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# Stop Violence Against Girls in School

## **A cross-country analysis of change in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique**



# Acknowledgements

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for ActionAid International, 2013.**

**The cross-country report stems from coordinated endline and longitudinal studies carried out by research teams in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique. Their contribution has been immense, including:**

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# Foreword

**This report is the culmination of five years' implementation of ActionAid's multi-country project, Stop Violence Against Girls in School, an initiative in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. The project was financed by the UK's Big Lottery Fund and aimed at empowering girls and enabling them to enjoy their rights to education and participation in a violence-free environment.**

ActionAid's human rights based approach to development promotes education as a fundamental and enabling right, and this project illustrates the importance of a collaborative and integrated approach, from local to national and international levels, putting girls' rights to education at the centre.

The achievements of this wonderful adventure showcase ActionAid's engagement since 2004 (and 2008 for this project) on violence against girls at school as key to ensuring safe and enabling environments for girls' access, retention and performance at school. This project shows that success is possible with a collaborative and integrated approach which addresses the root causes of the phenomenon within and outside the school, and with involvement of all the key actors in the communities in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique.

The research component of this work was conducted by national research partners with priceless collaboration of project partners in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. As research partner of the project, the Institute of Education, through Jenny Parkes and Jo Heslop, has played an instrumental role in coordinating the research across the three countries and providing technical support throughout the project.

This report provides an insight into the key areas where progress has been made in the countries involved in the project since the baseline study in 2009. It also discusses the challenges involved in this work, and makes recommendations for future projects. Learning from best practices and experiences from the three countries will nourish future work by ActionAid and other organisations concerned with combating violence against girls at school and promoting children's rights to quality public education.

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# Executive summary

**Recent reviews on what works to challenge violence against girls have concluded that the evidence base is weak, and there is a clear need for robust research to help inform interventions. This study is one of the first comprehensive attempts to address this gap in knowledge. It does this through analyzing the influence of a multi-level intervention, ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls in School, a five year project (2008-2013) funded by the UK's Big Lottery Fund. This report presents a cross-country review of findings from endline studies carried out in three districts in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique for Stop Violence Against Girls in School. The study aimed to assess change over the course of the project, and to consider the implications for future interventions concerned with gender violence in schools and communities. The research questions that guided the study are:**

1. How have schooling experiences for girls changed since 2009? Have there been changes in the gendered patterns of enrolment, completion and achievement in project schools, and in gender relations within schools? How can we account for any changes and continuities?
2. Since 2009, have there been changes in attitudes to violence and inequalities? How have these manifested in everyday relationships? How are these linked to the political, social and economic context? How are these linked to the intervention?
3. Have there been changes in patterns of violence that girls experience in schools, homes and communities, and in their responses to violence? How has the intervention influenced changes?
4. How have legislative and policy frameworks changed? How have policies and laws been enacted at local level, particularly in relation to formal and informal protection systems? How has the intervention influenced changes?

The research was guided by a conceptual framework, which highlights how in order to understand patterns of violence against girls, it is important to look not just at the acts of violence and individual perpetrators and victims, but at the interactions in schools, families and communities that surround and underpin these acts, and at the inequitable institutions that perpetuate violence. Data was collected in 2013 in 13 primary schools and communities in Ghana, 15 in Kenya and 14 in Mozambique. While all three project areas have high levels of poverty, the communities in Ghana

and Kenya are mainly rural and remote, while in Mozambique they are close to a peri-urban centre. A total of 2,739 respondents participated in the endline study, including girls and boys, teachers and head teachers, parents, SMC members, community and religious leaders, women's group leaders, District Education Officers, District Health Officers and Police. The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods, including longitudinal qualitative data collected in four schools and communities in each country. Comparisons with baseline data collected in 2009 enabled robust analysis of change. Research was conducted by research institutes in each country (see acknowledgements).

## **Key findings:**

### **a. Girls' experiences, attitudes and responses to violence, gender and inequity**

There have been many changes in how violence is experienced, prevented and responded to by girls, boys, their teachers, families and communities. However, change has been uneven, and violence against girls in 2013 remains commonplace, with 83% of girls in Ghana, 90% of girls in Kenya and 80% of girls in Mozambique saying that they have experienced some forms of violence in the past 12 months. Measuring intervention effects through reductions in levels of violence, however, is problematic because of the likelihood that an intervention will increase young people's confidence to recognise and speak out about the violence they experience. The unevenness of change in this project suggests that the reasons for violence are complex and that the project has not had a uniform effect.



Girls in towns in all three countries are more likely to say they have experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months than girls in more remote areas. On the other hand, in Kenya and Mozambique girls in remote rural areas are more likely to say they have experienced physical violence than those in towns. Relationships between poverty, violence and gender norms are far from straightforward and there is no evidence that the poorest or most marginalised are more likely to accept, internalise or take for granted disadvantage.

There are positive changes in girls' knowledge and attitudes towards gender, rights and violence across the three project districts. Girls in Ghana, and particularly in Mozambique, are more likely than in 2009 to report their experiences of violence to someone, though this is not the case in Kenya.

Features of modernisation in Mozambique are having a dual effect on sexual violence. On the one hand, with high levels of migrant labour there is evidence of enhanced sexual risks in girls' precarious relationships with older men. On the other hand, the peri-urban context brings better access to services, broader networks of information and communication on sex and relationships and less conservative views about teenage sex. Girls in Mozambique are now more confident to speak out about violence.

Girls' clubs have had positive effects in all three countries on girls' knowledge, confidence, attitudes and practices in managing violence and inequality. Where they also make possible open discussion on

intimacy, they may be more effective at enabling girls to break silences on taboos around sex and sexual violence, and to change their own reporting practices. Such discussions can be particularly challenging in remote, rural contexts with conservative gender norms. In a context where attitudes are already changing due to closer links to urban centres, broader communication networks and migration, as in the case of Mozambique, the potential for an NGO to support girls negotiating more agency in handling sex and violence may be enhanced.

Boys' clubs show promise for working with boys on addressing violence against boys, and for critically analysing what it means to be a boy or a man, the connections with violence against girls, and the alternatives.

## **b. Shifting attitudes, knowledge and practices in families and communities**

Some changes have been influenced by events outside the project, including droughts, floods and, in Kenya, horrific conflict. They have also been influenced by personal crises and family disruptions, including bereavements, parental conflict and loss of livelihood. Sometimes there have been unexpected ripple effects from the project, when for example girls' increased confidence has been reflected in their mothers' capacity to speak out on violence and gendered inequality.



There is persuasive evidence that the project has had an influence on family dynamics in the project communities. Working in tandem with concerted EFA campaigns, grassroots community based organisations (CBOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), the project has helped to shift the gendered divisions of labour for children and to increase awareness of girls' right to schooling. In some families, messages against corporal punishment at school are filtering into the discipline at home.

But norms about gender, including female submission, still persist, and the area where project work has been most difficult, and sometimes evoked hostility, has been engaging with discussions in communities about teenage sex and relationships. The project has been particularly effective when it has built alliances with community based organisations, including local women's groups, enabling discussions on sensitive issues to take place across different spaces and sites of disagreement. While community engagement has been a strong dimension of the project, the varying perspectives signal both the challenge of and the need to engage and obtain the support of parents and the wider community, particularly of men, alongside the intensive work with girls.

### **c. Changes in schools as sites for challenging gender inequality and violence**

While increasing numbers of younger girls are enrolling Over the five years of the project, there have been notable changes in project schools. Girls' enrolment has increased by 10% in Mozambique, 17% in Kenya and 14% in Ghana. Teachers and children perceive that there has been an improvement in pupil participation and gender equality in classroom processes, and knowledge and attitudes about gender and violence have improved. Many of these changes can be traced to project interventions, particularly the training for schools, as well as through the ways girls' clubs may be shifting the patterns of interaction between pupils and teachers. Changes are also to do with the broader educational context. In Ghana, although the district is conservative in gender norms, the education sector has been driving changes that are clearly impacting, in for example the accessibility of junior high schools.

But improved access is not always reflected in issues of quality and equality in school. In some contexts, though caning is used less often, it has been replaced by other forms of harsh punishment, like kneeling or squatting for long periods. While there is more resistance to corporal punishment and evidence that practices are changing, particularly in Mozambique, still in all three countries teachers lack knowledge and the capacity to use alternative forms of positive discipline, and the continuing poor conditions in which they are required to teach hinder change. The areas that have proved most difficult to change are those that threaten norms about childrearing, gender and sexuality.

While the in-service training has been effective in influencing teachers' knowledge, more attention is needed to institutionalise change in school structures and practices, including planning and policy work with all members of school communities, and supported by district education officials, ministries for education and teacher training institutions and unions. Gender-sensitive and child-friendly schools also entail attention to the conditions in which teaching and learning take place, and the ways in which children continue to be unable to participate in later phases of education.

### **d. Legal and policy enactments on violence against girls: from national to local**

The project work at national level demonstrates the importance of coalition-building in working to influence governments, and there have been some improvements in the attention paid to issues around violence against girls within national governments and the media, linked in part to the project's advocacy work. In each country this has helped to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks related to violence against girls, though progress has been uneven. At the community level, there have also been improvements in knowledge about child protection processes and in strengthening community-based structures that coordinate between informal and formal judicial systems.

In Mozambique, there are indications of improved outcomes for girls who experience extreme violence, where the peri-urban setting provides easier access to services, though this is less evident in some of the



more remote communities. The greater confidence of girls in this context to speak out about violence may also mean that they are somewhat less inhibited by the pressure to avoid bringing shame onto the community than girls in the more rural contexts of Ghana and Kenya. However, there are still clearly weaknesses in the formal protection systems in all three countries.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The multi-dimensionality of the project has successfully enabled change to take place at many levels. Girls' clubs have had a positive effect on girls' knowledge, confidence, attitudes and practices in managing violence and inequality, and boys' clubs have begun to show promise for similar work with boys. Discussions with parents in communities have led mothers and fathers to reflect on and discuss gender roles and norms, in some cases influencing family dynamics and easing the burden of labour from girls. Work in schools has influenced school

management and classroom processes, strengthening pupil participation and gender equality. New structures for child protection at community level have strengthened dialogue between formal and informal justice systems.

In all these areas, there remain issues about sustainability beyond the life of the project. Advocacy work to institutionalise interventions has been mixed, and our recommendations outline actions proposed to build on the successes of the project, to learn from its weaknesses, and to fill continuing gaps in our knowledge about how to address violence against girls.

Chapter 7 of this report presents recommendations arising from this analysis, including direct interventions with young people, interventions with schools, interventions with families and schools, and recommendations for planning future NGO interventions and for the post-2015 international development agenda.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the project

The Stop Violence Against Girls in School (SVAGS) project aimed to enable girls to enjoy their rights to education and participation in a violence-free environment in three project areas in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. Led by ActionAid and funded by the Big Lottery Fund as a strategic grant, it ran from 2008 to 2013, and combined advocacy, community intervention and research. The project outcomes were that, by 2013:

1. In Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique, a legal and policy framework that specifically addresses VAGS exists and is being implemented at all levels.
2. In the intervention areas, violence against girls by family members, teachers and peers is reduced by 50% from baseline statistics.
3. In the intervention areas, girls' enrolment is increased by an average of 22%, their drop-out is decreased by 20% and substantial progress is made towards gender parity in education.
4. In the intervention areas, 14,000 girls report the confidence to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools, report incidents and create peer support networks.

This is a multi-partnered project. In Kenya, project partners are GCN (Girl Child Network)(community and advocacy). In Mozambique, they are AMUDEIA (Associação das Mulheres Desfavorecidas da Indústria Açucareira)(community) and MEPT (Movimento de Educacao para Todos) (advocacy). In Ghana, they are GNECC (Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition)(advocacy) and Songtaba (community). Research partners are named in the Acknowledgements above.

The research component for the project included a baseline study, a monitoring and evaluation framework, a qualitative longitudinal study and an endline study, which completes the research for the project, in order to assess change over the course of the project.

## 1.2 Aims of endline study

The endline study has the following aims:..

1. To identify and measure changes in girls' confidence and capacity to challenge violence and inequalities.
2. To identify and measure changes in how schools, peers, families and communities contribute to girls' capacities to challenge violence and gender inequality.
3. To identify and measure changes in how formal and informal protection systems influence girls' capacity to challenge violence and gender inequality.
4. To analyse why or how changes have (or have not) occurred and their relationship with project inputs.
5. To capture learning from the project and share this with others to influence future policy, programming (at local, national and international levels) and research.

## 1.3 Research on gender, violence and education in Sub-Saharan Africa

The drive for increasing access to basic education for all children associated with the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) Goals has led to the expansion of education for girls, with girls and women seen as key to economic growth and efficiency (Aikman and Unterhalter 2005). While the policy thrust has been on increasing access and gender parity in numbers of girls and boys enrolled in schools, there are still over 60 million children out of school globally, 57% of whom are girls (UNESCO 2012). There have been growing concerns about the quality of learning environments. The UN Secretary-General's World Report on Violence Against Children documented multiple forms of violence experienced by children in school (Pinheiro 2006) and an increasing body of evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa shows how schools may be unsafe spaces for children, with widespread physical, sexual and psychological

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## Introduction

violence (USAID/Wellesley Centers for Women 2003; Burton 2005; DevTech systems 2008; Jones et al. 2008; Burton and Leoschut 2012).

Gender-based violence is a global phenomenon, violating human rights and manifesting gender discrimination in its most extreme form. In much of the world, research on violence against children tends to neglect its gendered dimensions. Only sexual violence is seen as gendered, since it is experienced more often by girls, though increasingly sexual violence against boys is coming to light (Brown 2002; Burton 2005). Bullying and corporal punishment are frequently seen as gender-neutral since they are experienced by both girls and boys, though there is much evidence that these forms of violence frequently have their roots in inequitable gender relations (Leach, Dunne and Salvo, 2013 forthcoming). Physical punishments in school, for example, can be used to reinforce gender norms about masculine toughness and feminine submission (Dunne and Leach 2005).

In Sub-Saharan Africa a growing body of research evidence focuses on gender violence (Leach and Mitchell 2006). Studies linked to the HIV/AIDS pandemic have revealed extensive intimate partner violence, with girls experiencing high levels of coerced sex with boyfriends and older men, including teachers (Human Rights Watch 2001; Koenig et al. 2004). Such violence has adverse effects on girls' attainment and attendance at school, their health and psychological well-being, including poor concentration and depression (Dunne, Humphreys and Leach 2006).

Research that attempts to document the prevalence of acts of violence has been important in helping to reveal previously hidden forms of violence, and has been important in influencing policy-makers to take action. But the recent work on gender violence, particularly in Africa, shows how acts of violence are embedded within everyday interactions and relationships. Attention is drawn to the ways in which gendered identities are negotiated and struggled over in classrooms and playgrounds, and the forms of discrimination and exclusion that take place. Often in these struggles gender intersects with other social markers, including poverty, ethnicity and class (Bhana 2005; Dunne 2007; Parkes 2007). Rather than seeing girls as passive victims, they are understood to be active agents. Work on girls exchanging sex for goods, favours or grades, for example, has traced

how difficult it can be to draw a boundary between consensual and coerced sex (Luke and Kurz 2002; Gavey 2005). In a context of poverty, girls may actively seek sex with older men to gain important material goods, though often such relationships entail force and aggression (Djama 2004; Chege 2006; Teni-Atinga 2006; Oduro, Swartz and Arnot. 2012; Heslop and Banda 2013). In Kenya, while some studies have traced gender discrimination faced by girls in pastoralist communities (Leggett 2005), recent research has also presented a more agentic perspective, with girls themselves having high aspirations and using their identities as 'schoolgirls' as a way to avoid and negotiate over early marriage and FGM (Switzer 2010; Warrington and Kiragu 2011). Research with girls who are out of school and with pregnant school girls and adolescent mothers has also drawn attention to the importance of listening to their concerns, and the struggles they experience in negotiating identities as mothers, daughters, wives and pupils. Even if they are permitted to attend school, they may not have the material resources to attend, and the schools themselves are often unsupportive environments (Dunne and Ananga 2013; Kendall 2013). Access to contraception and teaching about sex and relationships is often poor, with sex frequently seen as problematic, associated with disease, pregnancy and violence (Jolly 2010).

This research has also drawn attention to the ways in which institutions and social structures produce violence. Work on pregnant school girls and adolescent mothers, for example, has examined how laws and policies fail to enable girls to stay in school. Even if they are permitted by law to return to school through legislation, exclusion persists because of a failure to address the structural violence of poverty, inequitable gender relations and hostile school cultures (Wilkie 2012; Salvi 2013). Studies in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa have identified problems with translating national policies on gender and violence into local-level action (Wetheridge 2008; Unterhalter et al 2011). In Mozambique, gender norms can leave girls and women viewing violence as inevitable, so that cases are rarely brought to authorities (Arthur and Mejia 2007). Norms about childhood instilling a belief that corporal punishment is a necessary part of children's socialisation perpetuate these practices in schools in Sub-Saharan Africa, with legal and policy changes widely flouted within school institutions (Tao 2013). At national levels, there is often a lack of coordination





between governments, ministries and agencies in addressing gender violence in education (Jones 2008).

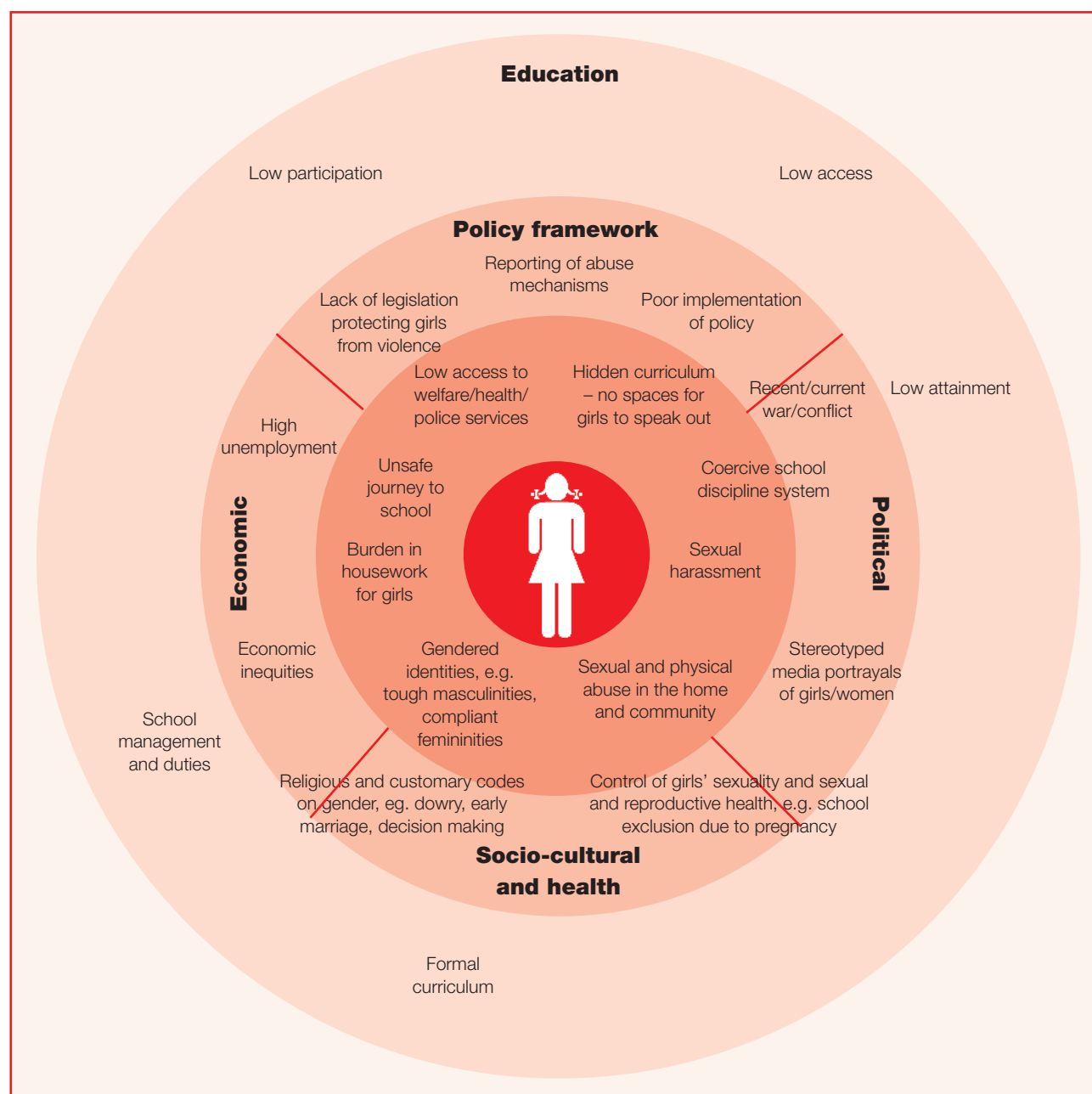
These studies from Africa are helping to expand understanding about experiences of gender violence in schools and their roots in everyday interactions and inequitable institutions. However, there remains a huge gap in understanding what to do about such violence. Few interventions on gender violence have found effective ways to measure change. Those that do attempt to evaluate their programmes tend to rely on assessing changes in knowledge or attitudes post-training, without measuring changes in behaviour (Ricardo, Eades and Barker. 2011; Leach, Slade and Dunne 2012; Lundgren 2013). A man who has attended a workshop on gender violence may, however, say that his attitude has changed, yet may continue to beat his wife. In other words, although changing attitudes may be important, they should not be used as proxies for changes in behaviour, which could be evidenced through observed reductions in levels of violence.

A recent review of evidence on interventions to address school related gender based violence globally concluded that our knowledge of what makes interventions successful remains woefully inadequate, and that efforts to intervene were “patchy and largely ineffective” (Leach, Dunne and Salvi 2013 forthcoming). They found that interventions often addressed a single form of violence, such as corporal punishment, rather than examining how they are interlinked with institutional structures and practices. Often they are short-term, involving single inputs rather than multi-level interventions. Interventions

in school tend to focus on violence, rather than on school cultures or whole school approaches. ActionAid’s TEGINT project is cited as an example of the whole school approach in contrast to the SVAGS project’s focus on violence. Weighing up the merits of these ‘violence only’ and ‘whole school’ approaches they conclude: “In terms of measuring impact of the various inputs on levels of violence in the project schools, the latter has a clear advantage but the whole school approach may bring about more lasting change”(Leach, Dunne and Salvi 2013 forthcoming). The only unambiguous finding on school-based interventions was the potential of girls’ clubs to challenge violence, while other interventions such as provision of toilets, and student involvement in school affairs, were viewed as promising (Leach, Dunne and Salvi 2013 forthcoming).

Overall, the evidence about what works to challenge violence against girls is weak, and there is a clear need for robust research and monitoring and evaluation tools to help inform interventions. This study is one of the first comprehensive attempts to address this gap in knowledge.

This brief review of research evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa highlights how in order to understand patterns of violence against girls, it is important to look not just at the acts of violence and individual perpetrators and victims, but at the interactions in schools, families and communities that surround and underpin these acts, and at the inequitable institutions that perpetuate violence. Combining the emphasis on individuals, institutions and interactions, the project developed a conceptual framework.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the Stop Violence project**

### 1.4 Conceptual framework for the study

The conceptual framework, devised in the inception phase of the project, has guided the research approach throughout the project. We also developed and agreed definitions of concepts to guide the project work, as set out below. The framework places at the centre girls themselves, surrounded in the inner ring by their everyday interactions with other girls and boys, families, teachers and others in their communities. While much violence experienced by girls takes place within these relationships, schools, families and neighbourhoods are also important sites for teaching

and learning about safety and empowerment. The outer rings depict the institutional spheres (political, economic, socio-cultural and health; and policy frameworks) that interact with the overarching sphere of education to produce violence against girls in and around school. Examples of acts of violence, and conditions producing violence, are depicted within the circles according to their “distance” from the girl. Unequal power relations based on gender, age and socio-economic background are central to this framework of violence against girls in schools.

**Violence against girls: This project defines acts of violence against girls as those set out by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women:**

“The term “violence against women” means any act 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. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following: (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs” (United Nations General Assembly 1994).

**Gender:** While girls’ and boys’ experiences of violence may be very different, we do not believe this is because of inherent differences. We understand femininity, masculinity and gender to be socially constructed and hence changeable. This means that our assumptions about what it means to be a boy or a girl are guided by historical and social relations which influence the beliefs and practices that come to be taken for granted and understood as true, fixed and unchanging. In many parts of the world these assumptions have come to include notions of male superiority and female subordination, and have produced inequitable gender relations. Even if males may often be more powerful and privileged than females, there are multiple gender identities. For example, there are many different ways to be a man, some are more valued than others, and men experience pressure to conform to these dominant norms. Not all do conform, but many who don’t experience discrimination and disadvantage. However, ideas about gender do change over time and place, and we believe that through advocacy, community level intervention and research it is possible to work together with girls and their communities to challenge gendered assumptions that produce inequality, discrimination and violence.

**Rights and Empowerment:** At the centre of our concern are the agency, judgement and action of girls in and around schools. While we seek to understand the social conditions and relations that constrain girls, we aim to understand the processes through which girls enhance their capabilities to safety and bodily integrity, and more broadly to claim rights and human dignity, achieve education, and to work to transform unjust structures. We understand empowerment as developing girls’ individual and collective agency, through working with girls and other actors, including boys, to raise critical consciousness of girls’ rights and social justice, increase the extent to which girls regard themselves as central players to ensure the realization of these rights, so as to increase life choices through building support, solidarity and networks within a collaborative ‘action space’.

### **1.5 Key research questions**

The project has been working directly with 45 primary schools and their local communities across the three countries, each within a district locality. These are Wenje Division, Tana River District in the north of Coast Province in Kenya; Nanumba North and South in the Northern Region, Ghana; and Manhica district in Maputo Province in Southern Mozambique. The project areas in Kenya and Ghana are both remote and rural. The communities practise Islam and Christianity and combine different ethnic groups, some of whom have a history of resource-related conflict. In Kenya, in the neighbouring district of Tana Delta, recent conflicts in the pre-election period resulted in more than 200 deaths. This led to high levels of tension and security concerns in the project district around the period of data collection, though the district itself remained peaceful. One of the groups in Kenya, the Wardei community, is semi-nomadic pastoralist, and farming is the other main source of livelihood in the Pokomo community. The project area in Mozambique contrasts somewhat, since it is on the main road traversing the country and near the capital. There is better access to communication networks, including mobile phones and electronic media, like the Brazilian television soaps, and there are higher levels of mobility and migration for work, including to South African mines. While many people farm for their livelihoods, there are also more diverse employment opportunities in local industry, and higher levels of HIV/AIDS. Most people practise forms of Christianity.

All three project sites experience high levels of poverty, adult illiteracy levels over 50%, gender inequalities, and poor access to services including electricity and running water. However, there is also some variability within each project district, with, for example, some schools located in towns or larger villages, while others are much more remote. This report therefore considers variations between the three project sites, and also within the sites.

### **1.6 Key research questions**

To examine change occurring since the beginning of the project in the following areas:

1. How have schooling experiences for girls changed since 2009? Have there been changes in the gendered patterns of enrolment, completion and achievement in project schools, and in gender relations within schools? How can we account for any changes and continuities?
2. Since 2009, have there been changes in attitudes to violence and inequalities? How have these manifested in everyday relationships? How are these linked to the political, social and economic context? How are these linked to the intervention?
3. Have there been changes in patterns of violence girls experience in schools, homes and communities, and in their responses to violence? How has the intervention influenced changes?
4. How have legislative and policy frameworks changed? How have policies and laws been enacted at local level, particularly in relation to formal and informal protection systems? How has the intervention influenced changes?





## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research design

The endline study synthesises and concludes the research carried out for the Stop Violence project. Research carried out prior to the endline study includes:

- a mixed methodology **baseline study** carried out in 2009, in order to be able to measure and assess change over the project and to inform project interventions;
- a **monitoring and evaluation framework** designed to record, measure and provide a basis for analysis of the achievement of the overall outcomes through milestones, detailed intermediate outcomes and specific indicators;
- a **longitudinal study** to analyse how girls' capacities to challenge violence and gendered inequality change over the course of the Stop Violence project, and how social relations and institutions contribute to these changes.

The endline study uses a mixed methodology, and brings together the baseline, longitudinal study and M&E of the project into an end point, as illustrated in figure 2. Therefore it incorporates aspects of all these data collection activities into its design. Quantitative tools were designed to be consistent with the baseline and M&E system in order to measure change reliably. The endline research also comprises the final wave of the qualitative longitudinal study, for which researchers had met with girls and other participants at six monthly intervals since October 2011 (four periods of data collection). This study was carried out in a sub-sample of four schools per country. The endline study also included some further qualitative data collected in all project schools.



**Figure 2: Stop Violence research timeline**



### 2.2 Sampling

In order to ensure reliability, the sampling technique for the endline study matched the approach used in the baseline study, though there were some important differences, particularly with regard to the qualitative component of the study.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in all schools participating in the study (instruments 1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11 – see table 1): 15 schools in Kenya, 14 in Mozambique and 13 in Ghana. In addition, four communities were selected for additional qualitative data collection (instruments 2, 3, T3, 4, 6, 9 – see table 2). These communities had been selected during the baseline study to reflect demographic variations within the project areas, and had participated in the longitudinal study.

Within each school and community, we aimed to gather data from a wide range of participants, including more marginalised members of communities, including for example, focus groups with girls who were out of school, and interviews with women's group leaders as well as male community leaders, and with mothers as well as fathers. In line with the project focus, girls' voices were prioritised, with a smaller sample of boys. Three age cohorts were included – 8-10 years, 11-13 years, and 14-17 years. While the project operated only in primary schools, the older age group reflects the large number of over-age girls in the schools.

For the quantitative instruments with pupils, sample selection was random using school registers, as in the baseline study. The sample included girls who were members and non-members of girls' clubs, with somewhat different proportions of club members across the three countries (15% Mozambique, 42% Kenya, 59% Ghana), broadly matching the proportions of girls enrolled in the schools who were in the clubs (8% Mozambique, 36% Kenya, 50% Ghana).

For the qualitative component, there were some differences in the approach, which used the sampling method developed for the longitudinal study. In 2011 (wave 1), girls participating in this study were also selected from the same three age cohorts. In each age group, teachers were asked to help select low achieving, less confident girls as well as higher

achieving, more confident girls. This ensured that our sample did not just include the most outgoing girls. For the endline study, these 'study girls' constituted the qualitative sample. They therefore differed from the broader sample of girls and boys through their average age being 1-2 years older, and more importantly through their familiarity with the researchers, who they had spent extended time with at previous waves of the research. Occasionally, particularly among the older age group, the study girls were no longer attending the project schools, either having moved to secondary school, or in some cases to work or be married. Researchers made considerable efforts to track all girls, and attrition rates were impressively low.

A total of 2,739 respondents participated in the study. Quantitative data was collected with 1,855 participants, while qualitative data was collected with 1,377 participants in the longitudinal and endline studies.



**Table 1: Data collected in each school**

No.	Instrument	Total per school	Total sample across all countries
1	Girls: Quantitative interviews	24	1067
1	Boys: Quantitative interviews	12	526
5	Teachers' quantitative interview	5	220
7	Headteacher qualitative interview	1	42
7	SMC qualitative interview	1	42
8	School records instrument	1	42
10	Parents focus group discussion	1 (5 parents)	210 (44FGDs)
11	Community leader: interview	1	42
11	Women's group leader: interview	1	42
11	Religious leader: interview	1	42
14	Community Intervention Team member	1	42

**Table 2: Data collected in four schools in each country**

No.	Instrument	Total per school	Total sample across all countries
2	Study girl qualitative interview	9	108
3	Girls: focus group discussions in school	12 (36 girls)	432 (144 FGDs)
T3	Girls: focus group discussion out of school (collected at LS Wave 1 and 3)	2 (12 girls)	144 (24 FGDs)
4	Boys' qualitative interview	15	180
6	Teachers' qualitative interview	3	36
9	Observation	5	

**Table 3: Data collected at district level in each country**

No.	Instrument	Total sample across all countries
11	District Education Officer	3
11	District Health Officer	3
11	Police	3
13	District level data instrument	3
	National level stakeholder (advocacy partner) interview	3

### **2.3 Ethics and safety**

A research protocol, initially developed for the baseline study in 2009, was used to ensure high standards of ethical conduct and rigour (Appendix 1). The study was granted ethical approval by the Institute of Education's Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

With research on sensitive topics with children, the risk of harm and distress is high, as well as the power imbalance between researcher and participant. At all stages, we aimed to respect participants and to safeguard their welfare, paying attention to informed consent, sensitive data collection, confidentiality and child protection. Children were identified through our ongoing relationships with the project schools, with initial contact made via school and community leadership. Interview schedules made it clear that participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time. Interviews with children were carried out by same-sex researchers. For the longitudinal component, where possible girls met with the same researcher at each wave, so that familiarity and trust were built. We tried to ensure privacy during interviews, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained during data collection, analysis, data storage and reporting through use of a coding system. Data and draft reports were anonymised using an agreed coding system, and care has been taken to ensure that data relating to individuals are not directly identifiable.

The research teams were trained to carefully approach subjects that might distress the young people being interviewed concerning experiences of bullying, sexual harassment or physical abuse, and what to do if examples of violence are disclosed, following ActionAid's Child Protection Policy. There can be tensions between maintaining confidentiality and passing on information when a researcher considers a child to be at risk of severe harm. In each country, researchers consulted local partners to find out support and reporting mechanisms, and each child was given information about what to do if they ever needed help. In cases where serious child protection issues were raised, these were reported to ActionAid, school management and local education authorities as necessary.

To help protect researchers' own safety and wellbeing, researchers worked in small teams, and were supported by the lead researchers during the fieldwork, often through daily debrief meetings. In Kenya, where there were enhanced security concerns due to violent conflicts in a neighbouring district, a special security plan was put in place (see country report).

### **2.4 Researcher selection and training**

Research teams were recruited to reflect the gender and language mix of the research participants. Experience in conducting research with children and especially girls, knowledge of the communities, and ability to conduct sensitive and ethical research were key considerations in selection of researchers and research assistants. Many members of the research teams, including all the lead researchers, had prior experience of conducting baseline and longitudinal research for the project. Researchers were required to demonstrate skills and experience to coordinate, supervise and support research teams, and to conduct focus group discussions and qualitative interviews. Research assistants carried out most of the quantitative interviews and assisted with focus groups, translation and understanding of local contexts. While local knowledge was important, research assistants did not work in their home communities, in order to ensure confidentiality (real or perceived).

Training workshops were held in each country, led by the country research leads with support from the IoE team and local project staff. In the training of research teams, discussions were held about how to minimise harm to participants, deal with the power imbalance regarding education and wealth levels and age. Researchers were fully trained in confidentiality issues, including what circumstances confidentiality may be broken (only when there is real concern over child safety and only to selected key professionals who are also bound by confidentiality). Training also included familiarisation with the research protocol and the conceptual framework, including an orientation on concepts of violence, gender and children's rights. All researchers practised use of instruments in a workshop setting and in a school.



## 2.5 Data analysis

### 2.5.1 Quantitative analysis

Data from pupil and teacher surveys and school and district records were inputted, checked and cleaned in SPSS by research teams in each country. IOE then liaised with country teams about further data cleaning (e.g. gaps and consistency issues) and undertook some further automated cleaning. This was done using a set of rules agreed so that all data were coded appropriately (for example ensuring the questions intentionally skipped were coded differently from those which did not elicit responses).

The quantitative analysis was undertaken at IOE. Endline datasets were merged with baseline datasets to facilitate analysis using both sets of data. Where equivalent data existed, the baseline and endline data were analysed in identical ways to enable direct comparisons; sometimes this meant that baseline results appeared slightly different from those calculated 5 years ago, as we developed more effective analytical methods, or those that worked best for both datasets.

Generally descriptive statistics were used. Where possible within the timeframe and resources available statistical testing was also used (correlations, t-tests, chi-squared and ANOVA). It was more feasible to use for girls' survey data (where  $n$  = approximately 360) than teachers' survey data ( $n$  = approx. 60) or school records data ( $n$  = approx. 15) in each country. As this study is not attempting to make data comparisons between the three countries, country level data was analysed separately.

Because such a large amount of data was collected, it was necessary to calculate many new variables to enable analysis. This was particularly the case for the questions asking children about their experiences of violence, as they were asked about 13 specific forms of violence. Some key variables calculated and used in the analysis included:

Violence indicators:

- Ever experienced physical, sexual, psychological or any violence
- Experienced physical, sexual, psychological or any violence in the past 12 months
- Reported last experience of physical, sexual,

psychological or any violence to anyone

- Reported last experience of physical, sexual, psychological or any violence to formal authorities (SMC, DEO, police)

Knowledge indicators:

- Knowledge of laws/policies: Does respondent mention at least one law/policy listed unprompted?
- Knowledge of reporting mechanisms; Does respondent mention at least one appropriate response to the violence scenario question unprompted? (i.e. reporting to someone appropriate in attempted sexual assault scenario).
- Knowledge of support organisations: Does respondent mention at least one appropriate local organisation listed unprompted?

In addition two indexes were calculated using responses to multiple questions. The '**Challenging violence and gender equality**' attitudes index combined responses to 8 attitude statements, and calculated a score between 0 (does not challenge at all) and 1 (high levels of challenge). The attitude statements contributing to the index focused on:

- Children doing personal errands for teachers
- Corporal punishment
- Dismissing teachers who have a sexual relationship with pupils
- Blaming girls for sexual harassment
- Pregnant girls being able to stay in school/girls being able to return to school after giving birth; boys who impregnate girls being allowed to stay in school

For the **Poverty index** each child scored a number between 1 (highest levels of poverty) and 2 (lowest levels of poverty), based on combined responses to 4 questions on:

- The material the child's house is made of
- Number of meals eaten yesterday
- Mother's education
- Father's education

These indexes allowed us to look at patterns and relationships between many different concepts, such as knowledge, attitudes, violence experienced, tendency to take action and poverty, as well as being able to compare responses between groups and assess change in these areas over the course of the project.



### 2.5.2 Qualitative analysis

Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded using tape recorders and detailed handwritten notes, which were then typed up and cross-checked to ensure comprehensive transcripts were made of each interview. As well as the more structured approaches, researchers kept field diaries to record their experiences and impressions on a daily basis. Where local languages had been used in interviews, these were translated into English/Portuguese so that all transcribed material was in English or Portuguese.

The qualitative analysis included three interlinked components, or levels, including 1. thematic coding; 2. identification of patterns (for example, between different sources of information or groups of participant, according to age group, or level of confidence/achievement); and 3. Identifying change (since baseline, or earlier waves of the longitudinal study). Research teams in each country carried out this analysis, using guides prepared in collaboration with IoE.

### 2.5.3 Report writing

The Country Endline reports combined the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The process was collaborative between the research teams in each country and the IOE team, with IOE responsible for preparing report guidelines, and quantitative analysis tables, and for peer reviewing draft reports, and country teams analysing qualitative data and writing the reports. Interim findings were shared with ActionAid and project partners at a workshop in London in July 2013, and in dissemination events in each of the project areas, enabling further review of the findings prior to the report completion.

## 2.6 Limitations

Many studies, including our own baseline study, have discussed the taboos in speaking about violence, with reluctance to speak about painful or incriminating events, and fear of repercussions leading to underreporting (Ellsberg et al 2001; Mullender et al 2002; Leach 2006; Parkes 2008; Parkes and Heslop 2011). While our research design during the baseline study was constructed to gather data sensitively, we anticipated that violence would be underreported, since data was collected at one point in time, without time for researchers to gain trust and familiarity. This was a particular issue in Mozambique, where the research assistants were university students, and not from the local district. To an extent, the endline study may give a more accurate picture, since many of the research team members were familiar with participants, the communities and the project, particularly with those participating in the longitudinal study. We also adjusted the research instruments from the baseline, where upon reflection wording of questions, or recording methods could be improved. However, we do not believe that we can ever fully overcome these difficulties, and there may still be some areas, particularly around sexual violence in the home or by teachers, where there is underreporting. The improvements in the endline design mean that we need to exercise some caution in comparing findings about change over time, particularly on more sensitive topics around violence. Increases in naming experiences of violence could reflect improvements in the research design and conduct rather than increases in actual experiences. As we discuss later in the report, they could also reflect increasing confidence in speaking out linked to project interventions.

The project operated in specific locations in each country, and caution should be taken in generalising from these findings. The project did not operate in identical ways in the three countries, since while the overall goals were the same, the interventions were tailored to local contexts, so considerable caution is needed in comparisons between countries and this is why the analysis was done separately for each country context. At the same time, comparing our findings across the three contexts has strengthened the robustness of our interpretation. For example, where there has been a marked change in all three contexts we can be more confident about the

influence of the project. At other times, a statistically significant finding in one country that has not been repeated in another country has led us to question the finding and seek more complex interpretations. In a similar way, inconsistencies in qualitative and quantitative findings have also prevented us drawing conclusions too quickly.

The statistical analysis of impact would have been strengthened by following a cohort in the baseline and endline, enabling measurement of change at the level of the individual child before and after intervention. However, a range of considerations, including high levels of anticipated teacher and especially pupil mobility, particularly among older pupils, made it more practicable to replicate the baseline design with a different cohort in the same schools. At the baseline stage we had decided not to use control schools, partly because of ethical concerns about conducting research without accompanying support/ intervention, and because of difficulties controlling for indirect impact on nearby schools through teacher movement, district level training and so on. Finally, our resources were insufficient for a full-scale community randomised trial and numbers of participating schools were small. These limitations mean that caution is needed in assessing significance of apparent differences. In the reports, we make clear where statistical significance testing has been carried out. The limitations for the quantitative analysis were counterbalanced by the qualitative analysis, and particularly its longitudinal dimension.

The sample sizes varied somewhat from the baseline samples. This was most marked in Kenya, due to the unsafe security situation at the time of the endline study, which meant that the time for data collection was reduced. It was not possible to collect data from two of the schools, and a few instruments were not administered (6, 9, 11). However, data had been collected from these groups six months earlier for the longitudinal study, the analysis was able to compensate for these difficulties. One school in Mozambique was also not able to participate in the endline study.

Poor record keeping by schools and local government authorities posed a significant challenge to the research. Often in schools data was missing, for example on rates of attendance or progression, and records kept by district education offices, police,

health and judicial institutions were also poor. This meant we had to be particularly cautious in our analysis of this data.

Attribution of change is complex, and in an endline study linked to an intervention there is a temptation to assume that any observed change is due to the project actions. However, our experience with the longitudinal study illuminated how complex change processes are, and how there may be many reasons things change, including unforeseen events, such as drought, political or ethnic conflicts; other programmes by governments or NGOs; or maturation. We have therefore attempted to be cautious throughout the report in our analysis of the reasons for change.

Data was collected in local languages, requiring that instruments were translated from English, and then back to English during transcription and analysis. Although efforts have been made for accuracy, it is likely that some nuance has been lost in the process of translation.





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## 3. Girls' experiences, attitudes and responses to violence, gender and inequity

### 3.1 Introduction

The baseline study found that girls experienced multiple forms of violence, that very few girls who experienced violence told anyone, and follow-up action through official channels was minimal. Many forms of violence, including corporal punishment, were taken for granted, with legal and policy changes appearing to have little impact on practices. Protecting family honour, shame and fear of repercussions hindered girls reporting, and girls were seen both as victims and to blame for the violence they experienced.

Many of the project interventions have attempted to address these concerns, including the work in schools and communities discussed elsewhere in the report. Girls' clubs have been the key intervention, working directly with girls to increase their capacity to challenge violence and gendered inequality. Following the baseline study, direct work with boys was initiated through boys' clubs, and in Mozambique through including boys within the gender clubs.

In this chapter, we examine changes in patterns of violence in the project contexts since 2009, and in girls' responses to violence. We also consider changes in girls' attitudes to and knowledge about violence, rights and gender, and the effects of participating in clubs. We find that there have been some shifts in children's attitudes and experiences, but that change has been uneven. Through analyzing the variations within and between the project contexts, we are able to draw some conclusions about what kinds of interventions working directly with girls can make a difference, and how projects can begin to address some of the complex barriers to change.

### 3.2 Violence against girls in 2013

As in 2009, in 2013 girls told researchers that they have experienced high levels of violence, with 83% of girls in Ghana, 90% of girls in Kenya and 80% of girls

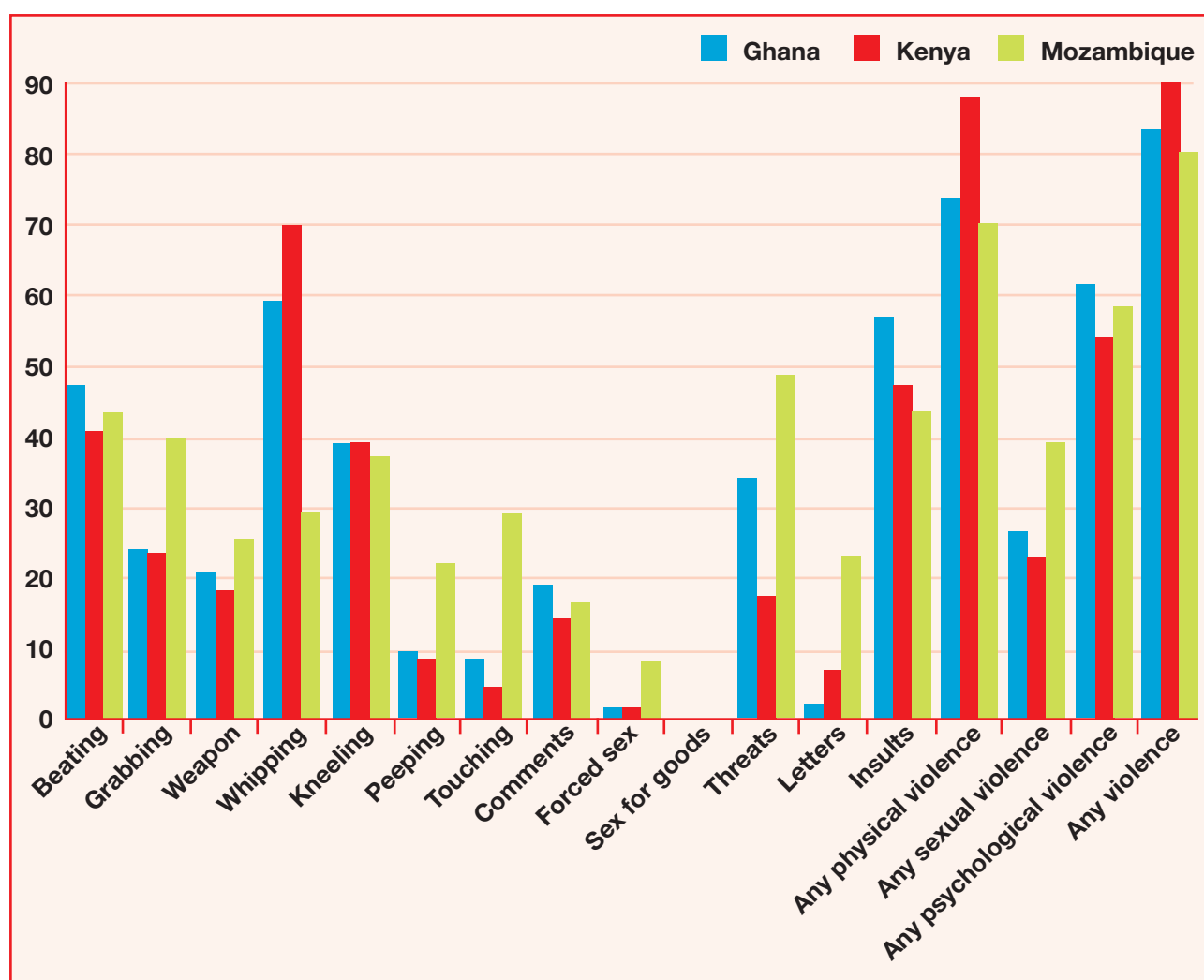
in Mozambique saying that they have experienced some forms of violence in the past 12 months.

As shown in figure 3, the most common form of violence in girls' recent experience is whipping or caning, with other forms of punishment like kneeling for long periods and beating also commonplace. Sexual violence is experienced less but still 26% of girls in Ghana, 22% in Kenya and 39% of girls in Mozambique have experienced some form of sexual violence in the past 12 months.

Figures for lifetime experiences of sexual violence are unsurprisingly higher than those for violence experienced in the past 12 months. For most types of violence the difference is small, indicating that many forms of violence are commonplace and not one-off incidents. The differences are larger in the case of sexual violence, most notably in relation to sex for goods. While very few girls say it has happened to them within the past 12 months, 6% of girls in Ghana, 7% of girls in Kenya, and 19% of girls in Mozambique say they have experienced sex in exchange for goods. This could indicate that there has been a recent drop in such forms of sexual violence; it is also possible that, although girls will sometimes admit to having had these experiences, they remain reluctant to speak further about them and so avoid answering follow-up questions.

In the next sections we compare these findings on patterns of violence with those from the baseline study in 2009. A major problem with this comparison is that the 2013 figures are likely to reflect both girls' experiences of violence and their increased confidence in speaking out about the violence they experience. In 2009, we were aware that violence was underreported, particularly in Mozambique where there were a large number of non-responses to violence questions. In 2013, following the intervention, we suspect that girls are more likely to talk about their experiences. Thus, while the project has not achieved its desired outcome of a 50% reduction in levels of violence, this may not indicate that the





**Figure 3: Percentage of girls saying they have experienced violence in the past 12 months in 2013**

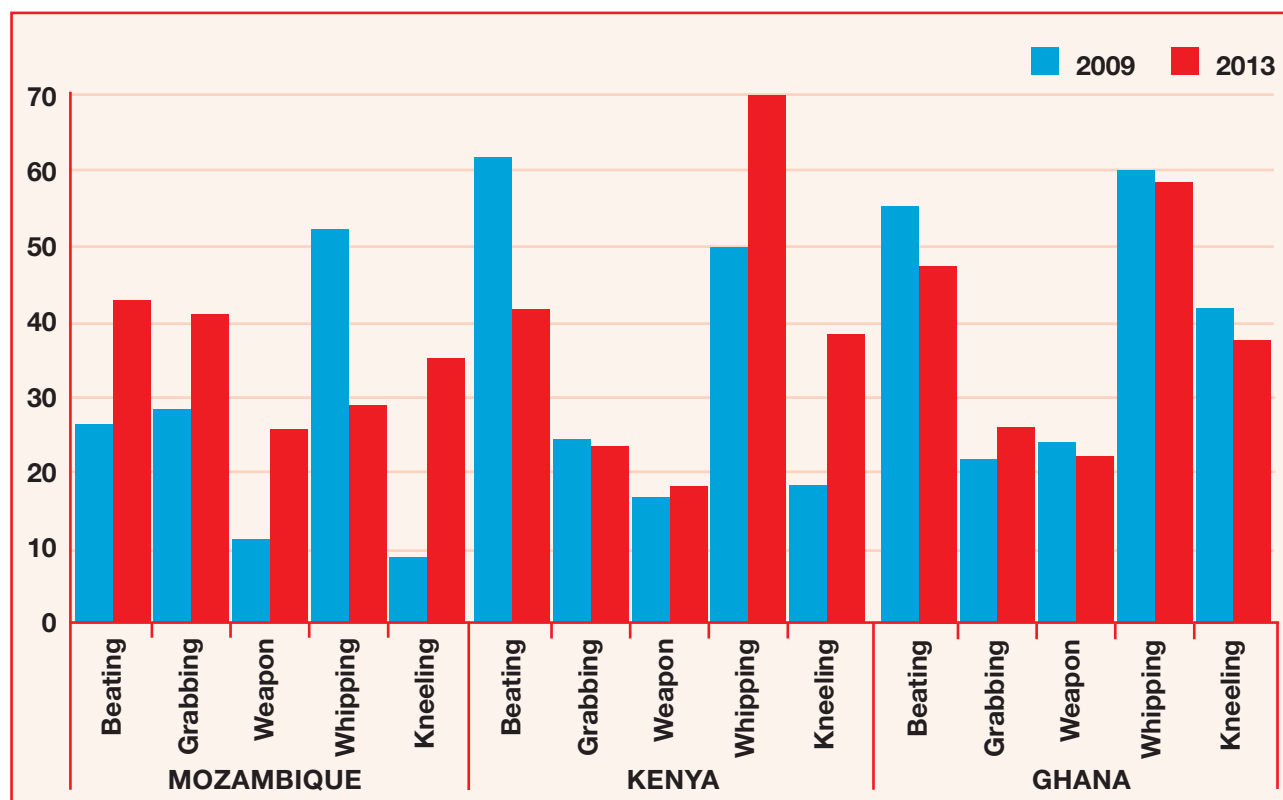
intervention has failed to reduce violence, but that it has succeeded in increasing girls' confidence and ability to recognise and speak out about violence. Our analysis below addresses this problem by looking at variations between countries and cross-checking across different data sources.

### 3.3 Physical violence

Physical violence remains common in 2013 as shown in figure 4. In Ghana, girls' recent experiences of most forms of physical violence have slightly reduced since 2009. In Kenya too there have been some reductions, most notably beating has dropped from 80% to 55%, though there have also been large increases in forms of corporal punishment. Forms of punishment, including whipping or caning and kneeling or squatting for long periods are commonplace in both countries. In both countries, younger girls are more likely than

older girls to say they have had recent experiences of beating, but corporal punishment is common across the age ranges. In Mozambique in contrast, whipping/caning have reduced considerably, from 52% in 2009 to 29% of girls in 2013 saying they had been whipped or caned in the past 12 months. On the other hand, other forms of physical violence have increased. In Mozambique older girls are more likely than younger girls to say they have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months.

The location of physical violence varies somewhat by type of violence. Girls' last experiences of forms of punishment, including whipping/caning and overwhelmingly kneeling, usually took place in school, though in Mozambique corporal punishment in the form of whipping/caning has reduced in schools, while kneeling has considerably increased. Male teachers are the main perpetrators of these forms of punishment in school. Corporal punishment in



**Figure 4: Percentage of girls experiencing physical violence in the past 12 months**

school is discussed further in chapter 5. Beating and grabbing take place at school and at home, often at the hands of boys, or family members. Use of weapons, including sticks, stones and knives, happens more in home/community settings, where they may be used as a form of punishment by parents or by other children.

In qualitative interviews, when girls described recent incidents of bullying, beating or hitting, often in their accounts several forms of violence coincided. In Ghana, for example, older pupils were given responsibility for physical punishments, along with teachers, as a 15 year old girl explained:

Girl: *The seniors beat us and the masters caned us*

Interviewer: *Why did the seniors beat you?*

Girl: *They told us to come to school at five am and we did not come, that is why they beat us.*

Boys at school were criticised for teasing and hurting girls, particularly when the teacher was not in the classroom, and often there were sexual connotations:

*"In my class the boys mess with the girls. They take their things and tell us that they want to be with us. Even outside the classroom they like to push us and beat us up"*  
(13 year old girl, Mozambique).

