

*DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING: SYMPOSIUM TO HONOUR
THE WORK OF FRANÇOISE CAILLODS*

*LES ORIENTATIONS DE LA PLANIFICATION DE L'ÉDUCATION: SYMPOSIUM
EN L'HONNEUR DU TRAVAIL ACCOMPLI PAR FRANÇOISE CAILLODS*

Gender Based Violence in South African Schools

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Education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labor and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and influencing population growth. Education is a path towards international peace and security.

Kofi Anan, Secretary-General of the United Nations (Human Rights Watch, 2001)

Introduction

In the last ten years many advances were made to increase the awareness on the value of girls' education and enrollment and retention has improved. While many countries have made progress toward achieving gender equality in education (Hyde 2001), girls continue to face many obstacles that impede their path to learning. Factors include discrimination on the basis of sex; unequal rates of investments by governments, political conflicts, and inadequate hardship are all recognized barriers to girls' educational attainment. In the least-developed countries, in sub-Saharan Africa, 45 percent of girls are not enrolled in classes, and of those who are, nearly 40 percent will drop out before completing fifth grade (UNICEF 2001).

The first step to creating quality educational experiences is access. If education for girls is not equitable then academic learning is compromised and the psychological empowerment that education can confer is greatly reduced. It is imperative that girls stay in schools and remain safe to complete their educations. The classroom must be a place of learning and can not entertain the problem of school-related violence against girls. In schools where sexual violence against girls is the norm, the education system itself may increase a girls chances of dropping out, interrupting her studies, experiencing an unintended pregnancy or becoming infected with HIV. A recent report from Human Rights Watch (2001) notes that: *Left unchecked, sexual violence in schools has a negative impact on the educational and emotional needs of girls and acts as a barrier to attaining education...Rape and other forms of sexual violence place girls at risk of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus [which has in turn] taken its toll on the educational system and disrupted education...especially for girls (2001;5).*

Sexual violence in schools is not a new phenomenon. Niehaus (2000) shows that sexual relations between teachers and schoolgirls in sub-Saharan Africa were common even in the 1950s. It has been made more common place by the bias and prejudice that exist against women. One survey indicated that eight in ten young men believed that women were responsible for causing sexual violence and three in ten thought that women who were raped 'asked for it' (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Female victims of sexual violence are often reluctant to report the crime to the police or the family. In most sub-Saharan African countries a women's virginity is linked to her family honor. A woman can either be forced to marry her attacker or killed by brothers or fathers for such an embarrassment.

Sexual abuse may occur outside the school with adult men engaging in sex for exchange of gifts and money. The act of aggressive and intimidating behavior as well as unsolicited physical contact such as groping and touching coercive sex and rape all are forms of abuse. Such behavior exploits the teacher's position of authority and betrays their duty of care. This

paper will explore the phenomenon of sexual violence of school girls in three African countries; Zimbabwe, Ghana and Malawi through a review of literature and statistics of recent research by international organizations.

The recognition of violence against girls as a significant barrier to social and economic development in all parts of the world is linked with the understanding that the societal mistreatment of school girls is reflected in the culture of the nations that marginalize and lessen the value of women and their contribution to the society. In the developing world the impact of violence on school girls attacks the economic and social well-being of developing countries. There are critical issues that must be addressed such as the rise of HIV, lack of basic education and low literacy rates that impact the education and health of the nation. However there is little evidence or recognition of the importance of preventing violence against school-girls nor are there consequences in formal education settings, or enough intervention strategies in place.

Gender-based violence is a global problem that limits the benefits of education, causes poor health and psychological trauma (Dobbert, 19975). Even more difficult to bring to the forefront is the issue of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV). Both girls and boys are victims of verbal abuse, bullying, harassment and rape. School-related gender-based violence can be broadly clustered into two overlapping categories: explicit gender (sexual) violence, which includes sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse, assault and rape, and implicit gender violence, which includes corporal punishment, bullying, verbal and psychological abuse, teacher's unofficial use of students for free labor and other forms of aggressive or unauthorized behavior that is violent (Akiba et al., 2002).¹

As a researcher I was motivated to undertake this endeavor to gain understanding of violence in schools against girls within a South African context. I visited South Africa in the summer of 2005 for a study abroad research course. During my 6 week visit I had the opportunity to meet with several educators and students to discuss the role of women in leadership in education. However, what continued to surface was the concern for the safety of girls in schools. I heard countless stories from educators and students about the levels of violence that girls experienced in schools. There were incidents of rape to and from school as well as issues of abuse from teachers in the exchange of sex for grades. Soon I recognized that the issue of creating safe learning environments for girls needed to be placed at the forefront of my research agenda as an advocate for social justice.

