

Making meaning from data on school-related gender-based violence by examining discourse and practice: Insights from a mixed methodology study in Ghana and Mozambique

Abstract

Efforts to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) globally are hampered by conceptual and methodological difficulties in capturing meaningful data needed to inform policy and practice. Whilst the emphases of influential studies tend to be on measuring practice of violence, we investigate whether we can develop a more meaningful analysis that incorporates attention to both discourse and practice. We do this by examining data collected through a 5 year mixed methods study assessing change in SRGBV in Ghana and Mozambique. The analysis reveals how in the two quite different contexts there were different discursive emphases and in turn practices which were invisible in the SRGBV disclosure data. We identify how both quantitative and qualitative data contribute to understanding changing gender violence in ways that can be illuminating. It is by understanding the interplay between discourse and practice that can really help us understand ‘what works’ to address SRGBV.

Introduction

Since 2000 there has been a rapidly increasing recognition of gender-based violence in and around schools as important and worthy of policy and programming attention (Parkes 2015). Studies helped to raise awareness of everyday violence – including harsh and humiliating punishments and treatment (Pinheiro 2006) and sexual harassment and exploitation faced by

girls across the world (Leach et al. 2003, Shumba 2001). A recent UN resolution called on all countries to take action on gender violence in schools (UNESCO 2015). Three Sustainable Development Goals (4 Education, 5 Gender and 16 Peace) all refer to violence against children, and target 4a - that schools are safe and gender sensitive places - are driving the push to monitor school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) globally. SRGBV now features as a key priority area of many development agencies (SVRI 2016, UNGEI 2016, Fancy and Fraser 2014). Along with the increasing emphasis placed on ‘evidence informed policy’ in recent years (Brannen and Moss 2012), there is increasing demand from multilateral and development agencies and national governments to understand ‘what works’ to reduce SRGBV (Parkes et al. 2016, DFID 2016). Along with the need for SDG monitoring data, and donor requirements for NGOs to provide evidence of impact, there has been a drive to identify measurable indicators that can assess change in violence.

However, as we investigate in this paper, these measures can be problematic. There is often a blind assumption that SRGBV prevalence data (for example girls’ disclosure of experiencing violence in surveys) simply reflect practice. Measurement data can reduce evidence to acts of violence, devoid of meaning, context and politics (Parkes et al. 2013). There are serious concerns about accuracy and validity of such data when taboos, conservative gender regimes and misrecognition characterise discourse on gender violence, and when the interview environment or methods used have so much influence over what is divulged (Leach 2015). Qualitative research has provided some rich, contextualised studies, but have had limited influence on policy. Meanwhile recent reviews have identified a paucity of rigorous meaningful evidence that helps us understand how to address SRGBV (Leach, Dunne, and Salvi 2014, Parkes, Heslop, Johnson Ross, et al. 2016). This paper aims to contribute

empirical knowledge on intervening on gender and sexual violence against girls in low income settings. We do this through analysing data from a 5 year mixed methodology study in Ghana and Mozambique where an SRGBV intervention took place. It is our contention that the lack of evidence about what works is largely due to the methodological difficulties discussed above. Our analysis attempts to address these difficulties and thus our key aim is to offer methodological insights for researching gender violence.

Approaches to researching SRGBV

Often as researchers, policymakers and practitioners we are most concerned with gathering evidence on changing *practice* of SRGBV. Since many interventions aim to reduce violence, indicators often seek to measure changes in prevalence of SRGBV. Nearly all reviews of effectiveness of interventions related to SRGBV, such as systematic reviews which are drawn on heavily by policymakers, use the level of violence disclosed by participants as the key indicator of intervention effectiveness. Sometimes other indicators, such as reported behaviour, knowledge and attitudes, are used as proxies of actual violence (Alford and Derzon 2014, De Koker et al. 2014, Ellsberg et al. 2015, Ricardo, Eads, and Barker 2011). Effective approaches in challenging violence are identified through experimental designs generating objective and measurable indicators of practice (Jewkes et al. 2008, Devries et al. 2015, Taylor, Mumford, and Stein 2015). However, the emphasis on counting acts of violence, identifying individual victims and perpetrators, effects on victims and witnesses and reasons for perpetration can fail to uncover the roots of SRGBV in gender inequalities and complex relations of power that underpin identities in varying contexts (Robinson, Davies, and Saltmarsh 2012, Parkes et al. 2013). Capturing data on practice without context can make it devoid of meaning, making it particularly difficult to interpret, and perhaps accounting for why many reviews of ‘what works’ have judged evidence to be ‘inconclusive’. A systematic

