

Stop **Violence** Against Girls in School

Success Stories

September 2013



LOTTERY FUNDED



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank colleagues, partners, national project managers and country directors in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique, the international education and youth team, the London Institute of Education and all those who have been involved in the implementation of the 5 years Stop Violence Against Girls at school project funded by Big Lottery fund.

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To access further information on ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls at School project, including the full end line and longitudinal report, go to www.actionaid.org/what-we-do/education/stop-violence-against-girls-schools.

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Foreword

Dear readers,

Every day millions of girls in Africa and across the world see their rights violated, without having the opportunity to express themselves or be heard, either because they are children or simply because they are female, and as a result they are constrained into submission both to men and wider society, as dictated by “morality” and patriarchal culture.

One of the single most important opportunities that could lead to their independence - education - is also denied to them, as families do not prioritize their children's education, much less that of girls. Moreover, laws, policies and regulations, in general tend not to safeguard girls' rights and even when they do they are not properly implemented.

On countless occasions, girls are accused of or blamed for the violence they experience, and are often held responsible for the consequences of the violence of which they are victims, on the pretext that they should have done something to avoid it, or should have avoided doing whatever it was that provoked the violence.

This situation can only change when each one of us fulfills our role and becomes a hero in the fight against violence and sexual abuse suffered by all girls, everywhere. We know how challenging this fight will be, but as the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, put it: “where there is a fight, there is also a victory”. Thus, we shall win!

It was precisely with this focus in mind that ActionAid implemented the “Stop Violence Against Girls in School” project in Mozambique, Ghana and Kenya, from 2008 to 2013. This project has demonstrated, through a range of practical examples, that when we join forces we can achieve change in girls' lives: in all three countries, girls' lives have improved and they have been able to live in a violence-free environment. The document you have in your hands brings together some of the examples of best practice emerging from the “Stop Violence Against Girls

in School” project and will enable you to see just how remarkable the qualitative leap in girls' lives has been; you will learn how safe spaces have been created; you will witness evidence of an increase in girls' self-esteem; you will appreciate the unconditional support girls' received from their peers, families, teachers and decision-makers. Through the work of the project, we have been able to demonstrate that it is possible for girls to become victorious warriors in the conquest of their “space” in the community, at school and at home.

In this document, you will find examples of best practice in all three countries, which led to changes in attitudes and behaviours in the target communities as well as in the girls themselves. The advocacy strategies employed by the project, informed by on-going research, monitoring and evaluation during the project's implementation made the most of strategic opportunities and increasing momentum in each country and confirm the project's successes.

In this document, you will also find stories told by the girls themselves about how they have been able to challenge the deeply-rooted culture of violence in all sections of society, and how the community-level work helped to promote changes in legislation, policy, school regulations and harmful practices at home and in the wider community. The collection of strategies and windows into the lives of girls and their communities that make up this document are worth reading, as they will undoubtedly inspire you to help thousands of girls whose rights continue to be denied across the African continent and indeed, the wider world. I must also add that the success of the “Stop Violence Against Girls in School” project, which resulted in a real empowerment of girls and in the reduction of violence and sexual abuse of girls in school in Mozambique, Kenya and Ghana was unquestionably due to the selfless effort and commitment of the many organizations that were involved directly or indirectly in its implementation.

Read on and enjoy!

Amade Sucá

Country Director, ActionAid Mozambique

1. Introduction

“**Violence** cannot not be tolerated at home, on the street or at school.”

Enshrined in international and national law, education is a fundamental right of all children without distinction or discrimination of any kind. It is also widely recognised as an enabling right, one which, by promoting the fullest development of a child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities, allows her to claim a range of other rights and fulfil her potential (UNCRC).

In addition to demonstrating their commitment to education by ratifying international conventions and undertaking necessary measures to align national laws with these provisions, in 2000, representatives from 164 nation states attended the World Education forum in Dakar, and pledged to achieve six key goals to ensure Education for All by 2015.

With less than 2 years to go before the deadline however, it is clear that despite monumental progress in expanding access to education for millions of children in some of the poorest countries

across the world, much remains to be done before all children’s rights to education are fulfilled.

A recent report from UNESCO demonstrates that there are still an estimated 57 million children out of school of which 53% are girls (UNESCO, 2013). Half of these children live in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of children out of school has remained static at around 30 million over the last 5 years. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest out-of-school rate of all regions and 22% of primary school-age children have either never attended school or have left school without completing their primary education (UNESCO, 2013). As a result, it is not surprising that the majority of these countries are unlikely to achieve the six Education for All goals by 2015 (UNESCO, 2012).

Moreover, whilst a narrowing of the gender gap in primary enrolment has been hailed as one of the key Education for All (EFA) successes since 2000, there are still 21 countries where girls are considered to face severe educational disadvantages and 12 of these are in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2012). However, achieving parity in enrolment is only one side of the picture and more needs to be done to ensure that, beyond enrolment education becomes more equitable overall in order to enable girls to remain in and succeed at school.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Although the achievement of the EFA goals cannot be automatically equated with the realisation of children's right to education, it is also evident that failure to do so will continue to deprive millions of children, particularly girls, of their most fundamental entitlements.

As the global community continues to debate the education agenda post 2015, it is clear that girls' education must remain a priority and the report of the global consultation on education in the post 2015 development agenda states that:

“all girls, no matter how poor, isolated or disadvantaged, should be able to attend school regularly and without the interruption of early pregnancy, forced marriage, maternal injuries and death, and unequal domestic and childcare burdens”

(UNESCO/UNICEF, 2013).



Ensuring children's right to education is one of ActionAid's core priorities, and beyond a mere focus on access to education, ActionAid believes in improving the quality of education as well as

ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard in the process. As an organization with a strong women's rights focus, ActionAid also understands that key to achieving this goal and indeed, through it, other wider human development goals, it is critical to understand, challenge and transform the complex factors that deprive girls of their right to education.

ActionAid has been focussing on girls' education since 2004, with advocacy, campaigns and programmes in a range of countries across the world. However, the purpose of this report is to document and share some of the key successes and examples of best practice emerging from one of the organisation's flagship multi-country girls' education initiatives - the Stop Violence Against Girls in School project - in order to share them with practitioners within the organisation and beyond.

The documents is divided in to 10 sections, including an overview of the conceptual framework for the project, a summary of successes under each of the 4 project objective areas and an additional 2 sections on the project's research, monitoring and evaluation components as well as a conclusion, summarising key elements from the document overall.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

2. Violence Against Girls in School

“**Violence or the fear of violence** is an important reason for girls not attending school. Besides being in itself an infringement of girls’ rights, violence is also denying girls their right to education” *ActionAid 2004*

In 2004, as part of its broader programme of education work ActionAid undertook detailed research into girls’ education in 12 different countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America and found that **violence and the fear of violence were among the key factors preventing girls from attending school and completing their education**. The research revealed that regardless of their age, race, class, caste or location girls were vulnerable to many forms of violence including rape, sexual harassment, intimidation, teasing and threats, whilst factors such as poverty, war and long journeys to school increased the risks (ActionAid, 2004).



The prevalence of violence against girls is deeply entrenched in patterns of gender discrimination which prevail in male-dominated societies where violence is used, consciously or unconsciously as a means for imposing male power over women and girls and which becomes normalized as an inevitable part of girls' lived experiences. In Ethiopia for example, the ActionAid study found that around 93% of male student respondents confirmed that they know violence against females is a criminal act and punishable by law. However, about 33% of them believed it was acceptable for men to get what their way either by charm or force, and about 21% admitted to having behaved that way themselves. The impact of violence on girls' education is significant and the findings demonstrated that the effects manifested themselves in low enrolment rates, poor performance, high drop-out rates, early pregnancy and marriage as well as psychological trauma (ActionAid 2004).

Whilst ActionAid's initial research was focused on 12 countries, at global level there is now a widespread recognition of the scale of the problem of gender-based violence against women and girls and the impact this has on their ability to enjoy their rights and freedoms including the right to education.

Recent data compiled by the UN Regional Information Centre for Western Europe for example shows that globally, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted at or on their way to school, and in some parts of the world, a girl is more likely to be raped than to learn how to read (UNRIC, 2012).

In 2011 corporal punishment was considered unlawful in 117 countries but many have yet to implement the relevant reforms at school level and beating and whipping continue to be used under the guise of 'discipline' with impunity (Plan, 2013). In addition harmful traditional practices such as early marriage contribute to depriving girls of their childhood and education. Worldwide, an estimated 60 million girls are child brides, including over 14 million in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNRIC, 2012).

ActionAid believes that violence against girls in and around the learning environment, if left unaddressed, will prevent the achievement of universal primary education and the elimination of gender disparities in education and have significant impact on the achievement of human development goals at global level.

The findings from the research highlighted above prompted the organisation to launch a global campaign against violence against girls in school in over 15 countries, including the integration of specific programmatic strategies to tackle the problem at country-level. As part of this process, ActionAid initiated an ambitious multi-country project entitled Stop Violence Against Girls in School, which sought to address the causes and consequences of violence against girls in three countries across Africa.



3. The Stop Violence Against Girls in School project

“By placing girls at the heart of the project... the project teams were able to ensure that girls’ voices and concerns were heard by a wide range of stakeholders including high-level decision-makers.”

The **Stop Violence Against Girls in School project** was a five-year initiative, running from 2008 to 2013, which was implemented simultaneously in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique with the support of a generous grant from the UK’s Big Lottery Fund.

The overall goal of the project was to empower girls to enjoy their right to education and participation in a violence-free environment. Despite a range of political and contextual differences, all three participating countries shared overall strategic approaches and worked towards the achievement of four common objectives to ensure that, by the end of the project’s life-time:

1 - A legal and policy framework that specifically addresses violence against girls in school exists and is being implemented at all levels in all 3 countries.

2 - Violence against girls by family members, teachers and peers in the intervention districts is reduced by 50% from baseline statistics.

3 - Enrolment of girls is increased by 22%, girls’ drop out rate decreases by 20% and substantial progress is made towards gender parity in education in the intervention districts.

4 - A total of 14,000 girls in the intervention districts demonstrate the confidence to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools, report incidents and create peer support networks.

ActionAid’s human-rights based theory of change consists of three main axes: empowerment, solidarity and campaigning, and aims to achieve sustainable change through “linking local groups to wider movements, gathering strong evidence, promoting policy analysis, building campaigns and using mass communications” (ActionAid, 2011). This approach empowers rights holders, builds solidarity and campaigns to make core duty-bearers accountable to citizens. It also seeks to enable the voices of the most marginalised, especially girls and women, to be an integral part of decision-making spaces.

This strategic human-rights based orientation was reflected in the design of the project, which used research, community-level initiatives and advocacy as the basis of its overall approach and was implemented in partnership with a diversity of national institutions ranging from community-based organisations to research institutes, universities, campaign coalitions, advocacy organisations and child rights networks in each of the three countries.