Framework & Context

Using a gender sensitive frame of reference, gender violence can be broadly clustered into two overlapping categories: explicit gender (sexual) violence, which includes sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse, assault and rape, and implicit gender violence, which includes corporal punishment, bullying, verbal and psychological abuse, teacher's unofficial use of students for free labor and other forms of aggressive or unauthorized behavior that is violent (Akiba et al., 2002). The implicit abuse is gender specificity in cases of verbal abuse that is overly sexual or psychological in nature. This abuse can be perpetrated by students on

¹(Akiba et al., 2002) conducted a study on school violence in 37 nations, based on TIMSS data. This report viewed school violence largely in terms of delinquency, youth crime and classroom disruption. Although figures on rape are provided, there was no attempt to distinguish sexual violence from other forms of school violence.

other students, and by teachers on students. These forms of violence are understood and reported within a framework of heterosexual gender relations. Both explicit and implicit forms of abuse will be explored in this analysis.

First we need to understand the contextual and cultural issues that dictate the social arena in sub-Saharan African schools. School-related violence in developing countries takes place on the context of inequality and specific cultural beliefs and attitudes about gender roles, especially concerning male and female sexuality, a pattern of economic inequality, and in some instances significant political unrest and violent conflict. This context is critical to a fuller understanding of the health and educational implications and consequences of sexual violence in schools (Wellesley Centers for Research on Women).

Schools in many countries turn a deaf ear to the female student's complaints and many girls do not even complain because of a fear of reprisals, especially from teachers, but also because they believe that nothing will be done. In many schools administrators, community and misters of education ignore the violence against girls. Making schools safe and equitable must be the goal to improve education for girls. USAID commissioned a report to identify, annotate, and synthesize research addressing primary and secondary school-related gender-based violence committed against boys and girls. The report provided information and resources to improve educational outcomes for girls and boys in developing countries. The goal was to create safe environments where children are free to learn and gain skills through education without experiencing abuse.

South Africa and GBV

South Africa's transition to democracy has been accompanied by extremely high levels of both political violence and violent crime. Assault, rape and sexual violence are 'endemic' in South African schools (UNICEF, 2001). As levels of violence have increased in society; so have levels of school-related gender-based violence in schools. Fear of violence is pervasive and has had major impacts on the educational opportunities available to students, because of risks to their security and safety.

As defined in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a U.N. General Assembly resolution passed in 1993, gender-based violence (GBV) is a term that is not limited to physical or sexual violence, but also indicates equally insidious forms of violence against girls such as economically coerced sex, sexual harassment, demeaning language that undermines self-esteem, and even assigning girls to perform domestic tasks at school while others study (U.N. General Assembly, 1993). Therefore GBV is a term that broadly incorporates many behaviors that manifest as physical, sexual, or psychological damage to women or girls.

A study conducted by the South African Medical Research Center (MRC) for the Department of Health, entitled, *The 1st National South African Youth Behavior Survey* (2003) gives statistical data of violence in schools. The landmark study established a baseline for future studies by providing information on the unsafe school environment. The study consisted of 23 schools in each province, which sampled 14,776 learners. The quantitative report revealed the following statistical data; 17% of students carried weapons, 41% of students were bullied, 14% belonged to gangs, 15% had been forced to have sex, 15% had been threatened or injured on school property and 19% were injured in fights and 32% felt unsafe at school

(MRC, 2003). Another study revealed that 50% of students had experienced violence either as victims or perpetrators².

The statistical data gives valuable information on violence in South African schools, but as it is quantitative it is limited in giving contextual factors for violence in schools. Therefore the aim of this pilot study was to examine the incidents of violence within schools in preparation for a later doctoral thesis study to examine the implementation of the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) and its impact on school safety in secondary schools in South Africa. This study aimed to examine the contextual experiences of girls' encounters with GBV and record incidents of violence that reflect student to student violence as well as teacher to student violence.

Issue of Power

The age/authority relations between teacher and student are a fundamental structure of schooling that interacts with the gender regime. The institution of the school officially condones teachers' regulation and control of appropriate student behavior through, for example, the allocation of rewards and sanctions, the distribution of their time and the attention in class, and corporal punishment. In this way, by using their age/authority power position, teachers 'normalize' certain aspects of male and female behavior (Dunne and Leach, 2003; Dunne, Leach et al, 2003).