review of school programmes to reduce violent and antisocial behaviour identified that many standardised ‘off the shelf’ programmes had been rigorously tested in multiple trials throughout the USA, but found few replications of particular outcomes (Alford and Derzon 2014). In some studies, outcomes only changed for some groups and not others (Connolly et al. 2015, Jewkes et al. 2008, Cihangir 2013) or certain outcomes actually got worse (Rijsdijk et al. 2011), but the research designs did not enable an analysis of why those patterns might be so. Some of these inconclusive findings reflect how measurement approaches focusing on the practice of SRGBV alone can mask or hide the complexity and context of violence. Even the most detailed and carefully thought out surveys cannot capture the contours of acts of violence – the intentions, emotions, resistance, the chain of events tied up in family/community relationships, power dynamics, beliefs and formal and informal codes - that help convey their meaning.

Disclosing incidents of violence in surveys depends in part on whether individuals recognise acts as violent. Understandings of violence – including recognition and labelling of acts as violations - sit within their cultural discursive context (Gavey 2005). For example, legal definitions influence whether women recognise coercive sexual encounters as rape. Although commonly perceived definitions of rape are often narrower than legal definitions, they tend to expand when laws are changed or through high profile cases in the media (Gavey 2005). In one study rape disclosure was found to be eleven times higher when framed as ‘unwanted sexual experiences’ rather than ‘sexual victimisation’, even though questions met legal rape definitions in both surveys (Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000). Studies such as these have highlighted the important role of language and emotion in recognition and admission of experiencing violence.

SRGBV and particularly sexual violence are bound up with taboos around discussing sexuality (Heslop et al. 2015). In contexts where unmarried adolescent girls are expected to refrain from sexual activity and sometimes blamed for sexual violence occurring it is not surprising that sexual violence is under reported. Some studies have identified that girls often under-report whilst boys over-report sexual activity (Lagarde, Enel, and Pison 1995, Leach and Machakanja 2000, Dunne et al. 2005), linked to discourses of chaste femininities and virile masculinities. However, when talking about sexual *violence* specifically some research has suggested that boys may particularly under-report, because it presents a position of vulnerability that is seen to be emasculating (Lab, Feigenbaum, and De Silva 2000), and linked to homosexuality (Fontes and Plummer 2010). These tendencies are situated within context specific discourses, and so making generalising statements about what data represents in terms of practice may be erroneous.

Silences in discussing such sensitive issues are also influenced by the research environment, the social distance between the researcher and participant and the level of comfort experienced by participants (Leach 2015, UNICEF 2014). Whilst care can be taken in selecting and training researchers to reduce social distance, the interview format may constrain or facilitate efforts to minimise power imbalances and develop trusting and non-judgemental environments in which to talk about violence. Trust and openness can be built during an interview and can lead to disclosure of previously hidden violence, as in one study on sexual relationships and coercion in which girls interviewed initially claimed to not be sexually active themselves, and then spontaneously started discussing sexual experiences one hour into the interview (van Eerdewijk 2009). The fixed format of surveys may limit opportunities for violence disclosure, although some surveys have asked questions twice, as

the answer to the second question is seen to be more accurate (Ellsberg and Heise 2005). Using computer devices have also been linked to more honest responses and higher disclosure of experience and perpetration of sexual violence (Jewkes et al. 2010, Langhaug, Sherr, and Cowan 2010): audio computer-assisted survey instruments, which involve questions spoken over headphones and multiple choice responses on a screen were found the most reliable method and highly effective with young people with little or no computer literacy in rural poor settings (Langhaug et al. 2010). But these survey approaches will still struggle to deal with the subjective nature of violence which gives its meaning. These challenges in gathering accurate data about the practice of SRGBV make measurement of change particularly difficult. Effective interventions – as well as reducing actual acts of violence, may also increase recognition of violence, and so increase disclosure rates (Parkes and Heslop 2013). This raises questions in how we interpret changes in violence disclosure reporting.

