

Suffering to succeed?

Violence and abuse in schools in Togo



Plan
Be a part of it.

Thanks

Plan Togo would like to thank all those who have contributed to making this publication a reality:

children for speaking up and trusting us enough to share their experiences, opinions, hopes and fears;

parents and teachers for talking to us, spending precious time answering questions and in discussions – time they could have used to pursue their struggle to make ends meet;

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Introduction

Violence against children in school is a feature of the ‘everyday violence’ that violates children’s human rights and causes them to suffer. The independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, told the General Assembly in October 2005 that “everyday violence against children must be named as violence and recognised as a threat to national development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”.¹

Precisely what children suffer in schools, and the reasons why they are subjected to violence there, need to be understood if their rights are to be protected and realised effectively. As participants in the West and Central African consultation for the UN study in May 2005 commented, “the available information on violence in school is inadequate ... and it is now imperative to improve knowledge on the extent and causes of this phenomenon”.²

This booklet brings together the results of a programme of research Plan has conducted on violence and abuse in schools in Togo. Through its engagement with communities in Togo, its close cooperation with children’s and youth groups in and out of school, and its long experience in reducing child poverty and improving education, Plan has over the years accumulated much anecdotal evidence of the forms of violence and abuse children experience in schools. During consultations with children carried out to inform Plan Togo’s country programming, children themselves identified action to reduce abuse and violence as one of their priorities.

From mid-2005, as part of its new country programme, Plan Togo commissioned five specific pieces of research whose findings form the basis for this booklet :

- Enquête Sur la Violence et la Scolarisation dans les Préfectures de Tchoudjo et de Tchamba³; a study conducted with Plan by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), within the framework of a large girls’ education project supported by Comic Relief and the government of Finland. This study involved interviews with a 1,000 schoolchildren in 35 villages, plus further interviews with more than 500 mothers of school-age children, teachers, traditional chiefs, members of the security services, social workers, and others
- Case Study on Violence and Abuse in Togolese Schools⁴; 19 first-person narratives and observations from among a large number of interviews with children, parents and teachers collected by research teams in seven villages and two towns during November 2005; selected and presented by Dr MABOUDOU Akouavi
- Analyse de la Problématique d’Abus Sexual sur l’Enfant en Milieu Scolaire au Togo⁵, by Professor AMENYEDZI Anani and Judge KOUNTE Koffi; an investigation of the degree to which Togolese law and law-enforcement institutions protect children against sexual abuse, or fail to do so
- Violence en Milieu Scolaire: Etude de cas à travers le phénomène de l’émergence et du fonctionnement des écoles d’initiatives locales du Canton d’Ataloté (Togo)⁶; an in-depth investigation by PASSINDA Kodjo Tapetlou and HOUINATO Bell’Aube of how violence against children occurs in schools set up by local community initiative in one area of Togo
- Basic Education in Togo: Educating for Violence, Conflict or Peace?⁷, a discussion by GBESSO Assouan of structural violence in the education system in Togo

1 Statement by the Independent Expert, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, at the Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly, United Nations Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children, 14 October 2005.
2 Report on West and Central Africa Regional Consultation, held in Bamako, Mali, 24–25 May 2005, United Nations Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children.

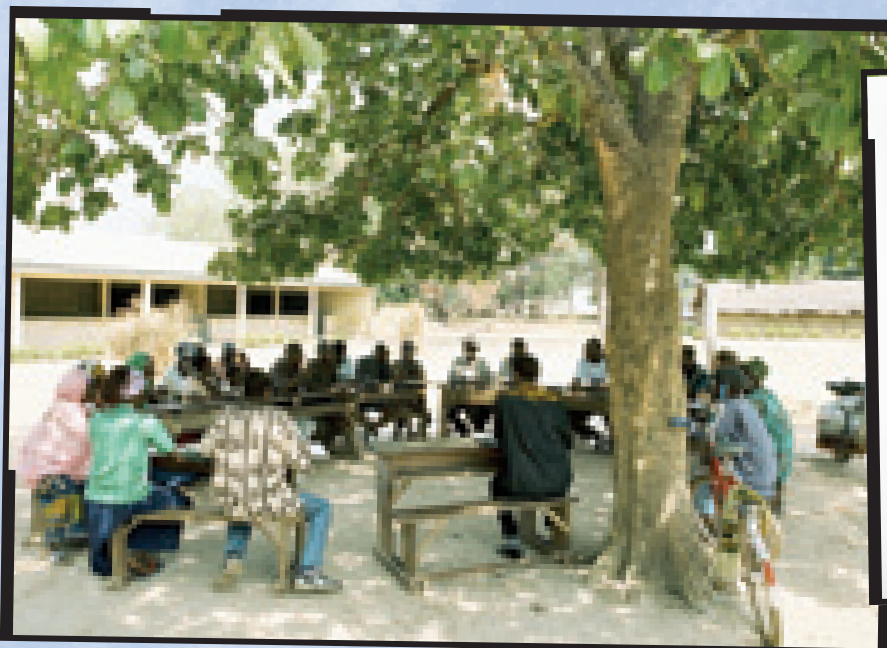
3 FAWE–Togo and Plan Togo, Lomé, November 2005.
4 Plan Togo, Lomé, January 2006.
5 Plan Togo, Lomé, November 2005.
6 Plan Togo, Lomé, December 2005.
7 Plan Togo, Lomé, December 2005.

These studies enable Plan and our partners for the first time to describe, and therefore address, the real scale of the problem in Togo. FAWE interviewed children in their last three years of primary school. Eighty-eight per cent of the girls, and 87 per cent of the boys, reported having experienced physical violence at school. Fifty-two per cent of girls, and 48 per cent of boys, reported threatening behaviour or psychological violence ('violences morales') at school, and 4.1 per cent of girls – that's around 31 girls from FAWE's group of 750 female school students – reported having suffered sexual violence at school.

These figures are shocking, but violence against children in schools occurs in a broad social context that tolerates and very often encourages it. Professor Amenyedzi's and Judge Kounte's research demonstrates how rarely sexual violence against girls in school finds its way into the courts. Lawyers they interviewed say parents don't bring charges; teachers told them cases rarely go outside the school: 'professional solidarity' among teachers ensures pressure is put on the girl to keep quiet, and the matter dies. A patriarchal esprit de corps among teachers is inevitable when only 12 per cent of teachers in primary schools, and 7 per cent of teachers in secondary schools, are women.⁸

Gender discrimination and gender violence blight the lives of girls; poverty blights the lives of everyone. Eleven-year-old Félix⁹ has had to leave school because of it: "When the teacher insulted my father and refused to discuss the school fees", he says, "I knew I had to go back to working in the fields. I was cross; I cried; I felt miserable all the time; and I had no one who would listen to me or could help me."¹⁰

Understanding the social context of violence in schools is essential for developing efficient responses. The content of this booklet is shaped in part by the observations of the principal writer, whose research trip early in January 2006 provided the opportunity for further discussion with children, teachers, parents, government officials, and workers in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Plan's own staff. The publication describes the main forms of violence against children in schools: corporal punishment; forced labour; sexual harassment and sexual violence; and attempts to provide some understanding of the social framework within which such violence appears 'normal' and 'everyday'. Most importantly, it also suggests routes towards change.



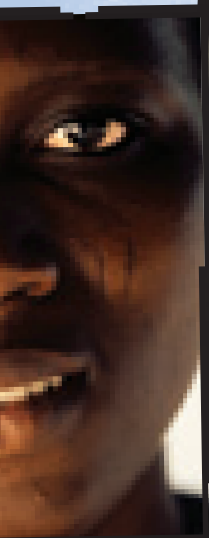
'Sexually transmitted marks'

One of the consequences of the proliferation of violence in Togolese schools is that there appears to be a crisis of confidence in the education system among schoolchildren themselves, certainly in the areas when Plan Togo conducted its research. None of the secondary schoolchildren we interviewed, from at least four schools, believes that the marks they receive at the end of term or end of year reflect the work they have done. There is a widespread belief that marks are the result of a series of trade-offs, mostly forced and unwanted, between pupil and teacher, which mean you pass or fail because:

- you've agreed to have sex with the teacher, or you've refused
- you've worked in the teacher's fields, or you haven't
- you've offered money and gifts to the teacher, or you haven't
- you're a boy who's regarded by a male teacher as a competitor for a certain girl, so you're marked down – or believe you're marked down

Plan Togo has discovered that the expression 'notes sexuellement transmissibles' (sexually transmitted marks) is in widespread use in secondary schools. It's a subtle play on words, but what it conveys is the conviction of secondary school students that success at school has very little to do with how clever or hard-working you are. And that suggests a complete lack of faith in teachers and in the education system as a whole.

Challenging violence against children in the school context is an immensely complex issue. It would be impossible for an NGO like Plan to address it in isolation. Plan's intention in producing this booklet is to encourage a process of dialogue amongst everybody involved: government bodies, teachers, parents' associations, schoolchildren themselves. We believe solutions need to be found at many different levels, and our goal is to help empower all the actors involved – especially schoolchildren – to formulate remedies and find the means to implement them.



Definitions and terms

A child:

A child means every human being below the age of 18 years. National law and guidance or local customs may be based on different definitions or notions of childhood and adulthood, but the standard for Plan is that children should receive equal protection as far as possible, regardless of local age limits.

Child abuse:

Child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately caused to a child. The following World Health Organization (WHO) definition provides clarification:

Child abuse and neglect, sometimes also referred to as child maltreatment, is defined as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Within the broad definition of child maltreatment, five subtypes are distinguished: these are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, emotional abuse, and exploitation.¹¹ (For further detail and information on these categories, please see Annexe 1.)

A note on the school system in Togo and the language of this report

Children do six years of primary school, split as follows: two years of Cours Préparatoire, two years of Cours Élémentaire, two years of Cours Moyen. In the research reports cited in this publication, pupils are described as being in CM2, CP1, and so on. For the purposes of this publication, we talk simply about primary school.

Secondary schooling takes place in two institutions: a collège, where students do four years; then a lycée, where students prepare for the baccalauréat. Because in the English-speaking world 'college' conveys a tertiary institution, in this publication we use the term 'secondary school' to cover both collège and lycée.

Corporal punishment in schools

“I use the baton in my classes, and I notice that it helps the children with their lessons – keeps them lively.”

Primary school teacher¹²

“If the teacher hits me, everything immediately goes from my head. Even if I had lots of ideas before, the moment he hits me, I lose everything – I can’t think.”

Primary school student

In Togo, where 60 per cent of the population is under the age of 18, education matters a great deal to children – particularly when they’re excluded from it. Here’s Félix, from a village near the town of Atakpamé; 11 years old, and still longing to go to school: “I want to learn to read and write French, and learn a trade: I want to become a master tailor.” And 18-year-old Angèle, describing how she felt when she started primary school many years previously: “I was overjoyed, because I so much wanted to learn French.”

But early on in her school career, something happened to Angèle that happens to nearly every schoolchild in Togo: she was beaten by her teacher. “I began to understand that going to school meant I was going to be beaten. I resigned myself to it. I said, well, if I want to learn French, this is the price I have to pay. But I felt anxious in class, and that made it hard to learn.”¹³

Teachers beat schoolchildren with a cane – un baton; or a strip of rubber cut from a car tyre – un caoutchouc; or a whip – un fouet. They beat on the hands, or the tips of children’s fingers, or their buttocks, or their backs. Just the threat of being beaten can make children scared and incapable. A little girl told Plan Togo: “When I see the stick, I want to cry. I tremble in front of the teacher.” Plan Togo has met children and adults who left school because they couldn’t stand the pain and humiliation. FAWE say 15 of the 250 boys they interviewed, and 67 of the 750 girls, wanted to stop going to school because of the violence they were experiencing.¹⁴

Is it government policy to allow teachers to beat their students? It is not. Over 25 years ago, in 1980, the Ministry of Education issued a decree prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in schools. And 15 years ago, the government of Togo was amongst the earliest in the world to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, committing itself to protect children “from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse”, and to ensure discipline in schools was exercised “in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity”.

But the effect of Togo’s economic difficulties on the education system over the past few decades has been to put the vast majority of primary school children in the hands of untrained and often unpaid, mostly male teachers, who believe, along with the rest of society, that beating children does them good. The same economic difficulties mean there are too few inspectors to monitor what’s going on. One regional director of education says: “The problem is that headmasters don’t tell us their teachers are beating students. They prefer to stifle the matter within the school, so our inspectors don’t even hear about it. Unless parents or pupils come to us, we’ll never know.”¹⁵

Over and over again, children say the effect on them of being beaten, or of their fear of being beaten, is to make it impossible for them to concentrate on their lessons: “I just want to hide”, says one little girl. “When the teacher stands next to me with the stick, everything I know disappears”, says another. A boy in Koboyo told Plan Togo: “From the moment [a particular teacher] steps into the room, I feel anxious.”

12 Interviewed in Silence! On Frappe ... [Quiet please! I'm busy beating someone ...], video film, 16 minutes, produced by Plan Togo, August 2005.

13 Discussion with Plan Togo, 10 January 2006.

14 FAWE–Togo, *ibid.*

15 Discussion with Plan Togo, 11 January 2006.



“If you have people working with you in your fields, and you keep beating them, will the work get done? It will not. It’s the same for children in school – they can’t learn if they’re being beaten.”

OUIBOSSI Bourayima
Peasant farmer

What many children say is most frightening about the beatings they receive at school is that they aren’t aware of having done anything to provoke the punishment. While research suggests that younger children especially often do not remember why they’ve been hit, Plan Togo’s research found that even secondary school students frequently do not understand the reasons for the punishment. A secondary school girl in Sotouboua said: “Teachers beat you when you’ve done nothing wrong. You get scared, and withdraw into yourself – you don’t participate in the class any more.”¹⁶

How can such feelings of anxiety be justified, or regarded as helpful, on educational or human rights grounds? The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the treaty body that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, says: “Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates.”