Given the structured asymmetrical power relations of schooling, the excessive use of sanctions can lead to abuse by those in positions of authority. This power can be used to exercise control through other means, for example sexual abuse (Leach 2001.) In many cases, the power display is engaged in schools through sexual abuse. Aggressive and intimidating behavior, unsolicited physical contact such as touching and groping, assault, coercive sex and rape all constitute abuse, as does any sexual relationship formed by a teacher with a pupil. In most contexts the latter is a disciplinary offence according to the conditions of teachers' employment and/or a criminal offence where sex act involves a minor. Such teachers and others working in a professional capacity with children are exploiting their positions of authority and failing in their duty of care. As this duty of care fades and breaks down within communities, sexual violence against girls is considered 'normal'. Where the protection and rights are not in place, behavior in school is likely to reflect the beliefs and norms of the culture, as young girls are exposed to acts of violence they are learning to accept it as an inevitable part of their daily lives (Akiba et al. 2002).

Current Intervention

Background of GEM

In 2003, the South African Minister of Education initiated the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) in Parliament. GEM is an education movement where students in schools and in the community employ strategies to bring positive change in the lives of girls and boys. UNICEF and the South African National Department of Education collaborated to institute GEM in all of the country's nine provinces. The premise for this program is to combat gender inequality and promote school safety in South African schools and communities. Though gender equity is a national initiative, the Gender Equity Unit of the South African Department of Education

² Swart et. al (2002) conducted a study on the prevalence of violence in teenage dating relationships.

does not have the manpower or funds to distribute the program in every province universally. Therefore the program has been rolled out in provinces over a period of three years, with the goal was to have program sites in each of the nine provinces by 2006. Since 2003 the program has been implemented in the provinces as follows; Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Free State, North West, Northern Cape, Western Cape, and Gauteng (March 2007).

In July of 2006 GEM and UNICEF received a donation of 4.5 million rand from Barclays Bank to support the GEM program in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Barclays CEO David Roberts pledged the funds because he believed in the mission of empowering girls through life skills and other training to reduce their vulnerability to abuse, and promote higher achievement levels for girls in school (UNICEF, Media Centre 2006). The program, which also includes boys as strategic partners to reduce gender inequality aims to strengthen the school environment by creating child friendly schools. The program hopes to ensure that schools are gender sensitive, safe and have strong community ties.

In whose best interest?

While talking to boys about incidents of violence against girls in schools, there was a level of insensitivity; some thought that the incidents of sexual harassment of girls merely as teasing. There were other boys who recognized the significance of the situation. However it appeared that the school principal, who attests to the importance of GEM in his school, had much to understand.

“Schools have become the easiest targets for gangsters, especially during exam time. There was a scenario where a 10th grade female learner was molested in the class room while she was waiting to take an exam. She arrived early to school to study and a fellow learner accosted her in the classroom and forced her to touch his penis and lift her skirt. The girl was afraid to scream as she was told that she would be beaten if she yelled for help.”

– 17 year old male learner, School Prefect

Fortunately another class mate arrived and stopped the male learner from going further. The incident was reported to the administration and the male student was suspended. The female learner and male learner both continued to take the exam the same day. When I questioned the administration about the incident it was then stated *“that such matters were better taken care of by the families than the police. The boy learner was extremely apologetic and that he would be dealt with at home”*.

The theoretical impetus of GEM is that culture is acquired through socialization. GEM proposes that socialization is inherited through cultural practices and beliefs that are instituted in society and transferred into the school environment. GEM attempts to combat negative socialization that results in violence and inequality. GEM proposes that children’s socialization can be molded in specific directions by encouraging explicit beliefs and attitudes as well as selectively providing alternative experiences for children in schools/communities. GEM recognizes that children should be an active part of the educational agenda; considering the perspectives of children and recognizing children as ‘clients’. This theoretical perspective places emphasis on children being primary contributors to solving conflict in the educational environment and community. Listening to children in

concrete and effective ways places them at the center of innovation in the context of school/community intervention. GEM encourages student participation and empowerment by giving children the opportunity to work together to find solutions to problems affecting their lives, the children become actors in the development of their schools and communities. The program serves as a vehicle for female empowerment within the confines of a patriarchal society to generate girls' confidence that they can acquire skills and be supported by peers and caring adults to gain control over their bodies and lives. GEM encompasses boys as a key proponent in dispelling inequality and violence in schools. As boys are often perpetrators of violence, it is through the educational and social transformation of values, cultural beliefs and prejudice that boys can become advocates for change, therefore creating a mind-shift in South African schools/communities. By listening to children and valuing their concerns in education programming and interventions, the conversations of practitioners, policy-makers and researchers can be well informed from a 'grounded' perspective. GEM professes that through the establishment of strong partnerships schools/communities can respond to three inter-related threats to education in South Africa-gender inequality, violence in schools and the impact of HIV and AIDS (UNICEF, 2001).

