SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH ASIA: STATE OF EVIDENCE REPORT

Huma Kidwai
Education Specialist, The World Bank, USA
Suggested Citation:

BACKGROUND PAPER

SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH ASIA STATE OF EVIDENCE REPORT

Huma Kidwai
Education Specialist, The World Bank, USA
Abstract

South Asia currently houses the world’s largest population share of children of school-going age. Safety and security of this large population is hence as much a concern of the region’s schooling system as it is of its homes and communities. Among the various obstacles faced by children and adolescents in successful completion of schools, violence perpetrated against them within and around schools is significant and extremely complex. Little has been said, in a comprehensive manner, on various dimensions of school-based violence in South Asia.

This background paper, *School-based violence in South Asia: State of evidence report*, makes an effort to map the existing evidence on forms, prevalence, and impact of school-based violence on an intersecting matrix of two frameworks – *life cycle* approach and *ecological* approach. Additionally, it enlists common regional approaches and a few programmatic efforts to prevent and address violence against children in schools. Methodologically, this paper triangulates data from multiple sources including published reports, statistics, and articles by government and non-government organisations, national and international institutions, academia and development practitioners, and large and small scale news and other media outlets. This data is supplemented by conversations and interviews with a conveniently and purposefully selected sample of nine teachers and nine child protection activists and professionals from the region.

The paper highlights the general paucity of data on child abuse, most particularly in schools, in South Asia. A few large and dated country-level studies continue to be referenced over and over again in all national and regional documentation on the subject. With lack of primary data collected from the region, the most common forms of literature on the subject include compilation of media reporting and review of existing studies and reviews. Additionally, attention to schools as locations of child abuse is quite recent and the general tendency has been to focus on adult to child violence. Under lack of consistently maintained and updated datasets on relevant indicators of violence against children, very little is known to make valid conclusions regarding trends and associations between different potential factors.

School-based violence was found to be highly prevalent in the region. Several forms of violence are linked to each other and many children tend to be exposed to successive and concurrent forms of violence throughout their schooling. Corporal punishment as a social acceptable disciplining device appears to be one of the most commonly reported forms of violence in most studies and reviews of literature on child abuse and school-based violence in all countries of the region. There is a general lack of systematic information on sexual violence segregated by the type of sexual violence inflicted on children, by age and gender, and by perpetrator information. However, an emerging body of data points to greater reported incidents of sexual violence against boys than girls, and the frequency of incidence is found to be relatively higher with older cohort of children.
Discrimination and humiliation inflicted in students on the basis of caste, religious, ethnic, and gender identity is a common feature of violence against children in South Asia. Violence in the form of verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse does not seem to have received significant attention in South Asian research and policy discourse on child protection. All the same, the case studies from across the region indicate high levels of prevalence of social discrimination and the associated humiliating and derogatory treatment of certain socio-economically less powerful groups of children.

Data on school bullying in South Asia is scarce in almost all categories of sources reviewed for this report. However, increasing coverage of cases of school bullying in media shows the prevalence of the issue in the region. Additionally, physical violence among children has not received sufficient attention in academic and organisational literature on violence against children.

A variety of risk factors pervade different age groups and levels of interpersonal interaction, from individual to family, school, community and society. This report outlines an array of research and reported evidence and speculation on causal associations with poverty and deprivation, social disadvantage of women and certain communities, political instability, lack of psychosocial support to children and guardians of children at home and school, and local customs and practices. The review of available evidence in addition to interviews with teachers and child protection professionals shows that violence in schools can be perpetrated by adults, including teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as by students against other students.

This report finds the role of the teacher to be at the core of most discussions, either as perpetrators of violence against children, or as vehicles of change and reform in improving school environment for children. Evidence from numerous sources support the claim that male teachers are more likely than female teachers to inflict physical and sexual violence on students. However, as pointed out by participants of this review, this claim does not hold constant several intervening factors. Another finding of this report is that there appears a complete lack of literature on teachers’ well-being and its relation with their interaction with students. Very little is known of what explains some teachers’ abusive behaviour and what are some of the common risk factors that impact teachers’ behaviour and attitudes towards their students.

Evidence from global and regional studies and reviews of reported incidents point out numerous risk factors outside the school premises that pervade children’s experience with learning and their interactions with friends and adults in and around schools. Safety of children on their way to school and back has been reported as one of the common factors responsible for irregular attendance or early dropout rates. Sexual harassment of girls on their way to school or back home is a significant concern in the region. The frequency of acid attacks as a form of physical assault on school-going girls and female teachers has grown at an alarming rate in the region.

The report observes that most discussions on impacts and consequences of violence and child abuse in the region are based on arguments evidenced by research from industrialised developed countries.
In general, there is lack of information on how school-based violence impacts children in the region. Most regional literature is limited to the issue of school-drop out among girls.

The report concludes with an open-ended discussion on some of the ongoing programmes in the region. This section in general steers away from discussing global programmes to make apparent the broad programmatic gaps in the region to address the many dimensions and forms of school-based violence. For example, a programme area that is evidently missing in this report, due to lack of information, is that which address the issue of bullying and student-led violence in schools.

**Keywords:** School-based violence, South Asia, Corporal punishment, Sexual abuse/harassment, Physical abuse/violence, Psychological abuse, Bullying, Child protection, Discrimination, Gender stereotyping, Caste-based violence, Intimate partner violence
Executive Summary

South Asia currently houses the world’s largest population share of children of school-going age, at 515.69 million. Safety and security of this large population is hence as much a concern of the region’s schooling system as it is of its homes and communities. Among the various obstacles faced by children and adolescents in successful completion of schools, violence perpetrated against them within and around schools is significant and extremely complex. Little has been said, in a comprehensive manner, on various dimensions of school-based violence in South Asia. To address this significant issue and gap in existing knowledge, this report, School-based violence in South Asia: State of evidence report, presents an in-depth examination of what we know about violence against children in schools in the region, and how we know it.

Conceptual and Methodological Framework

This report triangulates data from multiple sources including published reports, statistics, and articles by government and non-government organisations, national and international institutions, academia and development practitioners, and large and small scale news and other media outlets. The written word is supplemented by conversations and interviews with a conveniently and purposefully selected sample of nine teachers and nine child protection activists and professionals from the region.

Conceptually, this report makes an effort to map the existing evidence on forms, prevalence, and impact of school-based violence on an intersecting matrix of two frameworks – life cycle approach and ecological approach. This process was useful in understanding the when, where, and how of various risk factors facing children in their environment. It highlights the quality and sufficiency of data on violence against children in different age groups and settings, and provides a map for tracing causes and consequences of abuse as they overlap and extend across age groups and levels of interactions. The report also enlists common approaches and a few programmatic efforts to prevent and address violence against children in schools.

The report highlights repeatedly the general paucity of data on child abuse, most particularly in schools, in South Asia. A few large and dated country-level studies continue to be referenced over and over again in all national and regional documentation on the subject. With lack of primary data collected from the region, the most common forms of literature on the subject include compilation of media reporting and review of existing studies and reviews. Additionally, attention to schools as locations of child abuse is quite recent and the general tendency has been to focus on adult to child violence. Under lack of consistently maintained and updated datasets on relevant indicators of violence against children, very little is known to make valid conclusions regarding trends and associations between different potential factors.
Prevalence of School-based Violence in South Asia

School-based violence was found to be highly prevalent in the region. It was also observed that several forms of violence are linked to each other and that many children tend to be exposed to successive and concurrent forms of violence throughout their schooling.

Corporal punishment as a socially acceptable disciplining device appears to be one of the most commonly reported forms of violence in most studies and reviews of literature on child abuse and school-based violence in all countries of the region. Corporal punishment is reported to be carried out in multiple forms, ranging from verbal abuse and humiliation, to mild and severe forms of physical violence. School authorities find the use of corporal punishment central to their teaching methods and regard it as a duty. There are mixed findings on the relevance of age, gender, and type of school to differences in experiences of corporal punishment. Younger children in general appear to be more at risk than older children, especially in public schools. However, given the general problems associated with reporting mechanisms and cultural explanations for girls’ hesitation to report, no clear and empirically sound evidence indicates that boys are at a greater risk than girls.

The report finds that reliable and comparable statistics on sexual abuse and exploitation are difficult to obtain because of uncertainty with regards to methodology of data collection on the subject, lack of standard definitions, inability of generic databases to capture contextual complexities, the generally present tendency to combine women and children and to exclude boys from discussions on sexual abuse, and the “underground” nature of sexual abuse and lack of necessary reporting mechanisms. As a result, there is a general lack of systematic information on sexual violence segregated by the type of sexual violence inflicted on children, by age and gender, and by perpetrator information. However, an emerging body of data points to greater reported incidents of sexual violence against boys than girls, and the frequency of incidence is found to be relatively higher with older cohort of children.

Discrimination and humiliation inflicted upon students on the basis of caste, religious, ethnic, and gender identity is a common feature of violence against children in South Asia. Violence in the form of verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse does not seem to have received significant attention in South Asian research and policy discourse on child protection. All the same, the case studies from across the region indicate high levels of prevalence of social discrimination and the associated humiliating and derogatory treatment of certain socio-economically less powerful groups of children. Evidence on gender-based discrimination pertains to discrimination against girls in equal access to schools and not as a form of maltreatment within schools. Gender stereotyping and role expectations are discussed as possible factors for gender-based violence, and not as forms of violence. Almost complete lack of evidence on discrimination against children with disabilities is the biggest missing piece in this section of the review.
Data on school bullying in South Asia is scarce in almost all categories of sources reviewed for this report. Many participants consulted for this report argue that bullying is not as major an issue in South Asian countries as it is in other regions. However, increasing coverage of cases of school bullying in media shows the prevalence of the issue in the region. Additionally, physical violence among children has not received sufficient attention in academic and organisational literature on violence against children. This report finds that studies on bullying and physical violence are largely conducted among middle and secondary school children. Evidence points to a greater tendency of male students to have experienced being physically bullied than female students. The issue of cyberbullying has not yet been taken up in most major studies on violence against children in South Asian countries, especially in schools. Available evidence and writings on the subject discuss the issue as a problem of adolescents and youth. Moreover, cyberbullying appears to be emerging as a common channel for intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence and harassment. Global and regional studies indicate that intimate partner violence (IPV), dating violence, and sexual violence are widespread among adolescents and place them on a lifelong trajectory of violence, either as victims or perpetrators. Evidence from the region also shows that risk of economic hardship and early marriage is associated with adolescent girls’ experience of IPV in marriage and dating relationships. Yet, little is known about the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) and its associated factors among adolescents, especially in interpersonal relationships between children in schools.

**Risk Factors for Violence Against Children in Schools**

A variety of risk factors pervade different age groups and levels of interpersonal interaction, from individual to family, school, community, and society. School is a function of society and tends to reflect violence experienced by people in it. This report outlines an array of research and reported evidence and speculation on causal associations with poverty and deprivation, social disadvantage of women and certain communities, political instability, lack of psychosocial support to children and guardians of children at home and school, and local customs and practices. The review of available evidence in addition to interviews with teachers and child protection professionals shows that violence in schools can be perpetrated by adults, including teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as by students against other students. There are ways in which outsiders can perpetrate violence against children on their way to school or back home, as well as virtually through internet, impacting their physical and psychological well-being and educational experience and opportunities at school.

The report finds no empirically sound data to establish the relationship between the type of school (public, private, residential, religious, etc.) and the frequency and nature of school-based violence in South Asia. Nevertheless, discussions with study participants highlighted the need for nuanced and multi-layered analysis of risk factors in each context. It was pointed out that children are perceived to be more closely monitored in private schools than public schools, but this may not necessarily translate into higher safety of children, especially in large private schools that are often as difficult to monitor as public schools. It is also perceived that private school teachers, most specifically in the urban context, may be more accountable towards parents than public school teachers, implying fewer
cases of corporal punishment, discrimination, and other abuses of children at the hands of urban private teachers. On the other hand, it was raised by a few consulted participants that public school teachers have greater opportunities to receive orientation and trainings on child protection needs and policies than private school teachers, but reportedly, these trainings have limited effectiveness in controlling school-based crimes or in bringing about a lasting change in their attitude and behaviour towards students. Children at residential schools were pointed out to be most at risk.

This report finds the role of the teacher to be at the core of most discussions, either as perpetrators of violence against children, or as vehicles of change and reform in improving school environment for children. Evidence from numerous sources support the claim that male teachers are more likely than female teachers to inflict physical and sexual violence on students. However, as pointed out by participants of this review, this claim does not hold constant several intervening factors. Another finding of this report is that there appears a complete lack of literature on teachers’ well-being and its relation with their interaction with students. Very little is known of what explains some teachers’ abusive behaviour and what are some of the common risk factors that impact teachers’ behaviour and attitudes towards their students.

Evidence from global and regional studies and reviews of reported incidents point out numerous risk factors outside the school premises that pervade children’s experience with learning and their interactions with friends and adults in and around schools. Safety of children on their way to school and back has been reported as one of the common factors responsible for irregular attendance or early dropout rates. Sexual harassment and abuse of girls on their way to school or back home is a significant concern in the region. The frequency of acid attacks as a form of physical assault on school-going girls and female teachers has grown at an alarming rate in the region. Experiencing violence at home cannot be isolated from its consequences in school and in later life. Global evidence on domestic violence points to possible associations between witnessing parental violence as a child and exhibiting violent behaviour towards intimate partner in adulthood. Similar relations have been drawn between experiencing and witnessing sexual abuse and abusing others. Children growing in families with substance abusing adults are affected by several risk factors simultaneously. Studies from across the globe testify to the relationship between inequitable gender attitudes and perpetration of violence against women and girls. Boys too are victims of these assumptions and cultural notions of masculinity that impose certain behavioural expectations on them.

There are contradictions in literature regarding the impact of poverty and school-based violence. Rather than being regarded as a direct risk factor, household poverty has been shown to exacerbate risks of violence against children. For example, power differentials associated with poverty are evidenced to be associated with risks of bullying and physical violence in schools. Similarly, situations of political conflict and social unrest tend to place children under significant threat of direct attack or under an environment vulnerable to violent outbreaks in interactions between students and between teachers and students. Students in large parts of the South Asian region are seriously affected by their past and ongoing conflicts.
This report has attempted to list out and categorise some of the common spaces for acts of violence against children in and around schools. While there is no systematic review of at-risk spaces for children, a list is generated on the basis of all the evidence, including news reports, that was reviewed for this report. It was found that children can be abused in a variety of spaces within schools, just outside schools, on the way to and back from school, as well on virtual spaces such as school bulletin boards and online social networking sites. While some acts of violence such punishments, humiliation, and verbal abuse mostly take place on open spaces, others such as sexual abuse and bullying are conducted in secluded spaces within schools or outside regular school operation hours.

**Consequences of School-based Violence**

The report observes that most discussions on impacts and consequences of violence and child abuse in the region are based on arguments evidenced by research from industrialised developed countries. In general, there is lack of information on how school-based violence impacts children in the region. Most regional literature is limited to the issue of school-drop out among girls.

The consequences of violence against children can be obvious and hidden, severe and mild, short-term and long-term. In this report, all evidence on consequences of school-based violence is categorised by the three dimensions of student well-being it impacts: mental well-being, physical well-being, and academic achievement. Available evidence shows that the various impacts of violence against children are not entirely mutually exclusive. They tend to accompany each other to form a complex package of physical, psychological, and educational damages. Tracing these impacts along age and environment of children suggests their deep connections with the perpetuation of risk factors that underlie further occurrence of violence. These impacts are not limited to experiencing violence first hand, but also to witnessing violence in school, at home, work, or neighbourhood.

**Ongoing Programmes to Address Violence in Schools in South Asia**

The report concludes with an open-ended discussion on some of the ongoing programmes in the region. This section in general steers away from discussing global programmes to make apparent the broad programmatic gaps in the region to address the many dimensions and forms of school-based violence. For example, a programme area that is evidently missing in this report, due to lack of information, is that which addresses the issue of bullying and student-led violence in schools.

It is observed that with increasing realisation of the relevance of schools in the lives of children, more and more programmes are targeting teachers as key vehicles of positive change in the state of violence against children. Participants of this review have pointed out repeatedly that programmes to address violence against children are generally quite poorly resourced, and hence short-term and difficult to scale up. While several interventions have shown to improve awareness and attitudes to school-based violence among teachers and students, there is often no conclusive evidence under the lack of evaluation models and exercises associated with these programmes.
Most programmes observed in this report are supported by local NGOs or international donor agencies. Regional advocacy campaigns have been gaining visibility in the region, most prominent recent examples being the Plan International (Learn without fear) and SAIEVAC1 (Campaign Against Corporal Punishment of Children). However, their impact beyond adding weight to local advocacy groups, on development and implementation of programmes to address school-based violence is yet to be understood.

This report has identified three broad strategies that most commonly underlay programmes for children: (1) prevention, (2) response, and (3) accountability. However, the grouping of programmes under each of these categories is not effectively mutually exclusive as the three are interactive dimensions of most programmes, at least in theory. Nevertheless, this categorisation helps in highlighting the key gaps in approaches to address school-based violence in the region.

Under prevention mechanisms one of the most commonly found programmes in the region to address corporal punishment and physical and emotional violence include teacher sensitisation programmes on child development and “child friendly” education and methods. Another format, focussing on children, conducts sex education and gender sensitisation programmes with young children and adolescents. Compared to programmes, this category has been most tested and evaluated for its impact. The role of the civil society and advocacy by international organisations such as Plan International, ICRW, and UNICEF has been influential in carrying out these programmes.

Numerous other initiatives have worked with school curriculum and in developing reading materials and workbooks for teachers to introduce positive ideas around gender roles, awareness of one’s body, and social and life skills necessary to identify situations of abuse and exploitation. It has been shown by some of these programmes, including the Gender Equality Movement in Schools (GEMS), that the public education system is uniquely placed to influence overcoming stereotypes and shape processes and understanding of non-violent attitudes and behaviours. Police sensitisation trainings and workshops with parents and youth are some of the other common ways in which programmes are trying to intervene in children’s environment outside schools.

Under response and support programmes, some of the commonly discussed initiatives include Child Helplines, hospitals and medical care, psychological services, and school counselling programmes. Much is required to improve the scope and potential of these services in the region that are mostly not available in rural and remote areas. In contexts of high conflict, response also includes reinforcement of security features on school campuses to prevent attacks on schools and children.

