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Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
and United Nations Children's Fund
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
2018



Namibia's National Safe Schools Framework

PART A Introduction and Overview





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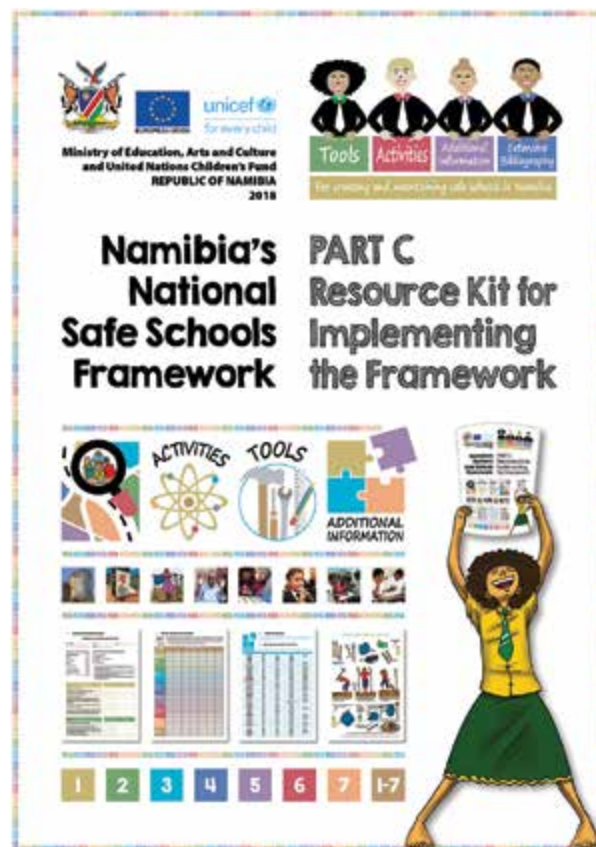
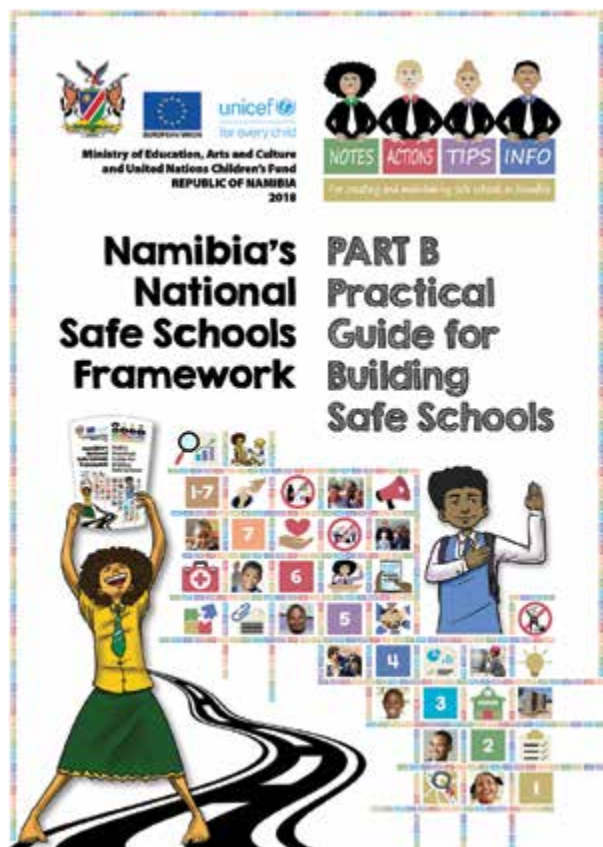
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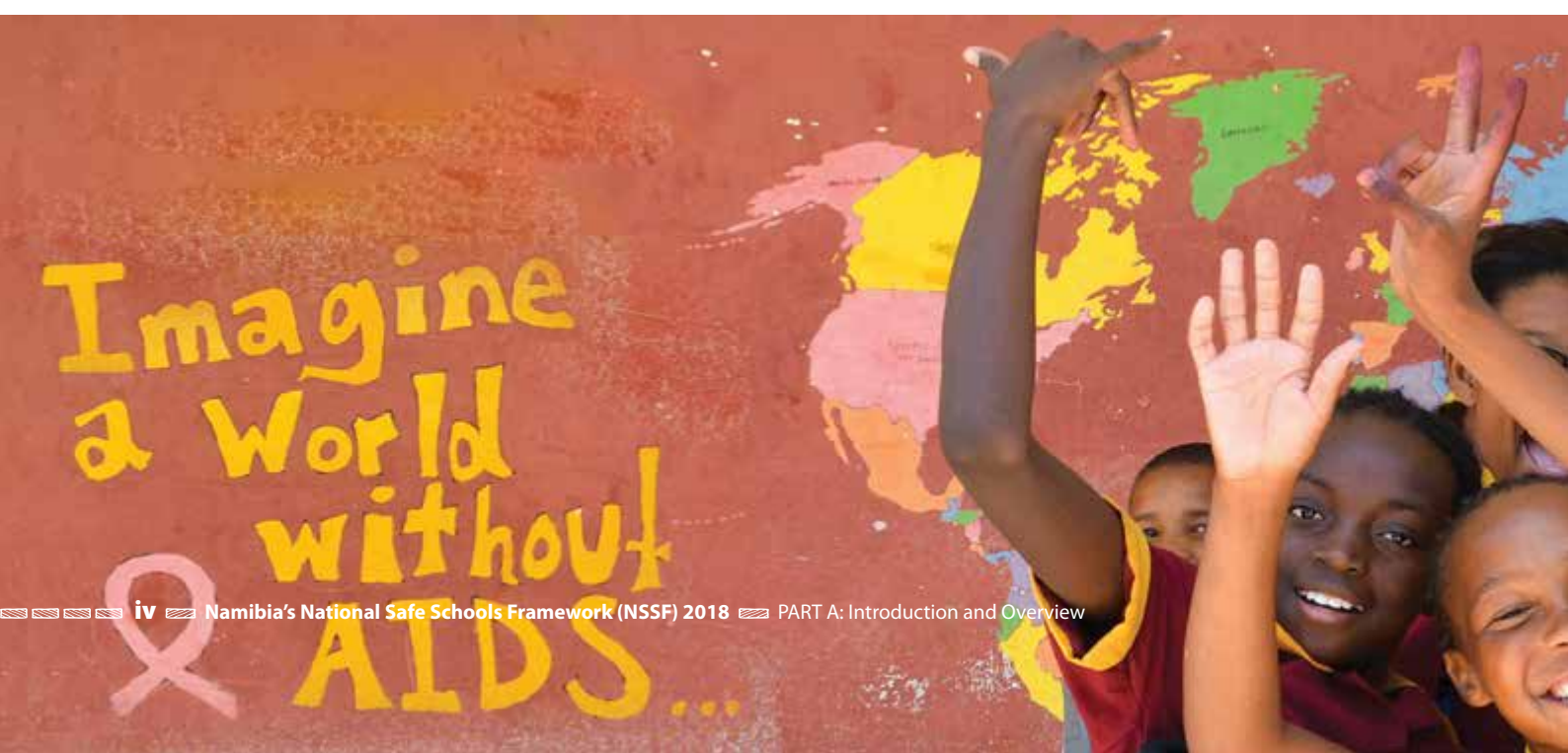
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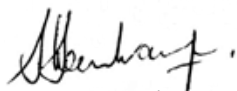


