl refuses a proposal, the boy's response is usually: *Ucabanga ukuthi usmart/umuhle* (You think that you are smart/nice). This implies that the girl thinks she is too smart for the boy. By these acts, a girl places herself in an equal role to which she is not entitled, challenging the boy's assumed natural superiority. Public threat or actual physical violence in front of his friends is the only means of restoring his male dignity in his and the eyes of his peers. Even children are aware of this pattern of gender violence from a young age.

*Yes it [threats of violence] normally happens particularly to girls if they refuse to have affairs with the boys, they are being threatened by boys. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

*Older boys beat girls if they don't want to have affairs with them or sleep with them. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

Talk among young men often involves boastful tales of beatings or threats to beat women and teach them a lesson. Informants also point to the male attitude of entitlement to sex in love relationships and to multiple relationships. To not have succeeded in getting a girl to have sex is to be labelled a softy and to fail in the eyes of one's peers.

*Boys and girls have love affairs. The aim of which is to have sex. If the girl does not cooperate when the boy wants sex, she is beaten up by this boy. (Female educator.)*

*There was an older boy around our neighbourhood who beat his girlfriend. He wanted to sleep with his girlfriend and the girl refused and she got beaten. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

*Men are the cause of the problem. They sleep around with other women and when a woman questions this, she is beaten. (Female educator.)*

In a violent climate, the male/female dynamic fundamental to males' conceptions of masculine status translates into volatile gender relations expressed in verbal humiliation, physical and sexual abuse in the domestic sphere and beyond. Domestic abuse of children and women by men is the most common form of gender violence.

*Mostly in our community, men abuse their wives. (Female educator.)*

*There are useless fathers who like to abuse their wives and children emotionally, physically and sexually. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

*Older fathers, once drunk, they beat their wives and force them to sleep with them. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

*Family violence is common. Sometimes you see parents fighting each other in a way that they scream at each other or sometimes fight outside the house. (Female educator.)*

*Men will tell women: 'You are nothing, you are not working, you depend on me, and I give you everything.' (Female educator.)*

While sometimes hidden, physical violence in the domestic sphere often occurs in public. The result is that even if children do not witness or suffer abuse in their immediate families, they often witness it in the neighbourhood. Every learner interviewed described cases of abuse they had witnessed. Most community members can recall cases of men assaulting women and many community members see physical punishment of women as a man's right. Those who disapprove often see it as a private issue and do not intervene either to report or stop violence.

*I have also seen a father in my neighbourhood stabbing his wife in front of his children. Now his children no longer feel safe, they always come to my place. The father behaved like this because he separated from his girlfriend and now he takes that anger out against his wife. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

*I have seen in our neighbourhood this father, when he is drunk he beats his wife and children. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I once saw a girl who was beaten by her boyfriend. The boyfriend accused the girlfriend of having an affair with another boy. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

Alcohol is a major contributing factor in domestic abuse. Educators describe alcohol abuse as a serious problem among parents and youth leading to violent behaviour as well as child abuse and child neglect.

*The main social problem in our community is that of alcohol abuse. Young boys and girls drink alcohol and most of them are not schooling. You will see them drinking alcohol during the day, sometimes during the week. (Male educator.)*

*Also alcohol abuse has become a serious problem in our community. Mostly you will find parents drunk, neglecting their children and sometimes you'll find these children being dirty and you begin to wonder where the parents are. (Female educator.)*

From informal conversations and formal interviews with women and girls, sexual harassment and sexual violence is a common experience in the community. Most girls do not feel safe in their communities.

*But for boys, I cannot say they feel safe or not, because I'm not sure. But girls are not safe, they are afraid to be raped sometimes. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

Many young boys also are keenly aware of the problem of safety for women and girls.

*Women and girls are always threatened with violence in our communities. Wherever women go, they just don't feel safe. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

Adult women also report lack of safety.

*As a woman, we are not strong enough to fight for ourselves. So anything can happen to you any time. (Female parent.)*

*You know sometimes when you are in the streets, you will find a group of boys smoking dagga and drinking alcohol in public. When you pass them by, you always wonder as to what might happen to you. You always feel threatened. (Female parent.)*

*Women and girls are always threatened with violence. We do not feel safe here. (Female educator)*

Of particular concern are male strangers on the streets, neighbours and lodgers who offer young girls money and gifts in exchange for sexual favours particularly when parents are not at home. Girls living in shacks in informal settlements are even more vulnerable. In the streets, girls report being scared of boys on street corners and of unfamiliar males who offer them rides and presents.

*We always meet male strangers and they always like to offer us things. Sometimes they send us to the shops or sometimes they go to the extent of asking us to accompany them to town and they will buy us some nice presents. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

For girls, moving around within the township is unsafe. Often local taxis refuse to enter unsafe streets and girls must then continue to their homes on foot.

Girls also face sexual comments, threats, verbal abuse, bullying and beatings from boys on the streets.

*Women and girls get verbally abused or degraded. (Female parent)*

*Women and girls get verbally abused or degraded. Name calling of girls by boys is fashionable. This is a common problem among younger and older boys. (Male educator.)*

*When a boy proposes to a girl, if they respond negatively you will find a boy swearing at the girl, calling her names like Isifebe 'bitch'. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

*For example, if you are a girl and wear a short skirt, boys will always call you names like you dress like a prostitute. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*They [older boys] normally make nasty remarks about girls. Sometimes they do that for fun. They like to do that when in groups and they start to provoke girls knowing very well that girls won't do anything. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

Despite being underreported, rape appears common in this community. Some adult female and male informants report that they have not heard of rape incidents. However, young girls and many female educators at schools confirm that rape is a serious problem. One female parent claims that it is mostly fathers who rape their daughters. Two weeks before we interviewed her, another female parent discovered a woman being raped near her home. Talk among young women invariably drifts towards rapes that have happened in the community as they pass by the houses where either victims or perpetrators live. Male neighbours are often the perpetrators of rape as they can prevent the victim from reporting it with threats of violence and even death. The principal of the primary school says that young girls with absent parents are most vulnerable. Young women report how two young male neighbours raped a young girl in their street and then threatened her if she reported them. Young women also report rapes by boyfriends and first dates. In some cases, pregnancy results. Often boys then threaten the girl with physical assault or even death if they report it. For young women, there is little protection if they do report such cases. When young women report cases, they claim that the police do not take them seriously jeering at them and asking whether they enjoyed the experience. Police response to rape means that few report rape cases.

### **Being at primary school**

Situated on the outskirts of one of the oldest sections in Motsemotle, lies Palesa Primary School. Founded in 1964 simultaneously with the establishment of Motsemotle, Palesa started with ten classrooms, an office, a staff room and a storeroom. Today, Palesa has 29 classrooms, toilets for both males and females and an administration block housing the principal's office, two offices for HOD's, a staff room, library and storeroom.

Small two- and four-roomed houses surround the school on two sides. An open tract of land and small businesses border the remaining sides. Older boys in their late teens and early twenties hang on one street corner where there is a street stall next to the school. Occasionally groups of young men in cars hang out near the school gate.

The school is tidy and the grounds neat. Stones mark the driveway, lawns and flowerbeds. A local father tends the garden. Despite being entirely fenced off from the surrounding community, local residents, particularly the elderly still keep a watchful eye on the school premises to prevent theft, vandalism and dumping. The school has established a close relationship with the surrounding community to keep the local area clean and to protect the school.

*Those people who stay near the school have become vigilant when it comes to those people who dump at the school. We rely more on our community for looking after the school even if teachers are not around. (Female parent)*

However, the school still experiences cases of theft and vandalism despite the community's care. Most recently, the removal of electrical cables from some classrooms has left them without electricity and some windows and doors have been broken. There are burglar bars on windows and security gates on all doors bearing testimony to pervasive crime in the area.

Pain-staking care of this 1960s style school cannot prevent 37 years of wear and tear. Walls are beginning to crack in the oldest classrooms, paint is peeling and the school appears old and worn. Only the three newest classrooms and the staff toilet look new. As a reminder of this past era, scratched wooden desks attached to benches face old badly finished chalkboards.

Despite its aging appearance, the school is well kept and reasonably well equipped. A framed mission statement hangs in the administration block and the school takes much care to make the interior clean and attractive. There are three computers for staff, one for the deputy principal and two for the secretaries. The school has an office phone, two printers, two photocopying machines and a fax machine. A recent donation of 30 computers from a company in a neighbouring town means township learners from Grades 4 to 7 now have the rare opportunity in the township to become computer literate. The library has books and science equipment for experiments. Palesa also offers extra-mural activities such as debating, music, netball, soccer and cricket. Each sport has its own grounds that are well maintained with all the necessary equipment.

### *THE LEARNERS*

Palesa has 1 184 learners, 630 boys and 554 females. Despite being a primary school, some learners are as old as 19 years of age. Originally established as a school for mother-tongue speakers of Northern Sotho, Palesa also caters for Southern Sotho and Tswana speakers and more recently for Xhosa and Zulu-speaking children. Attendance is high at about 99.5% on average. Dropout cases are rare with approximately 4% of parents requesting transfers during the year to move their children away from abusive fathers or because they are relocating.

Many learners are from poor families. Massive retrenchments in the late 1980s and early 1990s mean few parents have employment. The school estimate that only 25% of Palesa parents have employment. Many work as domestics or labourers earning meagre wages. Some parents rely on small business enterprises such as selling fruit and vegetables, recycling cans or collecting metal and wire to sell to scrap yards. Others run taverns, tuck shops and phone kiosks. Some parents report that such small business enterprises are not sufficient to maintain themselves and their families. Parents, especially single mothers, report that life is a daily struggle in the face of poverty. Many families rely on grandparents' pension money or on child support grants and some have virtually no income at all. Up to ten people in one family may rely on a grandparent's pension. Single female parents may have multiple relationships for economic survival while educators report that others work as commercial sex workers. Many learners come from informal settlements beyond the borders of Motsemotle and must travel several kilometres to and from school on foot.

Learners live in dwellings ranging from shacks in informal settlements and one-roomed houses to middle class eight-roomed houses. Shacks and one-roomed houses often accommodate between five to ten people. Four-roomed houses accommodate from five to fifteen people. The average number of occupants of houses in higher income groups ranges from three upwards.

### *THE EDUCATORS*

Palesa has 31 educators, 12 males and 19 females. Male educators range from 30 to 52 years with service periods from 1 to 22 years. Female educators' ages range from 29 to 64 years. Length of service among females is from 3 to 47 years. The principal is the oldest female staff member with 47 years service in education, the last seven of which she has been principal at

Palesa. The school has a support staff of four, two female secretaries, a male caretaker and a gardener.

The principal and most educators live locally and only a few have moved to formally white suburbs. Their comparative wealth means they are often targets of crime in township communities. During our month's visit, two teachers reported burglaries at their homes and most educators have been burgled. Many educators want to move out of the township to nearby formally white suburbs where they believe they will be safer.

### *RUNNING THE SCHOOL*

The school has a school management team consisting of eight educators, four HOD's, the principal and two deputy principals. The school management team is responsible for academic organisation and standards, general organisation and discipline. There is also a school-governing body (SGB) consisting of the principal, educators and parents. There are also separate committees for sports, cultural activities, catering, music, guidance, development and maintenance, first aid, HIV/AIDS and parents/educators. All of these committees meet regularly and maintain records of their meetings. The guidance committee, consisting of five females and one male educator, is responsible for the welfare of learners in the school and plays an active role in addressing social problems at home and at school. When problems cannot be solved locally, the committee works closely with the social worker assigned to the school from the Child and Family Welfare Society. There is an educator/learner/parent committee.

There are codes of conduct for educators, learners and parents. A code of conduct is sent to every parent. Codes of conduct emphasise respect for people and property, religious and cultural tolerance, punctuality and attendance. Violence and sexual harassment also feature in both educator and learner codes. Learners are encouraged to report threats of violence in both community and school. Corporal punishment is, on paper, still allowed, but only in front of the principal and parent. The code of conduct states that children should not be subject to random punishment. A demerit system is described although we did not observe it in practice. Suspension occurs after 10 points. Sexual harassment by pupils is a 30-point demerit.

The District Office (DO) of the Department of Education (DoE) has assigned an Institutional Support and Development (ISD) officer to look after Palesa. Palesa reports that they receive visits from the DoE and that officials do attend meetings at the school. Although the school says DO officials are very busy, the school feels that the DO supports them. The DO and the DoE regularly run workshops for educators. For example, during the period of this research, Palesa teachers attended workshops at their school on the disciplinary code and alternatives to corporal punishment.

The community considers Palesa to be one of the best schools in this township. Together, both principal and deputy principal exercise the necessary leadership and managerial skills that ensure excellent running of the school. The principal is seldom in her office preferring a hands-on approach. She goes to classes to check that educators are there and monitors teaching and learning. She checks learners' books and the educators' progress with their classes and records her assessment of their work. The deputy principal has created funding networks with local companies that have sponsored the purchasing of computers and building of classrooms. The school also links with other organisations such as Group Africa Recycling raising additional money for the school. Through recycling, Palesa has raised money to buy a video machine, television and fridge/freezer. The deputy principal has also introduced

enrichment courses for educators on Tuesdays and made sure temporary staff get permanent positions.

The school is very caring with educators visiting learners' homes to assist with problems. The school also contributes money to learners' families to help with funeral expenses and other needs. The school has a feeding scheme for learners. Approximately 280 learners participate in the school's feeding scheme. Funded by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the feeding scheme receives 45 loaves of bread delivered to Palesa every day. Educators, quick to identify learners who are hungry, say that sometimes learners do not eat for the entire day and become very tired at school. Educators immediately refer learners to the feeding scheme. Learners in dire poverty are given a loaf of bread and powdered milk to take home each day.

Underlying both concern and caring is the underlying metaphor of the 'school as family'. Educators, parents and learners use this metaphor to describe relationships in the school. Educators take on the key role of parenting at school.

*As parents we teach these children to respect each other, because Palesa is like one big family to us. When we send our children to school, we know that they are safe. They are with their parents (meaning teachers) during our absence as parents. We take these learners also as brothers and sisters. (Female parent.)*

*Also I take my male teacher as my father, with their presence in the school, I feel safe. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

This family ideology translates into a conscious, co-operative, caring and inclusive approach to solving social issues in the school. When parents cannot afford to pay school fees, for example, parents meet to work out they can help the parents pay through donations from other parents or fund-raising events.

*Most parents have been retrenched from work, but they do survive by working together as parents. In terms of school funds, there are these parents who cannot afford to pay the school fees, both parents, those who are working and those who are not, come together and show each other what they can do in order to help the children who cannot afford to pay their school fees... as a result of the meetings that we attend as parents, we come out with some good qualitative decisions that will accommodate everybody... Also we do have fundraising to assist learners who cannot afford. (Female parent.)*

Parental involvement is unusually high and parents are informed about how the school functions, including procedures to deal with violence and abuse. The school and parents agree that parental involvement is good, but could be improved. Parents participate in almost every aspect of school life. Parents have to sign reports and support from parents is high. Parents attend quarterly parents' meetings and participate in school activities such as family and fun days. They also participate in fundraising events, selling tickets or sponsoring prizes (if parents have the means) participating in games and taking part in cleaning campaigns with the local community in and around the school. One parent reports that she and other parents visit the school from time to time to see that things are running smoothly. The educators and principal say that parents contribute to decision making and have specific roles. Parents report that their involvement allows discussion to solve common problems.



*In our school, we normally have family day and we invite parents to attend such events. During these events we discuss common problems faced by our children and we come up with solutions. (Female parent.)*

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PALESA**

The walk to school marks the beginning of each school day for most learners at Palesa. For some the walk is no more than a few metres from their homes, while for others it can be several kilometres. Learners from informal settlements walk the furthest each day negotiating both deserted strips of dense undergrowth and a busy highway. Arriving tired and hungry, these learners receive something to eat before they go to class. On rainy and cold days, the principal tries to organise transport for these learners, but many simply do not attend school. Most learners walk to school without caregivers. Rare is the child whose parents can afford either the bus or the local taxi fare of two rand to take them across the township to school. Even more infrequent are learners whose parents have their own means of transport.

The ringing of the bell at 7:55 tells learners that assembly is about to begin. Everyone, including clerical staff, must attend. Assemblies have a strong religious character and there is a theme for each day. Assemblies have a core spiritual function and are taken very seriously. On Tuesdays, they invite religious guests including a local pastor to read scripture and preach. On other days, male educators, or in their absence, the principal, take it in turns to lead assembly. Following the singing of hymns, a male educator reads a passage from the bible and talks to learners about its message. The educator's message frequently emphasises love and respect for fellow learners and educators. Announcements by the principal and educators follow prayers and hymns. Learners must not disrupt assembly. Those learners who are late stand separately and have to pick up papers as punishment. Educators keep learners quiet by beating them on the head with sticks, pinching them or with verbal threats of punishment. Educators respond to disciplinary problems primarily with threats and random physical violence. Physical violence involves a rap on the head with a stick or pinching of ears or arms.

After assembly, learners and educators go to their classes. Educators make a note of who is absent and question learners closely when they return to school after being away. During our research a Grade 7 learner was absent for almost a week. Immediately when she returned, her educator asked her why she had been absent from school. The tearful learner told him that her father would not let her come to school, but would not give reasons. The child asked the educator to talk to the father. Suspecting possible abuse, the male educator immediately reported the case to the school's social welfare committee.

In class, most learners sit in single sex groups. Boys are often more badly behaved than girls. Some seem to have little fear or respect for authority and some parents say that learners do not respect their educators.

*Most children do not respect their teachers more especially boys. They are spoilt from home so they bring that to school by not respecting their teachers. (Female parent.)*

Some female educators highlight the bad behaviour of boys and point out that boys cause trouble with girls in classes. Some punish boys as a group making them stand outside class during break when it is cold.

Cleaning seems to be a core school duty and often takes place during class time. Some teachers report that they use the girls to clean classrooms. Others make both boys and girls clean saying that boys should also take responsibility.

At break times, male teachers retire to one classroom while female teachers gather in groups along language/ethnic lines in several classrooms. Male and female educators do not socialise for fear of giving the impression they might be having an affair. Ethnic tensions are also evident, since the introduction of Zulu and Xhosa languages into this predominantly Sotho school this year. SoPedi-speaking teachers are often critical of Zulu-speaking teachers.

During breaks, learners are free to stay in classrooms, move around the school grounds or go out into the street and to the shops. Some educators send learners to buy food for them. Boys and girls almost always play separately. Rough physical play is common among boys and small conflicts often turn violent. Boys play on the soccer and cricket fields or at the back of classrooms while girls stay in classrooms or play on the netball field. Boys tend to play on the outlying areas of the school grounds while girls tend to congregate in the centre. Boys and girls' groups consist of about three to five members. They sit in these groups and have lunch together, play games or talk. Learners also tend to group along linguistic lines and learners, like their educators, sometimes criticise or blame Xhosa and Zulu learners when there are conflicts.

When school finishes, learners usually walk home in groups of two or three. Some wait for transport outside the school gates, but no one monitors their departure. Monitoring only occurs for those who play sport or go to aftercare.

Aftercare is a result of local community members' concerns about delinquency and abuse of children who do not have parents or whose parents are at work during the day.

*As old parents who are not working, we wanted to contribute something to our society, but we didn't know what to do. As older parents, we came together and were concerned to see our learners, particularly younger learners, running around the streets after school not knowing what to do simply because their parents work till late and nobody looks after them after school. Those learners are mostly victims of rape and abuse.*  
(Female community member, Chairperson of aftercare.)

Begun in 2000, six mothers/grandmothers and two fathers staff and fund this voluntary initiative out of their own individual meagre resources. Approximately 70 learners, whose parents are deceased or work or appear neglected, attend aftercare from 2pm to 4pm, from Monday to Thursday. Learners pay ten rand per year. They also only take learners who live close to the school so that they can ensure that they get home safely. They would like to take learners further afield if they had sufficient funds to organise transport. Supervision of homework is followed by lunch (bread and juice). Singing, including songs about HIV/AIDS, games, drama and story reading take up the rest of the afternoon. Aftercare promotes both cultural heritage and a culture of learning. Assistance on how to set up their organisation and raise funds has come from an NGO that looks after abused children. This organisation trained the mothers and fathers—each receiving a certificate in childcare. The idea has spread to four primary schools in Motsemotle, and they would like to expand, but lack the necessary financial resources.

On Fridays after school, a local young women's organisation calling themselves Itsoseng runs a club at Palesa for Grade 6 and 7 girls. Young women conduct games and life-skills activities

with these young girls. The principal and school encourage this relationship between young women in the community and girl learners.

### *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS*

The social environment has a significant impact on the school. Apart from poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS, violence, crime and gender violence in the community affect the primary school in a number of ways.

Theft of parts of school buildings such as electric cables and school property such as furniture and computers is an on-going problem undermining the educational development of children at Palesa. Petty theft within the school is also common. Learners steal both educators' and other learners' property. There are occasional incidents of weapons and drugs being brought onto school premises. In the most serious case, a Grade 7 boy brought his father's gun to school and pointed it at educators and learners. In another case, a Grade 7 learner had drugs in his possession. However, such incidents are not very common.

Although crime is endemic, the gates of Palesa are open during school hours and there is no security guard or caretaker to monitor access. The school claims they have had no serious incidents of violence in the school although one educator had her handbag snatched. The primary school does not feel that they have the problems of gangsters and drugs that high schools experience forcing them to keep the school closed off from the community for their own protection. Strangers do not appear to enter the school grounds and visitors are mainly parents or older siblings. However, some educators, parents and learners are concerned that the gate is not closed, but feel they cannot do so as the school does not yet have a tuck shop where learners and educators can buy food.

Learners are more frequently exposed to violence and serious violence beyond the confines of the school leading to aggressive and violent behaviour as well as poor concentration and academic performance at school. In some cases, children have witnessed violent deaths of parents. Many children witness abuse at home or are victims of abuse. In virtually every class, educators have learners who are victims of violence either in their homes or communities.

Many of these abuse cases are against girls and some involve sexual abuse. Although the school is aware of some cases, abuse may be far more common than official school records. Confiding in the young women from the young women's group, Itsoseng, who train them in life skills on Friday afternoons, girl learners talk about male lodgers, neighbours and relatives who offer them money, food and gifts and try to harass them. These girls tell the young women that they are afraid to report incidents to their parents or educators fearing that no one will believe them or take them seriously.

Both boys and girls do not feel safe walking home from school as boys on street corners sometimes steal their possessions and money.

*Girls are not safe coming to school and going home. For girls who travel on foot, anything bad can happen to them. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*Girls are not safe coming to school and going home. Sometimes when I travel home, I cross an open space. So I just don't feel safe because you will find boys hanging around. So anything can happen and you will never know. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I don't prefer walking alone after school; I prefer to be in a group. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

For girls, the problem is particularly acute. Boys often harass girls on their way home.

*When I go home after school, I cross the bridge and just next to the bridge there is a house where you will find many boys. So I don't feel safe when I have to pass next to them, because they might rape me and they also smoke dagga. So I don't use that route anymore, because when they have smoked that dagga, they tend to be dizzy and become violent. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

The principal reports that they have had six recent cases of boys harassing girls and in some instances raping them.

*There was a girl who was raped by a taxi driver. She kept quiet about this. Her performance in school became very poor. We interviewed her and we discovered the truth that the culprit threatened her with death should she tell anyone about the rape. We convinced her that no one is above the law. We informed the child's parents. The matter was referred to the police who then arrested the taxi driver. (Female educator.)*

Officials at the local district office of the Department of Education confirm that, in their experience, young girls are very vulnerable travelling to and from school. Officials gave two recent examples. In one case young men, in a house opposite another primary school in the community took young girls as they came out of school and abused them. In another case, a child had to change schools to avoid passing a neighbour who was abusing her on a daily basis on her way to school.

Learners, particularly girls, do not feel safe at home. Girl learners, but also younger boys, report that they stay in or play near their homes at all times.

*I always prefer to stay at home. I don't feel safe playing around. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*At home when my parents are not yet back from work, I always lock all doors because I am afraid of strangers who might just take advantage while my parents are not around. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I prefer playing with my friends not very far from home. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

In drawings and writings from Grades 4 to 7, learners, both boys and girls consistently identify many and similar places and spaces in their community where they don't feel safe. These spaces and places include: places where young men gamble, street corners, shopping centres and near the hostels. Both boys and girls express a high level of fear in their writing.

*That place is not safe for me because there is a hostel and many trees and big boys and they smoke dagga and glue. And at the shop, there are many boys and they can rape girls also sodomise boys. And even in the hostel there is danger because some men can kill you or rape you, they can do anything to you and the other thing they can do to you, they can take you far away from home, then after, they are going to kill you. Then your parents don't know where you are, but those men know because they have killed you, but your parents don't know where you are. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

Both educators and learners say they feel safe at school and girl learners report that they feel safer at school than at home or on the streets. Learners feel that educators act as parents to them while their parents are at work.

*I do feel safe here at school. I know nothing will happen to me because my teachers are always there, and therefore I feel protected. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I do feel safe here at school. I always rely on my teachers. I know if anything can happen, my teachers are always there. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

Despite the apparent safety of the school, similar patterns of interpersonal and gender violence occur within the school. Interpersonal violence at school reflects a similar, if more moderated pattern to that in the community. Rough physical play, provocation, insults and violent responses to conflict are common occurrences among boys. Learners and educators cite fighting and bullying as the most common forms of violence among boys. Of particular concern to younger boys are older boys who bully them and steal their money. Boys also bully other learners in class.

*There is this boy in our class who thinks that he is the boss. He always provokes other boys and accuses them of things that they never did. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

Educators claim that they have never had any serious incidents of violence against girls within the school. Both parents and educators believe that violence and gender violence are more prevalent and serious at high schools.

*Those children [at primary school] are still controllable and you can handle them. The only violence that we experience from them is still minor where in most cases you will find that the kids were still playing with each other. (Female community member, aftercare.)*

While more frequent and extreme gender violence does occur at high school, our observations at Palesa revealed that gender violence is common. Underlying attitudes and patterns are similar laying the foundations for more extreme forms of violence against girls at high schools.

Educators and learners say that the most common forms of violence against girls are beating and bullying followed by stealing of money and possessions.

*The most common violence among girls is that of boys beating girls. There are cases which girls report to us that they [boys] have stolen their belongings. Boys are always involved in stealing girls' property. (Male educator.)*

*These boys like fighting and beating girls. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

*The violence that girls experience in our schools is that of beating. Boys always beat girls for no apparent reason. They steal girls' pens, scissors and even their crayons. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

Girls across the school say boys respond to conflict with physical violence. In some cases this violence is quite serious, despite educators' claims. For example, we observed a nine-year old boy in Grade 4 stab a girl with his scissors because she was telling him what to do. The boy claimed that the girl was fighting him and that he overreacted. The educator told him to leave the class but no further action was taken against him.

From as young as 8 or 9, boys express a sense of power over girls and an entitlement that makes them feel they can do whatever they like to girls. Up to Grade 4, boys mainly seem to hit girls, but by Grades 5, 6 and 7, violence becomes more sexual. Female learners in Grades 5, 6 and 7, report that boys squeeze their breasts, touch their private parts and try to kiss them. Some boys peep at girls in the toilets.

*Here at school in our class there is a boy who likes to squeeze other girls' breasts and touch their private parts... Last year when I was in Grade 5, there was a boy in Grade 7 who normally accompanied me home. He used to touch me on my private parts and even proposed to have sex with me. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

*There are those girls in our class who like to play with boys. They are always beaten by these boys whom they like to play with. Sometimes when playing with these boys, they force us to kiss them and we don't like that. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

Some boys deny this sexual harassment, but at the same time claim that girls make them do it. Other boys admit that boys sexually harass girls but often downplay its seriousness.

*The only violence girls experience is that of sexual harassment, where you will find other boys touching girls and their private parts. (Male learner, grade 6.)*

Provocation, interfering with other learners, taking their possessions and verbal insults are common among both boys and girls in cross-gender interactions. However, physical retaliation almost invariably comes from boys. Much of this conflict arises during times when educators do not monitor learners such as during break. A general antagonistic and superior attitude by boys towards girls appears to underlie much of their aggression. When girls and boys talk about their conflicts, girls argue that boys steal their things and when they find out and try and take things back, the boys fight them. Boys claim that girls interfere with them and say: 'Girls piss us off. We can't sit and relax so we have to beat them.' Girls claim that they avoid boys, but the boys provoke, boss and bully them. Boys say they despise girls because they don't fight back but report boys to educators. Privately some boys admit that they provoke and take advantage of girls because they are physically weaker and unless boys appear stronger they will become targets for other boys. Boys say they get jealous of girls who think they are more mature than the boys and it is these girls they threaten with violence.

## **SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

### **Levels of awareness and denial**

While learners have much to say about gender violence, educators and parents vary in their knowledge and perhaps willingness to talk about it. Some educators seem more aware and concerned than others.

*There are those boys when they play with the female learners they normally touch them in their private parts, sometimes saying how the girls are sexy, saying these funny words e.g. your legs are sexy. And it's a common problem. (Female educator.)*

Others, particular male educators, in stark contrast to their female colleagues, seem unaware of the problem or unwilling to talk about gender violence.

*As I am still new at this school, I am not sure if they get harassed after school, but I have never heard of anyone's rights violated after school. (Male educator/SGB member.)*

*According to my understanding, children are well protected at school. Cases of violence are not reported. (Male educator.)*

While some parents expressed worry and concern for their children's safety, other parents seemed completely unaware of gender violence in their child/children's school. In response to the question: 'Can you describe incidents of violence against girls in the school, what happened and what the school did?', parents who are involved with the school replied:

*In my school, we haven't experienced that problem before. So I wouldn't comment on that. (Female parent.)*

*I haven't experienced abuse against women and girls. (Male parent.)*

### **Understandings of violence against girls**

Opinions as to the cause of violence and gendered violence vary. Socio-economic factors have significant impact. Parents and learners suggest that poverty, unemployment, boredom, and drug/alcohol abuse especially among youth contribute to crime and violence. Primary school educators feel that violence is higher among children from poor families. To make up for feelings of inadequacy or rejection because of poverty, educators claim that boys in particular try to enhance their status in various ways often violent ones.

Respect is a key issue. Boys and girls emphasised lack of respect especially for educators and authority as a major factor in violence. Some parents also identified violence on the environment as linked to violence against people and lack of respect. Parents feel that children turn to crime because they have little respect for parental authority and bow easily to peer pressure.

*Most children don't listen to us as their parents. They respect people from outside rather than at home. As a result they cause serious harm like rape, stealing or public violence. (Female parent.)*

*The cause of violence at school is due to lack of respect among learners... charity begins at home, if the learners were not groomed at their homes, they bring in that kind of behaviour to schools. (Female parent.)*

Educators overwhelmingly stressed that violence in schools has its source in violence at home. At primary school, they say that children from violent backgrounds are more physically violent during play. They constantly fight over small issues and swear at children, particularly younger children.

*Also those children [from violent backgrounds] tend to be rough when that one plays with other children. They cannot play without hurting other children. And sometimes these learners make serious issues out of small things because they have these violent backgrounds that they are coming from. Other causes of violence are that they tend to imitate actions from movies, e.g. Yizo Yizo. They want to be like Chester and Papa Action. (Female educator.)*

Both educators and learners feel violence and gangsters on television promote violence among learners.

*Even Yizo Yizo, which was lately shown on TV is influential and contributes to violence against girls. Boys like to imitate the actions of Chester and Papa Action and practice that at school. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

Some educators recognise that they do not communicate clearly what is acceptable behaviour to children and what is expected of them. There are no clear policies on what responses including punishments should occur for different offences. They also recognise that they are inconsistent in their responses to violence.

*I think some blame should be put on teachers because... we are not doing enough to make these children aware that certain things are just not good for them. There must be some serious punishment or a mechanism that we have if maybe a particular learner behaves like this and this, she/he goes for punishment. The school and the staff, even management should have ways of dealing with such problems. Also we should make a plan that these learners know what is expected of them. Also what is said needs to be practised. (Female educator.)*

Educators also feel that lack of parental involvement contributes to the continuing high levels of violence. Although learners do not think parental presence makes any difference to levels of violence.

*Violence occurs all the time whether parents are there or not. (Male learner, Grade 6.)*

Many learners feel that the principal and educators are not sufficiently strict and learners are allowed to behave, as they like.

Girls and educators say that boys' and men's attitudes of superiority and assumptions of power over girls contributes to gender violence as well as their need to enhance their status in relation to females among their peers.

*The attitude of boys towards us is negative. They think that they have power over us and that they can initiate things makes them superior. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

*Boys don't have respect because they think they have the right to do what they like. (Male parent.)*

*Men think they are superior to women. (Female educator.)*

*Sometimes some of them are not performing well at schoolwork, so they need to be famous for something else. (Female educator.)*

Despite the above insights, educators and parents often attribute violence and gender violence to the fact that learners are young and playful and accidentally hurt each other or simply want to mislead adults. Even seemingly enlightened parents and educators speak in the following terms when serious violence takes place:

*As a parent at the school my child was once beaten at school by another learner. His teacher brought the mother of the child who beat my child at school. I took my son to the clinic for a check-up as he complained about a headache. So I wouldn't blame the parent of the child because he didn't send her son to behave the way he behaves. Children are just children, they just play anyhow and anywhere. (Female parent.)*



*... you find these two kids playing together. When the other one feels like not playing anymore he claims that he has been beaten... These kids want us to act, as they want. They want to lead us. (Male educator.)*

Girls are invariably blamed for acts of violence where they are the victims.

