



REPORT ON RAPCAN junior YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROCESS ON VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the call by the South African Human Rights Commission for submissions on violence in schools, it was decided that this group of young people would be approached and requested to provide input on their experiences and opinions of violence in schools. Given that the time frames for submissions to the commission were inconsistent with the timeframes and existing commitments of the group it was decided, in consultation with one of the organisers of the hearings, that a late report would be submitted to provide qualitative information relating to the experiences of the group for the possible inclusion into the commission's report on the process.

2. ABOUT RAPCAN JUNIOR AND THE PARTICIPANTS

RAPCAN junior is a young people's participation and development group that was established in May 2006. Because of the developmental elements the group is small with a full compliment of 16 participants. Members of the group range in age from 13 to 16 years. The group meets every fortnight in order to develop understanding about different social issues, build skills and ensure opportunity for participation in local events. The participants speak English, Xhosa and Afrikaans as home languages, the discussions in the group take place primarily in English, participants speak the language of their choice and this is translated into English if required.



Participants in the discussion on violence in schools come from six schools in the following areas in Cape Town: Retreat; Mitchells Plain; Pinelands; Claremont and the City Centre.

3. PROCESS OF THE VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS WORKSHOP

The violence in schools session was held on 23 September 2006 with 12 participants and a follow up session was conducted on 7 October 2006 with six of the original 12 participants.

In previous sessions the group have discussed issues of discrimination and bullying, these sessions raised many issues related to the experiences of group members at their schools. These discussions formed a basis for the discussion on their experiences of violence in schools. Feedback given by the group on 26 August 2006 is included in this report as it pertains to issues of violence at school.

The programme outline for 23 September follows:

1. The group was divided into smaller working groups and asked to prepare a role play on violence from a scenario. The facilitators put boundaries in place to ensure that the role plays were safe. The group then held a discussion in the big group on what they had observed and how this related to their experiences at school. These responses were recorded.
2. The group was again divided into working groups and asked to identify the types of violence they experience at schools and to indicate where in the schools the violence is prevalent. These groups were also asked to discuss and identify the causes and the effects of this violence at school. The group provided a drawing of their school identifying sites of violence as well as written cards with their causes and effects recorded. This information was supported by recording the content of the feedback and discussion that each group provided.
3. The participants were asked to work individually to write answers to a questionnaire relating to their opinions on solutions to violence in schools.

The programme on 7 October follows:

1. The preliminary report and presented to the participants to check accuracy, for further discussion and to make necessary changes.
2. In light of the fact that the groups responses in the previous workshop focussed on learner on learner violence, there was a gap in information on issues pertaining to teaching in the feedback, in spite of different conversations with some members of the group regarding their teachers during the past months. The Participants were thus asked to identify what they think makes a bad teacher and what they think makes a good teacher. The group offered examples based on their experiences at school. These were recorded during the discussion.

4. FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Violence Role Plays

The feedback to this exercise was taken in the format of a group reflection and discussion that was aimed at understanding the elements that are present in the build up to a violent situation and to explore ways in which to avoid or diffuse potentially violent situations.

The group expressed the idea that other people who are not part of the fight often make the fight happen by spreading stories or encouraging other people to fight each other.



“Hulle sê kom, slaan hom, slaan hom” (They say come, hit him, hit him)

They noted that people enjoy watching fights it is a distraction and entertainment.

“It’s like watching a show on TV”

“Ons lag vir hulle” (We laugh at them)

They discussed the different roles and reactions to fights at schools by girls and boys, it was noted that girls and boys are both responsible for starting and being involved in fights. In relation to responding to fights, the group felt that it is more acceptable for boys to fight boys, that if two boys are fighting they would not intervene because they would get hurt. One participant indicated that depending on what he knew about the situation he might get involved to stop it.

In relation to fights involving boys hurting girls, the boys all indicated that they saw it as their duty to get involved in breaking up a fight where a boy is hitting a girl. Some of the girls said that they would get involved but others said that they would not and have to stay out of it because they would be hurt.

