# STOPPING SCHOOL RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

### 1. Topic overview

School-related, gender-based violence (SRGBV) refers to corporal punishment, sexual abuse, bullying and other forms of violence in and around school. It affects more than 245 million girls and boys every year and has been documented in almost all countries. SRGBV damages students' physical, psychological and emotional well-being, undermines their rights, deters them from attending classes, and leads to low achievement and increased dropout rates. The existence of aggression and injustice within the educational environment where key behavioural norms are formed increases the severity of the problem. Even though it exists in all cultures, religions and societies SRGBV is still underresearched and under-reported.

This guidance note is designed to help EU staff engage in policy dialogue and programme development for stopping SRGBV as part of the EU's commitment to child protection and equal access to quality education, free of gender-based violence. EU policy for stopping SRGBV is based on the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, Sustainable Development Goal 4aii, EU advice on integrated child protection systems, the EU Gender Action Plan, and the Joint Staff Working Document: 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020'. All these equate accessing quality education to '...a safe, free of sexual and gender-based violence environment that responds to child protection principles'.iv

## UNESCO (2015). School-related gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all. <a href="https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002321/232107e.pdf">https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002321/232107e.pdf</a>

#### **Summary**

This guidance note provides information and programming advice about how to stop school-related, gender-based violence (SRGBV). It explains how:

- SRGBV refers to corporal punishment, sexual abuse and bullying in and around schools, perpetrated by teachers, students and others
- The root causes of SRGBV are unequal power over others, privilege and impunity, learnt violent behaviour, and unequal institutions
- Programming to stop SRGBV needs to address gender inequality at all levels of society while prioritising safe school environments, effective early intervention, and prevention
- Interventions can be mainstreamed through an existing EU education agenda such as girls' secondary education programmes and reducing school dropout
- Guiding questions for policy dialogue and programme design should be informed by a deeper understanding of root causes, the prevalence and types of SRGBV, and successful tools and approaches for stopping it
- Monitoring and evaluation should not rely only on self-reported behavioural change but be based on more objective data and means of verification.

Stopping SRGBV should prioritise safe school environments, early intervention, and prevention. There are five main areas to consider:

- 1. Types, locations and perpetrators of SRGBV
- 2. Root causes
- **3.** Effective tools and approaches
- 4. Key questions for policy dialogue and programming
- **5**. Effective monitoring and evaluation

Types of SRGBV can be any act or threat of sexual, physical or psychological violence in or around school. They include:

**Physical violence:** hitting, pushing around, fighting, mugging and destroying property.

iii Fiona Leach (2008), Gender violence in schools in the developing world. http://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/28-31-2008.pdf

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

iv EU (2015) Gender equality and women's empowerment: Transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/staff-working-document-gender-2016-2020-20150922\_en.pdf

Sexual violence: harassment, coercion, grooming, exploitation, assault, and rape. Students and young female teachers are most at risk in unattended classrooms, toilets, dormitories, school entrance areas and school grounds. Students also suffer sexual harassment, attacks and bullying during the journey to and from school. Globally, sources estimate 60 million girls and 29 million boys are sexually assaulted at or on the way to school each year.

**Bullying:** physical, verbal, emotional and cyber abuse, intimidation, insults, threats and rumours.

Corporal punishment: slapping, pushing, canning, forcing children into physically painful positions, degrading language and tasks are used for punishing students. Some teachers exercise power over children as an entitlement, others are not trained in nonviolent classroom management and respond violently to challenging conditions of large classes and no resources.

Marginalisation: discrimination and exclusion because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, social status, religion, disability, stigmatised illness (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and displacement. Marginalisation increases vulnerability to violence. Any of these factors combined with gender put children at higher risk. A study in Uganda of 11 to 14-year-old girls found girls with disabilities reported twice as many sexual violations as girls without disabilities. vi

**Child labour and exploitation:** for example, working on a teacher's garden or cleaning their house.

Conflict affected school environments: child soldier recruitment and trafficking, use of schools for military purposes and violence against girls in school as a weapon of war.