*Girls cause boys to beat them up. (Female educator.)*

*Too much freedom leads girls to go for evening entertainment and they get engaged in many relationships. These girls end up beaten by boys. They get drunk and often become vulnerable to sexual abuse. They are the cause of this violence. (Male educator/SGB member.)*

Even in cases of rape, school authorities blame girls despite their awareness that girls are in danger on the township streets from bad elements.

*Gender violence is sometimes caused by these very girls who attract these boys. You know our girls don't go home early after school. They loiter until these boys get hold of them. They are the people who invite these boys by their behaviour. Sometimes they don't know how to behave. Perhaps if they knew they were the people inviting these boys to touch them... to rape them, they would really go home immediately after school and then they would be safe. Also the manner of talking. They just shout anyhow you know if a boy is standing there and then you pass and shout like a street girl, they come. (Female principal)*

*I think boys should stop hurting girls, and girls should stop mixing themselves with boys. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

As young as Grade 4, boys say that girls shouldn't wear short skirts as it makes boys rape them. While male educators say girls provoke boys to get attention, boys also blame girls for provoking acts of violence they commit against girls. Girls admit that they sometimes provoke conflict, but they do not believe that boys need to respond by beating them or fighting back as girls don't fight back. When girls do report incidents, educators often unfairly blame the girl.

*Boys sexually harass girls. They touch their breasts. There was a case like this, which was presented to us. We called the boy involved and spoke to him. We reprimanded the girl and told her to stop playing in front of the boys because boys get tempted. (Female educator.)*

### **Dealing with violence against girls**

Despite some serious ambiguity around who is at fault and whether the perpetrator should really be blamed in cases of gender violence, the school encourages learners to report all incidents of violence and gender violence and has taught learners the importance of reporting to prevent further injury. However, boys and girls have different opinions about the extent to which they feel safe to report such incidents fearing the perpetrators and the adequacy of the school's response. Some boys appear confident to report cases of violence and gender violence to school authorities and believe girls are free to do so. Other boys feel they cannot report incidents of violence to educators for fear of being beaten by the aggressors.

*I will not report incidents of violence. Here at school when you report these older boys to our teacher, they always promise to beat us after school. So I am just afraid because after school, teachers are just not around us to protect us. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

Some female learner interviewees report that they can report incidents of violence and gender violence while others do not.

*I will report incidents of violence to my teachers. If I see something wrong happening, I will always report it. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

Although some girls claim that they do report incidents of sexual violence, it became apparent that most girls do not report them for fear that they may not be taken seriously or even blamed. Some parents and educators are aware that girls do not report gender violence.

*Most girls don't report such cases to their teachers or to parents, they prefer to keep quiet. (Female parent.)*

When girls report incidents of gender violence, educators respond inconsistently.

*Teachers are always there to protect me, but other teachers are just not as good. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

Many educators do not take verbal, physical and sexual abuse by boys at school very seriously. Some girl learners report and our observations confirmed that educators tell boys to stop, but don't always take things further by punishing them.

Girls report that male educators are less likely to respond to their complaints of physical and sexual harassment. They rely on one male educator who listens to them and punishes the perpetrators and protects them when boys try to beat them. Male educators claim that girls want attention from boys and some girls agree that their behaviour and complaints about what boys do are acts of seeking attention.

*There are boys who like to beat girls for no apparent reason. And sometimes there are those girls who seek attention from boys, and then boys beat them. (Female learner, grade 5.)*

Many girls expressed a sense of hopelessness saying they had given up reporting such incidents particularly to male educators. They felt that male educators are biased towards boys. One female educator felt that her male colleagues did not respond because they did not understand the impact of gender violence on females and perhaps they had sexually harassed girls as boys and had enjoyed it. She doesn't think men and boys understand how it feels. She makes sure she punishes such behaviour immediately to prevent more serious violence against girls such as rape.

However, other girls say that the principal and some educators do address cases of gender violence especially if girls report it to the principal or educators who take such acts seriously. Incidents are sometimes referred to the learner, parent and educator committee, which talks to both parties and recommends punishment. Punishment for boys may be making them clean toilets, receiving corporal punishment and/or calling the boy's parents to school.

*The school punishes those who hurt girls adequately or sometimes parents are called to school. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I think the school protects girls and deals with those who hurt girls. Most male teachers in our school get rid of those people who hurt girls. They always punish them. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*There was an incident where a girl was beaten by a boy. The boy was reprimanded and the parents apologised. (Female educator.)*

Educators continue to beat learners in this school when dealing with disciplinary problems. This random violence ranges from a hit on the head for making a noise to a thrashing for bringing drugs into the school. Many educators believe that corporal punishment is acceptable and the only effective way to maintain discipline.

*There was a case of a boy who was having these drugs. He was hiding them behind the toilets... the parents were called and he was thrashed thoroughly. Up to this day everything is okay. (Female principal.)*

Educators resent parents, principal and district officials who protest or complain to educators, but they also worry about their safety, as they fear learners will retaliate.

*Anything that happens to a child, especially if a teacher has punished a child, it gets attention... If a child beats a teacher, no one will know that the teacher has been beaten... District officials are also tough on educators. A child will think of shooting me at night. Older learners pose a dangerous threat to educators who are strict... Corporal punishment is a sound punitive measure. (Male educator.)*

It appears that the school does not have a unified policy outlining specific responses to different acts of gender violence and educators are inconsistent in their responses. Serious incidents such as stabbing with scissors may receive virtually no response, while other cases elicit responses ranging from corporal punishment or punitive punishments such as cleaning toilets to involving the parents. Where parents are involved, the school holds them responsible for costs of injuries and damage to property. There seems to be little agreement as to levels of seriousness or whether the gender violence that occurs in this school such as beating, touching and verbal comments is serious at all. Violence between boys is often seen as socially unacceptable and treated more seriously, while violence against girls is regarded as play that has got out of hand and the victim is also to blame.

With sexual violence that is criminal such as cases of rape and child abuse, the school has a unified policy and plan of action with set structures and procedures. Educators know each individual learner's background and circumstances. Personal knowledge of each learner ensures that educators are immediately aware of behavioural changes that signal possible abuse. When an educator suspects abuse, she/he reports the case to the social welfare committee. The school has established the social welfare committee on its own initiative to deal with learners' social and personal problems. It consists of the principal and some educators. The committee investigates the child's circumstances and visits the home. The committee hands suspected cases of child abuse to the chairperson of the SGB who works with a police officer from the Child Protection Unit. They also involve a social worker from the local branch of the Child and Family Welfare Society. Together they counsel children and parents and work to find a temporary place of safety. Sexual abuse requires medical verification before the police open a case against the person(s) responsible.

While Palesa is one school that has procedures and committees to deal with criminal cases of violence against girls, district officials report that not all schools know how to deal with such problems or are as caring. They describe one case in which a primary school girl reported that her mother's boyfriend was abusing her. The school advised her to go to the social worker and sent her away on her own.

### Preventing violence against girls

Palesa reports that police officers from the Child Protection Unit, responsible for all schools in Motsemotie, come to the school and address learners about violence, safety, abuse, how learners can protect themselves and what they should do in cases of abuse. Educators and learners report one police visit early this year for safety and security day. However, both educators and learners have lost hope that the police can protect them. Police involvement in crime makes the community feel vulnerable and threatened. Learners as young as nine, express deep mistrust of the police. According to the primary school, community policing was introduced a year ago. Representatives from the school attended meetings but nothing has come of this initiative. In most cases where police involvement occurs, there is little follow up. The school community does not seem to know outcomes of cases that occur and they receive little feedback. Lack of communication on outcomes discourages people from reporting violence.

The school is also proactive in the face of violence. They give female learners advice about their safety. Educators advise girls to go straight home after school and not to roam around the streets. The school also makes use of health workers, social workers, the police service and members of community organisations to address learners about social issues including violence and safety. Health workers have addressed female learners on issues of sexuality and sexual development including puberty and menstruation. More emphasis is however, placed on educating girls, rather than boys.

Public discourse on violence against girls is high in Palesa. At assemblies, educators emphasise love, respect and honesty. If an incident of violence against a girl occurs, educators talk to learners about it at assembly. Educators warn boys about their behaviour and tell them how they should treat girls. However, educators do not respond as seriously to acts of gender violence as they do other forms of violence.

The school initiates a number of theme days during the school year focusing on social issues such as violence and safety, family, HIV/AIDS, current and historical events and issues of national and international concern such as the celebration of cultural heritage and the planting of trees on arbour day. Safety and security day focused on rape, drug abuse and crimes such as hijacking and violence. Palesa makes an effort to involve participation of both parents and outside community organisations in these theme days. The school also promotes extra-mural activities and partnerships with community organisations to keep children off the streets and engaged in constructive activities.

*We have different kinds of sport in our school. The reason being, we want to attract these children away from the streets. We also as parents during family day, we even participate in netball and these learners watch us. (Female parent.)*

Guidance classes address gender, gender equity, violence and safety, rape, and drug abuse. Crime, specifically drugs, abuse, hijacking and theft, was the entire theme for one quarter. We observed lessons on transport and safety where learners discussed safety on the way to and from school. Learners report that they learn from school and demonstrate that they are informed. They know they should walk home in groups and not to get into taxis with tinted windows. They talk about using coupons on the bus instead of carrying money and discussed with their educators alternative routes to walking across wide-open spaces where there are few people. All of these issues affect both girls and boys and boys also feel safer walking in groups. Developing sexuality is also addressed. The guidance teacher also teaches girls basic guidelines about safety. Girls repeated instructions such: Don't let your father's friend look

after you; Report rapes to parents; Phone 10111 if you are in danger; Don't talk to strangers or let them in or go to them; Avoid local taxis with tinted windows; You don't have to sleep with your uncles; Do not accept money from strangers or men you know; Speak to your teacher if you can't speak to your parents. Even as young as Grade 4, learners at Palesa appear well informed.

### **Being at high school**

Founded in 1986, Motshitshi borders one of the newer suburbs in Motsemotle. Motshitshi has offices and a staffroom for educators, toilets for both male and female learners, a library, a home-economics room and an administration block with a large staff room, toilets for male and female educators, offices for the principal, and deputy principals and a waiting room for parents and visitors. Recently the school has opened a tuck shop run by one of the parents.

Residential homes surround the school on two sides. Surrounding the back of the school are large empty tracts of land that learners have to negotiate to reach their homes in neighbouring residential areas. The school grounds are unkempt and neglected. Over the uneven and stony surface, the grass grows wild, and litter lies strewn across the school grounds. The buildings are in reasonable condition, but vandalism is evident. Graffiti, broken windows and doors contribute to Motshitshi's slightly abused and neglected appearance.

Like most schools, fences, burglar bars and security doors have become a regular feature. A razor wire fence encircles the school. Every classroom, the library, the media centre, the tuck shop the administration block and even the toilets have burglar bars on the windows and security gates on the doors. At the end of each corridor, there are burglar bars and security gates around the stairs. Every day, the caretaker locks each gate once learners and educators have left.

Classrooms are clean but mildly disordered. Desks, tables and chairs, often arranged in a disordered way, bear the marks of both use and abuse. The school has computers for the principal and secretaries, a photocopier, and home-economics equipment. The school claims to provide extra-mural sports activities including soccer, cricket, netball and tennis, but there are no proper sports grounds nor equipment.

### **THE LEARNERS**

Motshitshi has 1 640 learners, 717 boys and 923 girls. Learners range in age from 13 to 23 years. Most learners are from families where breadwinners are unemployed. They live in two- or four-roomed houses or in shacks in informal settlements. Like the primary school, families depend on small local businesses, grandparents' pensions or child support grants. Poverty is a serious problem and school runs a feeding scheme for learners without institutional financial support. Some educators contribute to the feeding scheme out of their own money. The school also tries to create employment for parents offering them cleaning, maintenance, gardening and tuck-shop work.

### **THE EDUCATORS**

Motshitshi has 49 educators, 20 males and 29 females. They range in age from 30 to 48 years. The principal is 37. She has a BA honours degree and has served as an educator for 15 years, the last three of which she has been the principal at Motshitshi. The school has a support staff of 11, 3 secretaries, 3 grounds man, 3 cleaners and 2 security guards. Out of these 11, 6 are female and 5 male. The school has 8 guidance teachers, 3 males and 5 females. Most

educators do not live in the local area. Some, including the principal, have moved out of the township and live in neighbouring formally white suburbs.

### *RUNNING THE SCHOOL*

The school-governing body governs school activities through various committees. The SGB meets once a month and consists of parent representatives, educators, learners and support staff. The senior management team (SMT) consisting of the principal, two deputy principals, heads of departments and a teacher liaison officer (TLO) manages the day-to-day running of the school.

The school also has a representative council of learners (RCL). While learners have lost hope in the RCL, educators feel that it is doing enough. Learners say RCL members are involved with criminals. Educators claim that they and the RCL work together to monitor gates but we did not observe this. Many learners do not know who is a member of the RCL. RCL members claim that they are involved and talk to learners about right and wrong, but they cannot describe actual programmes or actions that they implement.

The district office has assigned an IDS officer for Motshitshi. The principal says they communicate frequently with the DO but the support is not satisfactory.

The principal maintains tight control over teachers. She would not allow teachers who had not completed their portfolios to attend a memorial service for a teacher from another school. There appear to be professional relations between male and female teachers and educators respect the HOD's and submit their work. Educators have a code of conduct and the code of conduct addresses violence. Some educators are very dedicated both to their work and to learners while others appear not to be.

The principal calls in parents whose children are not performing well. Some educators go directly to the parents when learners have problems, but most parents only become involved in times of crisis. According to the principal, parents are not interested in their children's performance until they are told the child is going to fail at the end of the year. The principal often has to restrain parents from beating their children when they are told that their children are failing. Most educators feel that parents are not sufficiently involved in the school and tend to leave things in the hands of the school. When we interviewed parents, we found that parents were ignorant about social problems in their communities and the school. There seems to be little communication between the school and parents and parents know almost nothing about what their children do at school or what they learn. Most parents do nothing to support the school, and do not think their children have problems because their children have not said anything.

*Q: What about your child, is he happy about the system here at school?*

*I can say so, because he has not yet indicated if he has problems. (Female parent.)*

### *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MOTSHITSHI*

Most learners walk to school or take a local taxi. Afraid for their safety, almost all learners who travel on foot to school walk in groups. Both boys and girls are afraid that township thugs may rob them of their money. Girls are also afraid that boys in the township will kidnap and rape them or assault and sexually harass them. Negotiating the 'sganga', the large tracts of empty land separating the school from the residential sections, is a daily concern.

The school day begins with assembly with about 80 to 90 learners present. Learners drift into assembly in their own time and many do not attend. Educators also sometimes miss assembly. Male and female educators lead the assembly, but there is no scripture reading. Sometimes a parent who is a church member gives a message to learners. Learners also take assembly.

Directly after assembly, educators meet in the large staff room for their daily briefing. The principal, HOD's and educators responsible for various activities give out information, make announcements and close the meeting with singing and prayer. Some educators drift in late. Female educators and a few male educators sit on one side of the staff room and engage fully in the meeting while most male educators sit on the other side. They appear somewhat disinterested and disengaged from the proceedings.

Girls are responsible for cleaning classrooms before and during school. No one expects boys to clean. Educators make sure girls clean and boys complain if girls don't clean properly.

Educators are not always on time for the start of school. Some arrive at 8:00 when school starts at 7:45. Only a small proportion of learners arrive at school on time. The principal and two or three male teachers stand at the gate and confront latecomers. They carry sticks and beat or pinch learners who are late for school. The gates are then locked and only opened at the end of the school day at 14:30. No learner may leave the school premises without written permission from an educator. A small number of male educators maintain order within the school. Female educators do not play an overt role in maintaining order. They also tend to leave male teachers to ensure learners are in class.

Educators appear to attend lessons, but on closer inspection, they are often not there. Some educators appear to go to classes, but they are often seen chatting outside their classrooms or busy in their offices as if about to go to their classes until most of period is over. Learners also hang out in the corridors until the principal or educators tell them to go to class. After breaks, learners are even more reluctant to go back to class and the principal, armed with a stick, has to force learners back to class. Educators also chase learners to class, but do not always follow. Some learners miss classes and sit in the sunshine on the east side of the school where other educators will not recognise them.

In classes, learners sit in groups in Grades 8 and 9 and in pairs in Grades 10 to 12. Invariably they group themselves along gender lines. Boys usually sit at the back and do most of the talking in class. Girls participate much less than boys and are mostly passive. When girls try to talk, boys frequently interrupt them and dismiss what they say. Boys, even in Grade 8, disrupt classes especially to avoid writing tests. Those learners who want to write the test fear victimisation if they protest.

Grade 11's and 8's complain that educators belittle them especially older learners who are too old for the class. They feel that the only educator they can talk to is one of the guidance educators. Learners have lost trust and hope in educators. They feel educators spread their confidences.

At breaks, learners buy food from the newly opened tuck shop or from the women hawkers allowed on the school premises. Some learners attend the school's feeding scheme. Many learners feel embarrassed and ashamed, but still attend.

Learners hang in and outside their classes in the corridors usually in single sex pairs or groups. The unkempt school grounds do not attract learners who would rather kick a tennis

hall around or sit and chat with friends on the paved areas next to the buildings. Some boys gather behind school buildings in hidden corners to smoke and gamble. They take off the school shirts to reveal other clothes underneath. Others hang out in gangs under the stairs at each end of the corridor of the back row of classrooms. Learners do as they please as educators gather in the staff room or chat outside and do not monitor what is happening.

Learners leave school at 2:30pm and educators at 3pm. No educator is on duty to monitor people coming in or going out. The caretaker opens the gate and boys and thugs from the township and other schools enter the school premises. As boys leave the school, they take off their uniforms and display other clothes underneath. Most walk home in groups and almost all go straight to their homes. Educators, particularly females, are afraid to stay after school and give extra lessons as they fear for their safety.

### *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS*

Like the primary school, crime and violence in the community also affects the high school. Theft of school property is common and recently all the school's computers were stolen. However, Motshitshi differs from primary schools like Palesa in that, like most high schools in the area, it is a focal point for conflict between different male subcultures and groups and criminal elements in the community. Although the fence around the school keeps drug dealers, thugs, gangs and boyfriends from entering during school hours, it is not completely effective. Local thugs have made a hole in the fence through which drugs and gangs can enter the school premises. As community conflict between groups of boys often plays out at schools, learners worry that gangsters may come through the hole in the fence and attack them.

*I can say they [boys] are not safe [at school], because in most cases you will find that they had a fight over the weekend with the other gang, and that other gang from the location or other school will come to our school and exact revenge. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

In 1999, gangsters did enter the school and attack learners. Police came and arrests were made.

Both male and female learners do not feel safe going to and from school.

*I am using the local taxis because I don't feel safe at school. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

Female learners report that they try and walk with their friends, but know that anything could happen.

*When coming to school, I walk with my friend, but I walk a long distance. I'm not sure if I'm safe or not. I just told myself that anything can happen, but when I am at home, I don't walk around. I stay at home. So I cannot say I am safe. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

There is also a tavern nearby the school where people rob learners of their money and spend it on drink.

The school reports that many learners experience violence at home. Both male and female learners complain of physical abuse by parents and/or fathers, boyfriends and even sons' abuse of mothers and other female family members. Parents also respond violently to their children when the school complains about lack of dedication to schoolwork or behaviour. The



principal often has to calm parents down during meetings about a learner's performance or behaviour. In one case, a father came to the school, after the school had complained about the behaviour of his son in Grade 9, and gave the son a beating in front of his class. While educators felt that at last parents were taking action and female learners approved of the punishment, male learners did not like what had happened saying they would have fought the father.

At school, stealing is pervasive and often involves bullying and violence. Learners steal money from other learners. Younger girls and boys are most vulnerable as they are targets for older girls and boys. A boy in Grade 8 told us that he sold sweets, but some of the boys took his money and sweets. Although he needs the money, he is too afraid to sell again. Toilets are where most problems relating to bullying and beating occur. Here learners bully other learners and take their money.

At the back row of classrooms, on both ends of the corridor, two gangs hang out under the stairs. Under one set of stairs is Carnival/Ntjaeland where boys play dice, gamble and smoke dagga. At the other end, Sunrise members also gamble, smoke dagga and other drugs and block the stairs forcing learners to pay money at a rate of fifty cents per stair, if they wish to pass. Girls as young as Grade 10 also gamble in the classrooms and some smoke dagga. Most learners and educators are scared to pass where learners gamble and take drugs. These learners are more violent and often take their money especially in the toilets. Both boys and girls do not feel safe walking around school. Learners belonging to these gangs carry guns and knives. Boys often rob learners of their money and one boy was shot last year.

Drugs are an increasing problem in many high schools in Motsemotle and Motshitshi is no exception. Selling of dagga occurs on school premises and drugs and alcohol exacerbate violence and aggression.

*Yes sometimes when we go to the toilet, those guys [on drugs] will ill treat us and provoke us so that we can fight with them, but we avoid them. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

Educators and learners both feel that drug users and dealers are the main threat to their safety. Girls fear other girls who smoke dagga. Educators and girls are scared to go on school trips as alcohol-related fights occur between educators and learners. In one school in Motsemotle, drunk and drugged boys raped learners and educators.

Swearing and verbal abuse are common among learners. We often observed fights between learners, verbal abuse and jeering. Learners jeer at other learners' clothes, hairstyles and bodies. Boys and girls fight over minor issues. Learners say educators humiliate learners who are over age and verbal abuse between educators and learners is also common. Some learners claim that educators abuse them physically and emotionally.

*I don't feel safe when I'm at school, cause teachers also abuse us emotionally and physically. They should teach and protect us, but instead they create the violence [how] are we going to protect or advise people if those who should teach us don't give us the security. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

Generally girls do not feel safe at school. Bullying, threatening and beating are the most common form of violence and violence against girls says the principal. Girls agree.

*During school hours, especially common are the cases where boys promise to beat the girls... (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

According to the principal, perpetrators are often boys who experience or witness abuse at home. In a society that considers men superior, she says that any apparent attempt to undermine boys is met with physical violence. Boyfriend/girlfriend relationships are also often abusive. The principal points to this pattern of sexual violence in girl/boy relationships beyond the school and a number of girl learners report that, in the community, boyfriends abuse and threaten them with violence. Several serious cases of abuse of girlfriends by boyfriends were reported to us during our research.

The principal says verbal abuse and touching are also common forms of sexual harassment at school. We observed that verbal harassment and touching are a regular part of every-day life. Groups of boys sometimes harass girls, touching and laughing at them while commenting on their bodies. Boys often comment aloud about a girl's appearance. Such insults upset girls. Sunrise boys under the stairs also touch girls when they pass and most girls try to avoid areas in the school where there are gangs of boys. Some girls say that both boys and girls make verbal remarks.

*I think it is a two-sided story. Girls do comment about the boy's body and boys do that to girls as well (Girl learner, Grade 10).*

Confusion is evident among girls when boys make favourable comments.

*Is like some girls feel impressed, others don't like that. Even if a boy comments, they get impressed, like boys like say that chick is nice. Some girls like that. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

Boys can be aggressive and viciously insulting with phrases such as 'Uyatsha' – She is cold, if a girl chooses to refuse a proposal of love.

*Some girls get beaten especially if a boy proposes to you, he will do anything he can so that you cannot be free. The police and community will not do anything. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

Boys also report verbal and sexual abuse. If boys do not meet or challenge the behavioural criteria and beliefs expected of a young township man, boys subject them to the same sexual harassment usually reserved for girls. At Motshitshi, a Grade 9 learner reports that boys are sexually harassing him and touching his buttocks. He is very frightened and has to pay them money to stop the harassment. His 'mistake' was to say girls should be allowed to wear what they want. In response, boys nicknamed him after a famous homosexual gangster in the township and began harassing him. Here young men employ sexual harassment as a form of feminisation in order to undermine a boy's status and identity.

Educators feel that rape is not common at school, although boys sometimes threaten girls with rape. The difficulty of reporting such cases means rape may be underreported. District officials strongly believe that rape is seriously underreported at schools in the area. They say that there are many cases of rape, but rapists are let out on bail and silence around these issues also discourages reporting.

There has been one reported rape at the school. It occurred last year when a girl was raped after hours on the school premises. Versions of the story differ from person to person, but neither female educators nor girls feel safe staying on school property after school hours. Female educators and girls cannot attend extra lessons or extra-mural activities with thugs and

gangs of boys coming into the school after hours or hanging around the gate. Learners, particularly girls, say they do not feel safe walking past these people as they leave school.

*They experience rape especially if you participate in activities. After school, you are left alone, the gates are not locked or monitored, so the guys from outside jump the fence and get inside the school. But not during school hours. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

When writing about places where they don't feel safe, female learners in Grades 8 and 9 are most afraid to go to the toilet.

*I don't feel safe in the toilet because the boys who smoke dagga they promise us they will stab us in the buttock.*

*I don't feel safe in the toilet. Sometimes I feel scared when I'm going to the toilet, because I think I will found a boy in the toilet. There is a place which they called it Sunrise when I cross I think those boys they will push me inside the toilet. Because boys when they smoke dagga they loose control.*

*I don't feel safe at the toilets because boys enter and you don't know their intension.*

*I don't feel safe at the toilets. Around, during school hours or after school. You can't walk near the toilets you are so scared that you will be raped at school.*

*When I go to the toilet some boys when they do not write their homework are standing there outside. When I came they call me. When I don't go, they start calling me nja [dog]; sfebe [bitch] and I don't feel safe.*

Most common was the fear of rape in the toilets. Grade 8 and 9 girls also wrote that they do not feel safe at the back and front of the school.

*You can't move around the school in front of the school. You are so scared that the boys will rape you or steal your money.*

*I don't feel safe at the back of the school especially when I am alone when there is no other people, its better when we are a crowd.*

Learner/educator affairs are common in high schools. In the last term, police arrested five educators in this district on charges of statutory rape. Officials emphasise that these are only the cases they know about. Learner/educator relationships are a serious problem for girls.

*I can say they [girls] are raped. If a teacher proposes you and you refuse, we get threatened, because we know that we are not going to pass. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

The most recent case at Motshitshi involves a learner who refused and reported the advances of an educator. The principal confronted the educator, but could not take it further as the educator denied the charges. The learner reports that since this incident, the educator has now sidelined her, excluding her from the rest of the learners.

According to learners, male learners and educators sometimes fight over a female learner. Boys will gang up and beat the educator and he cannot report it. Boys resent educators as they feel that educators are taking what they are entitled to.

*I think in most cases children dislike the educators especially the boys, but girls smile with them. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

District officials point out that, in the case learner/educator relationships, a small minority of girls use the system for material gain. They taunt male educators and use sexuality to gain materially or gain status in a negative way. There are also many young male educators who feel that female learners are their peer group and they are therefore entitled to see them as potential girlfriends. In one recent case, the young male educator helped a young girl with her homework and expected a relationship or felt that her acceptance of help was acceptance of a relationship. The young man seemed to be unaware that he was wrong. The young girl had been abused as a child and did not want the relationship.

Both IDS officers for Palesa and Motshitshi report cases of abuse of girls at home and at school in many district schools. The morning of our interview with the DO manager, she had had an anonymous call from a young girl who had laid a charge of assault against an educator and was too frightened to go to back to school. Unwilling to give her name or the name of her school, the manager could do very little but to give her moral support. Officials report that many female learners drop out of school because of abuse.

### **SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

Like the primary school, Motshitshi is concerned about gender violence, but it is not a priority. Bullying and beating of girls is seen as part of normal teenage behaviour. Despite an obviously difficult situation for girls, boys still feel that girls are pampered at school. They say that educators take girls who report violence more seriously than boys. Some educators agree with the boys' claims. However, we observed that educators take bullying and fighting among boys far more seriously than violence against girls.

### **Levels of awareness and denial**

Parents seem unaware of what happens at school and are passive in relation to their children's welfare. One mother vaguely recalls boys from Motshitshi and another school arguing over guns, but does not know the outcome despite her son being at the school. She claims not to have heard of violence against girls in the school or of wife battery, rape or other forms of violence against women in this community. However, she says crime, particularly robberies and hijackings and verbal abuse in the form of insults are common when people in the community don't get what they want. Other parents talk mostly of crime and fights in the community, but seem to know little about drugs, the impact of HIV/AIDS and the problems young girls face at school and in the community. Parents say that violence is due to alcohol and because children lose control while growing up. Parents also identify poverty as a cause of violence as it leads to crime in the case of boys while girls have relationships with men for the sake of money. Most parents' involvement in the school happens when their children misbehave or perform poorly. They admit that parents do very little to assist the principal or the school. Often they blame learners or the school for not reporting what happens and assume their children are fine because they do not tell them about any problems.

### **Understandings of violence against girls**

When respondents talk about causes of gender violence, they identify both attitudes towards women and socio-economic factors such as unemployment and poverty that lead to crime. Some male learners recognise that communities often place less value on women and girls.

*I can say boys don't understand life and the value of a woman, because a woman is a mother, it is the most important thing in the world, because she can do anything. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

They also describe the general attitude of boys towards girls as contempt for an inferior and weaker person. Since fear of those stronger than oneself is the only way to engender respect, girls are generally not worthy of respect.

*I can mention my class, the attitude of boys towards girls is good, but not around the school. Some of the guys disrespect girls because they know that they don't have the power to stand up to them. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

Learners also feel that violence occurs because parents are not sufficiently involved in their lives. They also feel that the police and the DoE do not do enough to ensure their safety. Learners also feel that the attitude of both boys and girls leads to gender violence and that drugs make their behaviour worse.

*I think it is because they smoke dagga, drugs and drink anytime. Some of the girls smoke the drugs, therefore they don't control themselves, and sometimes they go to the boys and sleep with them. So I can say the attitude of boys and girls. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

*I think it is the drugs and boys... I can say girls who are smoking the drugs also cause corruption at school. Sometimes, if you find them smoking in the toilet and you try to talk to them they will fight and say they cannot be told to behave by anyone. Sometimes you will find others sleeping because they are drunk from drugs (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

District officials believe that a fundamental cause of gender violence is the attitude of men towards women especially male to female educators. Although we did not observe this at Motshitshi, the district office reports that male educators harass and threaten female educators and female principals at some schools. Currently, a male educator is threatening a female principal in the district and recently pulled a gun on her. The principal is too scared to lay charges. Consequently, the DO has to follow a disciplinary route and the incident becomes a labour issue. In another case, a woman principal cannot attend school as the entire SGB has threatened her. A female district official reports that threatening and abusive behaviour even extends to district officials. At an SGB meeting, a parent became abusive and threatened her. Officials describe that attitudes and actions towards women range from these strong-arm tactics and threats of violence to treating them as children or sexual objects. These attitudes, they say, provide a role model for learners. Learners also perpetuate the violence and lack of respect they encounter between educators and learners.

Officials also say that it is clear that there is much confusion about what is acceptable behaviour. Youth are confused about sexuality and what is right and wrong in expressing their sexuality.

Similarly to the primary school, boys blame girls for gender violence.

*Some of them put themselves in dangerous situations, and they will say they are not safe. They hang out with bad boyfriends. If you try to help her, those boys will tell us that it is not our business, so we don't do anything (Male learner, Grade 10).*

*I don't think that the school is doing enough because it is difficult for them. This generation is difficult to control, the girls are rushing, it is like they are young, but they will want to have boyfriends who are working. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

The majority of boys blame harassment of girls on the way girls dress. They say that such girls are prostitutes and want sex. Boys cannot be expected to control themselves: it is not in the nature of things. If a girl smokes dagga, it is her fault if something happens to her. Educators also blame girls for being victims of violence. They say, 'High school girls run around streets wearing school uniforms till late attracting boys.' Educators also make the excuse that the perpetrator is a boyfriend or the girl wants the boy.

### **Dealing with violence against girls**

With these kinds of attitudes, reporting is difficult. Female learners do not feel they can report problems with male learners to most educators. They either do not take them seriously or they betray their confidence. Most learners feel there is nobody they can report incidents to. Reporting also requires educators and learners identify perpetrators. Most people fear reprisals and revenge beatings if they report incidents of violence. Girls are also afraid to report boyfriends who beat them.

*They are not free and safe, because if you report, that person will come with his group and they will beat you after school. (Female learner, Grade 10.)*

'I'll see you in the location' is the threat to both educators and learners if they try and report. In one case, a Grade 9 girl told our fieldworker that she had seen a boy in her class with a gun. The boy threatened to shoot her if she told anyone. She is worried and afraid. Some educators do report incidents to the principal who is not afraid to tackle violence.

According to learners, when they report incidents of violence, the school will sometimes call the perpetrator's parents, but many learners are unsure about what the official school response is or should be. Female learners feel that their school does not deal adequately with cases of gender violence.

The school has a disciplinary committee to deal with violence. In serious cases, the SGB becomes involved and then the school hands very serious cases over to the police. To most acts of violence, the school's usual response is to call parents and/or the police. The school is part of the 'adopt a cop' programme that links them directly with a police official whom they can call when serious problems arise. The principal regularly makes use of the police calling them to deal with drugs and gambling in the school. The police arrested several boys for house breaking, drugs and gambling during the period of this research and the principal also called in the police to deal with drugs and the gangs under the stairs. Although parents support the role of the police at the school, they are concerned about what happens to children in the hands of the police.

The principal feels that police and the community do not take gender violence seriously. Perpetrators of such violence often go free despite being identified. There is also seldom any follow up once perpetrators have been arrested. Educators and learners do not hear about the outcome of cases and this lack of communication makes them lose confidence in the institutional system and trust in one another.

### **Preventing violence against girls**

There are no community organisations that address issues of violence at Motshitshi and there are currently no initiatives or programmes that specifically target violence against girls and address their safety. Many respondents point to the fact that youth have few opportunities and places where they can engage in constructive recreation.

