

See our World

An essential part of Plan’s work is to help create spaces for children and young people to discuss together the issues which affect their lives, then ensure adults respect their views so that children may be involved in community decision-making. This communication has been prepared with and by children directly and is intended to give a sense of the kinds of issues children discuss and how they work together.

The problem of violence at schools

Dear sponsors,

We are a group of children and adults living in El-Beheira (a governorate in the northern part of Egypt where Plan is working). We would like to tell you about a problem that affects our daily lives, namely: violence in our schools. Almost every one has faced violence at school, and according to statistics by the United Nations’ Children’s Fund (UNICEF), an estimated 50% of children in rural areas are subjected to physical discipline in schools. Teachers beat us in class, and we are forced to collect rubbish from the school playground.

How this problem affects our lives

The term ‘violence’ has been used to describe many problems that we face at school, including: being beaten by teachers; being bullied by other pupils; verbal abuse; neglect; and not being allowed to express our opinions. In addition, ‘beating’ is still considered an acceptable way in our area, to raise and educate children, and some of our parents believe that beating is in our best interests, so they allow our teachers to be rough with us, to ensure that we are good at school.

“Sometimes teachers beat us and give us very low marks in the monthly tests, so that we have to have private lessons with them. They treat the children who take private lessons, better than they treat us. They even help them to write their exams. Some of us hate coming to school, because other pupils laugh when the teacher hits us.” Iman, 12 years old.



An example of school punishment.

“This is how we were brought up and there is nothing wrong with it.” Hafiza, a local mother.

Corporal punishment is accepted as a way of enforcing discipline upon children, both at school and at home. Threats of beating are commonly used by teachers who want to control an overcrowded class and it is commonly believed that hitting a child, whether a quick slap or spanking with a stick, will produce the desired obedience. In Egypt, corporal punishment in schools was banned by a ministerial decree in 1998, and this was followed by a second decree that extended the ban to any type of physical harm inflicted by teachers at any level of education, including university and private schools.

However, it is a fact that it is not fully enforced.

“Our teachers beat us for anything. For example, sometimes, I am beaten for looking out of the classroom window, or for doing my maths exercise wrong. However, he did not take the time to help us understand, and if we understood we would have given the right answers.” Ahmed, 14 years old.

“All what we want from our teachers is that they talk to us and listen to us, because we need them to understand our fears and concerns. If we do not understand our lessons, we are afraid to ask them to explain it to us, as they make fun of us in front of the whole class. We hope that such teachers will be punished.” Ahmed A, 11 years old.

Bullying is very common here, with the older pupils thinking that they are grown-ups, and the younger ones obeying them and fearing them. All teachers react in different ways to bullying. For example, some teachers just ignore it, whilst others punish the whole group, without knowing who was wrong. Some teachers try to address the problem, by passing it onto a social worker who might solve the problem, or just hold a meeting with our parents to inform them of our behaviour and let them deal with it. We now hate going to school because of this problem, and some of us have even ‘dropped-out.’ In addition, some of our

parents cannot afford to pay our school fees, or have to save really hard and are late paying them. As a result, our headmaster reads out the names of those who have not paid their fees, in front of the whole school and this makes us feel so embarrassed that some of us do not go back to school which is worse than being beaten.

Why we think the violence is still happening

- No-one thinks of the impact violence has on children
- It is an easy solution to hit someone.
- It is a reflection of the violence our teachers were subjected to, when they were young.
- It forces more children to attend private classes, and so the teachers earn more money.



During Learn without Fear Campaign



A drawing that shows the teacher as a friend.

What are we doing about it?

Working together with Plan and our local leaders, we have held awareness sessions for our parents, teachers, and fellow pupils, on the effects of school violence. In addition, our parents, teachers and education officials, attended awareness sessions on child rights and learnt about the importance of education. Some of our teachers also learnt about the best way to deal with

children and how we can express our opinions in the classroom. We also took part in the ‘learn without fear’ campaigns at school (to reduce violence and bullying) and were pleased that so many people attended. We also arranged a camp where we could discuss key issues and express ourselves. In future, we hope that our teachers will continue to receive refresher training on how to manage their classes without resorting to violence, and that they will learn more about our rights and be aware of child protection measures. The parents' council role in our schools should be activated. Our teachers need to earn a good income so that we are not forced to have private lessons, and we need to set up remedial classes so that fewer children have to have private lessons. There should be a social worker in every school so that he/she can help us with the issues we face at school, and above all, we need to have fun as well as doing well in our studies, so that we can express ourselves without being afraid of the consequences.

“This document was prepared by over 120 children and 80 adults, who came together to tell you about the violence some of us face at school. Next year, another group will share another important issue with you, so we hope that you have enjoyed learning about our situation and our efforts to improve it.”

This document was reviewed and edited by Plan staff.