The problem in Togo is that for many children, whether they’re inside the school gates or in the alleged safety of their homes, the threat of beating is the same. During their research in July 2005 FAWÉ asked 250 boy students and 750 girl students in their last years of primary school in Central region to say whether or not they’d been beaten at home in the previous month. One in four boys, and nearly one in three girls, reported having been beaten at home, either often, or very often, in the month preceding the enquiry.¹⁷

The idea that hitting children is good for them is deep-rooted in Togolese society. Here, for example, is the administrator of Catholic schools in Anfoin, assuring a Plan Togo film crew in August 2005 that “[beating] helps the pupil to study ... I remember certain beatings I received at school, and they helped me take my lessons more seriously”.¹⁸

“I was badly beaten when I was at school. When I became a father, I realised beating my children didn’t help them develop. I keep suggesting to our headmaster that it would be better not to beat the children.”

Chief Jannoh Abaliya



Teachers themselves argue they are under pressure from parents to beat children. In a village near Sokodé, teachers in the primary school told a Plan Togo team they had stopped using corporal punishment, but that as a result, they were being insulted by the parents: “They say, you obviously don’t know your job. What kind of a teacher doesn’t beat his pupils?”

Many parents believe the beatings teachers give are more effective. One proud mother, interviewed with her daughter standing behind her, told the Plan Togo film crew that “the child must be well beaten at school because she’s getting more and more undisciplined and she doesn’t listen to anybody ... She wouldn’t have got her [primary school leaving certificate] without being beaten. I don’t object at all to teachers beating children”.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child: an absolute ‘no’ to corporal punishment in schools

All of this social support for corporal punishment flies in the face of the government’s commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the government of Togo ratified in October 1990 – the 19th state in the world to do so. Ratifying the Convention obliges a government to enact the rights it defines in domestic law and punish their contravention through the domestic courts.

Under Article 19, the government is required to take “all appropriate ... measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse”.

Article 28 requires the government to “take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity”.

Under Article 37, the government is required to ensure that “no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.

All of these articles have a strong bearing on what happens to children in school. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the implementation of the Convention, has twice commented on the persistence of corporal punishment in Togo since the government ratified the Convention.

In October 1997, the Committee said: “The Committee is concerned at the fact that corporal punishment is a common practice in the family, in schools and in other institutions ... In the light of [the Convention], the Committee recommends that corporal punishment be explicitly prohibited by law”.¹⁹

Over seven years later, in January 2005, the Committee observed that nothing had changed: The Committee is deeply concerned that corporal punishment of children remains legally and socially accepted, and consequently is common in families and schools...

¹⁹ Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Togo, CRC/C/15/Add.83, paras. 17 and 40, 21 October 1997.

The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Adopt a law effectively prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children in the family, in schools ... and in the community;
- (b) Take effective measures to prohibit the use of violence against children, including corporal punishment, by parents, teachers and other caregivers;
- (c) Undertake well-targeted public awareness campaigns on the negative impact of corporal punishment on children, and provide teachers and parents with training on non-violent forms of discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment.²⁰

(For further discussion of the Convention, children's and human rights and education, please see Annexe 2.)

Aren't teachers being trained to use non-violent methods?

Social and parental support for corporal punishment in schools in part explains why it persists. But teachers are in theory exposed to more progressive ideas during the course of their training – including the concept of children's rights – and might therefore be expected to lead society in using non-violent methods of discipline.

The persistence of corporal punishment in schools reflects the impact on the education system in Togo of two major sets of economic interventions: on the one hand, the Structural Adjustment Programme, sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which started in 1984, and on the other, European Union economic sanctions against Togo, which began in 1993.

Under Structural Adjustment, recruitment to the civil service was frozen. This meant teachers were not recruited – at a time when the school-going population was increasing by 3 per cent per year – and teacher training institutions were closed. The World Bank reported subsequently: "Recruiting auxiliary teachers was the solution used to satisfy the need for more teachers without breaking the public wage bill constraint."²¹

In other words, untrained persons were brought into schools to teach children, and the phenomenon continues. Government figures show that while in 1990, 76 per cent of teachers working in Togolese schools were qualified, 12 years later, in 2002, that figure had gone down to just under 33 per cent.²²

Some 77 per cent of all teachers working in Togo's schools today have no professional qualification and have received absolutely no training as teachers, a situation the government describes as 'very alarming'.²³

Quite how devastating the behaviour of some untrained teachers can be is demonstrated in the following story, from a 9-year-old girl in a public primary school in Sokodé. The 'teacher' concerned turned out to have had no training and was not even an official employee of the education department, having reportedly been brought into the school unofficially by the headmaster:

It was a Tuesday evening in 2005. The teacher asked a question; I replied; he asked the class if my answer was correct. Some said 'no' and some said 'yes' ... He gave me the rubber whip, and asked me to hit those who'd said 'no'. I hit them, but because we're all classmates, I didn't hit them hard. The teacher took the whip from me and asked me if that's how one hits somebody. Then he hit me and beat me on my back until I was bleeding. My clothes were wet with blood and I was crying. ...When I told my mother, she didn't say anything, not even that she would go and see the teacher. I didn't tell my father because I'm frightened of him.²⁴

20 Ibid, Add.255, paras. 38 and 39, 28 January 2005.

21 Report No. 21410, Togo Country Assistance Evaluation, Operations Evaluation Department, World Bank, 20 November 2000.

22 Le Développement de l'Éducation: Rapport National du Togo sur les enseignements primaire et secondaire, prepared for the 47th session of

the International Conference on Education by the Ministère togolais des enseignements primaire et secondaire, August 2004.

23 Le Développement de l'Éducation, ibid.

24 Case Study on Violence and Abuse, ibid.

It's not only the absence of teacher training that's relevant here. Plan Togo has established that only 31 per cent of all primary school teachers are official employees of the government, on the government payroll. The rest – like the man who beat the 9-year-old girl – are employed unofficially by heads of schools, or they're volunteers, or they work in one of the many private, sometimes unregulated schools that have been springing up in Togo's towns and villages.

Until the 1980s, Togo had the highest literacy rate on the continent, and the majority of parents and children still see education as a positive value. With massively reduced government spending on schools, a number of other initiatives have developed:

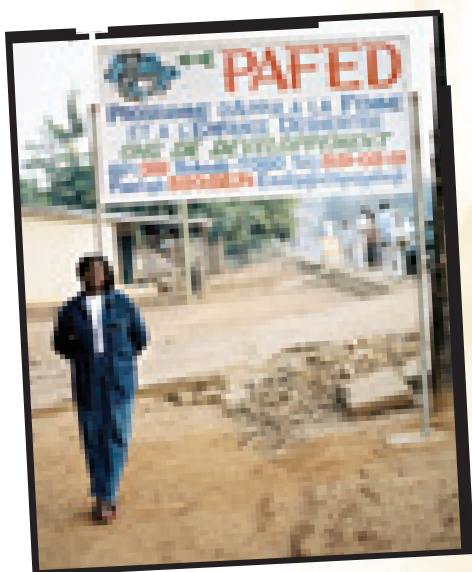
- Ecoles d'Initiative Locale (EDILs) – local community schools — established particularly in the rural areas, where over 60 per cent of the population lives.²⁵ Plan Togo has found that less than 7 per cent of the teachers in these schools are trained
- expensive private schools in towns and cities, where the constraint on teachers' behaviour comes reportedly from middle-class parents' unwillingness to pay large sums of money for their children to be beaten
- completely unofficial schools – what one observer calls 'ghost schools' – set up by a retired teacher in a village in order to make money, because he knows parents will pay; these private schools are rarely inspected, and the education authorities sometimes don't even know they exist

In this unregulated marketplace, where children are being taught by unqualified people in schools which are rarely, if ever, subject to inspection, the potential for abuse is enormous. The vast majority of children, in primary school in rural areas, face physical violence, or the threat of physical violence, every day of their school lives.

The government reviewed the state of education in March 2002, and described:

Complete anarchy in the creation of educational establishments, recruitment of inappropriate people as teachers by the public sector and communities, absence of effective authority in schools and conflicts among teachers, a squandering of the skills of trained people, NGOs taking on responsibilities beyond their abilities.²⁶

It was imperative, said the Ministry of Education in 2004, for the State to take effective control, and one of the urgent needs was to resume teacher training, "the beneficial effects of which are unarguable".²⁷



Testimony of a teacher from Koma II primary school in Sokodé:

"I've just started to understand that corporal punishment is violence against children, and that we can find other ways of disciplining them ... I did some training [with an NGO] in July 2005, and I began to understand that children aren't adults, that they have different priorities, and that one has to be gentle with them ... I must admit I haven't been able to make any changes in the school yet, but I did explain to one parent that beating his child was violence, and against his rights, and I've been talking to my colleagues individually to try and get them to think differently about corporal punishment."²⁸

25 See www.unicef.org/infobycountry/togo_statistics.html
26 Le Développement de l'Éducation, *ibid.*

27 Le Développement de l'Éducation, *ibid.*
28 Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

“We can see that our training workshops have helped many teachers develop their understanding. Most of the teachers who cause trouble are those who are illegally recruited by schools, and only get paid when the school has funds.”²⁹

GNOFAM Françoise Mayi, Director, Programme Appui à la Femme et à l’Enfance Déshéritée (PAFED)

The Children’s Code: Togolese children call for corporal punishment to be banned in school

In the late 1990s, the Togolese government began to develop a new Children’s Code, to give force in domestic law to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which entered into force in November 1999. The proposed Code, 90 pages long and comprising 465 articles, was tabled in November 2001; it did not include a prohibition of corporal punishment. As of today, the Children’s Code has not been approved; however, a final revised proposal has been submitted.

In November 2005, Plan facilitated a series of workshops with children and young people from across the country to discuss the Children’s Code. After discussion, the children involved issued a strong call for the Code explicitly to outlaw corporal punishment in schools:

We want there to be an article which forbids the use of the baton and all corporal punishment in all schools, because [corporal punishment]

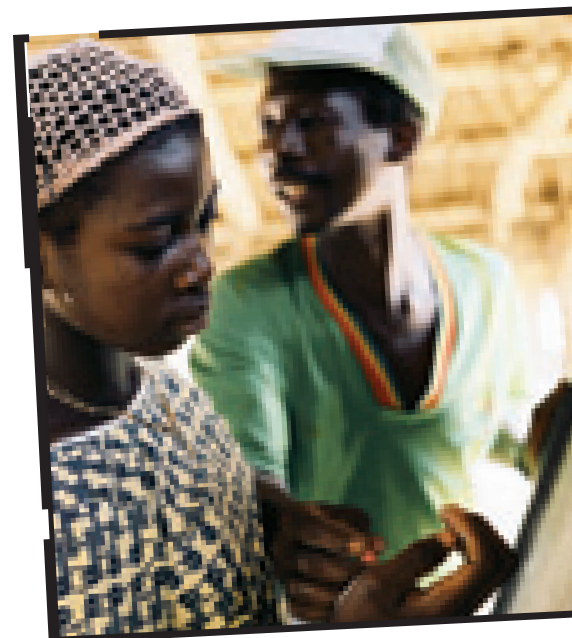
- causes psychological disturbance to children
- some children cannot concentrate on the lesson from the moment they see the cane
- the cane intimidates children and prevents them speaking in class
- ending corporal punishment will stop children running away from school
- ending corporal punishment will help stop children becoming delinquent.³⁰

The children propose a series of alternative punishments which do not have such severe consequences for children: manual work (but they are careful to make clear they mean keeping the schoolyard clean, not the forced labour in teachers’ fields to which many children are subjected: see the next section); writing ‘lines’; conjugating verbs; or having to come to school early to sweep out the classroom. They spell out that these alternative punishments need to take place outside class-time, “because the child who is being punished misses classes, and that doesn’t contribute to his or her success”.

Some adults may continue to insist that beating does you good. But ask children, who are under daily threat of it, whether or not beating helps their education, and they say ‘no’.

“One day in class, one of our colleagues was at the blackboard, and the teacher hit him. We all shouted, and the teacher stopped. We know what we want from school, and we don’t need to be beaten to make us understand.”

F, 18 years old; preparing her baccalauréat;
determined to be an advocate



The impact of abuse and violence on children's education

The physical impact of severe violence and abuse on children and its consequences for children's school performance can easily be understood: a child suffering physical injury from violence will miss school, and if the injuries have been severe might even be forced to drop out of school altogether (in the case of disability resulting from violence). Pregnancies resulting from sexual abuse at school equally force many adolescent girls out of school – as do sexually transmittable diseases, including AIDS.

Labour exploitation, such as in teachers' fields, reduces children's time to study, and, if the labour is exploitive, weakens their overall physical (and mental) health. Hazardous work for teachers creates immediate health risks, and Plan Togo's case studies include cases as severe as death through snake-bite in a teacher's fields.

The research conducted by Plan provides evidence that the above is understood and often criticised by parents and teachers. There is, however, clear evidence that the psychological impact of abuse on children at school (or at family level) is far from being understood by parents and teachers.

Abuse of children can have a wide range of psychological effects. The short-term impact can include symptoms such as fear, lack of concentration, flashbacks, phobias, anger; long-term consequences include psychological problems such as anxiety or depression, psychosomatic symptoms such as unexplainable illnesses, suicide, delinquency, and further victimisation. It is evident that the short- and long-term impact of abuse and violence have direct consequences on children's ability to perform at school. A drop in school performance is one indicator commonly used by social workers to indicate potential abuse.

While corporal punishment at school certainly has some impact on children's immediate compliance with what is expected from them in the classroom, it is not necessarily more effective than other methods. On the contrary: it makes children less receptive to other forms of disciplinary measures and more and more hardened to violence. Members of a parent committee told Plan Togo: "We have to beat more and more, but it helps less and less."