*"The boys are bad because they hit us with shoes. They also howl like goats at girls. In short, they are just bad mannered. The bad behaviour has increased, I don't know why."*  
(10 year old girl, Kenya)

Asked whether there had been changes, while a few girls, like the 10 year old Kenyan girl above, felt boys' behaviour had deteriorated, many felt that there had been no change or that there had been improvements:

*"The boys now behave better. They are cooperative and we can do class work together."*  
(10 year old girl, Kenya)

Girls gave various explanations for the perceived reductions in boys' aggression, including shifting disciplinary practices in school and the influence of girls' and boys' clubs. The threat of corporal

punishment was seen by some as a deterrent, while other girls viewed teachers or club mentors instructing boys not to disturb girls as responsible for perceived changes:

*"The boys no longer provoke us because the teacher told them not to provoke. When I complain, my teacher will beat him"*  
(12 year old girl, Mozambique).

*"Because if they treat the girl that way the girls will report to the teachers and they will cane them but now it has changed. They talk together and do not beat them again. (How did change come about?) When they meet at boys' club they tell them not to beat girls, that is why they have stopped."*  
(13 year old girl, Ghana)

Unexpectedly, there were even occasions when girls felt that behaviour had changed due to the influence of the researcher from former visits during the longitudinal study. A 15 year old girl from Ghana, for example, explained how boys used to tease girls in class, especially when the teacher was talking about "adolescence" but that this had stopped: *"it looks like the boys you last spoke to went to talk to the other boys"*.

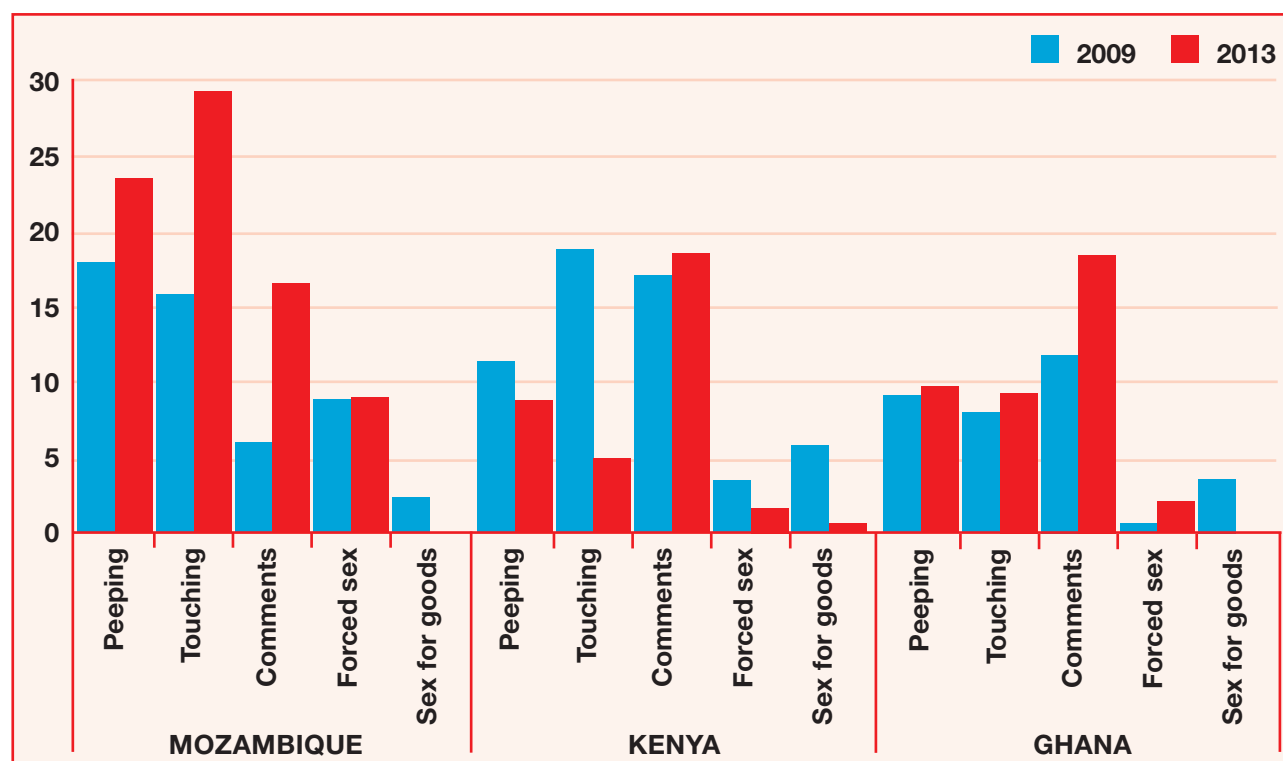
Overall, physical violence remains commonplace. The variations between countries are difficult to interpret. The quantitative findings in Ghana and Kenya may indicate that the project has led to a reduction in some forms of physical violence, such as violence between peers, and this is supported by the qualitative evidence. In Mozambique, the quantitative findings suggest an increase in many forms of physical violence, but this is not supported by the qualitative evidence, and may reflect the underreporting during the baseline as well as increases in confidence to speak about violence, as discussed in section 3.2 above. Across the three countries, the qualitative data signals that change has been uneven. For some girls, boys' aggression seems to have reduced, and this appears to be linked to the project's work with girls, boys and school systems. However, punishment practices in schools have also changed in uneven ways, as we discuss in chapter 5.

### 3.4 Sexual violence

Figure 5 shows that in 2013 girls in Mozambique are more likely to say they have experienced sexual violence than girls in Ghana and Kenya. For example, 29% of girls in Mozambique say in the past year they have been touched or pinched on their breasts, buttocks or private parts, compared with 9% in Ghana and 5% in Kenya; and 9% of girls in Mozambique say that in the past year they have been forced to have sex, compared with 2% in Kenya and Ghana. In Kenya, experiences of all types of sexual violence except for sexual comments are lower than in 2009, while in Ghana and more markedly in Mozambique, there have been increases in most forms of sexual violence.

However, as discussed earlier, the high levels of non-response by girls in Mozambique during the baseline study means we should treat the baseline figures from Mozambique with particular caution. Also, as discussed earlier, we might anticipate that violence levels might increase because of the influence of the project in enabling girls to speak out about violence. This may help to explain why in Ghana, sexual violence appears to have increased while physical and psychological violence rates have dropped. As taboos about discussing sexual violence erode, then we might expect these experiences, previously shrouded in silence, to be spoken about more. If this is the case, then the findings in Kenya seem more puzzling, raising questions about whether sexual violence has indeed reduced, or whether girls have become less outspoken, and whether it is the project or other contextual dynamics that have influenced the findings. Our analysis suggests that contextual features of the project areas and the intervention combine in complex ways to influence girls speaking out about violence.

Sexual violence in Kenya and Mozambique is more likely to be experienced by older girls. In Mozambique a quarter of 14-17 year old girls have experienced sex in exchange for goods during their lifetimes, and 16% of girls say they have been forced to have sex. In Kenya, one in ten 14-17 year old girls say they have experienced sex in exchange for goods in their lifetimes, and only one in a hundred have been forced to have sex. Age patterns are less clear in Ghana, with girls in the 11-13 age group being as likely or more likely to say they have experienced many forms



**Figure 5: Percentage of girls experiencing sexual violence in the past 12 months**

of sexual violence than older girls. However, fewer girls in Ghana and Kenya admit experiences of sexual violence in their lifetimes than in Mozambique. The implication is that either girls in Mozambique are experiencing higher levels of sexual violence or they are speaking out more than girls in Kenya and Ghana. We suspect both interpretations are valid. Our analysis indicates that some forms of sexual violence are more common in peri-urban settings, and also that these settings enable girls to speak more freely about sex and sexual violence.

In Kenya and Ghana, girls name boys most often as perpetrating their last experiences of sexual violence, though male community members were commonly named as responsible for sexual comments. Some girls complained that attempts to stop boys harassing them were unsuccessful:

*"Our relationships with boys have not changed. The boys are still the same; they still touch us on breasts and still tell us sexual comments like they will sleep with us. They are still doing that even though they have been warned by the head teachers."*

(13 year old girl, Kenya)

Other girls however did perceive positive changes:

*"I think boys have changed a little. They don't touch girls nowadays. They were told to stop by the headmaster at the assembly and also at the haki club<sup>1</sup> by Mr G."*

(12 year old girl, Kenya).

Girls in Mozambique more often cited male family members, as well as community members, as committing sexual violence. While girls in Kenya and Ghana rarely cited family members, this may be a further indication of the erosion of taboos of silence about these forms of violence in Mozambique, as well as a cultural tendency to use the term 'family' broadly, often encompassing community members, and thus the categories of community member and family member may overlap. Girls in Mozambique spoke about intergenerational sexual relationships, and at times these were clearly coercive:

*"I was playing at my friend's house when her father asked my friend to go to the market. I wanted to go with her but he said 'you stay, she will come back shortly'. When she left he called me to go inside the house and I refused. He added that he wanted to 'play' with me, go out with me and I said*



*'I don't want to play with my father'. He insisted, asking if I was sure of my refusal because he would buy me whatever I wanted, when I said that I was sure, he said 'go to your house' and I went"* (14 year old girl, Mozambique).

On this occasion, the girl resisted his approach, and later told her friend what had happened, but never spoke about it to her parents. Another girl described an incident involving a stranger in the community. Asked about recent experiences of being touched on breast or buttocks, she responded:

*"That happens mainly with people who don't come to school. One day I was coming back from school with a friend of mine when a big man, much older than both of us, touched her breast and we had to start running immediately"* (15 year old girl, Mozambique).

Although girls in Mozambique said that male teachers made sexual comments to them, teachers were rarely or never named by girls as perpetrators of their last incidents of other forms of sexual violence in all three countries. However, in our qualitative data, girls did sometimes speak about teachers who had sexual relationships with girls in their schools. In Mozambique, girls told of how teachers persuade girls to have sex in exchange for gifts or grades: *"Teacher X even grabs the small ones, he says 'if you want to pass, give me what's yours"* (girls' focus group, Mozambique). Girls in Ghana spoke of how teachers ask them to run errands or help in their homes, so that they are alone. While the project has been based in primary schools, during the longitudinal study, some older girls in Ghana progressed to junior secondary schools, where they were visited by the researchers. One discussion by a 14-17 year old focus group of girls raises concerns about whether sexual violence by teachers may be more common in secondary schools:

**Girl 1:** *At first it was good, as the masters didn't know our colleague girls, they were not proposing love to them, but now that they know them, they propose love to them.*

**Researcher:** *When you were in P5 and P6, how were the rules working?*

**Girl 2:** *When we were in primary, it was better. Here if a master proposes love to you and you talk*

*about it, your colleagues will tell you to forget it and that if you talk about it, you will disgrace the master.*

**Girl 1:** *At primary, we were small girls, but now we are grown.*

**Girl 3:** *What happened was that we were small girls and girls' club told us that it is not good for a man to love a small girl*

**Girl 1:** *At primary there was a girls' club and the members came to give us advice, but at the JHS [Junior High School] here, it is not there*

**Researcher:** *What about teachers asking students to come to their homes to work?*

**Girl 2:** *At this JHS, it is there, but primary, it was not there. At JHS, a master will call you to come to his house to wash his clothing or fetch water for him. But at primary, if you closed, everybody will go home separately.*

**Researcher:** *Why do they propose to you here?*

**Girl 2:** *Because here we are grown up. Because when we were at P6, if a master calls you and you don't want, you go and report to Madam X (girls' club mentor) and she will go and tell the master that the way you call the girl she is not happy and he will stop.*

**Girl 3:** *At the primary if a master calls you, you could go and tell the teacher and he will talk to him and he will never call you. But here, if they call you, you don't have anybody to report to.*

For this group of girls, sexual violence by teachers increases at secondary school because the girls are older and because of the absence of support and protection systems. At primary school, the threat is reduced though still present, yet the girls' club is clearly seen as protective. Girls recalled being able to seek advice from their peers at the clubs and from the mentor and teachers, who will intervene on their behalf with the teacher. However, these interventions do not appear to lead to sacking of teachers, raising questions about the effectiveness of implementation of the Teacher Code of Practice. These issues will be discussed further in chapter 5.

### **3.5 Sexual coercion and exchange sex in peri-urban contexts**

One explanation for the higher levels of sexual violence in Mozambique is that the more modernised, peri-urban context enhances risks for girls. Indeed there is some evidence to support this claim from our analysis of variations between communities. Sexual violence in Mozambique is more commonly experienced by girls living in communities close to the road and formal employment opportunities – 45% of girls in these communities said they had experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months compared with 37% of girls in the more remote communities. In Ghana a similar pattern was evident, though the district overall is more rural and remote, with sexual violence experienced by 32% of girls in towns compared with 23% in the most rural remote communities. In Kenya, differences were associated more closely with ethnic group than with rurality, though Pokomo girls in towns were somewhat more likely to say they had experienced sexual violence (29%) than Pokomo girls in remote communities (24%) and much more likely than pastoralist Wardei girls in remote districts (2%).

During interviews, girls in Mozambique spoke about harassment from men working in the area, as in the local sugar factory. In one community, for example, where there was a considerable amount of building work underway, girls spoke of sexual harassment from the construction workers:

*“People of the company are the ones who harass me. When they do that I keep quiet and keep walking”* (13 year old girl, Mozambique).

Girls in all three countries talked about intergenerational sexual relationships, often with a material dimension, but they were more commonly spoken of in Mozambique. Often such relationships were not viewed as coerced, but as freely chosen by girls as a way to meet material needs or desires:

*“In fact, some girls date much older people, and others are with big men. Those men burn coal to sell and that is why they give some money or cookies to the girls. They in exchange have sex with them”*  
(11 year old girl, Mozambique).

But girls also spoke about how these relationships entailed force:

*“Yes, there are intergenerational relationships. I don’t know why.... Some girls only want the money that men give in exchange for sex. When some refuse, there are men who beat them up”*  
(16 year old girl, Mozambique)

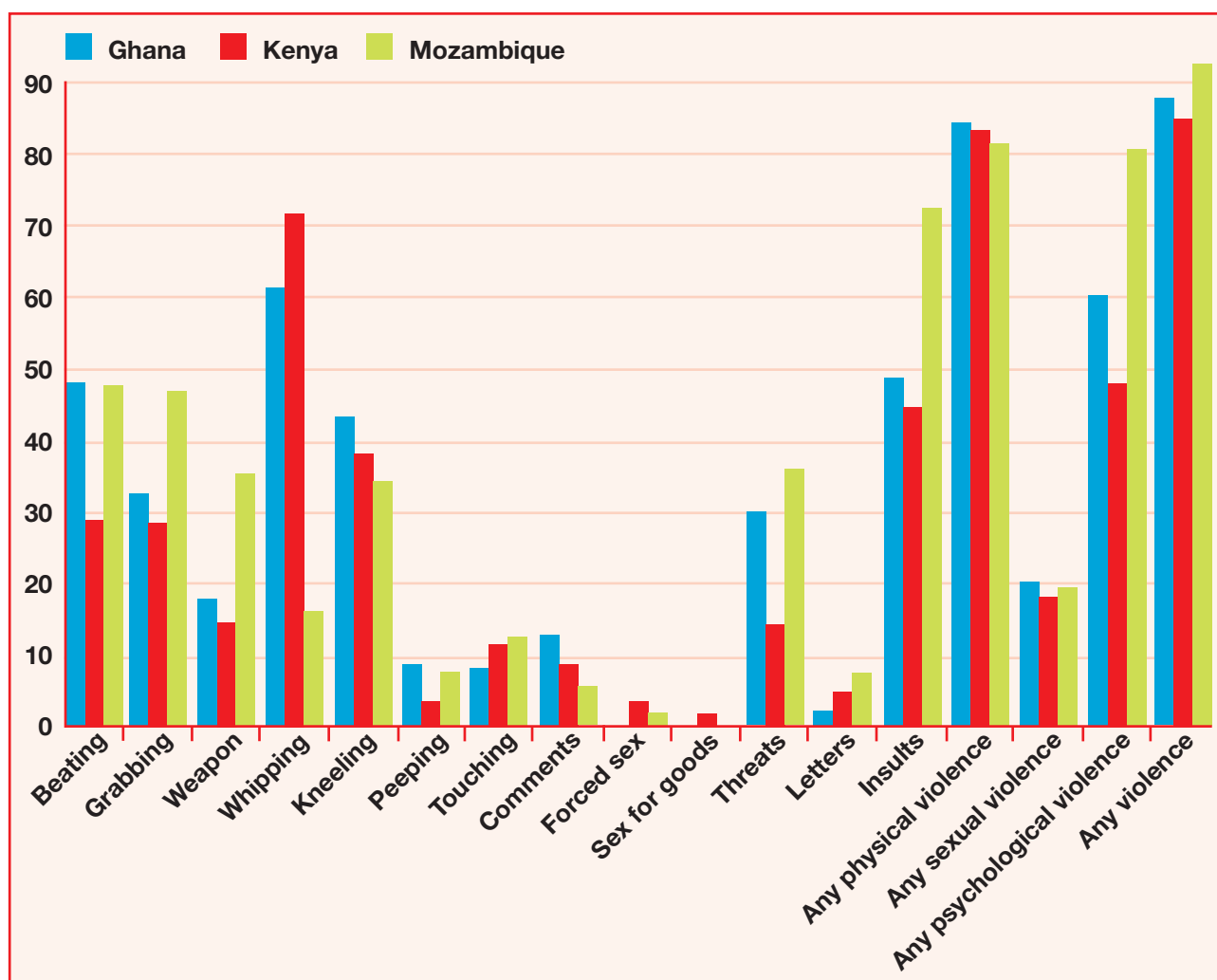
While there was awareness that such relationships often arose from dire poverty, girls were also critical, viewing girls who enter relationships for shoes, clothes or hair extensions as:

*“Not serious persons because they don’t really love and, on the day the money finishes, she will no longer remain with that person. My advice is for people to stay with boyfriends or husbands that your heart fancies and not your pocket”*  
(focus group with out-of-school girls, Mozambique)

While intergenerational and exchange sex happens in all three countries, the peri-urban setting, with high levels of migrant labour and more paid work may increase risky sexual practices, and may partially account for the higher levels of sexual violence described by girls in Mozambique. However, it is in this setting too that girls are most likely to report the violence they experience to someone, as we discuss below, indicating that such settings may both create risks and offer more possibilities for taking action.

### **3.6 Boys' experiences of violence**

Patterns of violence experienced by boys exhibit some similar trends to those of girls, as shown in figure 6. Overall, boys and girls in 2013 experience similar levels of physical and psychological violence, with just over 80% of boys in each of the countries saying they have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months. Boys experience lower levels of sexual violence than girls, though close to 1 in 5 boys say they have recent experiences of some form of sexual violence. Changes since 2009 echo changes in girls' experiences. In Ghana, there has been a marked reduction in many forms of violence (beating, whipping, kneeling, threats and insults). In Kenya, there have also been drops in some forms of violence, notably beating and sexual violence, but as with girls, boys' recent experiences of whipping/caning and



**Figure 6: Percentage of boys saying they have experienced violence in the past 12 months in 2013**

kneeling have increased. In Mozambique, as with girls, there has been an increase in many forms of physical and psychological violence, but a reduction in whipping and caning.

In the qualitative interviews, while many boys denied having been teased or beaten, sometimes they spoke of aggression from other boys. A 14 year old boy in Mozambique for example said that *“the head of class hit me in the classroom, you make a noise and he comes to beat you”*. Boys also talked occasionally of sexual comments and sexual touching by girls or boys, as described by a 16 year old boy in Ghana:

**Boy:** *A certain girl told me that I have a long penis. I was playing with her in the school compound when she told me this.*

**Interviewer:** *What did you do?*

**Boy:** *I insulted her back that her buttocks is like ‘bendele’ (a kind of local yam short and fat in size)*

Some boys felt that there had been changes in boys’ behaviour towards girls, in some cases because of fear of punishment by teachers, in others because project workers had spoken to them:

*“The boys have stopped saying bad things to the girls... Songtaba people came to tell us to stop because when we tell the girls such things, it makes them refuse to go with us to school.”*  
(14 year old boy, Ghana).

Other boys, however, felt that there was no change, and that girls were equally or more responsible than boys for sexual activity. Boys in Kenya claimed that sexual activity, though prohibited, was commonplace. One boy spoke of how he evades detection by teachers:

## Girls' experiences

*"What I always do is first to seduce her in class; I make a deal with another two boys, who keep on the vigil to ensure that no one has caught us. This is done in our cottages"*  
(focus group with boys 13-17 years, Kenya).

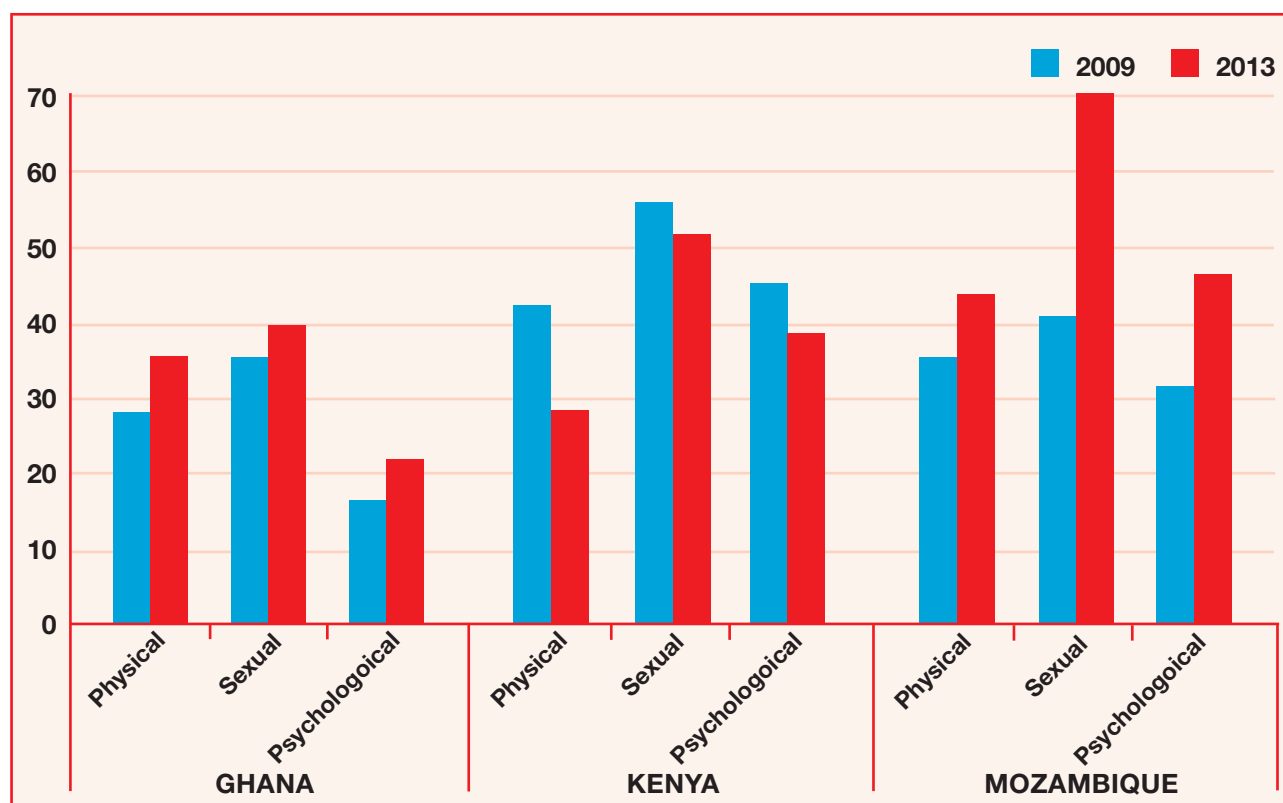
Another boy in the group suggested that the advice of the girls' club mentor was not followed:

*"Madam F has really taught them to abstain but, to them, this is only theory and impossible to follow."*  
(focus group with boys 13-17 years, Kenya).

In a context where sexual activity between teenagers is not sanctioned, the borders and boundaries between choice and coercion become unclear. For the boys in these discussions, sex was viewed as illicit but desired by boys and girls, and they were highly aware that they risked being accused of sexual violence for these engagements. Girls' perspectives are discussed further below.

## 3.7 Girls' responses to violence

Girls in Mozambique are more likely to report violence to someone in 2013 than in 2009, with the most marked change being an increase in reporting of sexual violence, as shown in figure 7. They are also more likely than girls in Kenya and Ghana to report physical, sexual and psychological forms of violence to someone, with the difference most marked in relation to sexual violence. Asked about their most recent experiences of different forms of sexual violence, 70% of girls in Mozambique said they had reported the incident to someone, compared with 52% in Kenya and 40% in Ghana. In Ghana, this indicates a small increase in reporting of sexual violence since 2009, as well as increased reporting of physical and psychological violence. In Kenya there have been slight reductions in reporting, particularly of physical violence, a finding that corresponds with the increases in forms of punishment (discussed above), which may be seen as legitimate or at least not worth reporting (see chapter 5). These findings again lend support to the finding that girls in Mozambique are more confident in speaking out on violence.



**Figure 7: Percentage of girls experiencing violence who told someone**



In all three contexts, girls told researchers of how they had taken action following sexual harassment. A 14 year old girl in Ghana for example explained that a boy had stopped making sexual comments to her after she gave him a warning: *"I told him not to play with me or call me whenever he sees me. If not I will report to the teachers."* However, norms about feminine compliance remain entrenched, particularly in the rural contexts of Kenya and Ghana, making it difficult at times for girls to take action themselves, as explained by an 11 year old girl in Kenya, for whom sexual predation becomes more of a threat as she matures:

**Girl:** *In the past boys never used to disturb me, but nowadays they call me mostly when I am from the river, that they want to talk to me or tell me something. This has started this year.*

**Interviewer:** *Do you talk to your friends?*

**Girl:** *Yes, I talk to my friend, Carla, about the way boys disturb me. It is very difficult for us because girls should not answer back when boys talk or say anything to them. We have to just keep quiet.*

While gender norms and taboos about family honour may still prevent some girls from reporting violence, girls in all three countries repeatedly demonstrated increased knowledge about what actions should be taken in cases of sexual violence:

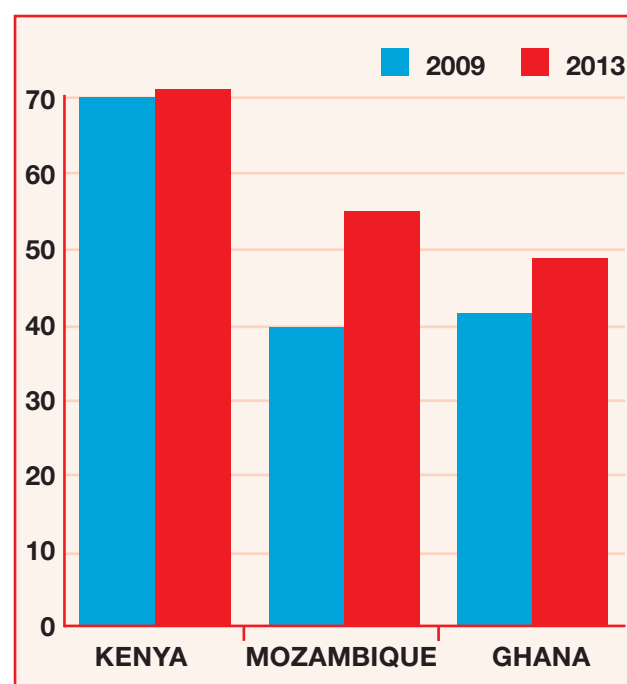
*"She should report to the headteacher, who will help her parents and the police to arrest the boy"*  
(10 year old girl, Kenya)

*"If he [the perpetrator] is a teacher, the girl must go to the school director and to the police. Even if it is an uncle, she must go to the police"*  
(10 year old girl, Mozambique).