*And for youth I can say, they don't have the activities, they don't have a playground, no hobbies, therefore they 'crew,' stand on the corner and start violence. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

- *I think those activities can work because if you look at the child who is always busy, going to gym and competitions, I think they don't have time to commit crime in the location. Or else if the learners decide to participate actively in the school activities, I think they don't have time to look around for bad things. (Female parent.)*

There is little public prevention discourse on gender violence and gender issues. Response is always reaction rather than anticipation. Assemblies do not address issues of gender violence or even general violence and behaviour. Denial among educators is still common. Many educators said that they don't believe there is violence between boys and girls. They blame girls who, they say, report acts of violence when these perpetrators are their boyfriends. A minority of educators acknowledge the problem of gender violence and recognise its illegitimacy. The head of guidance is one of the educators who recognises the problem. She attended a DoE workshop on issues of violence and abuse against girls in schools and reported back to educators. Specifically she emphasised that the DoE had found that learners no longer trust educators to keep their confidences. However, the school did not communicate or discuss communicating resolutions from this workshop to learners. Learners do not feel that their school guides them sufficiently on violence and violence against girls.

Within the school curriculum, the guidance department takes steps to address violence. They invite experts to talk about violence. Guidance classes address issues of sexuality such as life stages and adolescence as well as conflict resolution. Learners discuss rights and the responsibilities that are part of these rights, but, according to the head of guidance, they do not take gender issues and gender violence seriously. Discussions on these issues lead to verbal conflict with boys shouting at girls and girls, afraid for their safety, withdrawing and keeping quiet. Despite this conflict, learners appear to appreciate the opportunity to discuss many issues including sexuality and abuse in guidance classes.

*But the guidance period we talk about everything that is happening around us. We talk about violence, sexual violence like between the learner and the stepfather. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

The district office (DO) of education takes gender violence very seriously and the district manager has taken unusual steps to deal with it. Since there are no official district posts that deal with violence and abuse of children, the senior manager has freed two officials from other posts in her office to work full time on cases of abuse and social programmes that target behaviour change among boys. The person responsible for the child abuse unit is always busy. She counsels victims of cases that principals report to her and then reports these cases to the IDS officer responsible for the school. The IDS officer then contacts the principal and advises him/her on what steps to take against the perpetrator according to the code of conduct. The IDS officer then follows up with the principal on what steps have been taken.

District officials often deal with serious cases of violence and abuse. When such abuses occur, the support officers work with schools providing them with procedures to address the

disciplinary aspects of the abuse case. If school principals do not report these cases, how they deal with them is up to them according to the DO. Schools are supposed to have their own codes of conduct that address bullying and verbal abuse. District office intervention is dependent on reporting from the principal. The Department of Education does not yet provide official guidelines on how to deal with different cases of abuse, but officials report that they are working on the development of these guidelines, as there is a growing awareness of the need for them. DO officials also say that there is a growing awareness that school safety is not a matter of putting a fence around the school.

The DO reports that new labour legislation now makes it easier for the DO to deal with serious cases of abuse such as rape and educator learner affairs. In these cases, the new labour relations law allows for dismissal and does not preclude criminal proceedings. The DO manager follows both labour and criminal procedures and in the case of the labour law such cases are fast-tracked so that offenders must leave schools. However, criminal proceedings depend on the victim's willingness to lay a charge and intimidation is a serious hindrance.

The district manager has used her own initiative in providing documents to schools on school safety from the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Recently the DoE has introduced posters that address values such as bullying, tolerance, violence and hard work. However, these posters are only available in English. District officials have also received training in workshops on gender violence sponsored by the Canadian government. The Department of Education's national conference on sexuality and the right to innocence held in July is also likely to provide new policies for implementation. From January 2002, the Minister of Education has said that sexuality education will be implemented as a separate entity and not as part of the life orientation programme.

### **Solutions: Schools and communities speak out**

Most participants are able to provide detailed descriptions of the problems of gender violence in their communities and, in some cases, insights into the nature and dynamics of the problem. However, thinking of solutions is much more difficult. A minority of participants care deeply about gender violence and contribute individually and collectively to combating it. Often they feel overwhelmed by the scale and difficulty of dealing with this deeply rooted social behaviour especially when trying to make changes at an individual level, with seemingly widespread apathy and little institutional support. Having tried to intervene with varying degrees of success, they often are at loss when thinking of further solutions as nothing, in their view, seems to solve the problem. They often find it difficult to recognise the often small, but significant successes of their own initiatives or to see the potential of turning individual initiatives into wider programmes. Instead they concentrate on the difficulties involved in maintaining such interventions in the face of a seemingly unsolvable and relentless problem. Less active participants, who for various reasons have accepted the status quo or perhaps feel that they can do nothing about it, suggest large-scale and unrealistic solutions that often require proper functioning institutions and large-scale resources. Few of these participants focus on their individual potential or responsibility in finding and implementing small local interventions that might make some impact. Instead they conceive of solutions only in terms of addressing larger socio-economic problems that cannot easily be solved.

Participants overwhelmingly look to external controls and spatial separation in trying to combat gender violence. Greater police presence and monitoring with support from the army; exclusion of schools from communities using electric fencing as ordinary fencing is not



working; division of boys and girls into separate schools, classes or areas; introducing and increasing security guards and class prefects; searching learners and educators; and the use of surveillance systems such as video cameras are some of the suggestions that participants make.

*Police should always patrol around in our communities. They should arrest these people who do crime. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

*Police should come and look after us during school hours. (Male learner, Grade 5.)*

*I think there should be police in our communities looking after us. They should patrol around 24 hours a day. In that way, we won't have any violence in our communities. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I think we should have security guards in our school to look after us during school hours. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

*I think the police must be deployed at schools... Children found outside the school during school hours must be arrested... Strict rules must be imposed that will make children respect each other. (Male parent.)*

*Security checks must be strictly monitored. (Male educator/SGB member.)*

*Boys also should be separated from girls. Boys should have their classes as well as girls should have their own separate classes. (Female learner, Grade 5.)*

Emphasis is on forcing people to behave through external sanctions rather than on the need for intrinsic motivation. Punishment and even violent punishment is seen as an effective deterrent. Educators, for example, feel that corporal punishment should be used against learners involved in gender violence and see no contradiction in this response. Only learners point out the contradiction in punishing violence with violence. Some solutions suggested putting further sanctions and restrictions on the victims instead of addressing the problems and violence of the perpetrators. For example some participants felt girls should be stopped from wearing certain clothing such as short skirts and should not be allowed to mix with boys or be in certain places.

Participants also emphasise the need for greater institutional resources and support such as the need for more social workers and increased police involvement. Educators do not feel they have the time, the energy, resources or skills to cope with the overwhelming number of social problems that confront them on a daily basis. They feel there should be special structures and more support to deal with gender violence and that district offices of education, government departments, social workers, welfare organisations, clinics and other community organisations need to give greater support to schools. However, schools are also not always aware of some of the initiatives and resources that come from community organisations and local district offices to deal with violence and abuse of children. For example, schools are not aware of the local DO's appointments of a social programmes officer and a social worker to deal solely with cases of abuse.

In general, participants found it difficult to put forward ideas on what structures should be set up and how co-ordination and use of existing resources could be improved both in communities and schools to prevent gender violence. A common suggestion was the

establishment of youth centres. Boredom and lack of facilities for youth is seen as a crucial issue. Participants feel that extra-mural activities are an important way in which youth can be creative, constructive and stay off the streets. Schools need to promote such activities. Alternatively youth care centres, either at schools or in the communities, should be available to youth during the week and on weekends where they feel safe and can engage in meaningful activities.

Lack of effective communication within schools and between schools and support institutions remains a serious problem in preventing and dealing with gender violence. Lack of communication leads to mistrust and loss of faith among people and institutions. Although participants realise that policies, ideas, information and feedback on incidents of violence are not effectively communicated within and across schools and other institutions, few participants realise the importance of communication and most are unable to think of strategies to improve it. Interventions on effective communication are sorely needed.

Most informants believe a key solution to addressing violence is increased involvement of educators, parents and community organisations including churches, the police and organisations that specifically address gender violence. However, how this should be done was not clear.

*To involve the parents, to involve the police, to involve the community so that we can come together and address this, because as teachers alone we cannot. (Female principal.)*

Where schools make an effort to involve community organisations and the surrounding community, these co-operative relationships with the community protect learners, educators and the school and help to address violence.

Parents in particular need to be encouraged to play a more active role both in terms of guiding learners and in actively preventing violence. Parents found it difficult to think of ways in which they could play a role in assisting the school in preventing violence. Educators and learners feel that parents need to talk about sex and sexuality and the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour towards girls so that learners begin to understand that certain behaviours are sexual harassment.

*Children must be taught they are all equal. Boys must be taught they are not physically superior to girls. (Female educator.)*

When children perpetrate acts of gender violence, parental involvement is also felt to be key. Schools also need to involve parents in curriculum planning on gender issues as a way of educating them and gaining their support in reinforcing what is taught at school.

Educators felt parents also need to stop protecting their own children who commit acts of crime and violence, but could not give any suggestions on how to do this. Learners and educators suggest that unemployed parents can become more involved in schools providing aftercare, monitoring children after school and assisting with learning and other extra-mural activities. Where parents do become involved, violence appears to decrease. One parent says that in her area parental monitoring of children on a community basis has prevented violence. Learners suggest that parents also need workshops on how to deal with violence. As parents die of HIV/AIDS, participants also pointed to the need to empower elders and grandparents in the community to take on more proactive roles. Largely ignored, often marginalised and

sometimes unable to see the contribution they as older people can make. respondents feel that there is a need to find ways to value the knowledge and skills of this generation such as story telling and cultural knowledge and to encourage grandparents to regain their roles within their communities.

The potential of learners to find solutions for their own situations was largely overlooked by adult respondents who focused almost exclusively on how learners should behave. Many learners did not appear to see any role they could play in preventing gender violence. Though many learners did not know how they could be part of solutions, often thinking only in terms of what adults should do, some learners believe they have a responsibility to stop violence. Learners talked about the need for learner leadership in their schools in partnership with educators and parents. The current failure of LRC's and lack of leadership skills is of concern to learners. Learners believe that parents and educators do not really understand what is happening in their lives and there is a great deal of mistrust. They suggest social workers could help promote understanding but could not think of other ways in which they might promote communication, understanding and trust between different generations. Learners also stressed the importance of parents and educators working with them as partners to solve violence and that youth can be involved in safety projects in their communities in partnership with the police. They also felt that they could form their own groups and initiate campaigns. They felt that learners need encouragement to report violence and that counsellors and a person responsible for promoting reporting, communication and co-operation with all parties in dealing with violence should be appointed at each school by the DoE. They also felt that, as learners, they need to exert peer pressure on others to stop violence and that they could become role models. Some learners suggested bringing in former learners and celebrities as role models to talk about non-violent approaches.

Many suggestions on possible solutions focused on the need to raise the level of public awareness, knowledge and discourse around violence and safety both in communities and schools. Knowledge of one's rights, how to exercise those rights, what resources to utilise, how to approach violence and discipline and who to call upon, especially when the police do not help, were key areas of need that informants identified.

Informants stressed the need to maintain debate around violence against women and girls through multimedia campaigns including television and video, radio, newspapers, booklets, posters and other visual material and special programmes in schools as well as continued curriculum initiatives on sexuality, violence and values. Informants who are aware of UNICEF's work in other African countries would like to see sharing of visual material and voices from other countries about the fight against gender violence.

They also believe that many excellent and effective initiatives by small NGOs such as the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's school programme on violence, KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence's interventions in schools, and the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand's recently published work on alternative forms of discipline to corporal punishment need to reach educators and learners. They suggest that NGO programmes, where suitable, should be reworked into accessible and informative packages for wider audiences and distributed through various media including videos, pamphlets, talks and workshop campaigns with educators. For example, wider dissemination through the media and in the form of manuals and pamphlets on alternative approaches to discipline other than punishment that is physical or demeaning would fill a need among educators who still cling to corporal punishment as the only way to enforce discipline. In particular, they feel that visual impact is strongest where learners and educators

can see and compare situations involving the use of violence or alternative forms of discipline rather than just reading or hearing about these in pamphlets or workshops. Special campaigns that harness the creative skills of learners such as drama festivals on gender violence, writing and painting were also suggested. Exemplary cases of non-violent schools and approaches or even educators and community members who have made a contribution in small ways should be publicised and made more widely known.

When talking about campaigns and workshops, many participants emphasise teaching and telling people how to behave. Parents, educators and learners stress that people *must* learn to respect and that messages need to emphasise the impact of violence and the consequences for those who perpetrate it. However, continually telling people what to do does not seem to have the desired effect. For example, workshops at the primary school on educators not using corporal punishment, seems to have little impact on educators' beliefs or practices. It seems that a deeper level of engagement is necessary.

While participants stressed the need for mutual respect in schools and are at some level aware that respect is fundamental to non-violent schools and communities, most feel that such feelings can somehow be enforced. Very few respondents in schools spoke of other methods of inculcating a sense of humanity, love for others, kindness and respect. The only approach that we observed that comes closest to doing this, is at the primary school which expressed an underlying core ideology, in this case, 'the school as a family'. This ideology seemed to create more caring relationships and was an intrinsic motivating force for respectful behaviours and attitudes.

*Learners both boys and girls should respect each other, even though they are from different families, but they should know that they are from one school which is one big family. (Female parent.)*

However, there was almost a complete silence at schools on engaging with educators' and learners' experiences, beliefs, hurts, hates and understandings of their own humanity. Little emphasis was placed on how learners should be allowed to relate to others in a non-sanctioning mode to unpack the dynamics of gender relations and violence in homes, communities and schools.

Encouragingly, local district officials have begun to see that respect cannot be enforced and that a different approach is needed. While public discourse in the form of advocacy and other types of information and awareness campaigns are important, district officials say that such programmes that teach what is right do not work to reduce violence on their own. What needs to happen first is to hear the voices of learners and deal with learners' existing beliefs, experiences and attitudes rather than teaching about or dictating behaviour.

Under the leadership of their district manager, the district office has begun the difficult and slow process of adopting a different approach in dealing with and supporting schools. They believe that it is of fundamental importance to allow learners to express feelings about issues and obtain feedback from one another and adults to help learners work through their feelings, emotions and uncertainties. This engagement helps learners to work out and establish their values. This approach, they believe, helps people to be comfortable with who they are and their responses in difficult situations. The chance to speak openly, demystify feelings, and find ways of channelling their feelings in a positive way also help learners to establish the boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, particularly in terms of sexuality. If this does not happen, they believe that feelings, emotions and anger become aberrations

leading to violence. They believe that learners need to solve their own problems. Learners are continually hearing from others about what they should/shouldn't do, but don't get a chance to solve their own problems with the support of adults. They hear other people's input and have to carry it out, but it doesn't necessarily solve their problems.

Recently the DO has begun lifestyle camp retreats for boys and girls as part of their Peer Help Project. Away from the community, facilitators give learners space to talk about social problems, to deal with who they are and to interact with each other. According to the DO, this process allows them to come to terms with who they are and not who somebody else thinks or tells them they are. The DO feels that this is an important part of moving learners towards greater awareness, responsibility and the ability to develop their own solutions to problems they face.

The DO's specially appointed officer for social programmes has also begun planning pilot lifestyle workshops for boys. These lifestyle workshops aim to teach boys to respect girls for who they are and not just as the other sex. They plan to take boys to a cultural village where they have elderly men who are prominent within their different cultural groups. These men will talk to boys in the traditional oral way about their roles and responsibilities. They are also going to invite prominent speakers as role models and provide further workshops and training. More importantly they are giving learners the opportunity and space to talk about gender issues amongst themselves and with older people.

As a follow up to this process, the DO hope to create support structures for schools where learners will have recourse directly to counsellors running the programme. The DO hopes to raise funds to develop clusters of counsellors possible from local communities who are trained to listen and help learners at local schools. Extensive training, effective communication and sustaining the process will also need external funding support.

The DO believes that personal reflection and development approaches are more likely to solve violence than more structures and committees. Institutional approaches need to move away from policing, threat and high handedness to valuing and respecting people through courteousness, support and a positive approach that recognises people as human beings of worth and the dignity of education as a profession.

The DO has also begun to introduce a similar approach when working with educators. Emphasis is placed on the value of educators. Workshops are based on the foundation of respect, caring and value for others rather than authoritarian transmission of policies and practices with sanctions if they are not implemented. The DO believes that the crux of the problem of violence lies in rebuilding people first in order to rebuild the social fabric of schools.

## Appendix 2

### A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a primary and high school on the Cape Flats

#### The Community

According to the Central Statistical Services (CSS), there are 44 000 people residing in Hopeville, half under 21 years of age. Geographically the area covers three-square kilometres. The types of housing in the area consist of three-storey blocks of flats, semi-detached and single houses. The number of bedrooms per dwelling ranges from one to three. The general state of housing in the area is poor. Windowpanes are either broken or missing and the majority of houses and flats are in dire need of paint and maintenance. Pieces of zinc and wood are often attached to the front, side or back of the dwelling in order to create more space. There are, however, attractive and well-maintained houses in the area. Often the grim exteriors do not reflect the spotless, proud homes created within. Despite attempts made by residents to plant trees, maintain gardens, and keep their immediate vicinity neat and presentable, the overwhelming image of the area is stark and miserable. Where the factory-like blocks of flats are not dirty, they are defaced by graffiti.

On a windy day litter from trash cans lies on the streets and clings to the fences of the schools in the area. Roads appear to be in a fairly good condition, except for broken glass and dirt along the pavements. The only colourful feature of this desolate landscape is the endless lines of washing flapping in the wind, extending from one window to the next. It is not unusual to see the odd donkey or horse grazing on patches of grass on school grounds. These animals normally belong to fruit and vegetable hawkers or to scrap collectors in the area.

There are very few recreational facilities in Hopeville. Those in existence are either vandalised or hangout areas for gangsters. Certain parks are known domains for gangsters or gang fights. The state of the park equipment is not conducive to children playing there. Swings have no seats, slides are broken and there is no grass or soft surface to break a child's fall. Soccer is played on makeshift fields and netball courts are so neglected that it is hard to make out the designated area. Besides the parks, the only entertainment areas for youth are the game machines found at the shops and swimming pool. There is one swimming pool in the area. There is no shopping centre in Hopeville. Many businesses find it too risky to operate in the area. However, there is a big grocery store, a doctor's surgery, a dentist, a butchery and a fish and chip shop. These businesses are situated directly behind the local bus and taxi terminus in an area of high criminal activity. The local library is also situated behind the terminus, which means that few children make use of it, because of the dangers involved in gaining entry.

There is one clinic in Hopeville that is exceptionally busy. It deals with dispensing contraception, advising on abortions, immunising babies, counselling rape victims, and treating gunshot or stab wounds. The churches and mosque appear to be the safest sites in the community. This, however, does not mean that they are untouched by violence prevalent in the community. The number of funerals, especially those of young adults and children, and the daily number of people begging for alms, is testament to the dire socio-economic

conditions. Mosques and churches, like the schools, are also not immune to burglaries and vandalism.

Weekend activities amongst male adults involve smoking dagga, playing dice or drinking alcohol. These activities are often conducted outside in backyards, next to blocks of flats or in the parks. On a cold day, these male groups make fires in drums to keep warm. Children usually occupy themselves by going to the local swimming pool, playing games at the shops, going to the nearby dam or playing in the streets. Youth, who can afford to go elsewhere, leave Hopeville and go to nearby shopping centres. Some children participate in sports such as soccer and netball, while others are involved in youth activities organised by the local church or mosque. There are also children who participate in gang activities hanging out on designated street corners or the 'courts' within blocks of flats.

Hopeville was established in 1966 as a result of the Group Areas Act that forced thousands of families from District Six to re-settle in areas on the Cape Flats. The majority of families living in the area originally came from District Six, while some residents have moved to Hopeville from other Cape Flats areas. Families that used to live in three-bedroomed homes in District Six were forced into flats of two rooms with no gardens, backyards or space in which to live. This resulted in severe overcrowding or meant that families were forced to split. The impact of forced removals led to previously close-knit families and communities being scattered across various areas on the Cape Flats. Destruction of families and communities left many people feeling isolated, insecure and abandoned. This led to a variety of social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, family violence and gangsterism.

Overcrowding remains a severe problem in Hopeville. It is not unusual for twelve people to live in a house or flat consisting of two bedrooms. During group interviews, participants revealed that even bathrooms are sublet to boarders or extended family members. Similarly any available space in the backyard is used to erect a structure or wendy house.

*If you look at the housing ... the nuclear family aren't the only people in that house—it's not just a mother, father and three children, it's a mother, father, aunt, uncle and grandparents—and sometimes it goes up between 15 and 20 people in the family in one of these small houses—a one room or two room house. And what they do to accommodate that, they extend to the yard—build up shacks in the yard. Some of the family stays in the yard. We even had a matriculant—that's a fact—that we found who's staying in the toilet of their house. And again there, my responsibility as social worker came in and we—with the parents permission, we removed him from the house and I accommodated him at the YMCA—he's got his own room now where he could study and he's very successful now. (Principal.)*

Poverty is a serious problem in Hopeville and the rate of unemployment is high. According to the principal of Mission High School, gathering from the school's learner population, 45% to 50% of the parent community are unemployed. This high rate of unemployment has led to many men and women simply standing around in the streets or in front of blocks of flats. Every shop corner is a hangout place. The men huddle in groups, either playing dice or smoking dagga. Alcohol is also a serious problem among both women and men.

Based on single and group parent interviews, it emerged that, in most homes, it is more likely for women to be employed. The majority of women, who are fortunate enough to have employment, are chars, domestic workers, factory workers or cleaners at shopping malls.

Some are fruit and vegetable hawkers. Men are employed as cleaners, factory workers, council employees, labourers, fruit and vegetable hawkers, taxi drivers, guards or gardeners.

In most instances, where an elderly person lives, his or her pension is the only source of income in the family. Interviews with parents and educators revealed that elderly people are kept with families to ensure access to any pension money because of the high rate of unemployment. Grandparents play a key role in this community because they are often the providers. The R540 per month pension money is used to feed the family and pay school fees. As a result of this, it is grandparents who make contact with schools. In the experience of educators at both Mission High School and Rainbow Primary School, children who are cared for by a grandparent are better off and more effort is made by the grandparent to attend school meetings or to respond to requests to report to the school.

Most families are single parent households headed by women. Where there is a male figure in the home, it is normally a stepfather or live-in lover. In the opinion of the principal of Rainbow Primary, the mere presence of an adult male in the house represents some measure of physical protection against harassment from gangsters, even if that same male constitutes a threat to everyone else in the house.

*This is definitely a poor socio-economic environment. Many of the parents have not been to high school, or if they have been, they've dropped out along the way. Many of the parents are young. If I talk about our learner community—their parents are young. They've been at school during the '80's at the time of the uprisings, and I think many of them don't know how to handle the children. (Male educator.)*

The general breakdown in family life both with forced removals and the current socio-economic situation is often cited as the cause of gangsterism. Joining a gang provides the infrastructure of a family where there is none—either on a physical or an emotional level.

Hopeville residents seldom witness the successes that education can bring. Very few children reach Grade 12, let alone matriculate. For most children, Grade 7 is the highest grade they complete. As a parent at Rainbow Primary explained, in her street, which consists of 20 semi-detached houses and five blocks of flats, only one child has matriculated. 'But he can't find work—so what's the point of finishing school?' His parents could not afford to send him to college—and the longer he stays at school, the more it costs the family. Hence the cycle of poverty and employment continues.

While the general population of Hopeville is poor and many families experience lives of alcohol, substance, physical, verbal and psychological abuse, there are families who strive to live good lives. Many residents are very religious and honest people. According to the principal of Rainbow Primary there are good people and families in Hopeville. But to many people gangsterism, the smoking of dagga, abuse—physical or any other kind—is a totally normal part of life. The principal views the abuse of alcohol as the main destabilising factor in the community. Although Hopeville has been the childhood home of a number of talented South Africans, the successes of the area are far and few between—not because of the lack of talent or potential, but because of a shortage of resources, little or no parental involvement, gangsterism, erratic school attendance and few role models.

### **Violence in the community**

Criminal violence in the community includes house burglaries, car theft, theft of car batteries and washing on lines, robberies and assault. More serious crime involves stabbings.



shootings, rape and murder. Parents from both schools reveal that children and adults in the community commit most of the crimes. One parent explained that it is not unusual for the neighbour's son to break into your house. Residents can do very little because, in most cases, the child's mother will protect him and deny his involvement. There is also a very real threat of being hurt or ones house vandalised if one pursues laying charges with the police. It is this very real fear that, in the opinion of educators and a community worker, has led to the community simply accepting the violence and crime that surrounds them on a daily basis. It is this same fear that has made many people, especially the women in the community, vulnerable and defenceless. It is safer and easier to remain silent.

*... say for instance I am the merchant, and I say 'I need a TV'. Then they will fetch, they will steal a TV, they will break into the people's house. And not in Wynberg or Paarl, but here in Hopeville—the people who struggle. Then they sell to the merchant. Maybe for a hundred rand or ... and the people paid three thousand rand for the thing. They mostly use children to break in ... (Male parent.)*

Parents, educators and learners consider gangsterism and gang violence to be the major form and cause of violence in the area. They also considered gangs to be the biggest threat to the community. There are approximately eight different gangs operating in Hopeville. Most of them are linked to gangs in other areas on the Cape Flats. The sizes of gangs vary depending on how long the gang has been around, or whether two gangs merge. The number of members can range from 50 to 500. According to educators at both schools and a community worker, gangsters range in age from nine to 65. One parent at Rainbow Primary School said his father was a gangster, his brother is a leader of a gang, he was a gangster and his son wants to be a gangster. Joining a gang can be voluntary or forced. Learners at the primary school disclosed how boys are forcibly tattooed, proving their allegiance to a specific gang. While some gangsters are employed, most of them run taverns, sell dagga, commit crimes, such as house burglaries and car theft or simply sit on street corners. The high school principal believes that gangs control everything in Hopeville, including sport and housing.

*They control sport, they infiltrate sport. To give you an example, they play the Sunday leagues, or Sunday soccer sport—soccer, netball, volleyball, and it is rather tempting for our learners because they offer financial rewards at the end. They can easily give a learner a thousand rand for a weekend ... Housing—you think the Council are in charge of houses? Gangs are in charge of houses. (Principal.)*

He explained that because the gangs pay for people's electricity, water, food and rent, they control those people. This means that when the gang needs a favour, such as the hiding or selling of drugs, there is no choice but to oblige. According to the principal, there are hundreds of families in this community that are stuck in that situation.

Residents believe that sometimes gangsterism chooses the individual rather than the individual choosing that particular lifestyle.

*The reason I became a gangster—I used to work in Observatory, and traveled to work early, because we started at half past seven. I took the bus at the terminus. One morning the mongrels came and I had to buy my clip card. And so the mongrels came, they pressed with a gun and pangas, then they stabbed me, here's the mark. So they stabbed me and took my money. So the bus driver told me that he saw what happened and I could get in. So I went to work. But another woman gave me a handkerchief, I went to work just like that, but I went to work with the thought that I would get them again. (Male parent.)*

A female educator at the primary school believes that gang violence is linked to robbery, assault and rape. She revealed that two of her learners were shot through gang violence. She ended up going to hospital and speaking to the doctors, visiting the children and doing whatever needed to be done. In her opinion, gang violence has been the most dominant form of violence in this community. According to educators at the primary school, gangsterism and the lifestyle that accompanies it is admired by certain children and adults. Gangsterism is viewed as a good life. Gangsters drive the best cars, wear the most expensive jewellery and clothes and always have money.

*You know what they [the gangsters] do, they go to the terminus, they turn up with a bakkie or whatever, they dish out money. (Female educator.)*

They do this, according to the educator, to buy the silence of the people in the case of any police investigations.

Turning to the local police is not an option to many in the community. Residents do not trust the police. Allegations against the police range from corruption to absolute apathy regarding the plight of the people.

*The police come, the only thing they do is ask, "Do you know the people?" If I give the name they write it down. Then they ask where they went to. Now I say over here, because I don't know, I say this corner and that corner, they won't drive there to look for them. They just drive there to show you. You cannot trust them at all. They smuggle with the gangs ... I've seen it myself. The American leader—he's a big smuggler. If there is a roadblock in our streets—there's a policeman there, a white policeman. Then he drives the gangster's drugs and coke through the roadblock. I have lots of friends at the police station, then I sit by them, then I see him (the gang leader) come in. Then he maybe gives a bottle to a policeman, or a R500. Then he walks to the cells, then he visits his friends. Now if I am in the cells, then my wife or brother can't come to the cells. (Male parent, former gangster.)*

A female volunteer community worker also felt that the police are completely ineffective in the community. As a result, very few people call upon the police when they are in trouble. The policing forum, however, which has been active in the area for the last six years, is the body to which most people turn. The policing forum consists of seven members and acts as an umbrella body for all the organisations in the area. There are approximately 23 different organisations. Nonc, however, deals with violence against girls in particular. If any organisation wants to do something in the community, the policing forum has to be approached about it first. Meetings are held every Saturday. It appears that the policing forum has also taken on a 'watch-dog' role.

*The police, for example, the docket goes missing, then the people can come to the policing forum. They keep the police on their toes... and help people to deal with a case more speedily. People can come with any problem to the policing forum. The police are afraid of the policing forum, because they can't get away with anything. For example, perhaps there is a smuggling house next door, then the police will carry out the stuff and drink the wine...things like that. The police are corrupt. (Female community volunteer.)*

Parents at both Rainbow Primary School and Mission High School believe that among the main causes of violence in the community is unemployment, the abuse of alcohol and

substance abuse, the absence of fathers and father figures, gangsterism and boredom. At Mission High School, the reality of unemployment undermines learners' motivation to complete their schooling. The abuse of alcohol and drugs in the community is of particular concern to educators at both the primary and high schools.

*...alcohol is the main cause of violence in the community. Alcohol abuse is equally rife among men and women. Women can avoid the violence—they become argumentative, because of alcohol abuse. (Female educator.)*

She elaborated that violence starts at home, role models are violent, often there are gang members and money gets spent on alcohol.

The abuse of alcohol appears to be equally rife amongst men and women in the community. The principal of Rainbow Primary felt that alcohol abuse is the main destabilising factor in the community. In his opinion, people will buy a cheap bottle of wine before they buy a loaf of bread. A view shared by educators at both schools is that the abuse of alcohol has led to other types of abuses such as child neglect, verbal and physical abuse.

According to educators at both the primary and high schools, vandalism stems from general boredom prevalent amongst the majority of youth in the community. There are no community centres or recreational facilities to occupy their time. The gangs use whatever recreational facilities there are as battlefields.

*Our children come from school, here are not enough parks, here are not enough playgrounds... we have an alley ... here are no playgrounds for our children...here is maybe a field, but then the gangsters shoot at each other across it. I think it was June month last year... 19...2000. Yes, June month, excuse me. Okay, yes...it was a nice day, and suddenly sixteen people...seventeen people were shot dead...on that field.. on the pitch where people were braaing. (Female community worker.)*

Parents, it seems, add to their children's boredom and consequent frustration.

*... due to their lack of interest in their children or due just to the fact that they not interested in the child, they can't be bothered what the child does. Many parents are out. Some parents that I speak to don't see their children for days on end. (Female parent, SGB member.)*

The socio-economic conditions and small houses have played a major role in the behaviour patterns of both children and adults. One of the male educators at Rainbow Primary explained that because of overcrowding in homes, children witness sexual acts between parents, mothers and their lovers, sisters and their boyfriends, brothers and their girlfriends, and lodgers and their lovers. He believes that boys, in particular, emulate these actions at school. It comes as no surprise that the street becomes the preferred 'home'—for children it offers more space in which to play, for the adults it is the domain to which to escape from the cramped home. But, the street also holds other elements—more negative than positive. For children there is the temptation as well as the coercion into gangsterism; for girls there is the possibility of sex, either in the form of rape or prostitution; for the fathers there is the lure of dagga and drugs; for mothers it simply means that they are not at home for the children. It is under these conditions that children (girls and boys) and adults (men and women) are drawn to the company of gangs, who become their family—often offering more comfort and money than the blood family.

Linked to the high rate of unemployment and overcrowdedness is domestic violence. Domestic violence in this community encompasses physical, verbal, psychological, emotional and sexual violence. It also includes violence between parents, live-in lovers, parents and children, children and grandparents, as well as between siblings.

*I had it in my home where my husband was violent. I actually had an interdict against him. When I phoned them— when the police came here then my husband is gone already. And I mean nobody expected it from him. I was shocked when he done it to me, and I mean that is the kind of thing that you always have to deal with. I mean domestic violence it's all the way—you will get it in every second house, you will get it. I mean when the people on a Saturday afternoon stand there, they will sit and drink. In a split second then you will just see there they brawl with each other and what can you do? You must now stand and watch there or grab your child and go out because it's a bottle flying and all that kind of things... (Female parent.)*

One of the parents of Rainbow, herself an abused woman, revealed concern about the effect the violence in her own home and on the street has had on her children, particularly her 16-year old son, who, for the last two years has refused to attend school. He shows signs of aggressive behaviour, always hitting or kicking his sisters. He does not see anything wrong with his behaviour. The only way his mother is able to stop this violent behaviour is through hitting him. She realises that it is a vicious circle.

Violence against girls in the home includes abuse from almost any male figure: father, step-father, mother's live-in lover, uncle, lodger, brother, grandfather, male friends of parents or boyfriend.