In addition to ActionAid International and ActionAid offices in each country, the key implementing partners for this project included the *Ghana National Campaign Coalition* and *Songtaba* in Ghana, the *Catholic University of Eastern Africa*, *Own & Associates* and the *Girl Child Network* in Kenya and *AMUDEIA, Movimento de Educação para*

Todos and the *University of Eduardo Mondlane* in Mozambique. At International level the project also worked with the Institute of Education, University of London whose role was to oversee and coordinate the research component of the project.

The project aimed to reach a total of 14,000 girls in 45 primary schools across all three countries and whilst the community and research initiatives were implemented locally within the target areas (Bimbilla in Ghana's Northern Region, Manhica district in Mozambique's Maputo province and Wenje in Kenya's Coast province) the advocacy work had a national-level scope and impact.

Overall, the three components of the project (advocacy, community initiatives and research) worked together holistically to contribute to the achievement of the objectives, with each one supported by and informing the others in order to bring about change for girls.

By gathering a considerable body of rich data from schools and communities in the intervention areas, the research institutes provided both community and advocacy partners with a wealth of evidence to inform programme strategies and demand specific changes in policy and practice at local and national level.

For their part, the advocacy partners helped raise awareness of the issue by disseminating the research findings through the national media and at high level fora and calling for wide-scale changes that would benefit children across the country.

The community-level partners meanwhile, worked tirelessly to mobilise parents, teachers, children and local leaders around the issues by stimulating changes to knowledge, attitudes and practice and supporting them to instigate and demand the fulfilment of girls' rights to education, protection and participation.

Throughout this process, girls' participation was crucial to the achievement of all four objectives



Stop violence against girls in school project

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

and the project teams ensured that girls' agency and empowerment were fully recognised and promoted at all stages of implementation in all three countries.

By placing girls at the heart of the project, providing them with the opportunity to express their views in the context of community-level initiatives both in and out of school, to share their experiences with research teams and facilitate their engagement in local and national level advocacy and campaigning work, the project teams were able to ensure that girls' voices and concerns were heard by a wide range of stakeholders including high-level decision-makers.

This integrated, holistic approach, which prioritised girls' empowerment has delivered a compelling body of research regarding the causes and effects of violence against girls and its impact on their education and has used this to successfully influence advocacy at national and international level. It has also generated a wealth of information about programme strategies that effectively promote girls' education, protection and participation in a range of different contexts and, has done so by listening to and engaging with girls throughout.

Defining Violence Against Girls

The United Nations defines violence against women as:

“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”

(General Assembly Resolution 48/104 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993).

Given the absence of a specific definition for minors, the above definition is taken to refer to women of all ages, including girls, and served as a reference for the project throughout its lifetime.

Although the terms ‘gender-based violence’, ‘violence against women’ and ‘violence against girls’ are frequently used interchangeably, gender-based violence refers to violence directed against a person because of his or her gender and expectations of his or her role in a society or culture (UNWomen, 2012).

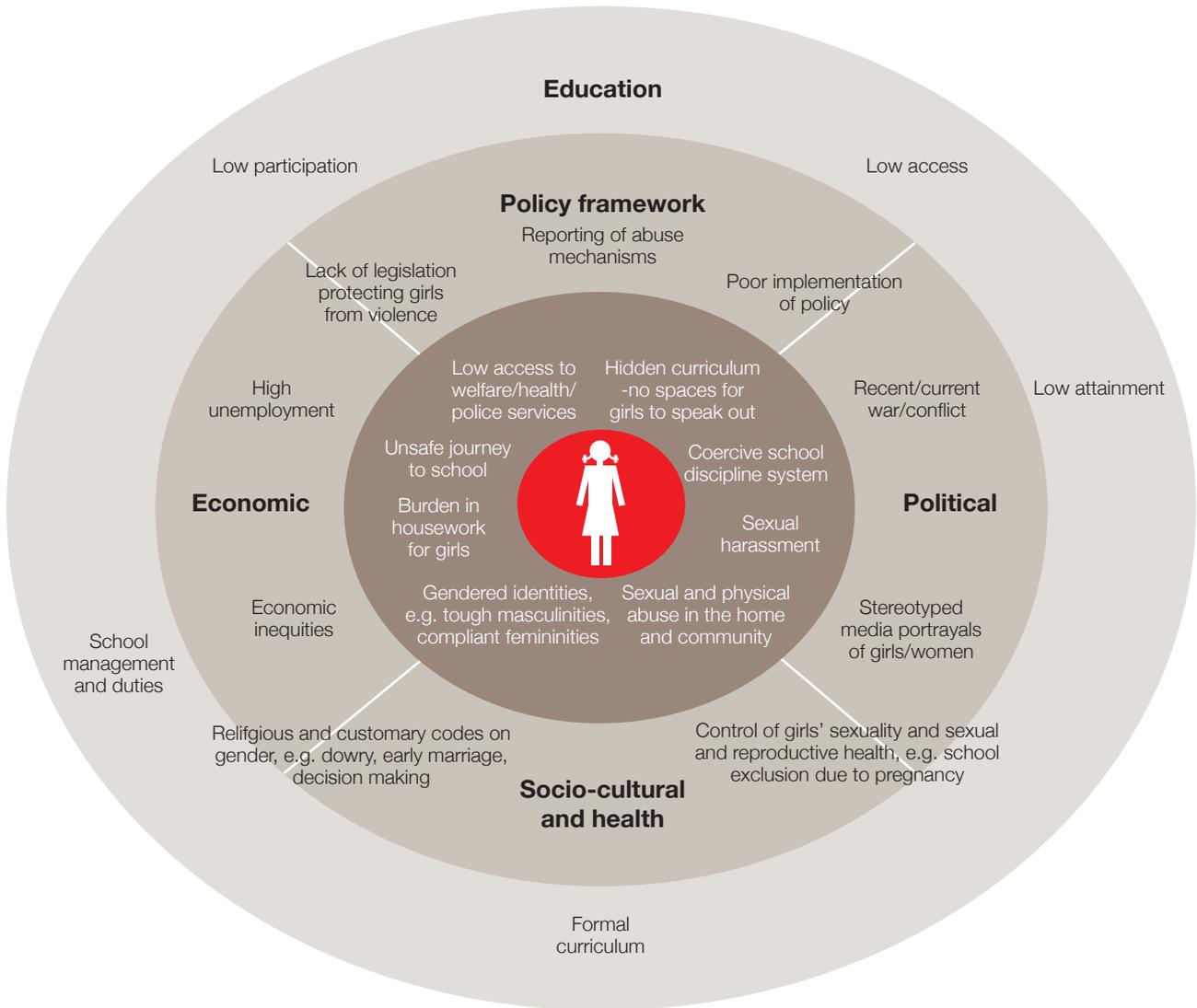
Whilst it is important to note that men and boys also experience various forms of gender-based violence, given the disproportionate numbers of female victims and the fact that the primary focus of this project was on girls’ experiences, the project teams employed the term Violence Against Girls.

Putting Girls at the Centre

ActionAid believes that violence against girls (VAG), and the threat of such violence, exercised through individuals, communities and institutions in both formal and informal ways, violates girls’ human rights, constrains their choices and agency, and negatively impacts on their ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from development (ActionAid, 2012).

As such, in addition to the above definitions, and in order to communicate an understanding of the complex nature of violence against girls and illustrate the ways in which inequalities at the root of repeated patterns of violence and discrimination that keep girls in a submissive role are perpetuated the project team developed a Conceptual Framework, which is illustrated in below.

Conceptual framework for the violence against girls project



This diagramme was designed to represent the three main spheres (education; socio-cultural and health; and economic and political) that interact to produce the conditions in which girls experience various forms of violence in school. Girls themselves are situated at the centre of the sphere as violence is seen as relational. Examples of acts of violence, and conditions producing violence, are depicted within the circles according to their “distance” from the girl (i.e. institutional environment on the outside to everyday interactions in girls’ lives nearer the middle). Unequal power relations based on gender, age and socio-economic background are

central to this framework of violence against girls in schools (Figue et al, 2010).

At the heart of the project’s concern are the empowerment, judgement and action of girls in and around schools. While the project sought to understand the social conditions and relations that constrain girls, it also aimed 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 (Figue et al, 2010).

The Conceptual Framework supports an understanding of violence not only as violent acts removed from social context but as embedded in institutional structures and practices. It focuses on where violence *comes from*. The project therefore understands violence to mean both acts of sexual, physical and psychological violence (including but not limited to rape, sexual assault, beating, whipping, taunts) and gender discrimination that exist within social and political institutions and manifest themselves in the form of laws, curricula content and measures that discriminate against girls. Both forms of violence restrict girls' equal access to and participation in education.

According to the theory of change embedded in this framework, interventions are necessary at all levels to challenge violence against girls. In other words, to reduce acts of violence it is crucial to address girls' everyday relationships in schools, families and communities, as well as the educational, economic, socio-cultural and health, political, legal institutions and structures.

The Conceptual Framework served to underpin the project's holistic approach that combined research, community engagement and advocacy

at community, national and international levels. By generating a robust evidence-base of the nature and scale of the issue and demanding changes to policy and practice in collaboration with girls and their communities, the project sought to challenge discriminatory norms and systems and instigate positive and lasting changes.

In addition, this Framework has also subsequently added value to the core work of ActionAid international's education and youth team, informing the design and conceptualisation of other programmatic initiatives.

The project worked at multiple levels in its attempts to challenge violence against girls in school over the past five years and whilst it is important to recognise that there will be multiple influences on change, including many that are beyond the scope of the project, the following sections of this document seek to outline some of the most successful interventions and highlight some of the main changes achieved. It is hoped that this information will serve to inform and inspire other practitioners working on issues related to girls' rights to education and protection in Africa and beyond.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

4. Building momentum for girls' education: increasing enrolment and retention and making progress towards gender parity

“You see these days the community has recognised the value of girls’ education... It is like they have woken up from a very deep sleep.” *Head teacher*

The governments of Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique have **committed to achieving gender parity at all levels of education**, as evidenced through the prioritization of gender parity in their respective national education strategies and implementation of specific measures to promote girls’ education.

At present, all three countries are doing significantly better in term of girls’ enrolment than the average for sub-Saharan Africa, and indeed, Ghana and Kenya have already nominally achieved gender parity in primary enrolment at national level. However gaps still remain and these encouraging national averages hide significant internal disparity. For example, data from UNICEF reveals that in Ghana, girls from the poorest households in the Northern Region where this project was implemented are nearly three times more likely to be out of school compared with the national average (UNICEF, 2010) whereas in Kenya a lack of gender equity persists, particularly in the northern and north-eastern provinces (UNESCO 2012) such as those where the project was implemented.

In recognition of these issues, one of the project’s four key objectives was to **increase girls’ enrolment by 22%, reduce drop out rates by 20% and make progress towards gender parity in education in the intervention districts.** A significant body of work was conducted by the project team in order to achieve this objective, all of which required a clear understanding of the factors preventing girls from accessing and completing their education as well the capacity to

engage with a range of stakeholders at local and national level.

