After the European Summer long break we finalized our newsletter n° 3. This year our work was mainly devoted to the preparation and success of the 4th World Conference on School Violence held in Lisbon in June, and the reorganization of our International Observatory on Violence in School. The work is almost finished! You’ll see the effects in the coming months.

Lisbon, 2008: 52 countries of all continents presented more than 180 communications, which will nourish several issues of our International Journal on Violence and Schools (www.ijvs.org) in addition to the items we already had in reserve (by the way, n° 6 is online!).

What a pleasure to have held such a meeting where horizons are broadened by meeting other people. A Big Thank You to all the Portuguese team for their work! Some articles in next newsletters issues will be devoted to this conference as well as to the reorganization of the Observatory, presentation of the elected Board of Directors and activities planned for the coming months and years. After, other newsletter issues will follow under the responsibility of different researchers, members of the International Observatory, Canada (Quebec) is currently preparing, under the supervision of Claire Beaumont and the Canadian Observatory, the first of these publications.

Violence in schools takes on several forms, not only according to the national and cultural context but also with regard to types of schools and the pedagogies they implement. For example, violence perpetrated against girls, including by their own teachers, is a serious issue. This is why we have decided to give coverage to a very large meeting organized on this subject in Senegal.

We would like to report all the bubbling ideas and projects that we feel around us, helping to advertise the work done all over the world. So, do not hesitate to contact the person that will become the coordinator of newsletters: José Brito Soares, from Lisbon! We need your news, your opinions. This publication is yours. Use this one to talk about important books, ongoing activities, researches in motion. Write about your concerns and your hopes. The newsletter is opened and it is a working tool against school violence.
From 1-3 December 2007, the sub-regional workshop Violence against girls at school – towards sustainable strategies was held in Saly, Senegal. Representatives of ministries of education, teachers' unions, national education coalitions, women's associations, the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and students from a variety of African countries were invited by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and ActionAid International to discuss the issues surrounding violence against girls at school, and the implications these issues have on girls' right to education. The importance of the workshop is evident, given the need to greatly reinforce political will to officially recognize that violence against girls at school is an obstacle to girls' right to education. The objectives of the workshop were the following:

• Provide a platform for civil society organizations, government officials and other partners in the region to share experiences, and reflect on the issues related to violence against girls at school;
• Illustrate how partnerships in girls' education affect progress towards the achievement of education for all, gender parity and equity;
• Collect students' perspectives and proposed solutions for addressing violence against girls at school;
• Examine the challenges faced and lessons learnt by country programmes addressing this issue; and
• Contextualize the policy developed in a similar meeting in Harare in 2006.

It was agreed by all participants that the scope of the problem of violence against girls in school reaches all levels of the education system, and that it is directly linked to lower levels of access, retention, participation and achievement of girls in school. Violence in general manifests itself in various forms: it can be physical, mental, psychological, verbal, emotional, sexual, direct and indirect. It has an extremely negative impact on girls' self-confidence and their ability to perform in school, which often leads to dropout, illiteracy, absenteeism and exclusion. Sexual violence in particular has an adverse impact on girls' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and as a result, on their mortality rate.

It was recognized that one of the biggest challenges faced in addressing violence against girls in school is that there is a lack of coordination and large-scale research initiatives at the national level; consequently, there is a scarcity of reliable data. Statistics are extremely unreliable, as the stigma associated with reporting acts of
violence leads to a low number of cases being reported.

Of the initiatives that exist, and which attempt to address violence against girls in school at the community level, the majority are carried out by NGO’s, as there is a need for community involvement and integration of key actors in the search for solutions. There is also a lack of infrastructure at the school level to deal with victim support, and thus problems are often not treated in depth.

While laws that address violence against girls and women do exist in many countries, they often do not target the school environment. In addition, social and cultural perceptions can act as a barrier to implementing these laws, especially in countries with weak legal systems.

Despite these challenges, various examples of best practice were presented and shared amongst the participants. For example, police victim support units exist in Malawi and Rwanda; in Senegal the Comité de Lutte contre Les Violence Faites aux Femmes (CVLF) counsels children that have been victims of violence; FAWE trains teachers in gender responsive pedagogy and girls are empowered through Tuseme clubs (“Let’s Speak Out”) in schools.

Various recommendations were derived from the participants’ discussions and observations:

• Colactors, and use the results to develop a legal framework that integrates all related aspects in the education system; laborate research with key

• Create multi-sectoral and government-coordinated data collection and analysis mechanisms;
• Ensure the availability of reliable statistics;
• Produce clear instructions for all schools as to how they can make the school environment safe for all children;
• Strengthen the coordination of all legislation to ensure that a child constitutes any individual under the age of eighteen;
• Integrate issues related to violence against girls in school into the school curricula and teachers’ training programmes;
• Implement school-level mechanisms to allow girls to safely report cases of violence; and
• Create a committee to coordinate and follow-up these recommendations.

It was recommended that civil society organizations should be encouraged to collaborate with government officials, and involve all stakeholders; especially students; when searching for solutions and effective programme implementation. It was proposed that these organizations should carry out sensitization campaigns for teachers, students and the general public, and produce and distribute simplified versions of relevant legal instruments and texts relating to violence against girls at school.

