



Prevention pays: the economic benefits of ending violence in schools



Learn

without fear.

The impact of violence in schools is often devastating for individual children, and can have wide-reaching social and economic consequences.



Learn

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In October 2008, Plan launched a global campaign to eliminate violence against children in schools – *Learn Without Fear*. As of August 2010, the campaign is operating in 44 countries.

This report summarises the main arguments of the Plan/ODI report *The Economic impact of school violence (2010)*¹ and draws on Plan's campaign and programme experience of the past two years tackling violence against children in school.

¹ Perezniato, P., Harper, C., Clench, B. and Coarasa, J. (2010) **The Economic Impact of School Violence**. London: Plan International & Overseas Development Institute. Available at plan-international.org/learnwithoutfear

Violence in schools is a major reason for children not attending school or dropping out early. In Nepal, 14% of dropouts were because children were afraid of their teachers.

The Plan/ODI research produced a variety of findings which show the severity of the economic impact of violence against children in schools. Here are some of the key findings:

In Guatemala and Argentina, the foregone benefit to society from overall early dropout is nearly 59 per cent and 11.4 per cent of GDP respectively. In Egypt, nearly 7 per cent is lost in potential earnings.

In the UK, 16-year-olds who were bullied at school are twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training, and to have lower wage levels at age 23 and 33. Young men who are not in education, employment or training are three times more likely to suffer from depression and five times more likely to have a criminal record.

Over their lifetimes, each young person in the UK who is not in education, employment or training will cost public finance £71,000. Overall, the burden of cost to the national economy will be £13 billion. In addition, there will be an opportunity cost to the state of a further £22 billion.

In Ethiopia, 40 per cent of parents said that school violence would discourage them from sending their daughters to school. Sixty per cent of girl students and 42 per cent of boy students said that violence had a high impact on girls' absenteeism.

Sexual violence in schools leads to unwanted and dangerous pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. **In Swaziland, 17.4 per cent of 13-17-year-old girls have been taken out of school because of pregnancy, and 10.6 per cent because they have been forced to have sex. A fifth of these rapes took place at or on the way to school.**

Women who have had an education tend to have fewer and healthier children. In fact, one of the most important factors determining a country's economic development is girls' education.

The economic cost of 65 low-income, middle-income and transition countries failing to educate girls to the same level as boys is US \$92 billion per year.

Children who have witnessed or been beaten at school are likely to think violence is acceptable. Corporal punishment can make students aggressive and angry, and teaches them that domestic violence is permissible.

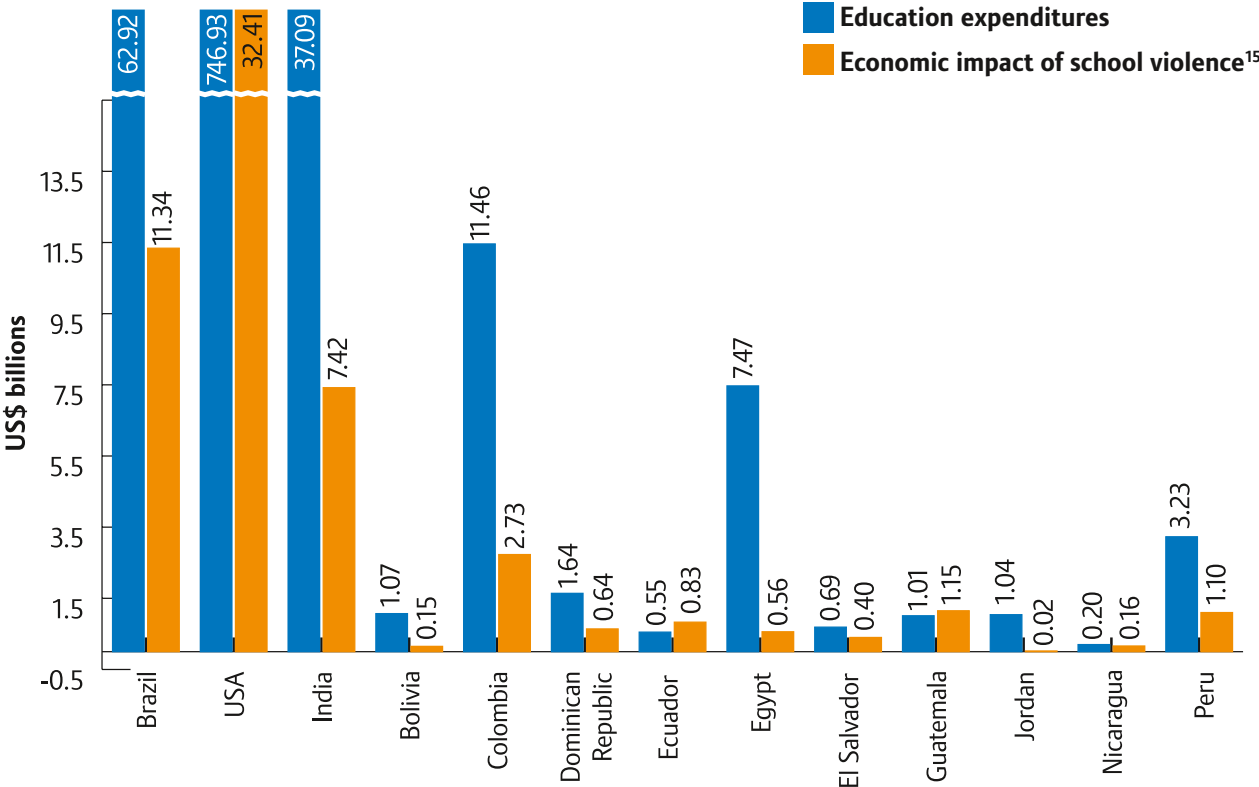
In Morocco, it costs a woman US \$274 to get help from the justice system following an incidence of domestic violence, and a further US \$211 for treatment. In other words, getting justice and treatment would cost a fifth of her total annual income.