---

1 SAIEVAC, an Apex Body of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), is a regional initiative led by the Governments of SAARC Member States in partnership with civil society organisations, and the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG).
The report ends with a brief discussion on programmes, or rather lack of it, to improve accountability structures required for better evidence and robust and standard systems of measuring prevalence and impacts of violence. It advocates for systematic processes of data collection and management, and a holistic approach to look at children’s experience with violence in their environment, to identify and address a multiplicity of risk factors and respond to incidents of violence in a timely manner.
Introduction

Violence against children occurs everywhere and every day but the prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence in schools are yet to be fully and systematically documented in South Asian countries. There are no comprehensive reporting systems of violent acts in the region, whether they occur inside or outside schools. Nevertheless, existing studies and media reporting on school-based violence in South Asia reveal that the prevalence of school-based violence is alarmingly high and that many schools in the region, both private and public, need to improve to become safe and protective environments for children. Intervening effectively in the lives of these children and their families is not the sole responsibility of any single agency or professional group, but rather, is a shared community concern.

The Know Violence in Childhood Initiative has been established as a collective response by governments, international non-governmental organisations, and funders concerned about the global impact of childhood violence and the lack of investment in effective violence prevention strategies. It is an independent, time-limited Global Learning Initiative which aims to fill the gaps in the global understanding of violence prevention strategies. The Know Violence Initiative focusses on the prevention strategies that can address violence experienced by children across settings: homes and families, schools and communities, and public spaces.

The Initiative recognises the centrality of age and gender to the experience of violence in childhood, that children often are poly-victimised, and that the experience of violence is multi-sited. It aims to produce:

- A flagship report to be published in 2016 that will lay out the evidence and recommendations for violence prevention policies and their core elements;
- Expert papers on preventing violence in childhood across settings of homes and families; schools and institutions of alternative care and detention; and communities, workplaces and public spaces;
- Up to seven regional roundtables on violence prevention strategies;
- Cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral roundtables to consider how integrated approaches can be developed; and
- An advocacy strategy focussed on national government leadership and policy-makers, influencers in international development agencies, high-level advocates, opinion-leader media and youth networks.
The purpose of the regional roundtables planned by the Know Violence Secretariat in New Delhi, in partnership with regional partners, is to learn how violence in childhood is seen and addressed in different parts of the world. The literature on violence in childhood is mostly Anglophone and covers a small part of the world. Attitudes to children and how they are best treated can vary in many ways. The roundtable meetings will enable the Initiative to hear and learn from scholars and activists with experience of the field and ensure that all perspectives are understood and incorporated in the work. They will also enable the Initiative to link to related initiatives that are active in different countries and regions.

The South Asia regional roundtable will focus on violence in schools. South Asia is home to the largest number of school-going children in the world\(^2\), and many of these children are first generation learners. Schools as institutions are also relatively new and not mature. How schools respond to violence, both within and outside, will determine the future prospects of millions of children in terms of life without fear and full of opportunity. To facilitate discussions on the state of school-based violence in South Asia, this report attempts to take stock of available evidence on and from the region. This is not a systematic or an exhaustive compilation of literature but a review of the nature of evidence available from the region. It attempts to identify some of the commonly discussed patterns of prevalence, risks, and consequences of violence in schools in the subcontinent, as well as to highlight critical gaps in these knowledge areas. The report concludes with a brief discussion of the broad areas of programme response to address school-based violence, observed from the region.

Methodology and Limitations

The report has employed the following data collection, analysis, and consultation processes: (a) Desk-based reviews of media report and blog entries from national-level newspapers available online; (b) Review of online databases, statistics, literature reviews, and analytical reports published by governments in the reviewed South Asian countries, documentation published by national and international organisations, and online academic sources, and (c) conversations and semi-formal interviews with child protection professionals, teachers, and representatives of relevant non-government agencies working on child protection issues in their respective countries. The reviewed literature on school-based violence or violence against school-going children in South Asian countries, can be categorised into the following groups (see Table 1).

---

\(^2\) In 2011, approximately 28 percent of the global primary enrollment was located in South Asia (UNICEF, 2012).
Table 1: Distribution of reviewed and referenced literature by type of publication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of publication</th>
<th>Count of reviewed and referenced papers, reports, and articles (units)</th>
<th>Approx. count of reviewed pieces*</th>
<th>Number of pieces reviewed and referenced in the report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Published reports and statistics by international NGOs</td>
<td>Up to 90</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Published reports and statistics by country-level NGOs</td>
<td>Up to 25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Published reports and statistics by government agencies</td>
<td>Up to 20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Peer reviewed academic papers and researches</td>
<td>100 – 120</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Newspaper articles and individual blogs</td>
<td>180 – 200</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Not all pieces of reviewed literature have been referenced in this report, most specifically literature from publication groups 4 and 5. Most of these non-referenced pieces either lacked in relevance to schools as settings of violence or added only to the repetitive value of information. Nevertheless, their estimated count provides a sense of general availability of information on the subject, as well as the relative prominence of specific publication type in contributing the documented evidence on violence against children. This count is not precise and indicates an approximate range of literature reviewed over the course of this study.

Additionally, key informant interviews were conducted to supplement information as well gather perceptions on the quality of evidence on school violence in South Asia. This sample was put together on an ongoing and convenience-basis and unstructured conversations were carried around certain key themes of school-based violence in the region. A total of nine school teachers and nine child protection experts were consulted in this process. Although most teachers were from India and Pakistan, effort was made to reach out to a variety of schooling systems: 3 government school teachers, 4 private school teachers, and 2 madrassa teachers. Due to sensitivity of data on child abuse in schools, the identity of participating teachers is being kept confidential.

Other limitations of the exercise need to be acknowledged upfront. This report does not offer a detailed and exhaustive analysis of all relevant educational and child protection policies and programmes on child abuse in the subcontinent, but offers a glimpse into the quality of available evidence on forms of violence that are prevalent in South Asian schools, key factors that explain school violence, and some local community-based, NGO-driven, and state-sponsored interventions to address this concern. This report draws heavily from the conversations with select individuals – child protection professionals and teachers – from different South Asian countries.

Another limitation comes from the sampling of literature available online in three languages: English, Hindi, and Urdu. Such sampling has limited this study from gathering information from a wealth of resources available in other languages. This selective sampling has likely impacted the representation of information emerging from rural contexts in the eight South Asian countries.
Finally, the report does not compare prevalence rates (of violence) across countries given lack of organised and recent data on child abuse. It also does not identify trends over time or draw conclusions on whether school-based violence has been increasing or decreasing across the region. Evaluations of interventions tackling school-based violence are scarce. All efforts have been made, however, to triangulate data gathered through different qualitative processes in order to supplement information.

**Organisational Framework**

The organising framework for this report is drawn from the *life cycle approach* as applied by Solotaroff and Pande (2014) in their analysis of violence against women and children in South Asia. Children are at risk of experiencing violence from birth through adulthood, across varying physical spaces surrounding a child. This life-cycle lens to view violence against children becomes most obvious in an institutional setting such as a school that marks different stages of a child’s growth, starting with the formal event of entry, and then transitioning to different age- and ability-defined levels of schooling.

The life-cycle approach has been widely used to study a range of issues ranging from social and cognitive development of children (UNICEF, 2014a), to socio-cultural issues concerning women (Foner, 1984; DasGupta, 1995). The approach when combined with the *ecological model of violence* (WHO, 2016) results in a framework that allows for understanding of intersections between different stages of child development and different factors that may exacerbate violence – individual, interpersonal relationships, community, and society (Figure 1)

---

**Figure 1: Organisational framework to review school-based violence against children, adapted from a combination of life-cycle and the WHO’s ecological model of violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Schooling/Grade level</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>ECE (Kindergarten)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Primary (1-5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>Jr. Secondary (6-8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>Secondary (9-10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>Sr. Secondary (11-12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specifically, and as suggested in figure 1 above, different stages of a child’s development are deeply connected with the age of schooling, starting from pre-school to primary, middle, secondary, and senior secondary.

By organising the regional evidence along this intersecting framework, this report reflects on:

a) the nature of research and policy attention given to schools as a relevant and nested space where children first experience external interactions outside their homes (both with their peers and the wider community);

b) the quality and sufficiency of data, particularly on risk factors for violence against children of school-going age;

c) the quality of evidence on the impact violence has on children’s behaviour in and outside schools and vice-versa,

d) the consequences school violence has, including repercussions in adulthood,

e) the types of violence for which the risk spans multiple life stages; and

f) how the school can become an important platform for preventing childhood violence, not just forms that are practiced in schools, but even those that are prevalent beyond the boundaries of the institution.

An additional conceptual point needs to be noted here. While this report did not adopt a gender lens to organise the evidence, gender inevitably explained variations in vulnerability to different types of violence at different life-stages and in different spaces in and around schools in South Asia. Some of the key studies on violence against children in the region over the last decade have focussed on gender and its multiple social attributes as a dominant category of risk factors. The pervasiveness of gender-based frameworks for reviewing violence against children is evident in this report. Also evident is the progression in deepening and expanding of gender-based concepts to understand child abuse from its early focus on girls3 as key victims of violence to emerging realisation of the need to focus on boys (Save the Children, 2007; Frederick, 2009).

This report is organised to answer the following key research questions:

1. What is the state of evidence on school-based violence in South Asia?

2. What are the key forms of school-based violence prevalent in the region?

3. Who are the common abusers of children in schools?

---

3 The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993, in its Article 1, defines the term ‘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 in private life” (UN, 1993, Article 1).
4. Who are most commonly abused in schools, or on way to and from schools?
5. What are some of the common spaces and locations of abuse in schools?
6. Why are school-going children being abused?
7. In what ways are children impacted by school-based violence?
8. What is being done to address violence in schools?

State of Evidence

The paucity of comprehensive and organised data from children and schools makes it difficult to completely understand and analyse the extent and magnitude of violence in schools in South Asia. However, there are many country level and international studies in the region to suggest the enormity of the prevalence. In this report, the following key general trends emerged with regards to the nature of evidence:

In general, research on child abuse in South Asia is limited. Not only is this claim evident from the poor availability of sustained research over time, it has been widely acknowledged in literature (UNICEF, 2014b), as well as by the various participants who were consulted and interviewed in the process of this study. A few large studies conducted at the national and international level tend to dominate most published discussions on child abuse (see Appendix A). For example, the most recent large scale study on the state of child abuse in India was published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2007. Since then, this source has been cited repeatedly in most publications on child abuse or violence against children in India and/or South Asia⁴.

Recent publications on child abuse in South Asia lack in primary data. The most common methodology for most published studies is ‘literature review’ in which a few country-level and international studies are referenced repeatedly (Figure 2). Another method includes the compilation of news media articles and cases to discuss the forms and prevalence of child abuse at the national level. Media coverage is the most consistent form of documentation on the subject. However, most news articles and blogs do not reference empirically sound research and base their information on anecdotal evidence, a recently reported case of child abuse, or commonly held perceptions and knowledge about the state of children’s well-being. Many NGO-published reports and documentation⁵ reference media reports as their main form of evidence. Primary data sources in most South Asian countries are almost a decade old and they continue to be referenced in reviews to date.

---

⁴ This news article (NDTV, October, 2015, “Break This Deafening Silence, End Child Abuse.” Retrieved from http://www.ndtv.com/opinion/break-this-deafening-silence-end-child-abuse-1232849) is an example of continued reliance on almost a decade old statistics on child abuse in the country (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007).

⁵ For example, Sahil’s (2014) publication of “cruel numbers” on child sexual abuse in Pakistan and SPARK’s (2014) report on the status of children in Pakistan, seek a large portion of their data from media citations. In
The extension of focus on schools as locations for child abuse and violence is very recent and scarce. School-based violence is usually a small section in different reports on child abuse, most commonly in relation to corporal punishment (see Figure 3). The recent publications on gender-based violence in schools by ICRW and Plan International (2015) represent a rare attempt to look at school-based violence in a comprehensive manner.

absence of an organised government initiative to address violence against children and lack of necessary resources channelised to gather and maintain data on child protection issues, reliance on media coverage and NGO reports is significant.
Academic literature on child abuse tends to come mostly from medical and psychology journals. There seems to be a general lack of focus on child abuse in South Asia as an educational concern which is reflected in the low uptake of academic research on school violence, particularly in South Asia. This speculation, however, needs to be confirmed through a systematic and scientific review of peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as of academic course designs and research interests of students and faculties at national and international schools of education and public policy.

Searches on “child abuse in schools” and “violence against children in schools” generated over a period of 10 years, from 2005 to 2015, listed global literature covering an array of issues pertaining to child abuse. However, most of these papers did not address schools as settings of violence and references to “school” were irrelevant. The generated literature, however, categorised by the discipline of their academic or research discipline indicated the dominance of medical and psychology journals. The category of ‘social sciences’ overlapped with psychology, economics, public policy, education, sociology, etc., and hence cannot be considered a standalone category. Overall, the role of education journals in covering issues of school-based violence was not as significant.

When segregated by countries, the search results dropped down significantly. The results were highest for India (Figure 5), followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan, but most were found to be

---

6 Personal conversation with Dr Monisha Bajaj, University of San Francisco; Department of Education, Jan, 2016.
irrelevant to the subject of school-based violence. Several additional word combinations were used to filter publications from the region and a relevant few have been referenced in this report. A series of similar search efforts revealed the relatively small share of quality research emerging on the subject of school-based violence based on data from South Asian countries.  

Figure 4: Search results for peer-reviewed publications globally, by discipline, 2005-2015, on Springer Link, Dec 25, 2015.

![Bar chart showing search results for various disciplines](chart.png)

This apparent distribution of research by disciplines is based on limited number and combinations of word searches, with limited online journal portals, and hence cannot be relied upon for its scientific rigor. Further research is warranted to arrive at statistically sound conclusions.
Most discussions on child abuse tend to focus on adult to child violence. Specific to school-based violence, most published reports and papers focus on teacher-led or school-staff-led violence against children in schools. Child-to-child violence is neither reported widely in media, nor has it been studied extensively in the South Asian context. This was revealed most explicitly in general lack of data on school-based bullying, non-partner sexual violence in schools, and substance abuse within school premises. Some of the key respondents (including teachers and child protection professionals) consulted for this process were of the view that bullying is not much of an issue in “our culture” or South Asian schools, as it is in the “western countries like America”.

Role of the government in contributing to national evidence on child abuse is relatively small. Alternatively, international NGOs and media tend to provide the majority of currently available data accessible or referenced through online sources. Local NGOs also contribute to the body of evidence, often by reiterating and further disseminating findings from a few large scale national and international assessments.

This observation is more evident in some countries than others, for example, in Pakistan and Nepal most efforts to collect data are led and managed by country-level NGOs often under donor aid from international organisations (Box 1). Most available evidence from Afghanistan is produced by international development organisations and their local field offices in the country.
Box 1: Status and source of child protection database in Pakistan, Nepal, and Afghanistan

Pakistan became the second country in the SAARC region to launch SAIEVAC’s Campaign against Corporal Punishment (COP) of children (Ministry of Law, Pakistan, 2015). However, we are yet to see the impact of this initiative on the quality of evidence emerging from the country to analytically provide comprehensive evidence on corporal punishment in schools.

Overall, there seems a lack of government initiative in studying and analysing the state of child abuse in Pakistan. It emerged during a consultation with representatives of SPARC – a prominent NGO working on issues of child abuse – that almost all data collection efforts for studying and monitoring child abuse are led and managed by the civil society organisations, such as Madadgar National Helpline (2016) and Sahil Cruel Numbers (2015) that maintain database of reported incidents of violence against women and children in the country. However, their reported data is not aggregated by locations of violence such as school, home, work place, etc. nor by other relevant variables to indicate the nature of the abuser or the abused. This raw data on types of violence targeted against children in society is widely referenced in national and international-level literature and media reports on child abuse in Pakistan.

SPARC annually takes stock of violence against children at a national level and has been publishing ‘The State of Pakistan’s Children’ report every year since 1997 (SPARC, 2015). While the organisation comprehensively compiles information from different databases, international reports, and media articles (primarily from Dawn newspaper) to report on the status of child rights in the country, they do not conduct any large scale data collection on child abuse with a focus on schools.

Similarly, civil society in Nepal seems to play a more prominent role in collection and dissemination of data on child rights and abuses than the government. Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) maintains a helpline service to report and address cases of child abuse. Annually, they publish The State of Right of Children report under which a section on violence against children details the trends on types and numbers of reports made to the helpline (CWIN-Nepal, 2016). This report combines the complaint cases that are registered directly with their helpline with cases reported in over seven local newspapers.

It seems like media reporting and helpline data have been the most consistent forms of documentation on child abuse to place pressure on government and non-government agencies to respond on cases of violence against women and children. In 2015, the Dawn newspaper in Pakistan published over 30 pieces of news articles and blog entries on child abuse, most however focussing...
There is a lack of consistently maintained and updated datasets on relevant indicators of violence against children; and the focus on school-based violence is broadly missing. There are very few sources that document the status of children’s well-being, based on data collected through large scale population surveys. They include the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) programme supported by UNICEF, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) by USAID, and Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) by WHO and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since most of these survey projects are conducted in collaboration with government agencies of the participating countries there is significant variation in the status of completion of surveys, data compilation, and reporting.

The global Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) programme of the UNICEF supports governments in carrying out household surveys, data tabulations and reporting of findings to assess the situation of women and children in each country. “Child discipline” is a small component of these surveys that measures the prevalence of physical violence and psychological aggression in methods adopted by parents to discipline their children. These surveys do not focus on schools as locations of violence against children. Nevertheless, they provide a context of high prevalence of use of physical and psychological aggression against children in South Asian countries. Since the component of “child discipline” was added to the surveys recently, many South Asian countries are yet to report statistics on this indicator (Table 2). It must also be noted that not all countries within the region have yet been included in the MICS programme. In Pakistan, only one state has been surveyed.
Table 2: UNICEF MICS data on prevalence of violent discipline methods by parents against children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Latest Year of MICS</th>
<th>Only non-violent discipline</th>
<th>Psychological aggression</th>
<th>Physical punishment</th>
<th>Any violent discipline</th>
<th>Severe</th>
<th>Number of children age 1-14 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>46237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>75907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>18049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan (Punjab)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>38405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Similarly, the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are nationally representative household surveys that provide data for a wide range of monitoring and impact evaluation indicators in the areas of population, health, and nutrition (USAID, 2016a). A few indicators relevant to understanding the socio-economic context for violence against children include child discipline, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, education, and gender attitudes. However, representation of South Asian countries in these databases is relatively smaller and irregular, making it difficult to find comparable statistics over time. Nevertheless, numerous research papers based on this dataset have been partially supported by USAID to provide analytical evidence for factors influencing violence against children. Almost 50 percent of these research publications are based on data from South Asian countries, particularly India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal, and focus on issues of child marriage and intimate partner violence in South Asian countries (USAID, 2016b).

