

# schools show the way



How schools are delivering better education by addressing Domestic Violence

*"If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."*

*"Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."*

**Mahatma Gandhi**



### Did you know?

- Sharp gender bias has led to five crore missing women from the population in South Asia. This can be attributed to various forms of violence, discrimination as well as neglect in care and upbringing faced by girls and women in South Asia.<sup>1</sup>
- Domestic Violence occurs across societies, regardless of class, caste, religion, education and geography. It not only affects the woman, but the entire family - especially children.<sup>2</sup>
- Of all the children in the world who are affected by Domestic Violence, South Asia has the largest number even by the most optimistic estimate – 40.7 million.<sup>2</sup>

Source references throughout this publication:

1 Oxfam briefing paper 2004, South Asia  
[www.wecanendvaw.org](http://www.wecanendvaw.org)

2 "Behind Closed Doors, The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children", UNICEF 2006



## What is Domestic Violence?

- Any action that violates a person's dignity and basic human rights is violence. When such actions happen at home, between individuals related by intimacy, blood, or law, it is called Domestic Violence, or DV.
- DV is most often committed by men against women. It is widespread in our society because women are valued less than men, and this must change.
- Children witness or experience DV when they see their parents fighting at home, their mothers getting physically or verbally abused, forced out of the house, or neglected. Children themselves may be victims of Domestic Violence.
- DV could be committed by any male member in the family, and it could be directed at different women within the household. A young woman or girl who is forced to stop studying, remain at home or married off early is a victim of DV.
- Apart from the obvious physical and emotional abuse DV could take many subtle forms; such as not providing enough money or taking away income, neglecting health and welfare, denying access or opportunities that male members in a family enjoy.



## How does DV affect schools?

- DV affects the ability of schools to deliver education in many different ways. For instance, it adversely affects the enrolment and dropout rate of children, especially girls. DV also affects academic performance and social behaviours.
- Children who are affected by DV often exhibit rest-

less, violent and delinquent behaviour. They can bully other children and are three times more likely to get into fights. They can lose interest in school work, get depressed and even have suicidal tendencies.

- Several studies<sup>2</sup> also reveal that children who witness DV are more likely to be affected by violence as adults; either as victims or perpetrators.
- Alcohol abuse, depression, low self-esteem, violent practices in the home, criminal behaviour, sexual problems, substance abuse are some of the other problems that may affect them later in life.

## But DV is a private issue, why should schools address it?

- DV is often assumed to be relationship trouble between couples, something that could be resolved through private counselling. However, many studies have shown that DV is a symptom of a widespread social problem, one that includes female infanticide, son-obsession, neglect of girl children, child marriage, dowry, trafficking of girls and women.
- All such examples of violence against women have the same root cause as DV – the fact that our society values women less. That is why there is a culture of acceptance and silence even though one out of every two women faces violence in their daily life.<sup>1</sup>
- Just because it happens in every household does not mean it is right, and that is why there are laws against all these practices. DV is not a private issue in the eyes of law.
- But apart from being a social problem, DV is impor-



tant in the context of schools because it affects children deeply, and the schools ability to nurture young minds into responsible citizens of the country.

### How can schools address DV?

- Schools play an important role in building values and character of the students. Teachers are role models; respected members of the community with a large circle of influence. They influence the lives of students - future citizens, their families, and therefore society.
- Schools can address DV by speaking out against attitudes and behaviour that promote violence against girls and women, and by instilling values of equality, respect and non-violence within the school.



### Does addressing DV require schools to provide support services?

- School staff already have enough to do and nobody expects a school to be anything other than a school. Addressing DV in schools does not necessarily mean offering support services within the school.
- It could mean consciously encouraging respectful attitudes and behaviours in relationships, implementing a range of simple strategies such as listening to children, being sensitive to troubled children and raising awareness on the issue.
- Experience from those schools that have addressed DV shows that pressure on teachers actually reduces, because classroom behaviour improves and incidents of bullying noticeably decrease.

Addressing DV at the school need not be additional work; rather, its inclusion will aid schools in meeting their mandate as well as benefitting the students and the wider community.

