

# Ending School-Related Gender-Based Violence

A Series of Thematic Briefs



## Brief 5:

# Investing in data and evidence to inform the response to SRGBV



## Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence

The Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) was created in 2014 to respond to SRGBV by raising awareness and finding solutions to ensure schools are safe, gender-sensitive and inclusive environments, where boys and girls can learn to unleash their full potential. The Group has expanded to more than 100 members representing 50 organizations, including humanitarian actors, civil society organizations, and regional and national offices.

[www.ungei.org/what-we-do/school-related-gender-based-violence](http://www.ungei.org/what-we-do/school-related-gender-based-violence)

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# Introduction

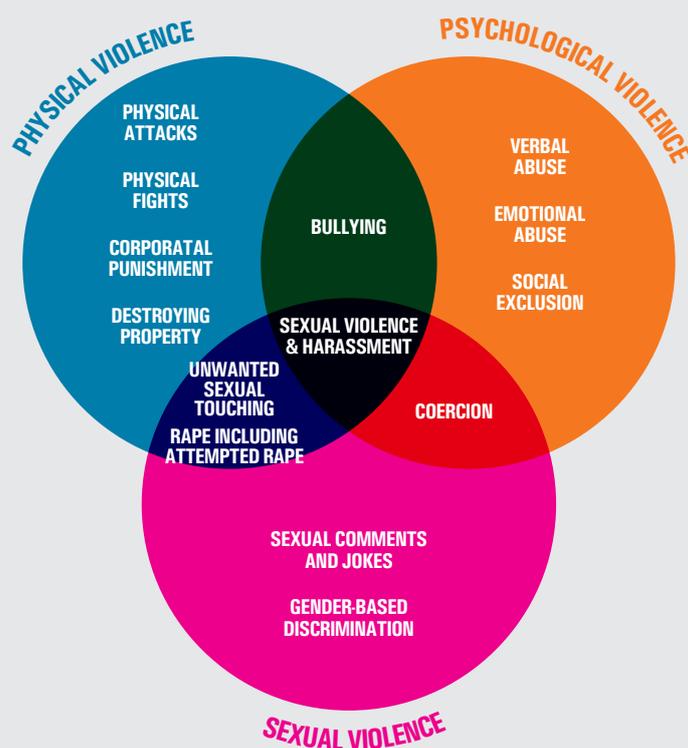
**School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV)** refers to acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes and enforced by unequal power dynamics.<sup>1</sup>

Discriminatory gender norms are one of the key driving factors for many forms of violence, including violence in schools. This means that it is essential to apply a gender lens when developing violence prevention and response approaches. School-related gender-based violence violates children's rights and is a significant barrier for girls' and boys' access to and participation in education.<sup>2</sup>

There has been increasing recognition of SRGBV as a pressing issue requiring global attention if the Sustainable Goals 4, (Education), 5 (Gender equality) and 16.2 (Violence against children) are to be met. Much work remains to be done requiring accelerated and multi-dimensional prevention and response efforts.

This series of **thematic briefs** is targeted at policy makers and practitioners. It aims to summarize the latest learning and evidence synthesized from two regional workshops on how best to prevent and address SRGBV held in West and Central Africa and East and Southern Africa. Other briefs in this series include: 1. Applying a whole school approach to prevent school-related gender-based violence; 2. Engaging teachers to create safe and gender-responsive learning environments; 3. Shifting harmful gender norms through curricular approaches; 4. Establishing Safe and Confidential Reporting Mechanisms; and 6. Integrating SRGBV into national policies and education sector plans.

**Figure 1: Violence in schools takes many forms, many of which are rooted in gender norms and inequality**



# Why strengthen efforts to gather data and evidence on SRGBV?

Data and evidence can make it easier to take targeted, national-level action to address SRGBV, as well as to invest in strategies that have proved effective. While SRGBV is widely recognized as a major problem, the full scale and impact remains unknown. Research on school violence and bullying has neglected to explore the role of gender norms. Yet, as with violence in wider society, many forms of school violence are deeply rooted in unequal gender relations, social norms, and discriminatory practices.