Discussion on the roleplays indicated that it's not always easy to see who started the fight, sometimes the person who starts by insulting or hurting one person can become the victim later because of this. The group illustrated this by showing a child being laughed at and teased by a group of children, in the role play the person who was initially being victimised, later came and stabbed one of the children who had laughed at her.

In relation to this the group indicated that people who feel weak will go and get friends or weapons to make them feel powerful and strong.

"then you go and fetch a scissor or a knife"

There was some discussion on the effects of fighting on the people involved. They were asked to discuss the impact of fighting on the main aggressor of the fight. The group agreed that often the person who wins fights gains popularity at school.

"You get lots of friends if you win, they all want to be your friend"

They also noted and that aggressive situations often escalate and that the outcomes of the situation were not always intended. In light of this they noted that the aggressor may feel remorse or fear afterwards.

"you feel very sorry afterwards"

"they feel scared about what they have done"

They noted that the victim of a fight or violent incident feels embarrassed, humiliated, hurt and will want to get revenge.

4.2 Discussion on impact of and responses to discrimination in schools

In a previous discussion on discrimination, violence and bullying in schools (26 August 2006) participants were asked how they feel and what they could do if someone discriminated against them. (Acts of discrimination described ranged from social snubbing, verbal insults, teasing, bullying and violence started on the basis of differences and discrimination.)

In response to how being discriminated against made members of the group feel they noted helplessness, frustration and being upset.

"sad"

"I feel scared, irritated and uncomfortable"

"it makes me feel useless and miserable"

"I feel humiliated in front of other people"

Some respondents also noted that experiencing discrimination made them feel angry and could start fights.

"I feel angry and I feel like fighting"

The group were asked to consider what things they could do if someone discriminates against them. Initial responses in the group tended to focus on responding in a violent manner and indicated how many of the group members would naturally respond to such a situation.

"Moer them back"

"Swear at them and insult them as well"

"Stab them"

"Hit back at those people"

The group were asked to pause and discuss these responses, they noticed that this leads to the "cycle of violence" and does not solve the problem. The facilitator then asked the group to continue to give ideas of what they could do. These ideas included ignoring or avoiding the discrimination, reporting it to authorities and having self awareness.

"Ignore it"

"Don't take note"

"Avoid the bully or the group that does this"

"Report them"

"Forgive BUT don't forget"

"Know that it is not the truth about you"



4.3 Identifying Violence in Schools, its Causes and Effects

The participants were divided into smaller groups and asked to draw a map of their school, they were asked to identify the types of violence they are aware of at their schools and where. Once this was completed the groups were asked to write up their understanding of the causes and effects of violence.

The groups identified three schools that were depicted, two schools were not represented because the participants indicated that there is "not a lot of violence at school" these two schools are both girls schools with better resources than the schools of other group members. The two from these schools participants expressed that their experience

was not reflected by the feedback from the three groups as they did not think that their

schools had any problems with violence. The other three schools identified include one in Maitland (School 1), two in Mitchells Plain which were amalgamated into one in the group (School 2) and one in Retreat (School 3).

	Sites of Violence	Causes of Violence	Effects of Violence
School 1	At the workshops, especially with tools and machinery. On the rugby field Under the trees At the tuc shop At the bicycle stands	Playing rugby Conflict in some areas Arguing Loafing Mocking other children	Hurting Bullying comes up – gets worse Losing body parts Fighting Beating
School 2	Fields Classrooms Stair ways – Children have sex at school on the stairs, no one does anything about it. There are no prefects anymore.	Alcohol Tik – takes place behind the classrooms, one of the children is a 'scout' and keeps watch for teachers. Jealousy Stealing Fighting	The fighting gets stronger and people get angry and emotional. Drugs causes holes in your brain, you end up stealing to buy it and you get aggressive.
School 3	All classrooms Field Toilets	Drugs Girlfriends and boyfriends (conflict relating to) Insulting other people's family members Verbal violence like swearing and insults	Sexual harassment Fights that sometimes lead to bad injuries Death of children Feeling hurt and leads to more fights

The sites of violence identified by the group is consistent with reports from learners in other research projects, it indicates that there are few areas at these schools that can be considered as safe.