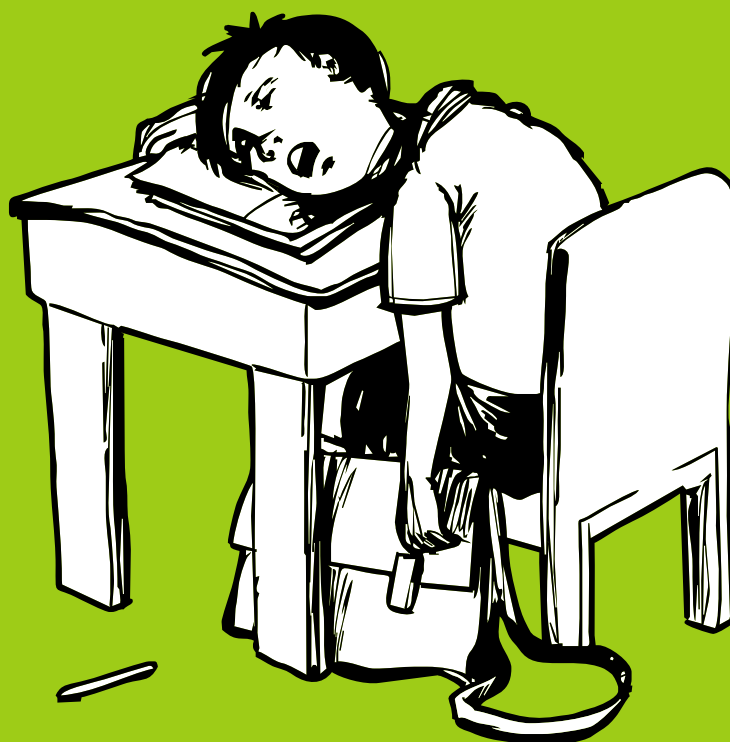
### How will parents react?

- Most parents actually want what is best for their child, but are unaware of the impact of DV on children. Schools can help parents recognize this, by involving parents in the child's education and development at the school.
- Parents may need support in resolving their own problems, and in some cases schools or teachers can work with others to help the child as well as the family to get the support they need. Even if the school cannot end all DV, they can help children by demonstrating support, and teaching that violence is not Ok even if it happens.

### Are there examples of schools who have actually addressed DV?

- Yes. In fact, there may be examples of good practices in your own school that other institutions can learn from.
- Over the next few pages you will be able to explore a range of simple, effective strategies that schools have adopted to address DV in their communities, and consequently improved the quality of education for their children.





## The little boy who slept in Class!

*One day a teacher noticed that nine year old Ranjan in her class was in deep sleep. She also noticed that he had not brought any food from home. The teacher asked a few classmates to share their food with the boy, and through gentle conversation found out a little about the situation at his home. Ranjan's parents were both working, she found out, and they often fought and shouted till late night. "I keep waking up", the little boy said guiltily.*

*The teacher discussed the issue with the headmaster and they jointly formed a plan of action. First, the teacher called both parents for a meeting. Ranjan's mother arrived, but when she heard the story, she denied any violence at home.*

*The teacher then arranged for a few classmates to help Ranjan with his studies after school hours. She visited the boy's home with material on the impact of DV on children, but the father was enraged, "Ranjan will not attend your school from tomorrow", he shouted. The teacher then alerted an active local youth group about the issue, without disclosing the identity of Ranjan's family, and encouraged them to perform neighbourhood street plays on "DV and children".*

*It took several home visits before the father began to listen, and understand how violence at home was affecting little Ranjan. Over time, the persistent efforts of the teacher paid off. The good news is that the boy is still in school, and is showing signs of improvement. He is cheerful, alert, and has made more friends. Sometimes, when he forgets to bring food from home, his friends are glad to share theirs.*





# Schools Build Confidence

Young people who are affected by DV often feel a sense of shame and self blame. Their emotional and social development gets stifled. They worry about being abandoned and feel guilty that they are betraying a family secret by talking about the violence. They feel helpless and powerless. To learn and grow into healthy adults, children must feel confident in the world and in themselves. DV can destroy a child's confidence, and his or her ability to learn.



Schools have successfully tried to build self confidence of young people through simple, yet impactful classroom approaches. **Which of these examples can be found in your school?**

### Listening, believing and respecting children

- Demonstrating to children that there are adults who care about them and their opinions.
- Assuring the child that the violence at home is not their fault.
- Teachers take seriously what children say, rather than dismissing them as fantasy or lying.

### Giving special attention to affected children

- Children who are frequently absent, whose academic performance is deteriorating or who display aggressive behaviour probably come from violent homes, and need special attention.
- Teachers inquire why...rather than make assumptions and blame the child.
- Teachers encourage classmates to visit and find out why the child is absent, or help the child to catch up on school work.

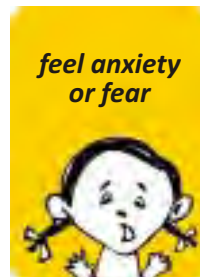
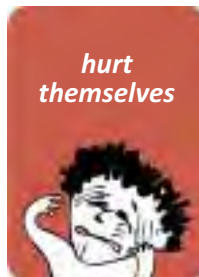
### Using creative methods to help children express their feelings

- It takes a lot of courage for a child to break the silence around DV. Using art or drama sessions help children share what they are feeling or thinking.
- Having a question-box in class, where kids can drop notes anonymously, sharing their worries. Answers are written on the black board regularly, and discussed so all kids learn.