*Her own brother continuously kicks and hits her terribly. She has laid charges many times. I don't know if the case was withdrawn. And so I spoke to the person's sister one day. We told her that if her brother hits her one day, then if she should marry one day she will think that her husband must also hit and kick her! (Female parent.)*

A parent from the primary school revealed how it is common for young girls to move into the homes of their boyfriends, especially if the boys are gangsters. This is done with the consent of the boy's parents. If the girl's parents should try to take her back, the boy's parents will stop them. Their house could be stoned, set alight, or her parents could be harmed. Girls are also often removed from their communities, and taken to other Cape Flats areas. A girl is often willingly to go with the gangster as he is able to offer her a better life, more money, clothes and jewellery. Once the boy tires of the girl, or if she falls pregnant, she is simply dumped and is allowed to return to her parents. It is seldom the case that the boy will accept responsibility for the baby. Instead he will claim that the girl slept around.

The principal of Rainbow believes that prostitution in the community is increasing. To the principal, this increase is rooted more in the low morals of the community than in any dire economic situation. Ex-learners of the primary schools have apparently been seen engaging in prostitution along the main road near the school. A female educator at the primary school sketched a story of how a twelve year-old girl followed in her mother's footsteps of becoming a prostitute. The mother showed her how to dress and where to stand in the area. High school learners report how other learners become 'taxi queens' selling sexual favours to taxi drivers in return for free rides or preferential treatment. Boys in a group interview revealed that girls offer sexual favours to boys in exchange for money, clothing and jewellery.

According to educators and parents at Mission High School, taxis and taxi drivers have had a major impact on the community, especially regarding the treatment and safety of girls. It is common knowledge among educators, learners and parents that the taxi industry in Hopeville is controlled by the gangs.

*... a very important point that people tend to miss out—they isolate gangsters, you know they normally couple gangs with drugs. In fact, in our community the gangs control practically everything. And let me tell you this, they obviously control the drugs, they control the transport—that's taxis, and just to give you one illustration, should one of their members be shot and buried, all taxis whether you like it or not will have to take part in that funeral. You are stopped and that's where hijacking comes in. They don't remove your taxi but you as a private taxi driver must just transport all the mourners at that funeral, whether you like it or not. (Male educator.)*

According to a Western Cape Education Department (WCED) official, girls appear to be vulnerable and are unable to protect themselves against their social circumstances. In her opinion, to a certain extent the girls are forced to be the girlfriends of gangsters or taxi drivers as a protection mechanism.

### **Being at Primary School**

Rainbow is situated on the corner of three roads—two of which are exceptionally busy and notorious for road accidents, gang fights, taxi wars, car hijackings and pedestrian accidents. The bus and taxi terminus is approximately 200 metres from the school.

Rainbow Primary was established in January 1979. The school offers dual medium of instruction in English and Afrikaans, the latter classes being bigger in number. The breakdown of classes per grade are as follows: three classes in grade one, two in grade two, three in Grade 3, four in Grade 4, three each in Grades 5 and 6, and Grade 2 in Grade 7.

The school is in very good condition and the greenest in the area. There is no visible littering and concerted efforts are made to maintain the flowerbeds and trees. In 1992, the school received the Mayor's Award for 'best kept school grounds'. The school is enclosed by high fences and razor wire. These go right up against the sides of certain classrooms because of the high incidence of gang fights and violence in the area. There have also been incidents where gangs have entered schools looking for learners who belong to rival gangs.

### **THE LEARNERS**

In total there are 818 learners at Rainbow Primary, of which 439 are boys and 379 are girls. The majority of the learners live in close proximity to the school. Others come from outlying farms and townships. According to the principal, the school does not have a high dropout rate. Where children drop out, it is more likely to be the girl. She either falls pregnant or has to stay home to care for younger siblings or an elderly person. Boys drop out because of the lure of belonging to a gang or because their parents want them to work.

The types of homes from which learners come vary. Most of them come from very poor homes. The difference lies in the type of care they get at home. Many children come from good and stable households despite being poor. Others come from homes where they are neglected. They come to school in dirty clothing, smelling and without being fed.

*Children from single-parent (mother) homes are cared for the best. Where children live in homes with live-in lovers or boarders, the children are most problematic. Only one or two children in my class come from stable two-parent homes. (Female educator.)*

According to the principal, it is not uncommon for learners to come to school in the same clothes in which they slept.

Approximately 50% of the learner population wear the prescribed school uniform or some kind of uniform. Only about 40% of parents pay the school fees of forty rands per year. Reasons range from real poverty and apathy to the belief that the government should be providing free education or the misguided belief that the teachers are using the school fees for themselves.

### **THE EDUCATORS**

Rainbow has a total number of 21 educators, of which five are males and 16 are females. The ages of female educators range from 24 to 50 years. The length of service of female educators is from one to 21 years. The age range of the male educators is between 27 and 44 years. Length of service is from two to 22 years. The principal, a male, has been at the school for the longest period—22 years. The school has a support staff of five—one secretary, one administration clerk, two male caretakers and one female cleaner. The management team of the school consists of the principal, one male educator and three female educators.

There are no guidance counsellors at the school. There are two teachers who have been trained as counsellors by the WCED, but they themselves have admitted that the training has been inadequate. There are no guidance sessions, as such.

*Discipline and moral teachings are part of the child's daily routine—in assemblies. Children look up to the educators as role models. (Female educator.)*

Educators are from the local area and only a few have moved to formally white suburbs. Their comparative wealth means they are often targets of crime in this community. Their cars have on occasion been broken into. Personal belongings also regularly disappear from their classrooms or handbags.

### **RUNNING THE SCHOOL**

Rainbow Primary has a functional school governing body. The school has an established teacher support team (TST), a management team, a finance committee, and a cultural committee. The school belongs to the Safe Schools Programme. Programmes run at the school include language, maths and science courses by Get-inset, an NGO; a literacy course by READ, as well as OBE workshops presented by the WCED. Recently the teaching of Xhosa has been introduced as a third language via the Academy of Xhosa. In addition, Rainbow Primary runs a properly administered feeding scheme and is affiliated to two soup kitchens. Most of the children come from homes where there is not enough food. The soup kitchens ensure that most of those children receive some type of sustenance. The soup kitchen has also ensured greater involvement from parents at the school.

It is the philosophy of the school to open its doors to the community. This means being aware of the plight and hardships that many people face on a daily basis. According to the principal, parents often approach educators to help with difficulties at home, such as sorting out the electricity bill, having the water supply reconnected, or to explain a legal notice. The principal has also been approached to arrange funerals for learners or other relatives or to talk to an

abusive spouse. This has meant that educators often spend a lot of their time directly dealing with social issues in the community. It has also meant educators coming to the community during the weekends or taking children home in order to be bathed or taken to a doctor. These services from the school are viewed by the staff as part of their jobs. They are of the opinion that one cannot teach in the area if one is not prepared to be involved in the community. Consequently, many parents have a high regard for the school manifested in the number of parents, who volunteer to make sandwiches or soup for the children, or the men who offer to do odd chores around the school.

Codes of conduct are in place for both educators and learners. School meetings for parents are held once per term. The school involves social workers from the WCED and from the school clinic in the local region. However, there are numerous schools in the region, so visits from these social workers are few and far between. Extra-mural activities on offer include cricket, mini-cricket, netball, mini-netball, volleyball, soccer, baseball, tee-ball, softball, athletics, gymnastada and chess.

### *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF RAINBOW*

Discipline, manners and morals are part of the school's whole teaching approach, starting with relations between staff members. In Hopeville, Rainbow Primary School has a reputation for being disciplined, organised and committed to its learners. Educators are on duty before school starts, monitoring scholar patrol and school grounds, until late in the afternoon. It is the policy of the school that all educators have to convene in the staff-room before the school day commences. This allows for any notices to be read, changes in the day's timetable to be announced and to ascertain which educators, if any, are absent. A typical school day starts with the wailing of the siren and educators promptly proceeding to their respective classrooms. Learners are expected to line up outside the door of their classroom. The educator then ushers them inside. Once inside they are required to remain standing, greet the educator and say a prayer.

Discipline in the classrooms appears to be good, although, there are the one or two learners who persist in disrupting the lesson. The classroom management of educators appears to vary. It was observed that male educators tend to pinch or bump learners when they step out of line. Learners still receive corporal punishment. Female educators tend to shout or send learners outside the classroom or depending on the seriousness of an offence, send them to the principal's office. When educators do not monitor learners, it appears that their behaviour changes to the extent that it becomes out of control. As part of controlling the learners during break time the principal and staff have divided the playground into sections. One section of the playground area is reserved for grades one, two and three learners. The younger group is separated from the older learners, because the latter often harass younger children stealing their sandwiches, teasing, fighting and threatening them. The area closest to the girls' toilets is reserved for the girls only, while the outer field is for the boys. According to the principal, there is an invisible line between the field reserved for the girls and that for the boys. The principal believes that those girls who cross the 'line' on the field are doing so because they want to be with the boys and they want to be touched. In addition, ten educators are on duty during break. This prevents fighting and other acts of violence.

As part of maintaining discipline and security within the school, the school gates are locked throughout the day. This does not only keep gangsters off the school property, but it also safeguards educators from irate parents. Parents have to wait at the gates when fetching their children from school. In the past parents have come to school, accompanied by a neighbour or other relative, with the sole purpose of assaulting an educator because the child has been sent

home with a letter of suspension or the educator has reprimanded him. It also allows the school to monitor who is entering the school. The intercom system also plays a vital role, not only in making announcements, but also in warning the school about any pending danger, such as gunshots or gang fights in the area.

While ten educators are on playground duty, some, mostly the females, meet in the staff-room. The men prefer to meet in one of the classrooms, while two others sometimes play cricket or soccer with the learners. On most days, the principal remains in his office, either dealing with parents, learners or speaking to one or two male educators during breaks. The principal appears to have a mentoring role with the male staff. The more serious aspects of the school, such as finances, are discussed only among the males. Issues, such as parent meetings and attending workshops are left to the female educators. The deputy principal is a female, but this was not evident in the delegation of duties from the principal. However, there is no animosity from female educators. The staff appears to have great respect for the principal.

There are no aftercare facilities at the school. Learners, however, are seen to hang around the school property well after the school day has ended. They either play on the grass, or they simply sit around, claiming that there is nobody at home.

According to both the principal and educators, the parents who pay school fees are the ones who attend meetings. These parents generally show an interest in the school and in the education of their children. The principal explained that school meetings are held in order to give parents the opportunity to speak to the educators, and vice versa. Unfortunately, he continued, the parents who do not attend are the very ones educators need to see. Of the parents who attend meetings, 95% are mothers, aunts, grandmothers, or women friends of the mothers. The term parent at Rainbow is loosely understood to refer only to the mother.

*They take responsibility of caring for the children and in terms of educating the child and in terms of seeing that the child is fed and clothed, etc. So I would therefore say that it is the mother who is the primary caregiver. (Male educator.)*

The men of the community, it appears, are absent. According to the principal, this absence of the male figure in the home has led to certain mothers expecting male educators to fill the gap especially when it involves disciplining the child.

### **VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

Crime has had a very damaging effect on the school. With its high fences and razor wire, the school resembles a prison, but as the educators and children point out, they feel safer at the school than in their own homes in Hopeville. Violence outside the school has impacted on the school directly in the sense that whatever fighting happens in the community invariably spills over into the school. Learners at the school may belong to rival gangs, fighting between gangs happens on the school field (there is a hole in the fence), or a learner may be shot in the crossfire. Burglaries often happen at the school, especially during the weekends. However, because it is common knowledge that the school has an alarm system, thieves no longer break into classrooms or the administration building. What is targeted are taps or any kind of metal, which can be taken to the scrap metal yard for a few rands. This is obviously costing the school money and inconvenience. Gangs use the school field as a war zone, particularly during weekends, and occasionally during the afternoons after school. It is not unusual for learners and educators to find bullets or shells lying around on the school field.

The violence learners witness in their homes and community also impacts on the school. Learners come to school, angry, frustrated and out of control. Educators at Rainbow Primary



observe that there is a high degree of instability and frustration among learners on Mondays. Many are victims of some form of violence, would have witnessed some form of domestic violence or been caught up in a gang fight over the weekend.

*They come from home in this violent mood. I mean the child who comes to school after he has seen maybe his mother or father being stabbed early in the morning—you can't expect him to be quite normal or cooperative at school. One morning we had a child here, her mother had stabbed her husband to death in the kitchen while the child was making ready to come to school. The mother stabbed the father to death, with a kitchen knife—bread knife. (Principal.)*

There is a high level of physical aggression amongst younger male learners from about seven to ten years of age. What starts as 'play' easily ends in a violent interaction including pushing, pulling and hitting. They fight over items such as sweets and chips. There is also a high incidence of swearing. Any type of disagreement, no matter how trivial, immediately takes on a threatening nature with finger pointing and swearing.

Sometimes the violence is very serious. During our research, the principal revealed that a Grade 6 boy (a twelve year old) had been badly beaten up by another Grade 6 boy the previous afternoon. The incident happened while the two boys were walking home from school. Apparently the one boy had hit the other boy with a rock across his face. The boy needed stitches across his face. His mother had come to see the principal about the incident the following morning. He voiced his frustration at not being able to get through to the children to stop the fighting.

Violence also occurs amongst the older boys and girls. While there is physical fighting between boys, it is also prevalent amongst the girls more so than amongst the younger group.

On the school premises the most serious acts of violence happen in and around the toilets. While boys are beaten, girls are touched on the breasts, groped, or boys rub up against them. Thus far, according to the principal, no 'serious' incidents of molestation or rape on the school property have been reported. He revealed though that educators are encouraged to lock their classrooms during break times so as to avoid any learners getting up to any kinds of mischief.

According to a male educator, girls are sometimes forced to pay protection money to the boys of approximately fifty cents to one rand per day to prevent boys harassing them. According to learners, certain children are targets for bullies or cliques at the school. If these children wish to be protected during school hours, then they have to pay protection money to another clique, who will come to their defence if they are harassed. If the money is not paid, they are left to the mercy of anybody who hurts them or takes their money. This includes the group to whom they may have paid protection money.

## **SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

### **Levels of awareness and denial**

Perhaps the most significant aspect about the school's response to violence against girls is the difference in attitude and perception between the male and female educators. While the female educators felt that there was a high level of violence against girls, the males dismissed it as normal with comments such as: *the same as at any other school; it's not really a problem; girls commit more acts of violence than boys; and the female teachers are blowing*

*things out of proportion.* Male educators were also reluctant to be interviewed or to participate in individual or group interviews.

Female educators believe that both the rate and level of violence against girls are increasing. Girls often confide in them regarding sexual molestation at home or about a violent stepfather or mother. It is more likely for the girls to confide in the female educators which provides a partial explanation for the male educators' belief that *"it's not really a problem"*.

Another area of difference, which emerged from male and female educators, regards the interaction between the educators and parents. The female educators claimed to have been verbally abused by mothers and their neighbours or friends, while the male teachers have not had this experience. There are two possible explanations for this difference in experience: one, is that male teachers might be getting more respect in the community, especially from females; two, is that females treat other females as men treat them.

*...rather speak to a mother who comes here, than the father, because I find that the mothers are sometimes-- they have you can reason with them a bit better than maybe a dad who comes along with an idea. Because a lot of the time it's just misconceptions, and you can just speak about it and then five minutes later they're off, they're happy, you're happy, the child is okay. But sometimes where we have parents and fathers sometimes coming here--one-track mind--then they want to sort you out basically.*  
(Male educator.)

### **Understandings of violence against girls**

As far as providing some kind of explanation for the violence between the girls and boys at the school, the principal believes that lack of tolerance is at the heart of most of the violence between boys and girls, between boys and boys, and between girls and girls. The principal and educators alike believe that girls are just as guilty as boys of the fighting that goes on at school. The learners have been conditioned by their home and community environment to believe that violence is how you solve any disagreement. Because the only type of attention received at home is a violent one, certain learners come to school looking for some kind of recognition or affirmation from educators through violence.

*...either they (the girls) must play mother at home, feed the younger children or clean the house cause the mother's either at work or doing whatever. So they come to school looking for that extra attention and whoever can give them that attention, they will basically fall into that trap where they become overwhelmed by this whole attention thing cause now the boys are perhaps smiling at them or saying something, which makes them feel good. So in a way they get caught up in this whole cycle of seeking for attention.* (Principal.)

### **Dealing with violence against girls**

While there may be a disparity between male and female educators in their perception of the level of violence against girls, both parties agree that it is happening and that it needs to be addressed. Individual interviews with educators and parents, as well as group interviews with educators revealed that educators are fulfilling more than their share of responsibilities. Most of the educators are doing more than can be expected of them, such as taking children home for weekends when circumstances are really bad at home, bringing learners clothes to school, taking children to the clinic or hospital, or taking them home for a proper bath. Some female

educators even take children home if they are being threatened. While female educators fulfil the role of mothers, male educators, in trying to fulfil a male parental role for learners, are often seen playing games with the children during break times. Both male and female educators spend a lot of their time speaking to the learners about how to deal with alcoholic parents, violent fathers and the general violence in the community.

On one level the boys clearly hold the girls responsible for violence against girls. They say that girls start the violence either through physically starting fights or through verbally provoking the boys. The boys also believe that certain girls want to be touched or raped by the boys by dressing provocatively or by what they say. On another level, the girls feel that all the boys want to do is touch the girls whether in the classroom or on the playgrounds. Girls also blame themselves.

In one interview a ten-year old girl confessed to how she had wanted to commit suicide in order to escape her situation at home. She shared that her mother and stepfather often fought—verbally and physically. During one specific altercation the stepfather attempted to stab her mother with a knife. Somehow the girl managed to grab the knife from her stepfather and wanted to stab him, but her mother stopped her. After this incident the girl was left with a sense of helplessness and intense sadness. She really wanted to stop feeling miserable and saw suicide as a way out of her situation. After discussing it with her brother, she decided against the suicide, but only because she did not want her mother to grieve for her.

#### **Preventing violence against girls**

When children are abused, educators at Rainbow Primary School do not know how to approach the department, and the only recourse they have to outside assistance is the Day Hospital and Red Cross Children's Hospital. Serious cases of violence and abuse are generally reported to the principal, who will try to sort out the matter himself either by calling the parents to the school, conducting a home visit, contacting the social worker (there is only one for the entire community) or by reporting the matter to the police.

*Look, the police they are so unresponsive ... Many times they came here for—we phoned them, and they would say they would send out the van within an hour or two, and when it comes to the end of the school day, no one has seen them. I don't know there seems to be some lull or lax—apathy maybe—let's just carry on with that vicious cycle that if we do report it to the police—ag, like it's no problem—they've also maybe also become so desensitised to the things that's happening in the community—that's why I make it a point of going personally to P., not phoning them, or if anything happens the principal will always call me and the two of us will go and sort things out at the police station. But you can see in their facial expression and even in their tones that they use—that it's so part of—okay your case is not really a priority because there's ten or twenty other cases and maybe there's ten other cases that's more important perhaps than your case, type of thing. (Female parent.)*

Both parents and educators felt, that there is a very poor link between the school and the local police even though the captain is an ex-pupil of Rainbow Primary School. According to the principal, the police have been to the school to speak about safety issues thrice in the last three years.

## **Being at High School**

Those learners who do further their education after completing Grade 7 at Rainbow Primary School normally continue their studies at Mission High School—one of three high schools in the immediate vicinity.

Like Rainbow Primary School, Mission High School is situated on the outskirts of Hopeville. The high school was established in 1976. It has its origins in the student uprisings of that time. There is one Grade 12 class as opposed to eight Grade 8 classes, reflecting the fact that very few learners reach matric. The language of instruction is Afrikaans in the last three grades, which means Xhosa-speakers bypass this school in favour of others in this area that offer English as a medium of instruction up to Grade 12.

The school is surrounded by barbed wire fencing. In attempting to create a safe school environment, the fence excludes about two-thirds of the playing fields. At the gates is a security guard, as well as a female parent, who volunteers to do gate duty. This basically means that she monitors who enters and leaves the school premises. The gates are kept locked and learners are not allowed to leave the school during school hours. However, learners seem to arrive and leave as they please due to the holes in the fence. Around the school are large empty tracts of unkempt land and the school is completely separated from the living spaces of local residents.

The school consists of several parallel blocks split by a connecting open-air corridor and separated on either side by open sandy sections in which rain water accumulates. At the back of the school are abandoned desks and seemingly disused tennis/volley-ball courts. There is lots of graffiti on the walls all around the school, as well as on classroom walls and on desks. The general appearance and state of the classrooms is not really conducive to effective teaching and learning. Window-panes are broken, there are gaping holes in the ceilings, there are few posters or pictures against the walls, desks are defaced by scribble and graffiti and walls are dirty and covered in graffiti. Litter is strewn around most of the school, especially against the fence. It appears that little effort is made to do something about the litter—either in terms of providing more bins, or by letting the learners clean up the area.

The administration block contains the offices of the principal, deputy and secretary, the staff-room, the photocopying and printing room, and the safe-room. The principal's office is separated from the foyer by a new wood and glass enclosure. One has to go through several offices to get to his office, which is not easily accessible. The administration block is completely separated from the classrooms, which means the closer one is to the back of the school building, the further one is from the staff quarters. This also means that the staff and principal are far from every day activities within the school.

Academically, according to a female educator, the matriculation pass rate has dropped in the last ten years. Most cite socio-economic problems experienced in the wider community. Several adult interviewees referred to high levels of intolerance and aggression in the home due to the stresses of unemployment, cramped living conditions, alcoholism, drug abuse and gangsterism.

## **THE LEARNERS**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, the total number of learners was 1 148. Mission High School has a number of over-age learners. There are three female learners, aged 20 in Grades 11 and 12

and four male learners of the same age in Grades 10 and 11. There are twenty-six (14 male and 12 female) learners who are nineteen years of age.

The school draws most of its learners—almost 90%—from the Hopeville area. Others come from Mitchell's Plain, Manenberg and surrounding areas. Lately a few learners come from more affluent areas, such as Newfields. Most of the learners come from very poor socio-economic backgrounds, frequently disrupted by gang fights, vandalism and violence. This means that whether learners are at school or home, their lives are continually tainted by violence and unrest.

### *THE EDUCATORS*

There are 31 educators, of which 18 are males and 13 females. The school has a non-teaching staff of seven: four cleaning and maintenance members, one foreman, one junior secretary and one senior secretary. The length of service for both male and female educators ranges from one to 25 years.

The majority of the educators do not live in Hopeville. Some, however, do have ties with the community either through having previously lived there, or through relatives. While a few of the educators live in previously whites only areas, the majority of them either live in neighbouring areas to Hopeville or in other Cape Flats areas.

### *RUNNING THE SCHOOL*

The school has a functional governing body, a code of conduct for both educators and learners as recommended by the WCED, a finance committee, a senior management team, a fund raising team, a counselling team, which consists of two learners and a secretary, a Christian group, a drama group, an Interact club and belongs to the Safe Schools Programme. Mission High School also has a fairly active Representative Council of Learners (RCL), which consists of learners and one female educator. The RCL deals with everything from minor classroom matters to providing counselling for gay learners. A newly appointed truancy officer (Learner Support Official) has been sent by the Department of Community Safety in conjunction with the WCED, to monitor attendance levels and to do house visits where necessary.

The school has a mission statement, which makes reference to the link between good school management, the development of a culture of learning and teaching, and good relations with the community. The school's general code of conduct, approved by the circuit manager, is in draft form. In the code of conduct, the wearing of a school uniform is insisted upon, so is respect between staff and peers. No fighting or swearing is allowed.

In general, relationships between staff and students appear to be relaxed. While certain educators are strict about discipline, the wearing of the school uniform and punctuality, others show no concern. Noise levels are frequently high, even between periods. Learners can often be seen milling around during school time. This appears to be largely due to the fact that learners need to move to different classrooms whenever a new period starts. Learners often use this opportunity to leave the school premises or not to report to the next lesson. There is no roll check to ensure that the learners who reported for registration at the beginning of the day are still at school. Because learners have different educators for different subjects, the educators have no idea who is absent or who is playing truant.

The school has a proud record of extra-mural achievements in the fields of sport especially soccer and drama. A trophy for most promising production was won by a group of Grade 8 learners in a regional competition for the performing arts for an anti-racist dramatic presentation at the Baxter, prepared independently by the group. An annual variety concert, the 'Ghetto Jam', attracts full houses from the community.

The principal defines his role at the school as 'multi-faceted' in the sense that he is a school manager, a social worker, a psychologist, a policeman, and a mediator not only between an educator and a learner but sometimes in the community as well. Communication between the principal and educators appears to be somewhat strained. This lack of communication between the principal and staff affects communication between educators. There appears to be little consolidation or agreed policy when it comes to the implementation of disciplinary procedures.

### *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MISSION*

Most of the learners at Mission High School walk to school. Even though most of them live in the area, a high percentage of learners arrive at school late. Certain educators also appear to disregard the official starting time of the school day and often arrive late. The outside gates are kept locked during school hours. However, learners seem to have easy access to arriving and leaving when they please through holes in the fence.

Only about half of the learner population wears the prescribed school uniform. While some learners attempt to wear the full school uniform, others wear parts of it. Some learners wear civilian clothes. Learners appear to have lots of freedom of movement, as well as free interaction between boys and girls.

Fighting, swearing and other kinds of verbal abuse are common at the school, whether on the playgrounds or in the classrooms. There are always incidents of violence--during break, in or outside the classroom, or while learners are changing classes. Learners often do not report to class on time. They take smoke breaks, bunk, bully younger learners, and engage in sexual interaction, such as kissing, touching or rubbing up against one another. One of the main reasons for this high incidence of violence is the frequency of unsupervised interaction between learners. Some learners consider walking around the school as unsafe--certain corners and sections of buildings are no-go zones. There are no locks on the girls' toilets--this makes the area particularly vulnerable and dangerous for girls. Girls in particular do not feel safe at the school, and generally steer clear of the toilets or remote corners and alleys. Some girls feel unsafe even in the classrooms, especially when educators are absent, arrive late, or leave the classroom for whatever reason.

*The educators are not always in the classroom. Anything can happen!* (Female learner, Grade 11.)

The 'anything' refers to boys touching girls, boys fighting with boys or with girls, or gangsters entering the classrooms.

### *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS*

Violence against girls at Mission High School is in the form of verbal abuse, threats, harassment, beating, touching and groping. These types of violence happen in various areas of the school, in the playgrounds, classroom, toilets, passages, on the way to school, as well as on the way home. Abusive actions or reactions towards girls from the boys are sparked by anything, from general frustration and boredom to direct intimidation and anger.

Girls at the high school basically have three types of reactions to the violence they face. They avoid it by steering clear of volatile boys or situations, which basically means they have to become invisible, they laugh it off and treat it as a prank or they report it to the educators, with no guarantee that it will actually stop.

According to the boys at Mission High School, their parents say that girls 'ask for it' when boys hit them, and 'boys will be boys'. Some mothers, they say, encourage boyfriends to hit their daughters. Sometimes, if a boy is hitting his girlfriend, his friends will join in.

Further attitudes are: 'if you don't provoke a boy, he'll leave you alone'; 'girls must be beaten when they step out of line: this is how the boy shows that he cares about the girl'. Girls can't help their friends when they're being beaten. Another prevailing view amongst the high school learners is that being raped (what girls experience) isn't as bad as being shot (what boys experience). Boys say girls shove their heads between their breasts or touch their penises when educators are absent.

Boys do not interfere if a girl is being assaulted because they themselves could be shot or because it is often the girl's boyfriend hurting her and they feel she 'deserves it'. Boys see girls as sex objects, they boast about how many girlfriends they have had and how girls fight over them. They become physically abusive if they feel a girl has been critical of them. In two separate incidents, three or four boys touched a girl. This was reported, but the boys claimed that she had laughed throughout and no further action followed. Another incident involved a boy exposing his erect penis to a group of girls.

The majority of girls are to a certain extent under direct threat of some form of harassment whether it is from a male lodger, a family friend, her father, her brother, her step-father or from the boy in her class to another girl at her school. Girls often complain that cleaning staff harass them sexually. It seems that besides being under threat from boys at school, girls are also being sexually harassed by educators.

*And then in the schools, unfortunately, the teachers. The schools that I've been-- there're many teachers having affairs with girls, unfortunately, and so much so I know of four--I don't know whether that was now harassment, but they actually got married, so it wasn't really--but in the beginning I think when it started, it wasn't quite kosher.*  
(WCED official.)

To most girls the home is not automatically a safe place. In fact, she may stand a bigger chance of being abused or violated inside the home than she does outside it. At Mission High School girls cannot be at school every day due to gang-fights in flats, corridors, or on street corners. Time appears to play a significant role in the safety of girls in the community. Girls also at the high school find mornings more unsafe than the afternoons, because it is easier to walk in big groups in the afternoon than it is in the morning when gangs are more active. During a group interview with girls, they revealed that gangsters steal their books, especially textbooks, in order to sell them.

Girls and boys at the high school show low levels of tolerance towards one another. They resort to insults and swearing at each other. As a result of just passing a comment, a boy wanted to stab a girl with a pen. Two boys were overheard saying that they would "get a girl" that afternoon, since they "felt like having sex". In another incident a Grade 8 girl stabbed a

boy just above his eye. The reason for this rage was that she had been sitting in his seat and he had asked her to move.

## *SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS*

### **Levels of awareness and denial**

The principal recently spoke to the school about aggression between boys and girls in an attempt to address the issue. A girl, who complained to an educator that a caretaker had sexually harassed her, was laughed at. A male teacher said that girls 'protect' themselves by attaching themselves to a gangster, in which case, the boys at school will not interfere with her. She also becomes the target for attack if rival gangs do not find her boyfriend. One male educator claimed that there is no distinction between how boys treat boys and how they treat girls. He also said that although sexual harassment happens, boys and girls do not take it seriously.

*...he knocks her head against the wall. During second break they are back together again. (Female learner, Grade 9.)*

### **Dealing with violence against girls**

It appears that instead of trying to alleviate the cycle of violence at the school, certain educators are in fact perpetuating and aggravating it. A non-teaching staff member has been allowed back again after having been suspended for molesting a girl at school. A female parent on the school governing body alleged that an educator, who habitually does this, had smacked her daughter across the face. Learners apparently also smack this educator. According to the parent the matter was reported to the principal, who referred the case to the 'subject leader', who had called the educator concerned to a meeting. After a brief exchange the educator walked out of the meeting and the parent was asked to leave. She was on the point of raising this matter in an SGB meeting, when someone else who raised a similar case was told by the principal to keep such matters out of SGB meetings.

According to the principal, there is a specific procedure in place that has to be followed when learners are disciplined. It works along these lines: the educator will refer a serious offence to the head educator and to the principal. The parents are immediately contacted. Any disciplinary procedure is conducted in the presence of the parents. Where suspension of a learner is recommended the matter is first discussed with the school governing body.

However, it was observed and revealed by learners, that not all the educators are enforcing the procedures when it comes to discipline or violence against girls. While some educators at the high school react strongly to minor misdemeanours others turn a blind eye to serious offences. As a result, only certain educators enforce rules, and learners know exactly which educators to be wary of.

Group interviews with both boys and girls at Mission High School revealed that learners also hold educators responsible for violence and violence against girls in the school. Learners believe that educators are neither strict nor consistent. Educators do not apply disciplinary procedures or threats. They are not consistent when punishing learners. Two Grade 9 learners alleged that educators know where learners smoked, for instance, but did not patrol there. One boy also felt that educators were too afraid to deal with violence from boys, particularly those



boys who belonged to gangs. Learners often turn to family members for help when it appears that the educator is incapable or does not want to deal with a particular situation.

*My aunt protects me. The day they pulled down my pants my aunt came to school. She told my teacher that she would bring her boss to school—I don't know what the boss is going to do, but he works for Childline. She works for the boss. So she came to school, and she said she would bring the boss to school. Thus far my teacher has not spoken to me. (Male learner, Grade 10.)*

On the other hand, learners felt that it was not the educator's job to baby-sit the learners. Instead they were at school to teach those who wanted to learn, and who needed their attention for more important matters.

Educators, it appears, hold the parents responsible for the lack of discipline at the school. Parents do not respond to educators' requests to report to the school when their child is giving problems. Parents, as alleged by one female educator, often react aggressively to educators. The learners, in turn, realise that they are able to get away with certain types of behaviour, and the educator is left with no other alternative but to suspend the learner until his or her parent reports to the school.

While educators blame parents, parents blame the educators.

*I mean, you know this grass that is so long ... Now I was at the gate for three weeks now—but I've seen a lot of things while I was at the gate. And I could see that something is happening there in that long grass, and the moment I see—I sense and then I just walk—I walk to them then I say, get up here, get up—the boy's laying on top of the girl—and then I get upset because I must take it this way, so it's happening to my child—things is happening to my child at school—where's the teachers—they say they've got teachers walking around intervals—it happened I think once or twice and it's not happening anymore." (Female parent, volunteer.)*

The same parent explained that because of the many holes in the school fence learners often bunked classes. But, this too, she believed, could be prevented if regular roll call were conducted against the register during the day. She continued, that if educators spent more time in their classrooms and less time in the foyer area or in the toilets, there would be fewer incidents of violence and disruption at the school. She also expressed unhappiness with the way the school deals with problematic learners. According to her, 20 learners were suspended in one week. They were given letters to give to their parents, but, as she explains, many of those letters will never get to the parents, similarly, many parents simply will not respond to the letters.

According to the principal, the captain and inspector of the police can be called upon any time. Although not all, he found most of the police officers very co-operative and helpful.

*... a very good relationship with the police... I can call them any time and they'd come and chat to the learners that say they belong to different gangs, and they get them out... (Principal.)*

Not everybody, however, at the high school shares the same experience with the police.