An alternative body of qualitative research has emphasised the discursive orientation of gender violence. Discourse is conceived as patterns of talk, ideas and assumptions that become linguistic resources for communicating actors – the way we understand and speak about things. Power can produce or constrain truth and provides legitimacy for certain kinds of knowledge or beliefs and not others – generating dominant discourses and hierarchies of knowledge (Foucault 1982, 1980). Thus discourse is linked to norms and identities, shaped by institutions and deeply embedded in context (Kehily and Nayak 2008, van Eerdewijk 2009). Research has emphasised SRGBV as a personal and subjective experience, something that is bound up with deeply held beliefs about gender, childhood and rights which are highly contextual (Parkes et al 2013; Stark et al 2012). For example, our study in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique found children and teachers often viewed corporal punishment as necessary for

learning and development but also as a violation under certain circumstances (Authors, 2011).

The relationship between discourse and practice is debated. Social constructionists understand language as not mirroring reality, but as creating it (Fairhurst and Grant 2010), and some understand acts as performance of discourse (Butler 1993). Whilst speech acts may shape actual practice, they are not identical, and this is recognised in Butler's *Excitable Speech*, where she acknowledges how for example hegemonic norms may be taken up and modified in practice (Butler 1997). Butler highlights how dominant discourses of gender can be inscribed on bodies through repetition, and can come to be seen to be natural (Butler 1990). This example of symbolic violence, the process of simultaneous recognition and mis-recognition, in which inequalities are perceived (or recognised) and taken for granted as normal (mis-recognised) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004) is an important part of understanding discourse and subjectivity. Hence silences or seeming 'lack of discourse' are critical in analysis of discourse. They help explain how some women have understood beating by their partners as a sign of love rather than abuse (Jewkes et al. 2001) and how adolescents in Zambia have understood coercive sex as the natural way of things (Heslop forthcoming). Central to this is how forms of gender discrimination and violence are taken for granted and normalised (e.g. Chege 2006, Parkes 2008).

An analysis of discourse requires close attention to context. Some studies have examined how discourse on sexual and gender norms and violence is shaped by local material surroundings, such as poverty and inequality levels, forms of livelihood, access to services and communications, local histories and traditions and wider influences such as globalisation,

government policies and media (Parkes, Heslop, Januario, et al. 2016, Heslop et al. 2015, Parikh 2012, Heslop and Banda 2013, Wilding 2015, Moletsane, Mitchell, and Lewin 2015). Other research has examined how the formal and informal regulatory environments of schools and education systems can produce violence but also sometimes prevent it (e.g. Dunne, Humphreys and Leach 2006; Mirembe and Davies 2001). These studies, using feminist social constructionist epistemologies, have emphasised the situatedness of knowledge and the position of the knowledge holder (Oakley and Roberts 1981). Postcolonial researchers have also raised questions about whose knowledge counts, critiquing the global north driven funding and research agenda, which may shape conceptual and methodological orientation of gender research in ways that do not reflect local contexts, with their complex relationships, politics and histories (Arnfred and Adomako, 2010; Beoku Betts, 2008). This attention to context and power is particularly important for research addressing violence against women and girls when gendered power relations are central.

These studies have necessarily tended to use in-depth qualitative methodologies, in particular ethnography and participatory research designs, to gain a deep, rich understanding of different perspectives and meanings of violence and how or why violence operates in different contexts. These methodologies have been able to emphasise developing trust and openness with research participants, and minimising power imbalances between the researcher and researched – particularly important when conducting research with children and on sensitive issues (Leach 2015). They have been better able to capture the subjectivity and contextualisation of violence needed to give it its meaning. However, they have had little influence on changing policy. The localised nature of many of these studies have not captured the imaginations of policy actors, who may not consider them on a large enough scale, demonstrating clear, broad enough patterns or generalisable enough to be considered

‘hard evidence’ to influence change (Leach 2015). They may be less accessible, with more complex and contextualised narratives replacing headline findings - which more easily translate into policy messages.

This brief review identifies tensions in research relating to practice of and discourse on violence. While quantitative research identifies practice, qualitative research illuminates the discourses embedded in contexts surrounding violence. Rarely does research engage in both dimensions. Our intention in this paper is to explore, through discussing one mixed methods study, whether a more holistic conceptual and methodological approach can generate fuller understandings about how to intervene on gender violence in and around schools.