Program Objectives

The GEM objective is to ensure that the voices of children are first and foremost. These objectives also express the importance of cultural appropriateness of interventions and the necessity to employ a human rights perspective.³ The specific goals of the program are as follows: Accessed July 10, 2006 at: <http://www.gem.gov.za>

- To protect the rights of girls special needs and any child at risk of exploitation or abuse in or outside school.
- To sensitize key actors in the importance of girls' education and mobilize policies and programs that will ensure quality education for all girls.
- To enable girls to participate in decision making about their education.
- To provide girls with opportunities to develop and exercise their leadership and technical skills.
- To tap the potential of boys, men and women to work in partnership with girls to promote equitable, accessible, high quality education in Africa and through education to create equitable, justice societies.

Targets

The South African Department of Education and UNICEF have supported 164 primary schools and 53 secondary schools in establishing the GEM program. The structure of GEM works in partnerships and uses multiple strategies and links to various levels of interventions. The structure is set to promote system-wide changes at an individual and communal level, while integrating gender components into existing educational programs.

The GEM initiative is implemented in schools/communities through school-based clubs. The clubs consist of students ages 7-19 and range in size. The clubs provide intervention for boys and girls, some clubs are co-ed and others are single sexed. In these schools/communities GEM is a network for improving girl's education with boys and adult as allies.

³ A rights-based approach places the discussion of gender equity and safety in schools within a broader framework of human rights and justice.

“These activities keep us busy with something positive, so we are not on the streets exposed to other harmful or negative things. Before GEM, I use to smoke and drink and make trouble in class. Now I understand that I have value and what I have as a woman is special. I feel empowered and can make choices for my future.”

14 year old female learner, Free State

Process

Though the goal of GEM is to build the overall knowledge and self-esteem of the girl-child there are no specific or direct links to GEM and the dispelling GBV. The program does not have a specific format that addresses the issue. Rather the program tenements are broadly set goals. There is no formulated process or activities that can be assigned distinctively as GEM actions or a succession of practices.

The student led clubs equip children to address issues of access to education, clean and safe school environments, the importance of good communication amongst peers, HIV prevention, equal opportunities in Math and Science, life-skills and the importance of personal development through youth leadership and community workshops. The workshops focus on enhancing student’s abilities to be creative leaders that contribute to the development of their own schools and communities.

In primary schools the GEM club’s are lead by the upper grade students and are actualized through drama, music and sporting events. At the secondary level the clubs orchestrate more diverse activities; some have produced community radio and TV programs. GEM clubs have morphed into drama groups who perform skits on related school and society issues, to peer counseling groups that meet to discuss student’s concerns about curriculum, violence, and traditional community practices. The participants of the GEM program reinforce transformation by leading their own development and recruiting other student’s to participate.

Experiences

Tolerance of gender-based violence in schools is a serious form of discriminatory treatment that compromises the learning environment and educational opportunities for girls. Girls are disproportionately the victims of physical and sexual abuse at school. Girls are raped, sexually assaulted, abused, and sexually harassed by their male classmates and even by their teachers. In South Africa, some girls have left school entirely as a result of their experiences with sexual violence.

“My teacher promised me a passing mark if I had sex with him. So when people asked my about studying, I just say why should I study when all I have to do is lift my skirt.”

17 year old female student, Western Cape

When I spoke with students about GEM and if there were any direct influences with the program and dealing with the issue of violence and sexual harassment. Students mentioned that they were told to report any kind of problem to the life skills teacher or principal. When

asked if they had encountered problems they simply stated that they knew of girls who had been sleeping with teachers or had been harassed. However, girl learners also stated that they did not feel safe to report incidents because there was no protection. The tenements of GEM do not change the reality of living in a community or going to school and facing daily assault.