Their understanding of the causes of violence include verbal arguments that insult and mock other people in a range of ways, the use of alcohol and drugs by learners and certain sport such as Rugby. These present some interesting points at which to focus prevention programmes. These could include programmes such as anger management and conflict resolution, schools teaching, practicing and entrenching principles of non discrimination. The feedback also indicates that programmes that are traditionally implemented for purposes of intervention such as some sports activities may

themselves contribute to violence, again entrenching discipline and values of respect as part of the sports programme is important.

The feedback from the groups regarding their perception of the effects of violence, lists the consequences such as emotional hurt, physical injury and even death. All of the groups indicate that violence escalates and gets worse. This indicates the potential for conflict resolution programmes to be available at schools to assist in addressing the issues.

4.4 Solutions to Violence in Schools

Participants were asked to fill in a form responding to a number of different questions pertaining to solutions to violence. Because the participants completed a form it is possible to identify the age and gender of the person who made the following responses.

4.4.1 The role of learners in finding solutions to violence



The first question related to what learners could do to address violence when an incident was actually taking place. Responses ranged from doing nothing, to not getting involved for reasons of safety and preventing the incident from escalating, going to seek assistance from adults, to trying to stop the violence themselves.

Participants seemed to understand that individually it was not always possible to prevent a violence, there is a strong sense of the need for adults to get involved to stop the violence. While respondents understood the need to take personal responsibility to walk

away. It is also noteworthy that one participant notes that teachers may not “take notice” of requests for assistance.

Try to stop the violence (Girl, 14)

Learners can help the victim or try to get adults to help the victim (Girl, 13)

Start by telling the teachers and if they don't take notice, we must report to the police. (Girl, 15)

Ignore it because if you decide to get involved then you would be the one getting hurt (Girl, 14)

They must leave it and then they must run to call a teacher (Girl 14)

They must/can call an adult or a person under supervision and try to stop it (Girl, 13)

Maybe you can walk away (Girl, 16; Boy, 14; Boy, 14)

Nothing (Boy 14)

The second question related to the things that learners could do in general in order to make schools safer places, this question was sometimes confused with the one above because they ask for similar information. Responses include young people working together to prevent the violence and becoming more organised, that learners can take responsibility for

their own actions and stop behaving in that way and to approach the school management in order to develop solutions like using prefects and security guards.

Try to ignore fights and stop them (Girl, 14)

Ask the principal if he could get more prefects, but children he can trust and children that will book the children for detention (Girl, 13)

By not being violent and stand up for each other (Girl, 15)

Stop doing what they are doing (Girl, 14)

Form groups and walking in those groups and stand up for each other, get teachers involved (Girl 14)

They can tell their principal to employ safe and better security and be more strict (Girl, 13)

To keep your school safer you must have Bambananis (Girl, 16; Boy, 14; Boy, 14)

Nothing (Boy 14)

4.4.2 The role of educators and school governing bodies in addressing violence at schools

The third question asked respondents to consider what they think educators and school governing bodies could do in order to make schools safer. The responses indicated a strong call for more security at schools that school management can prevent violence by ensuring more “bambananis”. It was also noted that teachers should be more involved and become stricter. One respondent noted that the children must be hit by the educators, it is notable that this response is repeated by this respondent who also felt that community members and “the government” must hit the children.

Get security (Girl, 14)

The educators can go around the school and find the place where children smoke and the governing bodies can expel the children (Girl, 13)

There must be Bambananis all over the school and maybe there must be some police patrolling in the school (Girl, 15)

Get securities to patrol the schools (Girl, 14)

Start using money to get good security and get involved (Girl 14)

The educators can be more strict and the governing body can employ disciplined and strict teachers (Girl, 13)

By paying the bambanani to do their jobs very good (Girl, 16; Boy, 14; Boy, 14)

Hit the children (Boy 14)

4.4.3 The role of community members in addressing violence

The fourth question asked respondents to consider the role of community members in making schools safer places. Many indicated that community members could become more organised and work together to understand the issues at the school and participate in solving problems and developing and running programmes such as clubs for the youth.