*Since I've been in high school now for this time—I've never seen them coming to school to come and speak about violence. They maybe come to school to come speak about something else, ja, like the bombings and whatever—like a hand grenade—how does a*

*hand grenade look and things like that, but they won't speak about violence and whatever* " (Male learner, grade 10.)

### Preventing violence against girls

The school counsellor is on call in the library every Tuesday. She is sent by the YMCA and has been at this school for the past six months. The principal requested assistance from the YMCA, which can service only a limited number of schools (ones which approach it) in the Western Cape. She interviews learners whose names have been entered into a book in the office, which contains names of learners with problems. She has been promised more private space, but the school management makes little contact with her. She sees her role as having to refer cases to the School Clinic, which she says is very supportive. She also approaches other NGOs. The number of parents wanting to see her is increasing steadily. She finds it difficult to advise parents what to do with learners who are older than 15, since compulsory schooling does not apply to them. Consequently the counsellor's time and resources are very limited in relation to increasing needs. She depends largely on her own initiative and self-sustained networks. She refers cases to a social worker she knows personally because she has not been introduced to the school's social worker. She also trains four Grade 8 learners for one year to be peer counsellors the following year.

There is an interact group, consisting of learners who, in conjunction with other schools, volunteer their services in community work, welfare work and the running of an adoption programme. Two educators and the secretary form a 'counselling team' whose job it is to deal with grief, rape, etc. The school provides access to services for learners up to 25 years of age.

The principal calls in caspiers and other police vehicles when gangs threaten the school—to ensure learners get home safely. On a broader level, three schools in Hopeville—of which Mission High School is one—are attempting to solve the issue of violence erupting at any joint gathering between them when each organises a particular recreational event for all three. At the joint sports day there was a high police presence, neighbourhood watch and security presence—no violent incidents occurred. On one occasion the secretary called a radio station and parliament to publicise the fact that gang fights were happening on a particular day, so as to alert parents.

Mission High School became part of the Safe Schools Programme in 1999. This is a government initiative to fight crime on the school grounds and to provide support to schools with fencing and burglar bars. Police featured at an assembly at this launch, but are not generally otherwise visible. The barbed wire fence close to the school for better control, is ineffective. There are often visitors at the fence; and a gangster was seen to leap over and assault his "girlfriend" in front of other learners during our research. In places the fence is rusted, providing easy access. Learners also bring pairs of pliers to cut it so they can run home. One to three educators do 'playground duty', but only when the sun shines. The gates are kept locked during school hours. A female parent—on a voluntary basis, has until recently, staffed them. Suspension is applied in response to the following misdemeanours: swearing at staff members; selling cigarettes; bunking; assaulting and touching. Some educators persist in using corporal punishment. Several learners hang around outside classrooms doing nothing because they have been banned by the educator from returning, in some cases for up to two weeks.

## **Solutions: Schools and communities speak out**

The range of solutions to stop violence against girls is wide. There are recommendations from the WCED either in the form of policy documents or via official monitoring. There are also recommendations from the principal and educators that could lead to a more disciplined learning arena for girls and boys. Some solutions are more community-based than school-based. Learners also have their ideas on how to create safer environments for girls.

The WCED has attempted to provide some solutions through the recent launch of its project—the Safe Schools Programme. The programme is extending its work slowly because it is still dependent on funding. It has reached only 700 out of 1 700 schools. The programme consists of courses for educators relating to personal and classroom management, as well as ways of responding to gang attacks on the school premises. Schools join this programme by requesting admission and being accepted or else if they are severely afflicted by violence of one kind or another. The Safe Schools Programme has made available a publication *Abuse no more: dealing with child abuse*. A limited print run was made available in English and Afrikaans only. Both Rainbow primary School and Mission High School were unaware of this publication and so was the high school counsellor. Basically, it outlines a multi-disciplinary approach to dealing with child abuse and provides detailed descriptions of safety management procedures.

Principals, educators, parents, learners and community members offered numerous solutions to violence against girls. Many recommended solutions are viable, while others are so dependent on huge funding that they are highly unlikely to be realised. The types of recommended solutions range from renewed focus on religion as a vehicle to restore morals to the establishment of single-sex schools as the only way to protect young girls. One of the more often recommended solutions is increased police presence in response to any type of violence from domestic to attempted rape. There was also a call, especially from educators, for mothers to show a greater interest in their children by keeping them off the streets and by ensuring that they attend school.

The principal of Rainbow recommends a centre only for girls run by women. The centre should be open to girls whose mothers are not at home. The girls should go there after school where they can be cared for and do homework until they are fetched by one of their parents. He stressed that it should not be a recreation centre, but a place where learning can be continued. He also recommends the employment of more educators especially those trained in counselling and guidance.

Physical safety strategies recommended at school level include the following: security guards; cassettes; cameras to identify intruders; badges or an ID to prove that learners belong to the school; swipe machines for identity cards; an intercom system so that incidents can be reported immediately; locks on toilet doors; and electrified gates. As preventative measures, caretakers should be on duty in toilets to prevent boys from peeping at girls, classes should be co-ed, but during breaks and between classes, girls and boys should be separated; peer counselling should be accessible on a weekly basis; prevention strategies should be incorporated into the curriculum; and suspensions and detention should be effectively implemented.

There are eight primary schools and three high schools in Hopeville. In the opinion of the high school principal, dropout rates could be curbed by high schools if staff nurtured academic skills, discipline and sporting abilities more.

Other types of recommended solutions include the following: learners caught smoking should be fined; moral values should be taught through counselling and the curriculum; punishment, like cleaning the school premises is effective because it is humiliating; guest speakers should be invited to address the issue of violence against girls on a regular basis; educators should change classes during periods, not learners; community members should be invited to do playground duty and to monitor learners' movements during period changes; learners should come together to decide on how to address the problem; pamphlets on violence should be distributed; more visible educator supervision is needed; educators should be stricter; parents should be aware of their children's movements, and know their friends; learners should choose their friends carefully; sport opportunities need much greater development; curfews should be enforced; 'undercover' learners should report incidents to educators; issues, such as name-calling, swearing, bad behaviour should be dealt with seriously; expulsion should replace suspension; and schools refuse admission to gangsters.

On a more community-based level, solutions recommended range from specific programmes targeted at girls particularly on self-respect; programmes targeted at gangsters; programmes on how to react to crime situations; adult education courses should address parent-child communication; social workers should present programmes that only facilitate people talking about their experiences; youth groups should address relevant issues; and the national department of education should support all such programmes; and provide trained personnel. Additional recommendations include: drama and music depicting various behaviours; an awareness campaign regarding the rights and responsibilities of community members; workshops to address attitudes of the unemployed members of the community; pre-school and edu-care groups should place a high value on developing children's self-esteem; stereotyping, prejudice, sexism and the associated negativities should be tackled; and boys' mindsets should be changed through training in conflict resolution and peer and family counselling.

### **CONCLUSION**

Several strategies have been suggested for dealing with violence against girls within the many expressions of violence in the Hopeville community. A few key ones are:

- A fully-monitored centre for girls only, which has an academic focus, in which girls may feel eager and safe to spend their afternoons, doing homework, furthering their education in some other way, or resting; it should be driven by the school; carefully selected community members should be given an incentive to work in such a centre.
- Regular workshops and pamphlets for girls in schools, addressing especially the issue of teenage pregnancy.
- Stricter or more effective structural controls within schools.
- A full-time counsellor per school who liases with a specific police officer assigned to that school.
- Various well-organised, safe sports and other recreational facilities for young people.
- Sustained structures whose duty it would be to ensure ongoing programmes that involve community organisations like the civic, churches, mosques, the policing forum and schools in the area.
- Regular, on-going contact between primary and high school leadership (especially principals) whose task it is to address the issue of violence against girls in conjunction with the way in which school rules, codes of conduct, teachers' contributions towards order and discipline—are maintained on a daily level.
- Adult education directed at developing good relationships between learners and parents.
- More direct, visible support from the department.

- More 'outside' organisations who are responsive and accountable to learners, to which learners can be referred by teaching staff especially for the group above 15 years of age.
- Greater police presence in the morning when more children walk alone to school, as well as in the afternoons at the close of the school day.
- Well-planned workshops, provided on an on-going basis, in which teachers can acquire ways of coping with issues of discipline and the building of respect and self-esteem among learners.

It needs to be realised and understood that any one of these recommended solutions or strategies can never be implemented in isolation. Violence affecting girls stems from a multitude of socialised, economically- and historically-rooted forms of violence, high rates of unemployment, overcrowded living conditions; and a pervasive male psyche of disregard for women. This means that welcome initiatives can only help to a certain extent, if the safety of girls is addressed in relation to some of the larger problems experienced by communities such as Hopeville. A WCED official succinctly captured this viewpoint:

*I think for me, the crucial issue is, we need to start in our own homes by changing these patterns, and we need to start in school and so with the programme that I'm involved in, with the Life Skills Programme, we're teaching decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, so we're not just leaving knowledge, we're also trying to teach skills - for both boys and girls--so that boys can also learn that a girl is a human just as he is, with just as equal rights. So that is part of our life skills programme. So it's going to take seven years before we, in effect would see, by the time that child's an adolescent whether in effect we have made any impact on their behaviour.*

The notion of sex and sexual interaction within the Hopeville area provides many insights to the psyche of the community, especially amongst the youth. Sex is associated with varying types of human behaviour. It is associated with love, as in the case of a girl agreeing to have sex with her boyfriend, because she loves him; it is associated with punishment, as in the case of a gangster punishing his girlfriend by letting his friends have sex with her; it is associated with prostitution, as in the case of making a living; it is associated with protection and provision, as in the case of a mother who lets an abusive lover or husband sleep with her in order not to let him leave; and it is associated with rape: as in the case of showing the girl who is in control. For the most part, the act of sex is seen by both males and females in the community as a weapon with which to gain control over the female—it is a medium through which to demonstrate power and ownership. Rape quite easily becomes a natural part of the relationship—it is a way of stating the female is the male's possession. In the case, where there in fact is no relationship, rape serves as a tool to wield male dominance by ensuring female subservience. In the same vein, females use sex as a bartering mechanism in exchange for material possessions.

An exploration of how and why gangs function, and how the police department, the justice system and the prisons' department can be made more effective in rehabilitating gangsters who have been arrested is required if, under present circumstances, the issue of violence is to be tackled in a fundamental way.

There is a need for research into how existing laws can be implemented that are supposed to govern the safety of girls, of children in general and of women in particular, as well as the rights of learners to a good education. Access to such information should also be developed, possibly in the following ways:

- A group of writers should be commissioned to produce it in a style and form that is easily understandable to community workers.
- NGO and local government groups working in the area should be given direction in how such information can be applied to the cases they encounter.
- It should form part of a regular, on-going programme in schools—perhaps part of the curriculum.
- Its distribution should also serve to build up referral networks for those who like educators and school counsellors, are directly involved in supporting affected individuals.
- It should be updated regularly.

In conclusion, implementing strategies to prevent violence against girls has to be involve multi-faceted approach. The message of any solution to violence against girls has to be that the solution lies partly in the way girls treat themselves. Young girls, wives and mothers need to take back their self-respect and respect for other women. At the same time, boys and men should be taught how to treat girls and women at school and in their homes and communities.

## Appendix 3

### **A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a primary school and high former model C high schools in Gauteng**

The two schools for this case study are situated in different communities.

#### **The primary school community**

The inner city community surrounding the school is over one hundred years old. The buildings are mostly residential and consist of offices, flats, shops, churches, a hospital, clinic and hotel. The population was historically white but is now predominantly black. Socio-economic status varies from low to middle class. On an average five people stay together in a two-bedroom flat. The community is slowly becoming overpopulated because of an influx of foreigners and with the opening of taverns. Over weekends, the streets are full of people moving up and down until the early hours of the morning. People returning from the taverns are usually drunk and noisy. Some of the shops open until twelve midnight and life continues as if it is daytime. There are a lot of adult/sex shops in the community. The streets are full of street children and homeless adults as well as boys mostly in their teens that direct motorists to parking and opt to wash their cars for some cash.

There are a few recreational facilities in the city centre. There are parks and a big swimming pool. These places have become target areas for rape, mugging and drug dealing and most people especially girls feel unsafe to be there unaccompanied by an adult. There are a lot of churches of different denominations. There is a community library that is well equipped and some other smaller libraries. There are two police stations, a clinic and a hospital. There are also different forms of entertainment like movie theatres, restaurants and taverns.

There is a relatively high rate of crime in the community. The most common crimes are car theft, hijacking and mugging. These crimes occur almost daily. There is a heavy police presence in the city centre. Community members express feelings of vulnerability, fear and threats to their safety in the community. Taverns often draw bad elements and a number of people are mugged at knife or gun point. Most victims are pedestrians. Some shops generally close late at night and this also adds to the high level of crime in the city.

*The violence we found goes around their possessions: somebody gets hijacked or gets beaten up so they can get hold of his bicycle or his car keys, that's the kind of violence.*  
(Female educator.)

Violence against women and girls also occurs. There are reported cases of rape by uncles and beating by alcoholic fathers and by stepfathers. Unfortunately some of these incidents are not reported because the mothers do not want their husbands to be arrested and the perpetrators are often breadwinners in the families.

*It has always been an amazing thing for me, people don't have money to buy bread but always have money to buy alcohol, so I think alcohol is a large problem in the country at the moment, drugs is the biggest problem there is no proper punishment for crime—our children are under peer pressure. It's always when a guy is under alcohol or drugs it's easier for him to rape a woman or kill somebody because he is not aware of what's happening.* (Male educator.)

Homeless people and street children pose a serious problem for the safety of the children especially the girls. Some girls report that homeless men sometimes strip naked and expose their private parts. Street children also pose a problem to the learners because they steal their money and food and sometimes even snatch purses from adults.

There are also a number of drug dealers in the area. These drug dealers target school children and use some of them to peddle drugs at schools.

### **The high school community**

Somerville is a small suburb near an industrial area in the Vaal Triangle. The school is located about four kilometres from a casino complex and about a kilometre from the Central Business District (CBD). The community is approximately 53 years old. According to educators who reside in the community, the community was established in 1948. It is a suburb that was historically for whites only, but since the abolishment of the Group Areas Act, it is now integrated. The area is predominantly residential with only a few shops. In the same community there is a technikon that also draws learners from all the provinces and across all racial groups in South Africa.

Most of the people interviewed reported that crime and violence is the order of the day in Somerville and surrounding communities. Crime ranges from rape, hijacking to drug abuse and trafficking. Gun shot wounds are most common with the number of hijackings that taken place.

*The main serious offences around our area are just the murders with the aim of robbing somebody and then the hijacking (Community policing forum.)*

Domestic violence such as spouse battery and child abuse also occurs. Here are a few extracts of what different individuals had to say about violence in the community:

*I've had a couple of cases that have been reported to me of domestic violence and usually it is the case of the mother that is subjected to the violence from the father and the children get dragged in and also cases of mothers who can't afford at the moment so two or three children are actually on social welfare as a result of parents not accepting their responsibilities and kicking the children out of their houses. We had a boy here that we were feeding and educators were bringing lunch for him every break because the parents kicked him out of the house and refused to take responsibility for him. When they have problems with the children they become upset and embarrassed and then they tend to not want to have anything to do with the child and if the child is not a relative who will then take him in, then it becomes a problem. (Deputy headmaster.)*

*Mostly over the weekends in our area you will find that most of the cases of crime is domestic violence that happen between two parents and others are fighting from the 'shebeens'. (Male parent.)*

There are reports of some children coming to school without having done their homework and reporting that there was violence and they had to switch off the lights. Girls are exposed to sexual violence and sexual assaults in their homes. Learners also report that they witness a lot of domestic assaults. There also seems to be pressure from other girls to be sexually active. Most of the girls are said to be sexually active at an early age. If a girl is found to be still a



virgin, she is mocked and subjected to the risk of rape. Girls indicate that they feel unsafe because of a number of gangs that loiter around street corners and make nasty sexual remarks to them.

*One of the girls I was speaking to recently indicated to me that at the street that she is leaving in she is the only girl of her age who doesn't have a baby and it puts the pressure on her to become sexually active and because she is not, she feels that she is excluded and the thought of people saying you think you're better than we are, so there is pressure to become sexually active, so it's sexual harassment as I can see. (Female educator.)*

*The only danger that we foresee is that girls are not highly protected due to lack of street lights when they have to cross from one other part of the location to the other they can be raped or be assaulted because the criminals just regard them as a soft target. (Community policing forum.)*

Boys as well are reported to have experienced violence.

*I know many of the boys as well are confronted by gangs in the townships. When they come to school for functions early in the morning and many times they relate stories to us of having been robbed at knife point or even gun point on the way to school for only morning functions so I think the boys are experiencing a lot of gangsterism and the girls, it's not only assault by way of a sexual nature and in the home as well I think many of them, but any community is like that, there is domestic violence taking place anywhere. That's my opinion of course. (Deputy headmaster.)*

A member of the community policing forum who is also a parent, views gender violence as resulting from lack of morals and from western civilisation.

*What I realized is that there is a lack of morals and the adoption of this new western civilization. (Male parent.)*

There were conflicting views regarding the involvement of the police in response to the violence in the community. According to educators, learners and the deputy principal, the school does not often use the police except when they need their protection for evening functions because they are scared that uninvited people will come and disturb the function. In this instance, the police have always been willing to help but, if they are called to a crime scene outside the school premises, they take a long time to respond.

*The only time we've used the police has been during evening functions where we have gates-crashers, but then we haven't used the police to patrol, we actually have to call them. What also happened is we lock all the gates and we only let people with tickets through. Then you find the people who want to gate-crash outside in the streets and then they party and they drink and sometimes we have to call the police to actually make it safe so that when the children get out by 22:00 or 23:00 at night they feel safe. What we actually do is that we call the parents when we have functions here. We say we will not have a function here unless we've got men, parents who are prepared to patrol outside to ensure the safety of the children while they are in the hall. Yes, that's our policy. (Deputy headmaster.)*

There are community structures like the community policing forums responding to the community and individual calls about crime-related matters. Below is what the deputy headmaster had to say regarding that:

*I know there are community policing forums but I'm not aware of their structures. I'm not aware of how they operate at all. I know in the towns you have the neighbourhood watch, which tends to work, but I know of white people who are involved in the neighbourhood watch and the community policing forum. I don't know how operational they are. I just heard that there are those forums in townships but I have no idea how effective they are. I've already moved from the township with my children and I've been in the townships before to take them home and it's not the place to experiencing things, no electricity, no tar-roads the conditions they demand. So as a white male it's very difficult to try and engage to the way structures are operated in the townships. It's a cultural reality because of the separation of races that has historical facts. (Deputy principal.)*

There seem to be structures that deal with women and children's issues in the community. These are mostly run by political and community organisations. There are also women's organisations and the child protection unit. A member of the community policing forum reported that since the nearby township started to engage a number of youths in sporting activities, crime is subsequently declining in that particular area. In noticing that most of the cases that are reported are between spouses with wives being seriously beaten up, the community started a movement that they call WAWA that stands for "Women Against Women Abuse". The community policing forum works with this movement and also with NICRO. They are looking at working with "Marshall Arts" to help train women in defence measures. The community policing forum also runs school safety programs in all the secondary schools around the local township and Somerville.

### **Being at primary school**

The school is located in the inner city. It was founded in 1899 as a Dutch school. It was previously a whites-only school. Since 1992, it has admitted learners from other racial groups and at present the majority of learners are black. It is quite a big school with 14 classrooms, a staff room, six offices, a big modern hall equipped with a piano and a beautiful stage, a computer room fully equipped with computers, sickroom and toilets inside the school and next to the classrooms on each floor. There is also a library, a big swimming pool and wooden change rooms. Next to the hall there is a tuck shop and a public phone. A hospital, a clinic and blocks of residential flats surround the school. The school is a two-storey building and is only painted on the inside. The junior learners use the ground level classes and the senior learners use the first floor classes. There are beautifully paved play areas just behind the junior classes and a football field.

There is a strong fence made of iron bars with pointed edges around the school and the big access gates are remotely controlled. The two smaller gates have an intercom for access control purposes. The school provides a number of extra-mural activities such as swimming, soccer, netball, karate, athletics, chess, mastermind club, choir and speech festivals. The school is well equipped for these sporting activities.

### **THE LEARNERS**

There are 614 learners presently enrolled in the school. Their ages range from seven years to 14 years. Attendance is good. One of the rules is that no learner should be absent from school. A letter from the parents must be sent to the school explaining the child's absence. If the

learner is sick, a doctor's certificate must be submitted. During the time of the research the learners mentioned that one boy was missing and that this boy had been very quiet for a long time. However, this is one isolated case and they reported that the educators were discussing the matter with the parents and the SGB. Most of the learners admitted to the school come from the community surrounding the school; they reside in flats and their parents work in town. The general socio-economic status can be defined as good (mostly middle class) as most parents are nurses, policemen and women, educators, managers of companies and other professionals. There are only three learners out of the whole school who are identified as poor and the school feeds them in the morning and during winter they are provided with warm clothes.

### *THE EDUCATORS*

There are 18 educators in the school, three males (including the principal) and 15 females. All the educators are white. Their teaching experience ranges from five to 25 years. The educators possess either a four-year teaching diploma, or a diploma plus a degree.

The principal is a male in his late forties. He is a university graduate. Prior to his present position as principal of the school, he worked as an educator in primary and secondary schools.

The school has two full-time secretaries, one part-time secretary and six support staff—three females and three males. The six support staff sweep the classrooms, clean the offices and take care of maintenance and security in the school. Some of them stay on the school premises.

### *RUNNING THE SCHOOL*

The school has a school-governing body, which helps in the administration of the school. Parental involvement is minimal, as most parents do not attend meetings. Communication between the principal and the parents is in the form of circulars/news letters announcing important events/trips and school activities. At the beginning of each term, a circular is sent out detailing all activities for the new term.

The school administers an after-school centre, which caters for learners who cannot go home at 14:00 when the formal school day ends. The learners are accepted for a fee on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Educators work in shifts to assist learners with their homework at this centre. They are then given a snack and allowed to play under supervision until their parents fetch them. The after-school learners wear red pinafores to be clearly identified and parents who fetch their children must sign the register indicating the time the child was picked up and by whom.

The relationship of the school with the provincial and district officials can be described as good. The district officials always come to the school whenever the principal needs their assistance. Communication is in the form of monthly circulars and they get a lot of support from the Department of Education.

### *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL*

In the morning the parents drop off their children in front of the school gate. There are scholar patrols at the robots near the school to help the children to cross the road safely. There is always an educator present to monitor the situation at each robot. (There are two sets of robots at each corner leading to the entrance.) Most of the learners are accompanied to school

by their parents or an adult, especially the younger ones. No cars are allowed inside the school premises except those of educators and other staff members. There is a paved drop-off zone outside the school where buses and taxis are supposed to drop off the learners. The gates are always locked and during the drop-off time there is always an educator standing at the gate to ensure the safety of learners. As soon as the siren rings to signal the start of school, all the gates are locked and no learner is allowed to leave the school premises. The gates will remain locked until the close of the school day. Any parent or visitor coming to the school should use an intercom system for the gate to be opened.

As the learners come in the morning they line up their bags in front of their respective assembly places. The senior learners assemble in front of the main hall while the junior learners assemble in the play park next to their classrooms. They form lines according to their classes and gender.

They start by singing a hymn or chorus and then the educator in charge will read a scripture verse and the learners and educators pray. The principal then makes the announcements and learners disperse silently and in lines to their respective classes. Discipline is strictly maintained as each educator stands in front of his/her class to ensure that there is complete silence.

There is a code of conduct that is printed and given to each parent when applying for admission at the school. It clearly stipulates the rules regarding uniform, books, punishment, detention, drugs and alcohol abuse, absenteeism and behaviour in the corridors. Certain areas are declared out of bounds for learners unless accompanied by a parent or educator. Only one learner is allowed in the toilets at a time, unless if it is during breaks—the reason being that there should be control of who is in the toilet lest there be mischief like bunking classes or making noise. Learners may only use toilets allocated to their specific grade. Running or shouting in the hall is not allowed. A homework diary needs to be signed by the parent every day. Learners leaving a class during class periods must be given an "official card". If a learner is booked three times for offences including some of those mentioned, he/she goes for detention and the parent is notified. Three detentions in a term warrant expulsion of such a learner depending on the seriousness of the offences.

There are notices of rules on the wall in the waiting room that is situated in the entrance hall. If a child is sick, she/he is taken to the sick room and the parent is notified. If the child has a doctor's appointment, the parent has to come to the school to fill in a register that he/she took the child and also the reason and the time. Learners are not allowed to leave the school premises, not even during breaks. They only play in their respective play parks or on the sports ground always under the supervision of the educators. The school runs a tuck shop where learners buy if they need anything. Times are respected and no child is seen loitering outside classes during school hours. During break time, learners are not allowed in the corridors or in the classrooms unless they are with an educator.

The classrooms are also equipped with charts and a lot of learning aids prepared by the educators. There are also charts hanging on the walls of the staff room and the offices. The educators use different learning aids such as the TV and overhead projector and learning is highly participatory. There is a computer centre and a library, which also help the learners to do their projects and acquire basic computer skills. The computers are used for teaching Maths and English to senior learners and there is also an opportunity for learners and parents to learn computer skills at a minimal fee. In this instance, the computer school of the University of South Africa (UNISA) offers the courses.

The learner/educator relationship is generally a warm one determined from the way the learners hug and talk to their educators. The educators indicated that they talk to the learners as friends and therefore they are able to trust the educators. Educators say they do not beat them rather they prefer to talk to them and this works well so that the learners see them as friends. In classes, if a learner struggles with a subject, there are educators who are prepared to offer extra tuition for English and Maths as these are often the problematic learning areas. This makes the learning environment a very conducive one. The educators do not believe in using corporal punishment as they say it was abolished by the Department of Education. Instead, if a child misbehaves in class, his/her name is written in a detention book. In the event a learner's name appears thrice in the book, then the parent is notified. On Friday the child is in detention where he/she has to stay behind after school and is given a task to complete and is permitted to leave the premises after a certain time. Learners do not like to be detained and in this manner order is maintained.

*We have school rules which apply for boys and girls. we have a discipline programme but no corporal punishment at all. we have got a school support system where a couple of educators come together if you have a problem with a child. (Female educator.)*

During break times all learners leave the classrooms and no learner is allowed in class unless he/she is with the educator. They are also not allowed to talk on the corridors during school hours. During breaks the educators supervise play in the different play parks. The learners are prohibited from buying food from vendors as a precautionary measure, and there is always someone at the gate to ensure that no learner leaves the school premises. They all bring their lunch boxes and a few bring money to buy from the tuck shop. When the siren rings the educators are already waiting to welcome the learners back into the classrooms. The educators are always punctual. There is always a staff meeting in the morning for announcements over a cup of tea.

At 14:00 when the school day ends, a number of cars and taxis fetch the learners while a few learners walk home. The after-school centre learners are then give a snack and assisted with their homework by the educators.

### **VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

The educators, learners and parents say that the most common forms of violence occur outside of school and include murder, hijacking and robbery.

Violence against girls is kept to a minimum. There has never been any serious violence against girls from boys or educators. Most of the reported cases happened either at home or on their way to school or in the buses to school. Both boys and girls feel unsafe walking to and from school as they are sometimes mugged and harassed. Most learners expressed that they do not feel safe on their way home.

*...I was walking alone. there was a guy who was hitting a girl. Suddenly I heard her screaming. everybody was just passing. then I couldn't do anything because they were carrying a gun. so I asked the other guy to help the girl and he did. There was no phone nearby and no police station. so that the person could take the girl there and report. (Female learner.)*

At home, educators report that some girls are spanked or beaten with objects on their heads or faces.

*Most of the time when the child gets beaten up it's the mother, she gets hold of the first thing she can lay her hands on and she goes for the child. If I look back at the cases that we have had it's mostly girls who get beaten up by the mothers, maybe it's because we have lots of single parents and the mother is now the caretaker of mostly the girls. I've heard only one case where the father beats the children both boy and girl. (Female educator.)*

There is a general view that violence against girls can be related to lack of respect for women and the black cultural view that women should be submissive to their husbands. Educators feel that if a boy grows up in an environment where women are not respected there is a strong likelihood that when he grows up, he might beat his wife and this behaviour might also be displayed at school in disrespecting girls.

*You know we've so many cultures in our country at the moment. Each culture has a different viewpoint of the woman, in our western culture women are respected, whereas in African culture it is known that women are not really that important. (Male educator.)*

*Most men grew up in families where they were abused, they grew up in a place where they saw women as nothing, and they do everything they want. (Male parent.)*

There have been some incidents where boys look up girls' skirts, hit and call girls names. Learners said that boys use mirrors to look up their skirts when they go out to the toilets. During breaks, boys run to be first at the stairs so that they can look up their skirts. It was also clear in their responses that boys' behaviour does not change. Although in the school they do not show extreme acts of violence because of close monitoring, when they leave the school premises, some boys harass girls. Female learners said that some boys bully them in the buses and some force them to be their girlfriends threatening to beat them if they refuse.

### **SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

There is zero tolerance to all forms of violence in this school. Educators are united in their response and respond consistently when dealing with acts of violence. Public discourse on the wrongness of being violent against women is high.

The school is proactive in dealing with potential problems such as violence, drugs and other related issues such as HIV/AIDs. The principal reports that the school is in constant contact with the Child Protection Unit (CPU) of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and that they are very supportive. During the time of the research, there was a drug awareness day at the school that was conducted by an international visitor and a superintendent from the SAPS. Children were taught about the different types of drugs and how they affect the health of people. They were also made aware of drug lords and that they can also fall victim to drug abuse without being aware. The superintendent of the police made them aware of common methods that are used in selling drugs. The police patrol the community and are reported to be prompt when called by the school although the same could not be established for the wider community.

There is a guidance educator in the school and life skills are viewed as an important part of the curriculum. During life skills/former guidance classes boys are told in no uncertain terms that they are not supposed to touch the girls.

The school has what they call a care system where the learners can choose whoever they want to talk to about their problems. Learners can talk to any educator be it female or male, whoever they feel comfortable with. When they consult with the particular educator of their choice, they are made to relax and are promised that their confidentiality will be respected. This facilitates the building of some sort of trust between the learners and the educators. In a case where the educators cannot resolve the problem and the learner is badly bruised or hurt, the case is referred to the Child Protection Unit. If the parent is to be contacted for whatever reason, the learner is consulted and permission is asked from him/her. This has helped learners to trust their educators and to open up more and more to them with their problems.

This is what the principal and educators had to say about the role of the school:

*We have our programmes in school we use the police to come and talk to the children, we've got workshops for the children, we've got support systems from the department that help us if we can't deal with the problem, we've got our school support teams that look at individual problems, even children have got problems and I see the community as the parents, they must help us and they must understand that we are teaching their children and we will never teach their children wrong, so we'll like to see that they must support us which I must say that 95 percent of the parents do support us and we don't have a problem with them and yes that is how we work. (The principal.)*

*We try to tell the children not to go to places they are not supposed to, we tell them not to go with strangers or take things from strangers, we try our best to make them aware of what's happening. (Male educator.)*

The school has a set of rules and some of the rules are:

- Learners shall at all times conduct themselves in a quiet and orderly manner when inside the school buildings.
- A learner must remember that his/her behaviour in public, whether he is in school uniform or not, reflects not only on his home and upbringing but also on his school. His own reputation and also the reputation of the school is jeopardised by his/her bad behaviour.
- Learners shall be cautious at all times.
- There shall be no talking by learners when walking in lines from the flagpole to class or walking from class to class.
- Learners will spend the break periods on the playground unless an educator gives permission for them to stay in the classroom, in which case the educator must be present. The learners should be aware that break periods are for visiting cloakrooms and washing their hands, as well as eating and playing.
- No foul language will be allowed.

*(Taken from the school's code of conduct)*

### **Being at a high school**

The school is located on the outskirts of Somerville. This school is adjacent to a local technikon. It is a former model C school mainly catering for learners from surrounding towns and townships. The school was founded in 1987. The school has 638 learners and 25 educators, with 384 (60%) female learners and 254 (40%) male learners. Only 19 educators are employed full time by the department, the school-governing body (SGB) employs the other six. Educators are represented as follows: 18 white females, one Indian female, four White males, and two Black males. The support personnel consists of two secretaries, one

general office work assistant, one tea lady, two cleaners and four gardeners. All the support personnel are females except for the four gardeners. The school has six life skills educators, five of which are females.

Most learners are ferried to school by public transport, i.e. buses and taxis, while others walk from nearby areas. Some use bicycles and some are brought by their parents or relatives.

The school has good facilities for hockey, tennis, basketball, athletics, netball and football. There is a media centre, technology centre, laboratories, and computer centre and there is also a recreation room where learners can play indoor games such as chess. There are 26 classrooms and 25 overhead projectors, which means each class has an overhead projector. There is also gymnastic equipment.

A high steel fence borders the school. There is a steel gate that is always locked and visitors are screened. The back part of the schoolyard is a technikon and in front of the school and on the sides there is open land. The playgrounds are located at the back of the school buildings.

The school relates very well to the surrounding community. School safety is prioritised. Each visitor must report at reception. A process of questions and answers is undertaken, the person visited is then called to the reception area. No visitor is allowed past the administration block.

The school is relatively clean and well maintained. The grass is well maintained and there is equipment such as a lawnmower, garden tools and a small tractor that help in the upkeep of the school. Seats and desks are always well arranged. There are burglar guards at every door and window at the school. It is reported that a car was once stolen from the educators' parking area and hence the security is very tight. The police patrol at least once, on a weekly basis. Most learners mentioned that they feel safe and protected when they are at school.