The Global school-based student health survey (GSHS) is a collaborative surveillance project of WHO and CDC, with assistance from UNICEF, and UNAIDS, designed to help countries measure and assess the behavioural risk factors and protective factors in 10 key areas among young people aged 13 to 17 years. The ten core areas identified by the project that cause morbidity and mortality among children and youth include (i) alcohol use, (ii) dietary behaviours, (iii) drug use, (iv) hygiene, (v) mental health, (vi) physical activity, (vii) protective factors, (viii) sexual behaviours that contribute to HIV infection, other sexually-transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy, (ix) tobacco use, and (x) violence and unintentional injury (CDC/WHO, 2015). The surveys comprise of

---

10 Of 11552 parents, 41 percent reportedly believed that a child needs to be physically punished.
11 116 research papers published between 2008 and 2014 from countries globally, as of January 20, 2016; 57 of these papers focus on one or more South Asian countries, mostly India, followed by Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal.
low cost-school-based and self-administered questionnaires that include country-specific questions. The project assists governments with capacity building to administer, contextualise and administer these surveys. Most South Asian countries have already administered these surveys; however, submission of detailed reports is pending. While they do not directly provide evidence on the prevalence of corporal punishment and adult-to-child abuse, these surveys do indicate factors pertaining to abuse including mental health, interpersonal relations between students, occurrence of fights among students, and tendencies for drug abuse.

Prevalence of School-based Violence in South Asia

This section of the report provides evidence on different forms of violence that are found to be prevalent against school-going children in South Asia, and forms that are new and emerging.

Table 3: Mapping different forms of violence against children using the lifecycle-ecological framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE-CYCLE APPROACH</th>
<th>ECOLOGICAL APPROACH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>Schooling/ Grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 ECE</td>
<td>• Corp. punishment • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Neglect • Emotional violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Primary (1-5)</td>
<td>• Corp. punishment • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Neglect • Emotional violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13 Junior Secondary (6-8)</td>
<td>• Corp. punishment • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Emotional violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 Secondary (9-10)</td>
<td>• Corp. punishment • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Forced marriage • Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) • Emotional violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18 Senior Secondary (11-12)</td>
<td>• Corp. punishment • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Forced marriage • IPV • Emotional violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This table is populated on the basis of both global and regional evidence gathered and reviewed for this report.

It is, however, important to recognise that all forms of violence are linked and that children are often exposed to successive or concurrent forms of violence throughout their schooling. For example, a
A child who is sexually abused may also be physically abused if he or she resists or retaliates. Similarly, bullying and harassment may be followed by beating the child. Cases of acid attacks on school-going girls in many South Asian countries have been linked with sexual harassment. Furthermore, it is critical to acknowledge that the aforementioned forms of violence put additional strains on the education of children, especially girls, resulting in parental decisions to withdraw them from schools or send them to school infrequently.

**Corporal Punishment**

Corporal punishment appears to be one of the more commonly reported forms of violence in most studies and reviews of literature on school violence in the region. Additionally, this review has found more examples of large scale empirical studies on corporal punishment than on any other form of school-based violence (Table 4). For example, in 2012, the Indian National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) published a report based on surveys carried out with a total of 6632 children aged 3-17 across seven states. It discussed the widespread use of corporal punishment as a disciplining device by teachers in India and revealed that between 2009 and 2010, corporal punishment was a near-universal experience for school-going children (99 percent of the sample reported experiencing some form of punishment in school).

**Table 4: Recent statistics on the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools in South Asia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Any violent discipline (percent)</th>
<th>Psychological aggression (percent)</th>
<th>Children: Age/sample</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Year of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>1-14/46237</td>
<td>CSO and UNICEF (2012)</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>1-14/75907</td>
<td>BBS and UNICEF (2015)</td>
<td>2012-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3-17/6332</td>
<td>NCPCR (2012)</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>1-14/18049</td>
<td>Govt. of Nepal and UNICEF (2015)</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan (Punjab)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1-14/38405</td>
<td>UNICEF and Punjab Bureau of Stats (2014)</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>12-17/1419</td>
<td>ICRW/Plan Intl. (2015)</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An unpublished UNICEF study conducted in 2009 in the Maldives found that 47 percent of children had experienced physical or emotional punishment at home, at school or in the community. The study, which involved almost 17,035 people in 2,500 households and 2,000 children in schools, found that 30 percent of children at secondary school had been hit by at least one of their caregivers (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014). More details will be made available once the findings of this study are disseminated. At present, very little is known about the state of child abuse and violence in Maldives from sources available online.
Corporal punishment in South Asian countries is accepted as a necessary and “unavoidable” disciplining practice and extends across family, schools, and community. This is a region-wide finding. Some of the general reasons for teachers in India to use corporal punishment include academic reasons (e.g. not being able to do schoolwork), for meeting their physical needs (e.g. eating), to maintain order at school (e.g. for being late) and for no apparent reason (NCPCR, 2012). In Sri Lanka, social acceptance for corporal punishment is widely reflected in blog entries and news media (Editorial, Journal of Child Health, 2014). The current discourse on corporal punishment in Sri Lankan schools seems to reflect the society’s dilemma with what is acceptable and not acceptable disciplining practice for raising and educating children (Mahanamahewa, 2014). Although many governments have issued advisory notifications to teachers against the use of corporal punishment of physical violence against children, these are reportedly not taken very seriously (See Box 2).

**Box 2: The prevalence of corporal punishment in Sri Lanka, and teachers’ rejection of prohibition laws.**

In Sri Lanka, the 2001 circular by the Ministry of Education banning corporal punishment in schools was not openly accepted by teachers in the country. In some schools, the circular booklets were destroyed without distribution (de Silva, 2007). As a result, there appears an ambiguity with regards to common knowledge on whether corporal punishment is “lawful” or “banned” in schools which may be also be a reflection of a lack of recent data on reporting and follow up on policies on corporal punishment.

“Corporal punishment is lawful in schools, as confirmed in the explanation of acceptable criminal force in the Penal Code (see above). In an additional section 2 of Circular No 2005/17, issued by the Ministry of Education in 2005, states that corporal punishment should not be used in schools, but as at 2010 this had not been confirmed in legislation” (SAIEVAC, 2016a, para, 5).

According to Professor Harendra de Silva, a prominent advocate of child rights in Sri Lanka, corporal punishment in schools is not a local tradition or part of Sri Lankan culture (de Silva, 2007). It was introduced during the colonial rule and continues to be prevalent in schools and society of Sri Lanka as a form of “colonial hangover” (Samath et al., 2000; de Silva, 2007). Historically, pre-colonial rulers in Sri Lanka practiced non-violent Buddhism that prohibits bodily harm by way of punishment of children and adults. However, currently, most teachers and schools accept and justify corporal punishment as a norm for the “discipline” and “education” of children. The Education Ordinance of 1939 of Ceylon, despite the signing of UN CRC permitted the caning of a child.

In Nepal, corporal punishment is forbidden in schools by a decree but there is no explicit prohibition in law. However, there is an evident rise in the occurrence of corporal punishment in schools (Mishra et al., 2010). In a qualitative study conducted by UNICEF and the Center for Victims of Torture in Nepal (CVICT) in 2004, it was revealed through extensive focus groups with 285 participants, such as students, teachers and parents, that beating and humiliating children are accepted and common practices in schools and families. It was confessed by the teachers and parents that they do not know of any other method, other than physical punishment and humiliation, that works effectively to discipline children, and that they too were beaten and humiliated in school and at home when they were children (CVICT, 2004). The report elaborated on how school authorities in Nepal perceive
their role as educators and found that the use of corporal punishment was central to their teaching methods with teachers regarding such practice “not only as their right but also their duty” (p. 2).

In Afghanistan, surveys carried out by Save the Children in three government schools in Jalalabad and 20 government schools in Mazar-i-Sharif in 2008 found very high levels of physical punishment, with children punished in 100 percent of observed classes in boys’ schools and 20 percent in girls’ schools (Samoon et al., 2011). Humiliating punishment including verbal abuse was also very common, and children were often authorised by the school to beat other children. Being beaten with a stick was identified as the most common method of “discipline” for both girls and boys. Over 50 percent of teachers believed they had the right to beat students, and the vast majority of teachers believed physical punishment was essential and unavoidable. However, there was a strong desire among the majority of teachers to learn alternatives to physical punishment. Following legal prohibition of school corporal punishment in 2008 and a two-year project which aimed to develop and implement child protection systems in the schools in question, including through monitoring and reporting mechanisms and education and training of teachers and children, the prevalence of physical and humiliating punishment fell (Samoon et al., 2011; Save the Children, 2011).

**Corporal punishment is reported to be carried out in multiple forms, ranging from verbal abuse and humiliation, to mild and severe forms of physical violence.** The 2012 NCPCR study revealed three broad categories of punishment – verbal abuse, direct infliction of pain by the teacher, and posture punishments. The top five reported forms of corporal punishment experienced by over 99 percent of 6632 surveyed children included the use of derisive adjectives referring to mental characteristics of children (81.2 percent), use of cane to beat children (75 percent), slapping cheek (69.9 percent), hitting on the back (57.5 percent), and boxing ears (57.4 percent). Similar categories of violence have been defined by other regional reviews including ICRW/Plan (2015) international review of SRGBV in Pakistan and Nepal, and media reports from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

**Studies reveal minor differences in experiences of corporal punishment by age, gender, or type of school.** The 2012 NCPCR study, being one of the rare large scale studies on corporal punishment from the region is also relevant in pointing out that spread and prevalence of such violence across age, gender, and school groups. The study (with its sub-sample of 107 pre-school age children) found minor differences between different ages groups indicating that corporal punishment by teachers begins as early as preschool for 3-5 age children who tend to receive almost all main forms of physical punishment (Table 5). The prevalence increases with age but not significantly. Differences in types and prevalence are in fact negligible between elementary and secondary level of school-going children. In a few instances, children as young as 3-4 years were reported by the NCPCR study to have received electric shocks as punishments by teachers.
The study further revealed that physical violence is more common in primary grades and verbal humiliation in secondary and senior-secondary grades, reportedly because of teachers’ fear of older students’ retaliation to physical abuse.

A transregional study, Young Lives, collaborative research project coordinated by a team based at the University of Oxford, is conducting longitudinal surveys tracing the lives of over 12000 children in India (Andhra Pradesh, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Peru). In the study country samples, India (the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) has the highest reporting of physical punishment at both age points – about 8 in 10 children reported being punished at age 8 and about one third of children at age 15. The preliminary findings of this research indicate the relevance of age as a risk factor for corporal punishment (Young Lives, 2015; Portella and Pells, 2015).

Similarly, while boys in general report greater experiences with physical punishment, this difference is not as significant as held in popular beliefs about gender differences in experience with corporal punishment (Table 6). Finally, the NCPCR study corroborates to an extent the general view prevalent in media coverage as well as expressed by many informants consulted for this report, that corporal punishment and physical punishments are more common in public schools than private schools (Table 7).
Studies from Afghanistan suggest similar findings around the understanding of corporal punishment in society. A qualitative research into adults’ perspectives on everyday physical violence against children in the family, published in 2008, involved interviews with more than 200 men and women from 61 families in urban and rural areas in four provinces, plus 56 focus group discussions and 46 interviews with key informants (Smith, 2008). The study found that violence against children is widely used and recognised, though to a significant degree is not regarded with approval. Physical violence existed within all 61 case study families, most commonly slapping, verbal abuse, punching, kicking, and hitting with thin sticks, electrical cables and shoes. More unusual types of violence included shooting at children, tying them up, washing them in cold water outside during winter and public humiliation. Corporal punishment was inflicted on children as young as 2 or 3 years. No clear difference between punishment of boys and of girls was found, but men were perceived as having more “rights” to be violent towards children than women in the family.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Reliable and comparable statistics on sexual abuse and exploitation are difficult to obtain. The 2014 UNICEF review of evidence on sexual abuse of children pointed out several concerns regarding the reliability and quality of existing data (UNICEF, 2014b):

- There is uncertainty with regards to methodology of data collection on child sexual abuse
- Lack of standard definitions and scales call in question comparability of the findings
- Generic databases of prevalence of child sexual abuse rarely capture other contextual factors and corresponding forms of violence against children
- There is tendency to combine women with children, and often excluding boys, when estimating prevalence of sexual abuse
- The “underground” nature of sexual abuse and lack of reporting mechanisms will continue to interfere with the reliability of evidence on what and how much we know about sexual abuse of children.

There is a general lack of information on sexual violence segregated by the type of sexual violence inflicted on children by age and gender. There is a tendency to homogenise the topic of “sexual abuse” as a singular form of interaction, with greater focus on the direction of adult to child. Global literature of sexual violence in schools identifies several forms. The most commonly referenced forms within the context of homes and schools include (a) Sexual abuse: verbal or physical harassment with sexual connotations, inappropriate touching, and sexual assault or rape. In most cases, the abuse is followed by verbal threats aimed at preventing the child from reporting the incident, and (b) Sexual exploitation: it refers to any abuse of vulnerability, position of authority or trust, for sexual ends, with remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person, or social and political gain resulting from the abuse (UNICEF, 2010). However, such variation in understanding of sexual abuse is missing in data from the region. This leads to limited understanding of variations in risk factors by different age groups, gender, and socio-economic context of children.
Nevertheless, existing literature shows that sexual abuse of children in South Asian homes, schools, and community is highly pervasive and transcends age and gender differences. However, lack of common definitions and comparable research methods makes it difficult to derive trends or patterns by region and over time.

Table 8: Recent data on prevalence of sexual abuse in schools and/or anywhere in South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sexually abused in schools (percent)</th>
<th>Sexually abused anywhere (percent)</th>
<th>Children: Age/sample</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>49.9% of 4320</td>
<td>53% of 17000</td>
<td>5-18/17000</td>
<td>MWCD/Govt. of India (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14-16/1507</td>
<td>CDC/WHO (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10-16/4100</td>
<td>UNICEF and CWIN (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12-17/1499</td>
<td>ICRW/Plan International (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An emerging body of data points to greater reported incidents of sexual violence against boys than girls in the region. According to the ICRW and Plan International study on SRGBV in Pakistan, approximately 8.6 percent of the sample (1499) reported experiencing some form of sexual violence in schools. The incidence was relatively higher for older cohort (15-17 years) than the younger cohort (12-14 years), and for boys (9.4 percent) than girls (8.6 percent). The report, however, pointed out to lack of reliability of this data due to possible underreporting in fear of retaliation by perpetrating elements of schools’ authority. This was pointed out specifically for the data from Pakistan where participating teachers and parents also pointed out the culture of silence around sexual violence, especially with girl victims, as a possible factor for seemingly low reporting.

Similarly, the 2007 national level study\(^\text{13}\) (MWCD/GOI, 2007) of child abuse in India found that approximately 53 percent of Indian children had experienced some form of sexual abuse, ranging from severe, such as assault, making the child fondle or exhibit private parts, get photographed nude, etc. to more common forms, such as forcible kissing, being shown porn, or sexual advances during travel experiences. Boys were found to be victimised as often, if not more than girls. Overall, according to the report, over 52 percent of the reported cases of sexual abuse were that of boys. Working children and those who live on the streets were more vulnerable than school-going children, but only marginally. Among the group of school-going children, over 49.9 percent experienced sexual abuse in school. The report also found that school-going children were less likely to report

\(^{13}\) The study was conducted with over 17000 children aged 5-18 across 13 Indian states; published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with Save the Children and UNICEF; involved the use of focus group discussions, interviews, and survey questionnaires.
abuse, and those in institutional care settings, such as observation homes and children’s homes, were the least likely to do so.

According to Sahil, Pakistan’s leading campaign group working against child abuse, more than 3500 cases of child molestation were reported in 2014, of which 67 percent were reported from rural areas. In total the number of boys being abused increased by 4.3 percent in the first half of 2015 compared to the same period in 2014 (Sahil, 2015). The report elaborated that 178 boys aged 6 to 10 were abused, compared to 150 girls of the same ages. The report also clarifies that more boys than girls get to go out of home to play in the streets and fall prey to sexual violence. Many families also prefer not to report offences against girls because of defamation issues. The country reports high incidence of sexual abuse of boys in residential madrassas.

Child sexual abuse and trafficking are significant issues in Bangladesh and Nepal. The significantly low birth registration rate, of less than 50 percent, increases the vulnerability of children to abduction, abuse, and harassment (UNICEF-MICS, 2016). An extensive ethnographic work by UNICEF in 2011 on sexual abuse and commercial exploitation of children in Bangladesh revealed the high prevalence of child sexual abuse in schools and madrassas. Early initiation of school boys into sex at brothels, and the dilemma of whether to victimise or penalise young school boys who are clients of underage prostitutes were expressed as some of the key concerns for child protection and juvenile justice laws (UNICEF-Bangladesh, 2011).

In Nepal, the most recent large scale study on children’s sexual abuse was published in 2006. The research titled ‘No More Suffering - Child Sexual Abuse in Nepal - Children’s Perspectives’ was a collaborative ethnography carried out by UNICEF and Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN). Data from 4,100 students from grade five to ten in government and private schools were gathered. It found that nearly 18 percent of the students interviewed had experienced severe sexual abuse, including molestation and rape. This study remains one of the widely referenced sources for child sexual abuse in Nepal. Another research report on child sexual abuse, ‘Silent Suffering - Child Sexual Abuse in the Kathmandu Valley’ published in 2003 by Save the Children and CWIN, revealed that nearly 13.7 percent of the 5,000 interviewed students in Kathmandu had suffered from severe sexual abuse.