Get security (Girl, 14)

Vote that the schools must be more strict (Girl, 13)

They can do the same as the educators and governing bodies or try something else (Girl, 15)

Start clubs which will help children to think about what is happening (Girl, 14)

Work together get plans and ideas (Girl 14)

Try to observe the problems in/or before school and deal with them (Girl, 13)

By working together as a community (Girl, 16; Boy, 14; Boy, 14)

Hit the children (Boy 14)

4.4.4 The role of the police in addressing violence in schools.

The fifth question related to the role of the police in making schools safer places, note that the respondents were not asked if they thought the police should be involved but what they should be doing. Almost all noted that the police could be more present at schools in order to make them safer, two suggested that the police should be involved in searching the children for drugs and weapons. One felt that the police could be called in for incidents of violence and another noted that the police should arrest the gangsters.

Patrol (Girl, 14)

The police can send a few police officers to the schools and patrol the school and look in the children's bags for drugs (Girl, 13)

By being in the school every day or keeping an eye on the school (Girl, 15)

Patrol it (Girl, 14)

They must start working in the school (Girl 14)

They can arrest all the gangsters including school children who are gangsters (Girl, 13)

The police can also help by looking after the children in school (Girl, 16; Boy, 14)

To phone the police (Boy, 14)

Sertch (sic) the children before they get in to the school (Boy 14)

4.4.5 The role of the government in addressing violence at schools

Lastly respondents were asked to consider what the government could do to make schools safer, this was contextualised by explaining that the government set policies and decided on spending for schools. Responses included ensuring that schools have security in place and spending money wisely on this, that the government must make the violence stop and take care of the children who are causing it and that they could employ better teachers and principals. Some respondents didn't answer this question.

I think the government must make sure that schools have a lot of safety and securitys (Girl, 13)

They must make sure that it stops and the children that are causing it must be taken care of (Girl, 15)

Get stricter bambananis (Girl, 14)

Stop using money on themselves and they must buy good security for the school (Girl 14)

To employ better teachers and security and principals (Girl, 13)

The government can stop their pay (Boy 14)

Hit the children (Boy 14)

5. FURTHER INPUT ON TEACHERS AT SCHOOLS

In the follow up session, it was decided to discuss some specific questions relating to teachers behaviour. Participants were told that they would be asked to consider two sets of questions,

- Do you think you have some bad teachers and what is it about these teachers that you think is bad?
- Do you think that you have some good teachers and what is it about these teachers that you think is good?

5.1 Experiences of Bad Educators

The group were asked to first discuss what makes a teacher a bad teacher. The group responded with many examples of teachers who are violent towards them, this included teachers swearing at and insulting the learners.

"We have one sir who smacks the children for nothing, he swears and says 'Jou ma se....'"

" We have a sir and the children they go on with him and then he smacks the wrong boy. He says I'll kill you, I'll kill you, don't play".

"We have a sir who has a belt with a big buckle, he hits you hard on the head or the back with it, but he can't aim so he sometimes misses"

"Ons het 'n meneer, hy slaan jou op jou kop met n stoel, dis baie seer, dan lag almal" (We have a teacher, he hits you on your head with a chair, its very sore, then everyone laughs)

"they abuse you at school"

"Die meneer slat jou met stokke dan kry jy bloukollie" (the teacher hits you with sticks and you get bruises)

"One Miss she says you children just think of sex, you all smoke dagga and then she tells us her children are successes and compares them to us."

Some indicated that they had teachers who drink or are drunk at school and some who smoke in class in front of the learners.

