

DEVTECH Sphere

DEVTECH SYSTEMS, INC.
Summer 2005

THE SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

“More children than ever are going to school, in part because more girls are going to school...the gender gap in primary school attendance is shrinking globally, but in many parts of the world it still yawns wide. The barriers keeping girls out of school in the developing world not only rob them of future opportunity, but impact their very health and survival.”

UNICEF Press Release, April 2005

In 2003, the USAID Office of Economic Growth Agriculture and Trade/Women in Development (EGAT/WID), similarly concerned over this persistent gender gap, began to examine other areas where it might be able to intervene to promote girls' enrollment and educational attainment. One issue that has emerged in recent years is the violence and abuse that girls experience in and around school, which inhibits primarily girls' abilities to attend school and achieve academic success. As a result, EGAT/WID commissioned a literature review on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) with the intent of more fully defining the nature of SRGBV and how it specifically manifests within countries. The literature review found that many children, especially girls experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse and violence either within or on the way to school, which is perpetrated by students, teachers and community member and this violence may well affect their academic performance.

As a result of this literature review and its recommendations for action, the Safe Schools Program (SSP) was awarded

to DevTech Systems, Inc. to implement in select countries with the intent of developing and testing interventions to reduce the levels of SRGBV in schools serving children aged 10 - 14. As it moves forward to implement this program in Ghana and Malawi, SSP is guided by the need to promote gender equality, educational quality and school safety, as well as the rights of children to education and bodily integrity and gender equality as articulated in numerous international conventions and declarations, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

In 2004, SSP was invited to Ghana by the local USAID Mission, which has long invested in the Ghana education system and most recently supported the implementation of the successful Strategies for Advancing Girls Education (SAGE) project. The purpose of the visit was to understand the nature of SRGBV in Ghana, identify programs that either addressed or could incorporate SRGBV interventions into their activities, and suggest strategic areas of emphasis for advocacy.



Ayalolo School in Ghana

Ghana and Gender-Based Violence

As the first sub-Saharan African country to obtain its independence from Britain in 1957, Ghana has long played a key role in the social, cultural, political and economic development of the continent. A country slightly smaller than the size of Oregon, it has a young population of over 21 million.

School-related gender-based violence in developing countries takes place in a context of gender inequality and specific cultural beliefs and attitudes about gender roles, especially those concerning male and female sexuality, a pattern of economic inequality, and in some instances significant political unrest and violent conflict. This context is critical to a fuller understanding of the health and educational implications and consequences of gender violence in schools.

USAID, 2003

Ghana is still a ways from achieving universal primary school enrollment and it continues to face a gender gap in education, as boys are still more likely than girls to attend school. Sixty percent of eligible boys attend primary school, compared to 57 percent of girls, and at the secondary level enrollment falls still further and the gender gap increases: 33 percent of boys compared to 28 percent of girls attend school.

In addition to the gender gap in education, many women and children in Ghana are victims of gender-based violence and abuse. According to the International Federation of Women Lawyers, at least 54 percent of women in the Greater Accra region report having been assaulted, and 95 percent of the victims of domestic violence are women.

Within schools in Ghana, there is evidence that girls are at risk of harassment and abuse from male teachers and pupils, as well as men from the community, which is both sexual and non-sexual in nature. Such abuse/harassment is related to beatings, verbal abuse, propositioning by teachers and “inappropriate touching.” While a recent report from UNICEF indicates that boys may experience some degree of sexual abuse and harassment, bullying and fighting among boys is more widely recognized and reported.

A survey of adolescent sexual behavior in three Ghanaian towns found that coercion and violence are a significant factor in young people’s lives, especially with regards to their sexual behavior. Nearly 25 percent of sexually experienced young women reported that their first sexual experience was forced and an additional nine percent said that they had been enticed or de-

ceived. Around one in five young men similarly reported that they used coercion or bribery (such as money or gifts) to get sex, and on occasion, force.

Male dominated relationships and violence towards women are an accepted norm in Ghana. The same survey found that 73 percent of adolescents agreed that there are circumstances where it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife, and 58 percent felt that there are justifiable reasons for a man to beat his girlfriend. Such reasons include lack of respect, flirtatious behavior with other men and failing to do what a man says.

Intimate violence is strongly linked to traditional gender role attitudes. Males who agreed it was acceptable to beat women were much more likely to hold traditional views of gender roles. Traditional gender role attitudes were also linked to educational attainment, with out of school and apprenticed youth more likely to agree with justifications for beating female partners than in-school youth.

SSP’s Ghana Assessment Findings

While in Ghana, SSP met with many governmental and non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and individuals involved in education, youth development, gender and human rights. The information shared in these meetings provided a deeper understanding of SRGBV in Ghana.

Overall, SSP found:

- Limited awareness of SRGBV at the national level and among communities, parents and teachers.
- Limited systems and procedures that monitor and sanction teacher behaviors, such as a teacher Code of Conduct.

- Limited social, medical and legal services for victims of SRGBV.