Girls and students were encouraged to “break the silence,” and say no to any form of abuse. They were advised to encourage each other to expose perpetrators both in school and at home, and to promote existing mechanisms enabling them to stop violence against girls in school.

To inform newsletter editor on your publications, conference and news:

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International Observatory on School Violence publishes with the UNESCO support the online International Journal on Violence and Schools. This journal is intended to attract articles of high scientific quality, with peer review. Please consult issues and Scientific Committee composition at the following address: www.ijvs.org. For the sake of transparency we will regularly publish statistics on it.

**Statistics about IJVS Consultation**

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**Localization**

The map below shows areas of connection to *ijvs* in 2007. Each red spot indicates a number of unique visitors between 50 and 100.
ARGENTINA

“Violencia escolar, flagelo en las aulas” [School violence, scourge in classes] is a special work realized and transmitted by Radio Cooperativa AM 740 from Argentina. One of the transmissions can be visualized and listened at: http://odeo.com/audio/18709543/players

AUSTRALIA

The professional development resource “Coping with School Bullying” is the latest Australian research project by Flinders University research team in which emphasises students’ “voice”. Studies using questionnaires and focus groups collected data from over 700 school students over the period of a year. Interviews were also conducted with teachers and other key school and health personnel. Focus group interviews were conducted with students and the script for the DVD was presented during a workshop. Four scenarios were identified including (i) relational (ii) verbal (iii) physical and (iv) cyber bullying. Students then acted the scenarios and were filmed by a film maker from Flinders University who also edited the final DVD. The backing music was written and performed by students. A booklet describing how to use the DVD in the school classroom was written by students and is part of the DVD package. Trailers for the DVD can be viewed at www.caper.com.au (search ‘products’)

The research on coping with bullying builds on a research involving over 25,000 students aged from 8 to 18 years from more than 60 Australian schools. As an outcome of the research programme the team have developed a range of resources including other DVDs. The research has explored in depth what students believe are constructive strategies that they and adults can employ to cope with bullying.

The Australian research team at Flinders University is looking forward to presenting their research on ‘Coping with School Bullying’ and meeting delegates at the 4th World Conference “Violence at School & Public Policies” in Lisbon on 23-25 June.

BELGIUM

The Belgian composer-performer Théo Mertens was invited to realize a clip as a part of a campaign against school violence. The result can be seen and listened to at: http://www.youtube.com:80/watch?v=Wq_YCTaxu_I&feature=related

CANADA (QUEBEC)

The Minister of Education, Leisure, Sports and Family of Quebec, Mrs. Michèle Courchesne, presented on 21st April 2008 her action plan to prevent and treat violence at school.

The implementation of this plan will need an investment of nearly 17 million Canadian dollars divided into three years, from the school year of 2008-2009 to the school year of 2010-2011. The Plan of action, titled “Violence at school: acting together, it’s worth it!” is concentrated upon four major lines: violence prevention and treatment, dialogue and training, research and documentation, and the follow-up and evaluation of the plan.

Until 2009, each school needs to adopt a local intervention strategy in violence prevention and treatment. School commissions are also

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invited to acquire an intervention plan for emergency situations.

School commissions will receive a help of 6.9 million Canadian dollars to be able to simplify the realization of efficient interventions. The government will also pay them an amount of 5.25 million Canadian dollars to allow them to organize a pedagogical and psychological support service favouring the reintegration of school suspended or expelled students.

In addition, the school network may count, in each region, on new resource-people, who will come to accompany them in their efforts aiming to counter violence at school, throughout the next three years.

The Canadian Observatory of School Violence is preparing right now a dossier “Special Canada” that will be published in the next numbers of the Newsletter. It will be possible to find many details on Canada’s situation and also considerations of the Plan of Action that was just presented.

A short version of the Plan is already available in the French language at:


POLAND

Last years the following research devoted to school violence has been carried out in Poland:

1. In March 2006 Centre of Public Opinion conducted Poll Surveys: “Violence at school” and “Regional diversity of students’ for Local Newspapers Publishing Groups “Polskapress” and “Media Regionalne”. These two Polish-wide surveys were done among teachers, students and parents. The aim of the surveys was a comprehensive diagnosis of school violence phenomenon;

2. Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, a professor’s assistant, delivered a speech: “Problems of secure school”- based on Centre of Public Opinion Poll Surveys.

3. Audit General Report from straw poll conducted in the frame of the campaign: “School without violence”, results of survey conducted among teachers and among students;

4. Professor Janusz Czapiński’s speech: “Is Polish school a habitation of pathology?”- based on the audit conducted within the frame of the campaign: “School without violence”.

On the basis of research results authors came to a conclusion that the basic problems of Polish schools are school isolation from the extensive environment (“closed school”) and subjectivism of school grades reflecting conflicts between students, between students and teachers as well the increasing students’ feeling of alienation from education process.

They concluded that special attention should be paid to a high school phenomenon. On the one hand the high school is in current educational system the most crucial for the further education; on the other hand in the high school all the negative phenomena grow stronger.

(Source: Manual of Best Practices for Combating and Preventing Bullying at Educational Centres. Published in 2008 with financial support of the European Programme Leonardo)