### Training classmates with peer support skills

- Often children find it easier to share their problems with peers. Simple peer support skills include when to tell an adult what is happening.
- Having a quiet space at play times where there are peer support counsellors to talk to if a child needs.

***Look out for these behaviours among children, they could be effects of Domestic Violence!***





# Schools Break Stereotypes

Rigid gender-based roles are stressful for children and adults alike. Girls are conditioned to sacrifice education and career for the sake of the family, while boys are pressurised to start earning early. Such stereotyping also influences how DV affects children. Typically girls respond to DV by withdrawing, becoming over submissive or fearful as they identify with the victims of violence. Social pressure on boys to be “manly and strong” creates a sense of inadequacy, as they are unable to protect their mothers. These social pressures result in children becoming either passive, depressed, aggressive or bullies in school.

Schools across the region have taken exemplary steps to instill gender-equal values in their classrooms. **Which of these examples can be found in your school?**

### Challenging social attitudes that girls are weak and inferior while boys are stronger and superior

- Encouraging boys to stop eve teasing and harassment.
- Assigning tasks to both boys and girls in turn, to break the taboos.
- Encouraging girls to take up roles that are considered 'boys' roles, such as those involving sports, public speaking or technology.
- Discouraging attitudes and comments like “boys are not supposed to cry – are you a girl?”

### Encouraging boys and girls to adopt gender equal roles

- Helping children identify tasks they can take up at home, including sharing of household chores.
- Encouraging girls and boys to follow their passion for higher studies, especially when they are non

stereotypical, for example, technical streams for girls and arts streams for boys.

- Ask children to find role models of people who have broken gender stereotypes, and make posters for sharing in the class.
- Encouraging teachers and students to challenge text books that reinforce gender based inequalities.

### Counselling parents

- Building rapport with parents and helping them think through the long-term impact of their decisions on children.
- Discussing with parents problems of early marriage for girls, aggressive behaviour among boys, and suppression of caring nature among boys.
- Encouraging parents to support their children's choice of subjects even if they do not fit typical gendered roles.

*“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”*

**Rabindranath Tagore**



## Montu flies into space!

*Montu was born in a small town in Haryana. As a child she was fascinated by the small airplanes at the local flying club. Every once in a while she would ask her father if she could get a ride in them. She was also wonderstruck by the stories of how JRD Tata piloted the first flights in India. At school, teachers often found her sketching airplanes instead of playing with friends.*

*Though her father encouraged her to join the flying club, he was horrified when she chose flying as a career. Montu managed to win over her family's objections to become Punjab Engineering College's first woman aeronautical engineer in 1982. Later, though her parents wanted her to get married and settle down, Montu was determined to go to the US for further studies. She got her Masters and then her Doctorate in America.*

*Just before her space flight in 2003, she was asked about her inspirations. She said "...my earliest inspirations have been my teachers at high school. The amount of effort they put in their courses... and just the compliments they gave students for coming up with new ideas... It makes me wonder how they even had the patience...."*

*Aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia, Montu carried a white 5-foot silk banner as part of a world wide campaign to honour teachers - It showed a tiny schoolgirl bowing to a teacher with outstretched arms.*

*Montu is better known to us as Kalpana Chawla, the first Indian woman to fly into space in 1997.*



# Schools Say No to Violence

The adverse impact of DV in classrooms is a challenge that many schools struggle with. It requires an understanding of the issue at all levels as well as a clear set of guidelines and policies. The harmful lessons about the use of violence in relationships that children learn at home can be challenged in the violence free environment of the school.



Schools have instituted a “no violence” policy to ensure a violence free environment for young people. **Which of these examples can be found in your school?**

### Having a clear policy against using violence

- Publicly displaying a message like “Our school believes in mutual respect and non-violence, which is everyone's right, and we will work to ensure everyone enjoys this right”.
- Displaying posters and leaflets on DV and sources of help on school notice boards or waiting rooms that provide a clear message to all stakeholders that violence is not tolerated in this school.
- Have a poster competition on “saying NO to violence against women” and then displaying posters made by kids all over school.
- Making child friendly material available to help children learn about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at home and outside.

### Having a school safety policy

- Developing a set of procedures, such as what to do when a child reports instances of DV, or who to contact during an emergency at the school.