These forms of violence in school harm children physically, sexually and psychologically and can impede their social development and educational achievement. Students who experience, or live in fear of violence, suffer from lower concentration, weaker academic performance, irregular attendance, and higher dropout rates. They can also suffer from low self-esteem, mistrust, anger, hostility, isolation, long-term mental distress and disorders, substance abuse, self-harm and suicide. Sexual violence can also result in pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and damage to sexual and reproductive health. Numerous cases

of corporal punishment or physical fights have resulted in broken bones, organ damage, disability and even death.

#### Root causes

SRGBV is caused by unequal power relations, sometimes exercised by men and boys over those they perceive to be weaker: women, girls, and more vulnerable men and boys. This creates male privilege and impunity and endorses the way violence is 'learned' as children grow up. Many children experience harmful masculinity and gender discrimination from an early age, affecting how they see their own value, rights and role in society - and in school. Boys learn to use violence to dominate those they perceive to be weaker. This accounts for homophobic bullying, assaults on other boys and the victimisation of marginalised boys, as well as sexual abuse of girls and young women teachers (girl-to-girl bullying and abuse of power by women teachers also exists and should not be underestimated).

Male privilege and impunity also account for transactional and survival sex in schools. Some teachers coerce students to have sex for better marks. Some students with no financial support from their families use transactional sex with teachers or other members of the community to pay school fees and pursue their education, sometimes condoned by their parents. In some contexts, teachers who exploit their authority by having sex with students are rarely expelled from the teaching profession. This only strengthens perpetrators' sense of impunity.

The school environment contributes to the problem by replicating and reinforcing existing power relations and gender inequalities in society.vii Corporal punishment, although banned in 122 countries, is still condoned in 76. Even where corporal punishment is prohibited, legislation is often not sufficiently enforced and the belief that children benefit from physical discipline persists. At a more insidious level, curricula, textbooks and official lesson plans can include ethnic. gender and other biases which endorse discrimination and harmful gender stereotypes. In addition, teachers may give boys more prominent 'leadership' tasks, talking time and physical space while girls are constrained in classroom interaction or physical activity and given more 'domestic' tasks like cleaning the classroom.

v USAID (2008) Are schools safe havens for children? Examining school-related gender-based violence. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\_docs/Pnadm792.pdf

Vi UNESCO-UN Women (2016) Global guidance on addressing school-related genderbased violence. <a href="http://unesdocunesco.org/images/0024/002466/246651E.pdf">http://unesdocunesco.org/images/0024/002466/246651E.pdf</a>

vii Fiona Leach (2008), Gender violence in schools in the developing world. Op Cit

### 2. Key issues

As the root causes and risk factors of SRGBV occur at individual, family, community, institutional and societal levels, stopping SRGBV requires a holistic approach with interventions at all these levels (UN Women, 2015). Programming is best addressed as a cross cutting theme in EU education programmes and interventions and can be mainstreamed through an existing education agenda, for example through girls' education, reducing school dropout, improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes, or curriculum development that links life skills and sexuality education to stopping gender-based violence.

It is vital that national education policies and plans acknowledge SRGBV and identify actions to stop it. EU staff can promote understanding and action on SRGBV through policy dialogue, sharing evidence of promising practices, and supporting analysis, and programme development and implementation.

#### Effective tools and approaches

A country-specific gender analysis will elicit the main drivers of SRGBV, factors that exacerbate the problem, the target groups, change agents and sources of resistance. This will serve as the basis for identifying the best suited responses for stopping SRGBV and drafting a theory of change.

The theory of change should include all levels of society from family to community, school, social services, to the Ministries responsible for education and other public bodies, because the root causes of SRGBV emanate from all these levels in combination. See the example theory of change for stopping SRGBV in Section3 below, which has been created for this guidance note by drawing on a range of successful interventions reported in 'Stopping school related gender-based violence'."

