Regional Expert Roundtable on Prevention of Violence in Schools in South Asia, 25-27 April 2016, Colombo

Synthesis of messages
Day 1
April 25, 2016
Setting the Context
Violence in Schools in South Asia

• Two recent desk reviews of evidence from the region indicate that violence is widely experienced by children in schools.

• With 515 m children of school going age in the region, 292 m of whom are in primary and lower secondary school, attention needs to be paid to their experiences children have when in school.

• Violence as a driver of poor education outcomes needs far greater attention than received – both in terms of dropout which remains highest in the world (for every 100 children who start Primary school in 2009, 33 will leave before the last grade), as well as on cognitive development, self-esteem and self-efficacy.
36 million children are out of school in South Asia

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS OUT OF SCHOOL

9.8 MILLION CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGE ARE OUT OF SCHOOL:

15% ENTERED LATE

28% LEFT SCHOOL

57% NEVER ENTERED

26.5 MILLION LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL-AGE ADOLESCENTS ARE OUT OF SCHOOL

5.3 MILLION CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL AS A RESULT OF CONFLICT
Violence in schools...

- The education sector, however, has not really paid sufficient/any attention to this issue – either in research and data collection, in policies and in plans, in curriculum development or in capacity development.

- Question is why not? Is it lack of evidence? Lack of understanding? Normative acceptance of violence?

- SDGs offer a great opportunity for the region to align and integrate and talk about prevention
Kinds of violence children experience

Data in the region is relatively sparse for the size of the child population, but patterns from available reports suggest:

- Use of corporal punishment is high; it is normalised and seen as essential for ‘effective discipline’

• Parents believe it is justifiable to beat their children
  • Afghanistan: 41% (Source: UNICEF, 2014)
  • India: 56% (Source: World Values Survey, 2010-14)
  • Pakistan: 42% (Source: World Values Survey, 2010-14)
Kinds of violence...

- Bullying has not received much attention in terms of data, but increasingly being reported and discussed
- Psychological violence, humiliation, labelling and name calling can also create great stress for children especially when peer opinion starts mattering more; can lead to suicidal ideation
  
  “Though usually dismissed, the use of humiliating language is one of the most stated cited reasons for feeling unsafe in school”

- Sexual harassment and abuse exist – but barely studied
- Mapping of violence in and around schools – vulnerability is everywhere
- Structural violence particularly conflict needs to be incorporated into the discussion of violence as it is a part of the reality for millions of South Asia children
Knowledge gaps

• Violence experienced by boys
• Difference and perceived difference as a vector – social group, LGBTQ, disability
• Younger children’s experiences of violence
• Peer violence remains under-studied; focus more on adult to child violence
• Perpetrators – we know very little
• Different types of schools – South Asia has diverse types of schools
The challenge of evidence

• Poorly maintained databases
• Missed opportunities to integrate violence indicators into other instruments

• Methodologies for measuring violence need to be discussed –
  • What do we need to collect? What do we need to know? What kind of data and information do we need to act, to influence, to be effective?
  • How to ensure child-centric approaches to understanding violence? Children cannot report in a safe way; yet, when offered safe spaces for reporting can give clear accounts of what they are experiencing.

• Data collected is often not used – eg GHSS – how is data used?
• Reliance on media reports, a few international reports, NGO reports – easy to dismiss if convenient
• Need for new kinds of evidence beyond prevalence – long term consequences for the education sector; costs of inaction;
Conceptualising Violence
Defining violence

• UN CRC + WHO:

Threatened or actual behaviour, by, against, or observed by children under age 18 that results in or is likely to result in serious physical or psychological harm, injury, mal-development, deprivation, or death to another person(s).