“I feel really scared so during the day I do not go to the toilet. If I do I will ask a friend to stand watch so nothing happens. Usually the toilets are full of gangsters smoking dagga and if you go alone they will try to rape you.”

-15 year old female learner, Western Cape

Strike violence against female student

I spoke with female students (ages 14-17) in regards to their experiences during the strikes in schools. One female student gave graphic account of her experience as a victim of the violence.

On one occasion matric students were taking an exam and the classroom was stormed by teachers. These teachers demanded the exams from the students and tore them up and turned over desk. Students who did not release their exams were beaten and threatened.

“I was afraid but I refused to give up my exam because I am scheduled to attend University of Cape Town next year. I need to have all of my math and science marks completed. If not I will not be able to pursue the pre-med course. So when the teacher asked me to give up my exam I protested. Then he grabbed me by the throat and began to choke me. No one would help me; I was screaming and pulling away. Many of the students ran out of the class to get help but eventually the teacher let me go and ran away. I did not recognize this teacher but I am sure nothing will happen to him.”

17 year old female learner, Western Cape

Learners reported having knowledge of multiple cases of rape, assault, and sexual harassment of girls committed by teachers and male students, as well as theft and gang violence. The learners spoke of how girls were raped in school toilets, encountered abuse in empty classrooms and hallways, and even on the way to and from school. My inquiries also revealed findings of sexual abuse through fondling and belligerent sexual advances, and being verbally put down at school. This study found that girls of all ages and social economic backgrounds were victims to violence at school.

Violence to girls in school is not limited to explicit violence but also manifest in implicit ways. Girls are required to provide cleaning and maintenance services for the school, while teachers and boys use the time for academic work or leisure. Sometimes girls are made to sit at the back of classrooms and are not called on to participate in classroom discussions.

Though some may not consider the above incidents a form of violence; I would protest that denying girls the opportunity to take part in learning is another form of violence. GEM teaches girls that they have rights and are encouraged to be participants in class and to speak up for their right to learn. Yet on the ground in the day to day experiences of girl learners there is very little application of the GEM initiative displayed in most classrooms. The impact and translation of GEM is left largely to the commitment level and tenacity of the teachers and students that become club members.

GEM at work in and out of school

A female learner aged 14 (grade 9) was forced into an arranged marriage for 1 month. The learners' parents were deceased and she was living with her uncle and aunt. The uncle traveled abroad for a few months and the aunt arranged for the girl to be married to a complete stranger, a 43 year old man living in a village 100 kilometers away. After being in the situation where she was locked in a room, forced to hide from visitors and forbidden to speak the learner was finally allowed by her new husband to return to school. Immediately she went to the Life Skills teacher and reported what had happened to her. Social Service was called and a case was filled against the aunt and the man. Apparently the uncle was not aware of the arrangement and wept bitterly when he heard the news. The case was heard in court; the man (husband) was charged with assault, and the learner was released back into the custody of her uncle. I had the opportunity to speak with this learner who was back in school and receiving some counseling, though still living with her uncle and aunt.

“My uncle traveled abroad for a few months and my aunt arranged for me to be married to a complete stranger, a 43 year old man living in a village 100 kilometers away. One day after school this man came to get me from school and told me to come with him that he was my husband and my aunt made all the arrangements. I try to tell him that I must go and get my things, because I was thinking it would give me time to run away, but he said no and forced me into the car. I was afraid and knew I had my rights. They taught me in GEM to speak out. Before GEM I would have been afraid and ashamed to tell what happened to me, but now I know it is not my fault, and I have my rights.”

-14 year old female learner, Limpopo

After being in the situation where she was locked in a room, forced to hide from visitors and forbidden to speak the learner was finally allowed by her new husband to return to school. Immediately she went to the GEM Coordinator and reported what had happened to her. Social Service was called and a case was filled against the aunt and the man. Apparently the uncle was not aware of the arrangement and wept bitterly when he heard the news. The case was heard in court; the man (husband) was charged with assault, and the learner was released back into the custody of her uncle. It was reported that the learner was back in school and was receiving counseling. It was evident that no other action or charges were filed against the aunt. When the researcher questioned the fact that the child was returned to the home the Life Skills Coordinator responded, *“Where else could she go, she wanted to return home. She has three years of schooling left, hopefully she will make it.”* There was a clear message that teachers and school staff were only responsible for what happened on campus. It was the parent's responsibility to keep students safe at home and on there way to school.