The research approach

The data discussed in this paper is drawn from a study linked to an intervention aiming to ‘stop violence against girls in school in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique’. The research aimed to understand whether and how SRGBV changed, and how an NGO intervention and other contextual features influenced this. The research used a multidimensional conceptualisation of SRGBV: as acts of violence situated within everyday interactions, norms and identities, and also broader structures and institutions that can produce gender inequalities and violence (authors 2013). Whilst the intervention – and research – was conducted in three country locations, in this paper we concentrate on examining data on sexual violence from the research areas in a remote rural area in Northern Ghana and a more connected rural area close to the capital in Southern Mozambique. The focus on these two locations enables us to compare in some depth the findings and trace differences and connections in discourses and

practices in these two distinct contexts. The research used a multi-strategy design, involving a mixed methods baseline and endline study and a qualitative longitudinal study.

The quantitative data in this paper is drawn from responses of 746 girls (390 in Ghana and 356 in Mozambique) to surveys conducted in the baseline and 752 (389 in Ghana and 363 in Mozambique) girls in the endline study. Girls were randomly sampled from three age groups (8-10, 11-13 and 14-17) within the participating primary schools (13 schools in Ghana, 15 in Mozambique). Boys and teachers were also surveyed, and school administrative data collected, along with focus groups with parents and interviews with school and community leaders. The longitudinal study followed nine girls in each of four schools in the two locations, so 72 girls in the Ghana and Mozambique locations overall, to see how their capacities to challenge violence changed over the course of the intervention. The girls were visited four times over two and a half years, and their peers, parents, teachers and others in the community also participated in interviews or focus group activities. Observations were carried out in schools, communities and for specific activities. We prioritised participatory techniques with girls, including drawing rivers of life, risk mapping and transect walks, as avenues to open up discussion on sensitive topics¹.

In the longitudinal, baseline and endline studies the *Author 1&2 institution* worked alongside *Author 3 institution* in Mozambique and *Author 4 institution* in Ghana to conduct the research, and built a rigorous research protocol (Authors 2011) to guide the complex methodological and ethical considerations. This included careful selection and placing of research teams to take into account gender, age, ethnicity and language and to minimise social distance and power differentials, and ensuring the team had the right skills and

attributes to conduct child friendly and sensitive research. Training addressed understandings of gender and violence, complex ethical dilemmas as well as intensive training on using the research instruments. Instrument design addressed concerns about data accuracy and ethics through for example, questions on personal experiences of violence located towards the end of the instrument, once a rapport was more likely to have been established. Questions asking about acts of violence were specific and avoided emotion or judgement-laden language that could be open to interpretation. When translating to local languages, research teams consulted about appropriate terminology. Instruments were developed with local teams and piloted in communities close to the intervention communities. The research teams worked with the intervention partner ActionAid to follow their child protection policy and ensure that they could support girls following abuse disclosures. The research was granted ethical approval by Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee, and followed local protocols in each country.

Quantitative data was analysed in SPSS, and looked at change over the course of the intervention, as well as investigating relationships between certain demographic data, inputs and outcomes. Indexes were developed to facilitate this analysis. For example an attitudes index measured to what extent participants challenged gender inequalities and violence by summarising responses to seven questions², with 1 indicating a high score (or 'lots of challenging') and 0 a low score (no challenging). Analysis of longitudinal qualitative data involved a 3 layer process of identifying themes, identifying patterns between girls with differing characteristics and different types of schools/communities, and identifying change in the data at individual, school and meta level. Analysis was carried out with close collaboration between the research teams, and findings were shared for reflection and interpretation by the wider research and intervention team.

Sexual violence: Changing patterns of practice?

As discussed earlier, prevalence of violence tends to be identified as a key indicator on SRGBV. In this project it was the main indicator of success, and one in which the donor hoped to see a ‘reduction by 50% in SRGBV’. The intervention aimed to address this through working at multiple levels to empower girls to challenge violence and make schools and communities safer, more supportive and gender equitable places. The project activated girls’ clubs initially - and later boys’ clubs - in schools. Small group discussions and broader advocacy activities encouraged community members to discuss and deliberate on gender, rights and violence. Workshops and training sessions involved teachers, community members and district officials, and the intervention promoted the development of school level policies on gender-equitable schooling. The project also worked at national level to strengthen clarity and consistency in national laws and policies, and at local level to support the enactment of laws and policies on gender, violence and education, through for example strengthening the ways formal and informal justice systems worked together to respond to violence against girls (ActionAid 2013).