The school participates in most of the extra-mural activities like soccer, netball, tennis, cricket, swimming etc. and is also actively involved in community projects such as helping the SPCA.

*We have an interact group which works with the grosser international group and we've taken on the project of helping the SPCA so this is our first project that we are doing that is school related. (Educator.)*

## **THE LEARNERS**

There are 638 learners in the school, 384 females and 254 males. Their ages range from 12 to 21. About 80% of the learners are black and the minority is white. The school mainly caters for learners from all over Gauteng, with the majority from surrounding towns and townships. Most learners come from working class families (84%). Few of them come from affluent families (15%) and only 1% are from poor families. Most of these families stay in squatter camps/informal settlements. Learners' home conditions range from violent backgrounds to disciplined homes. Some educators and some learners report that there is definitely a certain degree of violence experienced within their communities. They have neighbours, relatives and friends that rob or even kill people.

Learners' attendance can be said to be very good as viewed by both learners and educators. There are strict policies regarding attendance and learners are said to be adhering to them. There are no reported dropouts and even expulsion is uncommon as there have not been any serious cases of bad behaviour for about four years.



## THE EDUCATORS

There are 25 educators in the school, six male educators and 19 females. One of the male educators is the head of department (HOD); their ages range from 23 to 49. Their qualifications are: matriculation, N6, HED and degrees (honours). Their teaching experience is from two years to nine years. The female educators' ages range from 22 to 55. They all hold higher education diplomas and some have an added qualification, a degree or even honours. Their teaching experience ranges from one year to 12 years. The principal is a female in her mid-fifties. She holds an honours degree and is the longest serving member of the staff. She has also taught in other schools before.

## RUNNING THE SCHOOL

The school has a school-governing body (SGB) that consists of educators, principal, deputy principal, SRC member and parents. They meet once a month or anytime should the need arise. The management committee consists of educators, principal and deputy. The principal explained that she has extended the management team to include senior educators of many years experience and to assist in major decision-making. The decision-making procedure has various levels. Firstly they discuss the matter at the school management meeting, then they hold a general staff meeting. Thereafter feedback is received from the staff on what they consider should be amended, added or deleted from the original plan of action. Sometimes it happens that they don't have a plan at all as management then they return to the staff to explain the situation to them and ask for suggestions and comments in a general forum. Suggestions are generated and then from these suggestions a plan of action or a policy is formulated. There is also a disciplinary committee that consists of two educators, two parents and the deputy headmaster and a learner representative.

The school has no contact with national and provincial officials. The school is allocated a person to manage and liaise with the Department of Education (DoE). The official visits once in two months or when called upon. The problem is that the person liaises with more than 20 schools in the district. The school seeks support elsewhere when no help comes from the district. The district is said to support the school and it sometimes donates money towards the gatherings and workshops that the school organises.

Regarding the district involvement, this is what the deputy principal had to say:

*They have this workshop, a two-days workshop on trauma counselling which I think it would be a good course for staff members to attend because if children are victims of violence of a sexual or physical nature it would be a traumatic experience for them and we will be empowered to be able to deal with the children, but the problem is systematic, it doesn't matter in the school, children don't want to hear things coming from the educator's mouth, they want an outsider to come and tell them because we are the educators that they see every day and we talk too much so they think " but you know everything we don't want to listen to you" if you going to talk to the boys about sex, I'm Mr Miller I'm the deputy principal. I'm up there and they are down there but if we have an outsider and you do the workshop with them their eyes are wide open, it doesn't matter what colour the child is. But you can empower educators to deal with it within the internal environment in the school. So yes I think the district is trying its best to empower educators to deal with these types of issues, we organised a discipline workshop ourselves where we paid the consultant R1000 on Saturday to come into the school and teach us how to effectively deal with the discipline and it was absolutely fabulous but I was a consultant. Once again when we go to these meetings we hear district officials and there's non-respect*

*given to the district officials for what they are doing just like the children see the educators, we see the district officials in the same light.*

This is how the principal views their relationship with the district officials:

*I think we have a good relationship, we obviously have complaints about the way they've been restructuring in their district office and just this morning I heard from one of the people saying that they've got leaking roofs and that one of the files has been destroyed so we need to re-submit the documentation, things don't run smoothly as we like them to be and the relationship is quite good. I feel that I spend most of my time doing paper work rather than what I really think I should be doing.*

However, there seems to be a different view from the side of the educators and this is what they have to say:

*When we take things to the department, those people who are there feel as if they are doing you a favour if they have to help you. (Male educator.)*

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The school adheres to the highest standards of discipline. The mission statement of the school is to foster academic, social and extra-curricular growth through the development of cognitive thinking skills. The school also has a code of conduct and upon admission, learners go through the school code of conduct and sign it. This binding document maintains order and discipline in school. The management of the school (inclusive of two educators) forms part of disciplinary committee. The SGB is also represented in this committee. Each case is evaluated based on its merits, and decisions are made. Learners understand that their wrongs will be followed by disciplinary measures. Parent/s of the perpetrator are called in when the need arises (merits of the case apply).

*There is a disciplinary committee that deals with disciplinary hearings, and the parents of children are called in and they have to state the case like a small mock court then the whatever penalty will be handed out, whether the person is to be suspended or has to do community service, something to repent for their actions. (Female educator.)*

Assemblies are held on Mondays and Thursdays, at 07:50 and 07:30 respectively. Learners and educators are always punctual. Educators station themselves around the assembly gathering to maintain order during proceedings. Assembly is mainly about praying, remarks and announcements. Learners remain in their classes during lessons and then they move to their next classes, one after the other, until the lunch break. After lunch the same procedure continues up until 14:00. Learners confirmed that educators are always in classes during periods, and this set-up is always followed by more and more homework. Learners are not allowed to leave the schoolyard, even during breaks, until two o'clock. School gates are always locked from 07:45 to 14:00. Educators take turns to patrol around the school and monitor learners on a daily basis during breaks. The school has out of bounds areas, and learners found there are punished. For example there is a block called C block where the educators and learners believe that a lot of unlawful conduct happens such as lovers meet and learners smoke and play cards. This block is therefore declared a no-go area and any learner found there faces disciplinary action.

Educators and learners honour punctuality. Most educators travel to work by private transport and are always on time. Most learners travel by public transport. The principal highlighted

that absenteeism at the school is very low. Parents report if a child will be absent. The rules for exchange of classes are clearly outlined in the code of conduct. Learners are to respond promptly to the ringing of the bell and are expected to line up in single file before being admitted to class by the educator. Between periods, learners are to move quietly, in single file, keeping to the left in corridors while educators monitor them. Everybody takes responsibility to be in class on time. Learners stay in their classes during lessons, and they move to their next classes, one after the other, until lunch break. They are not allowed to leave the class until the educator dismisses them. After lunch break the same procedure continues up until 14:00. The siren indicates the start and end of class periods.

The police patrol the school, at least once a week. Educators monitor learners during breaks, and this happens in a very coordinated and organised manner. They use rational approaches in solving problems i.e. they do not jump to conclusions when they see or hear something about the learner, they ensure that they summon the learner and try to establish facts surrounding the particular offence and all educators are involved in this initiative.

*Out of bounds areas are areas we don't want the children to be in and we have staff members that are in duty during breaks, they must do break duty. We are only a staff of 24 and with the school campus being quite large, the staff can only patrol certain areas. We notoriously have C block which is actually extremely North West of the school where the children hide and smoke dagga. So by putting it out of bounds we make them more visible and make them less invisible but we haven't solved the problem. There are still boys smoking dagga during breaks and we don't want children in corridors during breaks running around up and down the stairs. We want them to be out of the buildings because the buildings mean work, the building is industry, it's academic so when they are playing out, they have a chance to relax a little bit and we have a ring road at the back and they're not allowed to pass the ring road because once they pass the ring road they go into the school and sports fields and they can hide and they might be late for class which is another problem after break so these are reasons we put those out of bounds places in place. (Deputy headmaster.)*

The environment and conditions are conducive for teaching and learning. Educators perform their tasks well enabled by the normal situation at the school. The school has all necessary teaching materials, textbooks and even a computer lab.

According to the school principal, although the school tries to involve parents, very few of them are involved. Very few parents attend school meetings. They only make themselves available when their children are in trouble at the school. Some parents are very active and form part of the SGB.

Learners indicated that they felt very safe whilst inside the schoolyard. The problems start when they go home.

There is a healthy relationship between learners and educators at the school. A spirit of co-existence and mutual respect is present. Some educators complain about ill-discipline among some learners, while some learners complain about racist educators. However these complaints are rare.

### **VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

Most respondents mentioned that boys do bully, touch, hit and tease girls, but sometimes girls also touch boys.

*Ja everyday, this other guy came to me in class and he touched me. I was angry and I even hit him. Then the principal came at the door and called us. We went to the office and I had to write an essay for that, for trying to hit a boy in the class, it was so terrible. (Female learner.)*

*But the thing is, I've been in this school for three years now and no boy has touched me where I don't want to be touched. The thing is that some of the girls lead the boys and at the end of the day they blame boys but it's actually them. (Female learner.)*

*There is a guy in my class, the guy is very friendly and he is playful and the girls play with him, then the girl touches him. (Female learner.)*

*There is this thing I do that my mom taught me. If guys touch you, look at them once then if they touch you again, you hit them so hard they wouldn't do it again. (Female learner.)*

However, there are no serious cases of violence in the school. The worst cases are when a boy proposes to a girl and the girl refuses. Then boys are known to threaten the girl with acts of violence. When a boy finds out that the girl he is interested in goes out with another boy, there is also fighting that occurs after school on their way home.

Both boys and girls however reported that the same couldn't be said about life outside school. In the community the girls are raped and gangs that loiter at the street corners physically abuse some while some incidents happen in the shebeens in the townships.

The girls stated that they are sexually harassed verbally when they walk past the technikon on their way to the bus or the taxi rank. They claim that sometimes the technikon students make rude comments to girls and they harass them. However, learners did not report any physical abuse.

The deputy principal gives an overview of violence against girls in his school:

*I think girls are intimidated. I think there is definitely a culture of intimidation from boys and if girls were aware of boys having stolen something, the boys will intimidate the girls very quickly into claiming that they didn't see anything. I think the girls as well are exposed to assaults from boys and they make implications towards their sexuality and the fact that they are girls and they speak about their private parts and I think it's a form of violence. Physical violence, the only girls that have been subjected to physical violence I know is, they actually fought each other and dragged each other through the dirt. Sexual violence, in the 11 years that I've been here, there has been one case where a girl was almost raped, I will say gang raped by four boys in the store room and that was way back in 1995 or 1996. That's the only violent incident we had and the charges were laid and the governing body at the time they did set recommendations to the office and those boys were removed from the school's premises. Physical violence no, not at all I don't think they experience physical violence but my concern here is we are pushing black females in this country. They want black females to be in all positions of the same capacity... Black men are threatened by black women and this is my concern and I think the backlash started. Black men are starting to see black women as competition and that's the reason for all the violence against women in this society in the community, all the rape, because if we keep pushing and pushing females black or white, there is going to be a male backlash against them and the backlash in the school and the school has got a ratio of about 60% girls to 40% boys. So on average girls are more and when we have awards and we hand out*

*awards to those who achieved, there are many boys who receive the awards but on average it's girls. So I think that could be a cause of the sexual harassment that's made against the girls. I often get the case where girls come and say, 'They told me that I smell and that I haven't changed my pants,' things like that, and now it upset the girls and the violence against them... and then of course swearing at their sexual parts. (Deputy principal.)*

### SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

There are diverse perceptions on the causes of violence against girls. Some girls believe it is the way they behave, for example, going to places where girls know that men dominate. They perceive it as 'asking for trouble'. Some commented that such girls go there and start doing suggestive dances and hence they end up being raped. Boys believe that girls like to be touched and teased and that is their nature. Some boys mentioned that the girls wear clothes that are too revealing and according to them, 'they are asking for trouble'. The educators (who are predominantly white) mentioned that their perception is that black women are taught to be submissive to their husbands and that the husband is the head of the family and can do anything including beating the wife and children, so that is why there is so much violence against black women. Other causes mentioned were socio-economic standards and the issue of human rights, lack of respect for human dignity, the culture of male entitlement, unemployment, apartheid, masculinity, stress, gangsters, religious cults such as rastafarianism and others as noted and explained in the following interview extracts:

*There are many reasons but one is definitely the social economic status and also women gaining power. You know many African men believe they are the head of their families and the women are sub-servants and you know it doesn't matter what human rights say, they believe that their children will abide by their rules whether they are sensible or not, negotiated or not and I think the social economic status plays such a role because they have, in my opinion a mental health problem in general, people are unemployed and with people being unemployed I think men in general are frustrated, the wife is bringing money and the children look to her because she's got financial status, the man's role is decreasing and they need some form of power so violence could be a form of power. And alcohol one of the biggest causes because if you take away the alcohol you are dealing with very sensitive men or some men are very sensitive you know, but bring in the alcohol then they forget who they are and yes, if you are unemployed you are frustrated and you are sitting at home, alcohol could be an option. (Female educator.)*

Poverty and unemployment are quoted as causing violence in the community. A lot of unemployed men and women end up roaming the streets aimlessly and resort to crime. House breaking has also been reported to be on the increase. The township houses are too small and there is a lot of overcrowding.

*I think there is a lack of respect for human dignity and I don't think South Africans see one another from a human perspective. Girls are seen as objects of sexual desire and boys are expected to hand over any possessions they have and other people don't have, especially gangsters, there is a culture of entitlement, I think there is a huge culture of entitlement. If you do something better than me, I'm entitled to it. I think those will be the root causes and unemployment is a cause of course and lots of social factors. You can even go back in history and say apartheid is a cause, yes it is. Townships don't have the infrastructure of their houses, they don't have the police structure in the township, there is a whole culture of not being 'mpimpi' in townships which we inherited from apartheid. (Deputy principal.)*

Both boys and girls expressed lack of respect for each other as the cause of violence against girls. Boys expressed that they form groups and stick together and that is where they discuss all sorts of things. The cultures that are brought to school from townships e.g. Rastafarian religion/cult are also viewed as playing a role in violence. E.g. Rastafarians believe in dagga smoking and hence some boys would like to smoke dagga at school claiming it is their religion and they become violent.

*Violence doesn't have one source it comes from many schools, right now the Rastafarians are taking over the schools, Rastafarianism is like white man pressure, cause right now we are mixed around our school black and white students and educators. (Male learner.)*

The educators and parents view the political change in the country as contributing to gender violence. There is a lot of pressure on the men because women are now beginning to empower themselves and the government is also recognising women.

*I think there is a lot of anger, my personal feeling is that although it's all very well to have a first-world constitution it is democratic and it's extremely, I mean it's a model constitution for any countries in the world: I think that very often what the constitution is trying to do, it's trying to legislate people's views because when the constitution says this, then that should be, but it's not from the ground up. Because when I look at the boys and I see the way that they perceive the girls, they are specially threatened and I think with African women too, because on a number of occasions I have meet African women who have empowered themselves through education sometimes they are now better or as well educated as their husbands and that creates friction at home. This used to happen amongst Afrikaans-speaking men and women as well because the Afrikaans woman was traditionally the home maker and as she became more educated and more empowered I think the Afrikaans man found it difficult to deal with that and I think something similar is happening in our society and although I can see the reason that there should be an equity policy I think at the same time it has got social repercussions because I think there is a lot of anger there, you know. I look at the number of parents that are single in the community and it's very often where you can find the grandmothers or the mother taking responsibility of bringing up young men and right through his life he needs a good strong role model and ironically I think instead of appreciating the role of a mother or a grandmother the boy starts to become resentful of the fact that there is no father and then depending on how the mother handles that issue I think the boy could then become angry at women particularly where in the case of a single mother who then gets a boyfriend and the boy, particularly the boy in the family who has been the boy and he then is shunted to one side. I think there is going to be a lot of anger and resentment because there is not a balance there where we have men and women together bringing up.... it might work in rural areas where there aren't the social pressures that children in rural areas... where the whole extended family works very well, but in an urban society I think that we do need the stability of a male and a female in the home playing equal roles, and of course the boys don't see that, they still see the old generation particularly the grandfather's generation, women are much more like servants, so when they see that, they are being challenged, they are then insecure of their own mass community and I think it leads to violence. (Deputy headmaster.)*

Violence is further viewed as copied/modelled behaviour especially from fathers:

*I've seen boys harassing girls, if girls should say something that the boy doesn't like, He'll go up to her and smack her, and I'll have to intervene, and tell them why this is not*

*right Because I think it stems from the home situation where the boys see their fathers using violence as a solution, and so now they feel ok, this is the answer, if a woman steps out of line. (Female educator.)*

There seems to be a practice of name calling between learners and between learners and educators. Some educators reported that sometimes the learners call them names and even swear at them in their African languages thinking that they do not understand. Learners also reported that some educators have racial attitudes and sometimes they say nasty things to them.

Similarly to the primary school, there is extensive monitoring. The only difference is that while in the primary school educators are more concerned with bullying and hitting, in the high school, there is a lot more to be monitored like boyfriends and girlfriends hiding and kissing behind buildings, smoking and gambling.

There are five life-skills educators, one for each grade. Although some of the learners expressed that these classes are not fruitful and that they would rather not attend them, the course layout shows that the life-skills educators are supposed to address issues relating to sexuality, gender violence, drugs and alcohol problems and other matters such as career choices and career decision-making.

*The life-skills programmes help them in shaping their attitudes towards women. So it's because of these values that are being instilled in them, it helps to curb it a little bit, but what goes on in their communities, we do not know, at home, as soon as they leave school, whether they still carry these values with them or not (Female educator.)*

The district is concerned about rapes that are reported especially in the townships. Cases are reported to the district office because there are psychologists and social workers employed there. High rates of rape have made them become seriously involved in trying to help in curbing violence against girls and women. The district has done research on sexual harassment and homophobia and organised a workshop to train female educators in methods of self-defence. When a case of rape is reported the following procedure is followed.

*It would be reported to the Educational Support Service (ESS) they will deal with it, they will visit the school, they will see the girl at school level and they will take the necessary steps. (District official.)*

The district confirmed that most cases are not reported and schools prefer to bring the cases to the district rather than take it to the police station because in most cases they are met with unsympathetic policemen and end up being harassed rather than being helped.

*Sexual harassment is dealt with according to the gender policy, which is an overachieved policy, and schools are expected to tolerate the old gender policy in that process. We have a departmental gender policy, part of that is the issue of supporting girls also in the curriculum, there is a bit on girls' sexual harassment but that is one of the things that if it's like the whole law on gender violence a lot of effectiveness is dependent on its [implementation], take for instance if you are going to a police station and meeting an unsympathetic policeman it means that your case doesn't get heard and I think in the same way at school level we still don't have enough support so a policy is only as good as is implemented. (District official.)*

## **Solutions: Schools and communities speak out**

The learners feel that communication is the best solution, and they feel that learners must be involved when the issue of violence is discussed. The high school learners feel that there is nothing motivating them to come to school i.e. it is not fun to come to school and if school can be made to be a "fun place" they might be motivated and since it is not fun to come to school they end up thinking and doing all sorts of funny things.

*Go to the students and talk to them because sometimes they might have ideas that might help you so I think if you can talk to them, they can help you and the educators. After you talk to them, you come with the solution. (Female learner.)*

The educators believe that no structure or policy can stop the violence but that the individual behaves differently in different circumstances. They believe that parental involvement in the education of their children may help. They perceive violence from the point of view that people, whose socio-economic status is good, do not do crime but those from poor socio-economic backgrounds and those who have experienced violence are likely to cause violence. Therefore, if the socio-economic status of people can improve, the violence is likely to decrease.

*I don't believe any structures or any policies put in place is going to cure violence or bullying or sexual harassment or sexual assault. I don't believe any policy, policy is on papers and ideal documents but human beings react differently... Do we need to put policies in place, I always said there is room for improvement all the time and we need a lot of parental security, we need a parent's charter and that's all we need in school, we don't have much parental involvement, it actually leads to crisis, we are trying to address it. And if we can have a parent's charter and empower the parents to panel[support] us, which is not happening at the moment. I feel if parents get involved in children's education, that child will become balanced in school but then again this is a world away from the child brought up in a township. They don't experience violence here the way they do there. They see structures here that run extremely smoothly. They don't see that, at that time and we have services that operate efficiently. It doesn't happen in the townships sometimes. So this is very much a first-world scenario and where they come from, many of them is very much in a third-world scenario. So it's conflicting most of these children apart... unless we can marry the two worlds and somehow change the two worlds to marry them as one. I don't think we are going to succeed in removing violence and whether it might be emotional violence or physical violence and we're not going to succeed removing them from the psychi of whites and black South Africans. (Deputy principal.)*

There was a proposal that gender issues be part of the curriculum in high schools to sensitise the boys about gender equity and the fact that women are just as creative and intelligent as men. This will help reduce the gender stereotypes and may curb the violence against girls and women.

*I could introduce a committee within the learners or within the SRC which is supposed to identify the problem of gender equality around the school and therefore we take that information and we sit down and look at it. From there it is then that we can request help from outside or call psychologists or social workers to come and address the learners.... I should have to open a small office for gender equality and each and every month a conference is supposed to be held. (Male educator.)*



The feeling of the district officials and educators is that parents also need to be educated about the changes their children go through. The standard of education has developed and advanced and parents sometimes cannot cope with their children's development and this causes violence.

*I believe that parents need to be educated and one thing I found, the children are becoming more clever than their parents because they are more informed of modern development. Parents need to be brought in line with what the law says and not only law but common sense is. You beat a child or you beat your wife they are just afraid of you they are not respecting you. I think that men need to be targeted not only men who are violent but men in general because I feel that women are being empowered and a lot of focuses are on empowerment. If you look at the affirmative action board, women get preference over the men it doesn't matter what race you are. Women still get preference and I think that men need to be empowered. Women are being empowered economically and intelligently but men need to be empowered emotionally and if they are aware of their emotions, how to deal with it, conflict resolution, stress management, they are given the tools for survival and I think they possibly want to take it out on their children and their wives, so I think the empowerment, we are not talking about political empowerment but emotional empowerment. You know men have a stigma that they are not emotional, sensitive, it's like this stereotype we've created and I think many men who are stereotyped they stick to it and they are not empowered. (Female educator.)*

There is a feeling that girls should not be separated from boys be it at assemblies or in class as this causes a division amongst them and they see each other as different and fight against each other. There should also be no single sex schools.

*You do not separate boys from girls. If you grow up isolated from boys, you do not know their behaviour pattern, and when you get introduced to them now it is a whole new world. You get them to live together in harmony. (Female educator.)*

The schools are reported to lack skills in dealing with issues of violence in schools. There was a suggestion that schools should have a social worker or a counsellor to deal professionally with issues of abuse and violence.

*If I was the principal I would send the violent learners for counselling. I would sit first and talk to them, then to counselling, to find out why this is happening. I would probably get a fulltime counsellor whose job would be to deal with problems at school. During school there should be an office where kids could go and speak to someone and confide in him or her and get advice. (Female educator.)*

The district felt that learners are unsafe especially when their breaks coincide with the lunch time of other people in the community and also because at that time i.e. between 11:00 and 12:00, a lot of unemployed people roam the streets looking for jobs and they are very dangerous.

*For me I have noticed that young people in our area are not very safe. As I drive down the road, you will find girls walking on their own to go to school. I have a big problem with the lunch break for people to be out from 11:00 to 12:00 and to stay out of school in that time and I also feel that unemployment is a big problem. There are people who are on the street all the time. The whole issue of gangs hanging around not having anything to do. So*

*I also believe that perhaps our girls are not educated enough about being safe, not being in the wrong place. (District official.)*

The educators feel that violence can be addressed in the curriculum and that workshops and educational tours may also be organised and during such occasions, topics such as sexual harassment and abuse can be discussed. They also strongly believe that during assemblies, religious practices such as reading from the scripture and preaching may also help to instil some morals in the learners. They believe that deviation from the daily routine and conducting some group discussions may also help.

*We address it in assembly through bible readings, in guidance classes, in library orientations. I do it in my language lessons. I often give them group discussion or debates on topics like sexual abuse, violence, equal rights, and certain jobs for women or certain jobs only for men? Things to broaden the child's way of thinking. Parents often do that. Every term I give them a chance to go outside, they sit in a group and they voice their opinions in mixed groups. Sometimes I put them as boys only and as girls only and it is very interesting to get feedback. (Female educator.)*

The educators further believe that corporal punishment does not help instead it makes learners stubborn. They suggest the problem be addressed through consultation with the parents and through educating the perpetrator about the dangers of abuse for example in the case of rape, he/she should be told that there is a danger in that he/she may contract the HIV virus. They further believe that cases of violence should be addressed immediately and the perpetrator (in the case of school children) must be reassured that the disciplinary hearing is not to condemn him/her, but to help.

*Deal with violence immediately, and always reassure the guilty child that he is not being attacked and even if the girl said or did something wrong to the girl, if the boy hit her in return, he gets punished because the school rule says, "You don't hit a girl no matter what, that is rule number 1, that is a golden rule. (Principal.)*

There are however some educators who believe that the perpetrator, in the case of school children, be made a public spectacle during assembly by being called in front and the other learners be told what he/she did and that such behaviour is not tolerated in school nor at home.

*I think awareness that violence against women will not be tolerated and I think in every school if you do have a case of violence against women that person or that child needs to be made a spectacle in an assembly so that children should see that violence will not be tolerated in school. I think they need to know what the school's standpoint is. (Female educator.)*

For community violence, the educators feel that the police should be more visible and prompt when called.

*Police need to be more visible, we need far more police visibility in our streets so that our children will feel safe and know that there is someone who'll protect them and they feel there's someone close by. (Female educator.)*

The educators furthermore feel that learners and educators should work together with the department, conduct campaigns and educate people about the legal implications of abuse and about sex education and violence against women.

*I think it is very important that children be involved in forms of campaigns in conjunction with the education department so that they may give legal guidelines, in the form of brochures on sex education, violence against women. (Female educator.)*

*There must be something, somewhere in the disciplinary committee act. We must tell the children, what is right and what is wrong. (Male educator.)*

*I think the educators must get involved, the social workers, everybody must be involved in the specific case if there is a problem. (Male educator.)*

Parents generally feel that they should support the educators and that educator/parent groups should be formed to help support learners. Clinics and churches must form youth clubs to deal with the learners' problems and work together to conquer the problem. They feel that the school cannot work in isolation and suggest that they work with other schools to share information on what works and what doesn't.

Parents often focused on the importance of institutional roles and the need for external controls and sanctions. They also felt that schools should work together and share ideas on how to deal with violence.

*The SAPS should arrest any people found in an act of abuse or harassment. The churches can play a vital role in helping the children grow spiritually and in the way that they can have time for their spiritual life. Clinic work with the Department of Health which is the same thing that the Department of Health is doing to give information to girls who are abused and the steps that they should take from that event. They teach them the steps that they should take, what to do as a girl if you have been raped... Youth clubs help the young children to get involved in social events to avoid this kind of situation like rape. (Parent.)*

*Because the schools are the centres of learning they should give out information of what they need as the school, what kind of help they need as a school so that they can get help from the Department of Education, local leadership, clinics, social workers, local structures, police, and other forums that can assist in giving information in terms of woman power. The schools cannot work isolated, they should work hand in hand. (Parent.)*

There was a suggestion that people need to be educated on the different policies regarding the rights of people especially the rights of women as lack of knowledge also contributes to gender violence because people tend to misunderstand these policies.

*I think the best way to come and deal with this whole problem is just to ask the relevant department within the government to can come down and explain to the members of the community, the different rights of the members of the society if we are talking in terms of the women's rights and everyone must understand that, that doesn't mean women should be in charge of the whole families or being the superiors but that means the equality within the society. (Community police.)*

People also felt that communities and particularly women should work together to address gender violence

*I think that it is the role of the entire community to come down and work together and catch and everyone if we have a problem should come out and advise us on what to do and how to handle it because you find out that most of the women in our society are not coming forward when talking about these things at forums and other stuff. (Community policing forum member.)*

## Appendix 4

### **A case study of school responses to violence against girls in a rural primary and high school in KwaZulu-Natal**

#### **The community**

Hlanganani is a small rural village north of Durban surrounded by mountains, forests and sugar plantations. Missionaries played a major part in the history of this community developing educational institutions as well as building a hospital and a church.

The community is still recovering from the political violence that affected KwaZulu-Natal before 1994. From 1991 until 1994, the community experienced severe violence between supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Many people died. Children in the community were victims of political violence and the primary and high schools were severely affected with both learners and educators being murdered. Young people were exposed to extreme acts of violence and death and still vividly recall the trauma. Parents believe that the political violence still has an impact on schools in the area. In their opinion, schools and education were affected more seriously than family life. They feel that learners are no longer controllable and educators do not do their work as a result of this violence.

Community members also feel that political violence destroyed their close-knit community. Before 1991, people knew each other in the community and took joint action to address community issues. However, with the violence, many people fled to Hlanganani from other areas, close ties disintegrated, crime increased and the community felt increasingly unsafe and vulnerable.

Added to the trauma of past political violence, is the number of people currently dying of AIDS. There are on average five funerals every week, but there is still denial and silence on the issue. Youth do not seem fully aware that people are dying of AIDS in their community. Community members believe the spread of the virus is due to people living recklessly combined with high rates of rape, sexual abuse and lack of employment. Parents claim that more than ten learners have died of AIDS this year. Health facilities, such as clinics, play a role in the community by providing awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS, but residents are reluctant to go to the clinics for advice or help on HIV/AIDS-related issues because of the stigma.

Houses are mainly traditional thatched round houses made of earth and wood. These houses consist of only one room that is used for all purposes i.e. a kitchen, bathroom, living room and bedroom. About eight to ten people on average share this one room. The community has electricity, but not every household has managed to get it. There is also no running water. People have to walk very far and stand in long queues at the river to get water that is not guaranteed to be clean. Clean water is a serious problem and many residents have been cholera victims. There is no sewerage system and toilets are mostly pit-toilets.

One of the major problems in this community is unemployment and poverty. A number of children suffer from malnutrition. Most men seek work in either Johannesburg or Durban and return once or twice a year. Young men who finish school also leave to find work in the cities.

Families often rely on migrant workers or pensioners in their families as the only source of income. Some family members find work on local sugar farms as casual labourers. Locally community members also have gardening projects, small spaza shops and phone businesses. A parent indicated that where he lives in Hlanganani "the community is the poorest of the poor".

There are few recreational facilities. Boys and girls create their own spaces in which to entertain themselves and play games such as soccer. People's main form of recreation is going to church and participating in gospel singing groups. The church plays an important role in this community. Youth activities are organised by the church to keep young people occupied. There are preparation classes for full church membership, church choir, competitions and meetings. Church ministers try to keep children busy by organising concerts and beauty contests. They also organise HIV/AIDS-awareness workshops. Sometimes workshops are conducted to teach the youth how to write their CV's and apply for jobs.

Traditional structures are still strong in Hlanganani. The *nkosi* 'chiefs', *indunas* 'assistants to the chief' and traditional councillors appointed by the chief handle issues of governance and law and order in the community. All traditional leadership roles are reserved for men. New political structures such as democratically elected councils and policing forums are also overwhelmingly male. There is much some tension between traditional and democratic structures within the community.

The community maintains traditional roles within families. Male and female roles are clearly demarcated. Household chores are for girls. Girls are expected to fetch water, clean and to look for wood in the forest, while boys look after goats and cattle. Men expect women to fulfil these functions and reject much of the new political discourse that promotes different opportunities and roles for women.

Drugs and alcohol are major problems in this community. Educators, in particular, point to the high prevalence of drug abuse in the community. Unemployed residents, especially youth who have completed school and are unable to continue their education or find jobs, become frustrated and resort to alcohol and drugs. Children, as young as 9 or 10, consume alcohol and smoke dagga and the use of mandrax is also increasing. Dagga is a popular crop in Hlanganani and is an important part of the local economy. The police know about the large fields of dagga and claim to sometimes raid and apprehend the dagga growers and smokers. However, educators and learners dispute this, saying police also buy and smoke dagga.

## **Violence in the community**

### **CRIME-RELATED VIOLENCE**

Crime in this community has increased since 1994. People no longer feel safe especially at night as most of the crime takes place at that time. Hijackings of delivery vehicles, house breaking, theft and mugging are common. It is important to have someone in the home at all times to deter thieves. Youth increasingly rob pensioners, particularly women, of their money. Women who work are also targets for theft of their weekly or monthly wages. Murders were rife during the times of political violence, but have decreased in more recent times according to the community.

## GENDER VIOLENCE

Gender violence is common in Hlanganani. Boys often verbally abuse and hit girls. At home, girls sometimes receive beatings from brothers and fathers. Beating a woman is often seen as acceptable and not regarded as violence. Male community members indicate that slapping a woman across the face is not serious. For many, hitting a woman is a way of teaching women respect for men. One educator believes that with the new developments in gender equity in South Africa, men believe that women no longer show respect and therefore need to be beaten. One respondent said that he understood why husbands end up killing themselves and their wives. According to him, it is usually to avoid laws that are now biased in favour of women. These laws regard the woman as the victim of violence, even though she is the perpetrator. Children also report that men assault their wives and steal their wages.

*Women experience violence because when they go out to work the men sit at home and do nothing and when the women earn their money the men take the money from them. It is violence for them to be robbed of their hard-earned money. (Male learner.)*

Alcohol is a major contributing factor in domestic abuse.