The baseline research conducted simultaneously in all three countries revealed that girls face a wide range of barriers to their schooling, with the main ones being directly linked to gendered roles (household chores, caring for siblings), poverty (parental inability to pay for school fees, need to work on the farm) and issues related to sexuality and gender violence (early pregnancy and marriage). In addition, sexual harassment abuse and punishment at school were cited in Mozambique and Kenya alike (Parkes & Heslop, 2011).

Overcoming these barriers required engaging with a range of stakeholders including parents, community leaders, teachers, school management structures and education authorities as well as girls and boys themselves to ensure a wide recognition of girls’ rights to education and protection and ensure these are respected in homes, communities and schools. Some of the most effective strategies adopted by the project to tackle discrimination and violence against girls and promote their enrolment and retention are outlined below.

Working with parents

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Research findings revealed that the burden of household chores like cleaning, collecting firewood and water, cooking, caring for younger siblings and helping to sell wares in the market are typically seen as being a 'natural' role for girls, preparing them for married life (Parkes & Heslop, 2011).

However these chores also limit girls' opportunities to study and constitute one of the main factors preventing girls from accessing or completing their education. The project worked directly with parents and guardians in all three countries using various approaches to tackle attitudes and practices that limit girls' educational opportunities.

Case study 1: Ghana's Peer Parent Educators

Established in each of the 13 intervention communities in Ghana, the Peer Parent Educators are teams of 5 volunteers with a strong commitment to girls' education. Following training from the project team on girls' rights to education and protection, the teams of Peer Parent Educators organised outreach events using locally relevant approaches such as street theatre and house-to-house calls during which their mission was to raise awareness of fellow parents about girls' rights and support the return to and retention of girls' in school. In many instances girls and boys from project intervention schools joined them in their work.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

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In 2011 a group of Peer Parent Educators organised an event in Bimbilla's bustling market to reach out to parents and traders, including girls themselves about the importance of education for girls. A total of 95 people, including 30 school girls and 65 Peer Parent Educators participated in the outreach work and, as a direct result of this activity, 7 girls were immediately returned to school and over 20 phone calls were made to Peer Parent Educator representatives requesting that the outreach campaign be intensified and expanded to neighbouring communities. The activity also strengthened the resolve of the Peer Parent Educators to continue their work:

"I must admit that I underestimated our work as Peer Parent Educators in this project. However my perception has changed completely after the market outreach today. It was alarming to see for myself about twenty out of school girls during the outreach programme. I think that the exercise has been very useful and has awakened us to intensify our education and visits to these unfortunate girls who are out of school due to parents preference of boys in education to girls"
(Member of Dangba Peer Parent Educators team).

In addition to their outreach and awareness raising work, Peer Parent Educators also provide pastoral guidance at household level to girls wishing to re-enter school, receive childcare support or avoid an early marriage. By nurturing trusting relationships with parents and children, and negotiating with parents to allow their daughters to return to school, Peer Parent Educators have played a key role in helping realise girls' right to education and justice.

These activities, which took place over the course of the project implementation period have been effective in changing attitudes and practices regarding girls' education and a total of 55 out of school girls across the district were returned to school as a result of the Peer Parent Educators' actions. In addition, endline research undertaken in 2013 demonstrated that girls could directly attribute a reduction in household chores to the project's work, providing them with additional time to study:

"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."



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 2: Reflect Circles support girls to return to school in Mozambique

In Mozambique an average 45% of adults are illiterate (UNESCO, 2012) and the project developed a range of activities aimed at parents and guardians, key amongst which were the REFLECT circles which provide adults with the opportunity to come together and acquire literacy and numeracy skills whilst also discussing, prioritizing and identifying solutions to key problems in the community.



In the context of the project, these circles also played a fundamental role in raising adults' awareness of the barriers to girls' education, the causes of dropout and also encouraged them to work together to identify ways in which girls could be supported to return to and stay in school.

One of the ways in which this was done was to create sub-groups of REFLECT circle members interested in playing a supportive role for out of school girls in their various communities. These members provided guidance to the girls, assisting many of them to return to formal education. The REFLECT circles were also provided with small grants to establish income generation activities such as brick making and poultry farming to mitigate the risk of girls dropping out in order to supplement family income through farm labour or domestic work. As a result a total of 54 girls returned to school in the project areas in Mozambique and parental attitudes to girls' education have also undergone significant transformations in the process:

"Thanks to the project I can see real changes in my personal life, in my family as well as the wider community and the school. Before I was trained as a REFLECT facilitator I must admit I somewhat discriminated against (my daughters); I didn't treat them as if they had the same rights as boys. In fact I would always put my sons first as I thought they were more deserving than the girls. This is the way things are here..."

Thanks to the training we received, I have seen changes in myself. I even volunteered to be a REFLECT facilitator, so that I can also help other parents and guardians. My group has led awareness-raising talks about human rights, children's rights and violence against girls. We have reached out to the communities so we can get through to parents who don't take part in the REFLECT circle activities so that they can join the group, so they can join forces with us. We also encourage community members to help girls who have dropped out to return to school."

(REFLECT circle facilitator and parent, Mozambique)

The fact that many REFLECT circle members are also members of local School Management Committees helped the project establish clear links between the school and the community on issues related to girls' rights to education and protection from violence.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Reflect

Reflect is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change, which fuses the theories of Paulo Freire with the methodologies of participatory rural appraisal. Originally developed in pilot projects in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda between 1993-95, Reflect is now used by over 500 organisations in around 70 countries worldwide.

Reflect provides an on-going democratic space for a group of people to meet and discuss issues relevant to them. The participants choose the topics themselves, according to their own priorities and supported by a local facilitator. They also decide where and when to meet.

Underpinning the approach is a huge (and ever expanding) range of participatory methods. Prominent among these are graphics such as calendars, maps, matrices, rivers and trees, which enable participants to communicate their knowledge, experience and feelings without being restricted by literacy and language barriers. Drama, storytelling and songs are also used to identify and analyse social, economic, cultural and political issues. In this process the development of literacy and other communication skills are closely linked to the engagement of people in wider processes of development and social change. For more information visit: <http://www.reflect-action.org/>

Working with boys and girls

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The establishment of girls' and boys' clubs in project schools and communities in Ghana, Mozambique and Kenya was a fundamental part of the project's work and served to empower children and young people with information about their rights and bring about positive changes in their communities. In each country, club-members were able to take concrete action to raise awareness of girls' rights to education and protection from violence and support out of school peers to return to their studies.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 3: Reflect Circles support girls to return to school in Mozambique

In all three countries, pregnancy was identified as one of the main reasons for girls' high drop out rates. In Kenya and Ghana, in particular, pregnancy was also linked with child marriage (Parkes & Heslop, 2011). In order to tackle this issue, girls' club members in the project schools in Ghana organised a series of awareness raising events at community-level to disseminate information about existing policies that support pregnant girls and young mothers' rights to education:

"My parents forced me into an early marriage when I was in class six. I had to stop schooling when I was three months pregnant. I delivered the baby and decided to stay at home since I thought the school would not accept me back, and even if they did I felt the other students would make fun of me. Then I heard some school girls drumming and dancing in the street, encouraging girls who were out of school due to pregnancy to come back to school. I was surprised because I thought that when one has given birth to a baby she could not be accepted back in school. Later in the day I approached the mentor of the Chamba Girls' Club and she told me that the Ghana Education Service has a policy that allows girls who leave school due to pregnancy. It was not easy for my parents to agree, but with persistence and visits by the Peer Parents Educators as well as the mentors, they agreed. I am currently in the first year of Junior High School with so much support from my parents. But for the Girls' Clubs I would not be back at school".

(Schoolgirl, Ghana)



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 4: Friendly persuasion in Mozambique

The Girls' Clubs in Mozambique also played a dynamic role in raising awareness of girls' rights to education, encouraging their peers to understand the value of education and delaying marriage and motherhood:

"Thanks to our club's activities we were able to persuade Cremilda to come back to school. Cremilda was 16 years old and had been attending class 5 but she dropped out, because her sister in law was making her go and work on the potato farm, saying she had no time for studies. So we went and talked her into coming back to school. We told her that marriage doesn't always last forever and that she might risk getting pregnant early too, so if she wanted to have a future and make something of her life, she should focus on her studies. Now Cremilda is back at school, thanks to the club's work."

(Girls' Club member, Mozambique)

Given that poverty was a key factor preventing girls from remaining in school, following training in handicrafts from the project team, the girls' club members used funds raised from the sale of beautiful hand-made shoes, sweets and jewellery to purchase school materials for those girls most vulnerable to dropping out.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Strengthening Community Structures to promote long-term support for girls' education

Since the outset the project sought to establish strong relationships with community members including parents, teachers, School Management Committee members and local leaders and also

strengthened the links between schools and education authorities. This approach served to generate awareness about issues related to girls' education and protection and also helped obtain widespread ownership and buy-in to the project's aims and objectives providing the basis for sustainability of key interventions to promote girls' education in the long-term.

Case study 5: Strengthening sustainability

In the project intervention district in Kenya, the project supported the establishment of the Zonal Education Committee, a community-based structure that has played a key role in the implementation of the project. The composition of the structure, which includes the Area Education Officer, a member of the School Management Committee, a member of the Parent Teacher Association, a representative of the Gender-based violence cluster and a member of the Court Users' Committee ensures effective links and communication between local education authorities, schools and community members.

The Committee has been engaged in the project from the outset and in addition to raising awareness around girls' right to education and protection from violence, the Committee has also established its own education fund and has undertaken initiatives to fundraise and support poor girls' transition from primary to secondary school.

The Committee is also committed to playing a key role in sustaining a number of project activities once funding comes to an end. By liaising with schools to ensure that girls clubs are active, that club matrons and patrons are trained, that child protection training is delivered to new school board members and that school records of cases of violence against girls are maintained, the Committee will help guarantee some of the conditions fundamental to promoting girls' access and retention.

"We started the trust fund to educate our girls. We have partnered with all the community leaders to sensitise the community on stopping violence against girls. We are grateful for (the project) and we won't stop the campaign. The project has led to more girls being enrolled to school and retained in school up to class eight, and transited to secondary school as evident in the number of girls in Wenje Secondary schools."
(Zonal Education Committee Chairman)



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

The examples outlined above demonstrate the importance of engaging effectively with a wide range of different stakeholders in schools and communities including parents, school management committees, local authorities as well as girls themselves in order to successfully address some of the underlying causes of gender-based discrimination and barriers to girls' enrolment and retention.

Whilst it is arguably challenging to assign attribution for all changes in enrolment and retention to the project's interventions alone, final research data shows that girls' enrolment in the project schools has increased by 10% in Mozambique, 17% in Kenya and 14% in Ghana since the start of the project. Although government initiatives such as free schooling, school feeding and financial support have been critical to this achievement, at the end of the project period many respondents also openly acknowledged the impact of the project's own work (Parkes & Heslop, 2013):

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

Overall, the project's success in promoting girls' enrolment 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. Moreover, while in 2008, there was a steep drop in girls enrolled in the final years of schooling, in Kenya, this has now considerably reduced and gender parity in class 8 has improved from 0.48 in 2008 to 0.87 in 2013. In Ghana too girls' enrolment in the final years has improved and there is now gender parity in the final year of primary school (Parkes & Heslop, 2013).