*"She will cry for help and try to run away. If there is someone around the person can help. When she reaches home, she has to tell her parents. If she knows that boy she can report to the police."*  
(13 year old girl, Ghana)

### 3.8 Changes in knowledge, attitudes and reporting behaviour

Girls' increased awareness about how to deal with violence was also evident in quantitative data on attitudes and knowledge. Girls were asked a series of questions relating to their attitudes towards gender norms, violence and children's rights. Girls in all three countries are more likely now to have gender equitable attitudes about who should help with housework and farmwork. The majority of girls in all three countries now think that girls and boys should equally help with school chores, and over half the girls in Kenya and Mozambique now disagree with girls and boys being asked to carry out personal errands for teachers. In Ghana, though there has been a slight improvement, still fewer than 50% of girls disagree with personal errands for teachers, a finding that is of some concern given the discussion about sexual coercion by teachers in Ghana above.



**Figure 8: Percentage of girls disagreeing that it is okay for teachers to ask girls to do personal errands e.g. cleaning teachers' houses or fetching water**

## Girls' experiences

There have been some positive changes in children's attitudes to girls' rights, with the majority in all three countries now supporting the dismissal of teachers who have sexual relationships with pupils, supporting girls' rights to return to school after giving birth, and disagreeing that it is the fault of a girl if she is sexually harassed.

In the endline study, girls were invited to name any laws/policies, support organisations and reporting mechanisms linked to violence against girls. Table 4 explores the relationships between these different knowledge indicators, and also whether knowledge is related to actual levels of reporting.

Not surprisingly, we see correlations between different knowledge indicators. For example, girls who know of support organisations are also likely to know how to go about reporting. These relationships are significant in all three countries, though only in Mozambique is there also relationship with knowledge of laws/policies.

A particularly interesting finding is that girls who have more knowledge of how to report and of support organisations are more likely to have reported their own experiences of violence to someone. The relationship is strongest in Mozambique, then Kenya, and weaker and not significant in Ghana. This important finding establishes a clear link between changes in knowledge and changes in behaviour that has been missing from the research literature (Leach, Slade et al. 2012).

The strength of the relationships between girls' knowledge and reporting in Mozambique further supports the finding that in this context, girls find it easier to speak out about violence. However, it does not tell us whether the project itself is operating more effectively in empowering girls. To consider this, we turn now to analysis of girls' clubs.

**Table 4: Correlations between girls' knowledge and girls' reporting**

	COUNTRY	Knowledge of reporting mechanisms	Knowledge of local support mechanisms	Reporting violence index <sup>2</sup>
Knowledge of laws and policies	Mozambique	0.050 (0.241)	0.123 (0.004)**	-0.010 (0.819)
	Kenya	0.070 (0.143)	0.079(0.098)	0.060 (0.209)
	Ghana	0.033 (0.516)	-0.027(0.591)	-0.049 (0.337)
Knowledge of reporting mechanisms	Mozambique		0.194 (0.000)**	0.135 (0.001)**
	Kenya		0.178 (0.000)**	0.106 (0.025)*
	Ghana		0.122 (0.016)*	0.027 (0.590)
Knowledge of local support organisations	Mozambique			0.139 (0.001)**
	Kenya			0.125 (0.009)**
	Ghana			0.042 (0.409)

<sup>2</sup> The Reporting Violence Index is a composite variable of reported last experience of physical, sexual, psychological or any violence to anyone (see section 2.5.1)

Indicating significance: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 (Pearson's Correlation Coefficients)

### 3.9 Girls' club effect

Table 5 examines the differences in attitudes and knowledge between girls' club members and non-members. Here the responses to attitudes questions have been combined into a composite 'challenging violence and gender equality attitudes index'.

**Table 5: Knowledge, attitudes and reporting of girls in and not in girls' clubs (2013)**

	COUNTRY	Girls not in clubs	Girls in clubs	Significance index <sup>2</sup>
Mean attitudes index	Ghana	0.54	0.54	0.888
	Kenya	0.54	0.60	0.034 *
	Mozambique	0.60	0.68	0.019*
% with knowledge of laws/policies	Ghana	7.00	17.30	0.019*
	Kenya	7.50	13.30	0.014*
	Moz	28.70	67.20	0.000**
% identify formal reporting mechanisms	Ghana	97.20	100.0	0.011*
	Kenya	84.00	96.90	0.000**
	Moz	81.90	96.90	0.003**
% knowing local support organisation	Ghana	66.40	84.10	0.000**
	Kenya	40.60	48.40	0.023*
	Moz	34.70	64.10	0.000**
% reporting any violence to someone	Ghana	38.50	38.90	0.927
	Kenya	40.60	48.40	0.171
	Moz	34.70	64.10	0.000**

Indicating significance: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

The overall picture is that girls in clubs demonstrate better knowledge and attitudes that challenge gender violence than those outside of clubs, albeit with some exceptions. Girls in clubs in Kenya have more gender-equitable attitudes, and higher levels of knowledge than girls out of clubs. Girls in clubs in Ghana also have higher levels of knowledge than girls out of clubs, though their gender-equitable attitudes are at similar levels. The most significant findings are in Mozambique, where girls in clubs have more

gender-equitable attitudes, and much higher levels of knowledge on all indicators than girls out of clubs. The most notable finding is the difference in girls reporting in Mozambique, with girls in clubs (64.1%) almost twice as likely to report violence to someone than girls out of clubs (34.7%). It appears that girls' clubs in Mozambique may be working particularly effectively in enabling girls to translate their knowledge and attitudes into action in speaking out on sexual violence.

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## Girls' experiences

Girls' accounts of their clubs showed that there were many similarities in activities across the countries. Debates and drama were frequently used in clubs as a way to discuss a range of concerns. Camps and visits to other communities enabled girls to broaden their experiences as well as carrying out advocacy activities. Girls also spoke about the informal support provided by girls' club mentors. Across the three countries, the clubs were an important site for learning about child abuse and how to deal with violence:

*"In the club they taught us that there are appropriate places to report violence, like AMUDEIA, the hospital, the police, including some telephone numbers"*

(11-14 year old girls focus group, Mozambique)

There was also an emphasis on girls' rights, particularly their right to education, and some club members were involved in outreach activities to persuade girls out of school to return to school:

*"There was a girl who left school in class 4 to get married. We tried to talk about coming back to school when we met her on her way to fetch water"*

(15 year old girl, Kenya).

Girls and their teachers spoke about how club membership helped to increase their assertiveness and confidence. One girl for example spoke of the personal impact of participating in a debate on violence against girls:

*"It was interesting, before we did it, I never knew I could stand in public and speak but I spoke and I was happy"*

(17 year old girl, Ghana).

The clubs were also a space for discussion about sex and relationships. In Kenya and Ghana, these discussions often focused on personal hygiene and on saying no to sex:

*"It taught me that we shouldn't give ourselves to boys because you can give yourself to boys and he will impregnate you and refuse to take responsibility"*

(14 year old girl, Ghana).



*"We are taught a lot of good things for example issues to do with cleanliness, especially how to keep our girlhood clean and keep clean during our menstruation."*

(14 year old girl, Kenya).

Only in Mozambique were there discussions in clubs about sexual relationships, dating and, very occasionally, contraception:

*"I really like the club because we learned a lot and talked about various subjects like dating, sex, teasing boys, work at home, relationship with parents"*

(11 year old girl, Mozambique).

Usually, girls were very positive about the club mentors, commenting that they are less harsh than other teachers and easy to go to for advice:

*"She is good because she respects girls' club members. She is different from the other teachers, I can talk to her when I have problems"*

(9 year old girl, Mozambique).

Lack of female mentors in some schools in Kenya and Ghana was perceived as a problem by some headteachers. There is underrepresentation of female teachers in the project areas in Ghana and Kenya, which is particularly acute in the rural areas. This means that some schools have no female teachers and in these schools the project has had to work with male teachers as girls' club mentors.



Headteachers were usually positive about the impact the clubs had on girls, often viewing clubs as improving girls' motivation and achievement in school:

*"In fact very much now the girls in girls' club are not as shy. They are confident of what they are doing and they are being sensitized about education to avoid early marriages and pregnancy. In fact I think it has helped improved performance and commitment to education. This can be seen in class participation."*  
(Headteacher, Kenya).

*"Because of the girls' club, the girls even try to overtake the boys. The girls contribute in class. They are no longer shy and answer a lot of questions in class. They used not to even report some issues but now every little thing is reported."*  
(Headteacher, Ghana)

Another positive effect of the clubs mentioned by some was that it led to setting up boys' clubs. In Mozambique, boys were invited to join the girls' clubs, which became gender clubs, though none of the boys we interviewed were members. In Kenya and Ghana, the boys talked about a range of activities in their clubs, including drama, reading, football, and often there seemed to be an emphasis on teaching boys how to cooperate:

*"We acted on how to establish a cordial relationship with others. We also do cultural drumming."*  
(14 year old boy, Ghana)

*"The activities include being told not to touch girls or push them"*  
(14 year old boy, Kenya)

*"The main activity is learning and being taught how to work together and being brothers"*  
(9 year old boy, Kenya)

One Kenyan headteacher commented positively about the shift of attention to the 'boy child', saying that "a time came when boys asked questions why they were the forgotten lot. The result is the Haki club". Within this project, we have insufficient information to assess the success of the boys' clubs, though clearly they hold promise. The same headteacher complained that the clubs were making girls too assertive. Though he

was generally positive about the empowering effects of the girls' clubs, he was unhappy at members' resistance to his discipline methods:

*"Some girls are now abusing the club's objective. I am tired of telling girls to run as alternative punishment. They look at me in the eye and tell me that it is not possible since they are menstruating, I am getting tired of that response over and over"*  
(headteacher, Kenya).

Overall, the clubs appear to be one of the main successes of the project. However, there are some problems. While the effects on motivation are very positive, in some cases when spaces were limited, teachers selected club members, and this risks creating an elite, which excludes girls not selected for club membership. The comment by the headteacher above also shows that the ethos of the club may be disconnected from the broader school culture, and this may reduce the long term sustainability. Without the institutionalisation of clubs into the education system, it is doubtful that they will continue once the project ends, though one headteacher considered the possibility of continuing through extending their activities to include income generation: "like rearing sheep, goats, poultry and kitchen garden" (headteacher, Kenya). The absence of clubs in secondary schools means that girls who transfer lose this important source of support.

### 3.10 Poverty, rurality and marginalisation

Within each of the three project districts, some communities were more remote than others, and our analysis investigated whether this was associated with higher or lower levels of violence. We also explored whether girls' attitudes to violence and gender equality varied according to community type. Our findings are shown in table 6.

Physical violence was common in all community types. However, in Mozambique and Kenya, girls in more remote communities were somewhat more likely to experience physical violence. In Mozambique, for example, 69% of girls in communities close to the road and formal employment opportunities spoke of physical violence experiences, compared with 75% of girls in more remote communities. In Kenya, among the Pokomo communities, 82% of girls in towns and

**Table 6: Girls' experiences of violence & gender-equitable attitudes by community type (2013)**

	Community type	% of girls experiencing any physical violence	% of girls experiencing any sexual violence	Girls' attitude index <sup>3</sup>
Mozambique	Close to road and formal employment opportunities	69.0	45.0	0.68
	Close to road but far from formal employment opportunities	66.0	35.9	0.58
	Far from road and formal employment opportunities	75.6	36.6	0.58
Kenya	Pokomo central	81.9	28.6	0.54
	Mixed central	76.2	9.5	0.62
	Pokomo remote	93.9	23.8	0.53
Ghana	Wardei remote	85.7	2.4	0.73
	Town	87.9	32.2	0.54
	Rural-close	55.0	20.0	0.62
	Rural-remote	72.2	22.8	0.51

<sup>3</sup> The 'Challenging violence and gender equality' attitudes index combined responses to 8 attitude statements, and calculated a score between 0 (does not challenge at all) and 1 (high levels of challenge) – see section 2.5.1.

Note: For the Gender Attitudes Index, ANOVA difference between groups significance levels were highly significant: 0.002 Ghana, 0.000 Kenya and Mozambique

94% of girls in remote communities experienced physical violence. These findings are particularly interesting in view of the contrast with sexual violence, which in all three countries was more common in the towns. In Ghana, physical violence was also more common in towns.

The final column of table 6 shows that there were marked differences between community types in girls' gender equitable attitudes. In Mozambique, girls in the communities close to formal employment, which are the least poor communities, have more gender equitable attitudes. In contrast, girls in the less remote rural schools, which are in the poorest communities in Ghana, and in the pastoralist Wardei communities, which are the poorest of the Kenyan communities, have the most gender equitable attitudes.

In order to examine the links between poverty, gender and violence, a poverty index was calculated for each child, combining poverty indicators on housing materials, food eaten yesterday and parental education levels. The overall relationships between poverty, experiences of violence and gender-equitable attitudes are different in each country. In Mozambique, poorer girls were more likely to experience physical violence than less poor girls, though this was only statistically significant in relation to whipping/caning. In contrast, poverty in Ghana and Kenya was not associated with increased levels of physical violence, with, for example, poorer girls significantly less likely to say they had experienced beating than less poor girls. The difference was most marked in Kenya, where it may be that girls in the poorer Wardei communities are more closely protected from many forms of violence in these communities. Alternatively, perhaps these girls



are more inhibited about speaking about the violence they experience. Consistent with this is the finding that poorer girls in Kenya are somewhat less likely to report violence to someone. On the other hand, they also have more gender-equitable attitudes than less poor girls. An unexpected and puzzling finding is that in both Kenya and Mozambique, and most significantly in Kenya, girls whose mothers have never been to school have more gender equitable attitudes.

These findings illustrate how relationships between poverty and gender norms are far from straightforward and, in particular, cautions against assumptions that the poorest or most marginalised are more likely to accept, internalise or take for granted disadvantage. One conclusion to draw from this is that there is not a straightforward relationship between violence and poverty. As we discuss in the next chapter, many contextual factors including customary norms around gender and childhood, local forms of employment and migrant labour, and broader political conflicts intersect with socio-economic poverty in influencing patterns of and responses to violence and inequality.

Our qualitative data from out of school girls also lends support to the finding that the most marginalised members of communities may well recognise and speak out about inequalities. Girls were out of school for varying reasons, but mainly because of family poverty and pregnancy, either while they were still in school or after they had left to labour for their families. While these girls had little contact with the project, and were not able to join the girls' clubs, they spoke forcefully about injustice and about their determination to return to education and employment, or to enable their own daughters to succeed. Their concerns are discussed further in chapter 4.

### 3.11 Conclusion

The voices of girls discussed in this chapter show that there have been some changes in patterns of violence in the course of the project, but that these have been uneven and must be treated with caution. In Mozambique and Ghana, girls are now more likely to report violence to someone. There is some evidence that the project has had an impact on boys' practices of violence against girls, as girls become more confident that the mechanisms are in place in school or girls' club to intervene. But these changes are not clear cut across all schools, with varying views about whether violence has reduced, and taboos continuing to inhibit some girls from speaking out.

There is no straightforward relationship between violence and poverty. Features of modernisation in the project context in Mozambique appear to be having a dual effect on sexual violence. On the one hand, there is evidence of enhanced sexual risks in the girls' precarious relationships with older men. On the other hand, the peri-urban context brings better access to services and more networked communities, with mobile phones, proximity to the capital, and much movement in and out of the area for work. These may mean girls have more access to information and communication on sex, and increase the likelihood of girls reporting violence.

Interventions working directly with young people can help to transform knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, but processes of change are embedded within highly localised contexts. Girls' clubs can help girls to become more knowledgeable about what to do when faced with violence, and help them gain confidence to discuss issues like the importance of girls' schooling with others. Where they also make possible open discussion on intimacy, they may be more effective at enabling girls to break silences on taboos around sex and sexual violence, and to change their own reporting practices. But how easy it is for interventions to generate discussions on these themes depends on norms and institutional structures within the communities. Where a context is already changing, as in the case of Mozambique, the possibilities for an NGO to support girls negotiating more agency in handling sex and violence may be enhanced.

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## 4. Shifting attitudes, knowledge and practices in families and communities

### 4.1 Introduction

Though the project title refers specifically to stopping violence in schools, the emphasis throughout has been on all the sites of learning in girls' lives, including the family. While families can be a key source of support, protection and learning for girls, they are also key sites where gendered inequalities are nurtured. Violence within the family, as discussed in chapter 3, is often the most difficult to speak about. The baseline study found that protecting family honour, embarrassment, shame and fear of repercussions hindered girls from speaking about sexual violence. A gendered division of labour was embedded within socio-economic conditions, with child labour required to support the family. Child marriage and teenage pregnancy were commonplace in all three countries, with female genital mutilation (FGM) practised in the pastoralist community in Kenya.

Project work to address these concerns has included a range of ways of creating dialogue in communities. Reflect circles are an approach to adult learning and social change developed by ActionAid. Originally associated with adult literacy programmes, Reflect Circles are now used more broadly to encourage communication through creating a democratic space

for community members to discuss and deliberate. The project has used Reflect Circles along with other community-based groups established by the project. Informal discussions in the market place, often led by girls clubs, have been used for advocacy. In Kenya, sensitisation work has addressed female genital mutilation (FGM) with traditional leaders (known as councils of elders) and religious leaders in the Wardei communities. Workshops have shared information and promoted discussions on issues relating to girls' rights and violence with women's groups, traditional, community and religious leaders. Girls' club members have also been involved in community outreach work. In Ghana, parent peer educators have been trained to communicate on issues of gender and violence with other parents. A range of public events and campaigns, including annual events held in each community during the 16 Days of Activism, have been organised by girls' clubs to speak out against violence and promote girls' right to education.

In this chapter, we consider how family perspectives and practices linked to girls' education, gender roles and violence, have changed, and the impact of the project on family dynamics. We focus in particular on the perspectives of parents, gathered during focus group discussions and interviews.





## 4.2 Families coping with poverty, crises and conflicts

In tracking a small number of girls over time, the longitudinal study has revealed how in these contexts families face multiple disruptions and stresses that affect family dynamics. Change takes place for many reasons, not just because of the project's intervention, and understanding why or why not a project intervention may have had an effect needs to take these features of context into consideration.

Across the three project areas, parents' overriding concerns in both rural communities and towns centred around poverty, with worries particularly about access to water, and consequences of poor harvests. In all three areas, there were periods of particular hardship over the five years linked to extreme weather conditions, with droughts, floods and storms causing damage to homes and harvests. At the same time, many parents spoke of relentless struggles to survive and support their families over the five years of the project:

*"You know our main work here is farming. Over this period, we have not had good yield and since that is our livelihood, there is no money, if you have a child in your household, you would not get money to buy things for that child to go to school. You pray to God that the next year it should change, the year comes and it has not changed; this is how it has been for the past four years, it is this year we are praying He should change it for us."*  
(Mother, Ghana).

They spoke of the difficulties they faced with costs of schooling, including purchase of uniform and other school materials, and of how lack of water and electricity in many villages hindered children's studies:

*"We need real investors in our area for us to develop, we are tired of politicians, every time they come over and make false promise, that we can get water and electricity. With water our children will have more time to be in school and do their home-work. For electricity our children can do their homework well when it gets dark"*  
(focus group with fathers, Kenya).

*"There were floods in my mum's fields, which caused lack of food. We still have some, but some of our neighbours don't have maize anymore, children are starving and that's not good"*  
(12 year old girl, Mozambique).

Over the past few years, some parents talked of improvements. Parents in rural communities close to the road in Ghana explained that the new supply of electricity meant their children could now study in the evenings. In Mozambique, recent investments in the communities have created new employment opportunities and improved the infrastructure in some villages. Many other communities, however, seem untouched by these developments.

The extreme weather conditions affect the poorest families most. In Mozambique for example, storms and heavy rains ripped the roofs off less sturdily built homes. In Kenya, for the pastoralist Wardei communities, extended periods of drought mean that some families spend large parts of the year travelling with their herds to seek water and pasture, and loss of livestock has led to malnutrition, as one girl explained:

*"As we speak now we do not have milk for our small babies here. Milk is the only source of proteins we have for our children, this means lack of milk is the reason most of them are suffering these complicated diseases"*  
(11 year old girl, Kenya).

In Ghana, parents spoke of how the large, polygamous families and the need often to care for relatives could be a burden in times of economic hardship. Parents in Mozambique were concerned about the large numbers of orphans in their communities, and children who were separated from their parents because of their migration for work:

*"Many children are orphans and are being raised by elderly grandparents who have financial difficulties for child care, that compels them to do weeding in the fields of others with the children"*  
(focus group with mothers, Mozambique).

In all three project areas, there is a history of conflict. In Mozambique the brutal civil war that ended in 1992 was rarely spoken of by families. In Ghana, parents sometimes alluded to the effects of the war between

## Shifting family attitudes

the ethnic groups in the area that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, but they largely coexist peacefully. In Ghana and Kenya, girls and others spoke of increased tensions linked to local politics, especially close to elections. In Kenya, there is a long history of competition over resources between the Wardei pastoralists and the Pokomo farming communities, and in the months leading up to the elections in March 2013 this erupted in the neighbouring district with devastating consequences between the Pokomos and another pastoralist group, the Ormas. While the project area stayed mainly peaceful, many parents and children spoke about the reverberations for their families, including fear for their safety, loss of relatives, and pressure on resources due to disruptions to trading and an influx of families fleeing from the conflict into the area, as these Pokomo parents reported:

*"Many families have moved from the Delta to come and be here in the north. This has brought another problem: scrambling for resources. Drought has also come, we now lack food and we over-rely on the relief food"*  
(mother, Kenya).

*"We have had conflicts between the Pokomo and the Somali (Orma), many people were killed in the process, many women and girls were raped and finally many were displaced, others lost their properties, houses burnt down or destroyed, some of them have come to settle in our village. A case in point is my husband's son who is now living with us and studying in the primary school"*  
(mother, Kenya).

*"There have been tribal clashes in Tana Delta on some villages. The Pokomo and Orma people had a conflict that resulted into many death casualties and even for us in Wenje village, people were tense and feared a lot. Especially children developed a lot of fear and there was sadness in their faces in fear of attack by Orma people"*  
(father, Kenya).

The pressures on families were exacerbated by a concurrent drought, which one Wardei mother viewed as God's punishment for the fighting:

*"The conflicts between Orma and Pokomo resulted to loss of many lives, it's because of the blood which was shed that there are no rains in this region and it is affecting everybody in the community, God was not happy, many people also lost their properties"* (mother, Kenya).

Girls too spoke of the disruption, terror and distress evoked by the conflict:

*"This term started badly for us, we had clashes between the Pokomo and Orma which left more than one hundred people killed. We had to hide in the farms near the River. This constantly made me to be worried and our entire family too. I had sleepless nights worried that I might be killed, we had to leave our house, our beautiful house, thank Allah"*  
(8 year old girl, Pokomo community, Kenya).

*"During the conflict and fighting in Tana Delta, we used to escape sometimes and go into the forest because we feared being attacked"*  
(17 year old girl, Wardei community, Kenya).

*"When people fight they burn houses and kill other people it is very scary, why can't the clashes stop? I have no idea what the adults fight for."*  
(10 year old girl, mixed community, Kenya).

One girl who was forced to leave her home, however, took an unexpectedly positive view on the relocation, as living with her grandmother and more relatives meant that household chores were shared:

*"Since now we have become many in the house, the hard work has reduced. The change is due to the community conflicts, my grandmother is so friendly."*  
(9 year old girl, Kenya).

While most girls did not see the conflict as impacting on family rules, one spoke of how rules have changed on her freedom of movement:

*"There is no leaving the house late in the evening, for fear of being raped. After I return home from school at around 5.00 pm, I stay indoors till the next day."*  
(10 year old girl, Kenya).

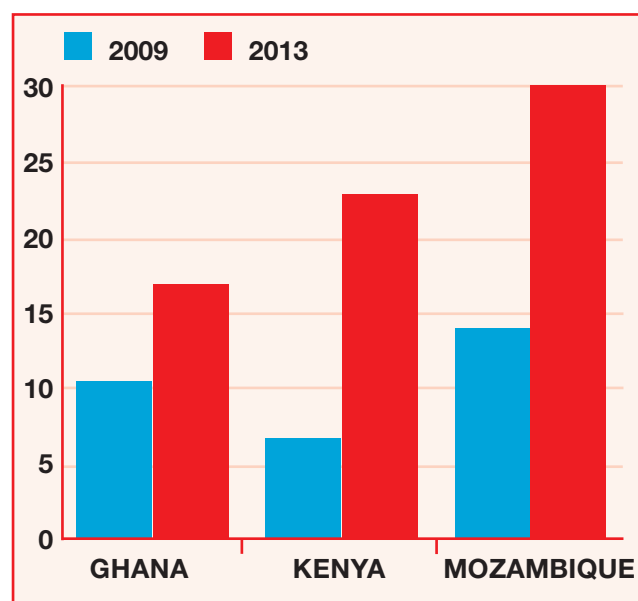
At times, this has affected the work of the project, with temporary suspension of activities because of security concerns and with the responsiveness to project inputs by schools and communities likely to be hindered by these crises.

As well as the crises that affected whole communities, girls participating in the longitudinal study also talked of personal crises within their families. With many girls across the 3 countries living in large, extended family networks, births, marriages and deaths were common in their accounts of change in their families. Many girls coped with bereavements from siblings, parents and other close family members dying, as well as loss of livelihoods in some cases, and sickness of family members at times increased the workload at home for girls and affected their school attendance. Girls also spoke of conflict between parents, and of one parent leaving the home either because of relationship breakdown, or more often for work. In Kenya, for example, fathers in the pastoralist communities spend long periods away from their families. In Mozambique, many fathers are away working in South Africa. While family disruptions were common in all three countries, in Kenya and Ghana the girls themselves usually stayed within the community. In Mozambique, however, many of the older girls participating in the study left the area, and often it was difficult to find out what had happened to them. While those girls who attended the school in town were still there, in the other three schools, most had left the school, often to marry and live elsewhere with husbands, and they could not be located. While chapter 3 showed how girls in schools are increasingly able to speak out on gender and violence, these findings suggest that early marriage and pregnancy persist in this context.

Crises and conflicts presented challenges for the project, which was not constructed for emergency response, yet could face pressures to provide much needed basic resources. Where it did have a role to play was in helping to prevent some of the personal crises for girls, through for example advocating against child labour, forms of gender violence in the home, and setting up systems to prevent child marriage.

### 4.3 Gender norms and child labour in families

Across the three project areas, there is a gendered division of labour, with women and girls carrying out much of the work in the home, while men are viewed as responsible for providing for their families. Many children, however, are now questioning this. While the majority of girls still see household chores as women's work, figure 9 shows how in all three countries girls have more gender equitable attitudes about who should help with housework than they did in 2009.



**Figure 9: percentage of girls saying that housework should be shared equally between girls and boys**

Many parents too explained that their own perspectives had changed, as they increasingly recognize the importance of girls' schooling along with the need to relieve them of labour in the home. Some girls explained that there had been changes in their workloads at home:

*"I don't go to farm anymore, I study at home and also in the night after the house chores, I study before I sleep. I have enough time for studies at home. The household chores are also now limited for me. My brothers use the bicycle to fetch water and I do the cooking, after which my junior sister washes the utensils. I don't do much. This is as a result of our activities with Songtaba. They have made our people aware of the set-backs in girls' education."*

(16 year old girl, Ghana).

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*“Somali men were not supposed to do any house work or other duties but now Actionaid has sensitized people on such issues, and so people are enlightened and men can now fetch water. Fathers can even take children to hospital which was not possible before. Nowadays fathers also move ahead to help female parents to do some roles. This is a great change due to Actionaid teaching on responsibility and rights of all parents”* (focus group with 14-17 year old girls, Kenya).