Girls’ disclosure³ of a number of different forms of violence at baseline and endline are shown in table 1. The indicator ‘any sexual violence’ reflects the kind of synthesised form of data being looked at in the search for SRGBV indicators and demanded by donors in monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The data would suggest that there was a clear increase in sexual violence overall in Mozambique and a smaller increase in Ghana over the course of the intervention. Patterns differed for different forms of sexual violence. In Mozambique whilst violence disclosure clearly increased overall, this was not the case not for

the most extreme forms of sexual violence. In Ghana the overall slight increase was mostly due to an increase in disclosure of sexual comments.

Table 1 here

Girls who disclosed forms of violence were asked what action they took (if any) in the most recent case. Whilst only a minority of girls told someone (a family member, teacher, friend or other official at school or elsewhere) at the baseline in Mozambique, these numbers rose markedly at the end of the project (see table 2). In Ghana we did not see the same clear rise in reporting. In fact the most extreme form of sexual violence saw a drop in reporting, unlike in Mozambique – although numbers are low so we need to use caution when interpreting data.

Table 2 here

These two tables appear to present contradictory evidence on practice of violence. Whilst the headline ‘prevalence’ statistics would suggest that *practice* of violence is increasing in both contexts, albeit with some slightly different patterns, it appears that responses to violence differ significantly between the two contexts. A more comprehensive analysis of discourse and practice reveal more complex pictures emerging, as we will see in the next two sections.

Ghana – subjugated discourses on sexuality

In Ghana the research took place in the districts of Nanumba North and South, in the Northern region of Ghana. Bimbilla town, which acted as the centre of these two districts, was two hours' drive from the nearest tar road. Despite Ghana's fast developing economy, development has been uneven, and the remoteness of the project area is in part linked to historical underdevelopment of the northern part of Ghana (Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah 2009). Bimbilla town housed district government offices and services, NGOs and small businesses. Eleven of the 13 study schools were located outside the town in villages across the districts, which had more limited access to services, running water and electricity, mobile phones and other electronic media. There were high levels of poverty, and livelihoods depended mainly on subsistence farming. People came from Nanumba and Konkomba ethnic groups, which have a history of conflict, including a bloody war in 1994, and practiced Islam or Christianity. Gender inequalities were evident, illustrated by unequal distribution of labour, gender gaps in education access and attainment, and chastity, compliance and domesticity the valued markers of femininity for schoolgirls.

Qualitative data collected early in the project highlighted how girls were already vocal about sexual violence, even though they lacked knowledge about supportive mechanisms to challenge violence. By the end of the project there was a clear change: girls were much more knowledgeable about and critical of violence, including having a range of strategies to prevent and respond to violence. Girls' clubs were set up to act as safe spaces for girls to come together, learn about and challenge gender violence and inequalities in and around schools, and had helped girls identify and understand what action to take:

They told us that when something happens to us we can come to them so that they will report the case to the police. If a boy rapes you or he is disturbing you, you can come and report to CAT⁴ (Laminu, 15 years, Ghana).

Survey data also provided evidence on increasing knowledge of what action could be taken on experiencing sexual violence, but there was no statistical relationship between this knowledge and actual reporting⁵. Also supporting this assertion is that at the endline girls' club members – who had greater exposure to the intervention - had better knowledge than non-members ($p < 0.05$), but were not more likely to report violence. If girls in Ghana had become more knowledgeable about reporting mechanisms and critical of violence, why did this not seem to translate into girls taking action?

In the project communities in Nanumba, there were strong taboos about sexuality, and particularly about premarital sex for girls. Girls even attending school had been controversial for some parents, as there was fear that girls mixing with boys outside their family may lead to relationships and pregnancy outside of marriage. The project had great success in changing these perceptions and discourses of girls' education, but paradoxically this may have been linked to dissociating girls' education from sexual activity. However, the qualitative data showed that some girls did have sexual relationships and encounters, often involving a material exchange and sometimes involving coercion (Heslop et al 2015). Girls clearly needed the opportunity to discuss and learn about safe, healthy relationships, but discussion on violence tended to focus on how to avoid, challenge or report sexual advances, as in this discussion with 11-13 year old girls on sexual relationships among their peers and associated risks such as pregnancy and HIV:

Researcher: Are there any actions on your part that might help the situation?