"I have chosen to go back to school after being out of school for one year. I dropped out of school to work as a house girl, but life outside school was very challenging. The guidance and counselling offered by ActionAid Kenya helped me realise what I am and that I could get a lot of support from my peers. Today people in my community respect me because I am in class 8. My dream is to become a community worker to advocate against Female Genital Mutilation."

(Girl, Kenya)



Stop violence against girls in school project

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

5. Girls at the heart: empowering girls to take action

“It really increased my confidence” she says ‘because now I know that I am able to stand up and speak in front of a big crowd of people.’ *Girls club member*

One of the project’s main objectives was to **demonstrably increase girls’ confidence to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools, report incidents and create peer support networks.** In order to do this, it was fundamental to provide girls with safe and supportive spaces where they could meet with peers and trusted adults to access information and share experiences.

In addition to establishing girls’ clubs for in and out of school girls in all three countries, the project teams also created opportunities for girls to meet with key policy and decision-makers at all levels, engage with the media and take part in campaigning and advocacy work. They also worked with parents, teachers and school management committees, raising awareness on girls’ rights particularly the right to participation, and helped create a supportive environment for girls to speak out. In addition, working with boys was seen as a crucial strategy to achieve effective and positive changes in terms of gender roles and relationships.

In common with other studies, findings from the baseline research demonstrated that in the project areas, aggression tends to be seen as ‘normal’ male behaviour, while domesticity and submissiveness are expected of females, and girls’ bodies are frequently seen as economic assets (Parkes & Heslop, 2011). These beliefs and attitudes, which by becoming embedded in every day life and reflected in institutional policy and practice contribute to the normalisation of gendered patterns of discrimination and violence.

Providing girls with knowledge and information about their rights, encouraging them to challenge stereotypes and broaden their horizons, as well as facilitating opportunities for them to speak

out about their concerns were all fundamental strategies adopted by the project to increase girls’ confidence and empower them to challenge violence and discrimination.

Girls’ clubs: speaking up and speaking out



The establishment of girls’ clubs constituted a fundamental component of the project’s activities in all three countries. Generally made up of around 30 to 40 members, the main purpose of these clubs was to provide girls with a safe and welcoming space in which to learn about their rights, particularly their rights to protection and education, with the support of trusted adult facilitators identified by the girls themselves. These club ‘matrons’ or ‘patrons’ as they were known, received training from project staff on a range of issues including children’s rights, participatory methodologies, diversity and inclusion, how to establish, manage and maintain clubs as well as guidelines for facilitating and planning activities with club members.

Whilst the majority of the clubs were set up in schools, a series of community-level clubs were set up for out of school girls. Whilst activities varied depending on the girls’ interests and the challenges

being addressed some common examples of girls' club activities included:

- Drama, songs and dances on the theme of girls' rights.
- Exchange visits between schools.
- Visits to out of school girls and their families to encourage girls to return to school.
- Engaging with the media to highlight issues related to girls' education and protection.
- Taking part in campaigning and advocacy initiatives at local and national level including marches, conferences and meetings with decision-makers.
- Participating in training workshops on rights, life-skills and advocacy and communication skills.

An independent mid-term review conducted in 2011 noted that girls' clubs were amongst the project's most effective initiatives. Respondents across all categories highlighted the positive impact clubs were having on girls' lives noting that club members were more confident and outspoken, aware of their rights, eager to pursue their education, performed better academically, assumed leadership positions in school, and had begun to challenge violence in their communities (Yankah, 2011).

Further research conducted at the end of project confirmed this, highlighting the fact that participation in clubs had succeeded in building girls' confidence enabling them to become more outspoken on issues of rights and equality when compared to non-club members (Education for Change, 2013). In Kenya, club members are more likely to agree that teachers who have sexual relationships with pupils should be dismissed, and to agree that girls should be allowed to return to school after giving birth. In addition, girls in clubs have more knowledge of laws and policies relating to violence against girls in schools, and are more likely to report violence, than girls not in clubs:

“In the club they taught us the appropriate places to report violence like AMUDEIA, the hospital, the police; including some telephone numbers”

(Girl, Mozambique)

The positive impact of clubs on girls' education and attitudes has been recognised by teachers and education authorities too, and in Mozambique, the District Education Director incorporated a request for information on girls' clubs activities in quarterly status reports he receives from head teachers.

Importantly though, girls' themselves enjoyed being part of the clubs and the opportunities for learning and sharing that the activities provided:

“One day I went to visit the club at my school and I liked it so much, there were a lot of beautiful things and I wanted to learn. This is how I started participating in the activities; I have learnt a lot of good things.”

(Girls' club member, Mozambique)

Working with boys: champions for equal rights



ActionAid believes that any effort to improve the status and situation of women and girls must involve determined efforts to engage constructively with men and boys. As such the project developed a range of targeted activities including, at school level, specific activities aimed at reaching out to boys. Whilst each country took a slightly different approach to this work the overall aim was to provide boys with information about their rights, encourage them to explore gender roles, life-skills, sexual maturation and issues contributing to discrimination against girls and support them to champion girls' rights.

In Ghana and Kenya the project teams established separate 'boys only' clubs in schools, bringing the boys and girls clubs together periodically for campaigns, events and activities, whilst in Mozambique boys were eventually recruited as equal and active members within the existing girls' clubs. Although the inclusion of boys in girls' clubs provides an opportunity to build solidarity between boys and girls and help them both challenge accepted gender roles, it requires sensitivity and responsiveness by the trained

teacher facilitators who need to be aware of gender-power dynamics within the group and the fact that girls will still likely require space to discuss confidential issues.

By generating greater understanding of the causes and consequences of discrimination against girls and helping boys understand how they can play a part in tackling it, this work has contributed to changing attitudes and perceptions for the better as outlined by the following example from Ghana.

Case study 6: Changing boys' attitudes to girls' rights in Ghana

Isshaku Abdulmajeed, aged 12, an outspoken founding member of the boys' clubs established in one of the project schools in Ghana explains why he and his friends decided to be part of this initiative:

"We decided to set up the club because we thought that girls can't work on their own – we need to help them. So we organise debates, quizzes and plays and last year we developed a play on girls' education."



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Isshaku explains that the play tells the story of two families: one family is poor but managed to find the money to send all three of their children – including the girls – to school. The other family is rich, but only sent their boys to school. In the end, he says, the rich family becomes poor and the poor family becomes rich because of their different attitudes towards investing in girls' education.

"We decided to focus on this issue because some people say girls' education is not important, but they are wrong because at times girls are even more intelligent than boys, so girls also need to be educated. They have good minds and they can learn too."

"There are all kinds of violence like forced marriage that shouldn't happen. She should be able to choose the man she likes to get married to, instead of people choosing for her. At times we boys also disturb the girls and insult them, calling them names. If you insult a girl, she will be thinking about it all day, even in class and then it will affect her learning because she won't be able to concentrate. This is violence so we shouldn't do this to girls because they are our sisters."

Final research at the end of the project shows that boys' clubs constitute a promising way to encourage boys to analysing gender roles and relationships, understand the connections between masculinity and violence against girls, and explore alternatives (Parkes & Heslop, 2013). Overall, the work with boys helped break down some of the prejudices that limit girls' academic performance and aspirations and provide an enabling environment for girls' education and empowerment.

Adults' attitudes to clubs

Reflect is an innovative approach to adult
Whilst research shows that adults may often perceive the notion of children's rights and, in particular children's right to participate as a threat to adult power and control (Save the Children, 2010) many of the adults involved in the project have been extremely supportive of the initiative and appreciative of the positive changes it has brought about. Some Head teachers were especially positive about the impact the clubs had on girls' academic performance:

"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 sensitised 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."

Girls' Camps: expanding horizons

One particularly successful initiative undertaken by the project team in Ghana in association with the Ministry of Education and other organisations including Ibis and Camfed, has been the organisation of regional and national-level Girls' Camps. Each year a group of 4 or 5 girls are selected from each of the 13 schools to take part in the events, which are held either in the regional capital or in Accra. The camps provide participants with

the opportunity to learn about issues related to girls' rights, gender-based violence, life-skills, relationships, leadership skills and the value of education. In addition, the camps also provide girls, most of whom come from remote rural areas where horizons for girls are typically limited, with the opportunity to meet inspiring female role models including professionals in all sectors and take part in exposure visits to places of historical and economic interest. The following case-study demonstrates the impact that these events have on individual girls.

Case study 7: Regional girls' camps in Ghana

Keziah, Bedau and Rubaina, both pupils in one of the schools supported by the project in Ghana, were selected to take part in the annual girls' camp that was held in Tamale, the capital of the northern region. Over the 4-day period they joined 50 other girls in a range of activities including debates, discussions, career-guidance sessions, training workshops and visits to the airport, the university, a vocational training centre for girls, and the district hospital. It also provided the space to learn and talk about issues that affect girls and their education



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PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Says Bedau 'we learned about our rights and types of violence that affect girls as well as who to get support from in cases of violence and the role of our teachers in stopping violence'. Girls are often the victims of different types of violence, many of which, such as verbal or physical abuse are accepted as part of daily life. To illustrate this Rubaina explains that 'sometimes, if we are facing violence we might not know that it is violence and so, even if it is harmful to us we just keep the pain inside and in the end it will end up harming us and harming our education.'

'Also some people don't believe in girls' education' adds Keziah, 'like local chiefs – most of them think that women are fools and that we should be given in marriage.'

The opportunity to take part in this big meeting was an inspiration to all the girls, and they were particularly motivated to meet a number of professional women, occupying a wide range of jobs, which are usually considered locally to be "men's jobs".

'I really enjoyed the career counselling sessions' says Bedau, 'we met this woman who worked for the medical school and she was so young and yet she was a medical doctor! This helped us to realise that although people will tell you that some jobs are for women and some jobs are for men, it's not true – men and women can do the same kind of jobs! I want to be a doctor myself one day.'

Keziah noted that they even met the District Education Director, who is also a woman. She came to the conference on the first day and Rubaina read out a petition to her on behalf of all the girls, requesting that more female teachers be posted to local schools in Nanumba district. 'It really increased my confidence' she says 'because now I know that I am able to stand up and speak in front of a big crowd of people.'

After the forum both Bedau and Rubaina had the chance to take part in a radio discussion, which was aired on Radio Justice. 'We met the presenter Madam Martina Bugri' says Rubaina 'and we told her about girls' rights and the problem of violence affecting girls. We also told her that we want the Government to implement laws that will make schools safe for girls.'

The girls are bright and inspired and it is clear that the opportunity to take part not just in club activities which provide them with a support network within the school, but also participating in forums and meetings has helped broaden their horizons and, as Bedau puts it 'made us more open because we saw things we have never seen before'.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 8: Developing and implementing gender-sensitive school plans in Ghana

In Ghana the project worked closely with School Management Committee members to ensure that school plans incorporated specific actions aimed at consolidating schools' commitments to creating learning environments that are free from violence and sensitive to the specific needs of girls. These plans were developed in consultation with girls and using the 'girls' club charters' as reference.