In addition, far from enabling children to do well and succeed at school, there is evidence that violence encourages school drop out. In research carried out by Save the Children, violence was one of the most frequently cited reasons for early drop out, alongside gender discrimination and poverty. The same source states:

Even less severe forms of corporal punishment damage children's education. Children learn through exploring, questioning, trying things out; they need the freedom to experiment, to think for themselves, to take risks. Where discipline is maintained through fear, all these preconditions for successful learning are lost.³¹



31 Ending Corporal Punishment of Children: Making it Happen, Save the Children, London, 2001

'If we don't work in the teacher's fields, we're beaten':

Schoolchildren and manual work during school hours

In schools throughout Togo, it is common practice for teachers to get primary and secondary school children to do manual work during school hours. Some work happens every day: FAWE discovered that 98 per cent of the primary school girls and 92 per cent of the boys in their survey were involved in sweeping the school. Fetching water is another daily task, that devolves more on girls than on boys (nearly 78 per cent of girls versus 49 per cent of boys in FAWE's study).³²

However, manual work at school goes far beyond keeping the school grounds tidy: children also work in teachers' fields. Agricultural labour is meant to happen only on a Friday, and any revenue derived from the children's work is meant either to be ploughed into teaching materials – chalk, paper, books (which all schools in Togo lack, since the State is no longer able to supply them) – or to go towards sustaining auxiliary teachers, with the agreement of parents. The system is open to abuse, and children complain:

"I'm a 12-year-old boy, and often in our school, the teacher puts us – particularly the bigger children – on a list to work in his house or in his fields. He calls the names, and anyone who's missing gets beaten."

"Last year, when I was 16, the teacher asked us to work in his field. It was more than 4 kilometres away, and we'd be there from early morning until 1.30pm. We were so tired we couldn't concentrate in class afterwards. I wanted to rebel, but I was frightened. I didn't want to work for him, but if we hadn't done it, we'd have been beaten."

"I'm 18 now, and I left school three years ago, because the teacher kept sending us older pupils to work in his fields. If you refused, he'd hit you badly, and ignore you in class ... His wife, or the headmaster's wife, used to come into the classroom and pick out the girls they wanted to have wash their clothes or their dishes or cook their meals ... I got to the point where I didn't know if I was a student, or the teachers' servant. I couldn't keep up with the class, and at the end of the year, I failed."³³

All the children Plan Togo has spoken to are opposed to the practice of doing manual work for the teachers. They consider that they don't go to school to do agricultural work: they can do that at home, and save their parents the school fees. Many children don't have schoolbooks, and the teaching they get is from teachers in the classroom. If they're in the fields, they can never recover the classes they lose. Children also suffer physically from the work itself, and they object to being blackmailed by the threat of beatings or bad marks if they don't go to the teacher's fields. These children are being exploited, according to the WHO definition of the term (see Annexe 1), and they feel it: "Sometimes the teachers and the headmaster ask us to go and work in other people's fields, and they keep the money they make for themselves."³⁴

Yet for many teachers, getting children to work for them makes perfect sense in the circumstances. In the primary school of a village near Sokodé, teachers who are on the government pay-roll complained to Plan Togo that they're frequently paid months in arrears (when Plan Togo met these teachers, in January 2006, they were waiting for their December 2005 pay-check, but they explained that this was nothing: salaries are frequently months in arrears. "We don't teach with any joy", said one of the teachers. "We're always

³² FAWE–Togo, *ibid.*

³³ All from Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

³⁴ Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

in a state of anxiety.”). They said they had no teaching materials, and that parents were too poor to contribute anything in addition to the fees (which in any case the parents often couldn’t afford). The teachers said the pupils had to do manual work to generate income.

One of the teachers complained that the children presently in the school were too small to do the sort of heavy work that would generate better revenues. Nonetheless, the list of work their pupils are involved in is considerable:

- harvesting of cotton
- making bricks
- recovering sand from the river-bed for making cement
- collecting wood for sale
- fetching water

Obviously not all of the work is being done all of the time – cotton can only be harvested when it’s ready; bricks have to be left to dry; people only need cement when they’re building; and so on. “We take the children out [to work] when there’s a demand”, said the teachers. Work for teachers happens in the mornings, because in the evenings, the children have to work for their parents.

These revenue-generating activities are apart from the daily task of fetching water, for school use and for use in the teachers’ houses, which is done by the girls in the school. The teachers in the school near Sokodé reported that the well in their village is slow to fill, and it usually takes the girls a long time to draw water – during which time, of course, they are missing classes.

These teachers conveyed that all the physical work their pupils do makes sense in the circumstances, if the school is to survive. Students don’t see it that way. A 19-year-old young woman from the same village, interviewed on a separate occasion, said: “In the middle of class they’d call me out to fetch water, find wood or wash clothes for the teacher’s wife. When the teacher or the headmaster sent us to their fields, they’d only let us go home late in the evening. They knew we were hungry and thirsty, but they said nothing. Finally my parents decided to withdraw me from school.”³⁵

The teachers laughed at the ‘tricks’ some children resort to just to avoid doing the regular Friday manual work. “From Thursday afternoon, they pretend to be sick”, said the headmaster. “They’re idle, some of them.”³⁶ But pretending to be sick means children miss even more of their classes.

Children who suffer from doing heavy manual work during school hours often complain that their parents are not strong enough to confront the teachers; the young woman who preferred to leave school at 15 rather than carry on working for the teachers says of her parents: “They didn’t say anything; they were frightened the teacher would get angry with them, and so they left me alone to face all the exploitation, the insults, the beating and the humiliation.” Another young woman says: “Our parents get really fed up seeing their children being exploited, but they’re frightened to do anything about it.”³⁷

Secondary school students: trading labour for marks

In primary school, children have no choice – they work for the teacher, or they’re beaten. In secondary school, working for the teacher becomes interwoven with the trade for marks. In Sotouboua, a young woman preparing for her baccalauréat (matriculation) told Plan Togo one of the ways it works. A teacher would spring an impromptu test (‘interrogatoire flash’) on the class. You would score a zero. The teacher would then tell you there was a way to ‘sort things out’: it involved working in his fields. You might work in his fields and find yourself still with a zero. It would then emerge that there was something else you could do to get yourself out of trouble, if you were a girl: you could visit him in his home.

35 Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

36 Discussion with Plan Togo team, 11 January 2006.

37 Both in Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

At every stage of this story, told in front of a roomful of adolescent girls, there was a great deal of laughter. Everybody recognised the scenario. And they laughed again when someone else said it was common for students who ‘volunteered’ to work in the teacher’s fields to get good marks: everyone, she said, finally ‘volunteered’.

The issue of children doing what amounts to forced labour in school hours and for teachers is a sensitive one for the government of Togo, in light of its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In January 2005, a representative of the government told the Committee on the Rights of the Child that “although some children worked in schools, that practice was not widespread. As part of the school curriculum, children sometimes were taught manual work. The few teachers who had made children work for them had been punished. The Government had conducted a campaign in schools to put an end to that practice”.³⁸

But Plan Togo’s research has established that the practice continues, and is widespread – at least in the parts of the country Plan’s research was carried out. Working for the teacher even has its own slang; students say of their fellows that “they’re away doing their oral exam” (“ils sont partis à l’oral”) when they’ve been taken off to work in the teacher’s fields. And students talk about champs-points – marks you get because you’ve worked in the teacher’s fields (les champs).

At the heart of the issue of the exploitation of students’ labour by teachers are the neglect and low status of teachers. Many teachers who are on the government’s pay-roll feel resentful that they are not paid well or on time. But some of the teachers in Togo’s schools are not on the government pay-roll, have no professional training, and may not have much in the way of professional pride. In the absence of substantial government investment in teachers’ training, or any government campaign to raise the morale of teachers, some people in teaching positions, both official and voluntary, manipulate what power they have – over students and their parents – to gain something for themselves. This phenomenon replicates itself even in schools created in villages by community initiative, and under the control of ‘the community’.

Local community schools: exempt from exploiting child labour?

Local community schools – Ecoles d’Initiative Locale, or EDILs – began to be established in the mid-1990s, in response to the extreme challenges faced by the state education system. They were stimulated partly because there was NGO-funding for an initiative perceived as coming from the grassroots. Parents in villages which don’t have schools put up money to construct a schoolroom, usually open-sided and with a thatched roof; young people from the village volunteer to teach.³⁹

In response to the great demand for education, and in the absence of significant government investment in the education sector, EDILs have mushroomed. The government reported in August 2004 that in 2002, just under 40 per cent of all primary schools in the poorest region of the country, Savannah, were EDILs. In Central region, in the same year, nearly 27 per cent of primary schools were EDILs.⁴⁰

Communities want schools for a variety of reasons, one of which is to give young people skills to cope with the economic changes brought about by Structural Adjustment – the very phenomenon which has so considerably reduced state funding of schools and teachers. The marketing of cotton, for instance, is no longer centrally controlled by the state, but has become devolved to the producers themselves, so farmers feel a pressing need for someone in the family to be literate and numerate: “We’re the ones now who do the weighing and the buying and selling, and we need to be able to keep accounts”, people told Passinda and Houinato.⁴¹ Chiefs who promote the establishment of an EDIL, and vigorously solicit the support of the community for its construction and maintenance, are reported to see an improvement in their standing in the village.⁴²

38 Committee on the Rights of the Child, Summary Record of the 1018th meeting: Togo, CRC/C/SR.1018, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva; session held 24 January 2005; summary issued 1 February 2005. Emphasis added by this author.

39 Passinda and Houinato, *Violence en Milieu Scolaire*, *ibid.*

40 *Le Développement de l’Education*, *ibid.*

41 *Violence en Milieu Scolaire*, *ibid.*

42 *Violence en Milieu Scolaire*, *ibid.*

But the analysis prepared for Plan⁴³ says violence against children in one form or another, including their forced labour, is inherent in the structure of EDILs. Firstly, teaching staff are almost entirely voluntary, and many come forward in the hope of graduating to a permanent job on the state's pay-roll: "They hope [teaching in an EDIL will enable them] to complete their professional training and compete successfully in the exams for recruitment of teachers." When these voluntary teachers fail their examinations, many lose heart and stop teaching. "At the beginning, there were lots of EDILs", says one informant. "But some have closed down because the voluntary teachers resigned when they weren't selected in the recruitment rounds. They thought they'd be able to slide easily into jobs in the public sector."

Moreover, the adult actors involved in EDILs have competing claims, and conflict between them usually results in violence towards pupils. "An EDIL may look like a wonderful example of grassroots participation in development", say Passinda and Houinato, "but the number of actors involved, and their competing visions, mean there is inevitably conflict."

Unpaid teachers, like their counterparts in the public sector, send their pupils to work in their fields. Passinda and Houinato say this is inevitable: "Children's manual work is implicit in the contract between villagers and teachers. One teacher told us: 'They said they would contribute money to pay us, and they would also pay us in kind – with sorghum, maize and other crops – and the children could help us. But nobody has given us anything for a long time. We're surviving through our own means.' "

In some EDILs, pupils are reported to have been beaten if they don't bring work-tools – hoes and machetes for the boys; brooms and buckets for the girls – to school with them. And other actors in the EDIL also claim the right to use schoolchildren's labour. Plan Togo researchers met children in the street in one village with tools in their hand, and were told: "We've been harvesting cotton for the president of the Association of Parents of Pupils." Chiefs are also said to requisition the labour of schoolchildren, "as a sign of gratitude from the pupils".⁴⁴

Some parents who have tried to prevent their children being exploited in the teachers' fields report that their children were subsequently beaten in class: "We arranged with the teachers that we'd pay them when we received the money for our cotton crop. But last year we didn't get paid. We told the teachers they could use our children in their fields, but we decided they were using them too much – exploiting them – and we held a meeting to denounce this. Shortly afterwards, my child got beaten in class, and I know it was to get at me."

The stories of students who leave school rather than work as servants or field-hands for the teachers demonstrate how damaging to children's prospects such exploitation can be. The children who met in workshops to discuss the project of the Children's Code have called for pupils' labour in teachers' fields, and the systematic use, particularly of girl students, to collect water for teachers, to be specifically prohibited in the Code.⁴⁵

Exploitation and violence in schools linked to child-trafficking

In *For the Price of a Bike*⁴⁶, published in 2005, Plan Togo described the scale of child-trafficking from Togo, and the terrible conditions endured by many thousands of exploited Togolese child workers in Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso and elsewhere.

Running like a dark thread through the stories and case histories Plan Togo has assembled for this present study is the lure for children of leaving behind the violence and poverty they know, and offering themselves to a trafficker – 'adventuring', they call it, or 'taking their chances' ('s'aventurer'). "I kept talking to my schoolmates, trying to persuade them not to abandon school for Nigeria," says one young boy in a village near Sokodé, "but a girl in the fifth year left for Nigeria."⁴⁷

43 Violence en Milieu Scolaire, *ibid.*

44 Violence en Milieu Scolaire, *ibid.*

45 See Le code de l'enfant vu par les enfants.

46 *For the Price of a Bike: Child Trafficking in Togo*, Plan Togo, March 2005.

47 Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

Sokodé and the villages around it are the heartland of the child-trafficking area. One of the teachers in a meeting with Plan Togo described their village as ‘le fief de la traite’ – a heart-stopping description because it conveys a village in feudal subjection to the business of child-trafficking, and unable to resist. “Parents have nothing, and children have nothing”, said the teacher. Some of the teachers are involved in the local anti-trafficking committee, but very young children are nonetheless regularly trafficked out of the area.

Plan Togo believes exploitation of children’s labour in school contributes to the trafficking phenomenon. It’s not hard to see that children who are doing what they experience as forced labour anyway – with nothing to show for it except loss of their classes, weariness, and a feeling of exploitation – might consider working abroad to be a more attractive option. At least, they might think, they would come away with a bike, or a trousseau, or some money in their hands.

We believe that the violence of all sorts that children experience in schools in Togo contributes to the helplessness and hopelessness some children feel, and pushes them into the hands of the traffickers. Schools that are not safe cannot hold children, or protect them against the depredations of the wider society. On the other hand, many parents do not protect children against violence and abuse at school, nor do they support them in their overall education efforts, or even communicate with their children. Trusting the promises of a trafficker and ‘taking your chances’ somewhere else will inevitably seem a more attractive solution than continuing to suffer where you are.