- Yakubu: We should tell them that education is important for them. If they don't listen, it will be difficult for them to continue their education.
- Warihana: We will tell the elders to tell the parents to advise them. If the children refuse, the chief should lock them in his palace.
- Iddrisu: We will tell them that they should stop going out at night.
- Samata: We have to tell them to stop going to dances.
- Majeed: We have to advise them and if they don't listen, we tell the elders to talk to them.
- Researcher: Has anything been done to help the situation?
- Majeed: The elders of the community. They call the girls' parents and the elders in community talk and advise them.
- Warihana: Chief calls the community and told the parents that if the girls go out and are caught, they should be beaten.
- Dahama: The elders gathered the community to talk to them.
- Majeed: The head mistress has advised us at assembly.
- Samata: The girls' club has been told about AIDS. The mentor has talked to us.
- Yakubu: Chairman told parents not to let the girls go for dance.
- Majeed: Action Aid has talked to our parents.

The discourse on female chastity was reinforced at multiple levels, including school staff, community members, the NGO and among girls themselves. This discussion illustrates how responsibility was placed on girls to keep away from possible risks, and girls who transgressed faced punishment and blame. This raises further questions about the barriers girls faced in taking action, which is reflected in the comparatively lower reporting rates

(table 2). In Ghana it seems that the anti-sex message may have contributed to stigma about sexuality, shame and blame, which did not help girls to take action and report violence.

Mozambique: Increasing recognition on sexual violence

In Mozambique the intervention took place in Manhica district, located on the main trunk road through the country and close to the capital. This brought with it greater mobility, access to facilities, communications and modernising forces, and employment. While subsistence farming was the main source of livelihood, a sugar cane factory provided much employment in the area, and many men migrated to work in mines in South Africa. This mobility and instability of income meant that food insecurity was more acute here than in the Ghana intervention area. Education has been rapidly expanding after infrastructure was destroyed during the '77-'92 civil war, but resources remain insufficient, and in the project areas primary schools were operating a shift system.

Like in the Ghana project area, there were clear gender inequalities, with chastity and compliance valued for schoolgirls. This was reflected in silences in girls' talk about sexual violence at the baseline, whilst other adults in the community often blamed girls for their involvement in sexual relationships, even though they were often exploitative: 'Children (girls) like money a lot; they go after older men and these men end up committing sexual abuse' (Women's Group Leader) and 'Girls are stubborn; they don't want to listen to their parents. They only listen to their friends, and as a result, they get pregnant' (Community Leader). However, this context, with greater access to global technologies, media and sexualised dress codes, including through Brazilian soap operas and pornography (Osório and Silva 2009), and higher levels of transactional sex and HIV (Mocumbi et al. 2017) linked to

economic migration, also opened up a little more room for more permissive discourses on sexuality than in the Ghana intervention area.

Whilst the survey data indicated a possible rise in some forms of sexual violence (table 1), the qualitative data suggested that this may be because girls became more confident in speaking openly about violence during the project. At the baseline girls tended to only talk about less sensitive forms of violence, such as corporal punishment, following norms and expectations disallowing children and especially girls to discuss sexual matters, and particularly with strangers. However, silences around discussing issues related to sexuality began to be eroded during the intervention. Unlike in Ghana, in Mozambique at the endline girls' club members were more likely to disclose experiencing most forms of sexual violence than non-members (for any sexual violence $p < 0.01$, for peeping and touching $p < 0.05$), and this seems more likely to reflect increasing ability to speak about violence than increasing violence risk. Girls frequently described the clubs as having a positive impact on their lives: 'I like to be a Girls' Club member because it helps me to know my rights, my duties, what to do to prevent pregnancy and how to help other people' (Megui, 15 years). Girls with views that were more challenging of gender violence and inequalities were also more likely to disclose experiencing some forms of sexual violence, namely sexual comments ($p < 0.01$) and forced sex ($p < 0.05$), unlike in Ghana.

All this suggests that silences around SRGBV began to be eroded during the project intervention in Mozambique. The intervention played a role in helping girls to recognise and speak out about sexual violence, and so the 'violence prevalence' statistics may reflect this change in *discourse* rather than increasing practices of violence. The evidence hints that girls

who had more exposure to discourse challenging gender violence and inequalities were more likely to recognise and disclose violence.

The slightly more permissive norms around adolescent sex allowed a little more room for the intervention to discuss decision making in sexual relationships as well as sexual violence with girls, and minimised backlash by including activities in the girls' clubs that were uncontroversial, such as making and selling crafts to help fund marginalised girls return to school, and undertaking community tasks such as tidying the market area. Whilst these approaches can be critiqued for reinforcing traditional gendered roles and child labour, this gaining of broad support may have helped the intervention address sex, relationships and violence in a more holistic way than was possible in Ghana, and succeeded in building a more supportive environment for girls.