Guiding questions can be used to shape policy dialogue and to inform planning and implementation. This dialogue and engagement should target the same levels of society – from family to national policy – as those targeted in the theory of change. Such questions should elicit from policy makers and practitioners the need to involve women, girls and at-risk groups in creating or improving participatory systems and mechanisms that affect gender inclusion and safety in schools. See examples of guiding questions for policy dialogue, programme design and delivery in Section 4 below.

# Theory of Change outlining a range of tools and approaches for stopping SRGBV

Level	Strategies	Use of outputs	Outcomes	Goal
Ministry of Education, education authorities	<ul> <li>Collect and analyse comprehensive data on SRGBV.</li> <li>Develop and disseminate policies for stopping SRGBV.</li> <li>Allocate budget, develop systems and capacity for gender equal curriculum development, develop child safeguarding protocols, agree on referral and response pathways for survivors of SRGBV in line with national child protection agencies, develop pre- and in-service teacher training, school leadership, and school environments.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Data on SRGBV types, prevalence and perpetrators informs national policy.</li> <li>Systems are designed to effectively prevent SRGBV e.g.</li> <li>abolition of corporal punishment in schools</li> <li>enforced disciplinary procedures for teachers</li> <li>safe, inclusive school policies.</li> <li>Curriculum reform embeds gender equality and sexuality education in schools and teacher training colleges.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Education authorities have the political will and capacity to implement, monitor, enforce and scale up safe school measures that stop SRGBV.</li> <li>Fewer children drop out as a result of SRGBV.</li> <li>Legal protection from SRGBV in accordance with human rights and international commitments is enforced.</li> <li>Responsive school systems</li> </ul>	Safe school env
Health, social services, police & law	<ul> <li>Develop school-level reporting, referral and redress mechanisms and train school staff how to use them.</li> <li>Establish standard operating procedures between clinics, counsellors, law enforcement and schools.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Age specific, child-friendly, gender sensitive confidential referral, reporting and redress systems operate in schools.</li> <li>Teachers recognise and refer traumatised and vulnerable/at risk children.</li> <li>Trained teacher 'guardians' and help-line managers support survivors and those at risk.</li> <li>Child friendly legal support is in place for the most serious cases.</li> </ul>	and coordinated local services provide effective early intervention.  • Survivors of SRGBV are supported and protected in a constructive, age-and-gender sensitive way.  • Corporal punishment, sex for grades and other types of teacher abuse of power	rironments, and effective early
Schools	<ul> <li>Provide pre- and in-service training, curricula and materials for school leaders and teachers in stopping SRGBV.</li> <li>Teach students core skills and life skills.</li> <li>Map 'unsafe' areas in and around schools and change school systems and infra-structure to create safe spaces.</li> <li>Train students to report bullying and sexual harassment including on-line.</li> <li>Develop staff and student codes of conduct.</li> <li>Develop a 'buddy system' (older students or young people in the community protect younger students).</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Teachers use participatory, gender and socially inclusive pedagogy, non-violent communication, and positive discipline.</li> <li>Gender equality, diversity, inclusion, human rights, critical thinking, and leadership skills are mainstreamed in the curriculum.</li> <li>Sexuality education is taught as a specific subject/ module in the curriculum.</li> <li>School leaders exercise zero tolerance for power abuse: sex for grades, rape, corporal punishment, gangs, weapons, coercion.</li> <li>Security is increased in hot spots: school entrances, toilets, perimeter fences, unlit rooms, on the bus, walking home etc.</li> <li>Students implement positive bystander training and report bullying and sexual harassment.</li> <li>Teachers and students adhere to and monitor codes of conduct.</li> </ul>	in schools decreases.  Student to student sexual harassment and bullying decreases.  Schools become safer, more equitable, inclusive, and nonviolent inside and outside class.  Fewer girls and children-atrisk drop out of school.  The culture of silence and impunity surrounding SRGBV perpetrators is challenged; more gender equal social norms and practices begin to emerge in school and at home.	Safe school environments, and effective early intervention and prevention systems stop SRGBV and increase learning
Community and parents	<ul> <li>Establish boys' and girls' clubs.</li> <li>Mobilise the community through traditional, religious and local community leaders to raise awareness about and stop SRGBV.</li> <li>Establish parent-teacher groups.</li> <li>Train teachers and parents in IT and internet safety for their children.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>CBOs work through youth clubs and positive role models to establish gender equality, stop violence, empower survivors and change behaviour of perpetrators.</li> <li>Local networks provide survivor support services.</li> <li>PTAs and mother groups monitor school protection, ensure teacher and student codes of conduct are upheld.</li> <li>Parents safeguard children's use of social media.</li> <li>Parents begin to question behaviour that maintains harmful gender stereotypes and practices.</li> </ul>		e leaming.