Parents taking action

In one village near Sokodé, parents have in fact got together to limit the amount of physical work their children are doing for the teachers in the local school. In the village of Koboyo, near Sokodé, the Association of Parents of Pupils (APE) went to the district governor to ask if there was any law obliging their children to work for the teachers. The governor told them there wasn’t. “We’d realised”, the parents told Plan Togo, “that our children had rights – the right to rest, the right to refuse forced labour, and above all the right to an education.”⁴⁸

APE was able to persuade parents in the village to subscribe a small amount of money – 200 CFA per year (approximately US \$0.50) – to purchase the materials the teachers said they needed. They instituted a surveillance committee, which makes sure children are not taken out of school to work without permission from APE. The teachers were initially reluctant to allow APE to see the accounts, but they insisted, and parents and teachers now meet regularly and review the school’s accounts. An 8-year-old girl present at a meeting of the village with Plan Togo said: “Before, the teachers used to make us work in the fields, even for the whole day. We’d come back at 6 o’clock at night. Our parents used to say: ‘Did we send you to school, or to the fields?’ Now we find there’s a change.”

During the course of the meeting, however, it emerged that children still do manual work for the teachers on Fridays. What APE has done is to limit this work to Fridays only, and prevent children being kept in the teachers’ fields very late. One elderly man at the meeting commented: “We forbade the practice [of children working for the teachers], but it still continues.” Plan Togo field staff suggested to the meeting that, since the way to kill a snake is to cut off its head, if parents wanted to prevent their children being exploited by teachers, they had to end the practice of manual work entirely.



Gender, education, violence

Many girls, particularly in rural areas, where most of the population lives, struggle to get their parents to let them even start at school. One 8-year-old girl told Plan Togo that although she'd registered for the first class, her father "confiscated my exercise-books, and used them to roll cigarettes with".⁴⁹

Education contributes importantly to the ability of a person to analyse her own situation and problems, and to find peaceful solutions in situations of conflict. For girls and women it also means, in the long term, the chance to gain financial autonomy.

Togo's education statistics for 2003 speak clearly for the persistence of gender discrimination in education, particularly in secondary education:

National school enrolment rates⁵⁰

Primary school

72.6 per cent girls,	81 per cent boys
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Secondary school

42.1 per cent girls,	64.2 per cent boys (collège)
7.4 per cent girls,	24.2 per cent boys (lycée)

What the national statistics don't reveal is the disparity between rural and urban environments: many more girls in rural areas don't go to school, which can be attributed partly to the greater availability of educational infrastructure and qualified teachers in urban zones, especially in Lomé. The figures also don't give much insight into changing gender norms regarding girls and their education: the gap between numbers of boys and girls entering primary education is in fact narrowing.⁵¹

49 Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*
50 Annual Education Statistics 2002/03, Ministry of Education, Togo.

51 KOUWONOU Raymond Kodjovi, *Travail Domestique des Enfants et Fréquentation Scolaire au Togo: Quelles interactions?*, Unité de Recherche DeLomé.

However, the gender-based violence which girls experience in Togo constitutes a material factor in whether or not they continue their education. Girls in Togo are subjected to harmful traditional practices such as genital cutting (which is practised among some ethnic groups: research conducted by the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lomé found 10 per cent of women in Togo have experienced female genital mutilation⁵² – mostly of type II, clitoridectomy). They are also subjected to early or forced marriage. The current maternal mortality rate is estimated at 478 per 100,000 live births. Among the factors responsible for this is a high rate of teenage pregnancy (19 per cent, according to a health survey carried out in 1998 by the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lomé).

The factors which take adolescent girls in Togo out of school include the poverty of parents, but they also clearly have a strong gender dimension: an unwanted pregnancy, or parents' unwillingness to pay for the education of daughters, or their insistence on an early marriage, which might push their daughters into being trafficked away to work, since girls are responsible for their trousseau ("an extravagant trousseau brings honour to the family" one mother of a school-age girl told FAWE researchers⁵³).

Plan Togo also has evidence that violence and harassment in schools are significant factors that push girls out of school. A 18-year-old girl said she'd left her school near Sokodé three years previously "because I couldn't tell any more if I was a student, or the teacher's servant. I got to the point where I couldn't understand anything in class, and I failed. At home my parents were insulting me, telling me I wasn't making any efforts to succeed. Finally I left school, in order to have some peace".⁵⁴ A young woman of 20 managed to get her mother's help to stop the English teacher harassing her, "but I didn't want to be in his class any more. I couldn't bear to see him".⁵⁵

Girls failing to complete their secondary education creates a vicious circle. There are very few women teachers in Togo, as the 2003 education statistics demonstrate: only 12 per cent in primary schools, and in secondary schools, only 7 per cent.

While low female education rates have an impact on the number of women who can successfully participate in public decision making to influence laws and conditions for women, they also have direct consequences for the continuation of abuse of girls at school level: engaging female teachers reduces the risk of sexual abuse and violence against girls. It also creates strong role models, encouraging girls to stand up for their rights and to gain confidence in themselves and their future.

A girls' scholarship group in Sotouboua created a song to stimulate girls' education and success at school; the refrain, dedicated to Suzanne Aho, the current minister of health, and probably the most prominent role model for girls and women at country level, goes like this:

**Girls, go to school;
Suzanne Aho, we can be like you and succeed;
Girls, become ministers,
Girls, become lawyers,
Girls, become teachers!**

Whether an increased female teacher ratio will reduce violence against children altogether, however, remains an open question.

The part played by violence against women in the wider society in perpetuating violence in schools is explored further in a later section of this report, 'Parents: Protectors or perpetrators?'

Sexual harassment and abuse of girls in school

The sexual harassment and abuse of girls in school by their teachers is so common in Togo that an entire lexicon exists to describe it (see below). Male teachers' gender assumptions, their powerful position in the lives of their students, and the failure to train and adequately monitor teachers, all coincide to devastating effect when teachers put sexual pressure on their girl students – an activity universally described in Togo as 'faire la cour' – teachers 'wooing' their students. Rarely has an expression less effectively conveyed the true nature of the exchange going on when an adult male teacher, with unique power to advance a student's interests or ruin her hopes, puts sexual pressure on a girl in his class.

Lexicon of child abuse: the words schoolchildren use to describe sexual relations between teachers and schoolgirls

These are some of the terms Plan Togo has discovered that schoolchildren use. We believe this list barely scratches the surface of how schoolchildren talk about the reality they live every day in school. What's particularly instructive is that most of these expressions are insulting to girls; they therefore suggest that the atmosphere that prevails in schools in relation to sexual harassment by teachers is largely critical of the girls themselves.

notes sexuellement transmises (sexually transmitted marks): used in relation to the good marks obtained by a girl student popularly supposed to be having a sexual relationship with the teacher

cahier de roulement (a shared exercise book): used in relation to a girl student presumed to have relations with several teachers

A3PT (achao populaire passe): a bordello that everyone uses

BF: the name of a brand of soap in Togo, but used in schools to stand for 'bordelle fatiguée', a girl who has so many sexual relationships with teachers she's completely exhausted.

What this lexicon doesn't convey is what it's like to be lonely and scared, on the receiving end of the attentions of a determined, unscrupulous, and apparently all-powerful teacher ('opportunist' and 'pitiless' are among the terms FAWE's girl interviewees used to describe the behaviour of their teachers).⁵⁶ Girls are entrapped and ensnared, sometimes with the collusion and active collaboration of their classmates, who are blackmailed into supporting the teacher.

Here is the story of a girl of 16 who was being 'wooded' by her history/geography teacher:

He asked me to come to his house one day, when his wife was away. I didn't go ... Then he came to my house, under the guise of buying alcohol from my mother. He told me, "I want you, and if you accept, we can go out together and nobody will know – not even my wife". I lied and told him I already had a boyfriend ... The next morning he came into class in a very bad temper, and told us to get ready for an impromptu test ['interrogatoire flash']. Everybody protested, and he let the idea drop, but he kept threatening us all with zeros. I ran after him and said what he was doing wasn't right ... He got even angrier and told me I was in danger of getting a very bad end-of-year mark.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ FAWE—Togo, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Case Study on Violence and Abuse, *ibid.*

A girl's classmates will sometimes urge her to have sex with the teacher, in order to stop him giving them all bad marks. Adolescent girls in Sotouboua, who have established a self-help organisation called Arc-en-Ciel (Rainbow), told Plan Togo they had been in classes where a teacher was punishing the whole class in order to put pressure on a particular girl, and that her classmates would say to her: "It's your fault that we're having all this trouble. Why don't you give in to him?"

What's anomalous, and very isolating for girls, is that their male classmates see them as having an unfair advantage: girls can have sex with the teachers and therefore get good marks without working hard, while the boys can't. The boys see themselves as disadvantaged because what they have to trade with the teachers, in exchange for good marks, is manual work in the teachers' fields, and they regard this as much more arduous than having sex with a teacher (which they regard as 'having fun').

In a large discussion group with Plan Togo in the secondary school CEG Elavagnon, in East Mono, which included boys and girls, it rapidly became clear that many of the boys resent what they see as the girls' 'privilege', and blame them for trying to seduce the teachers. The boys see themselves, rather than the girls, as victims; they consider themselves discriminated against, because they can't offer the teacher sex.

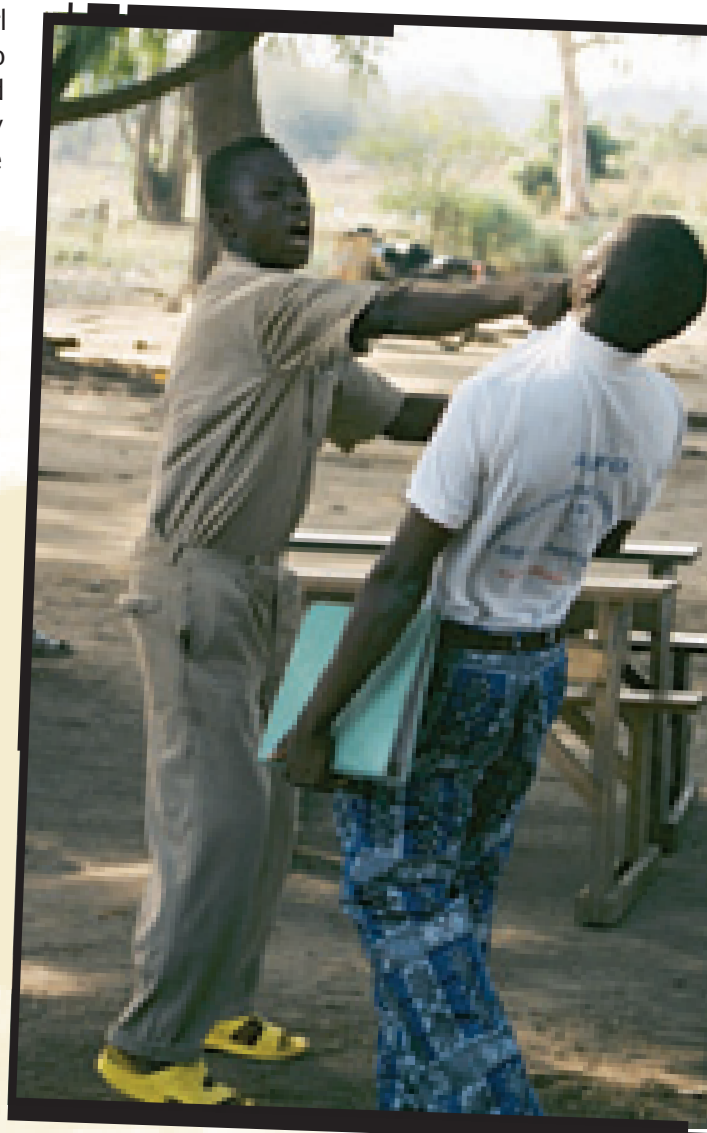
And they say they experience threats from male teachers if the teacher sees they're friendly with a girl the teacher is 'courting'. "I was threatened for two weeks by a teacher who wanted a particular girl", said one boy. Another said: "You can't afford to be friendly with a girl if a teacher's courting her. You'll be punished by the teacher."⁵⁸

The play at CEG Kpessi

Students at the collège in Kpessi performed a short drama for visitors in January 2006. The play was very funny and very well acted, and the whole audience – several hundred schoolchildren plus their teachers – laughed with recognition all the way through it.

But the play clearly demonstrated to what extent boys believe themselves to be victims in the game, as they see it, of 'wooing' between teachers and girl students. In the play, a succession of teachers comes into the classroom and returns the students' work. The girls uniformly do well, and one girl in particular is always given high marks and glowing praise. The boys do badly every time: they're given low marks or zeros and insulted by the teachers. One boy rebels, and is then sent to the headmaster's office, where the teachers gang up to complain about him. Finally he is expelled, and beaten before he leaves. In the street outside he runs into one of the teachers and pushes him around: an act of retaliation that got the loudest cheers from the student audience.

But the message was clear: boys suffer; girls don't.



What the stories of girls show is how isolated they become when a teacher is after them. Parents don't appear to play much of a part in protecting their daughters. In the case histories Plan Togo has assembled, there's only one instance where a young woman told her mother what was happening and the mother came to the school to complain. This intervention appears to have worked: "The teacher came to apologise to me and the harassment stopped. But I didn't want to be in his class any more; when it was time for his English class, I couldn't stand to be there."⁵⁹

It's a particularly strong girl who can resist on her own. A young woman told Plan Togo that she had been under intense pressure from a teacher who had recently left her school. When she had refused all his requests to go to his home – "I have the right to say no", she says – he tried to take her by force from the street; she cried out, and other students who were nearby came and helped her. Subsequently he sent a message pleading his case through a boy in her class, whom she had regarded as a friend; it's made her very mistrustful of everyone: "I don't laugh easily with people any more." But she is involved in the Arc-en-Ciel group, partnering with Plan, and she in turn sent a message to the teacher that if he continued to harass her, "I'll make very serious problems for you". She says the harassment has stopped.

