Summary of World Vision's Global Policy on Ending Violence in Schools

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Introduction

For many children schools are places where they feel valued, cared for and safe. But this is not a reality for all. In many school environments, girls and boys can be exposed to bullying, sexual, emotional and physical violence, such as corporal punishment.[1]. Globally, it is estimated that 246 million girls and boys experience school related violence every year. [2] Without the chance to learn in an environment free from violence, many children will lose the critical opportunities afforded by education and must forfeit the benefits it creates for them, as individuals, and for the society in which they live.

Underlying causes and factors that contribute to violence in and around schools:

- Gender inequalities in the school environment and classroom which can also be supported by curriculum materials;
- Cultural norms and traditional practices as well as religious or cultural ideologies;
- Fragile, conflict-affected and emergency contexts;
- Cultural taboos around sexuality, social stigma and shame associated with experiences of violence;
- Economic inequality contributes to the environment in which transactional sex for good grades or school fees is rampant in some contexts.

Global Policy Landscape

A host of existing and recent articles and initiatives have underpinned the right of children to study free of violence:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Articles 19, 28 and 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 4.8 and its inclusion in Education for All goals;
- the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children;
- The UN's Learning Without Fear decision (though 71 countries still condone or have not fully outlawed corporal punishment in schools.)

Solutions

The prevention of violence in schools is possible, not least through universal, school-based prevention programmes that can significantly lower rates of aggression and violent behaviour. Comprehensive responses to the issue of school violence focus on a holistic, whole-school approach that includes the following elements:
1. Life skills education forced on managing risks, peaceful resolution of conflicts and transforming gender roles and norms for boys and girls, as well as including girls and boys in student councils and decision making bodies at school.

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[1] Some 689 million in primary schools and 513 million in secondary schools. UNICEF, Manual. Child Friendly Schools, p. 19
[2] UNESCO. *Global Guidance: School Related Gender Based Violence*. December, 2016

2. Improving teacher practice through the provision of training in non-violent, positive discipline approaches and gender-transformative teaching and learning.
3. Improving school policies and the implementation of these policies to create a safe environment for children, and mechanisms for reporting and responding to abuse.
4. Working with communities and parents to improve accountability of schools and the school environment.
5. Strengthening government systems to foster an enabling environment that is accountable to protect all students from violence.

This means strengthening the capacity of the education and protection sectors to prevent and respond to the risk of school violence, and creating the conditions for success in schools and communities. It also means linking with other sector work such as health, economic development, social welfare, gender and advocacy efforts that can contribute to the creation of safe and nurturing schools. A holistic approach to school related violence requires multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnering with governments, the private sector, as well as other associated civil society groups and local communities.

To end violence in and around education establishments World Vision calls on:

- **Governments** to prohibit all forms of violence against children; invest in measures to ensure safe school environment; strengthen reporting on violence against schoolchildren and conduct awareness-raising campaigns to change attitudes and norms that condone and perpetuate violence against children.
- **Ministries of Education** to develop specific programmes to help children to better address and resolve potential violent incidents; ensure teachers' professional standards/codes of conduct to prioritise child protection; invest in qualified teachers, train them to understand how to spot and address violence early, and ensure police background checks; promote and reward safe schools; ensure sufficient budget to address violence in schools.
- **Local school authorities and schools** to developing codes of conduct, protection policies and reporting mechanisms; establish relationships with other local actors invested in ending violence against children; integrate programmes that build children's and teachers' abilities and awareness of the threats and solutions to violence; encourage children to be active participants in keeping their school violence-free.
- **Religious schools and faith leaders to** embrace and comply with national policies and laws that prohibit violence in school settings including development of child protection policies and mechanisms in schools; support and join efforts to change harmful cultural attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against children in schools.
- **All stakeholders** to advocate for the end of violence against children in all settings by 2030; support efforts at school and in the community to do that; invest in mechanisms to encourage quality education; advocate for inclusion of specific goals on violence free schools in the Education for All and other global education partnerships.