This support is illustrated in changing community responses to violence. Baseline qualitative data from the Mozambique project area showed how sexual violence cases had been often kept in the family, and sometimes addressed by traditional courts if a settlement could not be reached. Perpetrators would be asked for a payment by the family (called the 'ticket' in the following quote), especially in the case of a pregnancy, or sometimes a marriage arranged with the emphasis on economic rather than gender justice: 'Girls must obey what their parents say to them, for not losing the nights. In case of abuse, she must marry the perpetrator, and if the perpetrator doesn't want to, he must pay a ticket' (Community leader). The proportion of cases reaching formal channels, such as the School Management Committee, District Education Office or police, rose markedly from none to almost one-third during the intervention (see table 3). This changing level of community and institutional support was also reflected in responses by community leaders at the end of the intervention:

In recent years, the formal structures of the neighborhood have been working hard to mobilise and the entire population knows that if people engage in violence they have to respond to the community or the police....I think because of so much talking and mobilising to end violence some people have become more aware of the problems.
(Community leader).

Unlike in Ghana, knowledge of reporting mechanisms and support organisations were very strongly associated with reporting of violence ($p < 0.01$). In other words, girls who knew what action could be taken were much more likely to have taken action themselves in response to their most recent experience of violence. It is not surprising that if response mechanisms are working more effectively then girls would be more likely to convert their knowledge into action, having more confidence in a better outcome.

Table 3 here

This discursive change towards prioritising girls' rights was also facilitated by the material context in the Mozambique intervention area. Its comparatively better infrastructure and access to services facilitated change in some unexpected ways – such as how electrification brought to one village made girls feel safer at night – and helped to make services more accessible and responsive to the needs of girls who wanted to report violence, such as the use of a telephone support line.

The overall analysis identifies that it does not seem likely that sexual violence increased in Mozambique, and there is ample evidence supporting increased action taken against sexual

violence. We have seen how these were linked to changing discourses about girls' rights facilitated by the intervention, and that this discursive change may have been enabled by modernising influences that were more accessible in this setting than the more remote location in Ghana.

Discussion

Analysis of data from this SRGBV intervention shows that, whilst on the surface, some of the key headline 'indicators' of sexual violence disclosure increased in the two contexts, the meanings behind the patterns were very different, and they may not have reflected practice in the same way. Firstly, abundant evidence put major doubt that there was actually a sharp rise in sexual violence in Mozambique, and it seems much more likely that silences existing around violence seen at the baseline were eroded during the project, with girls coming to recognise and speak out about violence. The data on violence disclosure was more reflective of practice at the endline than at the baseline, as discourse in the Mozambican project area began to support discussion and criticism of violence. In Ghana, the smaller rise in sexual violence disclosed may reflect a more limited impact of the intervention in helping girls to speak out about violence. Multiple sources of evidence suggest that anti-sex discourses may have acted as a barrier to some girls disclosing and taking action on sexual violence.

In the Ghana project area the pre-existing discourses around female chastity and associations of education with promiscuity led the intervention to emphasise girls staying away from sex to protect themselves from violence - avoiding more complex and controversial discussions addressing healthy and safe sexual relationships. This may have further reinforced discourses that held girls responsible for sexual activity, with hints of blame when these were

transgressed, which may have further limited girls' ability to report sexual violence. Meanwhile the more 'modernised' context in Mozambique seemed to have shaped more liberal views relating to sexual relationships (although still with traces of blame for girls involved in sexual relationships), and access to services and information may have also facilitated change. There were still some tensions around girls speaking out and challenging entrenched norms, but there was a little more space to address sex and relationships, and the intervention garnered support in other ways. We have seen how the two quite different contexts led to different discursive emphases then taken up by the intervention in different ways. By the end of the project there seemed to be a closer alignment between discourse and practice on sexual violence in Mozambique than in Ghana. This highlights how important understanding contexts of violence are: not just for interpreting data but in how interventions may interact with pre-existing discourses which in turn can influence experiences of and responses to sexual violence.