Girls organise to end sexual harassment

Arc-en-Ciel got together in Sotouboua in September 2005, entirely on the initiative of several of the girls. Their aim is to combat sexual harassment in school, work to reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS, and provide a setting where girls and young women can share their stories and learn to defend their own interests.

So far girls from four secondary schools are taking part, meeting twice a month in Plan Togo's centre in Sotouboua. Many of these young women are ambitious, wanting to go on to study law or medicine. They say sexual harassment restricts the development of girls in school: for every ten girls who start secondary school, they say only one arrives in the final year – there are many reasons for this, but the sexual hounding of girls at school is the main reason, in their view. They say that on the other hand, it's very demoralising to see someone who you know isn't working hard get good marks, just because they're sleeping with the teacher or the teacher is 'wooing' them. And they say what really upsets them is when a teacher targets a very young girl who doesn't know how to defend herself.

"When I was on my own, I couldn't do anything to protect myself. Now I understand about sexual harassment, and I'm learning about HIV and AIDS."

Member of Arc-en-Ciel girls' support group

The young women of Arc-en-Ciel take a surprisingly firm line on school dress. They see part of their function as educating girls to dress 'decently' at school. "Girls give themselves to teachers", they say. "We want to teach them they don't have to." Their comments echo rather oddly the complaint of some male teachers: that they are sexually harassed by girls, who sit in their classes with very short skirts and make eyes at them. Boys at CEG Elavagnon also complained that girls wear very short skirts and set out to seduce the teacher.

In Plan Togo's view, this misses the point. Teachers are adults in a professional relationship of care with their students. They have a professional obligation to make themselves immune to the advances of their students. In addition, school codes of conduct spell out clearly what behaviour is acceptable in school. However, it is evident that girls who do have sexual relations with teachers do not necessarily regard themselves as victims, and that sexual provocation of male teachers by some female students does go on. The Arc-en-Ciel group was asked what happened if they tried to speak to classmates who were sleeping with teachers. They said the response was uniformly hostile – the girl in question would think you wanted to get her away from the teacher so you could have him for yourself.

There clearly is a need to understand what happens to girls who do have sex with their teachers. The case histories Plan Togo has so far collected are from girls who don't want anything to do with the teacher, resist his advances, and find themselves blackmailed and punished as a consequence. But in one school Plan Togo visited, it was reported that several of the teachers (there were only male teachers) were actually married to their former students. Whether or not this represents a satisfactory outcome for the young women concerned would need further investigation.

The Arc-en-Ciel girls say they want to disabuse their fellow students of the idea that if they have sex with the teacher, life will be easy. They say that in their experience, girls end up crying: "You get sick; you lose everything." This comment suggests more work needs to be done to investigate the specific outcomes of girls' sexual involvement with teachers: to discover what happens if the girl becomes pregnant, whether teachers in particular spread HIV and AIDS through their sexual activities, and to what extent schools in Togo are vectors for HIV infection.

A complicating factor in discussing the issue of sexual harassment in schools with teachers is that the age of consent in Togo is 14. Because so many pupils fail each year and have to keep repeating, or because of problems with school fees, and many other difficulties to do with lack of money, it can take as long as 11 years for a child to complete the six years of primary school.⁶⁰ In theory children start school when they're 6 years old, but it's often later. A young woman could be 17 or 18 or even older, and still be in primary school. There is a law, Law No. 84/L4 of 16 May 1984, which specifically forbids 'continuous sexual relations' between a teacher and a pupil, but it has become a dead letter. We explore a little later why this is so.

What will change the behaviour of teachers, and the perception of so many of the actors involved that girls are to blame, not teachers? When Plan Togo visited the secondary school in Elavagnon, the issue of teachers 'courting' girls was initially raised by a young woman, who bravely said in front of all her fellows, and the headmaster: "The teachers are harassing all the girls." In a room of around a 100 students, with boys outnumbering girls by around three to one, her remark was greeted with loud clapping. However, when the question was asked: "Do girls court the teachers?" there was an equally loud "yes", followed by the familiar complaints from boys about girls wearing short skirts and so on. After intense discussion, the students were finally asked to vote on who they thought was responsible for the problem of teachers 'courting' girls: the girls themselves, or teachers. Surprisingly, by nearly three to one, they voted that teachers were at the heart of the problem.

This suggests that consciousness-raising among all school students – which allows everyone to discuss the proposition that, far from girls having an unfair advantage, the behaviour of teachers who dole out marks in return for sexual favours is fundamentally unjust and exploitive – would have a positive effect, would reduce the rancour boys feel towards their female co-students, and would reduce the ability of teachers to blackmail students.



The legal framework: what does the law say about teachers sexually harassing and sexually abusing their students?

Sexual relations between a teacher and a student are forbidden by Law No. 84/L4 of 16 May 1984, which, amongst other provisions, makes it illegal to “entertain continuous sexual relations with a girl or a boy registered in a school or a training centre”. The law provides for between 6 months’ and 3 years’ imprisonment, or a fine of between 200,000 and 520,000 CFA (between around 365 and 950 US dollars).

In their study for Plan Togo, *Analyse de la Problématique d’Abus Sexual sur l’Enfant en Milieu Scolaire au Togo* (Analysis of the Issues surrounding the Sexual Abuse of Children in Schools), Professor Anani Amenyedzi and Judge Koffi Kounte comment on the word ‘continuous’ in the Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984. One of their concerns is the judicial response to rape, and they ask: “Does the use of the word ‘continuous’ mean that if sexual relations are an isolated act, the author remains unpunished?” Their question is, as they acknowledge, academic, because their research has uncovered an almost complete absence of prosecutions of teachers under Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984. Amenyedzi and Kounte interviewed 14 senior judges, lawyers, and other persons involved in the administration of the law, and report:

Almost all the State Prosecutors in the state courts agree that cases of sexual abuse in schools rarely find their way to the courts.

Amenyedzi and Kounte tried to understand this, and quote a senior education official whom they interviewed:

Girls are often frightened to complain that their teacher is sexually harassing them ... because they fear retaliation from all the teachers, who act together out of professional solidarity and blacklist the girl. She gets bad marks from everyone, which often means she has to leave the school.

In the rural areas, where there is usually only one secondary school, pupils refrain from complaining about the abuses their teachers subject them to, in order not to have any trouble in their end-of-year results.

Amenyedzi and Kounte did discover, however, that shortly after the Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984 became law, there had been ‘a flood of complaints’ by the parents of students, who “believed that the fine provided for in the law would come to them”. When they learned that the fine went into the public purse, “parents became progressively disenchanted ... and preferred to sort things out directly with the perpetrator (who was sometimes willing to make a payment to the girl’s family)”. This was mostly in cases of rape.

Plan Togo asked the Regional Director of Education in Central region, Madame Rema T. Aouissa, how many teachers had been fired from public schools for sexually harassing their girl students, or having sexual relations with them. The answer, in essence, is none. Madame Aouissa, who is known to Plan Togo for her commitment to child protection, said that in one case she had intervened in, where a teacher had been harassing a girl, she had moved the girl to another school. The teacher remained in place at the old school, and the girl subsequently learned that he was in contact with her new teacher, and was inciting him to give her bad marks. The girl had come to see Madame Aouissa when the harassment started, and came to see her again when she discovered the teacher was still acting against her. Madame Aouissa says the teacher in question is now ‘under surveillance’.

Broadly speaking, however, teachers appear to believe they can act with impunity, and it’s not hard to see why. “Teachers aren’t frightened of the law”, says one observer. “They know that even if a complaint is made, nothing will happen.”⁶¹

Some teachers even argue that Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984 discriminates unfairly against them. They say there is no equivalent law that provides penalties for sexual relations between other public servants – like police officers – and young men and women entrusted to their care.

Teachers also take refuge in the age of consent in Togolese law, fixed by the Penal Code of 1980 at 14 years. Amenyedzi and Kounte comment:

What has to be established is whether the consent was forced in any way – that is, obtained through fraud, deceit, or threatening behaviour, both physical and psychological.

In Plan Togo's view, however, all sexual relations between teachers and school students – whether or not a girl over the age of consent has apparently given her consent – create a conflict of interest.

The projected Children's Code intends to raise the age of consent to 15. It is also scheduled to define in law crimes against children which are not specified in the existing Penal Code: sexual exploitation; paedophilia; sexual tourism; sexual harassment. Amenyedzi and Kounte, however, worry that even if the Code is voted in, it will become as much of a dead letter as Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984 unless it is vigorously promoted in schools and its provisions vigorously defended by students. They want the text of the existing law, and the texts of all future prohibitions of sexual abuse of children, to be prominently displayed in schools, so that pupils learn what their rights and protections are, and teachers are reminded about their obligations, and the penalties they face.

Amenyedzi and Kounte are also calling for teachers to be involved right now in the drawing-up of a professional Code of Conduct that will govern teachers' relations with their students. They regard this as an urgent necessity, to end the inappropriately normalised sexual relations between teachers and their girl students taking place in schools across the country, often through fear, threat and blackmail.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has asked the government to take urgent action "to prevent and punish the abuse of school pupils by teachers, including sexual harassment and economic exploitation".⁶² The Committee says it regards the hiring of women teachers as an urgent and necessary step towards this end.

Schoolchildren in the schools Plan Togo has visited in the course of this research call for there to be a neutral person somewhere in the school whom children can go to if they feel themselves to be harassed or abused. Before Structural Adjustment, the education system in Togo used to include someone called a 'school social worker' ('assistant social'). This person, a state employee, would visit each school in their area once or twice a week, would be available to students who faced some sort of problem, and would try to help them find a remedy.

It's clear that there needs to be somebody available to every school, who is neither a teacher (and therefore potentially part of a teachers' cabal) nor a student (who can be punished for his or her intervention), but a neutral and trusted person, trained in gender awareness and children's rights, to whom children can report in confidence, who has powers to investigate the complaint and institute a remedy. Regional directors of education are often geographically too far away for a child to reach, and may be perceived by people as too remote and frightening to fulfil this task. But Madame Aouissa, Regional Director of Education for Central region, did not hesitate to take the opportunity of her meeting with Plan Togo in January 2006 to invite schoolchildren and their parents to come directly to her:



If parents or pupils come directly to me with a problem of violence in school, I can do something about it. Pupils feel subject to the hierarchy of schools. They go to the headmaster; if he stifles the affair, and I don't know about it, that's no good. People can come directly to me, and I will follow up the case.⁶³

“If students or their parents are worried by a problem of violence or harassment in school, they can come directly to me, and I will follow up the case. Maybe I will even go to the school myself!”

Madame AOUISSA Rema T.
Regional Director of Education, Central region

The idea of schoolchildren having somebody to whom they can address themselves, who will investigate and act on their behalf, was raised during the government of Togo's discussion with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva in January 2005. A member of the committee asked the government's representatives about what 'surveillance mechanisms' had been placed in schools to make sure children were not subjected to corporal punishment, and who children were able to go to 'to report bad treatment'.

A representative of the government told the Committee:

Student committees have been set up in most schools, specifically to allow students to report violence or sexual abuses committed by teachers.⁶⁴

Plan Togo acknowledges the endeavours of the government to establish school committees, but more work will have to be done to ensure that they become effective in ALL Togolese schools and are empowered to report adequately on abuse and violence at school.

⁶³ Meeting with Madame Rema T. Aouissa, Sokodé, 11 January 2006.

⁶⁴ Summary of the 1017th meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Togo, held in Geneva, 24 January 2005; CRC/C/SR.1017.

Sexual violence and rape in schools

During July 2005, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) interviewed 250 boys and 750 girls in their last three years of primary school. They established that 7 of the girls had been raped in school (whether by teachers or by classmates or older boys, FAWE don't say). A further 23 of the girls had been raped outside school. Of the 7 girls who admitted having been raped in school, FAWE discovered that 2 had suffered torn genitals.

It's possible that if girls understood more clearly that sex 'accepted' by them on the promise of good marks, or out of fear of bad marks, or generally out of fear of the teacher, constitutes forced sex, the figure for what they acknowledge as rape in schools would be considerably higher.

Rape is recognised and criminalised in Article 87 of the Togolese Penal Code, but is not acknowledged as such in Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984, the law which forbids 'continuous sexual relations' between teachers and their pupils.

What happens to teachers who rape their pupils? Professor Amenyedzi and Judge Kounte have unearthed several cases for which there is police documentation. In one, from 2002, an 11-year-old girl was raped by her headmaster. Her aunt took her to hospital, and it emerged that this was the second time the headmaster had raped the girl. By the time the authorities visited the school, the headmaster had absconded to Ghana.⁶⁵

In another, a 13-year-old girl from a village near Aného complained to her mother in 2004 that she was being raped regularly both by her own father and her maths teacher. Both the father and the teacher admitted to the authorities that they had raped the girl, but neither was charged and brought to justice; the official papers report "the matter was resolved out of court according to the wishes of the parents" (even though one of the parents was one of the rapists). The girl was tested for AIDS and subsequently left the village, and that was the end of the matter.⁶⁶

Amenyedzi and Kounte established that in the 51 cases of rape of schoolgirls for which they found police reports (most of these cases happened outside school), parents stopped the prosecution in more than half the cases. "Usually everyone knows who's committed a rape", they say. "It's somebody's cousin, or a neighbour. The family don't want to sever relations with these people, and so they come to an accommodation – very often that just means the perpetrator's family pays the costs of the medical treatment of the victim."⁶⁷

But where, they ask, does that leave the victim? What kind of reparation is made to a 12-year-old girl whose teacher has raped her, if all that happens is that money changes hands between the perpetrator and the girl's parents? A child under the age of 13 has no existence in law, they point out. Somebody has to stand up for child victims of rape, and they believe judges should pursue cases whether or not parents want them to:

There needs to be a fundamental change of attitude, in favour of the victim. Judges must have the courage to impose the sanctions the law provides.⁶⁸

Plan also argues for a more child-friendly court system, in which children are given a voice and adequate support (including legal support) and protection.