"..He drinks and he is sometimes drunk at school"

"In laer Skool het die hoof vodka in sy tee gedrink, then he chase you with a stick" (in primary school the principal drank vodka in his tea, then he chase you with a stick)

"Hulle rook in die klas voor die kinders" (They smoke in class in front of children)

They also raised that teachers who drink at school or on the weekends tend to be lax in teaching and don't teach them properly while giving the children high marks even when these aren't earned or deserved by the learner. It was raised that at times learners are left to

socialise without setting any work and that other teachers who should intervene in the situation do nothing about it.

“the teachers who drink give you little work and then you get extra marks for little work”

“Die meneer is dronk op die naweek, dan is hy babalas, hy los jou vir die hele week, hy gee vir jou niks werk nie. Die onderwysers sien die kinders buite maar hulle doen niks, hulle weet dis nie break nie” (The teacher is drunk on the weekend, then he is hung over, he leaves you for the whole week, he gives you no work. The teachers see the children outside but they do nothing, they know its not break)

Participants spoke about incidents in which teachers abused their power by lying and denying wrongdoing on their part, allowing the children to be punished for things that they have not done. The participants expressed frustration and anger at the unfairness of this. It was also noted that the punishment received for wrong doing was excessive at times and didn't always fit the 'crime'.

“One teacher he locks you in the girls toilet then the principal finds you and sends you home and he doesn't believe you that the teacher locked you there”

“Ek het kantoor toe gegaan, dan lieg hy (the teacher) vir die principal en se ek lieg” (I went to the office, then the teacher lied to the principal and said I lied)

“This teacher throws a duster at me and then told the principle (s)he didn't do it.”

“The teacher gets believed”

“The teachers take advantage”

“Jy doen a klein ietsie verkeerd, dan kry jy n groot pak, it's not fair” (you do a small thing wrong and then you get a big hiding, its not fair)

One boy noted that it was a problem because some of the woman teachers were dressed in a way that distracted and aroused the young boys. Other group members agreed to this problem.

“The teachers in short skirts and tight toppies (shirts) is a problem”

Some participants noted that at times the learners were more in control than the educator is and that the learners would harass the educators. In the discussion it was clear that this was based on the teaching style and ability of the educator.

“Our maths sir, the children call him names, so he starts crying in class, then he swears at us and goes out and tells the Xhosa teacher and she goes and calls the principle”

“In my school the children stand together against the teachers so they won't give you a hiding”

5.2 Experiences of Good Educators

Participants were asked to consider what qualities they thought made a teacher good and effective.

Responses included comments relating to educators and principals who listen to the learners, respect their opinions and are fair in their approach towards learners and teachers. One participant indicated that the discipline he received from his principal was fair because the learner is required and encouraged to take responsibility.

“my hoof is goed, sy sal nie net vir die onderwysers glo nie.” (My principal is good, she won't just believe the teachers)

“Ons hoof maak plek vir a meeting om met die kinders to praat oor die probleme wat ons het met die onderwysers en sy het iets gedoen oor die probleme” (our principal makes place to meet with the children to discuss the problems that we have with the teachers and she did something about the problems)

“My hoof hy sal praat met jou, nie net slaan nie. You admit that you're wrong, dan gee hy vir jou n keuse and you must choose your punishment.” (My principal will talk to you, not just hit. You admit that you're wrong, then he gives you choices and you must choose your punishment)

“One teacher has no favourites”

“There was a teacher drinking pap sak (box wine) in class and then he was fired

“my Engels juffrou sy stan op vir die kinders.” (my English teacher stands up for the children)

The participants also noted the educators' ability and style of teaching as well as their willingness to assist the learners who needed assistance to complete tasks, it was felt that this improved respect for the educator. One participant noted that one educator encouraged them to work harder on subjects that they were doing well in.