Similarly to adult male/female relationships, violence is often a part of love relationships among youth. Boyfriends beat girls if they refuse to have sex with them. It seems the community condones violence in relationships if the boyfriend provides reasons. For example, if he believes she is seeing someone else, parents will often accept such violence as justified.

*'She is seeing another person besides me. That's why I am hitting her.' You run out of words to say, because the girl is at fault. (Female parent.)*

Both younger and older children recall many cases of violence between boyfriends and girlfriends. One learner remembers a boy hit his girlfriend because she wanted to join him even though he had another girlfriend with him. The girl was so badly hurt that she left school.

Sexual abuse and rape also occur and perpetrators are often male relatives and neighbours. Girls and women are also vulnerable to sexual assault and rape when burglaries take place. With many men absent from home because of migrant labour, women on their own are also vulnerable without a male presence. Some women do not sleep at home for fear of being raped when their husbands are not there.

*Sometimes women feel so scared that they do not even sleep at their homes and would hide somewhere and only come home in the morning. (Female learner.)*

Some educators feel rape is not common in the community while others believe it is frequent.

*The only threats I know and those that occur often are incidents of rape. (Male educator.)*

Rape is clearly underreported. Intimidation is a serious obstacle in reporting cases of rape. For example, an old woman attempted to report a case of rape to the police. The culprits threatened her and she abandoned the idea, fearful for her life. Residents often deny the extent of rape and the responsibility of the perpetrators. While residents admit that rape was

common during the political violence, they do not feel it is common now. A female parent remembers that it was during the height of political violence that boys raped girls. She says that boys took advantage of the turmoil knowing that no one would do anything about it. However, while admitting sexual violence was rife during that time, one male parent denied that it was rape saying it is "girls who forced themselves onto the boys". Despite adult denial, children tell numerous stories of rape in their community. One remembers a rapist who raped girls by the river. Another recalls a community member who raped girls in his home.

Although there are new laws mandating police to intervene in domestic abuse, the police official who was interviewed still expressed some reluctance to do so. Many community members do not feel that the police function effectively. Residents complain that they only react to serious cases of crime and are not proactive in patrolling the community. When called, they often don't respond in time and sometimes don't respond at all. The nearest police station is approximately 15 kilometres away. This distance also causes delays in response to incidents of crime and violence. In many cases, community members say police do not do anything about crimes and they often see that the perpetrators of crime are quickly released after being arrested. Most community members do not trust the police saying that the police tell criminals who has reported them.

On occasion, the community acts in response to crime. An educator related a case of rape where a large group of community boys went out to track down the culprit. However, rape is often not taken seriously. In one case, an elderly woman was raped and a traditional councillor organised someone to look after her and reimbursed the victim for the broken windowpane where the rapist had entered. Nothing further was done. Community members say that in most cases, the response from both police and traditional structures is to make sure someone stays with the victim to help her recover, but no other action is taken.

Traditional structures handle disputes within families and between community members as well as crime in the community. Community members report incidents of witchcraft, domestic abuse and rape to the local *induna* who reports to the chief. The chief makes all decisions and the *induna* administers these. In cases of family conflict, the *induna* mediates. When community members report cases of rape, if the case is taken seriously, the chief usually orders compensation to be paid to both himself and to the girl's family to cleanse both the chief and the family of the victim. Usually this payment is in the form of a cow to each party. Once payment has been made, the case is considered closed. Only in very serious cases of crime, where the *induna* feels he cannot handle the matter, does he call the police. Cases of violence against women are not considered serious crimes.

The community also has a community policing forum (CPF). However, many community members do not know who is a member. Even the police official interviewed did not know despite claiming that the police meet with the CPF on a regular basis. It appears male businessmen, male educators and priests as well as some ordinary members of the community make up the CPF, but they seldom seem to meet. According to one educator, the CPF not only deals with crime and violence but also address issues such as electricity, schooling, water and sanitation. However, when speaking to the community, it seems that the CPF does very little.

### **Being at a primary school**

Situated on a hill in Hlanganani is Funda Primary School. Funda is a senior primary school beginning at Grade 4 and going up to Grade 7. The community led by the principal and parents built Funda Primary School in 1986. They obtained funds from a local sugar mill and



built it themselves with children fetching water and helping to mix cement. There are ten classrooms and a principal's office. Although the roof leaks in some classrooms and some are in need of repair, conditions do not impede learning. The school has toilets that are clean and usable. The school grounds are well maintained and care is taken to make the school neat and attractive.

Homesteads are scattered at some distance around the school. The school is fenced and the gate stays locked during class periods. However, it is opened during breaks for learners to buy food outside. There are two security guards. Educators try to ensure that the learners are safe from outside criminal elements and boys from the local high school, Juba High, who sometimes come to the school.

The school is better equipped than most other rural schools. Unlike most schools in the community, there is a telephone enabling effective communication with the Department of Education. There is only one computer and during the time of the research it was out of order. There is one photocopying machine.

### *THE LEARNERS*

There are 445 learners: 222 male and 223 female learners. Their ages range from 11 to 15 years. Most learners come from Hlanganani and walk to school every day. The dropout rate is low. The principal reports that only three learners left school during the year. Learners left because of family problems, pregnancy and learning problems. Most of the learners come from poor families. Most parents are unemployed and learners depend on grandparents' pensions to pay school fees.

### *THE EDUCATORS*

The school has eleven educators including the principal. There are four males and seven females. The age of male educators range between 34 and 43 years and their qualifications range from matric to Primary Teachers Diploma (PTD). The ages of the female teachers range from 32 to 58 years and their qualifications are matric, a Teachers' Certificate or PTD, two have a Higher Education diploma and one has a Bachelor of Education Degree. Length of service ranges from one to 24 years. Most of the educators live in neighbouring communities and commute to school using public transport.

The principal is a female in her late forties. She is one of the two educators with a higher education diploma and she has been a teacher for 23 years. Before becoming the principal, she was a lecturer at the local college of education (now closed) for two years. Previously she was an educator at two high schools. She also worked as head of department at Funda from 1995 to 1998 before becoming the principal in 1998.

### *RUNNING THE SCHOOL*

The school has a school-governing body (SGB) that consists of seven members, five parents, the principal and one educator. The SGB meets quarterly unless there is a special need to have an extra meeting. The school also has a management committee consisting of the principal and her Head of Department (HOD). There is no Student Representative Council. The school claims to employ the services of a social worker from time to time to help with cases of abuse and rape that learners experience in the community.

Educators seem dedicated to their teaching. They are punctual and attend classes. The principal has a hands-on approach providing close supervision of classes. She makes sure that

educators do their work. She checks their lesson preparation and visits classes on a regular basis.

The school has a written set of rules for learners and for the staff. Although parental involvement could be higher, parents do participate in the life of the school taking part in school activities and supporting the principal.

The education department communicates with the school through circulars and notices that are distributed through the provincial office and then passed to the district offices. District officers visit the school at any time without informing the principal of their visits. These visits are intended to check whether learning takes place effectively.

The district organises workshops for the principal, heads of departments and educators on Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Performance appraisals for educators are conducted and Teacher Unions serve as observers. The KwaZulu-Natal Education Department has introduced Culture Of Learning, Teaching Services (COLTS) to Funda with the motto "Building safe schools together".

The main functions of COLTS are:

- To identify obstacles to effective teaching and learning.
- Work towards implementation of codes of conduct.
- Encourage the involvement of parents in education.
- Introduce the concept of working together towards better quality education.

#### ***A DAY IN THE LIFE OF FUNDA PRIMARY SCHOOL***

Most learners walk to school every day. Some learners have to walk long distances and are tired and hungry on arrival. Most learners try to walk to school in groups. Most do not feel very safe on their way to and from school. Some report that they take longer routes and walk on the roads rather than cut across empty land and sugar cane fields to reach school. On the road, they can at least run to a house or shop and call the police.

Educators and learners are generally punctual. At assembly boys and girls stand in separate rows according to grades. Educators stand in front of the learners and either an educator or the principal leads the assembly. The principal delivers messages about learners respecting one another as brothers and sisters, stealing, obedience and good behaviour. Announcements are made followed by prayer. Then learners greet educators and one another before moving off in straight lines to their classes.

In classes, boys and girls usually sit separately. Educators maintain discipline by hitting children over the head with sticks. When learners misbehave they are sent to a particular male educator who administers corporal punishment. Beating learners appears to be common and learners claim that they sometimes respond in kind.

*If the teacher tells a learner to wear a shirt properly and he refuses, then the teacher will beat him and the boy will beat the teacher and they end up beating each other. This happens all the time (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

There is a school-feeding scheme that seems to cater for almost all learners. At lunchtime, local mothers cook the school meal consisting of pap and stew. Each educator is expected to supervise his/her class and to make sure that the learners dish out the food equally. Girls are

tasked with doing the dishing up. However, most educators do not supervise this process and fights arise over the food. Bigger boys bully and threaten smaller boys and girls. They push to the front of the food lines and take most of the food. Sometimes they chase away the girl who is serving food, particularly when meat is available. Then they dish up all the meat for themselves. Sometimes there is no food left for the girls. Some of the older boys won't queue for food preferring to buy food from outside the school because it shows that they have money.

The school has extra-curricular activities such as soccer and gospel singing. Some of the educators are also involved in community development initiatives such as teaching literacy to adults.

### **VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

According to both educators and parents, senior primary boys frequently bully and fight one another. In some cases, boys are sent to the principal's office where she deals with the boys or sends them for corporal punishment administered by a male educator. Female learners observe that boys undermine each other and sometimes make fun of those that do not have girlfriends.

Conflicts between girls sometimes result in physical fights. Often these arguments and fights are over boyfriends at Juba High School. Girls who have argued threaten each other with a fight after school at a place referred to as *Emphelandaba* 'where talk ends'. Even if the two parties later want to withdraw, other girls will encourage and sometimes coerce them into fighting. Learners do not report these fights as they know they will be punished. According to school policy, all those involved, including those who watched, will receive punishment. This punishment is usually two strokes across the hands.

Verbal abuse, hitting, bullying and touching are the most common forms of violence and harassment against girls.

*At school, a boy will call you, and if you don't come, he will insult you. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

There have also been cases of verbal intimidation from boys against girls who do better at schoolwork. Older boys who have reached adolescence intimidate girls the most. From Grade 6, girls report that boys try to grab, touch or kiss them. In Grade 7, boys are involved in sexual relations with girls. They also bring mirrors to school to look up girls' dresses. Educators seem not to know about this practice.

Female learners feel that boys are disrespectful to girls. They also feel that boys undermine girls because they believe they are stronger and can easily overpower them. Some boys feel girls commit gender violence on boys when they wear shorts or short skirts because boys are aroused quickly. They also claim that girls commit gender violence when they sit in class and pull up their skirts to show their thighs.

Boyfriends also bully and severely beat girls with whom they have relationships.

*There is this incident where we had two lovers in our school, and the boyfriend brought another girlfriend and the other girlfriend saw them and tried to ask what was going on. The boyfriend hit her with something on the head, I don't know what it was but she*

*passed out and had to be bandaged. Today, she still suffers headaches from the injury.*  
(Female learner, Grade 7.)

Girls at primary school also have relationships with high school boys and these sometimes result in serious violence often perpetrated after school. In one case, a boy from Juba High School beat his girlfriend from Funda. He broke her arm and she also sustained head injuries. The girl stopped attending school but the boy continues to attend at Juba High School. In another case, a boy from Juba High assaulted a primary school learner because she refused his advances.

Most educators believe that affairs between learners and educators happen at high school. However, a female learner at Funda reports that it is common for male educators to harass them in the toilets.

*During break when you run to the toilet, the male teacher will come when you are sitting on the toilet and he will say, 'Don't worry about that' and he will pull up your panties, and if you are a woman, you feel like you have been abused, and those toilets are for learners not teachers.* (Female learner, Grade 6.)

Most girls do not feel safe either in school, leaving school or walking to and from school. Boys from other schools often wait outside the gate and harass girls. Girl learners report that they fear out-of-school youth and boys from Juba High School who might beat or rape them on their way to school. Girls feel that the mountains, bushes and forests that surround the school make it easy for groups of Juba boys, among others, to drag them there and harass them.

*No [I don't feel safe at school], because there is no relationship between learners and teachers. A teacher will fight with a learner and when you go out someone from nowhere abuses you and you don't know who to turn to for help.* (Female learner, Grade 6.)

*Boys come from other schools and hang out at the gate. These are the ones who really trouble us.* (Female learner, Grade 7.)

*No [I don't feel safe walking to and from school], because even when we walk in groups, someone might come and take one of us by force. We cannot do anything about that because we are women.* (Female learner, Grade 6.)

*We use a gravel road to go to school and sometimes the boys stop girls. And when they call girls and girls don't come, they say they are going to beat them up. I have never seen them beating these girls; they just want them to come, so they threaten them.*  
(Female learner, Grade 6.)

While boys feel safe in school, like girls they fear boys from other schools.

*Yes, I feel safe [in school]. The only problem is when the boys from other schools come to our school.* (Male learner, Grade 5.)

While girls are exposed to violence in school, they are also vulnerable at home and in the community and this is where they often experience the worst forms of violence. There also seems to be little protection from peers or other community members.

*Question: What do boys do when they see other boys from other schools violating the girl from your school?*

*They say beat up the bitch, girls just look on and other girls laugh. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

## SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

### Dealing with gender violence

While female learners describe high levels of violence against them, educators are often silent on these issues and some, including the principal, deny its extent. When female learners report violence, often nothing is done.

*Teachers don't do anything. We don't have a guidance teacher so we don't report to anyone. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

Violence between boys is usually taken more seriously. Boys who fight must report to the office and receive corporal punishment. Educators seem to accept that boys will bully girls.

*Yes, boys bully girls because they are adolescents and they are bound to have that bullying. (Female educator.)*

Reporting is often difficult for learners especially when violence is not taken seriously. Learners report that most of them are scared to report rape and sexual harassment for fear of victimisation by the perpetrators.

Despite having a written code of conduct, educators are often vague when it comes to how the school deals with gender violence. Often informants gave contradictory information about school responses suggesting that there is not a unified and consistent approach across the school. Like most responses to misbehaviour in this school, educators seem to beat learners. Some educators say that they take verbal abuse and bullying seriously and that the principal addresses cases that are reported to her, but learners claim that nothing is done when they complain. The principal says she is aware of bullying of girls, but admits that no steps have been taken.

In serious cases of violence where learners are injured, parents may be called. In some cases, parents of the victim and perpetrator settle the matter between them. When there have been serious threats of harassment from boys, the school claims to call a parents' meeting. Parents are told the bigger boys are harassing the younger girls and are given the responsibility to tell their sons to stop the harassment.

Regarding sexual abuse and rape, the school also seems to do very little. In one reported case of sexual abuse by an uncle, the school has not addressed the issue or made any follow-up. There seem to be no formal links with the police and even rape is ignored.

*If someone is raped from the community and she attends school here, nothing is done for her, no one cares, it ends up just like that. (Female learner, Grade 6.)*

### **Preventing violence against girls**

General violence and violence against girls is part of the public discourse at Funda Primary School. The school addresses issues of violence during assembly and educators say they try and instil moral values through the messages they give. They tell learners to respect and treat one another as brothers and sisters.

*Children are taught to respect each other. They are taught not to pass verbal remarks to other children. They should be fair to each other. They should respect each other not only in school, but also outside the school. They should have respect for each other and treat each other as brothers and sisters. (Female educator.)*

During normal daily classroom teaching, the educators also claim to address violence.

*Though we do not have guidance classes, but in our classes, we address it very well. I think most of the teachers address it in their classes as well. (Female educator.)*

Some educators have their own ways of dealing with gender relations in class. One educator reports that he has drawn up a seating plan for his class that mixes boys and girls. His rationale is that both boys and girls should grow up understanding that they are equal in all respects, the lives they live are similar, and that they need to work harmoniously together.

Educators claim that boys are told not to intimidate girls. They say they speak to the perpetrator concerned to make him understand what he did or said was wrong and provide the learner with possible ways to avoid violence against girls. Some boys' attitudes reflect these messages. One boy said they try as boys to avoid harassing the girls because girls are also human beings. He feels there is no difference between the two genders. He says that boys try to control themselves because they understand that harassing girls ruins their futures.

Awareness programmes on various concerns are conducted in the school. Health workers tell learners how to take care of their bodies and guard against HIV/AIDS. However, there are no guidance classes or formally designated opportunities to address violence and related issues in the curriculum.

### **Being at high school**

Juba High School, also a community initiative, was founded in 1983. At that time, there were no high schools in the area. The community formed an organisation to raise funds and obtain permission from the Department of Education to build a school. The community bought the building material and built the school.

Surrounding the school are homesteads dotted around the hillside and a small forest. Conditions at the school are poor. Classrooms are run down and there are no offices for the principal or deputy principal. The staffroom acts as an office and a storeroom where books are piled high inside a wire cage. There is little furniture in the staffroom. Toilets are situated far from the school and are not in good condition. Several classrooms have no doors or windows and are too dilapidated to use. Classes in use don't have windowpanes and only the staff room and laboratory have burglar bars. The school also has few resources. There is no proper library and the science laboratory has no equipment. During our month of research, educators had to write exam questions on the chalkboard. As many learners had not paid their fees, the school could not afford to buy ink for the printer.

The school appears chaotic, with desks scattered across classrooms and litter strewn across the floors. Litter and wild grass cover the yard and no attempt has been made to create gardens or look after the environment. Although there is a fence around the school and a security guard is suppose to monitor access, this does not happen. The security guard, a man in his sixties, has not been paid for several months. Gates are not locked and male youth who do not attend school hang around at the entrance where there is a small shop that sells alcohol to learners.

On a wall in the school is written *Kukamazenzele High School* 'The do as you like' High School

### *THE LEARNERS*

There are 667 learners in the school, 329 males and 275 females ranging in age from 15 to 21 years. Most learners come from the local community and from poor families. Most parents are unemployed and children are often sick because of lack of nutrition. Parents struggle to pay school fees and buy the required uniform. Parents who are employed work for meagre wages on sugarcane farms, while others are absent because of migrating to find work in urban areas. Many learners live with grandparents and seldom see their parents.

Learner attendance is estimated at about 45%. Some male learners do not attend for the whole year but come and write exams in June and at the end of the year. Many learners appear to drop out during the year. Female learners drop out when they fall pregnant. Some learners leave to go to better schools, while others simply drop out because they gain little from going to school.

### *THE EDUCATORS*

There are 20 educators in the school, 13 males ranging in age from 29 to 54, and 7 females ranging in age from 27 to 40. Length of service ranges from 4 to 22 years. Minimum qualification is matric. At least 8 educators have BA degrees and three have post-graduate diplomas or degrees. There are two grounds staff and two security staff, but no secretaries. According to the community, the quality of educators is poor.

All except three educators live outside the local community. Most educators commute from areas around Durban that are about two hours drive away. Crime is high in Hlanganani and educators are often targets because of their relative wealth. Burglary has driven most educators away from the local community.

### *RUNNING THE SCHOOL*

Juba High School has a school-governing body (SGB), a Students' Representative Council (SRC) and a School Management Team (SMT). The SGB officially meets on a quarterly basis. They report that they discuss the school policy, whether it is implemented properly and the performance of educators. However, in reality the SGB seldom meets and usually only when there is a crisis. The SMT does not appear to function well and the day-to-day running of the school is largely left to the deputy principal. Visits from the District Office occur when there is a crisis.

The principal appears not to be in charge of the school and shows little leadership or initiative in running the school. Most initiatives come from the deputy principal who tries to maintain order and create opportunities to improve the school. However, he does not have the necessary authority or status within the school. Educators tend to reject or ignore his

initiatives. There is little unity among the educators and the only educator who is dedicated to his job is unpopular with his colleagues.

Parental involvement is low. Most do not attend parents' meetings or involve themselves in the running of the school or their children's academic progress. During our period of research, a parents' meeting was held where the principal talked about OBE and never referred to the almost anarchic situation in the school. Parents concerned about their children's education have sent them to other schools. Although originally a community initiative, the school no longer receives the support it once had from parents and the local community.

There appear to be no written rules or code of conduct at Juba High School. Although the school claims to have rules and regulations, there are no written documents and educators and learners do as they please. Learners, particularly boys, do not wear school uniform or attend classes. After the September holidays, many learners did not bother to come back to school.

### *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JUBA HIGH SCHOOL*

Most learners come from the local community and walk to school. Some walk long distances everyday. Learners always walk in groups to and from school.

School is supposed to start at 8:00. However, educators and learners are invariably late. Most learners do not attend assembly. Learners, some who are drunk, arrive about 9:00 or 9:30 and leave at about 11:00 along with some of the educators. Educators are not punctual for lessons and are often absent from classes. While chaos among learners ensues, educators sit in the staff room and chat instead of going to classes. Most learners stand outside their classrooms or move up and down the corridors during classes disrupting the little learning that is taking place.

Throughout most of the school, except in the Grade 8 class where they follow OBE and sit in mixed groups, girls and boys sit separately in class. Most girls and boys also socialise separately during breaks. Boys tend to take control of spaces within the school recently designating the girls' toilet as their space to hang out and smoke dagga.

The fieldworker observed that there is no respect between educators and learners. Learners seem to have the least respect for educators who engage in relationships with female learners. Learners jeer publicly at the principal and have no respect for him. He also often insults girl learners. On one occasion he said to a girl, *Wena ayikho into eyaziyo, ngaphandle kokudliwa abafana nje*. 'You don't know anything except to be eaten (to have sex) with boys'. Then he touched her buttocks. Educators frequently insult learners in a similar manner. Verbal abuse and bad language are also common among learners. When educators try to discipline learners, learners simply laugh at them.

During breaks, learners wander in and out of the school grounds and buy food from a local spaza shop situated by the gate. Here alcohol is sold to learners and educators do nothing about this illegal trade. Groups of male learners retire to the toilets to drink alcohol and smoke dagga during breaks and lessons. Some girls also smoke dagga. No attempt is made to stop learners bringing drugs onto school premises. Girls buy lunch from hawkers inside the school and eat in the classrooms. No monitoring of learners occurs and learners are generally left to their own devices.



There is little for learners to do after school. Some learners have initiated their own gospel groups and practice in a classroom, but most go to their homes. There is no monitoring of learners leaving school.

### *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS*

Violence in the community has had a profound effect on Juba High School. A community member says that during political violence, killing was an every-day event and "Killing a man was like shooting a bird." The community believes that this kind of violence has had an impact on the lives and behaviour of both educators and learners and order has almost completely broken down.

*One needs more than morals to transform those kids and turn them back to their earlier childhood years. I think the Government did not do enough to transform or reverse the situation. Violence has changed their behaviour and I don't think it is a reversible situation. (Male parent.)*

Crime in the community affects the school. Community members steal building material such as windows and doors as well as furniture such as cupboards, tables and chairs. With no security at the school and little support from the community, Juba High is slowly being dismantled. Both female educators and learners report that they do not feel safe at school. Female educators are concerned about gangs of boys from outside who come into school and fight learners. They say that criminals also come onto school property and demand their cell phones.

General violence is high at Juba High School. There is widespread bullying and fighting among boys often exacerbated by alcohol and drugs. Learners also testify to widespread drug and alcohol abuse among learners. Drug addicts aggressively demand money from learners to service drug dependency. Drug problems seem rampant both among learners and out-of-school youth. Addicted learners sometimes quarrel with educators, threaten and swear at them. Sometimes the learners are so uncontrollable that the school has to be closed.

*A lot of learners use alcohol and drugs and come to school in a state where they are completely uncontrollable. This brings conflict between the educators and the learners to the point where the school has to close as it happens sometimes. (Male educator.)*

Educators use physical violence against learners. For example, if girls fail to lead the singing at assembly, educators beat them. Sometimes learners fight back.

Verbal abuse and beatings are the most common forms of violence against girls at Juba High School. We observed that verbal abuse of girls is frequent and many female learners confirm this verbal abuse from male learners. Boys call girls names such as 'bitch' or 'mother fucker'. Sometimes boys write rude insults to female educators on the chalkboards.

Harassment of girls is also common. Boys in abandoned classrooms and at the toilets harass girls as they go by. Girls say they don't feel safe at school particularly in and around the toilets and empty classrooms. When girls refuse to talk to boys who harass them, boys begin swearing at them and calling them names. Boys also harass girls who fall pregnant. They write on the chalkboard "pregnant" and this, girls report, hurts the pregnant girl and those who have been pregnant before.

Beating of girls is also common both in and outside class. If a boy proposes to a girl and she refuses, he beats her. If a boy tells a girl to fetch his books and she refuses, he beats her. Boys, who believe their girlfriends are cheating on them, also beat them. In one reported case, a boy, whose girlfriend was cheating on him, pulled out a gun at school and chased the girl, but no one called the police.

When boys hit girls, other girls say that such beatings are deserved. Boys often say that the boy should have beaten the victim more. When boys talk about beating girls, they say that girls are disrespectful towards them and therefore they are justified in hitting them. Boys feel that their male status entitles them to respect from girls. Beating girls shows their power over girls that, in their view, girls sometimes forget.

A Grade 9 learner reported being assaulted during the period of our research. However, no one except the female learners took her seriously. The boys made a joke out of it. Girls have sometimes reported rapes by boys at school, but if the boy is the girl's boyfriend or claims to be, school authorities reject the girl's complaint. School members, including female learners, are quick to say that there are no rapes at school, but their definition of rape does not include rape within relationships nor coercive sex/rape such as told to us by a female learner who describes how violence occurs when a boy does a girl a 'favour' e.g. "helps you find the money you lost and asks you to pay by sleeping with him". Informants claim that rapes are not common in the community or at school. However, most learners are afraid to report cases of rape for fear of not being taken seriously or retaliation from the perpetrators.

Learners report that relationships occur between themselves and male educators. Learners say they have to agree to an educator's proposal otherwise they will fail at the end of the year. Educators sleep with learners in cottages in the school grounds that are supposed to accommodate educators. Some parents are aware that high school girls are forced to have relationships with educators. Some are also aware that an educator will threaten to fail a girl or give her low marks if she continues to reject his advances. Learners do not see such relationships as a form of rape despite their coercive nature. There are also cases of high school girls who have affairs with educators because educators give them money. Educators are often some of the wealthiest members of the community and learners see such relationships as an economic opportunity. Learners say that when they tell parents about unwanted advances, some parents encourage them to reciprocate because it means they will be able to bring home money.

### **SCHOOL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS**

Educators seldom respond to any form of misbehaviour and the school does not view violence against girls as either socially unacceptable or criminal. Even rape, according to learners, does not elicit a response.

#### **Understandings of violence against girls**

When informants reply to questions about causes of gender violence, many refer to the breakdown of family life, weakened family structures due to the absence of parents and loss of traditional forms of transmitting values.

*Before, we used to have grandparents who would teach us, for instance, how to treat a woman. My father used to say to me 'Themba, a real man will never beat his wife.' That is the kind of advice we should be getting from our existing government structures, but we don't. Also the family is no longer there so the young boys and girls grow up on their*

*own because the father is not there, he is working, the mother is working and the kids bring up themselves assuming what is right for one to become a good father or mother. That system has been taken out by democracy and that democracy is not replacing it with any other system. We do not have the storytellers and family guidance at home like we used to ... (Male parent.)*

Unemployment is also felt to be a major factor in high levels of violence against women.

*The unemployment issue is also a cause of greater violence because if a day goes by without something to eat, the woman will go shouting and she will come there and there is nothing a man can do, he is hungry himself. He loves to be a loving and caring father, but the situation does not allow it. Then the situation at home becomes sour and thus violence starts because no one is employed. There is no happiness and violence is always there where people are underprivileged. (Male parent.)*

Lack of education, external controls and parental involvement are also perceived to contribute towards gender violence. Learners feel that lack of collaboration between parents and the school contributes to gender violence. Learners also feel that parents fail to discipline their children and that violence occurs because the school does not have firm regulations against gender violence. Learners also feel that educators are not educated enough on gender equity and do not understand the laws relating to violence against women and girls.

Educators and male learners often blame girls for provoking incidents of sexual harassment focusing on how girls behave and the clothes they wear. They also blame girls if girls complain about violence within a relationship or when girls report unwanted advances from male educators.

### **Dealing with violence against girls**

Since the school authorities do not take violence against girls seriously and appear confused about what is socially acceptable, unacceptable and criminal behaviour, learners are reluctant to report violence especially sexual violence. Learners say they find it difficult to report cases to educators because they have little empathy and do not take action. In cases of rape, educators do not even send the learner to the doctor, according to learners. When a learner reports sexual assault the educator will ask the learner: "What do you know about sexual things?" If a girl learner reports sexual advances from an educator, she is usually blamed by both male and female educators for trying to seduce the educator. Often the male educator uses the same excuse in his own defence. Some parents who are told of incidents by their children seem to understand at first, but then use information against the child when conflicts arise. Learners also do not trust the police. They say police drink and smoke dagga with boys from the school and would tell those arrested who has laid a charge against them.

Verbal abuse, bullying, beating, touching, sexual harassment and rape seem to be ignored at Juba High. The school claims to address behavioural problems by inviting parents to school, but rarely does the school bother to call a parent over behaviour or bad academic performance.

The school calls the police in cases of criminal behaviour. Learners recall that police were called when two boys stabbed each other, but police are not called for any form of violence against girls. In interviews, the police claim to support the school and profess a willingness to help, but learners say they do very little to support the school.

### **Preventing violence against girls**

There is virtually a complete silence on violence, violence against girls, and issues of gender equity or male/female relationships. Educators say very little to boys or girls about acceptable behaviour and there are few public messages within the school that focus on these aspects.

Juba High School has made no attempt to initiate or implement programmes on violence and safety in general or specifically for girls. Despite having a police official appointed to liaise with schools who claims he visits the school on a regular basis, learners report that police have not come to the school to address learners or run workshops on crime, violence and safety. Educators and police claim that police address the school on violence against girls, crime and safety but learners say that this does not happen. The school does not initiate activities on special days such as Women's Day or Human Rights Day.

In 2000, Juba High School received a week's intervention from KwaZulu-Natal Survivors of Violence, on combating violence in school initiated by the Department of Education. Learners and educators had separate workshops where they explored the issues and drew up plans of action for their school. Despite learners and educators' immediate enthusiasm after the workshop, the school has still not implemented these plans. Key stakeholders within the school did not give support to these action plans and seemed reluctant to make the effort to do anything.

There are no guidance educators in the school and violence and violence against girls is not addressed in the curriculum.

### **Solutions: Schools and communities speak out**

For many informants in this community, the lack of facilities and recreational opportunities for youth are key areas for intervention. Educators and parents feel that it is important to keep learners busy by having recreational programmes. They suggest that the school, the school governing body and parents should see to it that boys and girls are occupied after school and during weekends perhaps by showing educational films. Some learners suggest that sports and other cultural events such as beauty contests might help solve the problem. Many residents feel that crime will decrease if there are recreational structures in place for youth.

According to learners, authorities need to address social problems in the community such as gangs of out-of-school youth that sit by the road and do drugs. Police need to be present in the community and stop such activities in order to make it safe for girls. Community members also feel harsher prison sentences would be an effective deterrent.

At Juba High School, many learners simply want the gates locked and security guards to monitor access. They also want the police to monitor the school. However, some learners claim that this would be impossible since the police drink and smoke with boys from the school. At the primary school, learners also feel security should be tighter especially to prevent boys from other schools coming into their school.

At Funda Primary School, educators say that reporting is an important element in solving the problem of violence against girls. The police should be informed about cases of sexual assault and gender violence. Educators feel that learners need to inform educators and parents, however, few had any suggestions how they might encourage reporting.

Many learners feel that the solutions lie partly with themselves. A female learner says she protects herself from gender violence by not having bad friends who drink and by not having a boyfriend—'by just being alone'. She notes that it is important to be friends with one's parents. Another female learner says girls must be helped to do martial arts so that they are able to defend themselves.

Educators and learners suggest that a code of conduct to deal with sexual offences should be developed for schools and given to parents to make them aware of gender violence. Learners, in particular, believe that the problems of violence can only be solved when parents and learners begin to talk to one another and parents work with the school to develop solutions.

Closely related to co-operation between learners, educators and parents is the issue of better school management. Educators at the high school feel that better communication and co-ordination between themselves, the SGB and parents are essential. In solving issues, learners feel that they need to be fully involved in the management of the school and in decision making. They feel that there need to be more effective learner structures and organisations within schools. At the same time, learners say schools need support from community organisations that specifically address violence against women. Learners also feel that communities need more women's organisations.

An educator at the Senior Primary School feels that the Outcomes-Based Education life skills/orientation programme helps learners gain a better understanding of the type of behaviour that is expected of them and how to take charge of their lives. She feels that this programme begins to touch on gender equity issues by showing girls and boys that neither male nor female should have more power.

Learners feel that educators need to be trained as social workers and that schools should have volunteer counsellors with whom they can talk. Educators believe that gender training would help to establish gender equity among learners and help them to deal appropriately with cases of gender violence. Educators would like to have gender training workshops by experts. These workshops would be opportunities to learn more about how to prevent and deal with cases of gender violence among learners. Educators would then combine this knowledge with what they extract from the media and be able to help the learners understand gender violence and how to avoid it. Educators also believe that parents need training in parenting and learners need training in life skills.

Learners feel increasing public debate through the media on how to solve the problem of violence against women and girls will generate solutions. Learners also want information on gender violence, its impact and effects in order to help people understand how damaging it is to victims. They also feel media campaigns will help people to become aware of what is unacceptable behaviour towards women and girls.

## Appendix 5

### Interview – SGB Member

#### Background information about the SGB member (5 minutes)

To begin with, I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself.

