From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make Education Safe for all!

Putting SAFETY and SECURITY at the Heart of EDUCATION

The SDGs provide an opportunity to create a better, brighter, violence-free future and strive towards gender equality, peace and justice for all children and youth by 2030. Education’s role is central to the achievement of the global goals and yet school environments are places of violence and insecurity for vast numbers of students globally.

School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) is a serious barrier that prevents girls and boys from meaningfully participating in and completing school and manifests itself differently in different countries. Threats of SRGBV are made worse by: curricula and teaching practices that reinforce harmful gender stereotypes, codes of conduct that are either insufficient, do not exist in all schools or are not implemented, weak reporting and monitoring systems so that incidents go unreported; lack of separate and easily accessible toilets for girls, which are sites of harassment and abuse; harmful social and gender norms that normalize corporal punishment and bullying or stigmatize other forms of violence; and inadequate policies and plans that can address the problem in a comprehensive way.

In order to create learning environments that are safe, inclusive and gender sensitive, a comprehensive and holistic approach that brings together a diverse range of actors, must be adopted. We need to seek new and creative solutions to address SRGBV experienced by girls and boys within the learning environment and on the way to and from school.

Schools provide an important enabling environment that has the potential to transform young minds and children’s lives - and by extension the communities in which they live - by promoting principles of gender equality, human rights and peace.

Considerable work remains to be done to make schools safe, and to bring together governments, development actors, communities, teachers, and boys and girls to end school-related gender-based violence in all its forms.

Yet together, we have the power to make schools safe spaces for learning for all!

SRGBV is a grave violation of human rights and impedes a child’s right to education: it affects their psychological, physical and social well-being and ability to learn.

We call on GOVERNMENTS, DONORS and all DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS to:

- Recognize harmful gender norms as an important driver of violence
- Address the root causes of violence by reviewing how gender and social norms intersect with other inequalities to produce violence
- Boost investment in interventions that address SRGBV
- Invest in targeted interventions and cross-sectoral programming and policies on SRGBV including in conflict and crisis contexts.
- Develop and implement national policies and plans to end SRGBV
- Strengthen multi-sectoral systems for monitoring and reporting, allocate budgets and develop education sector plans that include SRGBV.
- Address SRGBV in learning spaces for migrant, refugee and displaced children and adolescents

Refugee children and adolescents are more likely to experience bullying, harassment and violence in schools due to their unique status. Specific strategies must be adopted to ensure that these vulnerable students are protected and safe within schools.

Fill the SRGBV data deficit

Evidence points to SRGBV as a key barrier to access and learning - particularly for adolescent girls - yet data is limited. We need to generate better data to inform effective responses to end SRGBV.
In 2015, the Global Working Group to End SRGBV launched a Call to Action to amplify the message that gender-based violence in all its forms in learning spaces is unacceptable, and put out a series of actions for all stakeholders.

As we renew our commitments to end all forms of SRGBV, within the backdrop of the SDGs, we also take a moment to recognize that several significant steps have been taken during 2015-2016 that begin to address SRGBV. Our partners’ response to our Call to Action reflect the incredible momentum generated and lays the pathways to ending SRGBV by 2030.

**Action from UN Agencies and Member States:**

UNESCO with UN Women are launching in December 2016 the Global Guidance on addressing SRGBV. This comprehensive resource is for policymakers and practitioners, teachers and civil society and includes approaches, methodologies, tools and resources that have shown positive results in preventing and responding to gender-based violence in school settings.

**Action from Donors:**

The Government of Canada supported UNGEI and Education International to launch the Education Unions Take Action to Stop School-Related Gender-Based Violence supporting seven teachers’ unions in five countries in Eastern and Southern Africa to take action against SRGBV. This is a 36-month initiative to enhance the safety and security of male and female children, youth and teachers in educational settings.

The Government of France has committed funding to a multi-partner SRGBV programme in Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire and Togo. In January 2017, UNICEF, UNESCO and Plan France will launch the 3-year joint-programme of interventions to address SRGBV at government, school and community levels.

**Action from Ministries of Education, school administrators and education unions:**

As part of the Education Unions Take Action to Stop School-Related Gender-Based Violence initiative, EI members from 7 unions in Eastern and Southern Africa, with support from Gender at Work, have formed change teams and are creating action plans to address SRGBV in partnership with schools, the unions, ministries of education and teacher training institutions.

**Action from Researchers:**

The Institute of Education (IOE) at UCL, with support from the Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF with UNGEI produced a Global Literature Review of evidence on effective policy and programming approaches to end SRGBV. This is part of the End Gender Violence in Schools initiative in Togo, Cote D’Ivoire, Zambia and Ethiopia combining research, capacity building and knowledge exchange towards ending SRGBV.

As part of the Opportunities for Achievement and Safety in Schools (OASIS) initiative, USAID commissioned a study looking at TIMSS and PIRLS data for Botswana, Ghana and South Africa to analyze the impact of bullying on learning achievement. The study found bullying to be one of the key drivers that lower academic performance.

**Action from NGOs, civil society and the international development community:**

The regional working group on SRGBV under East Asia and Pacific UNGEI and UNITE to End Violence against Women (Plan International, UN Women, UNESCO and UNICEF) have jointly produced and piloted an open-source classroom curricula titled Connect with Respect tool. The tool has been designed to assist teachers to deliver lessons in early secondary school. It has been designed for students between 11 and 14 years of age, and can be adapted for use with older students. The tool is available in the national languages of Cambodia, China and Myanmar.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) developed, piloted and rolled out a toolkit on “Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Schools”, for use in their education in emergencies programmes globally. The toolkit contains resources for training of education staff, teachers and Ministries of Education, and guidance on how to set up reporting and referral mechanisms.

Promundo-US, with support from the UN Trust Fund launched the Youth Living Peace initiative targeting girls and boys (14-19 years), teachers and communities in high urban violence and post-conflict settings. The initiative seeks to provide support for adolescents who have witnessed or experienced violence, particularly in dating relationships.

World Vision has launched a new project called Ending Violence in School to Improve Retention, improving the learning environment for boys and girls and promoting protection against violence in communities. The project will strengthen local reporting systems and support the existing national policies on violence against children in an effort to increase students’ positive experience in school, improve retention and learning outcomes, and reduce gender inequalities.

ActionAid in Tanzania, Nepal, Mozambique and Malawi will launch “National Citizens Education Reports” with key message that governments need to ensure more toilets in schools to help girls get a better education by reducing the risk of violence and helping them stay in school throughout their monthly menstruation.