#### Guiding questions for policy dialogue, programme design and delivery

# Are SRGBV prevention strategies incorporated in national education policies and plans, including those on inclusion, curriculum National policy and teacher training? Does this include child safeguarding systems and code of conduct for education staff? • Is data collected on different forms of SRGBV in order to target the causes? • Do women, girls and other at-risk groups participate in the development of SRGBV education policies that address their rights and needs? · Is recurrent funding allocated at national and local level to stop SRGBV? · Do teacher training colleges train primary and secondary teachers in gender-sensitive, participatory, inclusive methodology? training and · Are learning materials age, gender, and culturally appropriate and relevant for girls and other at-risk groups? Do they avoid gender stereotypes for boys as well as girls? • Does the curriculum teach core skills and sexuality education in a way that addresses SRGBV? • If there is an imbalance in the ratio of male to female education staff, including in positions of leadership? Are systems in place and leadership for training, retaining and safe-guarding female staff? · Are women, adolescent girls and other at-risk groups actively involved in parent-teacher and community-based groups and activities? Are they in leadership roles? · What strategies are there for using male role models to influence positive behaviour by boys? · What are the normal help-seeking behaviours of child survivors of SRGBV? • Do social norms or legal frameworks put survivors at risk if they report sexual abuse (including same-sex sexual abuse), or put teachers at risk if they respond to such reports? · Are gender and age-responsive services such as teacher guardians and buddy systems available in schools to support survivors of SRGBV? · Is information provided to students and school staff on how to use SRGBV reporting, referral and redress systems in a respectful and supportive way? How often are students asked to provide input or feedback on the quality of these systems? · Who is responsible for child protection services when education officials refer cases (Ministry of Health, Justice and Social Services, others?)? • Are there community groups linked to schools that provide support to survivors of SRGBV? • Do schools have capacity, budget and human resources to implement SRGBV policies? management • Are there designated staff responsible for dealing with school safety and violence prevention? · Do annual plans include violence prevention? · What are the common SRGBV risks faced by students and school staff - especially women, girls and other at-risk groups - while School infrastructure accessing education? Are women and girls involved in decisions about making the school safe? · Are travel distances and routes to school safe for all students and acceptable to parents? · Has safety mapping been conducted with students and teachers to identify at-risk areas? · Are schools physically secure and accessible for all? Is there sufficient lighting? Are toilets private, safe, and sex-segregated? Are there trained monitors for hot-spots? · Which children and youth are not attending or face barriers attending school at primary and/or secondary level (adolescent girls, Social norms child heads of households, girl-mothers, sexual assault survivors, children with HIV/AIDS or disabilities, LGBTI children, refugees)? • Are there gender-specific strategies in place for reintegration and re-enrolment of dropouts?

· Are local leaders and parents involved in stopping harmful practices which prevent girls participating equally in education (early

#### Monitoring and evaluation

The difficulties associated with researching violence should not be underestimated. Working with children and with survivors of violence needs to follow strict ethical standards to avoid doing any further harm, such as re-traumatising the victim or eliciting revenge violence from the perpetrator or their associates for having been exposed.

marriage, transactional sex to pay for good grades or school fees)?

