

Living and Learning without Fear

Pilot project, 2015

A study by Plan Rwanda (2013) conducted in the Bugesera and Gatsibo Districts in Rwanda on school violence with has shown that **one out of six children has stopped attending school due to fear of in-school victimization**, 24% of children reported that their fellow students make them feel uncomfortable by making sexual comments/proposals, and boys reported experiencing a higher rate of sexual violence at home than girls. 51% of all children (49% boys and 52% girls) reported that their teachers physically punished them.

We find these figures alarming and were compelled to develop the Living and Learning Without Fear program. In the past couple of months, we've piloted in this project in 3 sectors Masoro, Shyorongi and Rusiga in Rulindo District, within the northern Province, about 40-50mins drive away from Kigali City.

Living and Learning Without Fear (LLWF) is a participatory action research project aiming at addressing various forms of violence in schools and communities thus creating a conducive environment for children to grow to their fullest potentials, as leaders in the making.

The pilot project involved an introductory session with local leaders and school authorities, selecting a target group for our intervention, a period of collecting information through questionnaires and interviews, and then training of these target groups around issues of violence.

Sireh Jabang, an intern from Uppsala University, Sweden, who was involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of the project writes the following about it:

"I think the project has been successful, for it gave room for community members to break out the culture of silence and talk about relevant issues affecting their lives with regards GBV. Most interestingly is SEP's initiative of bringing children and adults under one umbrella to discuss gender based violence, not only will it go a long way in addressing the issue but also reiterate the fact that children are leaders in the making and should be given responsible roles in our societies to contribute towards creating an enabling environment for sustainable development.

SEP is committed to further strengthen capacity on this issue by providing indebt training to committed community leaders as community councilors on D & SRGBV pending availability of funding. Looking at the cause of GBV as rooted in a societal norms/cultures, readdressing it requires a multifaceted approach and a long term process, as new findings on the forms of GBV in the communities may continue to emerge/or surface in due course, as such SEP's intention is to continue the circle of training and problem identification stages to be followed by taking necessary action accordingly in due course and conducting evaluative sessions to assess the impact of the project in the future and if possible a replica within other sectors."

To take this project further would require substantial funding. A once-off donation of \$50 would ensure one child or educator could receive this important training. A monthly donation of \$50 would mean significantly influencing a whole school or community.