*“There were some changes; I don’t cook every day anymore. My mother tells me that she will cook and I take care of other tasks”* (16 year old girl, Mozambique).

As illustrated by these quotes, sometimes the change is through sharing chores more evenly between boys and girls. At other times, mothers appear to take on the extra burden of work. Some mothers spoke of the sacrifices they made in order to enable their daughters to go to school, and for some it was with the hope that this may help daughters support their parents in the future:

*“I am struggling a lot to take care of my children because I did not study. I want so much for her to study because the studying will help her to get a good job. I only studied until grade 7 and that is why I am a servant”* (Mother, Mozambique).

*“The way they go to school is good but I am afraid of my girls getting pregnant in the process, but I am happy they are in school so that one day if there is something that has to be read, the child can read it for me. I also hope that one day when I am old they can take care of me.”* (mother, Ghana).

*“For me, I have not been to school, so it is my duty to encourage my daughter to be serious about her education because I do not want her to become pregnant and end up like me.”* (mother, Ghana).

These two quotes from mothers in Ghana illustrate different parental perspectives on schooling, with one viewing schooling as a way to avoid early motherhood, while the other worries that the exposure to boys at school may increase the risk

of pregnancy for her daughter. For both, however, education is viewed as a way of achieving aspirations that have been denied to these women.

Many parents and girls view the change in attitudes as directly linked to the project, as in the words of the girls quoted above who speak of how the project work has “made our people aware” or “enlightened” them. Ghanaian mothers spoke of how “our eyes have opened” and how men help more with child care “because we are educated by people like you”. A Ghanaian father put it this way: “Sometimes, when something is in front of you, you don’t see it, and they have come to open our eyes concerning these issues”. The sensitisation work at community level appears to have helped parents to re-consider their attitudes to gender within the families.

However, some girls spoke about increasing workloads, often because of changes in who was living at home. One 13 year old girl in Mozambique spoke of how her mother getting a job meant she was left to care for the baby at home, while another said that her sister’s marriage meant she picked up the work at home her sister had done. The burden of labour was particularly harsh for girls who were out of school:

*“I’m eight months pregnant now and I’ve dropped out of form 3 because of this pregnancy. I would wish to go back to school after giving birth. I am not married and I will not get married until I complete my studies. I still live with my parents, who provide for my needs, especially my mother who has been supportive all through. Since I dropped out of school I realized life in school is better because once you drop out no one provides for you and I have to work hard for myself and my unborn baby”* (out of school girl, Kenya).

The custom of kinship fosterage in Ghana, where girls are sent to live with paternal aunts, was also viewed as leading to these girls carrying a heavy burden of labour and often missing school. Some parents, however, claimed that the practice was ceasing, as discussed by a community leader:

*“In those instances, you give birth to your child and have to give that child to the aunt and they are mostly maltreated, and it was affecting those*



*children, but now we are enlightened, so in such cases, we the men speak on behalf of the child because she is your child not your sister's child. We take the child back. So there is a change and I can say we are getting the enlightenment from you; your visits and questions are responsible for the change"*

(Traditional Leader, Ghana).

While the project has had a considerable influence in shifting attitudes and practices regarding child labour, particularly for girls, the economic pressures remain on families, and the impact for some of the most marginalised girls is less clear.

#### 4.4 Sex, marriage and pregnancy

As well as gender norms relating to division of labour, across the three countries girls are expected to live up to femininity norms of compliance and chastity. Most girls actively follow Islam or Christianity, with religious teaching tending to reinforce these normative gender codes. In all three contexts, teenage sexual practices are disapproved of and messages about abstinence frequently reinforced. This is particularly evident in the conservative pastoralist community in Kenya, and less prominent in the peri-urban setting in Mozambique. Alongside the emphasis on girls' education has been a move away from child marriage, and again the project's sensitisation work has been important in driving this change.

As discussed above, some girls and their parents view education as a way of delaying sex and marriage, but others believe that being in school increases the risk of pregnancy. Some parents hold the project as responsible for what they perceive as girls' increasing promiscuity. By encouraging girls to speak out, the project is seen by some as undermining the norms around compliance, and by providing a space to discuss sex and relationships, and sexual violence, they are seen as 'spoiling' girls, even though, as discussed in chapter 3, girls' clubs mentors often seem to reinforce abstinence messages rather than teach girls about safe, healthy sex.

The ways in which the project may provoke tensions within a community is evident in these differing views of fathers and girls in a pastoralist Wardei community. The girls are highly critical about forced marriage:

*"Our fathers want us to get married so that we don't get pregnant at home. They want their daughters to get married to the families they know and relationships are already established. Our culture dictates that a girl must get married. Ignorance of the law among the community results in these problems. Poverty levels force the parents to exchange their girls with wealth (cows and goats). I think our fathers are just unfair, they don't love their daughters"*

(focus group with 11-13 year old girls, Kenya).

A group of Wardei fathers, in turn, is critical of the project for undermining religious and cultural traditions:

**Father 1:** *We in this community are Muslims. Our major belief about law is the Islamic law. The ActionAid and their projects is not an Islamic Organization so it should never interfere with us. They call for a seminar, but instead of talking useful things they just speak about the girls' forum.*

**Father 2:** *The aspect of giving our girls seminars has really confused our girls and led to bad manners, ActionAid should go and never come here. It is said most of the girls who have gone to those seminars are getting pregnant.*

**Father 3:** *Our girls are bad because of ActionAid, how do you tell small girls about sex when they are too young. This is very bad, and needs to change.*

**Father 4:** *ActionAid has a good idea but their implementation is not good, Islam as a religion has also cultures, there is a difference between religion and culture, and they should integrate their activities and involve the leaders.*

For these fathers, the girls' club, in teaching girls about sex and girls' rights, are seen as having a detrimental effect on girls' promiscuity and their manners.

Mothers in contrast were often positive about the work of the project, but one group of mothers from a Pokomo community in Kenya raised an important issue about mixed messages on sex and violence:

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*"For a long time the girls were few in school, but now they are more. Action Aid has been sensitizing people over and over. When Action Aid was working hard sensitizing it was so good – now Action Aid are very relaxed because the project is ending, and we are worried. There are no more issues of early pregnancies like there were before. There is change you know, like now rape is taken seriously and if a girl gets pregnant the perpetrator is arrested. Though people are annoyed on the fact that in case of teenage pregnancies involving a boy, only the boys are reprimanded and girls are left in peace, when they both participated in consensual sex that led to the pregnancy"* (focus group with mothers, Kenya).

This mother praised the work of the project in increasing girls' access to school, reducing teenage pregnancies, and strengthening sanctions for rape. However, she points out that the work the project is doing in support of implementing child protection laws reinforces the criminalisation of teenage sex, so boys are seen as perpetrators and girls as victims when the sex itself may have been consensual. A similar view was expressed by a Kenyan girl, who felt that by telling girls to keep away from boys the project was having a detrimental effect:

*"You people of ActionAid should stop making boys and girls enemies and thinking that having boyfriends is bad. I have boys and girls as my friends"* (11 year old girl, Kenya).

Girls themselves face dilemmas about how to negotiate sex and relationships. For some girls, aspiring to overcome the constraints of poverty in their communities, sex may be viewed as a means of escape:

*"When they tell you to live like a village girl, we won't be like that, you will go and buy short skirt and as men see you, they will want to befriend you."* (focus group with out of school girls, Ghana).

Most girls either said they never wanted to marry, or more often that they wanted to delay marriage until they had completed their education and were in employment. Sex and schooling are seen as incompatible. Girls who become pregnant, either while they were in school or after they have been removed from school to provide labour for the family,



are stigmatised, as we discuss further in chapter 5. Few girls in Ghana and Kenya admitted to having boyfriends, though many girls in Mozambique spoke openly about dating. Yet sex does happen, and in all three countries girls spoke about sexual relationships based on love and desire, pressure from boys and men, and most commonly for material reasons.

*"I know a friend who got herself pregnant because her mother could not afford and her father was no more and a boy promised her he will help her and the day they had sex for the first time she got pregnant. My friend was attending primary school and that brought her education to a stop, but the boy continued his education"* (focus group with 14-17 year old girls, Ghana).

While sometimes these relationships were viewed as coercive, others took a pragmatic perspective:

*"When I date somebody who does not help me I leave him, since he doesn't help me in anything. He doesn't give me soap, doesn't dress me, should I add to my parents' expenses with a boyfriend?"* (focus group with out of school girls, Mozambique)

For the project, work on the area of sex and relationships has been particularly difficult, in view of the continuing taboos and strongly held views in communities. Genuine community dialogue that addresses concerns, beliefs and values would build on work emphasising knowledge of the law and rights to support changing practice.

## 4.5 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Girls in the pastoralist community in Kenya during the baseline study raised concerns about the practice of FGM, and the project has addressed this through sensitising religious leaders, community leaders, parents and girls in these communities, including work with traditional leaders on less harmful initiation practices. One Imam spoke of how following training on FGM he has *“tried to sensitize people through teaching according to the religion”*. A community leader claimed that *“in the Wardei community, the practice of FGM has reduced and they have since known its dangers and a few are changing and even stopping the practice.”* There is some evidence of change, but it is difficult to assess how effective the campaigning has been as one effect of the campaign seems to have been to drive the practice underground. This was discussed by a mother from the Wardei community:

*“In our community girls are initiated at the age of 9 to 12 years. This is usually through female circumcision (FGM). But nowadays we don’t do it in the open because of fear that one can be taken to court. In our community therefore, those who still practice FGM do it very secretly so that the government or ActionAid will not know. After FGM girls are now told that they are grown ups and they are trained that they can get married and stay with a husband to live harmoniously. Here in the village if a girl has not gone through FGM the mother feels very bad because no man will even marry her. So the girls are pushed to engage through FGM so that they can be married off in the community.”*  
(mother, Kenya).

Another mother explained that her daughters had not undergone FGM, because of the seminar she had attended, though she disagreed with the campaign:

*“My two girls are not circumcised because ActionAid called us for seminar and told us to stop FGM. Therefore I will not circumcise my daughters although I don’t concur or agree with them, because FGM promotes girls’ virginity and helps girls refrain from early sex with boys because they remember the pain they felt and will not allow to pass another pain until marriage. In our community it is not possible for a girl to get early pregnancy*

*before marriage and we are really appreciating our culture but the other communities who don’t practice FGM have rampant early pregnancies because they are not thinking of consequences or pain and therefore they want us to be like them and share same problems with them.”*  
(Mother, Kenya).

Several girls around 11 years old underwent FGM during the course of the longitudinal study, and spoke of it as a time of sadness and pain, though one girl said that FGM as an initiation into womanhood is *“enjoyed and not seen as rough time in our community”*. Girls spoke about how they learned about the effects of FGM in the girls’ club, but for those who had been through FGM already, this could be distressing, leaving them feeling helpless:

*“Like FGM we have been told the side effects when we have already been circumcised. What can we do now?”*  
(13 year old girl, Kenya).

*“It is not easy to put into practice what we learn like for FGM. We know it is bad but most of us have already been circumcised.”*  
(13 year old girl, Kenya).

A third girl felt that it will influence her own decisions for her daughters:

*“I know about the bad things of FGM and although I have been circumcised I will not circumcise my children”*  
(13 year old girl).

While the project work on FGM seems to be influencing perspectives, the practice persists and the girls’ perspectives signal the importance of work with girls to be sensitive to their personal experiences and not to deepen their distress. Project work with parents and other community members, who see FGM as protective, needs to address difficult issues about female sexuality and marriageability.

## 4.6 Violence in the home

Corporal punishment and intimate partner violence are commonplace practices at home, in the accounts of girls:

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*"Beating and caning happens in my community and more so in my own family, my mother beats us all when we do wrong, other women in the village are beaten by their husbands, when they make mistakes"*

(girl aged 10, Kenya).

As illustrated in this example, such violence against women and children may be viewed similarly as a legitimate form of correction. But there is evidence that these practices are changing. Girls in all three contexts spoke of how physical punishments at home had reduced or stopped. Parents too talked of changing their practices, though views remain mixed. In Ghana, a group of mothers explained that they are responsible for disciplining girls, but fathers, when they are around, punish the boys. In Kenya and Mozambique parents explained that they use the same punishments for girls and boys. A father in Ghana explained why the practice is changing:

*"It has changed because in the past they used to cane us with 'baranzum' (a cane made of lorry tyre) but now we use a cane to whip our children and we don't even cane them frequently because they come home and tell us that their teachers no longer cane them at school, so we are also copying that"*

(father, Ghana).

Another father in Ghana explained that *"we have been told that it doesn't change character in any way"* and a mother said *"we have also seen that using cane alone only makes them not fear anything and also makes their ears harder, so that is why some times the fathers make them kneel"*. Similarly a mother in Mozambique said *"I talk to her, I don't beat her because there comes a stage in which she gets used to it, she doesn't feel the pain anymore and the beating makes no difference"*.

The project also seems to be having an unexpected impact on intimate partner violence between girls' parents. Girls in all three countries spoke of how men beat wives when they do not meet their *"obligations"*. Girls in Mozambique described such beatings *"because the food was poorly made"*; in Kenya because the women were lazy or disobedient, and the men drunk; in Ghana, a 13 year old girl told how a woman was beaten for withholding sex when her

husband refused to give her money to feed their child. However, changes in these practices were discussed by several groups of parents, including a group of fathers in Ghana:

**Father 1:** *Over the past 4 to 5 years, these things have reduced because people listen to each other. The man listens to his wife and the women listen to their husbands. Things that would have resulted in fights are now resolved peacefully.*

**Father 2:** *We have been taught by people like you and government and a law has even been passed. If you should do something like that you would be caught.*

**Father 1:** *The beatings were as a result of the men being drunk so the least thing set them off.*

**Researcher:** *Who among you has ever beaten his wife?*

**Father 1:** *Which of us can say tears have never left our eyes?*

While the final remark signals how common the practice of beating wives is in this context, the men agree that its frequency has reduced, partly because of fear of punishment. Legal changes together with the advocacy work by the project are seen as responsible. In Kenya, the role of the local women's organization partnering with the project was viewed by girls as sensitizing women about their rights and about what action to take:

*"Beatings at home used to happen so much, but now it has been overcome by time, it is no longer happening. Women used to be beaten by their husbands and girls by boys, in this community there is a belief that women must be beaten so as to be disciplined, so boys are allowed to discipline their future wives. Training offered to the women by Sauti ya wanawake (a women's CBO) is the reason they are now enlightened and they now know that it is against their rights to be beaten. Today women will take action against their husbands and so men now fear being taken to jail. The new constitution also has an impact"*  
(focus group with out of school girls, Kenya).



## 4.7 Conclusion

There is persuasive evidence that the project has had an influence on family dynamics in the project communities. This seems clearest in relation to the shifts in the gendered divisions of labour for children, where concerted campaigns linked to the Education for All agenda enable the project's work. Shifts in attitudes and knowledge seem to be accompanied by changes in behaviour, according to the girls' reports of their reduced workload at home. The project also seems to have affected forms of violence in the home, often in ways that are indirect. For example, messages against corporal punishment at school seem to be filtering into the discipline at home, and teaching girls to speak out about violence and providing information about support organizations may be enabling their mothers too to challenge their husbands' violence towards them. The project seems to have had a ripple effect on women's own confidence within their families, as described by a mother in Kenya:

*"Yes, we have involvement in the project. We know it's supposed to defend the rights of the girl child. Yes, that is what I know; it is giving us reason to believe in ourselves. We know that we also have ability and power to do a lot of things, even better than men. We are seeing our girls passing the exams now. It's better than before. We attend seminars on the rights of girls."*  
(FGD mothers, Kenya)

But norms about gender, including female submission, still persist, and the area where project work has been most difficult, and sometimes evoked hostility, has been engaging with discussions in communities about teenage sex and relationships. What seems to be particularly effective is where alliances are built, with for example local women's groups, enabling discussions on sensitive issues to take place across different spaces and sites of disagreement. While community engagement has been a strong dimension of the project, the varying perspectives signal both the challenge of and the need to engage and obtain the support of parents and the wider community, particularly of men, alongside the intensive work with girls. While the emphasis on laws and rights education may help to change the way people talk and act, it is not clear that these changes will be sustained without dialogue and critical open discussions on controversial issues and deeply held beliefs.



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## 5. Changes in schools as sites for challenging gender inequality and violence

### 5.1 Introduction

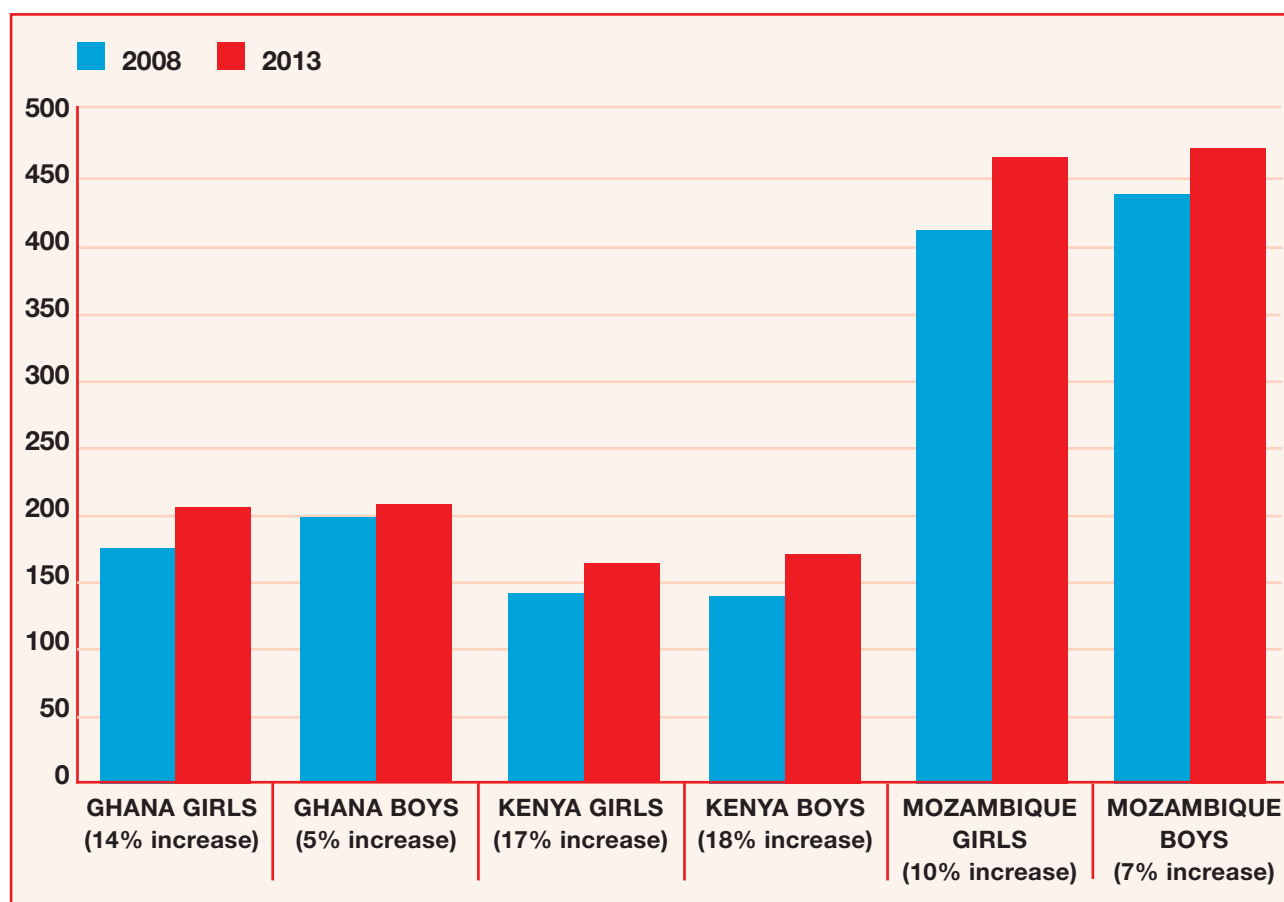
While schools are often seen as safe places for girls, many studies have indicated that they may be places where violence takes place and where unequal gender norms are reinforced (Davies 2004; Harber 2004). In 2009 the baseline study found that poverty intersected with gendered inequalities in creating barriers to schooling, especially in the later years of primary schooling. Within the schools, there was a shortage of well-qualified women in teaching and management positions, and poor resourcing as well as inequitable gender attitudes hindered girls' capacity to enjoy and achieve at school. Corporal punishment was widespread across project schools.

Approaches to create more gender-friendly schools have often focused on gender parity in attainment, or on gendered teaching and learning approaches, curricula and learning materials (UNESCO 2004). CARE's Common Indicators Framework synthesizes four dimensions for inclusion in projects on gender and schooling: attainment (access, progression, completion, achievement), equality (gender sensitivity in perceptions of teachers, children, communities), quality (physical learning environment, educational content, pedagogies) and empowerment (girls' agency, supportive strategic relations, structural environment) (Miske, Meagher et al. 2010). Other framings have stressed the importance of looking at gender in relation to teaching qualifications, and processes of management and training in schools (Unterhalter, Heslop et al. 2013). As discussed in chapter 1, the UNESCO review on GBVS interventions (Leach et al 2013) distinguishes between projects like SVAGS that are narrowly focused on violence, and others, like ActionAid's TEGINT project, that attend to whole school approaches. However, although its primary focus is on violence, because of the broad conceptualization of violence as embedded within institutional and interactional inequalities (see conceptual framework

chapter 1), the project's work in schools has addressed many of these areas of gender-friendly schooling. In the first area of attainment, the key project activity has been to sensitise community members, particularly parents, about the importance of girls' education. Through in-service teacher training, as well as girls' clubs, the project has attempted to influence perceptions of teachers and children on gender norms and equality, as well as knowledge about violence and child protection. The project has attempted to institutionalize gender-friendly schooling through advocating for the development and implementation of gender policies at school level. It has worked to promote girls' education among school management teams and within district education authorities. There has been less attention to quality issues, including infrastructural resourcing, though some work on building toilets for girls has taken place, and there has been some attention to pedagogies in relation to gender-sensitive teaching, disciplinary practices and sex and relationships education. Much of the work of the project on empowerment of girls beyond the school setting is discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 6. In this chapter, we consider changes in girls' schooling, in school management and in the knowledge and attitudes of school staff. We also consider children's perspectives about gender equity and equality in their schools. We look closely at corporal punishment and at the teaching of sex and relationships education. Throughout we reflect on the role of the project in influencing changes in school.

### 5.2 Changing patterns in girls accessing and staying in school

Girls' enrolment has increased in project schools since 2008, by 10% in Mozambique, 17% in Kenya and 14% in Ghana. Boys' enrolment has also improved. While in 2008, gender parity in enrolment was already evident throughout the primary years in Mozambique,



**Figure 10: Mean number of pupils enrolled per school in 2008 and 2013.**

in Kenya at that time, there was a steep drop in girls enrolled in the final years of schooling, and a positive finding is that this has considerably reduced. In class 8, the final year of primary education in Kenya, gender parity has improved from 0.48 in 2008 to 0.87 in 2013<sup>4</sup>. In Ghana too girls' enrolment in the final years has improved and there is now gender parity in the final year of primary school.

Within each country, gender parity varies between the communities, with more equal enrolment in communities closer to roads and formal employment in Mozambique and Ghana, but with girls in remote schools still disadvantaged. In Kenya, the differences were more closely linked to ethnic group, with gender parity in Pokomo schools, but not in Wardei schools.

School level data on drop out, attendance and progression was unreliable in many schools, but those schools that did provide data indicated that in Ghana and Kenya fewer girls and boys are dropping out of schools in 2012, though this is not the case in Mozambique.



<sup>4</sup> Gender parity is measured using the gender parity index, which demonstrates the ratio of girls to boys. In this case it is the number of girls enrolled divided by the number of boys enrolled. Numbers below 1 indicate female disadvantage, which is greater the smaller the number.



**Table 7: Drop out rate change**

	2008		2012	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Ghana	1.6	1.7	0.2	0.2
Kenya	5.3	7.1	1.1	0.6
Mozambique	8.4	9.5	8.9	9.7

**Note:** Values indicate percentage of children enrolled who drop out of school.

Headteachers viewed the improvements in girls accessing school as some of their major achievements in recent years. Often they attributed the change to the effects of government initiatives such as free primary schooling and school feeding programmes, alongside the effects of ActionAid and sometimes other NGOs working in the area, in sensitising parents about the importance of girls' education:

*"You see these days the community has recognized the value of girls' education. But remember the Action Aid group has been doing a lot in this area encouraging parents to take their girls to school. To the girls Action Aid is like their eye opener. It is like they have woken up from a very deep sleep."*  
(headteacher Kenya).

*"The free education policy is welcome. We can see that the child that is here in the school has no money for buying materials, and we are able to provide them thanks to the School Direct Support (ADE) scheme"*  
(headteacher, Mozambique).

*"It is through the support of hardworking staff and the education that Action Aid and Songtaba has been giving to the community. Then of course the government intervention by way of capitation, school uniform and exercise books policy."*  
(headteacher, Ghana).

The success of project interventions in this area was widely recognised, and in all three countries localised interventions as part of a broader drive for girls' education seem to have enabled a shift in gender norms.





However, continuing barriers to girls' schooling were also acknowledged. Most were related to harsh socio-economic conditions, with the main reasons stopping girls from attending school cited by teachers, girls and boys being chores, childcare or care for relatives and other forms of labour, as well as marriage and pregnancy. In Kenya and Ghana in particular, parents being unable to pay school fees was a barrier, though teachers in Ghana saw this as less of a barrier in 2013 than in 2009. Some headteachers explained that, though enrolment has improved, attendance varies through the year, with girls and boys missing school during harvest time, as in the mango season in Kenya. Some teachers also complained that girls arrive late at school because of the need to fetch water, though many felt this has improved over time.

Headteachers also expressed the view that cases of pregnancy and marriage leading girls to leave school have reduced, with some speaking about how girls are now encouraged to return to school after giving birth. While these concerns appear to have reduced, some headteachers still spoke of the challenge of tracking girls who have left the school. In Kenya, for example, one headteacher said that parents masked their intention to remove their daughters for marriage by saying they were transferring schools, leaving the headteacher powerless to intervene. Girls in Kenya expressed similar concerns, and emphasized their own powerlessness:

*"the father asks for a transfer letter and the girl can do nothing"*

(12-13 year old girls in school, Kenya).

Another girl in the pastoralist Wardei community, who aspires to take her studies to university and to marry when she is 22 years old, talked of her anxiety about being forced to marry if she fails her exams:

*"I am worried about getting married early because of my poor performance. If I fail my exams, I might get married. I will work hard so that I pass and so nobody will tell me to get married."*

(17 year old girl, Kenya).

In Mozambique, these challenges were exacerbated by the extent of mobility, with girls often disappearing from schools and headteachers unclear whether they had moved with their families for work, school in another area or marriage – as indeed was the case for

several girls in our longitudinal study (see chapter 4). Though girls welcomed the opportunity to continue studying after childbearing, some girls however are reluctant to return to school, where they may face stigma, difficulties keeping up with school work, shame and identity conflicts over their dual role as mother/adult and pupil/child (Dunne and Ananga 2013):

*"Efforts to encourage the girls to come back to school have been futile. Once they deliver we talk to the parents to encourage them to go to school. If it becomes impossible we tell the area chief. Actually there is little success because most girls do not want to come back. They feel shy and think others will talk about them and even laugh at them. I think if the parents will support and encourage them then they will come to school."*

(headteacher, Kenya).

*"She gave birth and continued in school but they would come and call her out of the classroom to go and feed the baby. She became embarrassed about that situation and quit school. We insisted with the husband but she could not return. The biggest challenge is to take care of the baby and continue studying"*

(Headteacher, Mozambique).