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. Do you belong to community organisations outside school? (If yes) Do you hold a leadership position in the organisation(s) and what are your responsibilities?
4. How long have you been on the school-governing body?
5. What is the role of the school-governing body? Tell me how it works and what it does?
6. What position do you hold on the school-governing body and what are your responsibilities?

#### Background information about the community (5 minutes)

Now I'm going to ask you about the community/communities where learners in this school come from.

7. How poor or how rich would you say the people in this community are? How do you know this?
8. What do most parents in this community do to support their families? Who looks after children if parents work?
9. How big is the homes people have and can you describe them? How many people do you think live in one home?
10. What are the main social problems in this community? (*Prompt the following:* Is there alcohol abuse? Who abuses alcohol and how does it affect people? Are drugs a problem? Among who? How does it affect people? Is HIV/Aids a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community? Is crime a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community?)

#### Community violence (10 minutes)

I would now like to talk a little about violence in the community and to what extent it is a problem.

11. What kinds of violence are most common in this community? (*If not mentioned, prompt: murders, hijacking, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, and family violence.*) *Ask the following about each one:* How common is it? Who is responsible and how does it affect the community?
12. What kinds of violence occur specifically against men and boys? How common are they? Who is responsible?
13. What kinds of violence occur against women and girls in this community? *Cover the following:*
  - a. Does sexual assault including rape occur? How common is it? Where and when does it occur? Who are usually the victims and who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How do they usually respond?
  - b. Do women and girls get beaten? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How does the community usually respond?

- c. Do women and girls get verbally abused or degraded? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond? Do they do anything?
  - d. Do women and girls get threatened with violence? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond?
  - e. In what ways is the community not safe for women and girls?
14. What would you say are the causes of violence against women and girls in this community? (*Allow them to speak and if necessary, prompt the following: What kinds of attitudes do men have towards women? What kinds of groups do men and boys form that might cause violence against women and girls? How well does the police force work in this community? Do social conditions contribute such as parents at work all day, parents not being involved with children, alcohol, drugs, and poverty? If so, how do they contribute to violence against females?*)

### **Gender violence in the school (10 minutes)**

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

- 15. What kinds of violence occur against boys in this school and in other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? (*Prompt: murders, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, drug-related violence.*)
- 16. What kinds of violence occur against girls in this school and other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? (*Prompt: rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks.*)
- 17. What do you think are the causes of violence at this school and other schools in this community? (*Prompt: What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in the school? Do drugs encourage violence? How? Is it because teachers and school authorities don't do enough or can't? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the SGB, the police and the department of education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?*)

### **Responses and solutions (30 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you how your school deals with violence against girls and what else you think should be done to address this problem.

- 18. Can you describe incidents of violence against girls in your school, what happened and what the school did? What hindered or helped the school in dealing with these incidents?
- 19. Can you tell me how your school usually deals or would deal with rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying of girls, and sexual harassment such as touching and verbal abuse? What hinders or helps the schools in dealing with these kinds of violence?
- 20. How does your school address and prevent violence against girls in and out of school? *Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following: Are there school procedures and guidelines to deal with different kinds of violence against girls? Can you tell me what these are and how they work? Does the school address violence against girls in guidance classes and in the general curriculum? How? Can*

you give details? What security measures are in place e.g. fences, teachers monitoring, policing? What role does the SGB play in preventing violence against girls? Who do you involve in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police, parents, social workers, SGB members, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in your school? Are there specific programmes to prevent violence against girls by the school, the Department of Education, police or other community organisations? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were?

2. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in your and other schools? *If necessary prompt the following:* What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What should parents be doing? What should learners be doing? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should the school work with the community, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics the Department of Education and other community organisations?



## Interview – District/education officials

### Background information (5 minutes)

I'm going to begin by asking you a few questions about you and your position in the Department of Education.

1. What is your name?
2. What position do you hold in the Department of Education?
3. What are your responsibilities, functions?
4. How long have you been in this position?
5. What previous positions have you held and what were your responsibilities?

### Gender violence in the school (15 minutes)

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

6. In your district/province what kinds of violence against girls occurs in schools? (*Prompt:* rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks. How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible?)
7. Which schools and communities have the most problems with violence against girls? Why?
8. What has your experience of violence against girls been in the past five years at schools in your area? Is it similar or different to now? In what way?
9. What do you think are the causes of violence against girls at these schools? (*Prompt:* What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in these schools? What other social attitudes contribute to violence against girls? Do drugs and alcohol encourage violence against girls? How? Is it because of the attitude of teachers and school authorities and the way the schools are run that allows violence against girls to happen? Can and do schools respond adequately? Is it a leadership problem at schools? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the police and the Department of Education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?)

### Responses and solutions (40 minutes)

Now I'm going to ask you how violence against girls is currently dealt with and what else you think should be done to address this problem.

10. Can you describe actual incidents of violence against girls in schools that you and your colleagues have had to deal with in the past year? What happened? What did the school do and what did the Department do? What hindered or helped the school and the Department in dealing with these incidents?
11. Can you tell me how the Department usually deals with rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying of girls, and sexual harassment such as touching and verbal abuse? What official policies and procedures are in place to deal with different kinds of violence such as rape, sexual harassment, bullying, verbal abuse, assault etc? In what ways do you think these policies and procedures are effective and not effective? What could be done to improve them?
12. Who makes these policies? How are they communicated to you and how are they implemented in schools? What room do you have to form your own policies, procedures and prevention initiatives?

*(Ask for copies of documents on policies and initiatives and what has been sent to schools.)*

13. What role does your department play in prevention of violence and violence against girls? What initiatives has your department introduced to try and help schools to deal with and prevent gender violence? (Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following: Have you addressed violence against girls in guidance classes and in the general curriculum? How? Can you give details? Have you introduced security measures e.g. Fences, teachers monitoring, policing? Who does the department involve in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police, parents, social workers, SGB, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in schools? How effective are they? What hinders or helps them? Does your office/department work with other community organisations and NGOs on gender violence prevention? Can you give us details of the formal and informal links you have set up? Do you have specific programmes for teachers and learners to prevent violence against girls? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were? How have schools in your opinion responded to the Department or your office's initiatives?)
14. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in schools? If necessary prompt the following: What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What could your office be doing? What should parents be doing? What should learners be doing? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should schools work with communities, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics the Department of Education and other community organisations?
15. If you had the opportunity and resources, what other initiatives, programmes and structures would you put in place to deal with and prevent gender violence?

## Single and group interviews – Educators

### Background information about the teacher(s) (5 minutes)

To begin with, I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself.

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. What grades and/or subjects do you teach?
4. How long have you been a teacher?
5. How long have you been a teacher at this school?
6. What position do you hold in this school? Are you a Head of Department or part of the management committee or any other committee?
7. What other responsibilities do you have at this school?
8. What activities are you involved in at the school?
9. Do you belong to community organisations outside school? (If yes) Do you hold a leadership position in the organisation(s) and what are your responsibilities?

### Background information about the community (5 minutes)

Now I'm going to ask you about the community/communities where learners in this school come from.

10. How poor or how rich would you say the people in this community are? How do you know this?
11. What do most parents in this community do to support their families? Who looks after children if parents work?
12. How big are the homes people have and can you describe them? How many people do you think live in one home?
13. What are the main social problems in this community? *Prompt the following:* Is there alcohol abuse? Who abuses alcohol and how does it affect people? Are drugs a problem? Among who? How does it affect people? Is HIV/AIDS a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community? Is crime a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community?

### Community violence (10 minutes)

I would now like to talk a little about violence in the community and to what extent it is a problem.

14. What kinds of violence are most common in this community? (If not mentioned, prompt: murders, hijacking, gangsterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, and family violence.) Ask the following about each one: How common is it? Who is responsible and how does it affect the community?
15. What kinds of violence occur specifically against men and boys? How common are they? Who is responsible?
16. What kinds of violence occur against women and girls in this community? Cover the following:
17. Does sexual assault including rape occur? How common is it? Where and when does it occur? Who are usually the victims and who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How do they usually respond?
18. Do women and girls get beaten? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How does the community usually respond?

19. Do women and girls get verbally abused or degraded? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond? Do they do anything?
20. Do women and girls get threatened with violence? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond?
21. In what ways is the community not safe for women and girls?
22. What would you say are the causes of violence against women and girls in this community? Allow them to speak and if necessary, prompt the following: What kinds of attitudes do men have towards women? What kinds of groups do men and boys form that might cause violence against women and girls? How well does the police force work in this community? Do social conditions contribute such as parents at work all day, parents not being involved with children, alcohol, drugs, and poverty? If so, how do they contribute to violence against females?

### **Gender violence in the school (10 minutes)**

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

23. What kinds of violence occur against boys in this school and in other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? Prompt: murders, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, drug related violence.
24. What kinds of violence occur against girls in this school and other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? Prompt: rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks.
25. As a teacher do you feel safe at school? (If no, ask) Where and when do you not feel safe and why?
26. What do you think are the causes of violence at this school and other schools in this community? Prompt: What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in the school? Do drugs encourage violence? How? Is it because teachers and school authorities don't do enough or can't? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the police and the Department of Education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?

### **Responses and solutions (30 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you how your school deals with violence against girls and what else you think should be done to address this problem.

27. Can you describe incidents of violence against girls in your school, what happened and what the school did? What hindered or helped the school in dealing with these incidents?
28. Can you tell me how your school usually deals or would deal with rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying of girls, and sexual harassment such as touching and verbal abuse? What hinders or helps the schools in dealing with these kinds of violence?
29. How does your school address and prevent violence against girls in and out of school? Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following: Are there school procedures and guidelines to deal with different kinds of violence against girls? Can you tell me what these are and how they work? Do you address violence

- against girls in guidance classes and in the general curriculum? How? Can you give details? Do you address it in assembly? How? What security measures are in place e.g. fences, teachers monitoring, policing? Who do you involve in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police, parents, social workers, SGB, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in your school? Do you have specific programmes to prevent violence against girls by either the school, the DoE, police or other community organisations? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were?
30. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in your and other schools? If necessary prompt the following: What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What should parents be doing? What should learners be doing? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should the school work with the community, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics, the Department of Education and other community organisations?

## Interview – Parent

### Background information about the parent (5 minutes)

To begin with, I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself.

1. What is your name?
2. How old is/are your child/children?
3. What work do you do?
4. What do you do for the school as a parent?
5. Where do you live?
6. Do you belong to community organisations? (If yes) Do you hold a leadership position in the organisation(s) and what are your responsibilities?

### Background information about the community (5 minutes)

Now I'm going to ask you about the community in which you live.

7. How poor or how rich would you say the people in this community are? How do you know this?
8. What do most parents in this community do to support their families? Who looks after children if parents work?
9. How big is the homes people have and can you describe them? How many people do you think live in one home?
10. What are the main social problems in this community? (*Prompt the following:* Is there alcohol abuse? Who abuses alcohol and how does it affect people? Are drugs a problem? Among who? How does it affect people? Is HIV/Aids a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community? Is crime a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community?)

### Community violence (10 minutes)

I would now like to talk a little about violence in the community and to what extent it is a problem.

11. What kinds of violence are most common in this community? (*If not mentioned, prompt: murders, hijacking, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, family violence*) *Ask the following about each one:* How common is it? Who is responsible and how does it affect the community?
12. What kinds of violence occur specifically against men and boys? How common are they? Who is responsible?
13. What kinds of violence occur against women and girls in this community? (*Cover the following:*
  - (a) Does sexual assault including rape occur? How common is it? Where and when does it occur? Who are usually the victims and who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How do they usually respond?
  - (b) Do women and girls get beaten? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How does the community usually respond?
  - (c) Do women and girls get verbally abused or degraded? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond? Do they do anything?

- (d) Do women and girls get threatened with violence? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond?
- (e) In what ways is the community not safe for women and girls?
12. What would you say are the causes of violence against women and girls in this community? (*Allow them to speak and if necessary, prompt the following: What kinds of attitudes to men have towards women? What kinds of groups do men and boys form that might cause violence against women girls? How well does the police force work in this community? Do social conditions contribute such as parents at work all day, parents not being involved with children, alcohol, drugs, and poverty? If so, how do they contribute to violence against females?*)

### **Gender violence in the school (10 minutes)**

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

13. What kinds of violence occur against boys in the school your child/children attend and in other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? (Prompt: murders, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, drug related violence).
14. What kinds of violence occur against girls in this school and other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? (Prompt: rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks.)
15. What do you think are the causes of violence at this school and other schools in this community? (Prompt: What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in the school? Do drugs encourage violence? How? Is it because teachers and school authorities don't do enough or can't? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the police and the department of education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?)

### **Responses and solutions (30 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you how your child's/children's school deals with violence against girls and what you think should be done to address this problem.

16. Can you describe incidents of violence against girls in the school, what happened and what the school did? What do you think hindered or helped the school in dealing with these incidents?
17. Can you tell me how the school usually deals or would deal with rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying of girls, and sexual harassment such as touching and verbal abuse? What role do parents play? What do you think hinders or helps the schools in dealing with these kinds of violence?
18. How does the school address and prevent violence against girls in and out of school? (*Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following: Are there school procedures and guidelines to deal with different kinds of violence against girls? Do you know what these are and how they work? Does the school address violence against girls in guidance classes and in the general curriculum? How? Can you give details? What security measures are in place e.g. Fences, teachers monitoring, policing? Who is involved in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police.*)

- parents, social workers, SGB, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in the school? What role do parents play in preventing violence against girls? Are there specific programmes to prevent violence against girls in school and the community? Who runs these? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were?)
19. How do you as a parent deal with the threat of violence against girls in your community and in the school? What do other parents do and say?
  20. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in your and other schools? If necessary prompt the following: What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What should parents be doing? What should learners be doing? What should the community do? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should the school work with the community, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics, the Department of Education and other community organisations?



## Interview – Principal

### Background information about the principal (5 minutes)

To begin with, I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been the principal at this school?
3. Tell us a little about your vision for this school and your role as the principal.
4. Were you a teacher at this school before you became the principal? *If yes ask: For how long?*
5. What position did you hold at this school or other schools and for how long before you became the principal at this school?
6. Where do you live?
7. Do you belong to community organisations outside school? (If yes) Do you hold a leadership position in the organisation(s) and what are your responsibilities?

### Background information about the community (5 minutes)

Now I'm going to ask you about the community/communities where learners in this school come from.

8. How poor or how rich would you say the people in this community are? How do you know this?
9. What do most parents in this community do to support their families? Who looks after children if parents work?
10. How big is the homes people have and can you describe them? How many people do you think live in one home?
11. What are the main social problems in this community? *(Prompt the following: 1 their alcohol abuse? Who abuses alcohol and how does it affect people? Are drugs a problem? Among who? How does it affect people? Is HIV/Aids a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community? Is crime a problem? Among who and how does it affect the community?*

### Community violence (10 minutes)

I would now like to talk a little about violence in the community and to what extent it is a problem.

12. What kinds of violence are most common in this community? *(If not mentioned, prompt: murders, hijacking, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, family violence) Ask the following about each one: How common is it? Who is responsible and how does it affect the community?*
13. What kinds of violence occur specifically against men and boys? How common are they? Who is responsible?
14. What kinds of violence occur against women and girls in this community? *(Cover the following:*
  - a) Does sexual assault including rape occur? How common is it? Where and when does it occur? Who are usually the victims and who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How do they usually respond?
  - b) Do women and girls get beaten? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How does the community usually respond?

- c) Do women and girls get verbally abused or degraded? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond? Do they do anything?
  - d) Do women and girls get threatened with violence? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond?
  - e) In what ways is the community not safe for women and girls?
15. What would you say are the causes of violence against women and girls in this community? *Allow them to speak and if necessary, prompt the following:* What kinds of attitudes to men have towards women? What kinds of groups do men and boys form that might cause violence against women girls? How well does the police force work in this community? Do social conditions contribute such as parents at work all day, parents not being involved with children, alcohol, drugs, and poverty? If so, how do they contribute to violence against females?)

### Gender violence in the school (10 minutes)

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

- 16. What kinds of violence occur against boys in this school and in other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? *(Prompt: murders, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, drug related violence).*
- 17. What kinds of violence occur against girls in this school and other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? *(Prompt, rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks.)*
- 18. Do you and your staff feel safe at school? *(If no, ask) Where and when do you and your staff not feel safe and why?*
- 19. What do you think are the causes of violence at this school and other schools in this community? *(Prompt: What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in the school? Do drugs encourage violence? How? Is it because teachers and school authorities don't do enough or can't? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the police and the department of education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?)*

### Responses and solutions (30 minutes)

Now I'm going to ask you how your school deals with violence against girls and what else you think should be done to address this problem.

- 20. Can you describe incidents of violence against girls in your school, what happened and what the school did? What hindered or helped the school in dealing with these incidents?
- 21. Can you tell me how your school usually deals or would deal with rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying of girls, and sexual harassment such as touching and verbal abuse? What hinders or helps the schools in dealing with these kinds of violence?
- 22. How does your school address and prevent violence against girls in and out of school? *(Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following: Are there school procedures and guidelines to deal with different kinds of violence against*

- girls? Can you tell me what these are and how they work? Do you address violence against girls in guidance classes and in the general curriculum? How? Can you give details? Do you address it in assembly? How? What security measures are in place e.g. Fences, teachers monitoring, policing? Who do you involve in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police, parents, social workers, SGB, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in your school? What is your role as principal? Do you have specific programmes to prevent violence against girls by either the school, the Department of Education, police or other community organisations? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were?)
23. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in your and other schools? *If necessary prompt the following* What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What should parents be doing? What should learners be doing? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should the school work with the community, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics the Department of Education and other community organisations?

## Single and group interviews – Boy learners

### Background information about the learner(s) (5 minutes)

To begin with, I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself.

1. What is your name?
2. What grade are you in?
3. How long have you been at this school?
4. What school did you go to before?
5. What after-school activities do you participate in? *Prompt:* sport, drama etc.)
6. Do you hold any leadership positions in your school? What are they?
7. Where do you live?
8. Do you belong to community organisations outside school? **(If yes)** Tell me about them and what they do?

### Community violence (10 minutes)

I would now like to talk a little about violence in the community and to what extent it is a problem.

9. Tell me about the community in which you live? Do you feel safe there? Do boys feel safe? Do girls feel safe? Why/Why not? What makes you not feel safe? What other things make your neighbourhood unsafe?
10. What kinds of violence do boys experience in your community? Beating, bullying, stabbing, threats, verbal abuse, etc. Where and when and who is responsible?
11. What kinds of violence do girls experience in your community? Where and when do these kinds of violence occur and who is responsible? *Cover the following:*
  - a. Does sexual assault including rape occur? How common is it? Where and when does it occur? Who are usually the victims and who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How do they usually respond?
  - b. Do women and girls get beaten? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How does the community usually respond?
  - c. Do women and girls get verbally abused or degraded? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond? Do they do anything?
  - d. Do women and girls get threatened with violence? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond?
12. What would you say are the causes of violence against boys? What would you say are the causes of violence against women and girls in this community? *(Allow them to speak and if necessary, prompt the following:* What kinds of attitudes do men have towards women? What kinds of groups do men and boys form that might cause violence against women and girls? How well does the police force work in this community? Do social conditions contribute such as parents at work all day, parents not being involved with children, alcohol, drugs, and poverty? If so, how do they contribute to violence against females?

### Gender violence in the school (10 minutes)

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

13. What kinds of violence occur against boys in this school and in other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? *Prompt:* murders, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, drug-related violence.
14. What kinds of violence occur against girls in this school and other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? *Prompt:* rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks.
15. As a learner do you feel safe at school? (*If no, ask*) Where and when do you not feel safe and why?
16. What do you think are the causes of violence at this school and other schools in this community? *Prompt:* What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in the school? Do drugs encourage violence? How? Is it because teachers and school authorities don't do enough or can't? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the police and the department of education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?

### **Community responses and solutions (10 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you to tell me what you and other people in your community do about violence against girls.

17. How do you protect yourself in your neighbourhood? (Include to and from school).
18. Do you think girls are safe coming to school and going home? If yes, why? If no, where and when do you think girls are not safe? What do you do if you see that a girl is in an unsafe situation?
19. What do you and other learners feel and do about incidents of violence against girls that you see or experience? What do boys feel? What do girls feel? What do boys do? What do girls do?
20. Can and do you report incidents of violence? To whom? Why? Why not?
21. How do parents, teachers, ministers, community organisations and youth workers view and respond to the different kinds of violence you describe in your community? What do they say and what do they do?
22. What kinds of things do you think could be done to make your neighbourhood a safer place? *Prompt:* around policing, community organisations, boys and girls doing something together, parents' roles etc.

### **School responses and solutions (25 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you what your school does about violence against girls and what you think should be done at school to prevent it.

23. Do boys and girls feel free and safe to report incidents of violence to the school authorities? To whom do you or would you report them? Why? Why not? What happens if a girl reports violence to a teacher or to the principal?
24. What does your school do about specific incidents of violence against boys? And then against girls? *Prompt:* if boys rape girls, if boys hit girls, boys call girls names or make comments about them, boys touch girls in a sexual way, get examples? What hinders or helps the school in dealing with these incidents?
25. Do you think your school protects girls and deals with people who hurt girls adequately? Why do you say so? What makes it difficult for schools to protect girls and deal with those who try to hurt girls?
26. How does your school address and prevent violence against girls in and out of school? *Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following:* Are there

- school procedures and guidelines to deal with different kinds of violence against girls? Can you tell me what these are and how they work? Is violence against girls addressed in guidance classes, other classes and in assembly? How? Can you give details? What security measures are in place e.g. fences, teachers' monitoring, policing? Who is involved in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police, parents, social workers, SGB, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in your school? Do you have specific programmes to prevent violence against girls run by the school, police or other community organisations? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were?
27. What role do you think you as boys and girls could play in preventing violence against boys and particularly girls?
28. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in your and other schools? *If necessary prompt the following:* What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What should parents be doing? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should the school work with the community, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics, the Department of Education and other community organisations?

## Single and group interviews – Girl learners

### Background information about the learner(s) (5 minutes)

To begin with, I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself.

1. What is your name?
2. What grade are you in?
3. How long have you been at this school?
4. What school did you go to before?
5. What after-school activities do you participate in? *Prompt:* sport, drama etc.
6. Do you hold any leadership positions in your school? What are they?
7. Where do you live?
8. Do you belong to community organisations outside school? *(If yes)* Tell me about them and what they do?

### Community violence (10 minutes)

I would now like to talk a little about violence in the community and to what extent it is a problem.

9. Tell me about the community in which you live? Do you feel safe there? Do boys feel safe? Do girls feel safe? Why/Why not? What makes you not feel safe? What other things make your neighbourhood unsafe?
10. What kinds of violence do boys experience in your community? Beating, bullying, stabbing, threats, verbal abuse, etc. Where and when and who is responsible?
11. What kinds of violence do girls experience in your community? Where and when do these kinds of violence occur and who is responsible? *Cover the following:*
  - a. Does sexual assault including rape occur? How common is it? Where and when does it occur? Who are usually the victims and who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How do they usually respond?
  - b. Do women and girls get beaten? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe an incident/incidents in this community? What happened and what did the community and the police do? How does the community usually respond?
  - c. Do women and girls get verbally abused or degraded? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond? Do they do anything?
  - d. Do women and girls get threatened with violence? Where and when? Who is responsible? Can you describe examples that have occurred in the community? How do people respond?
12. What would you say are the causes of violence against boys? What would you say are the causes of violence against women and girls in this community? *Allow them to speak and if necessary, prompt the following:* What kinds of attitudes do men have towards women? What kinds of groups do men and boys form that might cause violence against women and girls? How well does the police force work in this community? Do social conditions contribute such as parents at work all day, parents not being involved with children, alcohol, drugs, and poverty? If so, how do they contribute to violence against females?)

### **Gender violence in the school (10 minutes)**

Now I would like us to talk about violence in schools and particularly the kinds of violence that happen against girls.

13. What kinds of violence occur against boys in this school and in other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? *Prompt:* murders, gansterism, assault, fighting, robbery, bullying, drug-related violence.
14. What kinds of violence occur against girls in this school and other schools in this community? How common are they? Where and when do they happen? Who is responsible? *Prompt:* rape, sexual abuse, affairs between learners/educators, bullying, touching, sexual remarks.)
15. As a learner do you feel safe at school? (*If no, ask*) Where and when do you not feel safe and why?
16. What do you think are the causes of violence at this school and other schools in this community? *Prompt:* What kinds of attitudes do boys have towards girls in the school? Do drugs encourage violence? How? Is it because teachers and school authorities don't do enough or can't? Is it because the school does not receive sufficient support from parents, the police and the Department of Education? Explain where support is lacking? Is the violence caused by what is going on outside the school? How?

### **Community responses and solutions (10 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you to tell me what you and other people in your community do about violence against girls.

17. How do you protect yourself in your neighbourhood? (Include to and from school.)
18. Do you think girls are safe coming to school and going home? *If yes, why? If no, where and when do you think girls are not safe? What do you do if you see that a girl is in an unsafe situation?*
19. What do you and other learners feel and do about incidents of violence against girls that you see or experience? What do boys feel? What do girls feel? What do boys do? What do girls do?
20. Can and do you report incidents of violence? To whom? Why? Why not?
21. How do parents, teachers, ministers, community organisations and youth workers view and respond to the different kinds of violence you describe in your community? What do they say and what do they do?
22. What kinds of things do you think could be done to make your neighbourhood a safer place? *Prompt:* around policing, community organisations, boys and girls doing something together, parents' roles etc.

### **School responses and solutions (25 minutes)**

Now I'm going to ask you what your school does about violence against girls and what you think should be done at school to prevent it.

23. Do boys and girls feel free and safe to report incidents of violence to the school authorities? To whom do you or would you report them? Why? Why not? What happens if a girl reports violence to a teacher or to the principal?
24. What does your school do about specific incidents of violence against boys? And then against girls? *Prompt:* if boys rape girls, if boys hit girls, boys call girls names or make comments about them, boys touch girls in a sexual way, get examples? What hinders or helps the school in dealing with these incidents?



25. Do you think your school protects girls and deals with people who hurt girls adequately? Why do you say so? What makes it difficult for schools to protect girls and deal with those who try to hurt girls?
26. How does your school address and prevent violence against girls in and out of school? *Allow them to speak and if they don't cover these areas, prompt the following:* Are there school procedures and guidelines to deal with different kinds of violence against girls? Can you tell me what these are and how they work? Is violence against girls addressed in guidance classes, other classes and in assembly? How? Can you give details? What security measures are in place e.g. fences, teachers' monitoring, policing? Who is involved in the school to prevent violence against girls, e.g. police, parents, social workers, SGB, SRC, teachers, guidance teachers, Department of Education officials and community organisations? How are they involved in addressing and preventing violence against girls in your school? Do you have specific programmes to prevent violence against girls run by the school, police or other community organisations? Can you tell us about these programmes and how effective they are or were?
27. What role do you think you as boys and girls could play in preventing violence against boys and particularly girls?
28. What do you think should and can be done to prevent violence against girls in your and other schools? *If necessary prompt the following* What should teachers, the SGB and principals be doing? What should the Department of Education be doing? What should parents be doing? What should the police and other community organisations do such as clinics, youth clubs, and churches? Are school and community programmes and campaigns necessary? What kinds of campaigns or programmes should be conducted and whom should they target? How should the school work with the community, local structures such as social workers, the police, local leadership, clinics, the Department of Education and other community organisations?

## Community profile

1. From where does the school draw its learners?
2. What is the socio-economic status of the learners?
3. What kinds of homes do they come from? How many people do they live with? Under what conditions? What kinds of accommodation?
4. Describe home environments, spaces, presence of male lodgers, other threats related to safety of girls.
5. How do people sustain themselves economically? Are parents unemployed, employed? What kind of work?
6. Where do the teachers come from? Local or from other suburbs?
7. Where is the nearest police station?
8. Does the police service function effectively?
9. Have the police linked up with schools in any way? Describe how links work?
10. What surrounds the school? Draw a map?
11. Crime statistics in the area? Nature of crimes?
12. How does crime affect the school, if at all?
13. Give a brief history of the community? When was the township established? Where did people come from? What have the major crises and problems been? Have there been any major changes in the community?
14. What community organisations are there in this community? Purpose? Any links with school?
15. Locate relevant people in the community such as social workers, religious ministers, youth groups that you could talk to about how they address gender violence.
16. Describe general patterns of violence in the community and particularly against girls and women.
17. Identify local social structures among boys and girls e.g. gangs, street corner groups, or friendship groups, subcultures, entertainment networks, formalised youth groups, hangouts.
18. Locate specific organisations in the local and wider community that deal with violence and gender violence, find out if they have programmes in this community. Also find out what programmes they have so that you can discuss with the school what they think of these programmes and whether they would work in their school.

## School profile

1. How many learners in the school?
2. How many male learners?
3. What is the age range?
4. How many female learners?
5. What is the age range?
6. Attendance figures, dropout rates and reasons? How many educators in the school?
7. How many male educators? Ages, qualifications and length of service?
8. How many female educators? Ages, qualifications and length of service?
9. Principal, male or female, age, qualifications, length of service, experience in other schools?
10. How many support staff: secretaries, grounds staff and security staff?
11. How many males and females among the support staff?
12. When was the school founded? Get a history of the school from those who have been there the longest? Any major changes and emerging trends?
13. How long has the principal been at the school as principal and previously as a teacher?
14. Does the school have guidance teachers? If so, how many? Males/females?
15. Does the school involve social workers or any other psycho-social services?
16. What are the structures in the school: school-governing body, management committee, Student Representative Council, etc.? Describe how these work, how often they meet, who is on them.
17. What is the state of the buildings? Toilets, classrooms?
18. What is the state of the school grounds?
19. What equipment does the school have?
20. What are the school rules? Obtain a copy?
21. What are the staff rules? Obtain a copy?
22. What is the relationship of the school with national, provincial and district offices and officials? How often do they visit? What is communication like? What support is given?
23. Document various initiatives, programmes, etc. on violence, school safety and anything else that is relevant from national, provincial and district offices that have been introduced in the school? How have they been introduced? Who has carried them forward in the school? What has been the response and outcome? Are they ongoing? If they have stopped, why?
24. Look at school syllabi for focus on gender, gender equity, and violence.
25. What extra-mural activities does the school offer? Gendered nature?
26. Observe and assess involvement of parents. Chat to them informally about their roles.
27. Use of spaces and opportunities along gender lines both in and outside the classroom.
28. Discrimination and violence against boys considered feminine and girls considered masculine.

## Research schedule

(Treat as a checklist. You don't need to follow this exactly. Refer to school, community profile and school observation for more specifics. During week 1, look at week 2 and identify and approach all the relevant people for interviews a week ahead of time.)

### Week 1

By the end of week 1, you should have:

- a) Hooked up with one or two teachers and make friends with some learners. Begun to identify and develop relationships with key informants.
- b) Interviewed the principal.
- c) Interviewed one female and one male teacher.
- d) Done two focus groups, one with male and one with female learners in one grade.
- e) Done four interviews with learners, two male and two females in one grade.
- f) Got all basic statistics and background information of school, numbers of learners, dropout rates, and school map.
- g) Documented as many interactions between male and female staff and learners and written about these as well as issues of gender equity.
- h) Report on general safety, use of space along gender lines in schools.
- i) Report on informal chats with learners and staff on problems and solutions to gender violence.
- j) Report on structures that run the school and general running of the school.
- k) Take a class and ask them to talk about solutions to gender violence at school and in the community.

### Week 2

By the end of week 2, you should have:

- a) Interviewed one female and one male teacher.
- b) Interviewed one female and one male parent.
- c) Done a focus group with female teachers.
- d) Done two focus groups, one with male and one with female learners in one grade.
- e) Done four interviews with learners, two male and two females in one grade.
- f) Basic information on home and community environments, economic status, home life, travels to school.
- g) Information on crime, police and community organisations.
- h) Documented as many interactions between male and female staff and learners and written about these as well as issues of gender equity.
- i) Report on interactions between male and female learners and use of space by learners during breaks and after school. Monitoring of spaces by schools.
- l) Report on informal chats with learners and staff on problems and solutions to gender violence.
- j) Report on curriculum and how it addresses gender violence.
- k) Take a class and ask them to talk about solutions to gender violence at school and in the community.

### Week 3

By the end of week 3, you should have:

- a) Done a focus group with male teachers.

- b) Interviewed one female and one male teacher.
- c) Interviewed one female and one male parent.
- d) Done two focus groups, one with male and one with female learners in one grade.
- e) Done an interview with a relevant community member (the other researcher will do one too).
- f) Done four interviews with learners, two male and two females in one grade.
- g) Documented as many interactions between male and female staff and learners and written about these as well as issues of gender equity.
- m) Report on informal chats with learners and staff on problems and solutions to gender violence.
- h) Report on programmes in the school and community that address gender violence.
- i) Get copies of school rules and staff code of conduct.
- j) Do some lessons with learners on drawing maps of their school and community and looking at spaces where they feel safe or unsafe.
- k) Take a class and ask them to talk about solutions to gender violence at school and in the community.

## Week 4

By the end of week 4, you should have:

- a) Interviewed one female and one male parent.
- b) Done two focus groups one with male and one with female learners in one grade (only applies to high school as primary schools will only do three grades).
- c) Done an interview with a relevant community member or education official (the other researcher will have done one too).
- d) Done four interviews with learners, two male and two females in one grade (except in the primary school).
- e) Done two interviews with SGB members.
- f) Documented as many interactions between male and female staff and learners and written about these as well as issues of gender equity.
- g) Report on informal chats with learners and staff on problems and solutions to gender violence.
- h) Take a class and ask them to talk about solutions to gender violence at school and in the community.