In addition, monitoring and evaluation of SRGBV is often limited to self-reported change in attitudes and behaviour and can present an optimistic picture which is not

necessarily reflected in behaviour change. Triangulation of data is needed to avoid bias in self-reporting. For example, self-reported reduction in corporal punishment should be verified with testimonies from students. school records or unannounced classroom observations. Behavioural and systemic change should be monitored and evaluated with a balance of self-reported and more objective indicators and means of verification. See examples of indicators for monitoring and evaluation below. EU and other partners should encourage and support the collection of data on the diverse forms of SRGBV in a given country context.

# Examples of indicators for monitoring and evaluation

Level	Example indicators
Ministry of Education, education and other authorities	<ul> <li>Amount/percentage of national education/health budget dedicated to school-related, gender-based violence response and prevention.</li> <li>Increase in enrolment rates/decrease in drop-out rates of girls and marginalised students at schools that have introduced codes of conduct/non-violent discipline/guardians/grievance reporting and referral systems/safe spaces around toilets, playgrounds, bus routes etc.</li> </ul>
Health, social services, law enforcement	<ul> <li>Number of girls/boys reporting being afraid of sexual violence/bullying at school/on their way to and from school/on-line, in the past [month/year].</li> <li>Number of girls/boys self-reporting sexual violence/bullying at school/on their way to or from school/on-line, in the past [month/year].</li> <li>Percentage of students who know how to access/use SRGBV reporting systems.</li> <li>Number of SRGBV trained staff appointed as 'guardians'/help-line managers/referral points in schools still in post after [1] year.</li> <li>Number of cases filed that have resulted in the conviction (justice system) or dismissal/sanctioning (school grievance redress system) of the perpetrator.</li> <li>Decrease in recorded incidents of sexual harassment and rape in and around schools.</li> </ul>
Schools	<ul> <li>Number of teachers observed organising inclusive classrooms/teaching students to use non-violent communication/ using positive forms of discipline/ including core skills and messages about gender equality in lessons.</li> <li>Decrease in recorded incidents of corporal punishment in schools.</li> <li>Decrease in reported fights/ weapons in school/ gang incidents in schools.</li> <li>Students' self-reported perceptions of the safety of their learning environment.</li> <li>Increase in attendance rates.</li> </ul>
Community and parents	<ul> <li>Percentage of teachers/parents/students/community who know about the school's code of conduct/consequences of using violence against students.</li> <li>Number of parents who support daughters' involvement in gender activities/ girls' clubs.</li> </ul>

# 3. Case Study

Source	Judith Chirwa, EU Delegation Malawi; Moffat Njati, Programme Manager, Education Expertise Development Foundation Malawi; and Miet Chielens, Programme Manager, Edukans Foundation, The Netherlands	
Programme	Empowered Girls Complete Community Day Secondary Schools works on reducing SRGBV in 10 pilot schools in nine districts across Malawi in order to keep girls in school. It is a component of the EU supported Improving Secondary Education in Malawi (ISEM) and contributes to the implementation of the National Education Sector Plan and the Education Sector Implementation Plan. It is managed by Edukans and implemented by Education Expertise Development Foundation, the Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education, the Teachers' Union of Malawi, and the Girls' Empowerment Network.	
Context and challenges	90% of girls drop out of secondary school in Malawi mainly because of school fees, teenage pregnancy and marriage. According to national statistics, 26% of reported rape cases and 40% of sexual harassment cases take place in schools. School girls are at risk because of long unaccompanied journeys to school, (16 km on average), unsafe boarding facilities, unsafe schools, high incidences of HIV/AIDS and cultural norms which uphold early marriage, boys' school fees above girls', disapproval of sexuality education in school and a culture of silence around SRGBV perpetrators.	
Action taken	<b>Bursaries</b> for school fees, uniforms, books, and reusable sanitary pads are provided to girls who can't afford to continue in school, on condition that they attend regularly and do not get pregnant.	
	<b>Bicycles</b> to get to school, bicycle maintenance training, and getting girls to ride in groups for protection along the way, reduce physical stress and exposure to SRGBV.	
	Community mobilisation through chiefs and local leaders has led to whole community involvement and the formation of school committees which raise awareness about SRGBV, promote girls' rights, expedite SRGBV referrals to community-based organisations and monitor the safety of 'self-boarding' facilities for girls.	
	<b>Mothers' Groups</b> work on a voluntary basis as guardians and mentors through Girls' Clubs where leadership skills, self-esteem, and girls' rights are taught and where girls are encouraged to complete their schooling or to re-enrol if they have dropped out. Mothers' Group guardians are particularly important in schools where there are no women teachers or role models.	
	<b>Gender-sensitive pedagogy</b> gives teachers strategies to promote equality and inclusion, stop gender-based harassment in class, and challenge the 'hidden curriculum' in textbooks and school systems that discriminate against girls and other at-risk children.	
	Comprehensive sexuality education is taught to boys and girls through age-appropriate materials adapted from UNESCO's 'The World Starts with Me'. It teaches students about sexual health and well-being which the formal school curriculum does not do. The head teacher plus two others (ideally one male and one female teacher) from each school are trained to deliver	