Girls' Club charters were developed by girls' club members with support of teachers and project staff and served to outline girls' aspirations for a girl-friendly school including the need for: school rules promoting a non-violent environment; more female teachers and improved toilets and sanitation facilities. Once finalised, these charters were presented to School Management Committee members and district education authorities.

The opportunity to present charters and influence school planning and resource allocation was critical for increasing girls' self-esteem and their equal participation in a friendly and conducive learning environment. In addition, the participatory process values children's voices and provides a space for adults and children to listen and respond to each other with respect.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Empowering out of school girls

The project's research component revealed that out of school girls were likely to be amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups and interviews and focus groups across all three countries revealed that out of school girls lamented the foreclosure of their education and some spoke with regret about marriage, whether forced or not (Parkes & Heslop, 2013).

Although the project emphasised the establishment of school-based clubs for girls and boys, specific initiatives were also developed for out of school

girls aimed at providing them with information about their rights to education, protection and participation as well as supporting them to return to school by liaising with school management committees and parents. However, for those girls who no longer wished to return to formal education, alternative training programmes were developed providing information on: personal hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, childcare, and gender violence. In Kenya and Mozambique the project also linked out of school girls with income generating opportunities such as training in small-scale business development skills, vocational training schemes and loans.

Case study 9: Supporting out of school girls in Kenya

Gwakindu is the name of one of the out of school girls' group established with support from the project team in Kenya. The girls met regularly to share their challenges as young mothers in order to develop confidence and shared strategies to overcome these obstacles. As a group *Gwakindu* members aimed to:

- Sensitise their communities on matters concerning girls out of school including the school re-entry policy, early marriage and pregnancy
- Build the capacity of group members on leadership and entrepreneurial skills to enable them to manage a group business
- Encourage and source funds for members who want to go back to school
- Acquire a loan and start up a business for income generation for members
- Link with teachers to enhance in-schools girls' knowledge of marriage, pregnancy and offer guidance through presentations and discussions in schools.

The Project also linked *Gwakindu* with *Kwacha Africa* a youth empowerment group based in Mombasa to build their capacity on group formation and strategic development. The girls received training on life-skills, leadership and entrepreneurship and were provided with information about opportunities for start-up loans and vocational training. The group has since set up a poultry farm and have also received funding to buy every-day domestic items to re-sell in their communities.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

An independent evaluation conducted at the end of the project concludes that girls' participation was well incorporated into the project in each country, particularly in the various community and advocacy activities. Girls played an active role in campaigns, marches and were able to engage directly with high-level decision-makers at meetings and conferences. Girls' club members developed charters and petitions, which helped them stand up for their rights, set high standards

for themselves and demand accountability and responsibility from duty-bearers. Girls' clubs have also played an important role in empowering girls with knowledge, skills and confidence and evidence from mid-term, longitudinal and endline research shows an increase in girls' confidence to speak up and speak out about their rights as a direct result of project activities (Education for Change, 2013).



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

6. Reducing Violence Against Girls

“Now I cannot accept any violence of some sort at home, I just tell my father that if he hits my mother it will be reported” *Girls club member*

One of the project’s main objectives was to **reduce violence against girls by family members, teachers and peers in the intervention districts by 50% from baseline statistics.**

The baseline data revealed widespread violence in the project intervention areas in all 3 countries with the vast majority of girls interviewed (85% in Kenya, 81.5% in Ghana and 66% in Mozambique) stating that they had experienced some form of violence during the previous 12 months (Parkes & Heslop, 2011).

In addition, 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 (Parkes & Heslop, 2013).

In light of this evidence, the project had therefore clearly set itself a very ambitious target and range of strategies were employed to bring about changes to knowledge, attitudes, practice and policy and achieve a tangible reduction in incidences of violence against girls in their homes, schools and communities. These strategies included: raising awareness of girls’ rights to protection, facilitating closer links between communities, police, health, legal and social services and strengthening community-led child protection mechanisms as well as campaigning and working with the media. Whilst this is clearly a challenging and complex area of work, some of the most successful approaches are outlined below.

Establishing and strengthening child protection groups linked to local government services

In addition to the high levels of violence against girls, the baseline data also revealed that official mechanisms for reporting violence were weak in all three countries with only a handful of cases referred through official channels. Some of the main reasons for this included a limited access to health clinics and police services, especially in the more remote areas of Kenya and Ghana as well as lack of knowledge of the services that might be able to provide support (Parkes & Heslop 2011).

To address this problem and enable girls and their communities to better respond to and report incidents of violence and abuse in and around schools, a range of approaches were taken to establish and strengthen networked community-based child protection groups. Given the remoteness of many of the intervention areas, the establishment of community response mechanisms linked to official government service providers was key to improving access to formal health care, legal and counselling services for victims of violence.

The role played by groups such as the Community Advocacy Teams in Ghana, local women’s] network *Sauti Ya Wanawake* (Women’s Voices) in Kenya, the and ‘REFLECT’ circles in Mozambique was fundamental to the achievement of this objective.

Case study 10: Community-based child protection mechanisms in Ghana

In Ghana, the project supported the work of Community Advocacy Teams (CATs) in each intervention area. These groups usually made up of five volunteers (including three women and two men) per community are committed to raising awareness about violence and abuse, monitoring and responding to incidents and supporting victims and their families.

To facilitate their work, the project teams linked the CATs to key district-level support services including the Ghana Police Service's Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DOWVSU), the Department of Social Welfare and the Centre for Human Rights and Administrative Justice. Staff from these structures provided CAT members with formal paralegal training, featuring modules on: legal provisions for children's rights and child protection; legal penalties for child abuse; (formal referral mechanisms and psychosocial support).

In order to ensure a strong link with schools and facilitate the referral of school-based violence, CATs established community-based Child Protection Networks, composed of CAT members, School Management Committee and Parent-Teacher Association representatives as well as members of the District Assembly and DOWVSU. These networks enable a wider dissemination of information about and stronger links to institutional support and referral services, increasing the potential for cases to be reported and referred through the official channels rather than dealt with informally at the family or community level.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

The CATs also supported girls to report incidents sensitively and confidentially, accompanying girls to local police and children's services as necessary and their presence and role was well received in the communities they serve.

"The idea of getting community volunteers in place to monitor and advocate against these negative practices made a world of difference in my community"

(Madam Asoa, Elder, Ghana).

In addition to linking communities with local government services, CATs created close relationships with local authorities as well as traditional and religious leaders to increase awareness and support for children's and women's rights, promote the importance of girls' education, and build community support and momentum for speaking out against early marriage and early pregnancy.

Raising awareness of the reporting and referral system and making these services available to girls helped them know where to go for confidential, youth-friendly support services. Confidentiality provides girls with the important safe and non-judgemental space to report to people who are trained to listen, respond, offer pastoral care and prioritise needs appropriately.

"Girls have become aware and make reports that are referred to the Commission. This has become possible because the Community Advocacy Teams are providing a sense of security and social support for victims of violence in the communities, which hitherto was absent. We have dealt with a number of forced marriage cases together with the communities with much cooperation and at a very low cost to everybody. The network has made the Commission more conscious, visible and active in facilitating redress for abuse cases without marring social relationships and also not compromising the rights of girls to be enrolled and retained in school to complete their education"

(District Director of the Commission on Human rights and Administrative Justice)

Through their tireless work, the CATs have brought about real change in awareness and behaviour in the target communities and the percentage of adults who were aware of official reporting mechanisms rose from 36% in 2009 to 86% in 2013.



Stop violence against girls in school project

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 11: Women's Voices for Violence-free communities in Kenya

Kenya's Sauti Ya Wanawake (Women's Voices) network is a community-based social movement comprised of local volunteers committed to women's rights and empowerment.

"Our first priority is the girl child who we work with to make sure she goes to school and lives a violence free life. The women are also a priority as they are the members and empower themselves economically and socially through capacity building".

(Sauti Ya Wanawake member)

The project team in Kenya worked with Sauti Ya Wanawake from the outset, strengthening their awareness of gender-based violence and girls' rights to education. By providing group members with training and helping them to build alliances with other structures including local civil society organisations and government bodies, the team also helped Sauti Ya Wanawake to campaign for and secure justice in cases of violence against girls.

As a result of their hard work and the effectiveness of their approach, community members now consider Sauti as the first point of call, knowing that Sauti members will ensure cases are referred through the appropriate channels and that victims receive the medical, legal and psychosocial support they require. In some severe cases, where victims require treatment for violence and abuse, the issue of payment of medical expenses can be a considerable barrier.

To address this, Sauti members raised funds from the community and worked with the police and representatives of the Children's Department at decentralised level to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the needs of vulnerable girls. For example, in cases of sexual violence, Sauti members assist with reporting to the Police and then liaise with the Children's Department and refer the survivor to the hospital for treatment. They assist the Police in the investigation process and offer psychosocial support to survivors. Once the case is taken to court they facilitate the survivor to attend court hearings and provide paralegal advice as required.

They have also been instrumental in tackling impunity that so often results when cases are not referred to official channels. In two instances Sauti members provided evidence that contributed to jail sentences for the perpetrators of cases of child marriage and incest. According to Sauti Ya Wanawake's chairwoman these outcomes are directly attributable to the project, as in her view without the support and training received, Sauti members would not have had the courage to go to court and these cases would have most likely been dealt with at community level.



Stop violence against girls in school project

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 12: Strengthening and formalising the links between education and justice in Ghana

The police play a crucial role in ensuring justice is done in cases of violence and abuse against girls and the project team in northern Ghana worked to overcome some of the attitudinal and geographic barriers preventing incidents of violence in schools from being effectively reported and followed up through official channels.

By stimulating close collaboration between the Ghana Police Service's Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) and the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) of the Ghana Education Service the project team managed to broker an agreement between the two that was formalised by a national-level Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to tackle violence against girls. The MoU identifies, promotes and institutionalises a confidential reporting system to track and respond to cases of violence and includes guidelines to facilitate the reduction of violence in schools, document reporting procedures and manage cases.

Through a range of community outreach and awareness raising activities, the team were able to spread information about the MoU between the Ghana Education Service and DOVVSU, informing community members about reporting and referral mechanisms. This initiative has been so successful that it has been replicated through collaboration between ActionAid, the Ghana Police Service and the Ghana Education Service in all the areas where ActionAid is working.



Stop violence against girls in school project

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Reporting mechanisms that are clear, accessible, confidential, known and seen to be functional are an essential part of the process of reducing violence against girls. As outlined by the examples above, the project has engaged with government service providers, community-based organisations and community members to develop, promote and formalise effective reporting and referral mechanisms. Project teams and community members have also made significant efforts to communicate information about girls' rights to protection from violence as well as the appropriate, formal reporting mechanisms to teachers, parents, community leaders as well as girls and boys using a variety of methods.

At the end of the project period, research revealed a clear increase in community members' knowledge of local organisations that can help girls who have experienced violence; in Kenya the number of community members who could name these institutions tripled between 2011 and 2013.