Inclusive definitions – aid or hinder advocacy efforts? Does South Asia need a pragmatic approach? Or can we change the nature of the conversation?
Many forms (and terms) of violence

- Abuse – physical, sexual, emotional
- Bullying
- Child exploitation
- Child labour
- Child maltreatment
- Child trafficking
- Conflict-affected children
- Dating violence
- Cyber-bullying
- Honor killings
- FGM
- Rape
- Neglect
- Youth and gang violence
Unpacking violence

Violence encapsulates so many different things

a) Experience, perception, impacts, consequences, costs
b) Violence takes different forms, and different levels of severity (of impacts and effects)
c) Violence has crosscutting impacts – across different aspects of life, settings and societal institutions
d) Violence is behaviour, violence is learned, violence is intent, violence is harm, violence is structural, violence is chronic, violence is expressive, violence is organised.
e) Violence as power (adult-child; men-women); social control
f) Spectrum: neglect, interpersonal violence, violations
g) Within interpersonal violence – from corporal punishment to conflict via sexual abuse, exploitation
Conceptualising violence

• Important to analyse and understand different forms of violence as part of a spectrum and not as discrete

• E.g. emotional violence can co-exist alongside physical violence or sexual violence; the same child can experience more than one form of violence

• Presenting violence as a spectrum is important to get away from debates about “acceptable” thresholds; importance of zero-tolerance

• Life course approach to violence is necessary as experience and impact of violence varies by age;

• Intergenerational cycle of violence also a factor: perpetrators have usually been exposed to some violence in childhood

• Schools need to be seen as part of the continuum of a child’s lived experience – from homes to schools to communities. School often seen as safer than public spaces or journey to school
Gender, and difference

• Gender is a fundamental structuring principle of the experience of violence and hence understanding patriarchy and gender relations in this region are really important.

• School in that sense also reflects the broader societal context and prevailing norms.

• Other vectors of power include difference – whether social difference (caste, ethnicity, religious minorities) but also perceived differences around ability (learning or physical), body image,
Gender, and difference...

• However, importance of not being caught up in the binary of male/female, as it excludes experience of LGBTQ
• Binary is also often constructed around female victim/male perpetrator which obscures extent to which boys are victimised and girls can be perpetrators
• These constructs can also reproduce stereotypes
• Breaking the cycle of violence needs to fundamentally question social norms of gender;
Age

• Adolescence falls through the cracks of understanding; a key transition phase
• Adolescents have agency, evolving capacities
• Need a combination of protection and independence; of support and empowerment
• Some evidence suggests that as children grow older, risks for physical violence decline and sexual violence increase, especially for girls
• In this region, there are many challenges of acknowledging agency, especially girls – control is maintained through violence
Drivers and Measures of Empowerment

- Decision-making measures
- Familial/interpersonal
- Self-worth measures
- Psychological dimension
- Adolescent empowerment
- Sociocultural dimension
- Mobility measures
- Economic dimension
- Economic measures
What can be done?
Prevention as a starting point

• Prevention and response as part of a continuum, not in opposition - *In the absence of response mechanisms - children will not report or seek help*

• Schools play an important role in building citizenship, developing capacities

• However, long way to go to identify viable concrete strategies

• These are necessary because they also allow the education sector to identify costable concrete actions that can be integrated

• Need to identify the elements of strategies that can enable change – rather than whole programmes; so governments don’t just pick and choose strategies without understanding the elements that will drive change and reductions in violence
Laws and a legal framework

• Banning corporal punishment an element of legal reform – varied efforts
• Where laws exist – can provide powerful entry point for action e.g. Afghanistan
• Despite laws though – implementation is a challenge across the region
• Awareness tends to be low; legal norms and social norms not aligned
• For prevention, laws need to enable not penalise

“Many of the laws are contradictory, and enforcement is half-hearted. It is rare that teachers who have been found guilty of using corporal punishment have been punished.”
‘Whole School’ approach

• BRAC schools: ‘95% of BRAC schools are free of violence’; child protection policy, pedagogy, curriculum, teacher training, SEL for 8-12 year old in non-formal system

Q: how does this get mainstreamed, scaled up? What happens to children in BRAC schools as they grow older and get mainstreamed

• SCF, Afghanistan: positive discipline, in-school mechanisms such as complaint boxes, teacher capacity development

Q: what capacities do teachers need? How do they perceive the changes? What kind of support, training, mentoring? What about the curriculum?
Campaigns

Breakthrough: Linking social campaigns with targeted programmes for different stakeholders; integrated approach to empowerment that includes violence as one of several elements that come together for child well-being

ARC: capacity development campaigns around violence prevention – promoting social values such as kindness, empathy; awareness on child abuse – for teachers, parents and children
Helplines

• In many countries, varied effectiveness. India and Nepal have good examples, though outreach is not universal.