Data on SRGBV may not reflect practice in simple ways. This key finding cautions against the tendency to simplify and reduce monitoring data into key indicators (such as violence prevalence) that may be misleading in themselves if we place uncritical trust in them. Paying attention to discourse, how it is embedded in context and the ways it is bound up with practice may help to tell us more about what is changing. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data help to expand our understanding of changing discourse and practice on gender violence. Longitudinal qualitative designs can help develop a deeper understanding of prevailing discourses around SRGBV and how they impact on practice, with reflection and analysis in between waves of data collection helping to guide the progression of the study and build a more coherent picture over time. However, it is not simply that quantitative data tells us about practice and qualitative data tells us about context and discourse: this analysis has

shown how they each contribute to this more comprehensive analysis. Developing a dialogue between data sources is key, as is developing a more fine-grained analysis of quantitative data than is usual practice. For example, undertaking quantitative analysis to look at patterns by school or by community type, and looking at correlations between different aspects of discourse and practice, such as attitudes to gender, knowledge of reporting and actual reporting, help to tell us about the relationship between discourse and practise and how it is rooted in context. It is understanding this interplay between the dynamics of practice and discourse that is particularly illuminating and can help us understand ‘what works’ to address SRGBV.

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Tables

Table 1: Percentage of girls disclosing sexual violence in the past 12 months, by type

	2009 (%)	2013 (%)
Mozambique		
Peeping ⁶	18.5	23.7
Touching	16.2	29.2
Comments	6.3	16.3
Forced sex	8.8	8.8
Sex for goods	1.8	0.0
Any sexual violence	29.3	39.4
Ghana		
Peeping	9.5	9.8
Touching	8.2	9.0
Comments	12.6	18.8
Forced sex	0.3	1.8
Sex for goods	3.1	0.0
Any sexual violence	22.6	26.0

Mozambique Baseline n = 352, Endline n = 363; Ghana Baseline n = 390, Endline n = 389

Table 2: Percentage of girls who experienced violence who reported it to someone

	2009		2013	
	%	N ⁷	%	N
Mozambique				
Peeping	46.3	41	79.8	89
Touching	39.7	68	59.2	103
Comments	13.3	30	38.9	54
Forced sex	20.0	10	54.5	33
Sex for goods	53.8	13	-	0
Any sexual violence	40.9	110	69.5	141
Ghana				
Peeping	23.6	55	39.1	46
Touching	35.2	54	36.6	41
Comments	24.6	57	22.6	84
Forced sex	42.9	7	36.4	11
Sex for goods	45.5	11	-	0
Any sexual violence	35.3	119	40.3	124

Table 3: Percentage of girls who experienced violence whose cases reached official channels (school management/DEO/police), Mozambique

	2009	2013

	%	<i>N</i> ⁸	%	<i>N</i>
Peeping	0.0	41	13.5	74
Touching	0.0	68	33.8	77
Comments	0.0	30	0.0	22
Forced sex	0.0	10	34.8	23
Sex for goods	0.0	13	-	0
Any sexual violence	0.0	110	31.0	113

¹ The full endline study gathered survey data from 1855 schoolchildren and teachers, and qualitative data from a further 1,377 individuals through the endline and longitudinal studies (girls, boys, parents, head teachers, school committee members, and community and religious leaders, district level education, health and police officers and national policymakers). Full details can be found in Authors 2013

² Views on teachers asking girls and boys to do personal errands, corporal punishment against girls and boys, whether teachers who have sex with schoolgirls should be dismissed, whether girls are at fault for being sexually harassed, and whether schools should allow girls who became pregnant to remain at school.

³ We use the term ‘disclosed’ to refer to affirmative responses by girls to survey questions about whether they had experienced different forms of violence (in the past 12 months) – i.e. that experience of violence was disclosed to researchers. We use the term ‘reported’ to refer to responses from girls about what they did as a result of their most recent experience of violence. Reporting indicated that they took some action through telling someone.

⁴ Community Advocacy Teams are trained community members who provide a first point of contact to abuse survivors and help provide a link to formal services.

⁵ This summary variable calculated whether a girl had said that they told one of 5 identified people listed in the instrument for at least one of the 13 types of violence they were asked about. This binary number was divided by the binary number which summarised whether they had disclosed experiencing any of the 13 types of violence.

⁶ Full definitions used were:

- Forced/coerced sex in exchange for food, gifts, grades, or money
- Peeping (in toilets, mirrors, under desk)
- Touching/ pinching breasts, buttocks, or private parts
- Sexual comments
- Forced/ unwanted sex
- Forced/coerced sex in exchange for food, gifts, grades, or money

⁷ Denotes the total sample from which the data is taken for each question (i.e. number of girls disclosing each form of violence).

⁸ Denotes the total sample from which the data is taken for each question (i.e. number of girls disclosing each form of violence).