Some of the recent media publications have discussed sexual abuse of young boys in Afghanistan as a “cultural issue” (Goldstein, 2015) while others have attempted to analyse the potential cause of sexual abuse of children in the country based on a series of reported events (IRIN, 2007). Similar formats of reports – based on anecdotes, case studies, travel diaries, and reviews of reviews – characterise the nature of evidence on child sexual abuse in the country. The focus on schools as spaces of sexual abuse seems to be missing. Some of the common findings across different sources indicates significantly high rates of sexual abuse of young boys which gained significant media attention in the US in 2015 at the disclosure of US Army’s (stationed in Afghanistan) policy of maintaining silence over systematic rape and enslavement of young boys by Afghan military officials (Malkin, 2015).
According to the 2009 GSHS report (CDC/WHO, 2009), in Maldives, 17.8 percent of male students and 16.1 percent of female students had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse. This data was collected through self-administered questionnaire with 1507 students of grades 8 through 10 across 39 schools in the country. However, it lacks disaggregation by nature of perpetrator or location. A few news articles online point out to “unpublished” UNICEF statistics on the status of physical and sexual abuse of children in Maldives (UN, 2015). Additionally, many reports present combined statistics on sexual abuse of women and children (WHO, 2011).

Overall, it is evident that there is lack of large scale comparable and reliable database on child sexual abuse in South Asia. Available evidence from different countries in the region lack focus on schools and do not disaggregate perpetrator information sufficiently to indicate prevalence of sexual abuse perpetrated by teachers, by peers, by gender, or other variables. Acknowledgement of the issue of sexual abuse of male children appears to be a recent development, and hence the focus of many recent publications from the region.

**Discrimination and Humiliation in and around Schools**

Issues pertaining to social discrimination in school and society are generally discussed among risk factors contributing to the prevalence of the school-based violence. However, the prevalence of the act of discrimination by teachers and students against other students has been reported to have tangible manifestations, and hence discussed among forms of prevalent violence common in South Asian countries.

Deeply held social hierarchies based on caste, religion, and ethnicity pervade the interpersonal interactions of children with children and adults in and around schools. Violence in the form of verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse does not seem to have received significant attention in South Asian research and policy discourse on child protection. All the same, case studies from across the region indicate high levels of prevalence of social discrimination and the associated humiliating and derogatory treatment of certain socio-economically less powerful groups of children.

The 1998 Public Report on Basic Education (The PROBE Team, 1998) and the follow-up report in 2011 (De et al., 2011) found that higher caste teachers are generally inclined to humiliate children from Dalit and other lower castes by labelling them as dull and incapable of being educated. A qualitative study conducted by Human Rights Watch (2014) found that discrimination in schools

---

14 The study was conducted in four Indian states, through interviews with 160 respondents, including children, parents, and a wide range of education experts, rights activists, local authorities, and education officials, to examine continuing obstacles to proper implementation of the Right to Education Act in the country.
takes various forms, including teachers asking Dalit children to sit separately, making insulting remarks about Muslim and tribal students, and village authorities not responding when girls are kept away from the classroom. Teachers and other students often address these children using derogatory terms for their caste, community, tribe, or religion. In some schools, children from vulnerable communities are not considered for leadership roles such as class monitor because of their caste or community. Many are expected to perform unpleasant jobs such as cleaning toilets. Schools in marginalised neighbourhoods often have the poorest infrastructure and least well-trained teachers; many have fewer teachers than required. In many cases Dalit and tribal children are beaten up by the school teacher or the principal. While the report does not list in detail the possible impact of discriminatory treatment of children on their physical and psychological well-being, it argues that discrimination creates an unwelcome atmosphere that can lead to truancy and eventually may result in the child not attending school. Weak monitoring mechanisms fail to identify and track children who attend school irregularly, are at risk of dropping out, or have dropped out. The report further elaborates on the failures of governance and accountability structures at all levels - school management committees, school authorities, local village councils, or district and state education department officials.

Similar arguments have been presented by the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN, 2008) report on Nepal. Based on review of individual respondent testimonies and available statistics, the report enlists the various ways in which poor treatment of low caste children in schools by teachers and other staff has possibly led to high rates of drop outs and discrepancies in educational achievement across different caste groups. Several other desk-based reviews add to the body of literature on the topic (UNICEF, 2007; Shrestha, 2002). Discrimination based on religious and tribal identity are similarly reported in schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Hindu American Foundation, 2014; DeHart, n.d.). While systematic studies have been conducted to review the role of textbooks and teachers in promoting prejudices against minority communities in Pakistan, the scope of evidence from Afghanistan is relatively smaller and confined primarily to news articles and blog posts (Hussain and Salim, 2011).

Evidence on gender-based discrimination pertains to discrimination against girls in equal access to schools and not as a form of maltreatment within schools. Gender stereotyping and role expectations are discussed as possible factors for gender-based violence, and not as forms of violence. In general, literature discusses discrimination of girls with relation to consequences it has, such as lower enrollment in schools, higher levels of malnutrition, trafficking of girls for sexual exploitation, child marriage and their non-participation in decision-making in the family etc. (MWCD/GOI, 2007).

Almost complete lack evidence on discrimination against children with disabilities is the biggest missing piece in this section of the review. While there are examples of acknowledgment of the vulnerability of children with special needs to abuse in schools – by teachers and peers – none are
based on findings from an empirical research based in the South Asian context (ChildLine, India, 2015).

**Bullying and Harassment by Peers**

Data on school bullying in South Asia is scarce in almost all categories of sources reviewed for this paper. However, increasing coverage of cases of school bullying in media shows the prevalence of the issue in the region (Joshi and Pushkarna, 2014; Batool, 2010; Akella, 2013). Predominantly, there are three kinds of media reporting on bullying in schools:

1. Factual reporting of bullying and harassment in schools, especially if it is related with a significant accident such as a major injury, attempts to commit suicide, and/or resulting deaths from the two;
2. Articles written by counsellors or in consultation with counsellors for parents with tips on identifying signs of being bullied (and not being a bully) in their child and how to address the situation if that is the case. These articles often correspond with some recent case of bullying in the city, written primarily keeping the urban context in mind;
3. Articles discussing the evolution of school bullying into newer forms, including bullying and harassment on phone and internet.

In addition to bullying, physical violence among children has not received sufficient attention in academic and organisational literature on violence against children. Although global literature on bullying differentiates it from other forms of child-to-child physical violence in a school setting (See Box 3), the available evidence on the prevalence of bullying and physical violence in South Asia does not clearly make this distinction. This makes it difficult to compare the notion of severity of physical violence among children across studies and regions.

**Box 3: Distinction between bullying and physical violence**

"A child is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other children. Bullying comprises the notions of repetition, harm and unequal power."

"Bullying can lead to fighting. Fighting generally involves two or more people, where it is not easy to make distinctions between perpetrators and victims."

"Physical assault can occur as a separate phenomenon, as in the case of an attack by one person on another driven by inflamed feelings of anger or jealousy. It may also be driven by general feelings of rage, frustration or humiliation unprovoked by anything the victim may have done, as in the case of violent sexual assault and random shootings."

*Source: UNICEF (2012)*
Evidence on bullying and physical violence among children is primarily based on studies conducted with middle school and secondary school children, i.e. with children in their adolescence. However, most of these cases of violence and bullying are not exclusively located in schools. A 2012 study of violence among adolescents, with 1,040 boys aged 10–16 living in Mumbai, India, found that more than eight out of 10 boys had been the victims of violence; two-thirds of boys aged 12-14 in a cluster of low-income schools in India said they had experienced at least one form of violence in the last three months at school, mostly including violence perpetrated by other students (Das et al., 2012). Physical violence reported including being beaten, slapped, kicked, pushed, hit with an object, or threatened with a weapon, while “emotional violence” included being insulted, shouted at, derided via abusive language, and locked in a room or toilet.

Evidence points to greater tendency of male students to have experienced being physically bullied than female students. According to the 2009 GSHS Report (CDC/WHO, 2009), in Maldives, approximately 37.7 percent of students (from grades 8 through 10) reported to being bullied on one or more days during the past 30 days with a greater proportion of male students (41.2 percent) than female students (34.2 percent). Among the bullied students approximately 14.0 percent were bullied most often by being hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors. This percentage comprised of a significantly greater number of male students. Statistics on physical violence revealed that almost 38.4 percent of students were physically attacked and 34 percent were involved in physical fights for one or more times during the past 12 months. In both cases, the number of male students significantly exceeded that of female students. The GSHS/WHO evidence from Pakistan and Sri Lanka also show the high prevalence of bullying among adolescents. In Pakistan, 45 percent of male students and 35 percent of female students aged 13-15 reported having been bullied on one or more days during the past 30 days. Similar result was reported from Sri Lanka, where 47 percent of male adolescent students and 29 percent of female adolescent students reported having been bullied during the past 30 days. Over 60 percent of male and 34 percent of female students aged 13-15 years reported having been in a physical fight one or more times during the past 12 months. In the same country, 54 percent of male and 42 percent of female students aged 13-15 years reported having been physically attacked one or more times during the past 12 months (UNICEF, 2012).

Many respondents consulted for this report argue that bullying is not much of an issue in their countries. Three out of six child protection professionals from India and Pakistan expressed that discussions on school bullying are influenced by western (predominantly American) notions of bullying and are not very relevant in India’s/Pakistan’s school culture.
“There is no bullying in schools. There may be physical fights among students, especially older boys, but there is no bullying. [How do you differentiate between bullying and physical fights?] ...Bullying is when one or more group of students hit or intimidate a child and that child silently receives the treatment without fighting back. The culture in Pakistan is “honor driven”. Parents may not care much about their children’s studies or homework but as soon as they hear about their child being hit by another child, they rush to schools or to that child’s parents to settle matters. Children may not be protected from the abuse of adults, but families ensure that they do not receive abuse from their friends in school of their neighbourhood. I believe it is similar in Afghanistan as well.”

– child protection professional, Islamabad

“Bullying is an American concept. We are often asked about how we are addressing the issue in Pakistan and people feel that we do not understand the concept when we say that children in Pakistan are not at a major risk of bullying by their school mates. We do trainings of teacher to address the issues of corporal punishment. In 2009 we conducted a small qualitative study as a needs assessment exercise to understand issues of violence among children in schools in Punjab and we did not find bullying emerge as a significant issue. Physical fights were common but quickly resolved by teachers and intervening parents. We did fight teachers resorting to physical punishment for children engaging in fights with each other. I am not saying that there is no bullying but it is not as significant. I also have not seen a significant case of gang wars among adolescent school children as we hear of from America and some developed East Asian countries.”

– child protection professional, Islamabad

The issue of cyberbullying has not yet been taken up in most major studies on violence against children in South Asian countries, especially in schools. Available evidence and writings on the subject discuss the issue as a problem of adolescents and youth. The recent 2014 UNICEF publication “Hidden in Plain Sight” discussed sexual cyberbullying as a “new age” issue relevant to industrialised western nations. However, local experts working on the subject in India are of the view that cyberbullying poses a greater threat to the physical and emotional well-being of children in India, particularly in rural parts, where laws of cyber security are very loosely structured.

“Cyberbullying in Indian villages is a serious issue but rarely talked about. People feel it is a western problem or an urban Indian problem. But children in villages also have access to internet cafes and smartphones. Cyber laws in India are not structured to protect children. Most of these children are first generation internet users and barely have any support or supervision of adults to monitor their use of internet.”

– child protection professional, New Delhi

Over the last couple of years, in response to the rapidly expanding access to internet and smartphone technology, few studies have emerged on the prevalence of cyberbullying from the region, disseminated most commonly through online news media. The awareness and concern for cyberbullying peaked in 2012 in India and Pakistan in response to the Microsoft Global Youth Online
Behavior Survey. In India, it was found that over half (53 percent) of the surveyed children\textsuperscript{15} in the age group pf 8-17 who surf the Internet face cyberbullying, getting threatened or being harassed online. On a list of 25 surveyed countries India ranked third, preceded by China (70 percent) and Singapore (58 percent). The survey focussed on how kids are treating one another online and whether parents are addressing online behaviours. In India, the survey found that more than five in 10 children surveyed said they have experienced what adults might consider online bullying. The same survey in Pakistan revealed 26 percent of its sample of children (8-17) reporting on having experienced some form of threat or harassment by the use of internet. The study points to the variations in perceptions on what is considered cyberbullying in different cultures and hence the limited reliability on comparability of study findings in one country to another.

Cyberbullying appears to be emerging as a common channel for intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence and harassment. In Sri Lanka, increasing cases have been reported of adolescent boys bullying and harassing their former partners by posting their nude pictures on social media network, using editing tools to create pornographic pictures, or using defamatory and derogatory references to their former partner, her family, ethnicity and/or religion (NoBullying, 2015a). Similar cases of sexual harassment of former sexual partners by the use of internet and social networking websites has been found to be common in Bangladesh (NoBullying, 2015b).

\textit{Intimate Partner Violence among Adolescents}

Intimate partner violence (IPV), dating violence, and sexual violence are widespread among adolescents and place them on a lifelong trajectory of violence, either as victims or perpetrators (Lundgren et al., 2015). Yet, little is known about the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) and its associated factors among adolescents, especially in interpersonal relationships between children in schools. Global studies have found that IPV in adolescence is possibly associated with witnessing or experiencing IPV during childhood, multi-partnering, substance abuse, and atypical family structures (Cui et al., 2013; Roman and Frantz, 2013; Silverman et al. 2001). However, most of these studies were conducted in the United States and are not necessarily generalisable to other contexts. Nevertheless, to understand the nature of the problem, the National High School Youth Health Risk Behavior Survey data from United States reveals that 8-10 percent of the high school students reported physical violence and psychological harassment in their dating relationship over the last twelve months, each year between 1999 and 2011 (Child Trends Data Bank, 2014). Acts of violence included being hit, slapped, and physically and emotionally hurt to both boys and girls, though girls were more likely to report physical injury. It was also found that adolescents who report being victims of dating violence are generally at increased risk for low confidence, poor

\textsuperscript{15} Sample size unknown
self-esteem, emotional instability, and are more likely to report suicidal thoughts and attempts, risky sexual behaviours, pregnancy, cigarette smoking, and eating disorders (Solverman et al., 2004; Ackard et al., 2007).

In developing country contexts, as evidenced from research studies from India, Uganda and Ethiopia, risk of economic hardship and early marriage appears to be associated with adolescent girls’ experience of IPV in marital or dating relationships (Wagman et al., 2009; Speizer and Pearson, 2011; Erular, 2013). Overall there is lack of data, including sources from online news portals, on dating violence among school-going children in South Asian countries. However, increasing occurrence of cyberbullying, acid attacks, and harassment, as reported in news, appears to be associated with motives of revenge and harassment, mostly led by former male partners (see Box 4).

**Box 4: Prevalence of acid attacks in Pakistan, 2014**

Acid attacks involve the deliberate use of acid to injure or disfigure another human being. The victim of an acid attack rarely dies; however, the attack specifically aimed at the victim's face disfigures him/her permanently. Acid attack victims rarely have access to legal recourse and rehabilitative services and usually come from low income backgrounds with no means to support themselves.

In Pakistan, most of the acid attacks are carried out on women and girl children and the perpetrators most often include family members and unsuccessful suitors. The attacks may be triggered by property disputes, unsuccessful marriage proposals, and family feuds. Reporting of acid attacks remains problematic, especially in cases involving women and girl children whereby family members may be hesitant to report an acid attack because of the nature of aspersions leveled against her character by the male attacker.

Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) is a national non-profit organisation working to promote human rights of acid attack victims and to eradicate acid violence from the country. The organisation compiles annual information on the prevalence of acid attacks in Pakistan. The data provided by the Foundation reveals that over a five-year period, the number of acid attacks reported from different parts of the country have increased.

According to the data provided by ASF, 115 acid attacks have been carried out throughout Pakistan between January and October 2014 in which a total of 160 victims have been targetted. These include 113 females and 47 male victims. Among the 113 female victims, 32 were adult women (above 18 years of age) and 29 were children (18 years and below); age of the victim remained unknown in 52 cases. Similarly, the age disaggregation of male victims reveals that out of the 47 males targetted in acid attacks in 2014 (so far), 13 were adults (above the age of 18 years), 11 were children (18 years and below) and 23 victims with undisclosed ages.

SPARC, 2015, p. 16-17

**Risk Factors for Violence Against Children in Schools**

This section of the report provides evidence on the discourse and understanding of risk factors underlying violence against children in schools. It organises the review to answer broad questions such as: *Who abuses and who are abused? Where are children most commonly abuse? What are some of the commonly discussed contextual factors explaining the abuse of children in schools? An*
effort has been made to map the various risk factors on a matrix of two intersecting approaches to understand child abuse – life cycle and ecological model (Table 6). This table is not, however, an exhaustive or comprehensive list of risk factors prevalent in the region.

Table 9: Mapping key risk factors underlying violence against children on the lifecycle-ecological framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Schooling/ Grade</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Witnessing abuse</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Distance to school</td>
<td>Caste, religion, ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing abuse</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher and staff characteristics</td>
<td>Neighbourhood characteristics</td>
<td>Rigid gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neglect by parents</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Teaching and disciplining methods</td>
<td>Local law and order</td>
<td>Sexuality norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological attributes</td>
<td>Substance abuse by family</td>
<td>Substance abuse by adults or older children</td>
<td>Conflict, migration, natural disaster</td>
<td>Early marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Male dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction norms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Primary (1-5)</td>
<td>Witnessing abuse</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Distance to school</td>
<td>Caste, religion, ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing abuse</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher and staff characteristics</td>
<td>Neighbourhood characteristics</td>
<td>Rigid gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neglect by parents</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Teaching and disciplining methods</td>
<td>Local law and order</td>
<td>Sexuality norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological attributes</td>
<td>Substance abuse by family</td>
<td>Substance abuse by adults or older children</td>
<td>Conflict, migration, natural disaster</td>
<td>Early marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Male dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction norms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>Junior Secondary (6-8)</td>
<td>Witnessing abuse</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Distance to school</td>
<td>Caste, religion, ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing abuse</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher and staff characteristics</td>
<td>Neighbourhood characteristics</td>
<td>Rigid gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal psychological attributes</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Teaching and disciplining methods</td>
<td>Local law and order</td>
<td>Sexuality norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Substance abuse by family</td>
<td>Substance abuse by adults or older children</td>
<td>Conflict, migration, natural disaster</td>
<td>Early marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction norms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>Secondary (9-10)</td>
<td>Witnessing abuse</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Distance to school</td>
<td>Caste, religion, ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing abuse</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher and staff characteristics</td>
<td>Neighbourhood characteristics</td>
<td>Rigid gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forced marriage</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Teaching and disciplining methods</td>
<td>Local law and order</td>
<td>Sexuality norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological attributes</td>
<td>Substance abuse by family</td>
<td>Substance abuse by others</td>
<td>Conflict, migration, natural disaster</td>
<td>Early marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Male dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction norm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partner/ marriage characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>Senior Secondary (11-12)</td>
<td>Witnessing abuse</td>
<td>Poverty,</td>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Distance to school</td>
<td>Caste, religion, ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing abuse</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher and staff characteristics</td>
<td>Neighbourhood characteristics</td>
<td>Rigid gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forced marriage</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Teaching and disciplining methods</td>
<td>Local law and order</td>
<td>Sexuality norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological attributes</td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Substance abuse by others</td>
<td>Conflict, migration, natural disaster</td>
<td>Early marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Male dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction norm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partner/ marriage characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This table is populated on the basis of both global and regional evidence gathered and reviewed for this report.