### Building awareness and skills of stakeholders, including parents

- Enabling teachers, counsellors and social workers to recognize and meet the needs of young people exposed to violence in the home.
- Having workshops for students, parents and teachers to explore non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, including DV.
- Helping parents realize impact of DV on children's lives.

### Exploring ways of resolving conflicts without the use of violence

- Using real life examples of conflicts that are being resolved using violence in school and brainstorming or doing a role play on alternative peaceful ways of resolving them.
- Teachers themselves do not shout, and they encourage other kids not to shout at each other.

*“If you are teacher in whatever capacity you have a very special role to play because more than anybody else, it is you who are shaping the future generations”*

**APJ Abdul Kalam**, Former President of India



# Schools Influence Public Opinion

Social customs and attitudes that support DV are entrenched at all levels in our society; at home, family, community, society and the State. Underlying the acceptance of violence against women is the belief that women are fundamentally of less value than men. This belief affects women's lives, rights and their opportunities in almost all spheres of life.

By engaging with the family and society, schools are playing a critical role in ending Domestic Violence. **Which of these examples can be found in your school?**

### **Initiating or supporting campaigns that are working to end violence against women**

- Making time within the school schedule to periodically hold workshops for school staff, parents and students on gender equality and DV campaigns.
- Encouraging students to individually or collectively participate in public campaigns.

### **Speaking out, and acting against violence affecting the child**

- Protecting the child's right to a violence free life by making appropriate links, and reassuring the child that violence can end.

- Encouraging teachers and counsellors to intervene in cases where young people are facing DV, discrimination or social pressure at home, for example, in cases of early marriage for girls.
- Helping parents make to link with support groups wherever necessary.

### **Taking a public stand on the issue**

- Raising this issue in inter school forums to help other schools recognize the role they can play to protect children and end DV.
- Joining and connecting with other networks, alliances and institutions that address the issue.

*"One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child."*

**Carl Jung, Psychologist**



## Schools Join Hands

The "We Can - End All Violence Against Women" is a South Asia wide campaign that addresses the root causes of discrimination against girls and women to end violence against them. The campaign seeks to make a difference by creating 5 million Change Makers by 2011. Change Makers are ordinary men and women who actively influence others in their own sphere of influence. The campaign also aims to influence individuals in state and social institutions to develop norms and policies, and implement programmes to prevent violence against women.



*"I used to believe that DV was not possible in my family. Once, I was helping a girl in our neighbourhood to continue with her studies, when I realised that my own sister was in the same situation. When the truth hit me, I was stunned. I am making efforts to ensure that my sister can finish her studies uninterrupted."*

**Rudra Poudel Student Nepal**



*"One of my students was being forced to marry. When I protested, I was asked whether educating the girl would guarantee that she would find a job, and that she would share her earnings. I reasoned that even if that did not happen, the girl will be able to fend for herself. At least she will not be vulnerable or dependent."*

*Her mother seemed to understand that. I told her that the girl was too young to marry. It was illegal, and her life may be in danger if she conceives at this age. This convinced the mother and she cancelled the marriage."*

**Uma Devi Teacher India**



*Amina teaches girls from standard six to ten. Every month she holds discussion about violence against women in the school compound with students. Often their parents and relatives come willingly. "I am a teacher; if I say something to my students, to their parents or anyone, they listen to me. They come willingly because they want to know how to make their life peaceful."*

**Amina Khanam Teacher Bangladesh**



*"The We Can campaign has taught me valuable lessons that I would like to pass on to others. I have eight brothers, and all of them are violent with their wives. I am also not blameless, but I now see how DV is degrading or life-endangering. I also realise that if men continue to behave like this, they would be throwing their own daughter's lives into peril. I knew I would be doing so if I continued to ill treat my wife."*

**MA Hannan Teacher Bangladesh**



*"I had counselled a student who was badly affected by DV. Next day her father arrived, angry that I had spoken to his daughter about 'personal' matters. I said there was nothing personal about DV, and that it was affecting his daughter's studies. I told him about the campaign and importance of a safe home for his wife and child. He calmed down and actually thanked me after that. All I can say is that I educated a student's parent on DV, and it worked."*

**Anjali Rani Devi Teacher Bangladesh**



*"Boys in my school are decent. Though they sometimes tease us, they hear us out. I think youth energy can help address many issues, particularly issues relating to DV. I want to discuss this with my class friends. We need to work together to give girls and women a sense of self worth, and help break walls within and without."*

**Bobby Karmacharya Student Nepal**



Across South Asia, schools are delivering better quality education by addressing the adverse impact of Domestic Violence on children.

In this publication we share some of the simple strategies used by schools. Surely there must be many more.

Please do share your challenges and achievements so collectively we can find a way to end Domestic Violence and build a more equal society.



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