It seems there is a pronounced tendency to brush aside the effects of rape on a child victim. Believing you can sort the problem out with an exchange of money is only possible if no one listens to the anguish of the girl. This 15-year-old is in secondary school, in a village near Atakpamé:

My parents often give accommodation to teachers in our house. The teacher usually sleeps in the same room as my small brothers and me; because he's an adult, my parents trust him.

One Sunday night, the primary school teacher who was staying with us raped me. He put his hand over my mouth so I wouldn't cry out, undressed me and had sexual relations with me ... My parents were there, but I'm frightened of my father ... I went to my uncle and told him what had happened ...

I feel very upset, very disappointed; I'm crying all the time; don't want to eat; feel distracted at school ... I came close to poisoning myself; I wanted to see the vodou priests to arrange for the teacher to be punished, but that hasn't happened. My parents are suspicious of me because they say I should have cried out. They're so badly affected that they're likely to make the story public and dirty the name of the teacher.⁶⁹

This last comment is interesting because it suggests the parents' negotiating position – the rapist has to pay them money, or they'll publicise what he did. But no one, it seems, has either consoled the young woman, nor thought to charge the teacher with the crime of rape. Amenyedzi and Kounte suggest that in general, parents don't want to be responsible for someone losing their job: “no parent wants to be responsible for the bad luck of another person.”

In Plan Togo's view, even if parents choose not to make the crime against their daughter public, they still have an obligation to console her, to provide emotional support so she can recover. But there is little evidence that parents in Togo regard comforting and consoling their assaulted, abused and raped daughters as a priority.

Amenyedzi and Kounte interviewed a child psychologist who told them: “Everything is directed towards the perpetrator, and everyone neglects the victim, who will, to the end of her days, bear the psychological scars of what happened to her and to her alone.” The psychologist told Amenyedzi and Kounte that she sees child victims of rape once, and once only – when the child receives medical treatment and the parents are considering their course of action. However, these are children who need sustained care to heal their physical, emotional and psychological wounds. Reparation to such victims needs to become part and parcel of the state's responsibility, since the government can lead parents to understand that their children are suffering and need their support.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in January 2005 that the government:

- (a) Adopt a law effectively prohibiting all forms of violence, abuse and neglect of children;
- (b) Expand current efforts to address the problem of child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse;
- (c) Ensure that there is a national and local system for receiving, monitoring and investigating complaints, and when necessary prosecuting cases, in a manner which is child-sensitive and ensures the privacy and protection of victims;
- (d) Ensure that all victims of violence, abuse and neglect have access to counselling, redress and assistance with recovery and social reintegration;
- (e) Provide children with alternative protection and care, and ensure that institutionalisation is used only as a measure of last resort⁷⁰

Plan Togo believes such measures are urgently needed.

Parents: protectors or perpetrators?

Most of the stories Plan Togo has collected for this study have a common theme: children subjected to violence at school get very little comfort from their parents. “I was too scared to tell my father”; “I told my mother but she did nothing”; “I knew if I told my parents, they’d beat me again” – this is what children say.

In part, parents’ failure to support their children against the violence of teachers reflects their own fear of the teachers. “In the colonial period”, say Passinda and Houinato, “traditional society accorded a certain prestige to teachers: they were regarded as guides, intellectuals who could speak the language of ‘the whites’.”⁷¹ Even today, when more than two-thirds of teachers are untrained and their status is, says one observer, “lower than that of motorbike-taxi drivers”, teachers still wield power in the villages, where most of Togo’s people live. Parents are often too frightened to confront teachers, and if they do denounce them to the authorities and the teacher is arrested, other parents complain that their own children are being denied an education.

Because education is nominally free but in practice involves many costs, the decisions parents make about how to spend what money they have for their children’s education make parents key arbiters of their children’s hopes. Lack of money prevents boys going to school as well as girls, but in the villages, girls are much more likely to be kept away, sometimes with violence:

I wanted to go to school, but my father refused: he said that in his day, women didn’t go to school, only men ... But I asked my mother for a bit of money, and registered for primary school ... When I progressed to the second year, my father beat me and insulted me every time he saw me going to school ... In the third year, the threats got worse. My father confiscated all my exercise books and my school documents, and I had to abandon school ... When I think about it, I want to cry ... My mother left my father, and I spoke to my father’s third wife, who’s had some schooling – but she said my father is a wicked person and there’s no point discussing it with him.⁷²

In the area where FAWÉ conducted their research, 80 per cent of women and 47 per cent of men are illiterate; the district is one of the poorest in Togo. FAWÉ interviewed a father who said he may as well throw money out of the window as use it to send his daughter to school, where she was likely to ‘catch a pregnancy’.⁷³ FAWÉ discerned an attitude, amongst women as well as men, which says that an educated girl is ‘souillée’ – both dishonoured and soiled.

Violence against women: the differential power of parents

Girls themselves told FAWÉ that beatings at school helped “prepare them for married life”, a comment which reflects what they observe of the lives of their mothers. Of the 525 mothers of children FAWÉ interviewed in 35 villages, one in four women said they’d been beaten by their husband in the preceding month. Six out of ten said they’d been threatened by their husband in the same period, and nine out of ten said they’d been insulted by him. A study carried out by the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lomé reported that 74 per cent of the women it interviewed across the country had been subjected to physical violence by their intimate partners.⁷⁴

This extremely high level of violence against women in their own homes, by their husbands or intimate partners, severely limits their ability to act in defence of their daughters' interests, if the husband opposes the girl going to school and the mother supports it. In addition, polygamy results in many siblings, and competition for scarce resources. According to the URD study, polygamy is a reality for 43 per cent of Togolese women between the ages of 15 and 49, and 25 per cent of men of the same age group. FAWE observe that the custom in the villages they studied is for fathers to provide for their sons, and mothers to provide for their daughters. Since mothers may be one among several wives, and may have the misfortune to be less popular with their husbands than another wife, they are themselves usually involved in a daily scramble for funds, and they and their children suffer accordingly.

Structural violence against women in Togo includes female genital mutilation (FGM), as was mentioned earlier. But whereas national prevalence of FGM is around 10 per cent, the region where FAWE conducted their study has a much higher incidence. Of the 525 mothers of children that FAWE interviewed, 289 had been subjected to FGM (54.8 per cent). This is in spite of the fact that the practice is illegal, and has been since 1998. It seems women in this area are passing on the conviction that genital cutting is the right thing to do to their daughters. FAWE say the result of the official ban has been to drive the practice underground in the area they studied. Their informants told them that “girls themselves demand to be cut, in order not to feel different ... Sometimes girls will publicly make fun of someone who hasn't experienced this 'rite of passage': she'll be mocked and excluded”.⁷⁵ In a reversal of what one might expect, FAWE say they understand that girls who have not been cut sometimes abandon school, precisely in order for it 'not to be discovered' that they have not been excised.

Mothers and the trafficking of children

In some of the case histories assembled for this study, it's clear that mothers are the allies of girls who want to go to school, and try to help them. But most people in the villages fail to make anything like a living from agriculture. FAWE observe that, because the trafficking of children appears to offer a way out of poverty, in the area where they conducted their research it's very often mothers who encourage their children, particularly the girls, to 'take their chances' elsewhere and thereby realise some revenue for the family: “Using the tradable item you have – your daughter – appears to be a way of guaranteeing some income; it offers you a breathing space to try and find a way out of the crisis.”⁷⁶

Most of the women FAWE interviewed said they 'wouldn't hesitate' to give their daughters permission to “take the high road to adventure”. One woman said: “There's nothing here to stay for: misery, poverty, and an absolute lack of resources are eating away at our communities and poisoning our lives.”

FAWE's interviewees said girls who return from working abroad are sought after as wives, because they're considered to have money, and they're able to uphold 'the honour of the family' with a fine trousseau. Some girls are also reported to return with enough funds to pay for a craft apprenticeship or to open a workshop of some sort.

The only reservation the women in FAWE's study expressed about their daughters 'taking their chances' elsewhere is that they thereby lose the help these girls give them in the home and selling products in the marketplace.

FAWE also observe that some women 'pack their suitcases' and depart with their daughters. “Wife and daughters, working abroad, send money back to the husband, who stays in the village with the boys – and who then has the means to marry other women.”

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75 FAWE–Togo, *ibid.*
76 FAWE–Togo, *ibid.*

The practice of entrusting your child to another family member ('le confiage')

Very often the people who raise children are not the children's parents: it's customary across Togo – as in many other countries in the subregion – to send children to live with grandparents or other members of the family. Traditionally these arrangements would be made if one family member was in better circumstances than others, and could therefore afford to have the child educated. Sending children to grandparents is a way of making sure the grandparents have someone to take care of them. But girls whom FAWE interviewed who were not going to school complained that the grandmothers with whom they were living lacked any sort of funds to pay the costs of schooling, and their own parents neither came to see them nor contributed anything towards their education. For some of these elderly women, comment FAWE, many of whom are Muslim in the area they studied, the school system is “the road to perdition, the sure way for girls to lose Muslim values”.

Young girls from the villages often end up working as domestic servants in other parts of Togo. In one of those ironies that poverty and gender discrimination produce, it appears that the presence of servants in an urban household not only increases the likelihood that the household's own children will be sent to school (because there is money to pay for it, and someone else to do the domestic tasks that children do), but contributes significantly to the academic success of the boys: “Boys who live in a household where there are at least two [young women servants] are twice as likely to pass their academic year as those who don't.”⁷⁷ But even in households where there are two servants, girls are still required to perform domestic work, and their pass rate at school is no better than for girls who don't have servants.

Parents as a force for change

The Convention on the Rights of the Child sees the family as the “natural environment for the well being and growth of its members, particularly children”, and underlines in several articles the primary responsibility of parents, while placing limits on state interventions. It attributes clear responsibilities and duties to caretakers to support their child's development according to its evolving capacities, as well as to protect it. In return, the aims of education enshrined in the Convention seek to develop children's respect for their parents.

All over Togo, there are parents whose attitude towards their children is very different from that described in this section. In other words, there are fathers who want their daughters to be educated; mothers who tackle violent teachers and do everything in their power to prevent their children being trafficked; and so on. Plan believes that more research and discussion are necessary, to learn why these parents are taking action to protect their children, and to create networks by which other parents can learn from them.

Moreover, such parents need to find a voice, and a collective way of taking action to protect their children. The Association of Parents of Pupils (APE) is an existing organisation that would, and in some cases does, allow parents to intervene in the running of schools to moderate the actions of teachers and promote the safety of their children, but it needs to be more proactive.

If each individual APE set out to investigate what is actually happening in their children's school, established the facts regarding beating, sexual harassment and exploitation of their children, and took collective action to sanction the teachers involved, if the parents found such violence was happening, their children would have much more possibility of a sane, peaceful and productive education. Parents need to be braver in defence of their children.

Violence between schoolchildren

All the schoolchildren Plan Togo has met in the course of this research speak about the mockery and humiliation children subject each other to in the classroom. “If you ask a question, they make fun of you”, said a young boy in CEG Elavagnon. Another boy said if you made a mistake speaking French, your classmates would howl you down, so you wouldn’t hazard saying anything again. The girls in the Arc-en-Ciel club in Sotouboua said classmates would hit you in class and try to provoke you. They also spoke about being made fun of by classmates.

In Togo, as in most countries in the world, children make fun of each other specifically for being poor. “One of the worst consequences of being thought of as ‘poor’ is the associated social exclusion and susceptibility to teasing, bullying and denigration by peers”, says a study by the Christian Children’s Fund.⁷⁸ “How poverty constrains relationships with others and how it influences others’ treatment of children can be more important to children than having to go without food or other goods ... Children recognise that they are frequently the main instigators of abuses directed at each other due to poverty.” Quite how blisteringly painful, and life-shaping, such bullying based on poverty and difference can be, is demonstrated by this young girl’s story:

My father took me to school and enrolled me in CP1 [the first class in primary school], but I was already 8 years old, and I was the biggest in the class. Everybody made fun of me; they used to run after me, shouting, “here’s the mother of CP1”, “hello grandma”, and so on. I cried and felt very ashamed and unhappy. Only one of my classmates comforted me; she told the others to leave me alone, but they didn’t listen. I told my parents, especially my mother, but she did nothing to help me. Finally I decided to leave school and stay at home ... Now I’m helping my mother in the fields, but I feel really sorry about leaving school. If anyone asked me to go back, I would, but if they make fun of me again, I prefer to stay at home.

A boy from the same village as this girl – and therefore probably the same school – had a similar experience when he also started at the age of 8:

My classmates used to shout, “Here comes granddad”. The teacher sent me home to get money from my parents, but my father and my mother said there wasn’t even money to buy food [this boy has seven brothers and a sister]. My father came to the school to apologise to the teacher, but the teacher refused to talk to him and sent him away. Finally I had to give up going to school and help my parents in the fields. I’m cross, I’m crying all the time, and there’s nobody who can help me.”⁷⁹

As the Christian Children’s Fund study comments, “Children are far more sensitive to and tormented by poverty than was generally appreciated by adults. They are acutely aware of its divisive nature and feel its effects ... not so much in terms of lack of basic goods and services as in the associated stigma and humiliation”.

Gender is also a key area of ‘difference’ that provokes harassment and abuse among school students. Much more work needs to be done in Togo to unearth the different forms of gender harassment among students, but one particular instance rises from the fact that most schools lack adequate latrine facilities and children have to use the surrounding bush. For girls and young women, the lack of privacy (apart from the lack of water or any sanitary facilities) exposes them to the possibility of observation and shame. FAWE were told by some of their interviewees in Tchaoudjo and Tchamba that it’s not unknown for schoolboys to hide in order to watch the girls relieving themselves; “the nakedness of the girls then becomes a topic of conversation among the boys, in very derisory terms.”⁸⁰

78 Children and Poverty: Shaping a Response to Poverty: A Conceptual Overview and Implications for Responding to Children Living in Poverty, Children and Poverty Series, Part III, Richmond, Virginia, 2003.