Global evidence on various risk and causal factors associated with prevalence of violence in schools indicate that schools are a function of society and reflect the violence experienced by people in it. While some research indicates causal associations with poverty and deprivation (Anderson et al., 2001), the other points to social disadvantage of women and certain communities at the root of existing violence. Political instability (Smith and Vaux, 2003), lack of psychosocial support to children and guardians of children at home and school, and local customs and practices are often
discussed for the sub-cultural impacts on environment within which children are maltreated. Violence in schools can be perpetrated by adults, including teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as by students against other students. There are ways in which outsiders can perpetrate violence against children on their way to school or back home, as well as virtually through internet, impacting their physical and psychological wellbeing and educational experience and opportunities at school.

There is very little empirically sound evidence to inform us on the identity of potential abusers and victims. Recorded cases of violence against children, whether through helplines, police records, or media case reports, rarely provide detailed information on the victims themselves and the circumstances surrounding incidence of violence. However, recently a few attempts (UNICEF, 2014) have been made to collect and disaggregate data on violence against children by the nature of perpetrator. However, it remains limited to sexual abuse of children in all settings with limited focus on potential perpetrators in and around schools, and this data is further limited for South Asian countries.

It is evident from global literature on physical and sexual abuse of children and adults that the inherent power dynamics at play in the relationship between different social and political groups, genders, and classes make certain children particularly vulnerable to abuse (Majumdar, 2012). Additional circumstances of social and political conflicts and instability add to this susceptibility. A few analyses of school-based violence point towards the risk factors underlying both the vulnerability of some children, to receive abuse more than others, and the culpability of certain adults and children to perpetrate violence more than others. While parents are most powerful members of the family at home, teachers represent that power in schools. The 2015 ICRW/Plan International research on school related gender-based violence revealed that there is a wide variation in physical and emotional violence perpetrated by teachers or school staff, and by peers. Of the students who reported experiencing any form of violence in school, nearly 50 percent reported teaching/non-teaching staff as the perpetrator in Pakistan, 33 percent in Indonesia, and 42 percent in Nepal, and 20 percent in Cambodia and Vietnam. Across all five countries surveyed in the study, significantly higher proportions of boys mentioned teachers or school staff as perpetrators compared to girls. The percentage of students reporting experiencing peer-based violence across the five countries ranged from 33 percent in Vietnam to 58 percent in Cambodia.

Sexual abuse of children is the most hidden form of violence against children in the region. A myth that has been quite prevalent in the region among schools and policymakers is that sexual violence

---

17 A Plan India, 2011 report on gender equality which involved 6,011 respondents aged 10-35 found that physical, verbal and emotional violence, including in the name of “discipline”, was common in homes and schools, and that mothers and fathers were the main perpetrators of violence.
affects only girls and that unrelated adult males are the main perpetrators of this violence. However, in light of data emerging from different South Asian countries, it is now increasingly being understood that sexual abuse affects both boys and girls, and often happens within the family, in schools, and the community. In most reported cases, under non-conflict contexts, the perpetrator is someone familiar to the child (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014; SAIEVAC, 2016b; ICRW/Plan International, 2015). Sexual abuse and exploitation are seldom reported because of a lack of child protection services, a lack of awareness-raising of them as human rights violations and crimes and because of the stigma faced by victims of such abuse and exploitation (SAIEVAC, 2016b). Recent studies provide evidence of sexual exploitation of boys to a much larger extent than previously recognised. The victims of exploitation and abuse are also at high risk of sexually transmitted diseases.

This section focuses on the identity of abuser as emerging from the reviewed literature, notable media reporting of recent cases of violence in schools, and consultations and conversations with school teachers and civil society actors.

**Type of School or its Location**

Is there any significant difference between public and private schools with regards to the frequency and nature of violence? As of now, there is no conclusive evidence to establish such a relationship in the South Asian context. In most developed country contexts, private schools are generally considered safer places than public schools when it comes to school-based crimes and acts of violence against children (McTighe, 2004). It is difficult to reach such a generalisation in the South Asian context where a significant proportion of children are enrolled in private schools. Additionally, there are faith-based and community-run institutions like madrassas, maktabs, monasteries, and paathshaalas that may or may not be registered with the government or have a “recognised-school” status, and hence often fall outside most research and monitoring surveys to assess the prevalence of school-based violence.

To gather some sense of possible relationship between the type of school and the prevalence and nature of school-based violence in those settings, a convenience-based sample of eight teachers and four child protection professionals were consulted. Box 5 enlists some of the relevant responses to the issue. It includes responses from teachers from public and private schools and madrassas from India and Pakistan.

---

18 In India, private enrolment in elementary schools is approximately 35 percent and over 50 percent at the secondary level. In cities, like Mumbai and Patna, over 75 percent of children are attending private schools. In rural India primary enrolment has increased from 19 percent to 29 percent in the seven-year period from 2006 to 2013 (EY/FICCI, 2014).
**Box 5: Experiences of six teachers and two child protection professionals on the relationship between types of schools and violence against children**

Children are perceived to be more closely monitored in private schools than public schools. Within private schools, small campuses are easier to monitor than large campuses. This according to the participants’ experience and observations leads to fewer cases of bullying and student-led crimes within small private schools. Large private schools include many hidden spaces such as toilets, playgrounds, storage rooms, auditorium, unused rooms, etc. where bullying and sexual abuse are difficult to check.

“Most private schools are so small. There is no place to hide. With improving student-teacher ratio it has become easier to check children. Children usually fight outside schools – on their way to school or to home. But in big private schools they can fight anywhere”. – private school teacher, New Delhi

Private school teachers may be more accountable towards parents than public school teachers. Job insecurity of private school teachers, according to the participants, makes them more “responsive” to parent complaints thereby reducing the prevalence of corporal punishment. However, according to the following respondent, parents or urban private schools are more likely to raise issues with teachers than parents of rural private schools.

“In villages, government schools are still a norm. Parents who select private schools are making a special effort. They truly believe that these “English-medium” schools are better quality. That is not true in most cases. Parents [private schools] trust these teachers and their methods. In cities parents are more vigilant and more aware of their rights. They tend to question teachers and their methods” – Private school teacher, Lucknow, India

Verbal abuse of children and social discrimination seems more prevalent in public schools than private schools, and more common in rural schools than urban. Use of abusive language, derogatory labelling by caste, sub-caste and/or religion, discriminatory behaviour and associated neglect is more commonly observed in rural public schools.

“Most [village] teachers come from average middle class and upper caste backgrounds. They tend to have prejudices about low-caste children’s abilities and behaviour and often mistreat them on such basis. While beating children from low caste is becoming less frequent, name-calling and separating them from other children during mid-day meals and in classroom seating arrangement is still prevalent. Low caste Muslim children and the OBC Muslim children treated worse. Many of them leave government schools and come to our madrassa” – madrassa teacher, Barabanki district, India

According to a participant, there are two possible reasons why rural private schools may exhibit seemingly lower rates of discrimination than rural public schools – one is that relatively better off families, that mostly tend to be middle to upper caste families, are able to send their children to fee-paying private schools limiting the entry of the poor low-caste and tribal families into the system, the second is that these schools may admit students exclusively to match the school management’s community preferences.

“Some private schools do not admit scheduled caste children in their schools. Government schools cannot refuse admission. That is why most low income and low caste children go to government schools where they may or may not receive equal treatment.” – Public school principal, New Delhi.

Neglect of duties and indifference towards student-led bullying and harassment of other students is common to both rural and urban contexts, but is perceived to be more prevalent in public schools. According to a child protection expert based in West Bengal, one of the most common reasons given by runaway children for leaving homes in their villages is the abuse and neglect by their school teachers, most of whom were from government schools:
Many children staying and working on railways stations in the cities when asked why they left their homes said that their teachers never taught them, were often absent from schools, and never paid attention when they complained of other students beating or harassing them”.

Public school teachers are more likely to receive trainings on child protection policies and needs. Private school teachers tend to have lower levels of pre-service and in-service training on teaching, child development, classroom management, or other areas of need including child protection. Many private schools are not properly accredited with government authorities and are operating without following the national guidelines for teacher training. Reportedly, acts of violence in such private schools are particularly high (Gopal, 2011). In India, the SCERT has been conducting workshops and trainings on right to education and child protection over the last decade. However, it has been reported by a few participants of this review that these trainings are conducted in a piecemeal fashion and are not significantly effective in bringing about necessary change teachers attitudes. Moreover, most trainings and workshops focus on teachers and leave out other non-teaching staff at schools.

Faith-based private educational institutions like madrassas follow their own guidelines regarding disciplining children and resent external intervention. Internal childcare and teaching practices of faith-based private institutions, according to a few child protection activists interviewed for this report, are extremely guarded and difficult to intervene with.

“Corporal punishment is very common. Since most madrassas are also residential we often hear about cases of sexual abuse of children by their teachers or other non-teaching staff. Because of their socio-religious status in the community it is very difficult for us to raise an issue with them. Quite often madrassa managements have political affiliations that makes matters more difficult”.
– child protection activist, Islamabad

Traditional teaching-learning practices in many madrassas justify physical punishments as means of disciplining. This, according to a madrassa teacher interviewed for the review, is a matter of “east-west divide” in educational traditions and practices:

“Teachers and adults should have the right to punish children when they misbehave and use physical means as long as they are not a threat to the child’s health and life. It is because of the values of western education system that some people view our practices as cruel. We believe it is our duty to discipline our students into becoming responsible law-abiding and god-fearing individuals” – madrassa teacher, Barabanki district, India

Residential school children are perceived to be most at-risk. It was unanimously agreed-upon that children at residential schools, whether private, public, or community-based, are most vulnerable to different forms of school-based violence, particularly bullying and sexual abuse. Children are more exposed to non-teaching staff and other adults working on campus or dormitories. It was pointed out that all staff at residential schools need to undergo a thorough system of background check and trainings to identify, prevent and address risk factors at schools.

“Most incidents of abuse – physical or sexual – that take place in residential schools, especially after school hours, go unreported. With the absence of family in their immediate environment, physical and emotional signs of abuse may go unnoticed or intentionally ignored for long. Residential schools need specific guidelines and procedures for child protection. This is urgently required of many private residential schools and madrassas in the country [Pakistan]” – private school teacher, Islamabad

Overall, it can be hypothesised (to be confirmed through a more systematic study) on the basis of data gathered and reviewed in this section that children studying in rural and semi-urban schools, especially from economically week families, suffer the worst form of physical, mental and emotional abuse from their teachers, and cases of bullying and school-based crimes are most likely to go
unchecked in these schools. In general, private schools are believed to be safer than public schools, but large private schools are more likely than small private schools to have spaces where school-based violence may go unmonitored unless reported by students. Public school teachers have greater opportunities to receive orientation and trainings on child protection needs and policies than private school teachers, but reportedly these trainings have limited effectiveness in controlling school-based crimes or in bringing about a lasting change in their attitude and behaviour towards students. Most of these trainings are directed towards the teaching staff and no such attention is paid towards the sensitisation of non-teaching staff members. Children in residential schools are most at-risk of all forms of abuse, by teachers, non-teaching adults, as well as other fellow students. These observations need to be explored through a systematic investigation before any conclusions are drawn regarding the relationship between type of school and prevalence of school-based violence.

**Teacher Characteristics, Role, and Well-being**

A teacher in a school is a figure of authority and to some, exercising this power is the only opportunity they have with power. A common finding of this study is that power dynamics in social and political relationships in and around schools impact the identity of the abuser and the abused, as well as the nature of abuse.

“…In a classroom, the teacher alone has authoritative access to the child’s body, and this access derives from the teachers’ being in charge of the child’s mind. As an adult, the teacher gets this physical access on account of the role in which he or she is placed. Let us ask therefore: ‘Who places the teacher in this role?’ Such a question will allow us to go deeper in our appreciation or culpability for the crime suffered by the child”

– Kumar, K. (2012)

“A school teacher in most cases is a poor or an average middle class person with little financial or social power in his life... He no longer has the same social status that this profession used to have a few decades ago... He is most powerful in the school and may want to desperately guard his authority over his students. A slight hint of challenge or rebellion coming from students may make him insecure. All such teachers have the potential to be abusive”

– Child protection professional, West Bengal, India

A review of media coverage of school violence over the last ten years supplemented with conversations with teachers and child protection professionals has revealed that:

**Male teachers are more likely than female teachers to inflict physical violence on students.** This finding is also supported in academic and institutional literature on school violence from most countries (ICRW/Plan International, 2015) as well as most media reports on cases of corporal

---

19 Limited to a sample of national-level English-medium online newspapers, and hence scientifically not free from selection bias.
punishment and sexual abuse. It must be noted that emotional abuse, humiliation and verbal slandering is rarely reported as a serious child abuse problem in South Asian media. Among the participants of this study while most agreed to the possibility of male teachers being more abusive than female teachers a few pointed out to the lack of sufficient evidence for drawing any conclusions regarding the identity of the most common abuser:

“It is true that male teachers are more commonly reported for acts of violence against children than female teachers or other non-teaching staff. But this is a problem with statistics and data collection. It depends solely on whether complaints are being reported or not. Boys report teachers for abuse more frequently than girls do. Most middle school and secondary schools in the country [India] are gender-segregated where most teachers in boys’ schools are men, and girls’ schools are women. If girls are not reporting their teachers for acts of violence, either because of fear or hesitation, then we do not have enough data to make valid comparisons. I think we really need better mechanisms to understand the state of violence and forms of abuses prevalent in girls’ schools and residential facilities before we make any assumptions. It is likely that violence perpetrated by female teachers is qualitatively different from male teachers, but we cannot say if it is less frequent”

– Child protection professional, West Bengal, India

From what is evident from various news reports on the cases of teacher to student abuse, male teachers are more likely than female teachers to be reported with accusations of sexual abuse of their students. However, no conclusive evidence is available to prove that male-inflicted sexual abuse and harassment is more frequent than female-inflicted violence.

There appears a complete lack of literature on teachers’ well-being and its relation with their interaction with students. Teachers and their role and responsibility appears to be at the core of most discussions on school-based violence. Teachers, especially male teachers, have been reported as the largest group of perpetrator of violence against children within schools. Many policy and programmatic interventions to address child abuse focus on sensitisation of teachers and encourage them to be “custodians” of child rights. Despite this, existing research on child abuse and school-based violence have made very little attempt to research factors behind teachers’ reported abusive behaviour in schools.

In an analytical newspaper article by Krishna Kumar (2012) in response to a case of death of child because of physical violence by school teachers in Madhya Pradesh, he points to the failure of the state in ensuring responsible training, recruitment, and remuneration of teachers. With the rise of under-trained and under-paid contractual government and private school teachers in many Indian states, evidence needs to be brought forth to better understand issues of psychological, social, and economic well-being of teachers and how that relates with their tendency to perpetrate violence against children in schools. Available qualitative evidence on the “plight” of non-government teachers in Gujarat, India, reveals high levels of stress, work overload, poor salary and work environment, lack of self-worth, low levels of job certainty (Sindhi, 2012). This evidence is particularly relevant in emergency contexts ridden with socio-political conflict and/or natural disasters that tend to disturb the emotional well-being of adults as much if not more than children.
Interaction with Non-teaching Staff

In several media reported cases of sexual abuse in India over the last five years, the perpetrator has been a non-teaching staff of the school. The list includes bus drivers (Mendonca, 2015), clerks (Mehta, 2013), lab assistants (The Times of India, 2014), canteen staff (DNA, 2016), and family members (Shekhar, 2014; Hindustan Times, 2013) of the school management staff. In almost all cases so far reviewed for this report, this category of perpetrators from non-teaching staff were men. In light of these events there has been an increased policy discussion around the inclusion of non-teaching and contractual staff members in training and orientations on child protection. For example, the new child protection guidelines published by the Karnataka State Government, India (2014), has included non-teaching in all objectives and indicators pertaining to safe school environment.

Three respondents from Pakistan (including two child protection professionals and one teacher) pointed out the growing numbers of armed security guards and personnel in school campuses in response to increasing threats of armed attacks by extremist/terrorist groups in the country. These changes in school environment have led to new categories of risk factors. In 2015, two cases were reported of sexual violence perpetrated by armed guards against girls in schools. Sexual harassment of girls by the guards is reportedly on a rise.

“These guards have been hired in a rush. Last week [in January, 2016] there were threats to schools because of which a few schools were closed for a week [in Punjab]. Most of these guards cannot read or write. They have not received any formal training in the use of arms. They probably learned how to use guns in their tribes by their friends or families. There is an urgent need to think about ensuring safety of children from these guards. They need to be trained in responsible use of arms and sensitized on child protection issues and laws.”

– child protection professional, Islamabad.