Acknowledgement

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) has been implementing the Integrated School Health Programme in various forms since before the country attained political independence in 1990. School health goes beyond the physical health of the learner, in that it includes the holistic wellbeing of the individual learner, meaning that the school environment should be safe and conducive to learning. The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is an exciting dimension of the Integrated School Health Programme. The Programme focuses on promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of learners and other school stakeholders in Namibia, and the NSSF was developed to provide practical guidance to the schools and school stakeholders on how to systematically improve the standards of school safety, and how to develop a culture of care in any school.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been supporting the MoEAC in its efforts to ensure that all children in Namibia are able to access and benefit from inclusive quality education, and that those not in sound physical and mental health receive the necessary support at school. To assist the schools in the implementation of school safety measures, UNICEF provided both technical and financial support for the necessary research as well as the processes of developing and validating the NSSF. The MoEAC thanks UNICEF for being a committed partner, and for supporting the development of this Framework.

The development of the NSSF would not have been possible without the voices of all those who contributed. The Ministry appreciates and thanks the learners, parents, teachers, school principals, nurses, doctors, social workers, police officers and others, and the officials of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Safety and Security, who shared their stories, experiences and expertise to make the NSSF relevant to the Namibian context.



Sanet Steenkamp

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture



Preface



Namibia has a robust legislative framework for education, characterised by progressive policies and plans that support the achievement of national education goals. Yet, several challenges persist, posing barriers which often keep Namibian learners from attending school or fully reaping the benefits of education. These challenges and barriers include: a shortage of well-trained and passionate teachers, particularly in very remote schools; shortages of classroom and hostel space; limited water supply and sanitation facilities; and socio-economic pressures such as poverty, substance abuse, gender inequality, bullying, abuse and neglect.

Educational settings themselves expose children to violence, which can lead them to believe that violent practices and behaviours are normal. Learners may be subjected to corporal punishment and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, as well as sexual and gender-based violence. Fighting and bullying are commonplace in schools, as are stigma and discrimination of learners with disabilities. Schools are also influenced by practices and events in the wider community, such as gang culture, alcohol and drug abuse, gender-based violence in domestic and other settings, and cyberbullying.

However, schools are also a unique environment which can promote safety, self-expression and well-being, and initiate change. The National Safe Schools Framework is meant to assist the stakeholders of School Health and Safety in implementing safe practices and programmes in the schools. It provides them with practical tools and ideas for improving safety levels in schools in a step-by-step manner. By focusing on schoolgoing children and turning schools into centres of safety and protection, we hope that Namibia will be able to break the cycle of violence and ensure that every learner is able to learn and thrive in a positive and conducive environment.

Rachel Odede
UNICEF Representative





Research confirms that safe schools are a prerequisite for quality education, broad-based economic prosperity and a robust civil society. Education has the unique potential to modify social norms that condone violence, and to teach non-violent behaviour. Schools are well positioned to break existing patterns of violence and to help children to develop skills that enable them to communicate openly, solve problems through negotiation and non-confrontational means, and internalise the values of respect and tolerance.

Namibia's National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) was developed jointly by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to strengthen the provision of healthy, supportive and conducive teaching and learning in light of a worrisome level of violence in Namibian schools. Working together, the MoEAC and UNICEF oversaw a phase of research, information gathering and formation of a National Safe Schools Task Force comprised of a cross-section of education system stakeholders. The next phase involved the actual production of the NSSF, which is intended for use at national, regional and school level. At both national and regional level, it will be used as a policy document, while in schools it will be used as a practical tool to guide teachers and other school personnel on how to promote safe and supportive school communities. The guiding principles will also be implemented to promote learner wellbeing, and to develop supportive and respectful relationships between teachers, learners and the community at large.

The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) consists of three separate but closely related documents:

- ▶ The **Introduction and Overview** explains what such a framework represents, why an NSSF is needed in Namibia, and how the present NSSF was developed. It describes the safe schools vision, defines minimum standards and stakeholder roles, and outlines a common, comprehensive approach to school safety in Namibia.
- ▶ The **Practical Guide** features a set of practical, user-friendly ideas to help schools to realise the safe schools vision and to meet the minimum standards for safe schools.
- ▶ The **Resource Kit** offers hands-on tools, activities and other information that schools can use to implement the Framework.

Successful implementation of the NSSF requires a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. The education sector alone cannot effect all of the changes needed. The development of the NSSF included input from, for example, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGEKW), the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) and the Ministry of Safety and Security (MoSS). In addition, working with learners, parents and communities to develop and promote a culture of non-violence is critical to implementing the NSSF and improving school safety in Namibia's schools. All of these stakeholders were consulted as part of the process, and will play a role in the NSSF implementation process.

It is the hope of the MoEAC and UNICEF that the present NSSF package will provide every school in Namibia with the knowledge and tools required to break the cycle of school violence, and in this way contribute to improved educational outcomes and a more peaceful, equitable and prosperous society.