*"My time at school was a very tough one, I was punished almost every day by being caned. But my worst experience was being a big girl in class five among young children. Even teachers could make fun of me calling me 'mother'. I felt this was unkind treatment. Later on my classmates made it even worse by calling me grandmother"*

(focus group with out of school girls, Kenya).

These examples illustrate the need for sensitive enactment of re-entry policies. It is not enough just to permit girls to stay in school, without consideration of adaptations and support that may be needed for them to succeed.

### **5.3 Girls achieving and succeeding in school and beyond**

Girls consistently aspired to complete secondary education and beyond. Hardly ever did girls express the desire to work like their parents in farming, and most dreamed of professional careers as teachers,

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## Changes in schools

nurses, doctors or NGO workers, like the girl in Ghana who said *“I had actually wanted to be a pilot in the future, but now I want to work with ActionAid and Songtaba so that I can also help more girls”*. Their aspirations are clearly influenced by women with high status jobs in their own communities. Many are aware however, that they face immense hurdles, and the most frequently mentioned barriers they perceive are secondary school fees and reaching the academic level or passing the exams to go on to secondary school, college or university.

*“I would like to be a teacher and get married to a humble person who should be a doctor, and have at least 5 children. I want to get married after I get a job. I am only afraid of failing since for me to go to secondary school I have to work hard.”*  
(14 year old girl, Kenya).

*“I want to finish my studies up to the highest level. I would like to go to college, then get a job before marriage and continue working even after getting the job. I wish to get married after I have finished all my studies to have a number of children that God will give me. I worry about lack of school fees for my Secondary school education. I will convince my relatives and Acton Aid to help me.”*  
(10 year old girl, Kenya).

Some girls also spoke of pregnancy as a barrier to achieving their dreams. For one girl, who was already pregnant, this worry had become a reality:

*“I just want to continue studying, maybe I can be a nurse... hmm... I want to get married, but now that I’m pregnant I do not know what will happen to me today. I’m going to have to work. My mother did not have enough to buy everything for me, it worries me even now she does not live with me, she is working in Maputo. Today I am pregnant but I stopped studying, I will continue to come to school to be able to succeed in life. I can only study and sell things with my mother to get money.”*  
(16 year old girl, Mozambique).

Headteachers tended to paint a bleaker picture about girls’ future prospects, though this varied between the countries. In Kenya, many headteachers were concerned at the barrier posed by the exams at the end of primary schooling:

*“All boys and girls who pass their exams get admission to secondary schools. However, they are only few, many rot in the village as they engage in casual labour and charcoal making.”*  
(headteacher, Kenya)

In Mozambique too, headteachers complained about the costs and distance from secondary schools, and about the poor employment prospects for young people. In Ghana, where the policy to extend universal basic education from 6 to 9 years includes automatic progression and no additional fees when moving from primary to JHS, headteachers seemed more optimistic. They talked of many of their pupils going on to junior secondary schools, and some then proceeding to senior secondary schools:

*“After primary most girls previously got into hairdressing, tailoring and fish mongering and most boys got into farming and fishing. (Has this changed at all in the last 4 years?) Yes. Over the past 3 to 4 years, most girls and boys now proceed to JHS and SHS due to the encouragement and education from Songtaba.”*  
(headteacher, Ghana).

Our quantitative data on attainment, as measured by exam passes, supports the concerns of headteachers and girls regarding barriers to secondary education. In the Kenyan schools in 2012, fewer than 1 in 3 children passed the KCPE exams<sup>5</sup>, and though there has been an improvement in girls’ pass rates in lower primary, particularly among Pokomo girls, in the Wardei communities boys continue to outperform girls in both phases. In the Mozambique schools, just over half of girls and boys passed exams at the end of upper and lower primary schooling in 2012. In Ghana however, most girls and boys passed their end of upper primary exams in 2012. With 71% of girls passing in 2008 and 97% in 2012, the more optimistic perspectives of Ghanaian headteachers about girls’ futures may be warranted. However, though there has been an improvement in gender parity in exam pass rates from 0.69 (2008) to 0.88 (2012), there is still some way to go before girls perform as well as boys at this level. Some headteachers explained why girls continue to experience difficulties in the later years of primary schooling:

<sup>5</sup> Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) awarded after successful completion of 8 years of primary education.

*"Boys are doing better, most of them have more study time than the girls. Some of these girls have to fetch water before coming to school and some of them fetch water after school and cook after school. How can they learn? The boys don't do any of these things."*

(headteacher, Ghana).

*"Girls do not do well in upper primary because they start engaging in early sex, pregnancy and marriage, and household duties being a lot."*

(headteacher, Kenya).

In addition, pass rates in Ghana varied between school types. While pass rates for girls in grade 6 were high for schools in towns and some of the more rural schools, the three schools with pass rates lower than 60% were all in rural remote schools. Many parents in the remote rural schools spoke of their concerns about teacher absenteeism, while this was rarely a concern of parents in towns (see 5.4 below).

In all three countries, language was also viewed as hindering children's educational opportunities in these communities, with the minority languages spoken at home being disapproved or disallowed at school, particularly in the older years:

*"For the P6 we are supposed to use L2 (English) to teach, but here we have to use both L2 and L1 to teach, if you want to use only L2 we can't achieve our aim. Sometimes they themselves will tell you that because of the language they don't understand."*

(male teacher, Ghana).

#### 5.4 Gender, teachers and school management

The expansion in pupil numbers has been reflected in increased numbers of teachers in project schools, and particularly an increase in numbers of female teachers. However, in Mozambique and Kenya this has not had a marked effect on class size, with the average teacher-pupil ratio in Mozambique 47:1 and in Kenya 44:1 in 2013. In Ghana, however, teacher-pupil ratio has dropped somewhat to 33:1 (from 39:1 in 2008), suggesting that here teacher recruitment has kept up well with pupil enrolment. In all three countries, however, pupil:teacher ratios vary considerably from

school to school, between 19:1 and 57:1 in Ghana; between 25:1 and 64:1 in Mozambique; and 22:1 and 85:1 in Kenya. Headteachers also complained about teacher absenteeism meaning that classes often had to combine under one teacher, particularly in Ghana where the lack of housing for teachers and poor facilities in rural communities meant that teachers travelled long distances from their homes in town and were often late.

*"Another challenge we are facing is the teacher pupil ratio, it is so poor. For example if you go to one of my classes you get 120 pupils which are handled by one teacher, and these children are struggling with only 50 desks, teacher will struggle with no sitting place at all. In some of the classes there are virtually no desks."*

(headteacher, Ghana).

In Mozambique, half the project schools have female headteachers, and just over half of teaching staff and SMC members are now female. In Kenya and Ghana, however, women remain underrepresented, with fewer than 1 in 3 teachers and SMC members being female, and no female headteachers. This may reflect the rurality of the schools in these contexts, where recruiting female teachers has proved challenging. In both Kenya and Ghana, school developments have also been affected by high rates of teacher transfers between schools. Lack of female teachers in both contexts also meant that sometimes girls' club mentors were male. As one parent put it:

*"Teachers are not motivated in this community and it is said that when a tree is planted without watering it dies off. We also need trained teachers particularly the female teachers as most of the female teachers are not qualified."*

(father, Ghana).

Despite these continuing inequalities in gender representation in school management, headteachers and SMC members felt that there had been a change:

*"Yes there have been changes. The number of women has increased and the treasurer and the one in charge of school feeding programme is a woman. Now women are taking leadership position. The women have come up to be part of people building their society."*

(headteacher, Kenya).

*"Previously, we had only 10 men, but when they reshuffled, they got two women, so we now have two ladies. Because of the information of C.A.T (Community Advocacy Teams), peer parents and mentors, women can now contribute to decision making in the community and they contribute very important points but previously, they were looked down on."*

(headteacher, Ghana).

The project is seen as having contributed to women being able to participate in these spaces in management and leadership from which women were previously excluded, though men still dominate in numbers and in leadership positions.

### 5.5 School infrastructure

While in some of the project schools in Mozambique there have been improvements in school conditions, with for example the installation of electricity and a canteen supported by the project partner (AMUDEIA) in one school, in others conditions remain poor and in Kenya and Ghana there has been little change in school infrastructures. In all the countries, headteachers and teachers talked about the continuing challenges of lack of resources. Some schools are unfenced, some classes lack chairs and desks, or have lessons take place under trees, and toilets are often inadequate.

*"The toilets as you will see are very few which don't meet the needs of the number of girls in the whole school. Most girls end up running back home during their period of menstruation to change and this really wastes school time for the girls."*

(Headteacher, Kenya).

*"A challenge is lack of motivation because of the physical conditions of the school, to sit on the cold ground is very hard. Girls like to be clean but without desks and chairs it is very difficult. We never received aid from an NGO or government"*

(headteacher Mozambique).

*"If the community behaves well towards teachers you will even want to move your family there but the way they behave... Then we also talk of infrastructure. Some of the classes don't have*

*furniture, on a dual desk you see four children sitting at it making it difficult to write. Food is also a problem to the children. Actually the children are not fed well. If you are teaching and it is around 11 o'clock, the majority of them get very hungry because they come to school on an empty stomach"*

(male teacher, Ghana).

Although provision of infrastructural resources has not been prioritized by the project intervention, there has been a focus on improving provision of toilets for girls, with a notable change in Ghana, where provision of separate functioning toilets for girls has improved from 6 schools (46%) in 2009, to 11 schools (85%) in 2013. While most schools now have toilets for girls, in all three countries girls themselves often complained about lack of cleanliness, or toilets in need of repair.

### 5.6 In-service training and school policy on gender and violence

There have been marked improvements in project schools in in-service training by the project teams related to gender and violence. Teachers in all the project schools in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique and SMC members in most schools have been trained in issues relating to gender and violence against girls. Those who participated in training had more gender equitable attitudes than those who did not, though we need to caution against assuming a causal relationship as it is possible that the teachers participating in training already had more positive attitudes, and as the sample size was fairly small the differences did not reach statistical significance.





**Table 8: Teacher attitude index<sup>6</sup> according to participation in SVAGS in-service training**

	Country	Those who have participated	Those who have not participated
Training on policies and laws relating to violence against girls in schools/girls rights	Ghana	0.70	0.67
	Kenya	0.89	0.9
	Mozambique	0.89	0.86
Training in gender sensitive school plans	Ghana	0.69	0.68
	Kenya	0.92	0.87
	Mozambique	0.89	0.87
Training in gender sensitive pedagogy	Ghana	0.69	0.67
	Kenya	0.92	0.88
	Mozambique	0.89	0.86
Training in alternative approaches to discipline/ avoiding corporal punishment	Ghana	0.71	0.64
	Kenya	0.91	0.88
	Mozambique	0.88	0.87
Training in running girls' (or boys') clubs	Ghana	0.73	0.65
	Kenya	0.92	0.87
	Mozambique	0.88	0.87

6 The 'Challenging violence and gender equality' attitudes index combined teachers' responses to 8 attitude statements, and calculated a score between 0 (does not challenge at all) and 1 (high levels of challenge) – see section 2.5.1.

Girls' clubs are active in all project schools, and in most schools teachers have been trained on running girls' (or boys') clubs. Training on alternative approaches to discipline has reportedly taken place in around 2/3 of the Kenyan schools, and most schools in Ghana, but only a minority of schools in Mozambique, though plans were in place for such training to commence soon after data collection took place.

School level policy development has been more mixed, with most Kenyan schools having a policy on violence against girls, and half of them having Girl-Sensitive School Plans (GSSP); half the Ghanaian schools had policies on violence and 5/13 schools with GSSPs. While very few schools in Mozambique

had these plans/policies at the time of data collection, this may be because different terms were used there. The Mozambique project team have attempted to work with existing school structures and processes, so for example integrating gender-sensitive schooling and pedagogy into the existing annual and five year plans that schools are required to have. However, project staff have been concerned that the school boards have not been aware of their roles and responsibilities around teaching and learning processes, and their plans have tended to focus on buildings and resources. This raises important issues about policy development in schools, which is much more than producing a written policy but also involves assessing the effectiveness of existing structures and

## Changes in schools

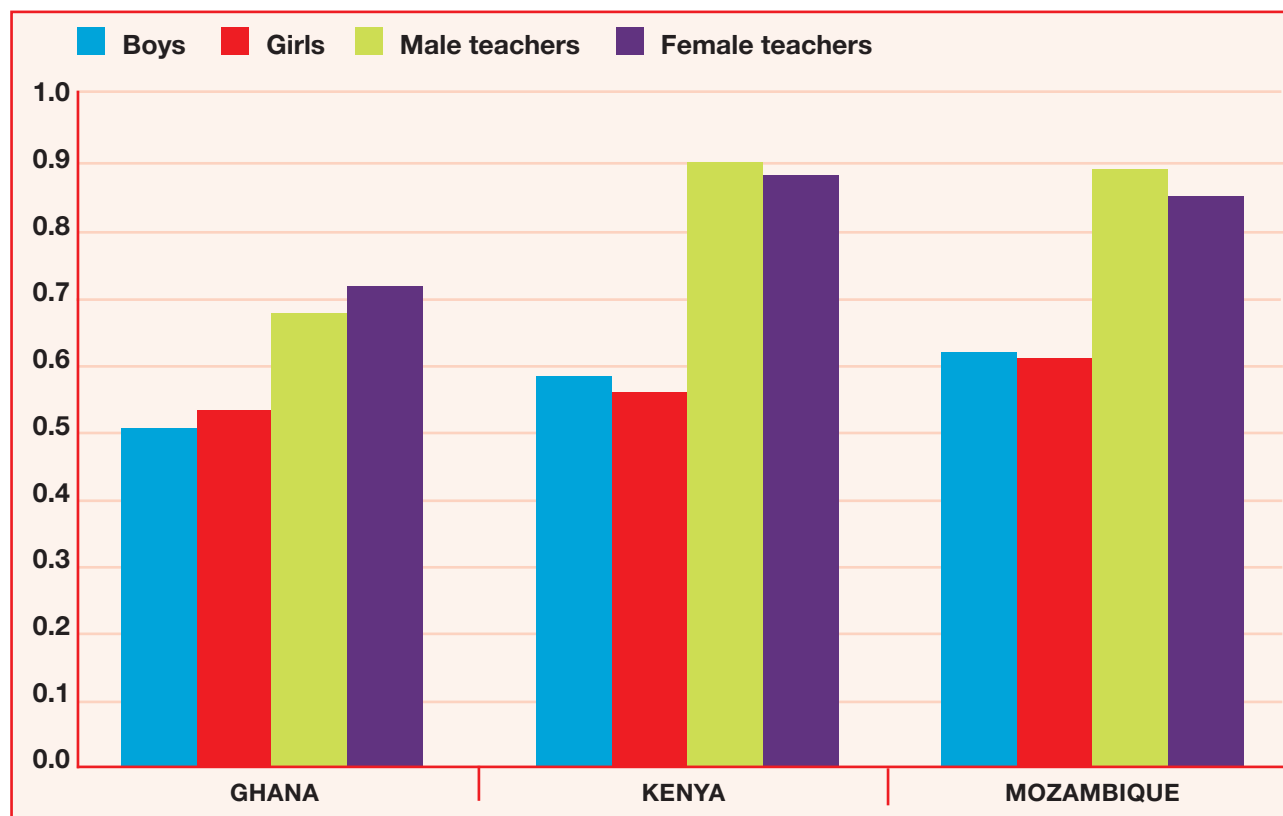
where necessary working with school management (as well as District Educational management) to strengthen these processes, and to consider how to integrate work on gender and violence in ways that can create meaningful change.

### 5.7 Shifting attitudes to gender in schools

During the endline study, girls, boys and teachers were asked a series of questions about attitudes to gendered roles, rights and violence. In order to examine these attitudinal trends in more depth, responses were combined into a composite 'challenging violence and gender equality attitudes index'. Overall attitudes across the three countries as measured by the index may be seen below in figure 11. They highlight fairly similar levels of attitudes for girls and boys across the three countries. In all countries teachers demonstrate attitudes more challenging of gender inequalities and violence than children, but with a greater difference in Kenya and Mozambique than in Ghana. Male and female teachers had similar attitudes, and teachers in Ghana had somewhat less equitable attitudes than those in Kenya and Mozambique.

We anticipated that more qualified, experienced teachers may have more gender equitable attitudes (Unterhalter, North et al. 2013), but our findings were mixed. In none of the countries did attitudes vary by years of experience. In Kenya and Mozambique, attitudes did not vary significantly between teachers with different types of qualification, or permanence of position. However, as shown in table 9, in Ghana teachers who are trained are significantly more likely to have attitudes that challenge gender violence and inequalities than those who are untrained, and there is an even greater difference in attitudes between permanent and temporary teachers.

These varying findings are difficult to explain, but may relate to broader issues around teacher status and training in the three countries. For example, the policy in Ghana of bringing in untrained teachers to meet demand in rural areas may be the reason why 30% of our teacher sample were untrained in Ghana compared to 6% each in Kenya and Mozambique. In Kenya too trained teachers had somewhat more equitable attitudes, but the small numbers of untrained teachers meant this did not reach statistical significance. The high staff turnover in the project schools in Ghana could perhaps account for



**Figure 11: Mean attitude index across groups and countries (2013).**

**Table 9: Teacher attitude index according to teacher status in Ghana**

	Attitude Index	Significance
<b>Permanent/temporary teacher</b>		<b>0.002 **</b>
Permanent	0.71	
Temporary	0.44	
<b>Professional grade</b>		<b>0.046 *</b>
Untrained teacher	0.62	
Trained teacher	0.73	

Indicating significance: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

the difference in attitudes between permanent and temporary teachers, since many of the temporary teachers would not have experienced the SVAGS training workshops. But we cannot assume a causal relationship, and it may be that teachers who enter training or get permanent positions come from different backgrounds and already have more pro-rights attitudes than those who are untrained or temporary.

Some attitudes appear to have changed more since 2009 than others. Teachers' attitudes to gender norms, including who should help with housework, farmwork or school chores, for example, have not changed very much, and still in 2013 teachers in Mozambique have the most gender-equitable attitudes in these areas. For example, more than 80% of male and female teachers in Mozambique in 2013 believe that housework should be shared between girls and boys, compared with 60% in Kenya and fewer than 50% in Ghana. Teachers' attitudes to rights have changed more markedly, with more teachers in all three countries in 2013 disagreeing with teacher practices such as corporal punishment, or asking girls or boys to do personal errands. While in Kenya and Mozambique, teachers in 2013 are more likely than they were in 2009 to support teacher dismissal for sexual relationships with pupils and girls returning to school after giving birth, and to disagree that sexual harassment is a girl's own fault, findings are mixed in Ghana. For example, while 93% of Ghanaian teachers in 2009 agreed that girls should be allowed to return to school after giving birth, this figure unexpectedly dropped to 57% in 2013.

The varying findings between countries may indicate that the training on some issues has been less

effective in Ghana, where high teacher turnover may also limit its effectiveness. It may also be that more conservative views on gender in this context mean that teachers are more resistant to rights based interventions. However, in Ghana as well as Kenya and Mozambique, teachers reflected on how their own classrooms had become more gender-equitable:

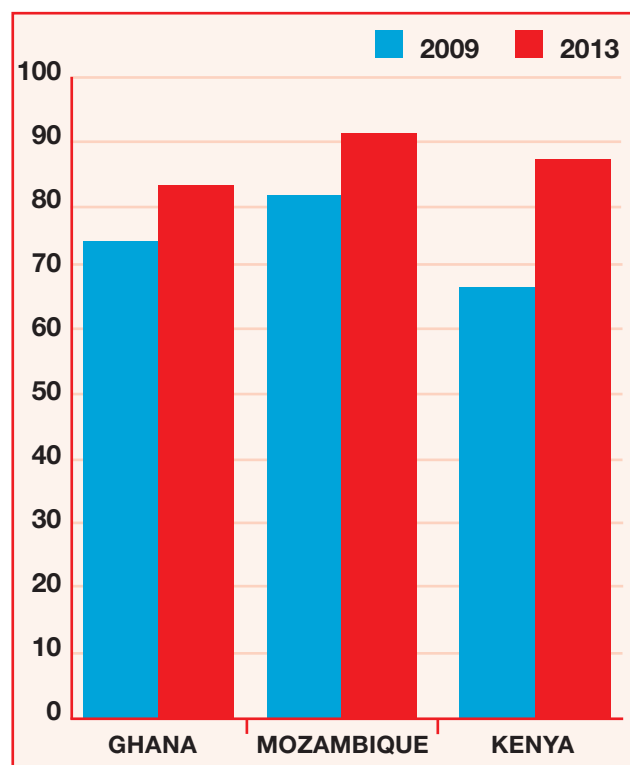
*"Formerly I used to focus only on the fast learners who are usually boys, but now I focus on all students in the class, that is both boys and girls. It is because I want the girls too to catch up. It's good they also catch up so we have gender equality in the class and also we have been hearing of gender equality and so that is what I also practice in my class. (Where have you been hearing of gender equality?) On the radio, in school and on TV. (How did you get it from the school?) The head teacher has mentioned the issues of gender equality to me before. Like this prefectship in school, we have both boys and girls as prefects and not only one sex"* (female teacher, Ghana).

*"Teachers now create a conducive environment for both pupils. They were using an unfavourable methodology. They were throwing questions to just boys but now whoever is ready to answer answers. This is all due to training. Now, both sexes are more active in class"* (headteacher, Kenya).

*"Now, in the organization of the students in the classroom, boys and girls are mixed and everyone is treated equally without prioritising one gender"* (male teacher, Mozambique).

### 5.8 Girls' perceptions of educational equity and equality in schools

Most girls in all three countries now perceive the classroom as gender equitable in the ways they are treated by teachers in class, and most feel that they participate in class as much as boys.

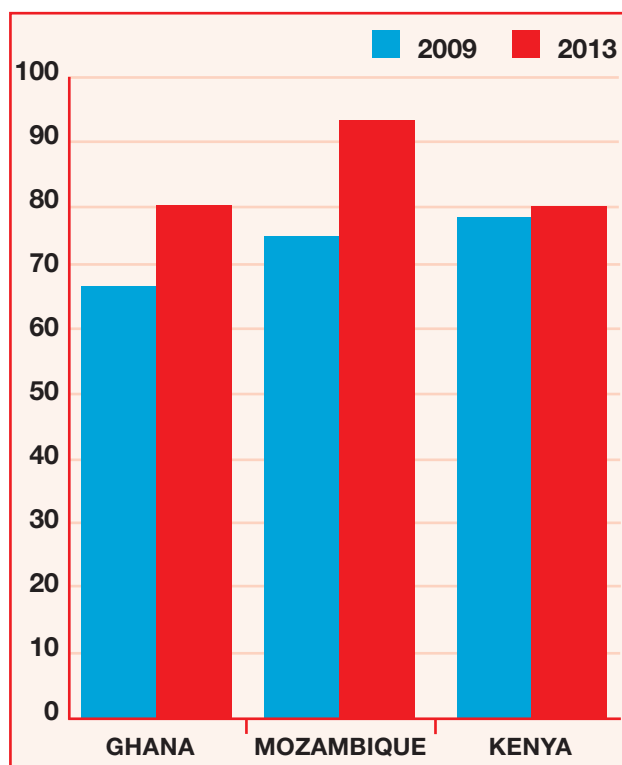


**Figure 12: Percentage of girls who think that teachers do not show bias against girls in their questioning approaches**

In all three countries, girls and boys have leadership positions in class, and often they are involved in selection of prefects or class monitors along with their teachers. Children are not generally involved in making the rules, though those in leadership positions are involved in their implementation. A girl who is now in junior secondary school reflected back on her time as prefect last year:

*“At the primary school I selected some of the juniors to be bringing water and others to sweep the school compound. And in the classroom I asked the seniors not to wear slippers to school again”*  
(14 year old girl, Ghana).

Although there has clearly been positive change in girls' participation and leadership at schools, gender bias sometimes lingers in the selection of boys for more senior, authoritative positions. One girl, for



**Figure 13: Percentage of girls who think girls participate equally or more than boys in class**

example explained that in her school girls could not take the role of 'general prefect':

*“Because she is a girl, if she wants to control us, we will not respect her”*  
(15 year old girl, Ghana).

A headteacher's comment also signals how changing gender roles in schools can remain rhetorical:

*“In those days, we always saw the boy to be the senior prefects but we have also realised that there are some roles that are not designed for only the male; if only the girl can perform such a roles, she can be given the chance. However, as for this school, there has not been a senior prefect being a girl.”*  
(headteacher, Ghana).



Many girls across the three countries feel that boys and girls do equally well at mathematics, science and literacy:

*“Both boys and girls perform the same in mathematics, science, reading and writing. It is so because we are taught by the same teachers and learn in the same class”*

(10 year old girl, Kenya).

Those who disagree tend to see boys as doing better because they have more time to study out of school, while a few feel that girls do better because boys misbehave in class.

*“I think they study a lot and we work a lot. When we got home we have to wash the dishes, sweep, do the cooking while boys just come and eat”*

(13 year old girl, Mozambique).

*“In maths, girls perform well because boys don’t pay attention. They just play in class”*

(9 year old girl, Kenya).

Few girls appeared to view gender differences in performance as innate, though one girl felt it was influenced by future aspirations:

*“Some of the girls want to be nurses so they learn science. The boys want to be bank managers and pilots so they learn maths.”*

(9 year old girl, Ghana).

Overall, these findings suggest positive improvements in girls’ views on gender equity and equality as learners and in classrooms. At the same time, they have many suggestions for how their schools could become more girl-friendly. Many spoke about the need for separate toilets and handwashing facilities, and girls in Kenya spoke of provision of sanitary towels. A group of 8-11 year old girls in Ghana spoke of the need to post more female teachers to their school. They also spoke of opening up the membership of the girls’ club to more girls, so that all girls had access to female mentors, and to be taught about sex and relationships:

*“We will tell the head teacher to request for teachers who can teach sex and relationships”*

(8-11 year olds girls’ focus group, Ghana).



## 5.9 Changing practices on corporal punishment in school

As discussed in chapter 3, corporal punishment in the form of whipping/caning has considerably reduced in Mozambique, with the percentage of girls saying that they have been caned in the last 12 months dropping from 52% in 2009 to 29% in 2013, a drop that is all the more remarkable in comparison to the apparent increase in girls' experiences of most other forms of violence. It has also reduced slightly in Ghana, though in the past year nearly two-thirds have been whipped or caned. In Kenya, however, the practice appears to be on the increase, with almost three-quarters of girls saying they had experienced it in the past year.