In addition, the project's endline research reveals that girls in Mozambique are now 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. Their cases are also considerably more likely to reach official channels, including school management, District Education Officers and the police. These findings are even more marked for girls' club members suggesting that club membership increases girls' confidence to report and take action on violence (Parkes & Heslop, 2013).

“These activities brought a change into my life, I gained more knowledge about child´s rights (and) I feel I am able to speak about violence against girls in the community. I came to know of the Child Line and through it I can report any act of violence. I also know that there is a helpdesk line to deal with domestic violence issues experienced by women and children. Now I cannot accept any violence of some sort at home, I just tell my father that if he hits my mother it will be reported”

(Girls' Club member, Mozambique)

Moreover, in Kenya and Ghana, girls' experiences of most forms of violence has reduced since 2009 - notably in relation to beating, and sexual violence in Kenya, and types of physical and psychological violence in Ghana. Beatings for example have reduced by 20% in Ghana and 25% in Kenya. These findings suggest that the project influence extends beyond knowledge and attitudes to influencing behaviours. While the project did not entirely reach its objective of a 50% reduction in levels of violence overall, this may not necessarily indicate that the intervention has failed, but that it has succeeded in increasing girls' confidence and ability to recognise and speak out about violence (Parkes & Heslop, 2013).

7. Making laws and policies work for girls

“Whipping, caning, smacking cannot be described as discipline.”

As outlined by the conceptual framework on p.13 forms of gender discrimination that exist within social and political institutions and manifest themselves in the form of laws, policies and the content of curricula all contribute towards the perpetuation of violence against girls within the education system.

For this reason, as part of its overall objectives, the project aimed to ensure that in each of the 3 countries **a legal and policy framework that specifically addresses violence against girls in school was being implemented at all levels.** Whilst this is arguably an extremely ambitious target to achieve within a relatively short time-frame, the project teams adopted a range of strategies founded on ActionAid’s human rights based approach that seeks to link local groups to wider civil society movements, using robust research and evidence, including policy analysis to lobby and campaign for sustainable changes.

In addition to the overarching research component that included baseline, longitudinal and endline studies in each country, early on in the project’s life-cycle, teams conducted a thorough analysis of national-level laws and policies relevant to girls’ education and protection and this information played a crucial role in informing the project’s advocacy work at local and national level.

Important alliances were established with key civil society networks and coalitions in order to conduct joint policy advocacy around shared priorities and teams also worked closely with the media to keep issues on the public agenda and increase pressure on policy and decision-makers.

Crucial to this process was the engagement of girls themselves. Empowered with knowledge about their rights as well as skills in communication and advocacy techniques, girls’ were provided with opportunities to actively engage with key decision-makers at local and national levels.

This combination of research, mobilisation, campaigning and media work during the life-time of the project resulted in the implementation of a range of measures in favour of girls’ education and protection from the school level upwards.

Tackling impunity within the system



As noted above, the analysis of gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies in laws and policies related to girls’ rights to education and protection provided crucial information for the project teams’ advocacy work in country. Using this information, the teams were better equipped to work alongside other civil society organisations to seize opportunities for influencing crucial policy review processes.

Case study 14: Engaging teachers in attempts to tackle impunity within the system in Kenya

The identification of teachers as one of the groups of perpetrators of violence against girls in the project's baseline research encouraged the team to focus advocacy efforts around specific changes aimed at mitigating incidents and reducing impunity for perpetrators within the system.

Project team members presented a series of recommendations emerging from the baseline study and the legal and policy analysis were presented to the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), which coordinates the recruitment, employment, training and management of teachers in Kenya. These recommendations included proposed revisions to the Teachers' Service Commission Act of 2012 and the Teachers' Code of Conduct, creating opportunities and designing strategies to ensure that teachers play a leading role in creating child-friendly learning environments.

The new provisions ensure that all teachers (in public and private schools) are registered and issued with a teaching certificate, which must be renewed every three years. Moreover, any teacher convicted of a sexual offence or any offence against a learner cannot be registered as a teacher and if the conviction occurs during teaching practice, the teacher shall be deregistered, interdicted and legal action taken.

Using the same body of evidence as a basis, the project team also worked alongside other civil society organisations including Childline and Plan Kenya to contribute to the drafting of Circular addressing acts of violence and abuse in schools. The Circular aims to ensure that any teacher found guilty of violence against pupils is removed from the education system and notes that collusion and failure to report an offender also constitute punishable offences.



Stop violence against girls in school project

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

The Circular, which has been disseminated to District Education Authorities and schools across the country, is also accompanied by a new centralised database to track and deregister teachers who commit sexual offences to ensure proper redress on cases of violence. At school level, the project teams helped teaching staff, parents and pupils understand the content of the circular and how to ensure its implementation.

Linked to this work, the team were also able to ensure the inclusion of specific clauses addressing violence in schools in the revised Basic Education Act which consolidates information from a range of education circulars into one document and, importantly, provides a clear definition of violence and under Section 36 (1; 2) notes that:

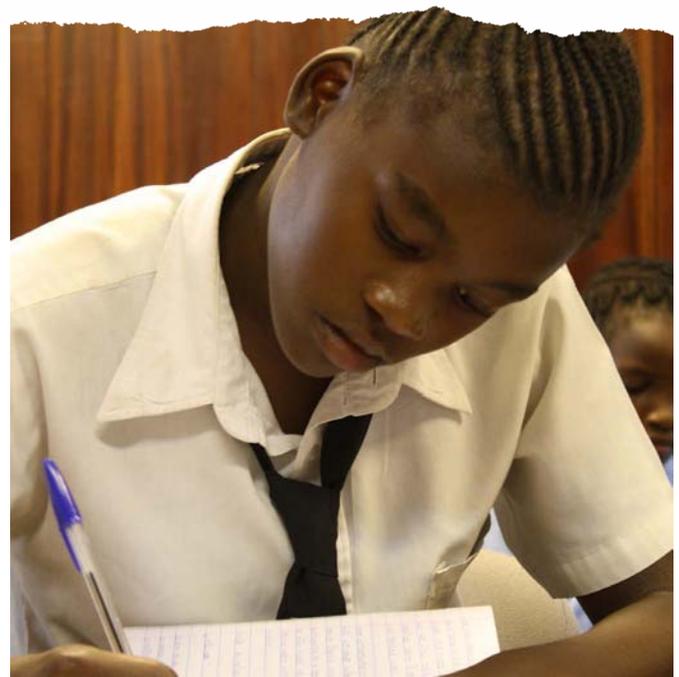
“No pupil shall be subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in any manner, whether physical or psychological. A person who contravenes the provisions of [this] subsection commits an offence and shall be liable to conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand shillings or to imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.”

In order to contribute both to changes in awareness and changes in policy, not only did project teams use robust evidence gathered in the intervention areas to inform national-level policy advocacy, but they also ensured information about national laws and policies were disseminated at local level, using accessible language and formats in order to promote implementation and compliance.

Civil society alliances engage in joint policy advocacy



Establishing and strengthening civil society networks and coalitions has contributed significantly to the project’s success in bringing about changes to national laws and policies on girls’ education and protection. By bringing together a wide range of non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, Teachers’ Unions and national-level media bodies and identifying common priorities across a variety of sectors including children’s rights, child protection, education and women’s rights the project was able to generate a common voice and consensus on specific issues related to violence against girls and intensify the pressure on decision-makers and politicians to listen and respond to the demands of civil society.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 15: Working together to defend girls' rights to education and protection in Mozambique

Teenage pregnancy was identified by the project's researchers as being one of the main causes of drop out for girls in Mozambique in the project intervention areas (Parkes & Heslop, 2011) a factor reflected in national-level data from the World Health Organisation showing that the proportion of girls under the age of 15 who become pregnant in Mozambique is just over 12% (WHO, 2013).

For many of these girls, continuing in education during and after pregnancy becomes extremely difficult, particularly when faced with mockery from peers and discrimination from teachers who tend to see such girls as a bad influence. In 2003, the Mozambican Ministry of Education, recognising the impact of teenage pregnancy on girls' education drafted Ministerial Dispatch N° 39/GM/2003, which outlines provisions that are to be made for their education. Unfortunately, the content of the decree, which states that pregnant girls should be transferred from regular day school to night classes, in many ways reflects the discriminatory attitudes encountered by girls' in their schools and communities and further penalises them by forcing them into a situation in which they may be at further risk, vulnerability and discomfort.

Whilst the same Dispatch also states that teachers and other education staff who are responsible for sexual harassment and impregnation of school girls should be suspended without pay and placed under disciplinary procedure it does not outline the procedures for the implementation of the policy.

Having identified these gaps, the project team in Mozambique successfully mobilised a broad alliance of civil society organisations to make specific recommendations for the amendment and implementation of the Dispatch. A Working Group was established and subsequently submitted a revised proposal containing recommendations for:

- The inclusion and equal participation of pregnant school girls at day school
- The suspension of perpetrators of sexual abuse and harassment of pupils from school during investigations
- Specific and proportional penalties for complicit adults
- Concrete procedures for implementation of the policy at school level.

Thanks to the wealth of data and learning on girls' education and violence generated by the project, the alliance was able to advocate persuasively for improved measures to support girls' education. The Ministry of Education are currently working on the document and the alliance will continue to advocate for its finalisation in 2014.



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PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Case study 16: Revisions to the Penal Code in Mozambique

Following an in-depth analysis of the legal and policy framework with regard to girls' education and protection in Mozambique a series of contradictions and gaps were identified. The project team ensured that the research report was widely disseminated and called a meeting bringing together civil society organisations working in Mozambique including UN Agencies, INGOs, Networks and Coalitions as well as key Government Ministry representatives to share the information.

They also worked with the Mozambican chapter of Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) and the national coalition of organisations working on child protection (ROSC) to draft a list of proposed changes to ensure better protection for victims of sexual abuse. These included demands for revisions to article 409 that states that rapists can avoid a prison sentence if they marry the victim; article 398 that only criminalises rape if the victim is a virgin and article 399 that fails to acknowledge the fact that men and boys can also be victims of rape.

The proposed revisions were submitted to Parliament for consideration in 2012. Although the process has not yet been finalised it is expected that civil society's proposed changes will be taken into account in the final review in March 2014.



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Empowered girls hold decision-makers to account



The project recognised girls' agency and active participation as key strategies in its efforts to achieve long-term change to laws and policies. By placing girls firmly at the heart of all stages of implementation and creating opportunities for girls

to voice their concerns about issues affecting their lives the project was able to engage them directly in key decision-making spaces and processes from local to national level. This was achieved through a range of approaches including the engagement of girls in the drafting of petitions, organisation of national level conferences with leading political figures and engaging with the media.

Case study 17: National Girls' Conference in Mozambique

The organisation of ActionAid's annual National Girls' Conference in Mozambique provided a space for girls to learn about their rights, identify priorities and prepare to meet with national-level policy and decision makers. Bringing together around 70 girls from across the whole country (including 40 girls from the project intervention areas), the conference constituted a highly successful platform for promoting girls' participation in the national policy agenda.