Data and evidence are powerful advocacy tools. Data that show the scope and consequences of school violence, including gender-based violence, can influence education ministers, political leaders, and policymakers to invest in prevention and response efforts.

Routine data collection to monitor the size and impact of SRGBV, identify those most affected, and monitor interventions makes it possible to direct resources more efficiently.

Researchers have highlighted three different forms of data needed to inform policy and programme implementation:

- data that helps with understanding the nature of SRGBV and how it is shaped by national and local laws and policies and prevalent norms;
- monitoring data to make the government aware of whether prevention practices exist at school level, such as curriculum-based programmes or clubs, teachers trained, response and reporting systems, and how these are functioning;
- evaluations or impact assessments of interventions (by government, non-governmental organizations, and partnerships) to determine whether strategies are being implemented effectively and having the desired outcome. This helps to identify the most promising and successful interventions to replicate and scale-up. They can also be used to guide legal and policy reform, help ensure effective and targeted services, and assess the impact of policies and programmes.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2: What do we know?



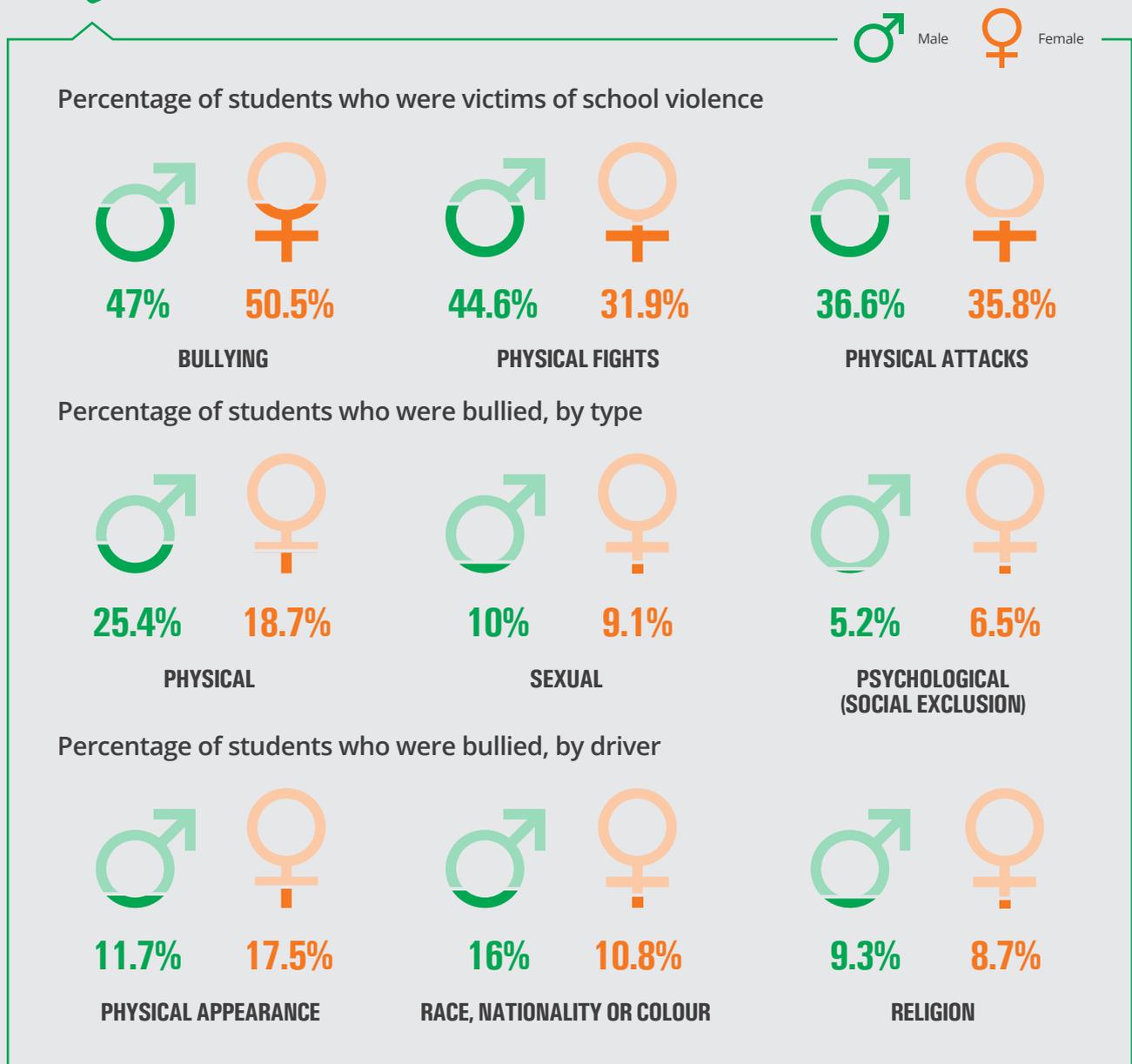
Almost one in three students (32 percent) report being bullied by their peers at school at least once in the last month.