Outsiders in and around Schools

School-going children may be physical or sexually abused and emotionally harassed by outsiders in and around schools. While there is very little empirical research to evidence the prevalence of such incidents, occasional coverage in news and other media point to issues with safety of school children in schools, near schools, and on their way to and back from schools. In August 2015, a widely reported scandal in Pakistan involved sexual abuse and persistent sexual harassment of at least 280 children, all boys in the age of 10 to 14, who were filmed being sexually

---

20 For the purpose of this review, violence against children has been defined broadly in terms of the limits of a school setting. However, it must be acknowledged that there is considerable discussion among entities that work in this area on what constitutes violence in education settings, and some ministries of education do not consider it to be under their jurisdiction violence that takes place on the way to and back from school and only on school grounds.
abused and their families blackmailed over the recorded footage. This case from a village in Kasur District, Punjab, is regarded one of the biggest “child abuse scandals” in the history of Pakistan. Many of these cases of sexual abuse were filmed in schools after school hours, and the gang of abusers comprised of several senior secondary students and school drop-outs.

Safety of children on their way to school and back has been reported as one of the common factors responsible for irregular attendance or early dropout rates. In Maldives, 22.6 percent of students did not go to school because they felt unsafe on their way to or from school on one or more days during the past 30 days. Male students (23.5 percent) and female students (21.4 percent) are equally likely not to go to school because they felt unsafe or on their way to or from school on one or more days during the past 30 days (CDC/WHO (2009).

Sexual harassment and abuse of girls on their way to school or back home is a significant concern in the region (India Today, 2014). Many girls at secondary level tend to drop out of schools because of persistent incidence of “eve-teasing”, molestation and groping on public transport, and harassment by men on the way to school or home (Masih, 2014). Several cases have been reported on harassment by male police and armed force officers stationed outside the school or on the way, most commonly in areas under conflict.

The frequency of acid attacks as a form of physical assault on school-going girls and female teachers has grown at an alarming rate in the region. In Pakistan, the number of reported attacks increased from 65 in 2010 to 150 in 2011 (Dawn, 2011). Some of the commonly reported motivations behind acid attacks in the region include (a) revenge associated with intimate partner violence or unrequited sexual advances (Daily Record, 2015), (b) attacks by extremist groups to discourage girls from attending schools (Khan, 2012; Filkins, 2009), and family feuds and property disagreements. In South Asia, cases of acid attacks are most commonly reported from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and India.

**Individual and Family Characteristics**

The reasons why children physically, sexually, and/or emotionally harm others are complicated and not always obvious. Some of them have been emotionally, sexually or physically abused themselves, while others may have witnessed physical or emotional violence at home. For some children it may be a passing phase, but the harm they cause to other children can be serious and some will go on to abuse children into adulthood if they do not receive help.

Global evidence on domestic violence points to possible associations between witnessing parental violence as a child and exhibiting violent behaviour towards intimate partner in adulthood (Sudbury-Wayland-Lincoln Domestic Violence Roundtable, 2008). Anecdotally it is known that growing up with violence in the home is a devastating experience for many children across the world. Yet, little is known about the full extent of the problem (UNICEF, 2009). Numerous
studies have proven a link between domestic violence and child abuse (Krug et al., 2002). There is also a strong likelihood that this will become a continuing cycle of violence for the next generation. Studies from various countries support the findings that rates of abuse are higher among women whose husbands were abused as children or who saw their mothers being abused (Ehrensaft et al., 2004).

**Similar relations have been drawn between experiencing and witnessing sexual abuse and abusing others.** Many cases of children sexually abusing other children have either experienced or witnessed some form of sexual violence themselves (Stop it Now, 2016).

**Children growing in families with substance abusing adults are affected by several risk factors simultaneously.** Studies show that drug abuse leads to poverty and family breakdown, poverty is often transmitted from parents to children, and substance abuse is often associated with crimes and law deceptions, thereby exposing children to a socially dysfunctional environment from early on (Sharma, 2009).

**Lack of resources and household are often listed as possible factors explaining violent tendencies in children, however, not all empirical research from different contexts support this claim** (Chaux et al., 2009). On the contrary, it has evidence research on bullying in schools in the US points to the association between poverty and the increased risk of being bullied (Kakarla, 2012). In the South Asian context, this area of research and evidence needs to be strengthened.

**Household poverty exacerbates risks for violence against children.** There is considerable variation in the ways poverty affects child protection outcomes. One key route by which this seems to takes place is by increasing economic pressures on households, which respond in ways that do not safeguard and may directly conflict with children’s rights to protection. Examples include economically motivated child marriages, children’s entry into commercial sex work and leaving children without adequate care while parents are working (Solotaroff and Pande, 2014). Poor children are also at greater risk of protection violations because they are often exposed to a wider range of social contexts in which violence can occur.

**Power differentials associated with poverty are evidenced to be associated with risks of bullying and physical violence in schools.** There seems to be a positive correlation between poverty levels and vulnerability to violence in schools (Krug et al., 2002). However, while some studies have found higher levels of bullying among children living in poor socioeconomic conditions, others have found no relationship. But it has been suggested that bullying could be critically related to differences in access to resources. In other words, socioeconomic inequality – and the power differentials associated with this – could be more related to bullying (and violence) than poverty itself (Chaux et al., 2009), although this has not been explored by specific studies on bullying. In the South Asian context, while many reviews of literature and news articles on child abuse draw linkages between economic hardship and child abuse, very few of such claims are supported with empirical evidence.
**Societal Norms, Gender Roles, Perceptions, and Sexuality**

According to the 2014 UNESCO review of school related gender based violence, some cultures have societal norms that view violence as normal and appropriate under certain circumstances. It cites statistics to support this claim: for example, over half (52 percent) of women aged 15-49 in South Asia, and 30 percent of women of the same age in East Asia and the Pacific, believe that a husband/partner in justified in hitting or beating his wife/partner under certain situations (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014). Also evidenced from UNICEF-MICS data, there is high rate of parental acceptance for physical violence against children as means of disciplining across the South Asian region. Teachers too have been reported to hold supporting beliefs regarding corporal punishment. Teachers’ and parents’ attitudes and personal beliefs associated with acceptance of corporal punishment and physical violence against children reportedly plays a significant role in “normalisation” of violence within schools (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014).

Studies from across the globe testify to the relationship between inequitable gender attitudes and perpetration of violence against women and girls. Some of the recently conducted research studies in the region have explored this issue among school-going adolescents. In a cross-sectional survey (Das et al., 2012) conducted with 1040 boys aged 10-16 years in Mumbai, India, to examine the relationship between their gender attitudes, attitudes condoning violence against women, exposure to family and community violence, and violence perpetration against peers and girls, less than one-quarter (22 percent) of the boys reported that they generally do not agree with violence against girls. The study reported that witnessing violence against women in the community and at home was related to perpetration of violence in the community, in school, and violence perpetration against girls. Additionally, having been a victim of violence at home, in community, and in school was associated with any violence perpetration. Furthermore, it was found that more equitable gender attitudes were associated with significantly less likelihood of sexual violence perpetration.

In a similar study (Dalal et al., 2012) of 15-19-year-old boys in Bangladesh (n=275), India (n=13078), and Nepal (n=939), using household health surveys, it was found that significantly high percentage of boys justify or support some form of violence against women. In Bangladesh, 42 percent of 275 respondents had justified wife beating; in India, 51 percent of 13,078 male adolescents had supported wife beating; and in Nepal, 28 percent of 939 respondents had supported wife abuse. Individual level factors, such as rural residency, low educational attainment, low economic status, being unemployed, and having a history of family violence, were positively associated with the justification of wife abuse.
In a recent study conducted by ICRW and Plan International (2014) on school-related gender based violence one of the research components surveyed adolescent girls and boys on their gender attitudes. In Pakistan, 47 percent of students were found to show low gender equitable attitudes, 51 percent moderate, and only 2 percent high. Girls, in general, were reported with significantly greater levels of equitable gender attitudes than boys. Significantly higher proportion of boys (76 percent) supported male dominance compared to girls (64 percent). On controlling for background characteristics, age emerged as a factor influencing gender attitude. Those who are 15–17 years are two times more likely to have high equitable gender attitude than those in the younger age cohort. However, girls in the older cohort were observed to show a slight shift towards less egalitarian gender role expectations than younger cohort. For example, 79 percent supported traditional roles for women, compared to 72 percent in younger age cohort. Further, schooling of mothers was indicated to have a positive influence on the attitude. However, access to internet and exposure to parental violence have negative effect.

**Political Conflict and Social Unrest**

South Asia is currently regarded one of the most violent geopolitical regions of the world. While conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan have attracted global attention, parts of India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal have also experienced long-running political conflicts, anti-establishment movements, and communal tensions (IRIN, 2009; UN, 2015; GCPEA, 201; Hart, 2001; Watchlist, 2010). Evidence has shown that countries experiencing or emerging from violent conflict tend to exhibit higher levels of violence in schools, because of the normalisation of violence in society and also because conflict increases the vulnerability of those already at risk of being targeted (Villar-Marquez, 2010). Exposure to violence in the community increases the risk of children developing aggressive behaviours, mainly because of the effects on cognitive and socio-emotional processes (Chaux, 2009). Four out of eight South Asian countries, namely, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Nepal, are considered some of the world’s “worst affected” countries with regards to violent attacks on schools (Education under attack, 2010; UNESCO, 2010). However, empirically sound evidence on the impact of conflict on the prevalence of school-based violence is scarce, indirect, and mostly based on small-scale ethnographic research (see Box 6).

---

21 Students’ attitudes were measured on a rating scale composed of a set of statements that represent commonly held societal notions and beliefs around gender norms and gender-based violence. A high individual score on the scale demonstrates attitudes that are more egalitarian, that is, supportive of gender equality and demonstrate low tolerance for violence. [ICRW/Plan International. (2014)]
Box 6: Excerpt from ‘Impact of Militarisation on Education in Kashmir’, 2013

A 2013 study on schools in Kashmir (India) assessed the various kinds of impacts of the military camps/bunkers established within and in the vicinity of schools and other educational institutions, exploring the relation between the presence of security personnel within or around schools and the sense of insecurity among school-going children, and exploring the link between the presence of the military and the growth of the various psycho-social problems among the student community in the Kashmir valley. During the research 360 students were interviewed, and each student was asked to answer questions related to the issue of militarisation and its consequences on the education system. During the study, students shared their experiences of various violent incidents and the difficult situations they encounter every day. A large number of educational buildings were found to be either under direct military occupation or surrounded by their camps and bunkers, distracting students and causing a disruption of their daily activities in school.

Adapted from Ahmed, S. (2013)

In situations of ongoing war and conflict in the region several cases of outsiders entering and attacking schools and school staff and children have taken place. For example, since the 1970s Pakistan has been reported to experience more attacks on education than any other country in the world. In the past five years, more than 1000 schools have been destroyed in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, which includes Peshawar, where the latest attack took place in December 2014 killing more than 130 boys and nine teachers. Since then several policy documents have been drafted to come up with a national strategy to ensure safety of children and strengthen security arrangements in and around schools (A World at School, 2015).

Overall, as of now, information on the longer-term impact of persistent targetted violent attacks, including the destruction of schools and the killing of students, teachers and other education personnel, on education systems is very patchy.

Common Spaces for Violence against Children in Schools

While it was beyond the scope of this report to systematically gather information directly from students on spaces within and around schools where acts of abuse take place most commonly, a random search of media reported cases of different forms of violence in South Asian schools that have been reported in the last decade (2005 to 2015), as well a review of recently published report by ICRW/Plan International (2015) on SRGBV has generated the following list (see Figure 6).

In most cases, corporal punishment and acts of discrimination, verbal abuse and humiliation have taken place in open spaces. On the other hand, sexual abuse and exploitation occurred in hidden spaces or after school hours. Cases of bullying and harassment by students were not reported with details on the location of the act, but point to the presence of other students and absence of teachers,

---

22 List of news websites scanned for cases of school-based violence over the last ten years: The Hindu, The Times of India, Dawn, Express Tribune, and Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka).
indicating spaces that are not frequented by teachers or other school staff at all times. However, sporadic fights and sudden quarrels may happen in view of other students, mostly in the classroom or playground.

*Figure 6: List of common physical spaces for violence against children in schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporal Punishment</th>
<th>Sexual Abuse</th>
<th>Humiliation and Discrimination</th>
<th>Bullying and harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff room</td>
<td>Staff room</td>
<td>Staff room</td>
<td>Class room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground/Gym</td>
<td>Store room</td>
<td>Playground/Gym</td>
<td>Dormitory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unused room</td>
<td>Unused room</td>
<td>Assembly hall</td>
<td>Canteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store room</td>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School bus</td>
<td>Science lab</td>
<td>School bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assembly hall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Right outside school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td></td>
<td>On way to school/home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dormitory</td>
<td></td>
<td>On way to school/home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bulletin boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science lab</td>
<td></td>
<td>Online spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other less frequented spots on campus</td>
<td></td>
<td>School bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On the way to school/home</td>
<td></td>
<td>Right outside school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online spaces (texting services and social networking sites)</td>
<td></td>
<td>On way to school/home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Violence that takes place while children are still in their school uniforms, according to some participants of this study, should be included in school-based violence for the purpose of preventive laws and policies.

> “Any act of violence that happens when a child leaves home to come to school should be a matter of concern for school managements and/or the country’s education system. The attack on Malala happened outside school but it would not have taken place if she was not coming to school or advocating for the same for other girls. So many girls have been attacked with acid or have been shot or abducted because their families sent them to school. Even minor incidents such as eve-teasing of school girls by local men is a risk of sexual abuse. Girls in our country, especially in rural parts, risk their life and honor to come to school, to contribute to their country’s development. It is the responsibility of our schools and education system to ensure their safety.”

– private school teacher, Islamabad

Sexual violence occurs in various locations in and around schools. Children have reported assaults on the road to and from school (girls and disabled children in particular), from men, but also from soldiers at checkpoints.
“Every year we hear of sexual harassment and abuse of young girls by police and armed soldiers in different parts of the country – in Kashmir, in North-Eastern states of the country, in Naxalite regions of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Most of these cases are not even reported. The police that needs to register the complaint and they are quite commonly involved in perpetrating violence themselves. Many cases of abduction and rape happen while girls are on their way to or back from school. Most of these girls are from minority, dalit, and tribal communities, and from poor and illiterate families.”

– child protection professional, Rajasthan

Another reason why the difference between within and outside school spaces is rather fluid for school-going children when they face violence is that family and teachers are the only seemingly reliable and trusted adults in the life of most children in the world. Violence experienced at home when discussed with the teacher at school, becomes an issue to be addressed in schools. Similarly, vice versa.

“As soon as a child confides in a teacher that he or she is being harassed by somebody on the way to school it should become the responsibility of the school management to help the child and his/her family. Child protection guidelines and training should help teachers and schools to become the ‘custodians’ of child rights. It should not matter whether the violence has taken place in the school or not. In a country like India and Nepal, where a significantly large number of children are first generational learners at school, the primary responsibility of protecting children and their rights should be shouldered by schools and teachers – the agents of the state who are closest to children.”

– child protection professional, Nepal

This understanding the violence in any given stage of life is a function of different layers of environment – home, school, community, and society – is the basis of the ecological model of abuse adopted for this report.

**Consequences of School-based Violence**

School violence negatively impacts students all around the world. It is now widely understood that school violence not only represents a violation of the right of a child but also a significant hindrance in realisation of individual potential. There is wide acknowledgment of the various consequences of violence against children in literature from and on South Asian countries, however, there are three common issues with these references:

1. Consequences of violence against children is mostly discussed without any empirical evidence. The discussion is based on general understanding of the problems likely related with violence, often referenced from literature from industrialised developed countries, such as USA and UK where school-based violence has been well researched;
2. The few available evidence-based discussions on impact of violence against children focus on adult-to-child abuse at home or work, or related with issues of child trafficking and child sex abuse;
3. Discussions on the consequences of school-based violence is primarily limited to the issue of school-drop out among girls.
The following list of reported impacts of school-based violence in South Asia is based on very few pieces of evidence from the region. References have been drawn from reviews and general discussions on possible impact of violence against children in general. It must be pointed out that the following different forms of impacts of violence against children are not entirely mutually exclusive. They tend to accompany each other to form a complex package of physical, psychological, and educational damages.

Table 10: Mapping key impacts of violence against children on the lifecycle-ecological framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Schooling/ Grade</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3-5       | ECE              | • Depression  
            • Low self esteem  
            • PTSD  
            • Complaints of headache, stomach ache  
            • Not wanting to go to school  
            • Excessive crying  
            • Fearfulness  
            • Clinginess  
            • Passive-aggressive behaviour  
            • Physical injuries  
            • Disability  
            • Death | • Bullying  
            • Physical violence  
            • School dropout  
            • Poor school performance  
            • Increased corporal punishment | • Lack of trust in schools and reliance on teachers  
            • Lack of trust in systems of law and justice  
            • Normalisation of violence  
            • Perpetuation of violence from one generation to other  
            • Loss to national and regional economy in forms of reduced educational outcome and increased health cost |
| 6-10      | Primary (1-5)    | • All of above  
            • Poor attendance  
            • Poor academic performance  
            • School dropout  
            • Eating disorders | | • Bullying  
            • Physical violence  
            • School dropout  
            • Poor school performance  
            • Increased corporal punishment | |
| 11-13     | Junior Secondary (6-8) | • All of above  
            • Substance abuse  
            • Sexual behaviour  
            • Early pregnancy  
            • Criminal activity  
            • Suicidal ideation | • Poor role modeling for younger members of family  
            • Loss of family member  
            • Increased medical costs | • All of above  
            • Dating violence  
            • Disruption of classes  
            • Property damage | |
| 14-16     | Secondary (9-10) | • All of above  
            • HIV AIDS and STDs | • All of above  
            • Intimate partner violence  
            • Domestic violence | • All of above  
            • Teenage crimes  
            • Sexual harassment  
            • Disruption to local law and order | |
| 17-18     | Senior Secondary (11-12) | • All of above | • All of above | • All of above | • All of above |

*This table is populated on the basis of both global and regional evidence gathered and reviewed for this report.

Tracing these impacts along age and environment of children suggests their deep connections with the perpetuation of risk factors that underlie further occurrence of violence. These impacts are not
limited to experiencing violence first hand, but also to witnessing violence in school, at home, work, or neighbourhood. Gender-based variations are observed in nature of observable impacts of violence, such as signs of physical injuries among boys, and suicidal ideation among girls. However, no conclusions can be drawn on the pattern of this variation in absence of systematic evidence-based studies.