The conference, which ran for three days allowed girls to take part in debates and discussions on issues such as forced marriage, denial of rights, sexual harassment and domestic violence. On the third and final day, the girls were able to meet with top-level government representatives including National Departmental Directors of the Ministry of Women and Social Action, the Head of the Ministry of Education's Gender Department as well as the lead representative of the National Office for Responses to Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence.

The girls took advantage of this opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns and handed in a petition in which they appealed for decision-makers to ensure harsher penalties for rapists, including those who abuse children within the school environment and ensure schools and communities support girls' education by approving and implementing the necessary laws and policies for girls' protection.

This work contributed to the project team's broader advocacy for policy change, particularly in connection with the Penal Code and the School Re-entry policy as outlined above and ensured girls' views on these issues directly heard by key national decision-makers.



Stop violence against girls in school project
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Engaging with the media

The way issues relating to violence and abuse against girls are treated in the media can often border on the sensationalistic and may contribute to placing the blame on girls due to their behaviour or dress. The project sought to monitor and promote more sensitive and constructive coverage that

would contribute to both disseminating factual evidence about the issues, ensure confidentiality of victims and lobby for the implementation of measures to tackle the problem. Crucially, the project teams also sought opportunities to work directly with radio, television and print media to ensure girls' voices were directly heard by as wide a public as possible.

Case study 18: Working with the media in Mozambique

Strategic engagement with the media in Mozambique ensured wide-spread coverage of girls' rights to education and protection during the project's life-time. In addition to the provision of training to staff from key media houses on gender-based violence, how to report issues related to violence against girls in a sensitive, constructive way that calls for concrete action, the project team also set up a working group of 15 journalists from the main TV, radio stations and newspapers in the country. This collaboration resulted in an increase of sensitive and constructive coverage, not just of VAG issues but also of the project's own work, supporting the project's advocacy strategies and contributing to keep the issue on the public agenda.



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At school-level, the project established links between project schools with local newspapers to encourage gender-sensitive reporting of cases of violence and abuse. As part of this work, 15 girls and boys received training in essential journalism techniques to enable them to share information and create a school newspaper that would show best practice in reporting education rights issues. They also received a package of basic materials to set up the newspaper and they have been linked to reputed national journalists for support and mentoring. The children pledged to use their acquired skills to report cases of abuse against children sensitively and accurately and set a model for others. They also participated in discussion forums on children's rights at local and national levels.

Most recently, in 2012, Dayse, an 11 year-old conference participant from one of the project schools in Manhica was selected by her peers to present the girls' petition against early marriage to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Women and Social Affairs. This was broadcast on live television and seen by an estimated 70% of people living in urban areas. This experience had a profound effect on Dayse herself, as not only was she able to learn about her rights, but also convey this knowledge to a huge audience, raising awareness of the issue and encouraging others to see her as a role model and someone to go to for information:

"Before participating in the National Conference for Girls, I used to see a lot of young people pregnant, it used to happen a lot in my neighbourhood and I thought that was normal. Now I know it is not normal for a child to be pregnant because when that happens that child no longer goes to school and no longer plays. Now I know that it is not right to be pregnant when young, I know that I have to study. At the conference, I learned about my rights. I became very happy when I was selected to read the petition. A lot of people saw me on TV, my colleagues, my family and a lot of my neighbours. When I went back home people asked me what early marriage is and what can be done to end this evil? I explain to young and old all that I learnt to allow girls to go school"
(Dayse, Class 6, Mozambique)

The project's community partners have also measured the response of the media to its advocacy work through weekly monitoring of media coverage of VAGS cases in at least two national newspapers in each country and assessing the sensitivity of the reporting to gender and girls' rights. This body of work contributed to raise community members' awareness of girls' rights as well as the laws in which these are enshrined - a first step in empowering people to claim their entitlements from duty bearers.

In addition, the production of simplified, translated versions of legislation and policy also contributed

to creating an enabling environment for children and community members to understand issues around violence and education. The production of child-friendly versions of the Sexual Offences Act and the Children's Act into pocket-sized, colourful and straightforward booklets has enabled whole communities in Kenya to understand the issues and related government policy. In the first year of the Project only 36% of community members could identify legislation dealing with VAGS compared to 85% in Year 4.

The project's objective to ensure the existence and implementation of a legal and policy framework

that specifically addresses violence against girls in school in all three countries was admittedly extremely ambitious. Legal and policy development processes are highly political and bureaucratic and involve lengthy ongoing negotiations amongst multiple actors each with their own agendas. As such, achieving changes of this type requires time, resources and concerted action in coordination with broader civil society as well as strategic advocacy planning and lobbying.

Whilst much remains to be done before all the gaps and contradictions in legal and policy provision and implementation are filled, some changes have

already been achieved as outlined by the examples above. That these achievements were made possible is largely due to the implementation of ActionAid's human rights based approach which aims to achieve sustainable change by linking local groups to wider movements, gathering strong evidence, promoting policy analysis, building campaigns and using mass communications.



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PHOTO: ACTIONAID

8. Realising the potential of research

“The project’s robust and rigorous approach to research and data collection has credibly and successfully revealed to implementers and the global education community a range of nuances and gaps in work on corporal punishment, sexuality and gender identity and sexual and reproductive health as well as highlighting areas of focus for future research, policy and programmatic intervention”

Achieving the Stop Violence Against Girls in School project’s ambitious aim and objectives required a sound understanding of some of the underlying causes of gender-based discrimination and patterns of violence against girls as well as the consequences of these factors on the potential for girls to enjoy their fundamental right to education.

As highlighted in the preceding sections of this document, much of what was achieved during the life-time of the project was only made possible due to the availability of a robust body of evidence generated by the project’s research component as well as its Monitoring and Evaluation system. This information facilitated a deeper understanding of some of the key issues at the root of violence against girls in school and also enabled the teams to better monitor changes and impacts occurring as a result of the project’s interventions. Whilst Monitoring and Evaluation will be analysed further in the following section, this section will focus on some of the more successful elements of the research component of the project.

As one of the project’s three central components, the research element was built into the overall initiative from the outset and generated a wealth of detailed quantitative and qualitative data including national and cross-country comparative baseline studies, longitudinal studies and endline studies. Information from the research fed into programme design and provided the evidence-base for advocacy work.

Research design and partnerships

The project’s ambitious research model specified a team composed of four research institutes, who worked together to design and deliver rigorous and detailed quantitative and qualitative research to inform programming and advocacy. At the international level the Institute of Education at the University of London was identified to coordinate the overall research component, working in close collaboration with the University of Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique, Own and Associates in Kenya, and the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition.

Researchers from each institute collaborated to design and implemented the baseline, longitudinal and endline studies, with national partners responsible for national-level data collection and analysis and the Institute of Education assigned to support the overall design and implementation process as well as the production of comparative studies bringing together findings from all three countries.

This partnership model based on mutual respect and a desire to develop and share learning, encouraged national research teams to engage regularly with each other, sharing skills and offering intensive peer support. The approach has increased all partners' capacities to manage and deliver complex quantitative and qualitative research.

Investing in a multi-country, multi-institute research model such as this one that included regular face-to-face meetings and workshops as well as the publication of reports and other materials required the allocation of significant resources. However this investment has helped contribute to a shared vision and understanding of the design, approaches and methodology for the research and commitment to quality, rigour and ethics across all four partners and stimulated positive working relationships and internal learning. In addition to the biannual meetings scheduled as part of the overall research design and implementation process, national research partners also sought out additional opportunities to learn from each other and provide peer support. During the initial phases of the longitudinal research for example, the lead researcher from Mozambique visited the Kenyan team while the Ghana researchers travelled to share skills with the Mozambique team. These examples highlight the effectiveness and creative opportunities for researcher networking during complex multi-country projects.

Research processes and products



Unequal gender power relations and related social norms are a root cause of violence against girls, however, ActionAid recognises that these manifest differently in different socio- cultural and political contexts. Successful interventions are those that are tailored and based on rigorous analysis of the particular factors affecting violence against women and girls in a given context (ActionAid, 2012).

The research component of the project was active throughout the five year implementation period and served to provide a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data to inform the work of community intervention and advocacy partners who were thus able to disseminate rigorous evidence at both community and national level as part of their work aimed at changing policy and practice.

Acknowledging the complexity and ambition of the research model, the team put in place a research protocol outlining the roles and responsibilities of each partner (including contributions to the design of the project's Monitoring and Evaluation framework and tools) and ensuring ethical compliance throughout the process. The inclusion of researchers in other aspects of programming, combined with a clear but flexible structure and procedure for operation, reflected the value of researchers in the project and of the data that those teams generated to support and effective and relevant programming.

As outlined on p.12 the project's conceptual framework was jointly developed at the early stages of the project and served to inform not only the project team's overall understanding of violence against girls in school as well as its causes and consequences, but also the design and implementation of the various elements of the research component.

Overall, the research produced a range of products including national and comparative baseline, longitudinal and endline studies, invitations to present at global conferences on education (including the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) and the UN Girls' Education Initiative conference in Dakar amongst others) as well as a series of publications in credible national and international journals.