“As sy sien jy is goed in iets dan gee sy vir jou extra werk dat jy kan beter doen” (If she sees that you are good at something, then she gives you extra work so that you can do better)

“My sir has equipment and he explain lekker the poetry and stuff and the children respect the teacher”

“I like my teacher but I get cross if the teacher doesn't teach properly”

“Daar is n onderwyser, hy help vir jou om die goed to kry wat jy nodig het vir jou werk soos carton” (there is a teacher, he helps you to get the things that you need to do your work like cardboard)

“n meneer hy help om n plan te maak as jy n problem het soos as jy nie n pen het nie” (a teacher helps to make a plan if you have a problem like if you don't have a pen)

“They help you to understand the work”

5.3 Security

During the discussion on the qualities of educators, participants also raised some issues relating to the quality of school security. They noted some instances of school security guards abusing their power, abusing some learners and setting a poor example to the learners.

“In my school the security lock you in the toilet if it is after break, they say that break is over and they don't know you are there but they do know”

*“Daar was n security wat gevang was met n meisie in die class, hy was gefire”
(there was a security guard who was caught with a girl in a class, he was fired)*

“The security sell cigarettes to the children”

“they confiscate it and then give it to their children”

5.4 Observation

It must be noted that although six participants were present for this discussion the input received came primarily from only four. The two participants who were not giving examples of experiences were asked why and they both indicated that they did not experience these sorts of problems with teachers at their schools. These are the same two participants who had noted that they did not have problems with violence in their schools.

The group reflected on the fact that the schools which are viewed as having the least problem with violence are also the schools in which there are no significant problems with discipline of the educators.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Reports from participants of the role of teasing and verbal harassment in leading to violence, highlights the need for programmes in schools that focus on discrimination between learners and between educators, these programmes must go further than providing learners with information to gain knowledge on non discrimination it is necessary that they extend to the principles and values of non discrimination being practiced throughout the school. This implies an experiential approach and programmes that extend beyond a few hours or a day of information.
- 6.2 Addressing the issue of alcohol and drugs at school by creating an environment in which learners cannot bring these into schools.
- 6.3 Addressing the issue of alcohol and drug use by learners by providing school based programmes for prevention and early intervention. Schools in which alcohol and drug use is a significant problem should also consider working closely with rehabilitation services in order to complement and support these initiatives for learners who are undergoing rehabilitation.
- 6.4 In schools with high levels of violence, extra emphasis should be placed on anger management and conflict resolution life-skills for learners.
- 6.5 The development of dedicated conflict resolution programmes at schools to assist learners in addressing areas of conflict, learners must participate in setting up and running such programmes. Management and educators must actively support and participate in such programmes.
- 6.6 The department of Education must form partnerships with the department of Social development and NGO's and CBOs to implement effective programmes in schools as educators do not necessarily have the skills and ability to run such programmes and these programmes are unlikely to be successful if they are simply added to the existing workload of educators.
- 6.7 Encouraging the participation of community members (parents) in developing solutions for maintaining security at schools. In order to ensure participation of

parents it is important that the attitude of the school principal is open and respectful of parents and community members.

- 6.8 Encouraging the participation of community members in providing safe extramural activities and clubs for learners.
- 6.9 Creating a culture of learning by example, through improved management of misconduct in educators. Developing a culture of mutual respect and accountability that addresses the complacency and complicity of some educators towards misconduct of their colleagues.
- 6.10 Creating forums at schools for learners to raise issues and assist in developing solutions, it is critical that these be taken seriously by educators.
- 6.11 Maintaining discipline of learners at school through ensuring that educators are disciplined and that non-violent forms of positive discipline are used throughout the school.
- 6.12 Ensuring that security personnel who are employed to work at schools meet basic standards with regard to their interaction with children and ensuring accountability of the security staff.
- 6.13 Providing educators with support and training to improve their teaching standards.

7. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Addressing violence in schools requires initiatives that focus on prevention and early intervention as well as management of the actual violence that happens. Putting up fences, searching children and providing security on its own is not sufficient. The situation requires a shift in our view of the role of schools as places at which prevention and early intervention services are provided to children. The cost of not doing this is the loss of safety and lives of children at schools.

In doing this it is critical that children be involved in developing and implementing the solutions to discrimination and violence at schools.