• In Nepal, this mechanism provides emergency support as well as creating awareness against violence in the school setting.
## System Initiatives: Violence Prevention Enablers in Bhutan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems and Procedures</th>
<th>Violence Prevention: School/grassroots</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toll free call 113: Royal Bhutan Police</td>
<td>Call for assistance and/or report related to crime or violence,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toll free call 112: Medical Emergency</td>
<td>Call for medical assistance, ambulance,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toll free call 1600: Bhutan Telecom</td>
<td>Call for any contact nos for assistance and reference across the country</td>
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<td>Cell no of Police Chief and relevant Police Officers</td>
<td>Any one can call during emergencies and crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell no grievance office at the PM’s Office</td>
<td>Anyone can call during emergencies and crisis</td>
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<td>Youth Police Partnership Program (YPPP)</td>
<td>The YPPP engages students and out of school youths to prevent violence, crimes and anti-social activities</td>
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<td>Children Parliament (2015)</td>
<td>Children and Youths take ownership to help address national issues concerning them. MPs represented by Democracy Clubs of Schools/ Institutes</td>
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Child Participation

• Nepal, Bhutan, India – Children’s clubs
Systems and Accountability

• Bhutan: child protection in monastic bodies
• Laws, policies, systems and institutions – alignment

• Nepal: School management (SCPCs) and PTAs; Schools as zones of peace (SZOP)
• Decentralisation – cycles of election can impede their effectiveness
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<tr>
<td>Gross National Happiness (GNH): happiness and well-being of all</td>
<td>GNH Commission (Country), GNH Committee (District), GNH Club (School),</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Friendly Schools (CFS), Nationwide system in place</td>
<td>Principles and practices at school level; Aspects of CFS to be implemented</td>
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<td>Care Givers in Boarding schools: Ladies for girls, men for boys</td>
<td>Care and protect young students in boarding schools. SOP for reporting and monitoring in place. Roles of nursing for young students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddy System in many schools, Senior-junior student adoption</td>
<td>Senior students caring younger ones: brothers and sisters relationship,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption: One-Teacher One Student</td>
<td>Some schools initiated this system of adoption to care young and vulnerable students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling programmes in secondary schools</td>
<td>Personal, academic, career, relation</td>
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</tbody>
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The ‘Wishlist’

• Mainstreaming VAC in sector wide policy and planning discourse, monitoring and learning strategies is critical.
• Adequate training and support to teachers with accountability measure can help prevent violence and serve as a first port of call for children who have experienced violence.
• Adequate support to school management can potentially:
  • enforce codes of conduct for all staff and students
  • incorporate alternative forms of discipline in teaching methodology
  • develop/reinforce tools to help teachers move away from physical/psychological violence;
  • work with stakeholders outside the school including parents, guardians, local child protection bodies to address VAC through awareness, changing norms and behaviours
  • support child clubs/youth clubs in promoting gender equitable and non-violent attitudes and behaviour; educate children on child rights
  • Review content of tv programmes for children;
But...

- Does the reality of South Asian schools suggest these are viable? Are there other entry points?
  - Support teachers; improve working conditions and support, especially in remote and conflict areas
  - Shift language to ensure consistency in building ‘cultures of peace’
  - How do we create the architecture of mental health support and resource it?

- Shift language to ensure consistency in building ‘cultures of peace’

- Can we achieve the reduction with one or more of the different approaches that were discussed?

- Do we have sufficient evaluation research to confirm that the mechanisms we are using are indeed the most effective?

- Do we have common resources that can be compiled and shared?