**On Students’ Mental Well-being**

The consequences of violence against children can be obvious and hidden, severe and mild, short-term and long-term. School based violence against children, whether by peers or adults, may lead to lifelong psychological problems for children by affecting their emotional well-being and undermining their cognitive development (UNICEF, 2010). Some of the common psychological impacts of early experience with violence includes depression, low self-esteem, mistrust in others, aggressiveness, risk of suicide, drug abuse, poor physical health, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Contreras et al., 2012; UNICEF, 2010). Evidence also points to eating disorders and obesity as common consequences of bullying and physical violence in schools (McCarty, 2013).

However, we know very little about the psychological consequences of violence on children in the region, leave alone school-based violence. Studying and addressing mental health is not yet a priority in the region (Mahmood, 2014; Prabhakar and Dubois, 2013). There is a serious lack of comprehensive mental health policy in South Asian countries\(^{23}\). The situation is worsened by negative social attitudes toward mental health, underestimation of the suffering of people suffering from mental illnesses, and lack of political empathy and leadership to support programmes for psychological well-being of people (Trivedi and Tripathi, 2015). Under this situation of general neglect of mental health and well-being of people, psychological impacts of child abuse often go unnoticed until manifested in sudden observable changes, such as physical injuries and decline in academic performance of children (see Box 7).

---

\(^{23}\) In 2007, national mental health policies were present in only four of the countries: India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan (Trivedi et al., 2007).
Box 7: Local experiences of how teachers come to know of violence against children

How do teachers come to know that a child is being abused in school by friends, family, or other teachers?

“If we see signs of injury like bruises and cuts, we know that children were either in a fight or have been beaten by others. If a child cries a lot, we ask what is wrong. The child then tells us about being abused at home or by other children. Children also come with complaints. And many times, their parents come with complaints. Then we take action against children who are bullies or against teachers who excessively use physical punishment.”
– public school teacher, New Delhi

“They only notice physical signs. Teachers do not know how to read signs of abuse. Unless there is a physical injury..., teachers generally ignore changes in behaviour of children. In fact, with children who suddenly go quiet and stop playing, we have seen teachers to take it as a positive change in the child. They say that “he [the child] is now a well-behaved child. Does not make noise”. Teachers may notice children whose grades drop significantly and may then try to explore the reasons. But those children who were not academically strong to begin with, their behavioural changes are generally ignored or labeled as “problems to be fixed” rather than “issues to be resolved”. This is also true for many parents. They do not come to know that their child is abused unless the child reports it or shows physical signs on his or her body.”
– child protection professional, Bangalore

Almost all participants of this study, in addition to the reviewed literature, posited that there is limited understanding of the impact of witnessing violence in a school setting. Most post-event procedures to address a situation of violence in schools focus more on the victim and the accused/perpetrator. However, we know this from a large body of literature domestic violence that children who witness violence between adults may develop short to long term behavioural, emotional, and cognitive problems (Edleson, 1997). Children who are exposed to violence are more likely to suffer from attachment problems, regressive behaviour, anxiety, and depression, and to have aggression and conduct problems. Other health-related problems, as well as academic and cognitive problems, delinquency, and involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, are also associated with experiences of violence (Margolin and Elana, 2004; Duke et al., 2010). Studies have also shown that the students who reported having most frequently witnessed parental physical abuse were more likely to bully others than those who had less frequently witnessed parental physical abuse (Laeheem, 2013). However, regional evidence is rare and there is an obvious gap in the understanding of psychological impacts of violence against children, in schools and beyond. This gap in general understanding is reflected and possibly sustained by underdeveloped policy frameworks, institutions, and research on mental health in the region.

On Students’ Life and Physical Well-being

Impacts on physical well-being of children range from signs of mild to serious signs of injury on children’s bodies to long term or lifelong disabilities. Physical violence can be trifling or serious and may result in wounds, bruises, fractures, internal injuries, and head trauma. Reportedly, physical signs of violence are more commonly observed among boys than girls. Also, younger children are understood to be more at risk of physical violence by adults at home, and older boys are at greater
risk of physical violence in school and their neighbourhood (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014). Cases of death under severe and unrestrained physical punishments by teachers is a common occurrence in the region and every year child deaths at the hand of school personnel are reported from all countries of the region (Banerjee, 2016; UNICEF, 2014).

Sexual violence may have serious repercussions on the child’s own sexual behaviour. Research has shown that child victims of sexual violence are at greater risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviour at an early age. A review of 13 studies involving sexually abused children revealed that 28 percent had sexual behaviour problems, with the highest prevalence occurring in the youngest age group (Kendall-Tacket, 1993). In another study of 201 children of 6 to 12 years of age with inappropriate, intrusive, or aggressive sexual behaviours, 48 percent were sexually abused, 32 percent had a physical abuse history, 35 percent had a history of emotional abuse, and 16 percent had a history of neglect (Bonner et al., 1992). Early pregnancies among adolescent girls is one of the impacts of sexual abuse and/or early initiation into sexual activity. It may lead to abandonment of education, social stigmatisation, and complications during birth. Issues of early pregnancies as a result of sexual abuse in schools and other educational settings is rarely discussed; the focus remains on early marriage and intimate partner violence at home. Additionally, little do we know about the prevalence and physical consequences of dating violence among school-going children.

Global evidence on consequences of school-based violence includes high-risk of sexual and drug using behaviour that can result in the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections and communicable diseases (Knerr, 2011; UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014; UNICEF, 2014). However, literature on prevalence of drug abuse among adolescents in relation with their interactions within school is scarce for the region. According to some participants consulted for this report, drug-abuse is not a big part of school-based violence issues in the region. Some posited that the problem of drug abuse is greater issue with street children and college-going students. Literature on narcotics and drug-abuse, however, reveals that that substance abuse among secondary school children is a serious issue in the north-western part of the region, including Pakistan and Afghanistan (UN, 2008).

Schools are also target of non-state armed forces attacks and list of evidence on such attacks, taking lives and causing physical injuries and disability among students and teachers, is growing longer year by year. Almost the entire South Asian region – countries and parts of countries are afflicted by armed conflict. Schools, students, and teachers are targetted for multiple reasons as they make “high-visibility” and “soft” targets (Coursen-Neff and Sheppard, 2011).

Self-harm and attempts to suicide as a results of physical, emotional or sexual abuse experienced by teenage girls at school, on online social media, at home, or in intimate relationships is a growing concern for the region (WHO, 2014a). It must be noted by 2000 suicide rates in teenage girls had already surpassed maternal deaths by fractions of percentage points but it was not noticed until the release of 2014 report by WHO – “Health for the world’s adolescents: A second chance in the second decade” (WHO, 2014b). It revealed that the rate of death by suicide is 27.92 per every 100,000
females between 15 and 19 in Southeast Asia\textsuperscript{24}, more than twice the global rate in that group. The report points to the need to investigate various socio-political factors that underlie teen suicides in the region. Attention is required to investigate and understand the prevalence of and the factors underlying suicidal ideation among boys.

\textbf{On Students’ Academic Achievement}

One of the commonly reported impacts of school-based violence is dropping out of school. While it is reportedly common among boys to drop out because of excessive physical punishment by teachers and bullying by peers in school (Save the Children, 2009; NCPCR 2012; UNESCO 2014), girls reportedly drop out because of increased incidence and risk of sexual harassment in school, and on their way to and back from schools (Solotaroff and Pande, 2014; UNICEF, 2014; UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014).

Dropping out of school because of experiences of violence in school is most common during transition from primary to secondary, secondary to senior secondary, and from school to college. Entry into labour or workforce, and early marriage are commonly the most immediate follow up events after dropping out of school.

Global research has shown that students who face violence in school, direct and indirect, may show signs of poor performance, such as lower attendance and lower academic results than those who do not (Pereznieto et al., 2010). In addition to poor cognitive response to learning and performance, children may develop patterns of cognitive responses to situations of violence from their previous exposure of violence from experiencing or witnessing it.

Research has shown that exposure to violence activates a set of threat-responses in the child’s developing brain and excess activation of the neural systems involved in the threat responses can alter the development of brain in terms of changes in emotional, behavioural and cognitive functioning. The roots of violence-related problems, therefore, can be found in the adaptive responses to threat present during the violent experiences. The specific changes in neurodevelopment and function will depend upon the child’s response to the threat, the specific nature of the violent experiences and a host of factors associated with the child, their family and community (Perry and Azad, 1999; Perry, 2001).

Studies in South Asia show that corporal punishment of children is a direct and significant reason for children dropping out of school: 14 percent of dropouts in Nepal can be attributed to fear of teacher

\textsuperscript{24} a WHO-designated region that includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste.
(UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014), and the majority of school dropouts in Afghanistan reported fear of corporal punishment in schools as their main reason for not going to school (Save the Children, 2009). A discouraging or disrupted classroom has been found to affect boys’ educational achievement, in particular, by creating a stressful and intimidating learning environment. Globally it has been found that school-related violence, or the fear of violence, can have profound consequences on students’ participation, achievement, and continuation, particularly for girls who may respond by choosing to underperform to avoid unwanted attention from teachers (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014).

Corporal punishment combined with conservative political and social ideologies of school management may limit students’ rate of participation and creative potential (see Box 8).

**Box 8: Impact of conservative school management on students’ progressive ideas and independent thinking in Maldives**

Qualitative interviews with youth in the Maldives revealed that strict and conservative school managements as well as conservative teachers who do not encourage student’s progressive ideas and independent thinking but utilize the “suspension order” – a policy of exclusion towards students with ‘too liberal’ views – results in students not actively participating in class or seeking academic excellence. This in turn, creates a stressful and intimidating learning environment, lowers concentration and motivation and contributes to lower academic achievement, overall poor performance, or drop out.

Cited in UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014

Academic performance and school participation are clearly related with all other impacts of school-based violence. Numerous impacts of school based violence on students’ physical and psychological well-being impact their performance in schools – their levels of concentration, sustained effort, problem solving skills and reasoning abilities. From an economic point of view, school based violence has serious cost implications with increased loss of health, social capital, and educational achievement.

**Ongoing Programmes to Address Violence in Schools in South Asia**

This section briefly outlines broad categories of programme responses observed in the region. It must be acknowledged upfront that this report does not provide a review of country-level laws and policies to prevent and respond to violence against children, which have been in general found to be extremely limited in definition, scope, and implementation, as summarised in Box 9. By no means does this section attempt to provide an exhaustive list of programmes led by different agencies to address violence against children in region. It provides brief descriptions of select programmes from the region categorised on the basis of their broad underlying strategy.
Box 9: State of laws and policies to respond to and address school-based violence in South Asia

The 2014 UNGEI/UNESCO review of SRGVB in Asia-Pacific, including South Asian countries, found that policies and laws to prevent and address school-based violence is limited. The following are the key highlights of the review:

Greatest attention is given to the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings including schools. However, many policy or legal efforts to support this are still on-going, await final government approval, are fragmented, contradictory, and gender-blind. For example, in Maldives, corporal punishment is lawful in the home and there is no explicit prohibition of all corporal punishment in schools. In Nepal, it is forbidden in schools by a decree but there is no explicit prohibition in law.

In India, corporal punishment is explicitly prohibited in schools under the Right to Education Act (2009) but that limits the application of this law to children aged 6-14 and does not cover Jammu and Kashmir. In Pakistan, the existing state of the law is such that the responsibility of offences related to children are laid on those who have the custody of the child, such as a parent or a guardian, but not school teacher, and hence not applicable to school settings. In the Bhutan, there is ambiguity in the articulation of the law against corporal punishment in schools that leaves it to subjective interpretation.

Sri Lanka is the only country in the region with anti-bullying legislation applicable to schools, however, much is desired to improve the implementation of the law. Bullying although estimated to be a significant issue in schools, is still not an important policy matter for the region. Legislation to address sexual violence against children appears to be widespread, but often gender-blind or exclusive. For instance, research by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre into child trafficking in South Asia has found that boys often have less legal protection from sexual abuse than girls do.

In conclusion, the UNESCO-SRGVB in Asia-pacific review emphasized the urgent need to establish supportive and enabling policy and legislative environments to prevent violence against children in schools. It highlighted the need for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to developing policies that involves intersectoral collaboration and coordination by governments and relevant ministries, and governmental and non-governmental agencies.

UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014

Review of literature, more globally then regionally, shows that there is a general increase in the number of programmes addressing the needs of children in difficult circumstances, especially targetted to mitigate risks of their abuse. While many of these programmes focus on getting children into schools as a way of empowering them and protecting them from abuse and exploitation at work and home, from being attacked on their way to and from schools, from being trafficked, from substance abuse and truancy, etc., there seems a lack of understanding and programmatic focus on violence that takes place inside schools. Nevertheless, with the increasing realisation of the relevance of schools in the lives of children, more and more programmes are targetting teachers as key vehicles of positive change in the state of violence against children. However, it has been pointed out by experts consulted for this report that the array of programmes from different parts of the region have been poorly resourced, and hence short-term and difficult to scale up. While several interventions have shown to improve awareness and attitudes to school-based violence among teachers and students, there is often no conclusive evidence under the lack of evaluation models and exercises associated with these programmes.
It has been noted that most programmes addressing school-based violence are supported by local NGOs or international donor agencies. At the government level, very little effort has been observed with actual programmes being implemented. However, the role of the government agencies at the national and provincial level, particularly in India, has been prominent in supporting policy discourse and documentation on the issue of corporal punishment. Regional advocacy campaigns have been gaining visibility in the region, most prominently Plan International (Learn without fear) and SAIEVAC (Campaign Against Corporal Punishment of Children). However, their impact beyond adding weight to local advocacy groups, on development and implementation of programmes to address school-based violence is yet to be understood.

This report has identified three broad strategies that most commonly underlay programmes for children: (1) prevention, (2) response, and (3) accountability (adopted from UNGEI/UNESCO, 2015). These are not mutually exclusive categories and there are obvious overlaps between programmes across these strategy groups, especially prevention and response that are often deeply connected. For example, reinforcement of security features such as guards and CCTV cameras in school of Pakistan in the aftermath of the December 2014 attack on the Army school of Peshawar is both a response and a prevention strategy adopted by individual schools and the government in the country. Nevertheless, this categorisation helps in highlighting the key gaps in approaches to address school-based violence in the region.

**Prevention**

Review of literature on causes of school-based violence reveals that no one factor in isolation is the cause, hence, stopping school-based violence involves using multiple prevention strategies that address individual, family, community, and societal factors that influence the likelihood of violence. Prevention efforts should ultimately reduce risk factors and promote protective factors at these multiple levels of influence. In this regard, it has been observed that teachers are the most commonly targeted actors by preventive programmes to lead and implement prevention mechanism in schools, most specifically to prevent sexual violence against children (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014). The second most common target of programmes are children themselves, however, limited to addressing relatively fewer forms of violence. It appears that programmes to assess effectiveness and to ensure accountability of preventive structures, such as laws, schools’ governance and administration, school staff training and recruitment policies, security arrangements, role of the police and armed forces, etc. are not commonly addressed by ongoing programmes in the region.

**Sensitisation of Teachers and Development of Schools as “Child Friendly” Spaces**

Teacher sensitisation programmes are the most common forms of prevention and response strategies observed in the region. According to a child protection expert consulted for this report, teachers are the most convenient and effective targets of programmes to address issues of violence in schools.
Teachers, once trained and sensitised to various aspects of prevalence and impact of violence against children, have the ability to transform school environment in favor of children.

There is encouraging evidence of programmatic collaborations between government agencies, local NGOs and multinational agencies in this area. For example, in Pakistan, the training unit of SPARC under the funding support of international donor agencies, for the last two decades, has been organising trainings for various groups of stakeholders including prominent members of community, child rights practitioners, volunteer groups, and teachers on principles of child rights and child development and needs (SPARC, 2015). Some of the key areas of focus of trainings for teachers include sexual abuse, corporal punishment, bullying, and child-friendly environment.

In India, the Department of Elementary Education at the NCERT has created several manuals of trainings and workshops to sensitize teachers and schools staff, including school management committees against the use of corporal punishment in schools (NCERT, 2013). This manual is based on a series of participatory workshops conducted by NCERT in 2008 with school leaders, teachers, state and district level education administrators, child psychologists and counsellors, in Gujarat, Assam, and Karnataka, against the use of corporal punishment in schools.

Over the last decade, training teachers and school leaders to adopt child-friendly schools (CFS) approach in their curriculum and pedagogy is has been considered an important rights-based framework to enable and abuse-free, protective and healthy environment for children (UNICEF, 2012). In South Asia, under the programmatic and funding support of UNICEF, many countries have tested and localised the CFS model of education, particularly at the primary level in Sri Lanka (UNICEF, 2009), Afghanistan (Madhok, 2012), Nepal (Basnet, 2009), and Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2014).

In Bangladesh, BRAC schools that have adopted a “no punishment” policy have systematically integrated this approach in their pedagogy by emphasising principles of child development and psychology, as well as child friendly teaching learning practices, in their pre-service teacher training programmes as well refresher courses for in-service teachers. A special feature of BRAC’s approach to eliminating corporal punishment is their engagement with parents through regular meetings and forums to sensitise them on the negative effects of physical and emotional violence at home. By increasing the coverage of their programmes from teachers to parents, BRAC is attempting to create a consistently enabling environment for children. Internally, BRAC monitors the coverage of topics pertaining violence against children in their teacher-parent forum discussions, as well as evaluates shifts in teachers’ behaviour and attitude towards children.

---

25 Based on information provided by BRAC and Save the Children team in Bangladesh, through emails exchanged in February, 2016.
In Bhutan, a three-year teacher action research project – *Transformative Education for Gross National Happiness* (2014) - was organised collaboratively by the Royal Education Council, the Oulun Lyseon Lukio secondary school in Finland, and seven public schools. The project supported a series of workshops with teachers and school leaders on issues of transformational learning, child-focused pedagogy, development of children’s confidence and openness, and improving parental involvement in schools.