79 Both these case histories are in MABOUDOU, Case Study on Violence and Abuse in Togolese Schools, *ibid.*

80 FAWE–Togo, *ibid.*

One of the common complaints secondary school students make about each other is that people who are doing well don't share their work with others. Over and over again, in CEG Elavagnon and with the Arc-en-Ciel girls in Sotouboua, Plan Togo was told that students let each other down by not helping each other.

It appears that jealousy is an important element in students' relations with each other, and that doing well academically doesn't lead to an easy life with your classmates. In the large secondary school group in CEG Elavagnon, it was mainly girls who spoke about the negative consequences of getting a good mark for a piece of work. "If it's known that you got a high mark, you become the enemy of everyone", said one young woman. Another said: "If you do well, you know that you will have an enemy in class who will seek your misfortune."

The complicated relations and perceptions suggested by these comments might be part of the explanation for why so few girls successfully complete their secondary schooling in Togo. Because in the areas we studied, there appears to be a crisis of confidence amongst schoolchildren regarding the validity of their marks – no one Plan Togo met believed their marks had anything much to do with their work – a girl getting good marks is perceived, particularly by boys, but also by other girls in the class, as a sign that the girl has a special relationship with the teacher. This may very well not be the case – the girl might be clever and hard-working and may be lucky enough to have a competent and honest teacher – but the fact of doing well appears to excite vicious jealousy and gossip among her fellows.

Jealousy leads to 'seeking the misfortune of others', and in Togo, where people believe deeply in the power of vodoun to effect both harm and good, fearing other people's jealousy is a significant factor. Why would you want to do well in school if, as a result, you attract bad luck to yourself or your family?

The girls in CEG Elavagnon wanted marks to be kept private – for the teacher not to call them out as he returned work to individual students. Boys in the discussion group did not volunteer anything on the negative consequences of doing well, and it's possible that they either don't fear jealousy, or don't attract it to the same degree as girls do.

It also appears that in some secondary schools, teachers are getting boys to mark the work of other students. This practice is leading to abuses. Girls in the Arc-en-Ciel club protested that girls were getting zeros for their work either because they'd refused the teacher's sexual advances, and the boy marking the work was colluding with the teacher, or because they'd refused the boy's own advances. At CEG Elavagnon, Plan Togo heard that the practice of teachers getting students to mark work was contributing to the crisis of confidence among students. Firstly they didn't believe their marks, and secondly some of them reported being subjected to insults by the classmates who'd read and marked their work.

Any practice which gives certain students power over their fellows – and particularly boys over girls – is clearly counterproductive.

Professor Amenyedzi and Judge Kounte argue⁸¹ that there are cultural modes of behaviour which normalise violence among people, including children, in Togo. They say that for instance there are initiation rites that schoolboys subject themselves to when they move up from one class to the next – trials of endurance which are a mark and a measure of the boy's virility. There is, and needs to be, active discussion and debate about the positive and negative aspects of such cultural practices. However Amenyedzi and Kounte argue that without a change in the popular apprehension of the meaning of violence, it will be difficult to eliminate violence among schoolchildren. This area clearly needs a great deal more research and discussion.

The curriculum: educating to end violence?

The curriculum taught in Togo's schools was last seriously discussed over 30 years ago, in the process that led up to the 1975 education reform (Ordinance No. 16 of 6 May 1975). Since then, the government of Togo has signed up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, both of which have engendered a great deal of discussion regionally on how to embody and advance children's rights and the principles of quality education.

The 1975 reform broke the colonial model of education, whose primary aim was to produce middle-level cadres to assist the colonial power in administration. Reform was intended to create a specifically Togolese system: "its basic principles included the introduction of national languages in school programmes, which is one of the characteristics of quality education", says Assouan Gbesso.⁸² Its goal was to develop the student's "individual and collective responsibility, sense of social justice and national solidarity".⁸³

The economic and political difficulties experienced in Togo in the intervening years have prevented much imaginative reflection on the content of teaching in schools. In any case, less than one in three of the teachers presently working in Togo's schools is a trained teacher, exposed to contemporary educational theory or gender issues and encouraged to think creatively about what and how to teach to promote human rights and gender equity. Some of the girls whom FAWE interviewed commented that the textbooks they are using "are full of negative stereotypes of women".⁸⁴ In 2002, the government began a review of the National School Manual, the national teaching guide for reading and writing in primary schools. The intention is to review for gender and ethnic stereotypes, and the government hereby affirmed its commitment to respond to the standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the aims and content of education. However, this process is still ongoing, and will need to be extended to include other subjects, not only reading and writing. And with the under-resourced conditions prevailing in Togolese schools, many books other than official textbooks are in circulation and are used in the classroom by teachers.

When Plan Togo met with students and the headmaster in the secondary school CEG Elavagnon, we were surprised to find ourselves facing a large portrait of Adolf Hitler on the wall of the classroom. None of the students we met had put it there: the drawing had been done by a previous year. But when students were invited to reflect on what Hitler meant to them, speakers were evenly divided between those who said Hitler was a "un homme brave" (a courageous man) and a powerful warrior, and those who spoke about the Nazis' genocide of Jews and slaughter of political opponents and described Hitler as a malevolent force. It was clear there was a lot of interest amongst the students in having further information on the subject: they were keen to learn more. The decision whether or not to remove the portrait of Hitler remains with the student body of CEG Elavagnon.

82 GBESSO Assouan, *Basic Education in Togo: Educating for Violence, Conflict or Peace?*, Plan Togo, Lomé, December 2005.

83 John Aglo, cited in *Basic Education in Togo*, *ibid.*

84 FAWE-Togo, *ibid.*



However, it will take considerable persistence on the part of the students of CEG Elavagnon to pursue research on Hitler and World War II: the school has no library. Nor does it have computers, or any other means of access to search engines and learning programmes on the internet (despite the fact that introduction to modern communication technology is part of the national education strategy). The students Plan Togo met commented on other aspects of the school which they experience as violence against them and their desire to learn: there is no science laboratory, nor anything remotely resembling one. There are no playing fields. And there are no latrines.

“The school of my dreams? One where there’s justice – where the marks you get reflect the work you’ve done, you don’t get beaten for nothing, and you don’t feel threatened.”

G, 18 years old, studying for her baccalauréat and thinking to be a magistrate

Plan Togo's approach to education in Togo -

and how this study will influence what we do in the future

Plan is implementing three five-year country programmes in Togo (2005–10). They follow the life cycle of childhood and address principal causes and consequences of child poverty at country level:

- A Healthy Start, whose focus is on early childhood and maternal health
- Learning for Life, which aims to ensure that all children of school-going age receive basic education and succeed in school
- Protection and Participation, which aims to ensure the protection of children of all ages and strengthen the participation of children and youth organisations in civil society

Plan's strategic approach for increasing children's participation and protection at home and in the classroom aims at:

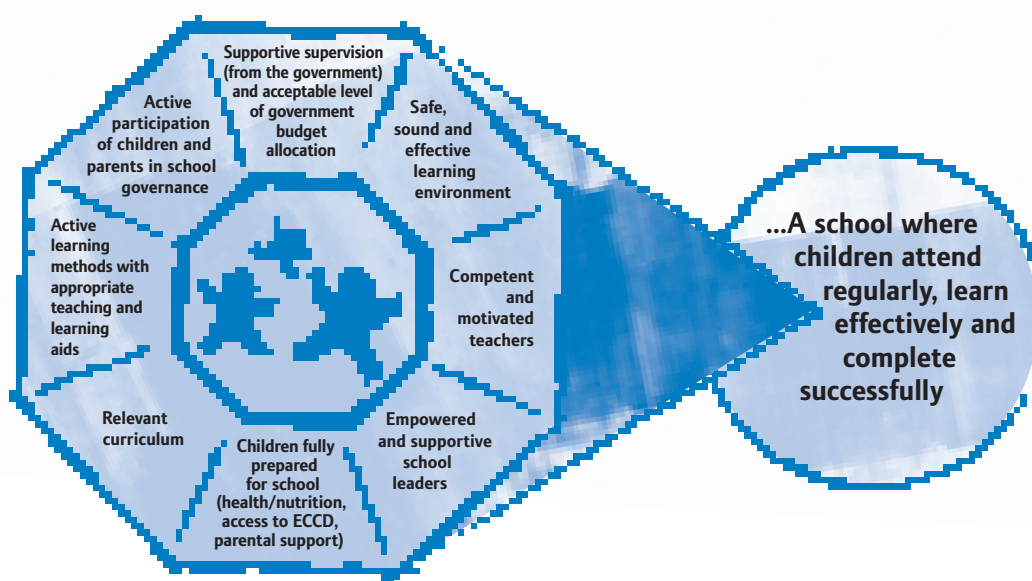
- **developing children's resilience, and their capacity to participate and advocate for their rights, in partnership with children's and youth organisations**
- **developing the capacity of adult support persons and caretakers of children to provide and create a protective environment (parents, caretakers, teachers, community leaders, NGO workers, etc)**
- **creating an enabling environment for child protection and the respect and realisation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child from community to national level**



The following project components aim at implementing Plan's strategy:

School improvement plans: supporting communities to create a long-term vision of a school fit for children through:

- promoting community participation in school life and school management
- improving quality of education through improved teaching methods and capacity building of parents' associations
- improving school infrastructure
- providing efficient preventative and basic curative health interventions at school level
- monitoring of student performance
- increasing girls' enrolment and success rates
- introducing child rights into school curricula
- increasing teacher motivation through improving working and living conditions
- stimulating the development of community-managed early education opportunities
- ensuring inclusion of all children through developing alternative education opportunities for children with special education needs



In communities with strong gender disparities in education, research on factors impeding girls from succeeding in school as well as advocacy on girl education and gender issues are introduced into school improvement plans. Plan has started to explore and better understand the links between difficulties in the education domain and child trafficking.

Strengthening children and youth in civil society: this programme component includes structured capacity development programmes with children's and youth organisations – in and out of school – to support children and adolescents to better organise themselves, network with each other, understand their rights and develop their own programmatic responses as well as to conduct advocacy in their spheres of influence to change unequal power relations affecting their lives. In addition, Plan implements a large Children and Media programme, empowering children (and adult media workers who support them) to use creative media – from traditional techniques such as song and dance, through theatre for development, to radio and video-making – to express themselves freely, bring child rights' violations into the public arena, and raise awareness on child rights.



Influencing and improving national policy and practice: this project includes advocacy at government level to introduce child rights and human rights education in the national curriculum and in teaching practice. It also aims at influencing an increase in the number of, and improve living and working conditions for, female teachers, especially in rural areas. Secondly, it involves the development of capacity of decentralised education offices to monitor teachers' classroom performance and train teachers.

Diversification of educational offer: this component aims at ensuring that education is available for the most marginalised children, such as children with disabilities or street and working children. It also aims at the establishment of community-based early childhood care and development approaches, in order to reduce household burdens on mothers and sisters taking care of younger siblings, and to better prepare children for school life.

In its long experience of intervening in the education sector in Togo, and thanks to close partnerships with communities, grassroots organisations and education authorities, Plan has found it relatively easy to increase enrolment rates. In a large-scale girls' education project in the Tchamba and Tchaoudjo districts (under which FAWE's study on violence at schools was realised), Plan and its local NGO partners were able to rapidly and significantly increase girls' school enrolment rates through efficient community mobilisation.

For the future – supporting national education policy, working more closely with parents

The results of the research work conducted for this study, however, have clearly shown that it will be necessary for the organisation to include additional elements in its programme interventions to contribute to the abolition of violence and abuse in schools. Our ongoing partnership and discussions with national and decentralised education authorities will be a good basis for this. Plan attributes much importance to ongoing discussions with the Togo Ministry of Education on the inclusion of child rights in the national curriculum.

One important element – besides improving the legal framework and education content and practice – will be to work more closely with parents and their associations to improve their understanding of children's psychology and emotional development needs, promote good parenting techniques, help them understand the impact of their and other adults' action on students, assist them to provide sufficient emotional and psychological support to their children facing violence and abuse, and encourage them to stand up against perpetrators.

Making teachers part of the solution:

Investing in teachers as essential human capital

From a regional and pan-African perspective, Plan's Strategic Framework for Africa acknowledges the high prevalence of violence against children in schools as a basic violation of children's rights within its prevention and child protection theme. Plan's Strategic Framework for Africa at the same time identifies investment in human capital, building relationships and partnerships, and the promotion of learning, as the main strategies to tackle this and other recurring problems.

A genuine, evidence-based acknowledgement of the widespread and far-reaching nature of the problem of violence against children in schools is the first gateway to a long-needed and structural solution to this child protection problem.

Also from Plan's perspective, it is believed that a very effective strategy to grasp the problem of violence at school and conceptualise solutions is to listen actively and attentively to children's own voices and opinions and include them in any problem-solving and decision-making process.

The studies done in Togo on this issue demonstrate that the main perpetrators of violence at schools are the children's teachers. Yet, on the other hand, Plan believes that teachers are by definition an essential part the solution.

Teachers are the schoolchildren's central interlocutors in ensuring their right to child-friendly, qualitative education. In line with Plan's Strategic Framework for Africa, as well as with the engagements of the Togolese government in education, investing in the professionalism of teachers will be an essential strategy to prevent violence in schools and make the school a child-friendly place where learning is cherished.

This crucial investment in the human capital of teachers needs to include:

- ensuring gender equality in the teacher corps
- better working conditions and legal status for teachers (that is, making the profession of teacher attractive)
- effective child-centered monitoring, support and supervision of teachers
- pre-, in- and on-service training for teachers
- elaboration and enforcement of a professional teacher code of conduct
- building child-centred relationships between the community and the school

The true centre of life at school and the measure of the school's quality and child-friendliness is the child. Where the Convention on the Rights of the Child rightly declares that parents are the key persons responsible for ensuring their children's right to education, children also have the right to receive an education by qualified teachers able to lead in an educational process that responds to children's individual and development needs and rights.

