

UNESCO HIV and Health Education Clearinghouse

Thematic brief 1/2015

School-Related Gender-Based Violence

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is defined as acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in or around schools and educational settings as a result of gender norms and unequal power dynamics between genders. It includes acts of bullying, sexual or verbal harassment, physical violence, corporal punishment, non-consensual touching, rape and assault and structural violence amongst others.

Leadership and joint action to eliminate school-related gender-based violence: International Partners Meeting Report, p. 2.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious violation of human rights, increases vulnerability to HIV and also has a negative impact on school attendance and the ability to receive a quality education. School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) can occur in the classroom, in boarding facilities, on the journey to and from school. It can occur between pupils, and between pupils and education personnel. Girls are particularly vulnerable to SRGBV, which often stems from deeply rooted cultural beliefs and practices, power imbalances and gender norms. Gender non-conforming, lesbian, gay or transgender young people face specific issues of harassment and violence due to their sexuality. Recent estimates from [Plan International](#), based on the number of children affected by verbal bullying, show 246 million girls and boys suffering from SRGBV every year. (*A girl's right to learn without fear: Working to end gender-based violence at school*, p. 11).

The consequences of SRGBV are not only physical. It has serious psychological consequences including low self-esteem, under developed social skills, and general anxiety. This in turns impacts on concentration, may increase dropout rates and lead to reduced academic achievement.

The education sector has an important role to play in helping prevent GBV through gender-transformative teaching and learning approaches, supported by well-trained teachers and education personnel. Schools themselves can also play a preventive role and ensure that effective policies, and reporting and response mechanisms, are in place and function effectively. Few ministries of education have, as yet, developed policies on sexual violence and guidelines on how schools should respond.

SRGBV is not a new issue. A number of development partners and other organizations have been working on the issue for many years. However, concrete actions, both

programmatic and policy, are hampered by the lack of evidence and data on the scale and nature of the problem. According to the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and UNESCO some of the knowledge gaps include research on non-heterosexual forms of violence, knowledge of student-on-teacher violence, links between SRGBV and other forms of violence (e.g. within families), links between SRGBV and bullying, teachers' perceptions on GBV and how they deal with it in the school environment, and the relationship between education, access and achievement. SRGBV as a development issue is now receiving increasing support and many are advocating for its inclusion in the post 2015 development agenda.



Some recent high-level activities on school-related gender-based violence.

Rallying to end gender-based violence in schools

On 10 March 2015, UNESCO and partners organized a side event to the [59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) on ending gender-based violence in schools and launched a policy paper entitled “[School-related gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all](#)”. The paper presents an overview of existing evidence and knowledge gaps with regard to SRGBV. The event can also be watched on the [UNICEF livestream channel](#).

Launch of the Global Partners Working Group on School-Related Gender-Based Violence

A [Global Partners Working Group on School-Related Gender-Based Violence](#), co-convened by UNESCO and UNGEI, with funding from USAID, was established in 2014 to strengthen and coordinate efforts at global, regional and country level aimed at eliminating SRGBV. The Group includes 30 organizations - governments, development organizations, civil society and research institutions, leading agencies and institutions promoting girls' education and gender equality. In addition to playing an advocacy role, activities of the Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV will include establishing standards for the response, as well as the collection of evidence to monitor trends and improve practices. The Group welcomes organizations or researchers working in this field. Please contact j.herat@unesco.org for further information.

Learn without Fear outcome statement

The occasion of the [International Day of the Girl Child in October 2014](#) (with the theme of Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence) provided a further occasion to highlight the issue of SRGBV. Members of the Global Partners Working Group participated in a policy roundtable organized by [Plan International France](#) and the French [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development](#) entitled “Learn Without Fear”. This event concluded with an [outcome statement](#) to mark the international day of the girl child: “Empowering adolescent girls: ending the cycle of violence” with recommendations including establishing and strengthening of legal frameworks and codes of conduct that ensure appropriate sanctions, preparing and adopting multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder national action plans to address SRGBV, and establishing and strengthening data collection and reporting mechanisms. Finally the right of girls to quality education in a safe environment should be a priority in the post 2015 development agenda.

Asia-Pacific regional SRGBV activities

At the regional level UNESCO Bangkok has been involved in [Asia-Pacific activities on SRGBV](#) along with partners in the East Asia Pacific UN Girls Education Initiative and the UNiTE to End Violence against Women (UNiTE) campaign. Initiatives include a social media campaign at the end of 2014 to mobilize policy-makers and youth, as well as invite discussions, with the dissemination of an [advocacy infographic on SRGBV](#) in English, as well as in a number of regional languages.

In February 2015, UNESCO Bangkok co-organized with UNGEI a [side event at the Asia and the Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, Beijing +20](#). The side event focused on marginalization and SRGBV, with questions to panelists focused on, amongst others, settings where marginalization happens, the barriers toward accessing education among migrant children, and the conflation of child labour and girls' participation in education.

The UNESCO Office in Jakarta, with support from UNGEI, is conducting a study on “[The situation and response analysis on school-related gender-based violence in Indonesia](#)” and recently held a stakeholder meeting to discuss preliminary findings of the review.

The UNESCO Office in New Delhi has produced an advocacy and information desk calendar on SRGBV. An [electronic version is available for downloading](#).