School bullying and violence affects girls and boys in different ways. Girls are more likely to experience psychological violence and sexual violence and harassment. Boys are more likely to experience physical violence and corporal punishment.



Data from Global School Health Surveys shed some light on the gendered nature of school violence and bullying in sub-Saharan Africa.



Source: Secondary analysis calculations based on HBSC data



Over 700 million school-aged children live in countries where they are not fully protected by law from corporal punishment at school.

# What have we learned about measuring SRGBV?

## Use a range of gender-sensitive indicators

Indicators to measure SRGBV need to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools. While quantitative indicators provide information about certain forms of violence, qualitative indicators can help to generate data about more sensitive issues and identify the associated gender and social norms. There is no international consensus about standard indicators to monitor and evaluate SRGBV programming. However, it is agreed that indicators should be based on a clear definition of SRGBV, which encompasses the dimensions of violence and attention to gender, in line with international standards, and reflect local realities.<sup>4</sup> In addition, a variety of indicators are needed to help paint an overall picture of the problem. Three types of indicators are needed to measure SRGBV-related interventions (see figure 6).

## Disaggregate data by sex

Given that we know that some groups are more vulnerable to SRGBV than others, it is critical to disaggregate data by, at a minimum, sex, location and age. Disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity,<sup>5</sup> and type of violence should also be disaggregated in order to get a full picture of the problem, identify the most vulnerable groups, and target interventions where they are most needed and appropriate.

## Be aware of ethical considerations

Close consideration should be paid to ethical and safety risks when carrying out data collection on SRGBV. Researching SRGBV requires asking people to reflect on their own experiences of violence and runs the risk of causing direct or secondary trauma, compromising the safety and security of participants, and breaching confidentiality and disclosure agreements. It is important to consider safety and support mechanisms when interviewing children, adolescents, and adults about their experiences of violence in school settings. Ensure that if children disclose experiences of violence during data collection, there is a support system in place to respond (see Brief 4).

## Take into account methodology

There are a number of challenges in gathering accurate data on incidents of SRGBV. The data collection methods used influence what information is disclosed. In addition, reporting on cases of violence relies on the researcher and informant having a shared understanding of violence. But understandings of violence are subjective and sit within a cultural context. Where data rely on reporting through official channels or self-reporting through research and surveys, a child's understanding of and recognition of violence, researchers' biases and skills, and the sensitivity of the issues being discussed all impede reporting. As such, there are major concerns about the accuracy and validity of data on GBV, including in schools, particularly in the face of taboos and silence around many forms of violence.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