Katrina Hanse-Himarwa, MP
Minister of Education, Arts and Culture

Abbreviations

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN)
GBV	gender-based violence
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPSI	Health-Promoting School Initiative
ISHP	Integrated School Health Programme
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
MGE CW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
MoEAC	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
MoHAI	Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MoSS	Ministry of Safety and Security
MoWT	Ministry of Works and Transport
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NSPIS	National Standards and Performance Indicators for Schools in Namibia
NSSF	National Safe Schools Framework
PQA	Programme Quality Assurance (MoEAC)
RACE	Regional AIDS Committee in Education
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Measuring Educational Quality
SASG	Social Accountability and School Governance (Programme)
SHTF	School Health Task Force
SRGBV	school-related gender-based violence
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization



Accessible education: Education that reaches and benefits all children, respecting their rights and taking into account their different backgrounds, abilities and learning styles.

Adolescence: The period following the onset of puberty, during which a young person develops from a child into an adult.

Adult literacy rate: The percentage of the population aged 15 or older who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

Anti-social behaviour: Behaviour characterised by a persistent pattern of disregard for social obligations and callous violation of the rights and feelings of others; behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to other persons.

Barriers (to education): Obstacles that prevent learners from accessing a full range of learning opportunities and limits their participation in education or society. Barriers could be a result of attitudes, language, culture, organisation of support services, power relations or social structures.

Bullying: Bullying is the use of force, threat or coercion to abuse, intimidate or aggressively dominate others. The behaviour is often repeated and habitual. Bullying arises from imbalances in social or physical power.

Bystander: A person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part in it.

Bystander effect (or bystander apathy): is a social/psychological phenomenon referring to cases in which individuals present during an incident fail to help victims of violence, aggression or bullying.

Child: A person who has not reached 18 years of age.

Child abuse: According to Namibia's Child Care and Protection Act, child abuse consists of –

“Any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, including:

- (a) assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury to a child;
- (b) sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- (c) bullying by another child;
- (d) a labour practice that exploits a child;
- (e) exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally, including intimidation or threats;
- (f) depriving a child of his or her rights to the basic conditions of living; or
- (g) exposing or subjecting a child to a social, cultural or religious practice which is detrimental to his or her wellbeing.”

Child-friendly schools: Such schools adopt a rights-based, multi-sectoral approach, concerned with the whole child. Child-friendly schools are safe; have well trained teachers; adequate resources; and appropriate physical, emotional and social conditions for learning. These schools value diversity and promote inclusivity, gender-sensitivity, tolerance, dignity and personal empowerment.

Cognitive: Refers to the mental processes of comprehension, judgment, memory and reasoning, in contrast to emotional processes.

Corporal punishment: Traditionally refers to punishment using physical force, usually inflicted by a person of authority, with the intention of causing physical pain for disciplinary purposes. However in recent years the definition has been broadened to include verbal and/or emotional violence – see **Violence, psychological**.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology to harass, threaten or intimidate another person. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools such as social media sites, text messages, chatrooms and websites.

Disability: Long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment that hinder an individual's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Discrimination: Unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, for example, on the grounds of race, age or sex. Legislation is in place in Namibia to ensure the right of individuals to be treated equally, for example in education and employment. The Constitution and the Education Act contain specific non-discrimination clauses.

Domestic violence: Violent or aggressive behaviour within the home, typically involving abuse of a spouse or partner. Sometimes called “battering”; when children are the victims, it is often referred to as “child abuse”.

Emotional intelligence: Emotional intelligence is the capability of individuals to recognise their own, and other people's emotions, to differentiate between different feelings and label them appropriately and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour.

Empathy: The ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.

Equal opportunities: The same chances to take part in activities, access services, etc. as others, ensuring equal life prospects for individuals.

Facilitated workshop: Meeting with a clear objective and strategically chosen participants, facilitated by an independent person. For the purpose of this document this refers to workshops in which the objective was to establish what constitutes a “safe school” in Namibia.