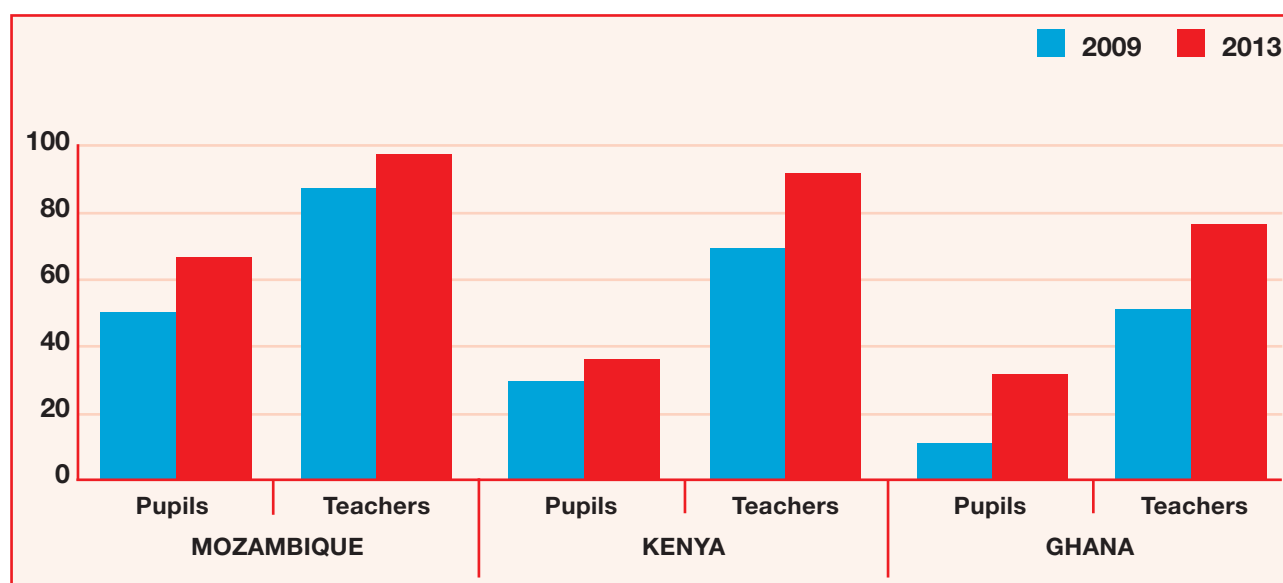
This evidence about the extent of corporal punishment in Kenya and Ghana contradicts to an extent the findings on attitudes to corporal punishment, as shown in figure 14. This indicates that the majority of teachers in all three countries disagree with the practice, and that teachers' views have become increasingly critical. Children's views have also shifted, though only in Mozambique do a majority of girls and boys disagree with corporal punishment.

During the baseline study it was noted that in Mozambique the legal ban on corporal punishment discouraged teachers from openly admitting it, but seemed to have minimal impact on the practice of corporal punishment. In 2013, however, there is clear evidence in the project schools of a change in practice

in Mozambique. This may indicate a time lag in the enactment of the law, and that at least in Mozambique there has been a shift from rhetoric to changing behaviours. In Kenya, the ban on corporal punishment has been streamlined by the 2010 Constitution and the Revised Education Act 2012, while in Ghana, though there are ministerial directives advising against the practice, caning by headteachers is still legal. It seems possible that Kenya and Ghana are closer to the situation of Mozambique 5 years ago, with attitudes not yet followed by significant changes in practice.

It is also possible that the quantitative data does not accurately reflect changes in practice since children were not asked about the frequency of the practice, but whether it had happened to them (at all) in the past 12 months. Shifts from daily to occasional incidence could therefore be missed. A concerning finding from Mozambique and Kenya, however, is that kneeling/squatting for long periods has increased, with one third of girls in Mozambique and two fifths in Kenya saying they had experienced this punishment in the past year. This finding is also supported by our qualitative data, in which girls in all three countries talked of a reduction or elimination of caning, only to be replaced by 'lighter' punishments like cleaning toilets, or punishing with hands rather than canes.

Most headteachers in all three countries said that corporal punishment is no longer used in their schools, indicating an awareness both about shifting laws/policies, and about the project's advocacy work



**Figure 14: Percentage of pupils and teachers disagreeing that it is okay for teachers to whip girls to maintain discipline in school or class**

in this area. Some explained that they no longer need to cane, but prefer to use reasoning and dialogue with children:

*"There is no violence and we can't beat the pupils like during our days. So we keep away corporal punishments and adopt dialogue. Madam, I think caning makes children afraid and timid and kills their confidence. This leads to men dominating girls, which is gender inequality."*  
(headteacher, Kenya).

Some clearly attributed their changing practices to ActionAid's work, though they were not always happy about this. One Kenyan headteacher, for example, said that the reason they do not cane is fear that ActionAid would "have us indicted". Another complained that children's performance had deteriorated as a result of project interventions:

*"As you see from our KCPE results on the wall, our performance as a school has drastically dropped since this project started. The main reason is indiscipline. How can a child learn without discipline? Tell me how best can a child be corrected at school and home without punishment and caning. The project should have taught girls and boys on neutral equality issues without overemphasizing the caning and punishment"*  
(headteacher, Kenya).

A headteacher in Ghana said: *"if we don't use the cane, we can't control the children."*

Teachers spoke about how they struggle with discipline in their own classrooms. Many felt this was an area where they have changed their own practices, but their capacity and confidence to successfully use alternative approaches varied, often they lacked support and some talked of how this had impacted negatively on their morale:

*"On policies, our head spoke about the use of cane at assembly. She said that the use of cane is not that good and when you use it on them it frustrates the pupil, so teachers should devise other forms of punishment. (Did she suggest any?) No. However, I last saw herself punishing P2B pupils that each of them should bring 50 stones for making noise in class."*  
(male teacher, Ghana).

*"Because now we don't cane anymore, we have changed the way we teach. You have to know how to distribute questions. How do you frighten them to pay attention to you? How do you motivate them to pay attention to you? So you have to develop a teaching approach that will keep the entire class busy all the time. So nowadays if I enter the class and they are making noise I ask the class to stand up, they will know that there is a teacher in the class. So when I start teaching and the stubborn ones are making noise, I will always say hello and they will say hi. And I will say what I am teaching is very important so they have to pay attention, if not, when I finish teaching I will give exercise and if you don't score I am going to punish you. Because they don't know the kind of punishment that I will give, they will all pay attention. This makes me able to handle my class. We don't cane now and the children are happy with that and they are doing well."*  
(male teacher, Ghana).

*"Now I do not feel motivated, and if the kids do not do the work set I do not insist, because the children were encouraged to complain to authorities about the punishments."*  
(female teacher, Mozambique).

*"Teachers are now fearful, not knowing what type of punishment they will apply to the student (...) Those are the changes, we have lost autonomy over students"*  
(male teacher, Mozambique).

Overall, it seems that the project has not provided teachers with alternative strategies to maintain discipline in class. Although the project is clearly articulating the legislative and policy changes, and thus influencing knowledge and overt attitudes, it has told teachers what they should not be doing rather than what they can do. At the time of the endline data collection, plans were underway to carry out school based training in positive discipline in Mozambique and Kenya, so it is possible that the practices there will continue to improve. But there is clearly a long way to go. Our evidence clearly indicates that tackling corporal punishment requires addressing a range of issues, including beliefs about child-rearing, teacher training in classroom management and 'positive discipline', teacher motivation and school resources to reduce the burden of large, poorly equipped classes.

### 5.10 Curriculum on gender, sex and violence

Most headteachers in all three countries claim that the school curriculum covers a wide range of issues concerning gender, sex and violence, with topics like girls' rights, sex and relationships, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health, menstruation, and violence taught during class sessions, in girls' clubs, and sometimes in assembly.

The topic of violence is usually discussed in school in relation to children fighting and bullying, often in class or during assembly. Sometimes girls explained that they have been told how to report incidents. Many girls do not remember being taught about sex and relationships. Those who do, often speak of being taught about bodies and hygiene, to avoid boys, and to abstain from sex outside marriage. Sometimes this teaching takes place in class, but often the instances described by girls were in the girls' club, or when a project partner came to speak to whole classes:

*"It was a Friday and we sat for girls' club and they told us. They said we are students therefore we are not supposed to have boyfriends. I learnt that it is not good to be a student and have a lover"*  
(9 year old girl, Ghana).

*"Our social studies master spoke to us in class about it, he said we should not give ourselves to men as we can get diseases from that. That was last term."*  
(14 year old, Ghana).

*"Actually, on Monday Sarah of Action-Aid said that if boys cheat us with money, we should refuse and go away and if one accepts that would be her own problem. She also added that, if boys touch our breasts, we should tell our friends, parents or teachers."*  
(9 year old girl, Kenya).

*"I don't remember much but she taught us to keep ourselves well during menstruation. Yes. To have sanitary towels for the periods and cleanliness."*  
(13 year old girl, Kenya).

Teachers, parents and children alike view schooling as incompatible with teenage sex, and repeatedly the messages conveyed to children associate sex with disease, immorality and educational failure. The

legal context is important too, where sex involving a girl under 18, whether or not it is consensual, is considered a crime in Kenya (16 in Mozambique and Ghana), and responses are increasingly focusing on punishing boys and men who are found to have impregnated girls under that age. At the same time, it is girls who carry the responsibility to stay away from boys in order to stay at school, without attention paid to boys who may be pursuing girls. Likewise, there is a gap in project interventions addressing the male youth out of school. There is a discourse of school-girls as non-sexual, and teenage sexual activity is therefore not openly spoken about. As one teacher explained:

*"I will suggest that they still continue to advise them to keep themselves away from men. There is a saying: marry your books and give birth to success"*  
(male teacher, Ghana).

And a Kenyan boy expressed a similar view:

*"Education and sex are like oil and water, they don't go together. Abstain"*  
(focus group with 12-16 year old boys, Kenya).

The project has recognised the need to support girls and boys in having safe, healthy, consensual relationships but this has been a particularly challenging area for the project to tackle, given the sensitivities, and discussions on how to deal with unwanted sexual aggression are more acceptable. In the Ghana project area, for example, girls going to school had been associated with promiscuity and the project has successfully broken this association and removed these attitudinal barriers to girls' education. However, the common perception of sex and relationships education as encouraging sexual activity or promiscuity makes it particularly difficult to tackle. Girls have received some support in terms of education about safe sex in girls' clubs, especially in the more peri-urban project area of Mozambique, and it is in this site where the project has been able to work on improving sex and relationships education in schools. While there was some teaching on these issues in all three countries, teachers appeared to be given little guidance, and few teachers spoke with young people about safe sex or contraception. Addressing teenage sexuality continues to be a challenge for projects working within a child protection framework where any sexual activity involving girls can be seen as abuse.





### 5.11 Conclusions

Over the five years of the project, there have been notable positive changes in project schools. Enrolment has increased, teachers and children talk of increasing pupil participation and gender equality in classroom processes, and knowledge and attitudes about gender and violence have improved. Many of these changes can be traced to project interventions, particularly the training for schools, as well as through the ways girls' clubs may be shifting the patterns of interaction between pupils and teachers. Changes are also linked with the broader educational context. In Ghana, though the district is conservative in gender norms, the education sector has been driving changes that are clearly impacting, in for example the accessibility of junior high schools. The shared emphasis on EFA seems to be having a particularly strong impact there. But this is not always reflected in issues of quality and equality in school. The persistence of corporal punishment, and related forms of harsh punishment, signal that intervention on positive discipline is still needed. More guidance is needed on how to teach sex and relationships education in contexts hostile to teenage sex. More attention is needed to address classroom processes, to ensure that teachers are supported to enact the training they receive in their own classes.

In all three contexts, there is still some way to go in institutionalising change within school structures and practices. Asked about sustainability following the end of the project, many headteachers felt that the training of mentors and other staff would go some way to maintaining change, but this leaves the onus on the individual teachers, rather than built into institutional planning and policy at school level. It is also important for interventions in primary schools to be followed through to secondary school. The challenges of institutionalisation are huge when there are no existing effective mechanisms in place, within which new initiatives can be integrated. A salutary example was the discussion of one headteacher in Ghana with the researcher, who asked the head about girls' charters. When the headteacher denied any knowledge about this, the researcher prompted him by pointing out the charter produced by the girls in the club at his school that was pinned on the wall of his office. It is all too easy for efforts of girls, their teachers, and project workers to dissipate, and for talk of change to remain just that. Without attention to the conditions in which teaching and learning take place, and the ways in which children continue to be excluded from later phases of education, the potential of 'gender-friendly schools' will remain only partially unrealised.

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## 6. Legal and policy enactments on violence against girls: from national to local

### 6.1 Introduction

In 2009, the baseline study concluded that in all three countries there had been significant strides in legislation to improve girls' access to basic education, and on gender and violence, but that there remained some problematic gaps and inconsistencies, and the changes at national level were feeding through to local level in very uneven ways. Neither informal traditional justice systems nor formal welfare structures, like police or health services, were providing robust response and support systems for girls. The study concluded that "the rhetoric of change seems a distant reality for girls and their communities in the project districts across all three countries, with ineffective structures, training and resources to implement policies at local level" (Parkes and Heslop 2011, p. 11).

The project has addressed these issues through advocacy work at national level aiming to strengthen clarity and consistency in national laws and policies, and through working at provincial, district, school and community level to support the enactment of laws and policies on gender, violence and education. One focus has been to strengthen the ways in which formal and informal justice systems work together on violence against girls. It is this local level that forms the main focus of this chapter, where we consider changes in knowledge, structures and practices in addressing gender violence within the project areas.

### 6.2 Influencing national legal and policy frameworks

A key characteristic of the project's advocacy work at national level has been alliance-building with other civil society organizations (CSOs) in order to influence policy making. Using findings from the baseline research as well as other project activities, project teams have attempted to influence government, ministries and the media.

In Kenya, the project has worked with the Elimu Yetu Coalition, a broad grouping of CSO's focusing on education for all. There has been a considerable amount of legislative activity, including the 2010 Constitution supporting children's participation in decision-making at community level; the Sexual Offences Act was reviewed and updated in 2011; FGM was made illegal through the FGM Act 2011; the 2012 the Teachers Service Commission Act banned teachers having close private relations with children, such as children doing chores in teachers' homes; and the new Basic Education Act in 2012 criminalised corporal punishment in schools and strengthened the re-entry policy for pregnant school girls and adolescent mothers. In Kenya, the project's alliances with civil society organisations have contributed to some of these legislative and policy changes, including a new ministerial Circular ensuring that teachers found guilty of sexual violence are not just transferred to other schools, and setting up a centralised database to track teachers who commit sexual offences. The revised Basic Education Act brings this and other education policy circulars into one document, and provides a clearer definition of violence. The project also lobbied for reviewing the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) Bill in Kenya which was finally enacted in 2012, emphasising issues of gender violence, and securing agreement with teachers' unions to support this agenda in schools.

In Mozambique, the project's alliance building with civil society organisations led to a campaign to reject Decree 39 (2003), an Order that prohibits sexual relations between teachers and pupils but also stipulates for the removal of pregnant schoolgirls from school to evening education classes. Through the alliance's work in raising awareness about the potential stigma and risks to girls' safety and security in travelling to classes at night, the Ministry of Education is now reviewing the Order. With the end of the project, the continuing campaign is led by Girls Not Brides. The project in Mozambique has also coordinated civil society consultations around revision

of the Penal Code, specifically as regards child rights and gender violence.

In Ghana, the project partner, GNECC (Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition) has led the process of discussions resulting in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Girls Education Unit (GEU) of the Ghana Education Service and the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service:

*“This became necessary when the mapping of the existing policy on girls’ education identified gaps in policy implementation and this was corroborated by these two state institutions. As the way forward to the issue, DOVVSU and GEU recommended that they have a system in place which could enable DOVVSU officials to walk in to public schools for their outreach programs and teachers walking into DOVVSU offices to file complaints of abuses.”*  
(interview with advocacy partner).

The project has also initiated and helped to push forward the Ghana Gender Education Policy to be adopted by the Ministry of Education.

As well as through coalitions, direct petitioning by girls has been an effective way to influence legislators. In Mozambique, for example, their petition led the Vice-Minister of Education to work with girls and CSOs to draw up a proposal, now awaiting ministerial approval, to institutionalise girls’ clubs across the country. The project’s combination of national and local intervention enables local knowledge to be disseminated to national stakeholders, creating valuable opportunities for girls and their communities to influence policy and legislation. In all three countries, strategic relationships with media houses and individual journalists have been developed in order to promote VAGS issues and to improve how VAGS is reported in the media.

For the past three years, the project’s advocacy work at national level has been monitored through annual interviews with government officials and analysis of sensitivity of media articles on violence against girls. In all three countries in 2013, government officials interviewed were universal in their verbal support for challenging gender violence in schools. In all three countries, there has been an increase in the numbers of government officials saying that they take actions during their work, such as funding



activities, to help challenge violence against girls. In Ghana, most newspapers were deemed to represent issues on violence against girls well, but in Kenya only half the media articles were rated as sensitive. In Mozambique, there appears to have been an improvement in media coverage, with three-quarters of articles rated as sensitive and productive in 2013. While changes in laws and policies, and attitudes and practices in government and media clearly cannot be attributed solely to the project, they may be indicative of how violence against girls has become an increasing priority among opinion formers and legislators.

### 6.3 Building local structures for policy enactments on violence against girls

At local level, the project has worked to disseminate information about relevant legislation and policies, including, for example, in Kenya and Ghana producing and distributing guidelines on the Gender and



## Legal & policy enactments

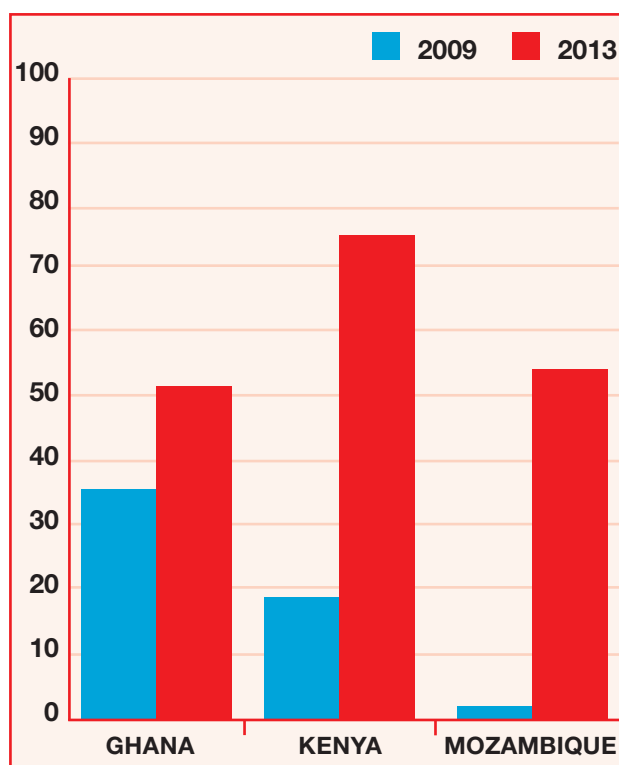
Education policy, Re-entry policy and the Sexual Offences Act to schools and communities. In Ghana, the project printed and disseminated the revised Teachers' Code of Conduct, which criminalizes sexual relationships between teachers and pupils. In Mozambique, the project has worked with a coalition led by UNICEF to develop a manual on mechanisms for addressing violence against girls.

The project has worked with Reflect Circles in Mozambique, community action groups comprising elders, religious leaders and women in Kenya and CATS (Community Advocacy Teams) in Ghana, providing information on laws and policies, with these groups often taking responsibility for further dissemination within their communities.

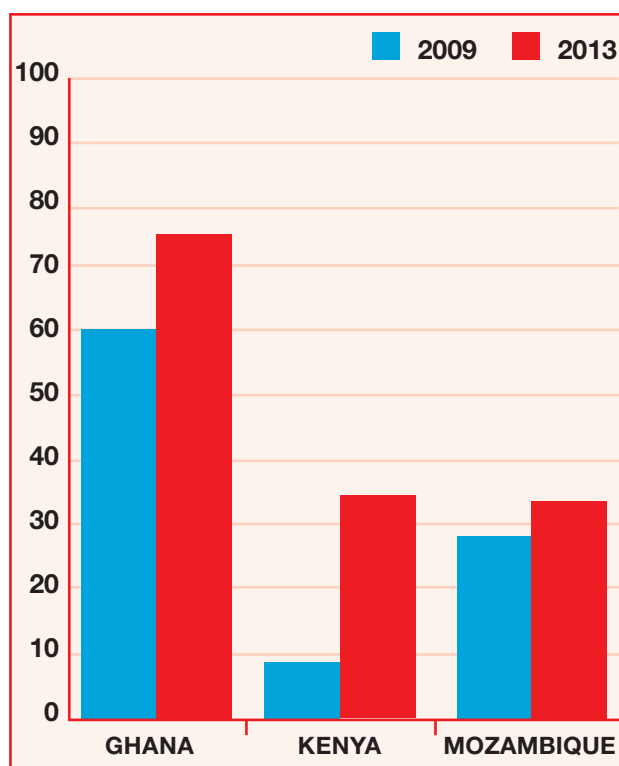
Also central to their roles has been strengthening of local child protection systems. In Kenya, while in the past cases were settled mainly through informal systems, girls are now encouraged to report cases of gender violence to *Sauti ya Wanawake* ("The Voice of Women"), a women's CBO which, with support from ActionAid and the Girl Child Network, provides paralegal support and refers cases as needed to police, the children's department and hospital. In Mozambique, the project has helped to set up a multi-sectoral technical group to provide more coordinated service delivery. In Ghana, in each of the project communities a CAT, comprised of three female and two male community members with para-legal training, responds to cases of violence and links to the formal child protection systems. They establish Child Protection Networks, including members of school management committees, the District Assembly and DOWSU. All these structures attempt to bring together community-based and formal justice systems.

### 6.4 Knowledge about laws and policies on violence against girls

In all three countries, there is clear evidence of change in local knowledge about laws, policies and child protection systems. Training for school staff has led to an increase in all three countries in teachers' knowledge of laws and policies relating to gender and violence.



**Figure 15: Percentage of teachers with knowledge of laws/policies**



**Figure 16: Percentage of girls knowing local organisation providing support to VAG survivors**



There have also been changes in girls' knowledge about organizations providing help in cases of gender violence, as demonstrated in figure 16.

Although data on girls' knowledge of support organisations was not collected in the baseline study, it was included in the project's monitoring and evaluation framework, enabling comparison over the last 2 years of the project. While girls in Ghana continue to be most knowledgeable about support organizations since 2011, there has been considerable improvement in girls' knowledge in Kenya, and some improvement in Mozambique. In the qualitative interviews, girls and boys were asked to predict outcomes of hypothetical scenarios involving sexual attacks on girls, and across the three countries, they talked of seeking help from parents and teachers, and reporting on to police. While in Mozambique there were few references to other community-based support structures, except for the police, in Kenya, they often mentioned seeking help from ActionAid, and in Ghana they also mentioned the project (ActionAid and SongTaba) as well as other community structures, such as CATs:

*"The family will report to the chief and he will assemble all the men in the community and find out who was involved and if the person is not trying to own up then the chief will report to the police for investigation. And she should tell Songtaba."*

(13 year old boy, Ghana).

*"She should go and report to her parents then the chief afterwards. She could also report to the police or ActionAid. I don't think there are any problems during reporting. These people will help her."*

(15 year old girl, Kenya).

Parents too talked about changes in their perspectives about actions to take in cases of violence against girls, including both community based resolutions and official systems. Some spoke of how cases would initially be discussed by community members, often including traditional leaders and elders, and one mother in Mozambique commented on how these discussions were no longer restricted to men:

*"Now things have changed. People sit, talk and decide. Before, only men decided but now everyone decides; regardless of age, everyone participates"*

(focus group with mothers, Mozambique).

A father in Kenya talked of increasing "consensus-building" and one in Ghana talked of change: "at first we used to just come out and fight but now we investigate the issues and use the law to get the truth." Parents also talked about a readiness to go to the police, either immediately in extreme cases, or when a case was not resolved in the community. Some felt that the changes were because of the deterrent effect on men of knowing they may be punished. Others felt they were because girls and women had more knowledge of where to go to report. Asked whether their views had changed about the best course of action in cases of violence, a group of mothers in Ghana had varying perspectives:

**Mother 1:** *Yes, because I now know of the rights of girls and I also know if someone does that to your child, you should not let him go free.*

**Mother 2:** *We do hear programmes on the local radio on issues bothering girls. Sometime too, we were also educated on rights of girls by members of Songtaba.*

**Mother 3:** *No, I have not seen any change because if a family member rapes your child, you cannot send the person to police for the others to hear of your family problems.*

These mothers attributed their increased knowledge both to the project and to media coverage, but the third mother also reflects on continuing barriers to reporting, particularly of violence within the family.

## 6.5 Changes in formal and informal child protection systems

While there have been clear changes in knowledge about how and where to report and about the law, the evidence that child protection systems are operating in practice more effectively is more mixed.

Girls were asked about the outcome of their last experience of different types of violence. As in 2009, in 2013 very few of the experiences of violence they report to anyone reach official systems. The small number of cases of extreme violence makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the outcomes, particularly as girls who had experienced sex for goods or forced sex tended not to answer questions about actions taken, perhaps because of the sensitivity of these issues. In Ghana, cases involving weapons (sticks, stones or knives) that had been reported to a family member were often not followed up, or were followed up within the family or community. Where they had been reported to school staff, however, follow up actions included punishment at school or in a few cases reporting to the police. In Kenya, the small number of cases spoken about were mainly followed up within the family or community. In Mozambique, more cases reached official channels. While in some cases no action was taken, 11 of the 34 cases involving weapons were reported by family members to the police; and of the 7 cases of forced sex reported to teachers, 3 were followed up by reporting to the police and to school management or the District Education Office. Almost no cases were followed up with counselling or health advice for the girl in question (1 case each in Mozambique and Ghana).

These findings indicate that there has not been a marked improvement in the support provided by official systems for girls experiencing violence. Only in Mozambique does there appear to be some change in relation to cases being reported to the police. Monitoring and evaluation data collected annually on the outcomes of reporting to the police (from any source) also presents a mixed picture. Since 2009, there has been an increase in the numbers of cases reported to the police, child protection agencies and community based organizations, from 13 to 53 cases in Mozambique, 9 to 32 cases in Kenya, and 66 to 105 in Ghana. In Mozambique this has been matched by an increase in the cases being investigated, prosecuted and leading to conviction. In Ghana and Kenya, however, while there has also been an increase in cases investigated, very few cases have resulted in prosecution or conviction.

Views of community members varied about effectiveness of official systems, but many felt that there had been an improvement in how formal and informal justice systems work together. In Ghana, the

informal justice systems within the community are often preferred: “because as local people we don’t really like our problems being discussed in public because of the shame it brings to both families” (female CAT member). Community members felt there has been an improvement in how decisions are made about cases between community leaders and CAT members, and in knowing when to pass cases on to the police. The formal systems are however viewed as overly bureaucratic and time-consuming. A women’s group leader viewed the improvements as linked to the project, but also recognised room for further improvement:

*“Because of the education you people give to us we now know some problems like impregnating a girl and refusing responsibility upon intercession of the chief should not go unpunished. We now know making such cases family problems will not take us anywhere and so we report to the police to take care of those spoiling our daughters. (Are there any ways in which you feel that the formal and informal justice systems still need to improve?) Yes, I only wish we could find another way to settle our problems in the community, although the police station is good but it takes a lot of our time and even it brings division in the community in terms of unity.”*

(women’s group leader, Ghana).

A local police officer in Ghana also recognised the need for formal and informal justice systems to improve through “the establishment of mutual trust and cooperation”.

In Kenya too there is some evidence of improved coordination at community level, with cases initially taken to community leaders and *Sauti Ya Wanawake*, before being referred on to the police, though the District Education Officer pointed out that severe cases were taken more quickly now to the police:

*“In most communities people are related, so the informal structures are still working whereby people can sit and resolve disputes, but if the cases are severe which may include bodily harm they are taken straight to the police”*

(District Education Officer, Kenya).

However, a District Health Officer complained at the delays in cases reaching the hospital:

*"The community does not have a formal referral system. They have been reporting cases to the chiefs who report to the police to take such cases to hospital. This has not been helpful because most cases have lost critical evidence in the process as most girls are not accessing timely medical attention. Ideally, in a defilement case, the survivor should get to the nearest hospital as soon as possible. Informal systems have taken prominence in most cases."*

(District Health Officer, Kenya).

In Mozambique, community leaders and women's group leaders were often positive about their relationships with the police:

*"We work in close coordination, police-community-police. And we help each other."*

(Government community leader, Mozambique).

Views on the police appear more positive than in 2009, but they varied from community to community. In towns where there was a police station, community members talked of good coordination between formal and informal justice systems. In one town this is helped by the existence of a specialist office for dealing with violence against women and children within the police station. The absence of police stations in other communities meant that cases would be dealt with through the FRELIMO Party secretary or Mozambique Women's Organisation, whose members may not have specialist training. Concerns were also raised sometimes about police corruption:

*"There's a lot of corruption in the police. The policemen receive money and free the perpetrators. That is why the community does not expose or take cases to the police".*

(School Management Committee member, Mozambique).

