

Voices on Violence

Sexual Violence

"They touch me as if I am public property!" Amina said to her friend.

"Me, too!" her friend replied. "They pinch me, grab my breasts and laugh as if it is funny. These conductors on the bus are too much!"

"Even at school," Amina continued, "the teacher asked me to take his books to his house nearby, and then followed me, and locked the door. He tried to grab me but I started shouting and escaped through the back door."

"You know, that Elizabeth who keeps quiet all the time?" Amina asked. "She told me once that her father disturbs her at night when her mother goes to the village. What is it that makes people feel they can treat girls like this?"

"It's not only girls," her friend said. "Some boys also are touched and forced to do things that they don't want to."

"Why do people feel they can do this to children?" Amina asked.

"It is because they think that children can't do anything," her friend said. "They also know that many adults won't do much when they see this happening to children."

"But don't people know that it makes children feel bad about themselves and makes them feel like no-one cares about them? I wish I could tell all the adults about how dirty and shameful it feels." Her friend looked at Amina and thought about what she was suggesting. "Do you think they would believe us?"

"We should tell people that it is not right to treat children like this," Amina said after a while. "We should write to the headmaster at our school. People should speak out. It is only because everyone is keeping quiet that it continues to happen."

"Yes," her friend said, "silence protects no-one."

In a study completed recently, more than ten percent of the children consulted said they experience sexual violence at least once a week. More than one in five girls said that they had been coerced into having sex.

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