## Consider using participatory methods and technology to bring a gender perspective

Some types of violence are more easily tracked than others, for example, physical and corporal punishment versus psychological and sexual violence. Quantitative data are in high demand but must be viewed with caution given that SRGBV is under-reported. Qualitative researchers have tried to address both ethical and methodological challenges by using a range of creative and participatory research methods. These methods address power imbalances and can generate rich data to help understand the meanings and context of violence. Research has also found that using technology-based data collection tools can help generate more accurate responses. For example, gathering data with computer devices is linked to more honest responses and higher disclosure of experience and perpetration of sexual violence.<sup>9,10</sup>

## Existing data can be a good starting point for advocacy and action

There is limited research that looks specifically at patterns of SRGBV. Global estimates based on national data sets (such as the Global School Health Survey, Violence Against Children Surveys, and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys) give an indication of the prevalence of certain forms of violence such as bullying and physical fights and provide a justification for scaling up and strengthening prevention and response efforts (see figure 5). Many existing data collection instruments on violence in schools, such as the Global School Health Survey, do not ask about gender-based violence or provide enough analysis of gender and other variables. However, there may be national level data (see figure 6) and qualitative studies on violence and gender norms that can be used to understand the nature of violence in schools and advocate for effective action. Applying a gender analysis to existing administrative data, police records, and school-based incident reports can also provide insights into patterns and existing response mechanisms.



**Figure 3: Example indicators and tools**

The UNGEI whole school framework to prevent SRGBV proposes three types of indicators to measure SRGBV-related interventions. A number of existing instruments exist.

EXAMPLE INDICATORS	EXISTING INSTRUMENTS
<b>1) Prevalence of violence indicators that measure trends over time</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of students (M/F) who have experienced physical bullying in the past 30 days/since the beginning of the school year</li> <li>• % of teachers (M/F) who have administered corporal punishment to a student in the past 30 days/since the beginning of the school year</li> <li>• % of students (M/F) who have experienced sexual harassment in the past 30 days/since the beginning of the school year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global School Health Survey</li> <li>• Violence Against Children Surveys</li> <li>• Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys</li> <li>• SDG indicator 4.a.2 “percentage of students experiencing bullying, by sex”</li> </ul>
<b>2) Process indicators measuring practices and programmes at the school or provincial level</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of schools that have a code of conduct on SRGBV</li> <li>• # of teachers who have skills in positive disciplinary techniques</li> <li>• # of school boards of management that adequately monitor reporting of violence and accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Management Information System (differs by country – see example 1)</li> </ul>
<b>3) Indicators on drivers that measure shifts in norms and attitudes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of teachers (M/F) who believe that women and girls need to be responsible for keeping themselves safe</li> <li>• % of students (M/F) who believe that a woman’s role is to take care of her home and family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale</li> <li>• The Gender Beliefs Scale</li> <li>• The Gender Norm Attitudes Scale</li> <li>• Global Early Adolescents survey</li> </ul>

## Example 1

# Introducing questions about violence into routine national-level data collection in schools

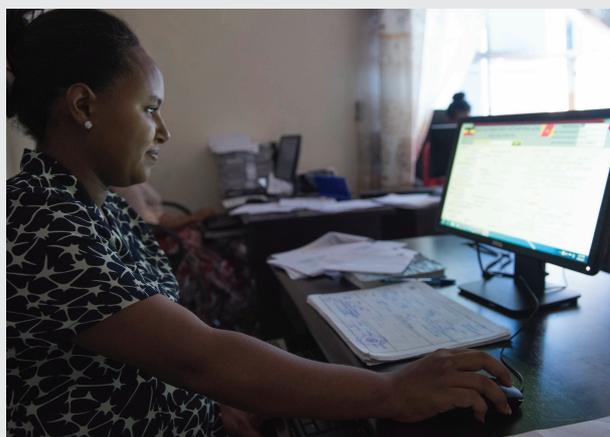
## Cote D'Ivoire and Ethiopia

Several countries have established an Education Management Information System (EMIS) to manage and provide basic administrative data about their education system. EMIS information is useful for research, policy and planning, monitoring, and decision-making about the distribution and allocation of educational resources and services.