## 6.6 Conclusion

The mixed picture discussed in this chapter signals the complexity of projects attempting to challenge gender violence at multiple levels, from state to district to local community level. The work at national level demonstrates the importance of coalitions in working to influence governments, and there have



been some improvements in the attention paid to issues around violence against girls within national governments and the media, linked in part to the project's advocacy work.

At the community level, there have also been improvements in knowledge about child protection processes and in strengthening community-based structures that coordinate between informal and formal judicial systems. In Mozambique, this seems to have been associated with some improvement in the outcomes for girls who experience extreme violence, where the peri-urban setting provides easier access to services, though this is less evident in some of the more remote communities. The greater confidence of girls in this context to speak out about violence may also mean that they are somewhat less inhibited by the pressure to avoid bringing shame onto the community than girls in the more rural contexts of Ghana and Kenya. While there are still clearly weaknesses in the formal protection systems, particularly in Ghana and Kenya, there have been positive improvements in the ways formal and informal systems coordinate, and particularly impressive in Ghana is the widespread knowledge about organizations girls can turn to for help. However, the weakness of the formal systems limits the wider impact of the project, and any project working on gender violence needs to carefully consider how best to work with these systems. With the closure of the project, some sources of support will be lost, but across the three contexts the efforts to work with and strengthen organisations and services that will continue to operate should help to sustain the improvements in child protection systems.

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## 7. Conclusions & Recommendations

This report has documented many changes in how violence is experienced, prevented and responded to by girls, boys, their teachers, families and communities in three districts of Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique. Many of the changes have been direct results of the project, which has impacted on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. However, change has been uneven, and data are too complex and at times inconsistent to draw any firm conclusions about whether the project has substantially reduced violence against girls in school. At times, change has been influenced by events outside the project, including droughts, floods and, in Kenya, horrific conflict. Sometimes there have been unexpected ripple effects from the project, when for example girls' increased confidence has been reflected in their mothers' capacity to speak out on violence and gendered inequality.

Some changes have been uniform across the project areas. For example, more girls are accessing and staying in school, and there are positive changes in girls' knowledge and attitudes towards gender, rights and violence. More girls, teachers and community members are speaking out against extreme forms of violence. There have been improvements in the ways informal and formal child protection systems work together to address violence against girls. In these areas, the project work has worked closely alongside other community based and government organisations, building up a momentum for change.

Other changes have been influenced by context. The peri-urban context of Mozambique brings sexual risks for girls, but also erodes taboos of silence, enabling girls' clubs to work effectively to help girls to speak out about violence. Here there is more open discussion about teenage sex, though in all three countries teaching on sex and relationships is poor, with an emphasis on abstinence. In Mozambique too, there is more resistance to corporal punishment and clear evidence that practices are changing, but still in all three countries teachers lack knowledge and the capacity to use alternative forms of positive discipline, and the continuing poor conditions in which they are required to teach hinder change. The areas that have proved most difficult to change are those that threaten norms about childrearing, gender and sexuality.

The multi-dimensionality of the project has successfully enabled change to take place at many levels. Girls' clubs have had a positive effect on girls' knowledge, confidence, attitudes and practices in managing violence and inequality, and boys' clubs have begun to show promise for similar work with boys. Discussions with parents in communities have led mothers and fathers to reflect on and discuss gender roles and norms, in some cases influencing family dynamics and shifting the burden of labour from girls. Work in schools has influenced school management and classroom processes, strengthening pupil participation and gender equality. New structures for child protection at community level have strengthened dialogue between formal and informal justice systems.

In all these areas, there remain issues about sustainability beyond the life of the project. Advocacy work to institutionalise interventions has been mixed, and our recommendations outline actions proposed to build on the successes of the project, to learn from its weaknesses, and to fill continuing gaps in our knowledge about how to address violence against girls.





## Recommendations

### Direct interventions with young people:

**Girls' clubs:** Girls' clubs in schools run by trained female mentors can be critical spaces for girls' empowerment. They can act as positive role models, and increase knowledge and confidence to speak out against violence and broader inequalities. Girls' club manuals can provide effective guidance on how to run clubs. More research is needed on how to ensure fair membership criteria, avoid elitism, tailor club approaches for specific local contexts (particularly in relation to addressing sensitive taboo topics, including sex and relationships), maintain motivation and support for mentors, and how to institutionalise the clubs within the broader school culture, rather than being seen as an NGO intervention external to the school.

**Working with boys:** More research is needed on boys' experiences of violence, including sexual violence. Boys' clubs have potential for addressing violence against boys, and for critically analysing what it means to be a boy or a man, the connections with violence against girls, and the alternatives. While providing separate spaces for boys and girls to discuss these themes is important, mechanisms to bring boys and girls together for discussions on gender relations is also important.

**Girls out of school:** Often the most marginalised members of communities, projects need to involve girls who are out of school, listening to and responding to their concerns, and facilitating their return to school or to alternative educational, training and employment opportunities.

### Interventions with schools:

**Tackling corporal punishment:** Legislation banning corporal punishment, reinforced in codes of conduct for teachers and with the support of teachers' unions, are important steps in reducing physical punishment in schools. These must be reinforced by interventions in schools and teacher training programmes that provide skills in classroom management and positive discipline approaches. Involving local partners in the development of such training programmes will enable them to sensitively address norms and beliefs about child-rearing

**Codes of conduct for teachers:** National guidance needs clearly to set out acceptable and unacceptable conduct and sanctions for breaking the code of conduct. Working closely with teacher unions is important in ensuring effective guidance and implementation. Sanctions like relocating teachers who have sexual relations with pupils to other schools should end. Codes of conduct should be shared with all members of school communities and pupils, teachers and parents should be educated on their content.

**Sex and relationships education:** Teachers and project staff need training and support in how to address sex and relationships. While provision of curricular guidance will be valuable, staff will need support on how to address issues like safe, healthy sexual relationships in contexts where there are taboos on teenage sex. The curriculum needs to make links with broader discussions on masculinities and femininities and link to work in communities (for example, work with traditional leaders on cultural norms around gender and sexuality). Young people need access to safe, legal contraception methods.

### Strengthening school infrastructure:

Governments need to ensure that schools are safe spaces, with solid buildings, desks and chairs, single sex toilets with access to water, textbooks and other learning materials.

**Teacher provision:** Governments need to ensure schools have sufficient numbers of trained female and male teachers to avoid over-crowded classrooms. In rural areas, this entails addressing the working and living conditions that reduce teacher motivation. Presence of female teachers in all schools can help to reassure girls, though both female and male teachers should be trained in skills to counsel and mentor their pupils.

**Training and support for teachers:** In-service training is an effective way to build knowledge and change attitudes about gender and violence, and to ensure this transfers into changing behaviour, ongoing support for teachers and SMC members is needed alongside work with teacher training organisations and Ministries of Education to strengthen training. Club mentors or other selected staff members could become focal points in a school for work on gender violence. Head teachers need to be involved in all

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## Conclusions & Recommendations

training, which should include the development of school action plans to integrate learning into school practice. There needs to be monitoring and follow up support process to help ensure learning is institutionalised.

### **Institutionalising interventions in schools:**

Whole school approaches may be most effective in ensuring that gender violence is addressed through strengthening gender-sensitive child-friendly classroom processes, in-service training, work with school management and broader school communities. To ensure that specific issues on violence are not dissipated through this approach, specific outcomes and indicators should be developed and progress carefully monitored. Working in partnership with district education officials and teacher training organisations, as well as line ministries at national level, can enhance these approaches.

**Secondary schooling:** Governments should provide free secondary schools, remove examination systems that deny girls and boys access to this level of schooling and develop initiatives to enable poorer girls to stay in school. Projects should work across primary and secondary schooling to enable work with girls on violence and gender to be sustained across phases of education.

**Supporting pregnant school girls and adolescent mothers:** Re-entry policies need to be accompanied by material support for girls and their families, training for schools on providing supportive environments for girls. Seeking girls' perspectives will be important to determine their own needs.

### **Interventions with families & communities:**

**Engaging families:** Creating dialogues with parents and carers through reflect circles, home-school discussions and home visits can help parents to reflect on and re-negotiate gender dynamics and violence in the family. They can help parents to respond effectively to violence and to support girls to have safe relationships and be safe from violence. These opportunities are particularly important for reinforcing direct work with girls in clubs, helping parents to feel included and girls to feel supported in discussions about sensitive issues within families.

### **Partnerships with community based**

**organisations:** Working in coalition with established local women's groups and child rights organisations can help to secure community support, enhance the effects of interventions, and increase their sustainability. These relationships can be particularly important for engaging discussions on sensitive issues, such as those on corporal punishment and teenage sex, to take place across different spaces and sites of disagreement and discord, and to obtain the support of parents and the wider community, particularly of men, alongside the intensive work with girls.

### **Engaging traditional and religious leaders:**

Work with opinion leaders, including traditional and religious leaders can be an effective strategy to get buy in and support for promoting gender equality and addressing violence.

**Addressing values and beliefs:** It is important to combine work that emphasises knowledge of rights and implementing laws in communities with more dialogic work with different groups, that addresses the fundamental values and beliefs that underpin practices that may be harmful to girls, and build alliances within communities for change.

**Ending female genital mutilation:** Building coalitions and alliances in communities can encourage discussion of customary, legal, health and sexual rights in relation to FGM with range of community members (female and male adults and young people, religious and traditional leaders). To avoid driving the practice underground, and to find ways to discuss difficult issues about female sexuality and marriageability, and consider alternative rites of passage, sensitive work is needed, ensuring that discussions with girls avoid repeating the distress caused by FGM.

### **Coercive sexual relationships, early marriage and exchange sex:**

Interventions need to be carefully tailored and adapted for local contexts. For example, in more urban areas, with high levels of labour mobility, work is needed with community members on how to curb sexual harassment and coercion through material means; interventions with men could extend into places of employment e.g. factories and businesses; in rural areas, work is needed on accessing effective services, information



and support, including working with parents to curb practices of forced marriage. Dialogue is needed with all groups in communities to make explicit the links between ideals of adolescent and adult manhood and womanhood with sexuality and gender violence.

**Informal and formal justice systems:** Building local groups of women and men trained in issues relating to violence against girls can be an effective way to strengthen access to and coordination between informal community justice systems and formal judicial and support services. However, they should not be seen as an alternative to formal systems, including health clinics and hospitals, police and legal services, that need to be resourced and trained to provide effective, efficient services and multi-sectoral responses to violence.

**Strengthening formal protection systems:**

Formal systems need better coordination and more investment. It may be unrealistic for an NGO project such as this one to be able to build formal systems within a project, but future projects could focus further on this through lobbying for better funding and coordination in the respective ministries or through partnerships with multilateral or bilateral agencies which may be in a better position to strengthen infrastructure.

**Coordinated poverty reduction and crisis**

**management initiatives:** Provision of piped water and electricity can help to reduce the female burden of labour and extend study opportunities for children; efficient communication systems are needed in crises (e.g. extreme weather; conflicts) between non-governmental and governmental bodies for fast response to crises. A future project may enhance its outcomes by linking with social protection and/or livelihoods schemes to address poverty

**Planning NGO interventions:**

**Conceptualising violence:** To address acts of physical or sexual violence, it is necessary to address the everyday interactions and institutional inequalities that produce these acts.

**Integrated interventions:** Projects that combine work with girls, boys, schools, communities, and district and national advocacy work are important for addressing the multi-dimensionality of violence.

**Partnership approaches:** Projects that combine multiple organisations are needed to provide integrated interventions, but are highly complex with risks of conflicting priorities, understandings and delays. Such



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## Conclusions & Recommendations

projects need to be effectively managed, with specific strategies developed to coordinate within and between partners, and build capacity as necessary.

**Inception and capacity-building:** The complexity of these multi-partnered and multi-country projects means that sufficient lead-in time before project implementation starts is essential to build common understandings, good relationships, shared commitment and implementation plans in projects that deal with sensitive issues and challenge deeply held beliefs. During the project design and inception phases, conceptual frameworks need to be developed and capacity assessments conducted. Including capacity building in project design can enable this to be effectively planned and budgeted for, as well as ensuring that organisations are able effectively to deliver and manage projects. Throughout the project, repeated opportunities for discussion and capacity-building about concepts and approaches are needed.

**Collaborations across education, health and women's rights:** Interventions should emphasise girls' rights to bodily integrity and being able to make decisions about own bodies. This may not always be easy in contexts with strong moral codes around sexuality. Organisations working on violence in schools and girls' education within the child protection and/or education sectors and could learn a lot by partnering with organisations working on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights on how to effectively work with communities on teenage sexuality.

**Robust research-based evidence base:** Rigorous and comprehensive data is needed to strengthen knowledge about what works. This should involve carefully planned baseline and endline research, together with a monitoring and evaluation system developed and agreed by project partners. Quantitative measures should be combined with qualitative data to create a robust evidence base that is also sensitive to context. Project implementation plans need to be guided by the baseline research findings. Sufficient budgeting for research and M&E is essential.

**Duration of projects:** Five years is a minimum period for projects for longer lasting effects on gender and violence, and ten years would enable more sustainable interventions. Longitudinal research

is needed to build knowledge about processes of change on gender and sexual norms, and violence.

**Scaling up:** The evidence base from research and project work on gender, violence and schooling needs to be shared widely, with national and international policies drawing on the research-based evidence base. Successful approaches, such as girls' clubs, should be scaled up by governments.

**Post-2015 Development Agenda:** A strong commitment to address gender violence and child-friendly schooling is essential in the post-2015 international development agenda, including sex-disaggregated data collection, as well as goals that address gender violence in schools and communities. At the same time, it will be important not to rely on over-simplified measures of violence, but to combine quantitative and qualitative evidence on a range of indicators, including how violence is experienced, prevented and responded to and how this is influenced by varying features of contexts.





# Appendix 1: Research protocol

**The purpose of the research protocol is to outline how we will carry out the research in ways which are high quality, rigorous and ethical. The protocol addresses three main areas: 1. Research design, 2. Ethics and safety, 3. Researcher selection, training and communication. In each section, we outline the key problems or challenges, and in italics the principles that have been agreed to guide our work. The protocol was designed in 2009, to guide the baseline research and has since been adapted for use with the longitudinal and endline research.**

## 1. Research design

### Designing research which is rigorous, credible and persuasive

A key challenge researching violence with young people is to design studies that give accurate, reliable and transferable findings, and at the same time that are able to tap into subjective experience and meanings. Quantitative research elicits broad trends and comparisons, and provides data that can easily be used to both measure change, to generalise and to inform advocacy/policy work. However, it is unable to capture perspectives and experiences of research participants, details of the context, and it does not explain how or why change takes place. Meanwhile, qualitative research elicits fine grained detail about experiences, perceptions and meanings and can help explain the quantitative data. It may be more effective for finding out about sensitive and taboo topics, and for tapping into some of the more subjective constructs that are difficult to measure, such as confidence and support (outcome 4 of this project).

*The baseline study and endline study will combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, in order to provide in-depth data about violence against girls, and to generate findings which are measurable, in order to inform advocacy work and to be able to measure change over the duration of the project. The methodologies selected will be underpinned by the conceptual framework, M&E plans, project outcomes and research questions.*

### Verification: Trustworthiness, reliability and validity

The reliability or trustworthiness of the research refers to how consistent the information we gather will be if we use the same instruments with the same person. For example, are we likely to get the same response from a girl if she is asked the same question again? The factors that are likely to affect this are: the way the questions are asked; who is asking the questions; the environmental conditions (for example, whether she is at home, school or elsewhere, if there are people around, if she believes that her responses will be confidential or have any repercussions to her safety or wellbeing).

Validity is a contested term with different meanings in quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research it refers to the extent that the research will measure what it is designed to measure. This may be affected by the instruments that are used or questions asked, the methodologies used and the researcher-participant relationship. Under-reporting of violence is a major risk for research on violence against girls. As well as providing inaccurate baseline data for the project, research that inaccurately reports low levels of violence could be used to question the importance of addressing violence in the project area. The way that questions are worded affects the rates of disclosure. Questions should avoid using terms such as 'rape', 'abuse' and 'violence' that are loaded and open to interpretation and instead ask specific questions about acts (such as being beaten or being forced to do something sexual she found degrading or humiliating), places (such as home or school or church) and people (such as teachers, parents or other pupils). In qualitative research, validity refers to the adequacy of the researcher to understand and represent people's meanings, giving as 'truthful' version of reality as possible.

*We will maximise the accuracy, reliability and validity of the research through detailed analysis of the context before commencing the study, and involving research participants and intervention partners in designing and piloting instruments, sensitivity to environmental conditions, and careful recruitment and training of researchers. A range of instruments (e.g.*

## Appendix 1

*focus groups, interviews and checklists) will be used to increase reliability through using more than one way of gathering information (triangulation). Specific actions include:*

- *Country context reviews – Research partners in each country will review existing data about the local, provincial and national contexts*
- *School and community profiles – Research partners will complete a checklist with information about each school and community*
- *Consulting communities/trialling – Researchers will hold focus groups and discussions with community members (e.g. group of girls at selected ages, group of teachers/headteacher, group of parents) in order to consult about content and terminology (including wording of questions) of draft research instruments. Instruments will then be revised before pre-testing.*

### Sampling and controls

Although using both intervention and control schools (that are not involved in the intervention) in the baseline and endline research might help us to see whether any change over time is a result of the interventions, we have decided not to use control schools because of methodological and ethical challenges, including:

- Ethical concerns of research without support, for example, unearthing high levels of violence against girls in control schools but providing no community intervention to assist
- We cannot control for programmes that may be implemented (for example, by other NGOs) in control schools, which may distort the results
- Our resources do not allow a full scale community randomised trial and numbers of participating schools are small; therefore using control schools is likely to add very little to the research results.

All too often research only includes the voices of the more powerful or influential members of communities, and the views of children and marginalised groups are not represented. This needs to be taken into account when sampling, including choices of which schools, and which people to include in the research.



*The baseline and endline research will not include control schools, but schools for quantitative and qualitative research will be carefully selected, taking into account demographic characteristics and prior interventions. In particular, the School and Context profiling will enable careful selection of schools for qualitative instruments. The baseline research will gather data from a wide range of participants in schools and communities, including for example women's groups as well as community leaders. At the heart of the research will be girls' perspectives, and we will strive to listen to girls at all stages. When introducing the research in communities, we will try to maximise the participation of all groups, and the choice of methods will be sensitive to the needs of the participants.*

### Data analysis

It is important to avoid bias in the analysis and interpretation of data. There may be a possibility to over-interpret or to over-generalise on the basis of limited information, and insufficient contextualisation of findings. For example, a statistic that suggests high levels of female school enrolment may be incorrectly interpreted as meaning there are no problems with gender inequalities in schooling; or an instance of sexual violence perpetrated by a teacher is difficult to interpret without understanding the school context, including gender relations within the school. While the qualitative information may strengthen the interpretation of quantitative figures, it is important to take into account the subjectivity of data. For example, people are likely to be selective about what they choose to tell about their experiences

of violence; and group interviews have a tendency to bring out societal norms and to emphasise the views of dominant members of the group. Extreme instances that are widely known about in communities may be reported by many individuals, and so gain prominence in the data though they may be rare instances. In contrast, minor, everyday violences may be so taken for granted that they are not named by participants. Bias in reporting results in inaccurate representation and can misleadingly label groups, of for example teachers or communities.

*Systematic and rigorous methods of data analysis will be developed which strive to provide an accurate and credible representation of violence against girls. To ensure data accuracy, once data has been input into a computer programme (e.g. SPSS) and before it is analysed it should be checked and cleaned (identifying incomplete or incorrect parts of the data and then replacing, modifying or deleting this 'dirty data'). As it is never possible to eradicate all bias, all reporting will include critical reflection on limitations and possible alternative interpretations. Bias in analysis will be reduced by developing procedures for cross-checking between researchers, and for consulting about draft reports with intervention and advocacy partners, and with communities. In our reporting, we will try to avoid negative stereotypes, for example by highlighting how inequality and conditions can contribute towards differences.*

## **2. Ethics and safety**

### **Power in the research process**

While it is important that all research is conducted according to ethical principles, in research on sensitive subjects like violence, and research with children and young people, this is particularly important because of the increased risks of causing harm/distress and because of the power imbalance between the researcher and participant. Children are often used to being judged and disciplined and may hide their views in favour of presenting an account of their experiences more “acceptable” to adults. Children may also feel obliged to answer all questions, even if they do not want to, because they have been asked to by an adult.

*At all stages of the research, we will aim to respect participants, to treat people fairly, and to safeguard*

*their welfare, minimizing risks and assuring that benefits outweigh risks. We will use methods/approaches to minimise power imbalances and help children to express themselves, such as participatory group activities and questions early in interviews that help young people feel at ease. We will ensure that less powerful members of communities, including women, participate in focus group discussions and interviews.*

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is especially important when conducting research on violence against girls, as the act of revealing violence may put participants at more risk of violence. For example, previous studies have reported that in schools/homes where abusive teachers/husbands have been suspicious that girls/women may be reporting violence, the risk of further violence increases. Maintaining privacy is important for encouraging open expression of views, but it can be both practically difficult and occasionally harmful, when for example a neighbour/relative wants to know what is being hidden. Data should not be disaggregated in a way that could identify individuals. If specific data must be presented in the analysis (such as in a case study) then it may be necessary to remove or change certain details that may identify them, as long as this is recorded and does not affect the meaning of the data.

*Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research, including during data collection, analysis, data storage and reporting. We will try to ensure privacy during interviews. Data will be stored in a way so as not to identify individuals' responses, for example by coding questionnaires/participants rather than using names, and by securing data so that only those who need to access the data for the project can do so.*

### **Informed consent**

It is very important that children are not coerced into participating in the research against their will. Some research protocols advise gaining written consent from participants before undertaking research with them. However, the hazards are likely to outweigh the benefits of this approach, making participants feel intimidated or uncomfortable. ActionAid's Child Protection Policy states that parents should provide consent when any activities are carried out with children. However, in some cases this could lead



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to parents telling children how to participate in the research or not consenting to their participation (possibly skewing results if these children may be at more risk of violence). On the other hand, conducting research without parental approval could provoke a backlash if parents discover their child's participation without their knowledge or consent. For longitudinal research, it is important that informed consent is sought each time the researcher visits.

*Informed consent means that all participants, including children, will be given clear information about the project, to be able to choose not to participate, and to withdraw at any time. Researchers will seek permissions to carry out the research in schools according to existing procedures in each country (e.g. permit from Education Department, or district). While written permission from parents is inappropriate where there are high levels of adult illiteracy, permission will be sought either through community discussions or via school staff. For the longitudinal study, an opt in procedure will be used, and researchers will explain to the girls at the start that they will be returning every six months, so that girls can make an informed decision. Permission will be re-sought each time the researcher visits, and girls (and all interviewees) will be told that they can withdraw their consent at any time. Special care will be taken to be flexible to schedule activities around girls' and others' daily lives, especially with regard to their education, income earning and household and care-giving activities.*

### Disclosure and safety of participants

Researching the topic of violence increases the risk that violence will be disclosed during the research process. While in some contexts it may be possible to follow local child protection procedures, this is problematic in contexts where official support and reporting mechanisms are absent or inadequate. There may also be a tension between maintaining confidentiality and passing on information when a researcher considers a child to be at risk of severe harm. ActionAid's Child Protection policy states that if violence is disclosed or suspected then the staff member should take detailed confidential notes; report the case to their line manager who reports it to the country representative; and report the case to child protection agencies or authorities if there are concerns about the child's health, physical injury, sexual exploitation or criminal activity.

*Researchers have a duty to ensure support and reporting mechanisms are in place if violence is disclosed during the research process. At the stage of consulting communities/trialling, it will be important to map out local support available and reporting mechanisms, including exploring the possible role of community intervention partners in providing ongoing support. Researchers will also consider whether it is desirable/feasible for a trained counsellor to accompany the research team.*

### Safety and wellbeing of researchers

Researchers may also face risks to their safety and wellbeing, either through witnessing violence or by the research process generating anger. They may experience distress by stories they are told, or their experiences conducting the research may reignite painful memories of their own experiences of violence.

*Researcher training and support needs to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Researchers will work in small teams, and will be supported by the lead researchers during the fieldwork. There will be regular debriefing meetings during the research, allowing researchers to share what they are hearing and how they are feeling, along with opportunities to discuss these issues in private. Researcher training will include how to manage hostility and anger.*





### 3. Researcher selection, training and communication

#### Researcher selection

Research guidelines recommend that researchers are not from the same community (for trust and confidentiality reasons), but at the same time care needs to be taken to select researchers who speak the local languages, and who are able to understand, or empathise with, the experiences of participants in research communities. Researchers from more privileged ethnic or class groups may be quick to judge and generalise about 'others'. This may be especially the case when researching violence against girls, where beliefs, perspectives and practices may differ. On the other hand, sometimes (for example in some qualitative approaches) having a different perspective may enhance a researcher's ability to critically explore participants' responses.

*Recruitment strategies will address issues of gender, age, language and community. Same sex researchers/ research assistants will be used for interviews where possible, and always for interviews with girls. Recruitment of researchers carrying out qualitative research will assess experience and capacity to discuss sensitive issues, have a non-judgemental approach and empathy with others.*

#### Researcher training

Researchers involved in research on violence need training and support over and above that normally provided to research staff. This should include an orientation on concepts of violence, gender and gender inequality and children's rights, and issues around violence against girls in schools. The training needs to include opportunities for researchers to reflect on both their own prejudices and experiences of violence and consider how these might affect the quality of their work and their welfare. Researchers also need full training in the research protocol, including research ethics and child protection procedures to be implemented during the research, and any other procedures identified. Researchers need an opportunity to practise with reflection their use of the research instruments. Support mechanisms need to be in place during field research to help researchers manage their safety and wellbeing and to monitor progress and quality of the research.

*A programme of researcher training will be undertaken prior to the main data collection phase, led by the lead*

*researchers in each country and members of the IoE team, and will address key concepts, processes and methods underpinning the research. It will include opportunities to practise use of instruments, to pre-test instruments in project communities, and will include ongoing opportunities for reflection and support.*

#### Communication between research partners

With research partners in several countries, and with several project partners in each country, the need for a communication plan is paramount. Researchers work within different disciplines, and are familiar with different approaches to research, with some for example more comfortable with interpretive, qualitative approaches, and others more familiar with more quantitative 'scientific' paradigms. While these differences will add value to the research, we will also need to find ways to negotiate differences and to support each other with capacity building.

*Research partners will build a coordinated and collaborative research approach through sharing information, and through peer review, in which we will read and comment on each other's work. Where a partner identifies a capacity gap, we will explore how to support, for example through joint problem solving, offering training, or advising on recruitment strategies. As well as communicating by email, skype conferences will be organised at key decision-making points to discuss and debate the research plans.*

*To ensure that the research is fully integrated with the Stop Violence project and that everybody is kept in the loop on progress and decisions, all significant emails about the baseline research will be sent to the lead researcher and copied to the ActionAid country project manager, to the international project manager and to IoE (Jenny and Jo). In addition, before the Research Partner submits key documents to IoE, (cc.Jenny, Jo, Asmara/Tim) the country project manager needs to have reviewed/given feedback to Research Partner so that the documents are accurate, complete and adhering to the already agreed upon processes by AA and BLF. For all communication between IoE and Research Partner (Lead Researcher and Research Coordinator) the PM and IPM need to be copied.*

*Involvement of all research partners in report writing, conference presentations and publications will be encouraged, together with other partners where appropriate.*

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