**Sex Education and Gender Sensitisation Programmes for Children and Adolescents**

The last decade has seen a rise of discourse on the need for sex education among adolescents and young children in the region. However, “gender-blindness” of the regional programmes continues to impact the perception that regards men and boys as perpetrators of violence and rarely victims due to discomfort around girls’ or women’s sexual activity and taboos around discussions of homosexual contact (Barker and Pawlak, 2012; UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014). Nevertheless, with increasing evidence to highlight the scale of prevalence of gender-based violence against young boys in schools, homes and communities, programmes have begun to address the issue of sexual violence against both boys and girls. The role of the civil society and advocacy by international organisations such as Plan International, ICRW, and UNICEF has been influential. Civil society organisations in the region have led numerous efforts to address SRGVB by directly targetting students through sex-education workshops, publication of age-relevant literature, and curricular inclusion of topics to enforce gender equality and sensitivity.

In Nepal, Save the Children worked with community-based clubs to implement the ‘Choices’ curriculum which aimed to empower boys and girls aged 10-14 to challenge gender norms. The intervention, which included an experimental control group, showed positive outcomes on attitudes and behaviours of participants. For example, prior to the intervention just over 40 percent of participants believed “it was okay for a man to hit his wife” while this number dropped to under 10 percent in post-intervention survey (cited in UNGEI/UNESCO, 2014).

In Pakistan, NGOs like Rozan release frequent publications and workbooks for young children and adolescents on topics of sexual abuse, awareness of one’s body, and social and life skills necessary for children to identify situations of abuse and exploitation (Rozan, 2016). The organisation also carries out trainings for teachers to support sex education of children in schools. Public discussion on sex is a taboo in the country and often met by strong disapproval of religious groups. To circumvent these issues NGOs have been working closely with community groups and local religious leaders to garner support for sex education and similar life skills programmes for adolescents (Svanemyr et al., 2015).

In India, the Gender Equality Movement in Schools (GEMS) is a school-based movement that promotes gender equality among men and women and places special emphasis on working with
young men. Evaluation of the GEMS intervention suggests a positive shift in students’ attitudes toward gender equality. For example, programme participants of the pilot phase in 45 schools of Mumbai, India showed a significant increase in the gender equality scores, and more students reported they would take action in response to sexual harassment. In addition, the proportion of students believing that girls should be at least 18 years old at marriage increased over time, reaching nearly 100 percent. Further, lessons learned from the implementation of GEMS revealed that public education system is uniquely placed to influence to overcome stereotypes and shape processes and understanding of non-violent attitudes and behaviours. GEMS experience provides evidence of a useful and feasible practice for creating and scaling discussion around gender equality within school settings – the methodology, which involves students in self-reflection, has the potential to make a positive difference in attitudes and behaviours and foster gender equality and non-violence (Achyut et al., 2011). Following the success of the pilot phase in Mumbai, the Maharashtra state government has integrated key elements of GEMS in the school gender programme for all of its nearly 25,000 public schools (ICRW, 2015).

**Sensitisation of Police**

Police training and workshops on human rights have been common. There is evidence to support country-level and regional discourse and efforts to reform police recruitment and training practices to align efforts with human rights initiative in the region (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2007). However, similar initiatives seem missing for the military that is often charged with accusations of child abuse and sexual harassment of adolescent girls in many high conflict parts of the region. Also missing is a sustained effort to sensitive police and armed forces on specific issues of violence against children, the specific needs or children and age-appropriate practices of investigating young children affected by reported crimes or involved in criminal activity themselves. However, one-off examples of workshops can be found from almost all countries in the region: Workshops by UN and Government of Maldives in 2010 (US Department of State, 2011; Police Integrity Commission, Maldives, 2010), Establishment of Community Police Forums by Bangladesh Police and Asia Foundation in 2007 (Schiro, 2011), and child protection and gender sensitisation training of police by several state governments of India, and under law justice projects of Asia Foundation in Nepal (Asia Foundation, 2016).

Local NGOs play a critical role in designing training literature and modules for the police. Another modality through which organisations are increasing sensitive engagement of the police force with the issues of children is by organising community awareness campaigns with the police department. For example, in Maldives, ARC (Advocating the Rights of Children) is known to regularly conduct awareness building workshops with the Police for local parents and communities. Similarly, the Living Values Education’s *Hand in Hand* project is currently implementing a Safe Island Model project in cooperation with Maldives Police Services (Living Values Education, 2016).
Community Awareness Programmes

Global research has highlighted the relevance of community engagement in executing sustainable and effective prevention and response strategies to address school-based violence (Leach et al., 2013). However, in South Asia, programmes based on community participation as well as those mobilising community support are rare and ambiguously defined when it comes to addressing school-based violence. Most programmes address teachers and students within the physical vicinity of schools. There is some evidence of community mobilisation activities led by local NGOs under support of international organisations. However, the focus of these interventions lie mainly on violence against women, and gender-related issues.

Youth-led rights-based organisations have been emerging across the region but are limited in operations due to lack of monetary and logistical support. In Nepal, a recently established organisation Yuwalaya is working to bridge networks between different organisations working on youth and adolescent issues, including those run by youth and child clubs (Yuwalaya, 2013).

In India, Instituto Promundo and United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, along with local partner organisations - Grameen Vikas jan Sahbhagita Trust Jaunpur and Ujala Welfare Society - organised advocacy campaigns and community outreach programmes with more than 1500 men and youth (age 18-48) who were educated on the consequences of gender-based violence and prevention tools. Themes of masculinity, gender, violence against women and sexuality were central to the efforts. As a result of workshops, men self-reported doing their own washing and participating more equally in household responsibilities and boys self-reported advocating for their sisters’ right to an education. Participants developed individual plans to address the prevalence of violence against women in their own lives. Additionally, the group as a whole devised community education plans for their villages to educate their neighbours on these issues (Instituto Promundo, 2012).

Response and Support

As discussed earlier, it is oftentimes difficult to discern response programmes from prevention programmes given the cyclical relationship between the two. This section outlines some of the most common formats of programmes that mostly address situations in which the act of violence has already taken place.

Child Helplines

Data collected on violence and abuse cases from child helplines worldwide shows that violence and abuse has consistently been the number one reason across the board why children contact a child helpline. In fact, child helplines worldwide receive an average of ten contacts per day, every day, about violence and abuse (Plan International and Child Helpline International, 2011).
Almost all South Asian countries have operational complaint mechanisms such as child helplines\textsuperscript{26}. However, little is known about the relative effectiveness of this reporting mechanism and the its varied functions in South Asian countries. It has been ascertained from literature published by NGOs in countries where formal systems of data collection on violence against children are underdeveloped, data from Child Helplines forms the basis of most evidence-based claims on the prevalence of child abuse, common examples being publications by SPARC and Sahil in Pakistan, CWIN in Nepal, Aparajeyo in Bangladesh, etc. International literature on the effectiveness of helplines in responding to cases of abuse, and maintaining data on risk factors and prevalence points to the relevance of this response programme. However, no such evaluations of effectiveness of Child Helplines have been found in South Asian region. Additionally, little is known on the administrative competency of this programme in the region.

Child helplines have a strategically unique position in addressing issues of school-based violence. According to the 2011 Plan International study of Child Helpline International data and services, this programme responds to and addresses school-based violence in the following ways: (a) provide children a confidential means to reach out to a child protection service in real time, providing him/her to speak with someone in a safe and trustworthy environment, (b) in countries where children protection structures are well connected, the Child Helpline service provides children with direct interventions, shelter, mediation, and rehabilitation services to children who reach out for help, (c) provide counselling services to victims and when necessary, provide referrals and follow up services, and (e) collect a wealth of data on reported incidents that can be used to inform, influence, and create policies for child protection (Plan International and Child Helpline International, 2011). Table 11 provides a snapshot of the depth of information Child Helpline data can provide about risk factors associated with school-based violence. It reveals the scope of information that can be acquired from the database.

\textit{Hospital and medical care for child victims of physical, psychological and sexual abuse}

Hospitals and medical centres play a crucial role in providing treatment response to child victims of physical and sexual abuse. However, little is known about the procedures and protocols followed by medical institutions across the region. At the country level, in India, medical procedures and protocols to address abused children are not consistently practiced\textsuperscript{27}. There appears lack of evidence to support coordination between schools, police and medical facilities to comprehensively support cases of abuse. In rural contexts, unavailability of expert support from psychologists, social worker,

\textsuperscript{26} No information on child helpline available from Bhutan. According evidence dated September, 2008 there was no child helpline in Bhutan till then (OHCHR, 2008).

\textsuperscript{27} A widely acknowledged issue raised by most participants of this study.
trained medical experts, and sensitised police pose a further challenge to the implementation of advisory guidelines and protocols by the government and organisations like UNICEF and Child Helplines. Nevertheless, the irreplaceable role of hospitals and medical care, and the potential of this institution in effective response to children under violence is evident from cases where hospitals proactively support programmes for child abuse victims.

In Bangladesh, Dhaka Shishu (Children’s) Hospital has a child development centre and a psychosocial team which deals with a substantial number of cases where children have been sexually abused. Additionally, they provide drop-in therapy spaces for young adolescents and children with development and behavioural problems. The Hospital has had some staff members undergo training in counselling skills and has hired professional psychologists. The child protection and response team at the Hospital also produced educational materials and documentaries on issues of child sexual abuse and recommended series of responses for dissemination to other similar service providers (Slugget, 2003).

Table 11: Disaggregation of data collected from reports on school-based violence on Child Helplines in Sweden, Egypt, Zimbabwe, and Paraguay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Is the abuser?</th>
<th>Same age students</th>
<th>76.03% of the times in Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the victim?</td>
<td>School girl</td>
<td>63.84% in Sweden</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the victim?</td>
<td>School boy</td>
<td>62.73% in Egypt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls?</td>
<td>A school child</td>
<td>96.82% of the times in Sweden</td>
<td>An adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children seek support from?</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>41.35% of all times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHERE</td>
<td>This happened?</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>37.27% of all cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls?</td>
<td>Around the school</td>
<td>19.30% of all cases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT</td>
<td>Happened?</td>
<td>Criminal offences</td>
<td>Out of 481 calls, 109 criminal offences recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happened after?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>Affected one every 30 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>3 boys and 2 girls raped, 4 of them in Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal and emotional abuse</td>
<td>54.5% of all incidents collected through this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fight</td>
<td>4.55% of all incidents including 4 fights with knives in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitalisations</td>
<td>12 children ended up in hospital, 10 of them in Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear and anxiety</td>
<td>With more than one in three affected children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School performance</td>
<td>Was compromised in 11% of all cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Affected 5.81% of all cases in Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suicide thoughts</td>
<td>4.56% of victims have thought of killing themselves in Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>2.73% of victims in Egypt sexually abused someone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It happened again</td>
<td>For 13 out of 20 cases in Paraguay it was not the first episode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing!</td>
<td>Sweden showed 80.4% of underreporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We should do?</td>
<td>Tackle</td>
<td>Unsupervised “out-of-hours lessons” (as they explain 25.4% of cases of school violence in Egypt)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is widely acknowledged that the region, as a whole, needs to consider improving its structures of medical and psychological support to children under violence and conflict. Cross sectoral and organisational partnerships need to be fostered. For example, following the 2012 Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, a comprehensive law that applies to all cases of sexual assault on a child, UNICEF Indian and the Indian Medical Association (IMA) have been devising programmes to equip medical practitioners with a detailed understanding of diverse facets of child sexual abuse, along with relevant legal provisions. Medical practitioners are often the first point of contact in a child sexual abuse case, and are required to take prompt action to ensure immediate and effective treatment of the child. The programme aims to build a nation-wide cadre of doctor-trainers who can later disseminate the knowledge at different levels. Under the supervision of IMA state branches, these doctor-trainers will take the training forward to state and district levels (UNICEF, 2015b).

**Student Counselling Programmes**

This is a major area of programmatic gap in the region. There is no significant programmatic approach to provide school-based or community-based psychological counselling or mentorship support to victims of school based violence in South Asia. The region lacks trained psychologists and counsellors working in the field of school-based counselling, as well as university programmes that regularly train child counsellors and psychologists (Mitra and Yasmeen, 2010). While many elite urban schools have in-house psychologists and trained counsellors this provision is almost absent in most schools of the region. Most references to school-based counselling services pertain to academic counselling often provided by teachers who may or may not specialise in counselling skills.

Evidence can be found on the availability of some psychosocial support programmes in the region, however, most in response to cases of child sexual abuse. Notable examples include training programmes on psychological support in Nepal (CVICT) and Pakistan (Rozan and SACH). Bangladesh is house to numerous psychosocial support centres and services, however almost none supporting specifically to the issues of school-based violence in the country. These services may be located in NGOs for women’s empowerment, centres for rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked children and children in prostitution. As discussed previously, the Dhaka Children’s Hospital has
development centre and a psychosocial team which deals with cases where children have been sexually abused. The Centre for Training and Rehabilitation of Destitute Women (CTRDW) in Bangladesh provides shelter and day care for pregnant unmarried young girls and women, many of whom have been sexually abused and/or trafficked, and alienated from their families and communities (Slugget, 2003).

Peer support models in Pakistan (Dost Foundation) and Nepal (CWIN) are some of the rare examples from the region where one-on-one counselling support is facilitated between victims of childhood violations. However, such counselling sessions were reportedly seen as culturally inappropriate in Afghanistan, where sitting alone with a person while talking about ‘confidential’ matters was deemed suspicious (Slugget, 2003).

Reinforcement of Security Features of School Campuses

This is a specific response by schools and administrations to cases of attacks on schools (A World at School, 2015), as well as cases of abduction, sexual abuse and violence in schools (Mukherjee, 2013). The most recent case of such response can be seen in Pakistan where schools and government agencies are working together to reinforce security standards of their schools.

Box 10: Attacks on schools in Pakistan

Over the past four decades, Pakistan has experienced more attacks on education than any country in the world. Militants have destroyed thousands of school buildings, have taken the lives of hundreds of teachers and students and have denied the right to education to thousands more. In the past five years, more than 1,000 schools were destroyed in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which includes Peshawar. Between 2011 and 2012 there were 105 attacks on schools countrywide. In the wake of the tragic massacre that took the lives of over 130 innocent children and more than 10 teachers in Peshawar, Pakistan, which has been followed by additional attacks on education, an immediate scaled-up response is needed to protect schools, students and school personnel from attacks.

Several Pakistani provincial governments, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan, have already begun to direct educational institutions in districts across the country to take additional security measures. For example, the Punjab government has released a set of requirements for schools, including installing closed-circuit cameras, raising the boundary walls of schools to at least eight feet and topping the walls with razor before they reopen following the 2015 winter break. The new Punjab security guidelines, focused primarily on physical infrastructure and security, are to be implemented in three phases, with the first phase having concluded in January of 2015. Five security agencies, comprising a newly created special force, will collectively inspect the schools to gauge their compliance.

The case of Peshawar attack has triggered alarms in neighbouring countries including India, where state governments and education agencies have issued advisory notifications to schools to reinforce their security features (CBSE, 2014). Detailed guidelines have been devised to ensure that schools carry out drills to practice suggested responses in the case of a terrorist attack or hostage situation.
Accountability

A variety of strategies can be employed to improve accountability (UNGEI/UNESCO, 2015). Accountability measures to ensure the effectiveness of policies and programmes addressing violence against children must be reinforced by legal and policy frameworks at the national, state, district, and school levels, and by the government, international organisations, and local NGOs. Accountability structures require better evidence and robust and standard systems of measuring prevalence and impacts of violence. This area of programmatic intervention is seemingly quite weak and sparse in the region. Some indications of this scarcity are evident in the following claims established through the review of evidence in this report:

- Lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation components to programmes by the government or local and international NGOs
- An extremely underdeveloped state of data collection and management system focussing on issues of child abuse in the region
- Lack of accessible information on teachers’ code of conduct, and lack of stress on these codes during training and recruitment of teachers in schools
- Evidence on misuse of power and authority by legal enforcers of law and order, such as police and army personnel often charged with violation of human rights and child rights
- Limited role of school management committee and parent-teacher associations in school operations and decision making across the region
- Cultural acceptance of physical violence as a disciplining strategy

Ensuring accountability of all stakeholders to each other and towards children’s well-being must be a necessary dimension to all programmes and interventions addressing school violence. Lack of mechanisms that pointedly focus on strengthening monitoring and evaluation of programmes for children’s safety and well-being in schools was raised earlier as a significant weakness existing studies and interventions. The brevity of this section and the scarcity of examples to populate it with programmes from across the region is evident of a significant gap. It presents us with directions for further research and policy considerations.
References

A World at School. 2015. Safe Schools Initiative: Protecting the right to learn in Pakistan. Retrieved at http://b.3cdn.net/awas/17f0a8f0c750d6704c_mlbrgn5qs.pdf


Daily Record. 2015. “Acid attacks on the rise in Pakistan as women left disfigured and blinded for life in horrific assaults.” Retrieved from [http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/acid-attacks-rise-pakistan-women-5580535#PFL6wKBbLPz6rGB6.97](http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/acid-attacks-rise-pakistan-women-5580535#PFL6wKBbLPz6rGB6.97)


Human Rights Watch. 2014. *They say we are dirty: Denying education to India’s marginalized.* Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/04/22/they-say-were-dirty/denying-education-indias-marginalized


Appendix

A. Most Commonly Referenced Studies and Reviews in The Existing Literature

Some studies and reports have been repeatedly cited in different reviews of violence against children. Many of these papers have also been heavily referenced in this report:


B. Experts Contacted and Consulted for This Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>FORM OF CONTACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anees Jillani</td>
<td>Child rights lawyer, Founder of SPRAC, Islamabad</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Email and skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zohair Waheed</td>
<td>SPARC, Islamabad</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Email and skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rozan, Islamabad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Email and skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepak Purkaystha</td>
<td>Prajak, Kolkata</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Email and phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suchitra Rao</td>
<td>UNICEF, Bangalore</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>In person*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilal Bhat</td>
<td>UNICEF, Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>In person*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavina Rathore</td>
<td>Childline India Foundation, Rajasthan</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>In person*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neelam Singh</td>
<td>Independent child rights/protection consultant; current focus on cyberbullying</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>In person*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramrajya Joshi</td>
<td>CEDPA-Nepal, former affiliations with Plan International and Plan-Nepal</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*in person conversations at the UNICEF Working Group Meeting on Developing SOP for Safety and Security in Schools on November 27 and 28, 2015, in New Delhi.
Know Violence in Childhood