- Limited opportunities for children to build healthy and equitable relationships.

- Gaps in educating children, parents, teachers and communities about SRGBV.

With the concurrence of USAID/Ghana, SSP recommended the development of a program to address SRGBV, beginning with a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data collection exercise designed to better understand the gender norms, stereotypes and roles that drive violent behavior among and targeted to children, as well as better document the occurrence of SRGBV. To facilitate the program, SSP decided to focus on 40 schools in 20 communities in the Central Region of Ghana that had participated in the SAGE and other education projects, and were therefore well acquainted with promoting education, especially for girls and improving community school linkages. A field office was opened in September 2004 to oversee Ghana-based activities.

To better understand the cultural nuances and gender norms that shape the behaviors of children and communities, SSP used Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) strategies. Using PLA methodologies as a framework, protocols were drafted and facilitators were trained to work with the 40 communities to elicit the thoughts, opinions and observations of parents, teachers, children, religious leaders and others on issues that affect the children’s participation in education, and particularly how SRGBV plays out in and around schools. Facilitators were fielded in March of 2005 to collect the data.

SRGBV Defined

SRGBV is violence that is based on gendered norms for roles and relationships. It can be either physical, sexual, or psychological or combinations of the three. It can take place in the school, on the school grounds, going to and from school, or in school dormitories. SRGBV can be perpetrated by teachers, pupils, or community members. Both girls and boys can be victims as well as perpetrators. Both educational and reproductive health outcomes are negatively affected by SRGBV.

Findings

A wealth of information was collected, and the raw data is now being analyzed to tease out the community perceptions of SRGBV and how it affects children and their abilities to attend school and receive a quality education. A preliminary review of the data elicited the following observations from community members on what constitutes SRGBV

Community Members Observations on SRGBV in Ghana

Physical	Psychological	Sexual	Other
Fighting over boys or girls	Gossiping	Harassment in school and on way to school	Teacher lateness to school
Beating	Insults	Touching of private parts	Girls demand money from boys
Excessive caning	Name calling	Sexual abuse	Boys don't allow girls to use playing field
Child labour, such as carrying stones, farming, selling in the market	Quarreling over boys or girls	Impregnating of school girls	Poor teaching methods
Older students bullying younger students	Parental neglect	Indecent proposals from boys/male teachers	
Hard slap on back	Stigmatization		
Kicking stones at opposite sex			

While each item listed above clearly constitutes abuse or violence, more will need to be done to connect these to existing gender norms, gender socialization or gender behavior before they can be clearly identified as school-related gender-based violence. For example, “insults” is abusive but could be gender neutral. If, however, a teacher says to a female student, “Of course you can't answer that question, you're just a girl.” – then it is clearly SRGBV.

How SRGBV Affects Students

School Performance	Health	Behavior
Drop out	Pregnancy	Low self-esteem (especially of girls)
Poor academic performance	Sexually transmitted infections	Fearfulness
Absenteeism	HIV/AIDS	Hatred
Indiscipline	Illness	Falling in with bad company
	Injuries	Stubbornness
		Problematic relationships with peers
		Sadness
		Timidity

Community members were well aware that violence and abuse influence the health and well-being of children, and discussed at length how victims react and are affected by gender-based violence in the schools.

Community members believe that SRGBV occurs nearly every day as long as school is in session, and many are affected as both perpetrators and victims, including teachers, students, community members and parents. A number of community members commented that many people, however, especially parents and teachers, do not see how abusive behavior affects children, and believe it to be normal and even a corrective measure to maintain discipline.

Using PLA/PRA to better understand SRGBV

PRA/PLA is a group of methods and approaches that enable community members to analyze, share and enhance their knowledge of life and its conditions and to plan, prioritize, act, monitor and evaluate based on this knowledge.

(Absalon, et al; 1995; Chambers, 1977)

Using PLA: Next Steps

The PLA findings will shape the development of several activities to address SRGBV, among them:

- 1) A survey of children and teachers which will attempt to better quantify the incidence of SRGBV in project communities
- 2) A community-based intervention that reflects data back to the communities, resulting in a community action plan to prevent as well as respond to SRGBV.
- 3) Community specific educational materials and training tools, such as child focused life skills education, teacher training and community outreach strategies.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on this preliminary review of the data, SSP believes that SRGBV indeed does affect the educational and health outcomes of children in Ghana. As this newsletter goes to press, survey data collection activities are wrapping up and will provide further clarity as to how often SRGBV occurs, who is most likely to be affected by it and how they are affected. This PLA and survey data will guide SSP as it develops responsive programs and interventions in collaboration with project communities, the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service and key non-governmental organizations and importantly, measures the effect of its interventions.

Resources listed on page 4

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Resources

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Established in 1984 by economist Jorge A. Sanguinety, Ph.D., DevTech Systems, Inc. is a consulting firm dedicated to development with expertise in the following core practice areas:

- Economic Development, Governance and Environment
- Social Sector, including Education and Human Capacity Development and Gender Integration
- Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

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