The EMIS has potential to be used to record and track cases of violence in schools. Although there are many challenges with this system, including timeliness, reliability, and accuracy of data, some countries are showing initiative by using the system to collect data on incidents of violence occurring in schools. With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia has introduced a Violence Reporting Template (VRT) designed to be completed at the school level each term. The form collects information on the number of cases of different forms of violence, perpetrators, and outcomes of cases. The tool is likely to contribute to keeping SRGBV on the agenda

for action in schools and there is potential for it to be developed and adapted for use in other countries. Some adaptations to the tool format and development of guidance for completion would help enhance the quality and usefulness of the data generated.<sup>11</sup>

In Côte d'Ivoire, having recognized that violence in schools was a pressing issue but that no data collection mechanisms were in place, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of National Education, Technical, and Vocational Training (MENETFP) to integrate simple questions on SRGBV into routine data collection tools. Initial efforts yielded disappointing results, with only 10 percent of regional directorates submitting data. In response, initiatives were taken to generate more ownership of the process, with stakeholders engaged to review indicators and data collection tools, training provided to regional directorates, and the creation of child protection working groups in schools to coordinate efforts. Routine questionnaires completed annually by all schools now include variables on violence in schools. The data generated includes the number of students who are victims of violence disaggregated by level of education and by type of violence. The data are disseminated and shared nationally which gives it high visibility and supports accountability. The data reveal important trends, which is crucial for developing effective prevention and response efforts.



# Challenges

-  National reporting and data tracking systems are often non-existent or weak. Such systems are usually at their lowest capacity in areas and countries affected by crises and conflict and in remote locations where SRGBV likely has a higher prevalence.<sup>12</sup>
-  Many existing data collection instruments on violence in schools (e.g. the Global School Health Survey) do not ask about gender-based violence or provide sufficient analysis of gender and other variables.
-  Even where reporting systems exist, the reality is that most violence goes unreported or unrecognized, particularly where social and gender norms make it hard for children or adults to report or recognize certain behaviours and actions as violence. This means that many forms of violence are likely underreported.<sup>13</sup>
-  Where data rely on reporting through official channels or self-reporting, a child's understanding of and recognition of violence, researchers' biases and skills, and the sensitivity of the issues being discussed may all impede accurate reporting.
-  Some types of violence are more easily tracked than others (e.g. physical and corporal punishment versus psychological and sexual violence).
-  In terms of monitoring the effectiveness of interventions, measuring behaviour change is difficult. Behaviour change can take time and attitude change cannot be taken as a proxy for behaviour change. Many studies measure short-term effects. Monitoring for long-term change and impact of SRGBV interventions can be constrained by short project cycles and funding mechanisms.



# Recommendations

-  Invest in qualitative and quantitative research such as situational analyses, needs assessments, or exploratory research to collect data on forms of SRGBV, common norms and attitudes, and existing policies and practices.
-  Integrate key indicators on SRGBV prevention, policies, and practices into existing national education administrative data collection systems where they exist.
-  Build capacity to collect and analyse data at school, district, and national level, ensuring that data collected at the school level feeds into a central system.
-  Advocate to integrate questions related to SRGBV into existing global data collection instruments like the Global School Health Survey, Violence Against Children Survey and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.
-  Ensure that data is shared through the appropriate streams so that it can be used to inform policy and programming and to enhance advocacy efforts.
-  Ensure a solid monitoring and evaluation framework is included in the design of any intervention seeking to prevent or respond to SRGBV. It should assess impact, as well as whether the intervention is relevant, efficient, effective and sustainable.
-  Invest in understanding the drivers of violence and measuring behaviour change so that programmes can address the root causes of violence.



## Endnotes

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## Notes on figures

1. Source: UNESCO. (2019) Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying, Paris: UNESCO. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/Pf0000366483>
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