

#DEMANDSAFESCHOOLS!

Extract of Equal Education's Social Audit of Safety & Sanitation Conditions in Western Cape Schools

From September to November of 2015 Equal Education and partner organisations audited the safety and sanitation conditions of 244 schools in the Western Cape. This process included surveys of 912 learners, visible confirmation of conditions, and interviews with school administrators as well as extensive reviews of the existing literature and data request from government institutions.

1 in 6 People Feel Unsafe!

There is a widespread lack of a sense of security among people attending school in the Western Cape. Our audit found that 16% of administrators and 16% of learners feel unsafe at school. In other words, **1 out of 6 people at schools in the Western Cape feel unsafe**. Auditors felt unsafe in 35% of schools visited.

This is worse for urban learners, secondary school learners, and learners at poorer schools. **Half of urban secondary school learners at a quintile 1 school feel unsafe**. This is twice the share of rural secondary school learners who feel unsafe.

Violence is Experienced at 9 in 10 Schools!

Violence is extremely common. According to administrators, in the last three months: half of all schools surveyed have had a theft, a third have had physical violence against a learner, a third have had drug or alcohol use, and one in six had a gang presence. Furthermore, in the last year: more than half of schools have had a robbery, a quarter had a case of vandalism, one in six have had the significant injury of a learner, one in nine have had a stabbing, and 3% have had someone raped.

Learners reported experiencing or witnessing a violent event at 89% of surveyed schools:

- At half of schools, learners report being or seeing someone pickpocketed.
- At half of schools, learners report being or seeing someone threatened.
- At a third of schools, learners reported being or seeing someone mugged.
- At two thirds of school, learners reported being or seeing someone physically assaulted. Of those, nearly half are with a weapon, and one in ten are with a gun.
- At 16% of schools, learners reported being or seeing someone sexually harassed and, at 6 schools, administrators reported a rape occurring at the school in the last year.

1 in 4 Feel Unsafe On Their Way to School!

One in four learners (27%) feel unsafe on their journey to school. Those who walk more than 15 minutes unaccompanied to school (1 in 5 learners) feel significantly less safe (41% feel unsafe).

This fear stems from the high instances of muggings and violent assault that can occur on route to school. It is common for learners at many schools to experience violent events such as muggings (54%), assaults (57%), and harassment (43%) on their way to school. Again, these events are more likely in urban schools and in secondary schools: **at two-thirds of secondary schools, learners have witnessed or experienced a mugging on their way to school.**

At 83% of Schools Teachers Are Abusing Learners!

Given that corporal punishment is illegal and that the WCED has stated policies against it, one of the most remarkable findings of the audit is that **corporal punishment occurs in 83% of schools**. There is little variance between quintile or between age of learners. **It occurs daily in 37% of schools and at least once a week in 59% of schools**.

Furthermore, 64% of learners in our sample have personally been abused by or seen a fellow learner abused by a teacher weekly and **30% report witnessing corporal punishment daily**.

At 91% of schools with corporal punishment, teachers use weapon. The most used is a ruler/small stick (75% of schools), but pipes (44%) and batons/large sticks (11%) are also common.

Half of Fences Couldn't Keep Someone Out!

Nearly all of schools have a fence. However, the condition of the fences varies: 16% are below the government mandated 1.8 meters and 42% have holes in them. Most are made only of wire, with just a fifth made entirely out of sturdy materials like bricks, metal, or concrete. As a result, **only half of fences were assessed to be sturdy enough to keep people out**.

Most schools (93%) have an alarm, but of these 7% are broken. This means that about 1 in 7 schools are unprotected by an alarm. Further, at many schools these alarms are limited to only certain areas (admin blocs and computer labs for example.)

Finally, 72% of schools lack CCTV cameras, and of the schools that have CCTV cameras 6% the CCTV cameras do not work. Moreover, the effectiveness of these cameras in apprehending or deterring offenders is debatable – especially since the WCED has lost the assessment they did of CCTV interventions in 2008.

Causes of Violence

Learners and administrators named several reasons for this violence in schools:

- **Lack of access control:** "There is no proper gate or fence. Strangers can just walk into the school."
- **Lack of guards:** "There is no security or guards in our yard. Learners can come inside with weapons and drugs."
- **The presence of drugs and alcohol:** "Anything is possible when learners are on drugs."
- **The presence of weapons:** "Many other students bring weapons here, such as knives."
- **Community violence:** "When something happens in the community we feel very unsafe. Some of the learners do belong to gangs and the school is an easy place to get hold of."
- **Gangsters:** "Gangsters come inside the school and sexually harass us and traumatize us."
- **Lack of funding:** "School maintenance money is not enough; fundraising events don't work; security money needs to be more." "School maintenance money is not enough. Currently its paying for 5 teachers and it's still has to do maintenance stuff."
- **Lack of safety training:** "Not enough is being done to educate learners and educators about safety."
- **Learner's long walks to school:** "Large amount of learners live 34km from school. There is no transport, the road they walk is dangerous: 2 learners were killed by trucks in the last 5 years. The WCED says no money for transport."