This publication of Plan Togo affirms that – through the active and central involvement of children – it is a priority at all levels, community, regional and national, to increase parents' sense of responsibility for their children's wellbeing. It is also a priority to make the necessary investments in teachers as critical human capital, in order for them to be empowered and made responsible – hence also able to be held accountable – to take up their role as child-centred agents of change. This may help realise Plan's vision to attain child-friendly schools – schools that are fit for children.

A call to action

Children in Togo go to school with hope in their hearts, and many leave with scarred bodies and scarred minds. The violence they experience in school is commonly accepted in Togo, shrugged off as socially acceptable behaviour – just the way things are. But beating children, sexually harassing and sexually abusing them, exploiting their labour – these all need to be named for what they are: breaches of human and children’s rights.

Plan Togo calls all actors to assume their responsibilities and take action to stop abuse and violence in schools.

To the government:

The government of Togo needs to give a firm lead by honouring its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and passing into law, and ensuring effective enforcement of, the Children’s Code, whose final draft includes articles making corporal punishment illegal at school.

All laws and rules that are meant to ensure child protection against all forms of violence need to be displayed prominently in school premises so that every pupil and every teacher is aware of their content. This needs to happen in all schools – public, private, and community.

Specifically, this includes the existing Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984, which forbids sexual relations between teachers and their students, and the contents of the Ministerial Decree of 1980, which outlaws corporal punishment in schools. Plan Togo also recommends that Law No. 84 of 16 May 1984 be revised to ensure that all forms of sexual relationship between teachers and students, irrespective of whether or not the student involved has reached the age of consent, be banished from school. School Codes of Conduct need to be made known and discussed in every school.

Plan Togo also recommends to the government to seize the opportunity of ongoing efforts to modernise the legal system to create child friendly court systems. Investigation protocols for detecting abuse (including medical exams to determine rape) need to be reviewed and improved and legal and psycho-social support given to survivors.

Plan Togo recommends that performance appraisal of teachers include non-violent teaching practices and correct behaviour at school. Because all forms of violence against children in school have become so normalised, the Ministry of Education and regional directors of education need to develop strategies that will convince teachers (and parents and their associations) that business as usual is no longer acceptable and that sanctions will follow if they commit crimes against the children in their care.

The government needs to recognise the destructive consequences for children and the education system as a whole of teachers’ lack of training and lack of morale, and the precarious livelihoods most endure. Violence against children in schools will not end or even be reduced while teachers feel aggrieved and trade what they can offer pupils – good marks – for what they have decided pupils can offer them – sex and labour. Teachers need to be trained properly, paid adequately and paid on time; if they are not, the de facto exploitation and abuse of schoolchildren will continue.

Led by the Ministry of Education, teachers themselves need urgently to develop a professional code of conduct that will reinvigorate professional pride and include clear child protection guidelines. Such a code needs to articulate the frontline role of teachers in actualising the rights of children.

Plan Togo also advocates increasing the number of female teachers in rural areas to reduce the incidence of sexual abuse in schools. This will require a gender approach to take into consideration the difficulties female teachers experience in rural zones. Urgent steps need to be taken to recruit women teachers into the public teaching service and to encourage private and community schools to recruit women teachers. They need to be offered conditions that will encourage them to stay in the teaching service.

The government needs to initiate stronger control mechanisms for community schools (EDILs) and ensure strict observance of children's rights to quality education and protection against violence through regular in-service training and effective supervision of the large number of untrained and unqualified teachers.

Plan Togo also asks for the establishment of national, regional and prefectural ombudspersons for children, and the establishment of a Child Helpline and response services that are accessible to children.

Finally, Plan Togo recommends urgently that the school curriculum be reformed, to include children's and human rights education, and that the teaching by competences approach piloted by the Ministry of Education be extended to all schools.

To donor agencies:

Plan Togo calls on donor agencies to take a stand and support the fight against violence, abuse and the exploitation of children by all possible means. They should commit, and make more resources available, to education programmes in Togo, particularly education programmes that take child protection into consideration.

Donor agencies should develop and widely disseminate consistent policies on child protection issues, with a view to influencing governments and development organisations to integrate children and human right issues in their policies and practices.

To non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society actors:

Plan Togo calls on all NGOs to listen to children and include anti-violence programming in their education activities. It also calls on NGOs to include child protection measures in their own organisational procedures, and to ensure that they have qualified staff to address child protection issues, to provide support to child survivors of violence and to interact with and adequately refer children who disclose abuse or violence. NGOs should also promote and support the government in ensuring that child protection services are available at all levels and accessible to children.

NGOs should also make a conscious effort to promote gender programming in education that goes beyond merely increasing girls' enrolment and completion rates. They should incorporate gender education into the training of the children's and youth groups they interact with, to ensure development of self-esteem and respectful relationships among boys and girls.

Plan calls on NGOs also to support efforts to create ombudspersons for children at school level. Children in all schools – public, private and community – need a neutral person in their environment to whom they can report violence and abuse, in the knowledge that their complaint will be treated seriously and confidentially.

To communities and parents' associations:

Local community schools — EDILs — and all private and unofficial schools need to subscribe to a charter that defines children's rights and outlaws violence against them.

Plan urges all village development committees, school committees, and parents' associations to include activities against violence and abuse of children in their development plans. Associations of Parents of Pupils (APEs) need to be braver in defending their children against violence and abuse in school, and in confronting teachers and heads of schools. Individual APEs ought to take active steps to find out whether violence and abuse are features of the schools their children attend; such enquiries will require that they ask children what is happening at the school, and listen to what they have to say.

To children:

Plan Togo encourages children to get organised. They should refuse to suffer in silence, network with their peers, and speak up to people they trust.

Children's solidarity organisations, which allow schoolchildren to discuss what they can do to defend their interests and make their own schools safer places, need to be encouraged. Information about such groups needs to be spread through available networks, including NGOs, and schoolchildren encouraged to form such groups, with a view to ending abuse and promoting the rights of all children.

To the whole society:

All measures that provide an economic counterweight to the lure of trafficking need to be considered – whether they include a system of micro-credits, to enable parents to pay for their children's education without taking food out of other children's mouths; small awards and bursaries to enable children to stay on at school, or similar social protection measures; establishing local centres in villages where children are able to gain an apprenticeship in a craft.

Programmatic recommendations

Violence in schools and the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Declaration of September 2000 has united member states of the United Nations around common goals to significantly reduce poverty and misery by 2015:

“We will spare no effort, to free our fellow men, women and children from the object and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected.”

Gender parity in primary and secondary education, intimately linked to violence and abuse at schools, was set to be achieved by 2005 – a decade before the other goals. In 2000, the World Education Forum, meeting in Dakar, adopted a clear statement reaffirming education as a fundamental human right and emphasising the importance for governments to employ rights-based approaches to achieve Education for All (EFA). The Dakar Framework for Action highlights the need for acceptable standards of education, including non-violent teaching methods and child-safe schools, both of which are crucial for providing equal access to education and eliminating discrimination in schools. They are also essential for creating a learning environment which gives every child the chance to develop to his or her own full potential.

The Global Movement for Children established ‘reducing violence and abuse of children’ as one of the number one priorities to make the world fit for children. Yet much needs to be done to ensure that responsible people at all levels include this demand of the world's children in national plans to meet the Millennium Goals.

Making education programmatically

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger:

- Improve understanding of child poverty, its emotional and psychological impact on children and their education, and its links to violence and abuse, in order to improve programmes
- Reduce poverty-related social exclusion and discrimination against children at school
- Strengthen children's nutrition and school feeding programmes to reduce food battle between students at school

Achieving universal primary education:

- Improve quality of education and include human and child rights education in national curriculum and teaching practice
- Strengthen children's participation in school governance and development and application of school code of conduct
- Strengthen parents' understanding of children's emotional and psychological needs, child (and parents') rights and parenting techniques; strengthen parents' associations to negotiate with teachers and education authorities in order to reduce violence and abuse and increase their participation in school governance
- Strengthen monitoring of teacher performance to include anti-violent and non-abusive behaviour in and outside the classroom
- Ensure efficient denunciation processes, protocols, rehabilitation and legal services for survivors of violence and abuse at school
- Improve living and working conditions of teachers, and their legal status
- Ensure adequate training of teachers in non-violent and participatory teaching techniques and cooperative discipline in classroom
- Improve teachers' motivation
- Include child protection screening in the recruitment process of new teachers and conduct screening with those already employed
- Improve legal and institutional frameworks (including school code of conduct) and national action plans to ensure education for all to include the abolition of violence and abuse at schools

Reducing child mortality:

- Prevent violence, abuse and exploitation at schools to reduce the risk of death
- Abolish sexual abuse of girl students to reduce teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection of children

child-safe: recommendations

Promoting gender equality and empowering women:

- Reduce gender-related discrimination and violence at school
- Promote gender equality in the teachers' corps
- Increase the number of female teachers, especially in rural areas
- Abolish early marriage and other traditional harmful practices that impede girls from enjoying their education and protection rights
- Make school books and curriculum free from gender stereotypes and discrimination, and render teaching methods gender sensitive

Improving maternal health:

- Include adequate services for schoolchildren who have survived sexual violence
- Educate on sexual health rights and needs at school

Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:

- Educate in sexual health rights at schools to ensure students and teachers are aware of risks
- Include high norms and standards against sexual relationships between students and teachers in school code of conduct
- Conduct research on sexual abuse and harassment at schools to understand their implications for sexual health and as potential vectors for transmission of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases to improve programming

Ensuring environmental sustainability:

- Provide adequate water and sanitation facilities at school level to reduce risks of sexual harassment and address girls' specific hygiene needs, and to reduce excessive workload for children fetching water in schools

Developing a global partnership for development:

- Ensure global learning and sharing on successful measures to reduce violence and abuse
- Advocate for greater budget allocations of donors and governments for anti-violence work at school and household level
- Work with children as partners in development and increase space for children and youth organisations defending their rights in civil society at global level
- Promote human rights approaches to education internationally

Annexe 1

Categories of violence against children

These sub-categories of child maltreatment, and their definitions, were devised following an extensive review of different countries' definitions of child maltreatment and a 1999 WHO consultation on child abuse prevention.

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include, but is not limited to, the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Neglect and negligent treatment is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competences commensurate with her or his personal potential, and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts toward the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, and moral or social-emotional development.

Annexe 2

Children's and human rights and education

The International Declaration of Human Rights and a series of international rights treaties guarantee to every child and youth, every woman and man, the right to:

- free and compulsory elementary education
- readily available forms of secondary and higher education
- freedom from discrimination in all areas and at all levels of education, and equal access to continuing education and vocational training
- information about health, nutrition, reproduction and family planning

Rights being indivisible and interdependent, a series of other rights depends on the realisation of the right to education. For example, a child without a birth certificate (a fundamental human and children's right) is not allowed to participate in national school exams in Togo.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides an ideal vision and at the same time a practical framework for the right to education as well as for other rights of children. It asks State Parties to:

... recognise the right of the child to education, and...shall...make primary education compulsory and available free to all; ... make (secondary education) available and accessible to every child...: make higher education accessible to all...; make education and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children...: take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates... State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:... the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential: the development of respect for human rights...: the development and the respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, languages and values..." (Articles 28 and 29).

The Convention against Discrimination in Education furthermore requests State Parties to:

... undertake ... to ... discontinue any ... practices which involve discrimination in education ...; to formulate, develop and apply a national policy which ... will ... promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in ... education and in particular: ... To make primary education free and compulsory; make secondary education in its different forms available and accessible to all; make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity; assure compliance by all with the obligation to attend school prescribed by law ...; To encourage and intensify ... the education of persons who have not received any primary education or who have not completed the entire primary education. ... It is essential to recognise the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools and ... the use or the teaching of their own language. ... (Article 3,4 and 5)

Article 29 of the Child Rights Convention formulates clear aims for education, which asks State Parties to make the necessary efforts to ensure a good quality of education, developing children's full potential and preparing them for a responsible life in a free society and enshrining the value of respect for all others.

Article 19 of the Convention protects children against all forms of violence – physical or mental, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment, exploitation, sexual abuse – as well as against corporal punishment. Other articles of the Convention have thus to be seen in connection with it, such as Article 5 (appropriate direction and guidance through parents), and Article 28, that requires school discipline to be administered in accordance with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the Convention.

Importantly, the Convention also asks State Parties to ensure that its content is widely known to children as well as adults (Article 42). Inclusion of Child Rights Education in the national curriculum is recognised and recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as an important measure.

Togo has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and with this act agreed to make all efforts to undertake all measures to ensure its implementation.

Annexe 3

Children’s ability to overcome violence

The violence which children experience in the school system in Togo frightens them, isolates them, limits their educational progress, and can cause them psychological as well as physical harm.

The ability of children to overcome trauma as a result of violence and abuse depends on a range of factors such as a child’s age, family history, his or her physical and mental wellbeing, emotional and other support received at family level or through others, the length of exposure to abuse, the relationship with the perpetrator, and the severity of the abuse. Clearly, support from parents and caretakers as well as peers is crucial for children not only to prevent, but also to learn to live with, the psychological impact of abuse.

Children’s resilience – their ability to cope with life’s difficulties

Vulnerability (life difficulties)

Low self esteem
Discrimination against girls
Power relations between genders and between adults and children
Age and lack of experience
Exclusion
Violence and abuse

Resilience (coping mechanisms)

Belonging to a group
Space to talk
Family support and understanding
Love and affection
Encouragement
Communications skills
Personal relationships with their peers

Further resources

- Beyond victims and villains: Addressing sexual violence in the education sector, The Panos Institute, London, 2003
- Children and Poverty, Christian Children's Fund, Richmond, Virginia, 2003
- Counselling Guidelines on Child Sexual Abuse, Southern African AIDS Training (SAT) Programme, Harare, 2001
- Ending Corporal Punishment of Children: Making it Happen, Save the Children, London, 2001
- For the price of a bike: Child trafficking in Togo, Plan Togo, March 2005
- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, www.endcorporalpunishment.org
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