Gender violence in schools as a factor in school dropout rates in sub-Saharan Francophone Africa

In May 2010, a working group was set up by the French [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Genre en Action, Forum for African Women Educationalists \(FAWE\), Plan International France, UNESCO, UNICEF, and l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie \(OIF\)](#) to identify GBV in schools and its impact on the schooling of girls, to advocate for its eradication, and promote universal education. Work conducted by the group has found that no single regional definition of GBV currently exists, and although there are national and regional laws protecting the rights of women and children, they are often not upheld at the local and community levels. They put forward three elements which must be addressed in order to ensure a significant change, including breaking the silence surrounding gender violence, addressing the issue of the impunity of perpetrators, and implementing preventative measures and treatments in schools. More information (in French) on the working group, their activities and publications can be found on the [Genre en Action](#) website.

Selected resources

A selection of resources on school-related gender-based violence, focussing on global and regional reviews. Further resources may be found on the [HIV and Health Education Clearinghouse](#) and the [UNGEI](#) website.

Click on the title to access the document.



A girl's right to learn without fear: working to end gender-based violence at school
Plan International, 2013



Promising practice in school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) prevention and response programming globally
Concern Worldwide, 2013



Addressing the intergenerational transmission of gender based violence: focus on educational settings
CARE, 2014



School-related gender-based violence. A global review of current issues and approaches in policy, programming and implementation responses to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) for the education sector
UNESCO, 2014



Are schools safe havens for children? Examining school-related gender-based violence
USAID, 2008



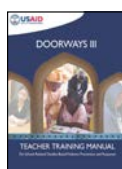
School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV): UNGEI-UNESCO discussion paper
UNESCO; UNGEI, 2013



Building a gender friendly school environment: a toolkit for educators and their unions
Education International; Education Development Center, Inc., 2007



School-related gender-based violence in the Asia-Pacific region
UNESCO Office Bangkok, 2014



Doorways training manuals
USAID, 2009



Stop violence against girls in school: a cross country analysis of baseline research from Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique
ActionAid International, 2011



Gender-based violence at school in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding its impact on girls' attendance to combat it more effectively
Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 2012



Voices against violence
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts; UN Women, 2013



Good policy and practice in HIV and health education. Booklet 8: Education sector responses to homophobic bullying
UNESCO, 2012



Violence against women and girls: Education sector brief
World Bank, 2014



Literature review on the intersection of safe learning environments and educational achievement
RTI International, 2013



Violence in primary schools in Southern and Eastern Africa: some evidence from SACMEQ
Saito, Mioko, 2013

News and views

A snapshot of voices on school-related gender-based violence.

Focus on education: Gender-based violence in schools by Kate Plourde

[This post](#) on the Interagency Youth Working Group Half the World Blog argues that GBV is most often perpetrated by someone the victim knows, and that, within the school setting, teachers may use their authority to have sex with students, sometimes in exchange for school fees or grades. Research demonstrates a strong link between school-based sexual violence (SBSV) and girls' drop-out rates and suggests that SBSV may be a factor in low secondary enrollment rates among adolescent girls.

The Top 10 list you don't want to be on: Dangerous places for girls' education by Rebecca Winthrop and Eileen McGivney

[This Brookings Education + Development blog](#) highlights the challenges facing millions of marginalized girls who can't access a safe, high-quality education. The data points to 10 countries in particular where girls are struggling to have access to decent and safe educational environments. Barriers to access include early and forced marriage, attacks on school premises, and sexual attacks on journeys to and from school.

Shifting young men's attitudes about gender in the Balkans by Sophie Namy

[This blog](#) from the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) presents early findings from an evaluation in Kosovo on the the Young Men Initiative (YMI) programme, adapted in part from Promundo's Program H, which was first developed in Latin America and the Caribbean. YMI targets boys ages 14 to 18 through school-based activities and media campaigns that aim to trigger critical reflection

about gender norms and promote healthy, non-violent lifestyles. Operated by CARE and its partners across the region, YMI has been implemented in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Importantly, the programme takes place in vocational schools that have a reputation for high levels of violence and are often comprised of economically disadvantaged students.

Safe spaces for learning: Engaging men and boys by Michael Kaufman

Michael Kaufman is the co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women. [This UNGEI blog post](#) looks at the role of teachers in promoting gender equality and the UNGEI initiative working with teachers and teacher unions to help prevent SRGBV. It includes a short video interview with the author in which he talks about some of the issues.

More attention on school-related gender-based violence: Highlights from the Comparative and International Education Society Conference by Koli Banik

[This post](#) on the Global Partnership for Education blog provides summaries from three panels which focused on SRGBV from the 2014 Comparative and International Education Society Conference. It references a review of 40 Global Partnership for Education (GPE) programme implementation grant and 40 education sector plans through which the GPE was able to highlight how governments are addressing SRGBV in their plans and applications for financing. The results showed only a handful of countries were addressing issues of SRGBV.



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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: Our second thematic brief will be in June 2015 and will focus on the issue of **comprehensive sexuality education and particularly unintended pregnancies**. We would be interested in hearing about your stories, news, events and publications to include in the brief. Contributions can be sent to hiv-health-clearinghouse@iiep.unesco.org by 30 May 2015.

The HIV and Health Education Clearinghouse is a knowledge sharing initiative, provided by UNESCO, with contributions from external partners. Through a comprehensive resource library and information exchange service it supports ministries of education, development agencies, civil society, researchers and other education partners, to develop effective HIV&AIDS education, school health and sexuality education policies, programmes and advocacy. To add or remove your name from the distribution list, please contact: hiv-health-clearinghouse@iiep.unesco.org

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