Program Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the program was difficult to measure in the context of the schools that were visited. Many students, teachers and administrators had not heard of GEM. Several schools that were reported to have the program were no existent. But the real challenge that faced program implementation was changing the mindsets of the school community.

It is imperative that the GEM initiative be established based on the contextual state of the socio-cultural environment in South African schools. School-related gender-based violence does not happen in isolation but is believed to be a result of contextual factors that are built on cultural beliefs and attitudes (Chisholm, 2003). Gender roles, continue to formulate sexuality, and reproduce a culture of inequality. This context is significant to educational implications and the consequences of sexual violence in schools (Panos: 2003).

Thus the effectiveness of the GEM program is limited to a few individuals that participate in some after school club activities. Though there are dynamic programs in KwaZulu Natal implementation is still impeded by the beliefs of parents and students that cultural and traditional beliefs and practices must not be tampered with. Parents were most reluctant to changing the roles and responsibilities of the girl-child. Many believed that the teaching of GEM tenements would make their daughters disrespectful and disobedient. One parent shared that her daughter now refused to wash dishes and sweep because she attended GEM camp. The mother protested that the daughter was now disrespectful and always speaking about her rights. The female learner simply stated that she had two older brothers who created the mess most of the time in the house but were never forced to clean. This caused division in the household and the girl-child was forbidden to continue to be a GEM club member.

“How can we make change without funding for our programs? National says that this is a mandate and going to be rolled out in every school in the country in the next few years. That is totally unrealistic when most of the gender units at the provincial level consist of one person. Secondly, National does know what we are dealing with on the ground. The levels of violence are worst now and getting difficult to help students, especially those with no parents. How can you tell a girl who is hungry not to sell her body when she is desperate? When sometimes the teacher she is sleeping with is the bread and butter for her entire family.”

GEM Facilitator-Kwa Zulu Natal

Conclusion

In tackling gender violence in schools, a whole school approach involving management, teachers, pupils and the curriculum is necessary to ensure that the messages are consistent and reinforced by teachers and pupils alike. Teachers can be key instruments for change. However, they have their own experiences as gendered beings. To play an effective role in addressing gender-based violence, teachers need to understand and confront their own attitudes and experiences regarding gender and violence. Given that some teachers are perpetrators of abuse, and others may be victims of abuse, it is important that strategies to address gender violence in schools acknowledge and address teachers' experiences as well as students, so that constructive and collaborative relationships can be encouraged. The teacher training curriculum will need to prepare teachers for such a role.

To effectively eliminate the abuse of girls there must be a systemic cultural change in the value of girls. There needs to be a change in attitude and behavior among the people of South Africa. There must be economic and social growth that increases the education and fiscal stability of the developing countries. This growth can only come through provision of resources and education.

Studies have shown that the use of multi-media can be advantages to help change the mindset and engage the community. Teachers, parents and students must take part in this re-education training. There must be a system of enlightenment to dispel the myths and thoughts at the low value of girls. To rectify gender violence men must understand the power in gender relations and become role models to increase equity.

Though I will not dispute that GEM has had impact of the lives of participants, I can not help but recognize that there is a long way to go before it becomes the grassroots movement that UNICEF and The South African National Department of Education, Gender Equity Unit would like to see take form. More specifically, provinces and local schools face many challenges in the replication of GEM. There is no standard “tool kit” for GEM; each club operates at a high level of autonomy which has its benefits but in this case creates great disillusion. GEM clubs activities range from gender activism to nothing more then a recruiting ground for conversion to Christianity and sewing clubs. The club effectiveness and growth, as well as absorption are highly dependent on the GEM coordinator at the school level and the mindset of the GEM student leader.

Therefore it is necessary to review the implementation process of GEM, in the areas of training, goal-setting, and requires a needs assessment at every level, from National to the grassroots community level. Even now the Gender and Equity Division of the South African National Department of Education is in the lurch as it is without a permanent leader and struggles to find direction to fulfill the education development demands. The progress that has been made in implementing GEM objectives is threatened by lack of funding and limited dissemination.

The South African National Department of Education and UNICEF must undertake capacity building, training and allocate and distribute resources within the provincial and local school levels. A program can not be implemented at any level without appropriate funding support. It is imperative that GEM be implemented effectively with consistency in a comprehensible manner; to develop a movement there must be initiation from the bottom-up and not top-down. If GEM is to be replicated throughout South Africa it will need a sustainable force of supporters to create transformation. There must be ways and means to address the challenges and issues while enabling the schools to accelerate the pace of program progress to achieve the set objectives.

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