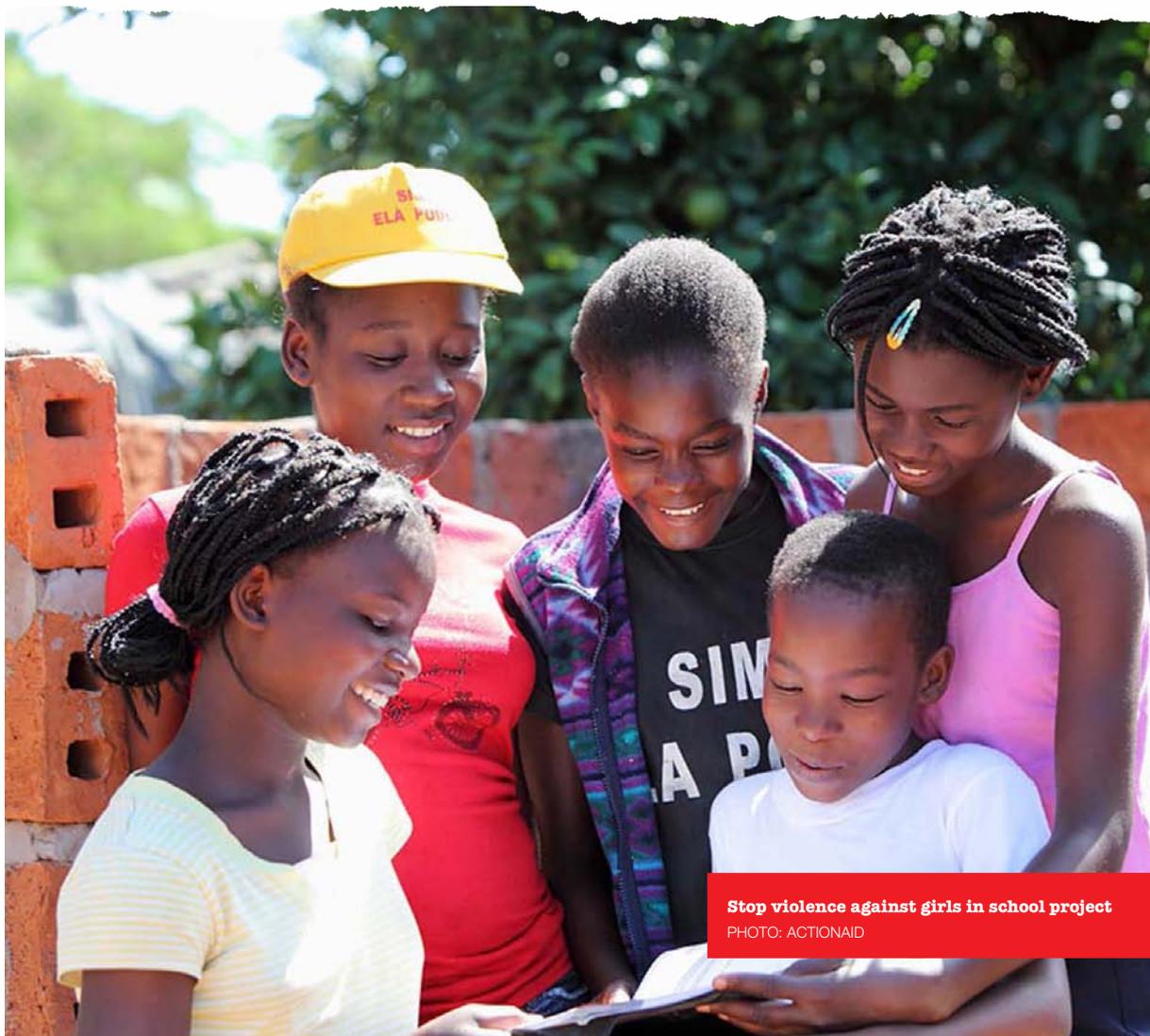
The project's efforts to better understand the contexts within which violence occurs, as well as monitoring change and impact brought about by specific interventions has been key to producing innovative, informative and effective research

that adds value to the project and to external stakeholders. The project's robust and rigorous approach to research and data collection has credibly and successfully revealed to implementers and the global education community a range of nuances and gaps in work on corporal punishment, sexuality and gender identity and sexual and reproductive health as well as highlighting areas of focus for future research, policy and programmatic intervention.

By speaking directly to girls about the challenges they face and ensure their voices were clearly captured in the findings the project teams have managed to use this information to influence

national level policy advocacy as well as to stimulate community level mobilisation for girls' rights to education and protection.

Building strong partnership between practitioners and academics in the context of this project has been a complex, challenging yet rewarding process, providing the project team and indeed, wider civil society with credible data to inform programmatic interventions as well as evidence-based advocacy. It also provides children, communities and the wider public with a clearer view of some of the real obstacles to girls' education and protection at the school and household level and supports them to demand action for change.



Stop violence against girls in school project
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9. Monitoring and evaluation

“This very detailed framework... has provided a strong structure and a step by step support to the country teams in their monitoring tasks. Aided by an accompanying manual and appropriate training it has increased their confidence and skill in data collection.” *Leach and Dunne, 2012*

As noted in the previous section, in order to effectively track progress towards the achievement of the project’s ambitious aim and objectives, the team developed a comprehensive Monitoring Evaluation (M&E) framework, complemented by a range of tools for the regular collection of qualitative and quantitative data.

This process, which was led by the Institute of Education included members from all project partners to ensure that all developed a sense of ownership of the final products, were familiar with the processes for data collection and analysis and understood the importance of the data in informing programme implementation and advocacy work during the project’s life-time.

The contents of the M&E framework were reflective of the core elements of the Conceptual Framework, acknowledging the need to tackle violence against girls at multiple levels and seeking to capture data relevant to changes in interactions, institutions and power relations that affect girls’ experiences of violence.

The framework itself included four sections, each linked to one of the project’s four objectives and containing a series of detailed indicators that were specific, measurable and yet flexible enough to be adaptable to the three different country contexts. The indicators served to capturing qualitative and quantitative information about changes in laws and policies, girls’ enrolment, retention and drop-out, prevalence of violence against girls and girls’ confidence occurring in project schools and communities.

These indicators were incorporated in the key stages of the research component, particularly the baseline and endline studies as well as meticulous

annual data collection and analysis. Whilst the baseline and endline studies were led by research partners, the annual M&E activities were conducted by community and advocacy implementing partners staff in collaboration with ActionAid with the support of a guidance manual and series of tools especially designed for the purpose. These resources included simple, user-friendly step-by-step guidelines and timeframes for data collection to support implementing staff to track progress towards objectives on a regular basis by comparing changes to baseline data.

This information greatly contributed to enhancing the project’s advocacy and programming work by providing team members with the robust qualitative and quantitative data to improve or alter implementation strategies and highlight issues on girls’ right to education and protection to decision-makers.

The framework was not only considered a success within ActionAid itself but was also highly regarded by external stakeholders including other organisations and research institutes working in related fields.

“This very detailed framework [...] has provided a strong structure and a step by step support to the country teams in their monitoring tasks.

Aided by an accompanying manual and appropriate training it has increased their confidence and skill in data collection. The result has been more robust and more comprehensive data, with few gaps.

Regular and reliable monitoring has allowed for early adjustments to project activities and a greater likelihood that the project outcomes will be met in a timely fashion.”
(Leach and Dunne, 2012)

Examples of M&E outcome indicators developed to measure Outcome 2: reductions in violence against girls by family members, teachers & peers

Intermediate Outcomes and indicators

2.1: increased awareness about VAGS, legislation, prevention and mechanisms.

Indicators:

percentage of respondents (other than girls) able to identify specific legislation aimed at preventing VAG, to identify formal mechanisms for reporting & referring incidences of VAG, of respondents who know of a local organisation or service providing support to VAG survivors.

2.2: increased community rejection of VAGS and support for efforts to reduce it.

Indicators:

percentage of respondents who think teachers do not have the right to demand sex from pupils, who think girls are not to blame for sexual harassment, and who question corporal punishment.

2.3: decrease in incidence of VAG in the home, in the community & at school.

Indicators:

the percentage of girls who experienced violence at school in the last 12 months/in their home or community in the last 12 months.

Some of the key recommendations emerging from the process of development and implementation of the project's M&E framework, manual and tools include the need to:

1. Engage representatives from all sectors of the project including those responsible for community implementation, research, advocacy and coordination in the development of the M&E framework and tools in order to promote understanding, ownership and commitment to collecting, analysing and using the resultant data.
2. Develop simple qualitative and quantitative outcome indicators that are specific,

measurable, relevant and effectively support the tracking of progress towards project objectives.

3. The production of a simple, easy to use guidance manual and toolkit, complemented by basic training is crucial to ensuring staff responsible for data collection and analysis understand the purpose of the task and are easily able capture robust data in the field.
4. Ensuring all team members are involved in the analysis and interpretation of annual M&E data supports a better understanding of the changes occurring in project intervention areas and helps better orient project implementation strategies.

In addition to serving as an internal tool for measuring progress towards results, the M&E framework and data collected against its various indicators have also been used effectively by independent external evaluators responsible for conducting the mid-term and end of project reviews providing project staff and donors with

robust evidence that highlights what works and provides clear, comprehensive evidence of areas where the project has been successful (or less successful) in bringing about the anticipated positive changes in girls' lives during the five years of implementation.



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10. Conclusion

“ActionAid is demanding action from governments and the international community to protect girls from violence and increase the number of girls attending school” *ActionAid 2004*

Established in the context of ActionAid’s broader campaigning and advocacy work for girls’ rights to education, the Stop Violence Against Girls in School project, which ran from 2008 to 2013 was an ambitious initiative aimed at enabling girls to enjoy their rights to education and protection in violence free environments in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique.

Established in the context of ActionAid’s broader campaigning and advocacy work for girls’ rights to education, the Stop Violence Against Girls in School project, which ran from 2008 to 2013 was an ambitious initiative aimed at enabling girls to enjoy their rights to education and protection in violence free environments in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique.

Whilst five years is admittedly a short time over which to expect social change on issues as complex as gender and violence, the project teams’ passion and engagement as well as the adoption of a strategy combining community-based initiatives with research and advocacy resulted in clear changes in knowledge, policy and practice as outlined in the various case studies and examples outlined in this document.

By adopting an approach that combined research, advocacy and community-based initiatives the project sought to obtain an understanding of the social conditions and relations that constrain girls, as well as 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.

Findings from the research conducted throughout the project outlined some of the main factors preventing girls’ from enjoying their rights to education and protection from violence and enabled team-members’ responsible for community-based initiatives to refine their intervention strategies as well as providing a credible evidence-base for the project’s advocacy work in the form of detailed research reports.

Greater awareness of girls’ rights to protection from violence, increased knowledge of official reporting channels and organisations providing support to victims of violence amongst parents, children, teachers and other community-members resulted in clear changes to knowledge and practice leading to measurable reduction in incidents of violence against girls in all three countries.

By placing girls at the centre of all its work and emphasising their empowerment through active participation and engagement through meetings with decision-makers at all levels including high-profile politicians, the project was able to successfully increase girls’ confidence enabling them to challenge the status quo about girls’ role in society and contributing to maintaining the issue of girls’ rights to education and protection on the public agenda.

In addition, the concerted effort to ensure necessary buy-in from key government stakeholders at all levels has been crucial to the achievement of changes to laws and policies that should have a wide-ranging positive impact for thousands of girls in all three countries far beyond the intervention zones and life-time of the project.

None of this work could have been achieved by the project teams alone though, and one of the key lessons learned from this initiative is the importance of building movements of solidarity from the local to national (and ultimately global) levels and using evidence-based advocacy to achieve concrete change.

As the 2015 deadlines for both the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All targets

draw closer, millions of girls in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be denied their right to education and protection. Understanding the underlying factors preventing girls' from accessing education as well as what works in terms of prevention and change is therefore key to achieving long-term sustainable impact.

Whilst this particular project has come to an end it is hoped that the rich body of research as well the documentation of successful programmatic responses developed during its implementation will support practitioners in the field to strengthen their commitment to ensuring girls' rights to education and protection from violence are maintained on the agenda in the lead up to 2015 and beyond.



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In school I should be treated with the same respect as boys.



Education is my basic right. I should not have to pay to go to school.

If I am hurt or abused there should be someone to defend my rights.



I can only benefit from education if there is no violence at or on the way to school.



School should not limit my horizons; it should show me many options.



I need to learn about HIV/Aids so I can protect myself.

I should have separate, clean, safe toilet facilities at school.



My teachers should stop and challenge bullying whenever it happens.



I have the right to say no to sex. No-one must ask me or force me to have sex.



My parents cannot take me out of school and I cannot be thrown out if I am pregnant.

**Stop Violence Against Girls in School!
Make Girls' Rights to Education a Reality!**

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ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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Stop Violence Against Girls in School! Make Girls' Rights to Education a Reality!

ActionAid, September 2013