the course and recruit girls and boys to attend.

#### Impact

Many of the girls in the programme have been motivated to stay in school. They show increased confidence and self-esteem. Even though the project has only been running for one year there is a 5.2% increase in girls' enrolment in the targeted schools and 20 girls who had dropped out earlier re-enrolled through the project. The teachers in the programme also feel more empowered. In an environment where Community Day Secondary Schools are often seen as second-class schools and previous teacher training projects have focused on primary schools, the gender-responsive pedagogy and sexuality education training is the first in-service professional development they have had.

At the strategic level, project results and experience have been used to inform policy dialogue on girls' education with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, with specific reference to the Review of the Re-admission Policy, and the implementation of the National Girls' Education Strategy.

#### Lessons learned

The Empowered Girls programme takes a holistic approach to stopping SRGBV by working through individuals, families, community, and social institutions – all the levels responsible for the violence in the first place. Safer school environments are addressed through protected journeys to school and monitored boarding facilities. Early intervention is addressed through the support of Mothers' Groups and community mobilisation. Prevention is addressed through gender sensitive curricula and pedagogy.

Initially the new school uniforms, resources and bicycles triggered some 'do no harm' issues. Some girls were stigmatised for being poor. In response, programme implementers got school authorities to explain girls' rights, link vulnerability to remoteness and long school journeys and turn derision into support. In other cases bursaries and bicycles increased the girls' attractiveness and made them more vulnerable to SRGBV and unwanted pregnancies. In response the girls were given extra training to avoid risky situations and deal with sexual predators.

The pilot has limited impact and sustainability because it is small and teachers can be transferred away from it at any point. Negotiations with the Ministry for a second phase, therefore, include a focus on developing their Teacher Management Strategy for deployment and incorporating gender sensitive pedagogy and sexuality education in national pre- and in-service training. One already established entry point is through Domasi College of Education which works with the Malawi Institute of Education on curriculum development and primary and secondary teacher education.

Community mobilisation and the involvement of local leaders as change champions has also been a significant success factor. However, changing social norms is a slow process. Although there has been a lot of enthusiasm in community meetings to stop SRGBV, it is much harder to get support at family level where most of the problems originate. One 'way in' is to target more boys and men through the programme. Currently, 36% of participants in after school clubs are boys. The club curriculum specifically addresses the roles and responsibilities of both boys and girls in friendship and support, love and sexuality, consent, and preventing sexual harassment, early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. But the number of boys needs to increase and boys need to interact more with male role models at home and in the community to harness the power of helpful rather than harmful masculinity. The EUD is currently looking at ways to include more boys and men both in this phase and the next

# Further information

Education Sector Implementation Plan II; National Education Policy, Ministry of Education Science and Technology website <a href="http://www.education.gov.mw/index.php/resources/acts-and-policies">http://www.education.gov.mw/index.php/resources/acts-and-policies</a>

EU ISEM project design document Annex A.2.

# 4. References and Further Reading

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