In Uganda, a victim of domestic violence has to pay US \$5 – five times the average daily income – to get treatment for her injuries. Involving the police costs the equivalent of almost ten days income.

In 2002/03 domestic violence cost the UK £23 billion and Australia more than \$8 billion.

In OECD countries, an extra year of schooling will, on average, mean 5 to 15 per cent higher wages.

Annual education expenditures vs. Economic impacts of school violence resulting from Early School Leaving



Adapted from CIA country profile¹⁶ and Perezniето et al¹⁷

For the 13 countries where data is available, the economic impact of school violence totals up to US \$58,919,215,887.

¹⁵ The projected shortfall in government revenue through children not completing their education.
¹⁶ US Central Intelligence Agency (2010) **The World Factbook**. (Online) Available from: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankfinder/2206rank.html.
¹⁷ Perezniето, P., Harper, C., Clench, B. and Coarasa, J. (2010) **The Economic Impact of School Violence**. London: Plan International & Overseas Development Institute.

5. Call to action

The fundamental reason for eradicating violence in schools is because it violates children's rights. It is also a significant barrier to achieving Millennium Development Goal 2 on universal primary education, as school violence is a significant cause of truancy, dropout and under-performance.

And, there are also strong economic arguments. Violence in schools is costing children their futures and keeping them poor. It is preventing countries from developing and perpetuating violence that has an impact on every society.

Because violence in schools is underreported, measuring its exact cost is a challenge. However, given the data we have, it is clear that it is costing governments more than they can afford – especially at a time of economic downturn. We believe no state can afford to ignore it.

Preventing violence in schools requires investment and the allocation of resources, but it is an economically sensible investment, bringing immediate financial savings and long-term development.

We are calling on donors and governments to:

- earmark funds to scale up proven interventions to eradicate violence in schools
- invest in quantitative research and longitudinal studies to track the true extent of violence in schools, its cost to individuals, society and development.

We are calling on governments to:

- recognise that ending violence in schools is critical for their societies
- introduce and /or enforce legislation and policies banning violence in schools, including corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying.

We are calling on donors, governments, education authorities, schools and civil society organisations to promote a non-violent culture and make schools safe by:

- investing in teacher training, support materials and school inspections
- investing in more women teachers
- establishing school and teacher codes of conduct prohibiting violence in schools
- providing better pay and conditions for teachers
- improving school facilities, including adequate and separate toilets for girls and boys
- broadening school curricula to include learning on gender equality, conflict resolution, children's rights and citizenship
- enabling children to play a critical role in shaping the solution to violence in schools
- supporting children's families and communities to reduce violence by promoting positive forms of discipline
- improving reporting and referral mechanisms
- promoting a more thoughtful use of media by families and a more responsible depiction of violence by broadcasters and media content producers.

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Cover photo: © Plan / Dina Torrens. Group of children from Plan supported primary school in Udaipur, India.

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About Plan

Founded over 70 years ago, Plan is one of the oldest and largest children's development organisations in the world. We work in 48 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty.

Plan works with more than 3,500,000 families and their communities each year.

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