Gang-related violence: Any form of violence (including assault, gender-based violence and bullying) that is committed by, or relates to, a formal or informal group of young people who may be engaged in criminal activities.

Gender-based violence: Gender-based violence is considered to be any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender. It may include sexual violence, physical violence or mental violence.

Grief: Intense sorrow. Emotional, mental and physical pain experienced, often caused by loss.

Grooming: Behaviour that targets and prepares children and young people for sexual abuse and exploitation. Grooming is often subtle and difficult to recognize.

Health-promoting school: An initiative introduced by the World Health Organization in which all members of the school community work together to make a school a healthy place and promote the health and wellbeing of all school stakeholders.

Inclusive education: A commitment to removing all barriers to the full participation in education of every individual, irrespective of their background and experience. As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, since education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society. Inclusive education may involve adapting and modifying content, approaches, structures and education strategies in order to meet the individual needs of all learners, allowing them to benefit from quality education.

Integration: This occurs when learners with special needs or disabilities are taught in mainstream education settings. The expectation is that the learner will adapt to the school, without requiring major changes in the classroom.

Life Skills: Skills that help an individual to live a productive life as a member of a social group or community, e.g. communication skills, negotiation skills, literacy and numeracy. In Namibia, Life Skills is taught starting in Grade 4.

Low-level disruption: Anything that causes distractions in a classroom, such as tapping a pen, rocking a chair, talking over others, texting, chewing gum, passing notes and similar behaviour that slows the flow of the lesson and can have an impact on the learning atmosphere. Some reports show low-level disruption can have a detrimental impact on many learners' life chances (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skill Report, UK, 2014)

Mental health: A person's psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Mental illness: A wide range of mental health conditions and disorders that effect a person's mood, thinking and behaviour, such as depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia.

National Safe Schools Framework: An instrument through which school safety standards are established, implemented and monitored, and for which all responsible actors can systematically be held accountable.

Non-communicable disease: A medical condition or disease that is non-infectious and non-transmissible among people.

Perpetrator: A person who carries out a violent act or causes hurt and/or harm.

Positive discipline: A discipline model for schools and parents that focuses on a child's positive behaviour, based on the assumption that there are no bad children, just good and bad behaviours.

Physical violence: An intentional action that causes physical harm to the victim, including, for example: (i) physical assault or any use of physical force against a victim, (ii) forcibly confining or detaining a victim, (iii) physically depriving a victim of access to food, water, clothing, shelter or rest.

Physical disability: A limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina. Physical disabilities also include impairments such as respiratory disorders, blindness or epilepsy that affect other facets of daily living.

Power imbalance: This refers to situations in which an individual relies on his/her greater strength or authority to control, humiliate or harm others. For example, bullies may use their physical strength, access to embarrassing information or popularity to dominate other learners.

Psychosocial support: A holistic approach to care and counselling that addresses the mental, emotional and social wellbeing of an individual.

Psychosocial wellbeing: A positive emotional, psychological and mental state.

School culture: Beliefs, norms, values and behaviours characteristic of a school community that make up the ‘persona’ of a school, and directly or indirectly influence how the school operates.

School health policies: Guidelines and rules which promote a healthy, safe and secure school environment that guarantees equal rights and opportunities to receive health education and health services.

Segregation: The action of setting someone or something apart from others. Often used in reference to the placing of learners with a disability or other special needs in separate schools (or units within a school), or providing them with separate courses within mainstream education settings.

Self-awareness: Conscious knowledge and understanding of one’s own character, feelings, motives and desires.

Sexting: A blend of the words ‘sex’ and ‘texting’, sexting is the sending of sexually explicit messages or photographs of oneself or others, by request or spontaneously, using mobile phone or Internet technology.

Sexual harassment: This consists of unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature that makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated, threatened or offended. Sexual harassment can take many different forms and may include physical contact, verbal comments, jokes, propositions, the display of offensive material or other sexually motivated behaviour.

Stigma: A perceived mark of disgrace associated by a society or social groups with a particular circumstance, quality or person; often based on unfounded social or cultural beliefs.

Stress: A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

Trauma (psychological): Damage to the mind resulting from a severely distressing event, such as a serious accident or a rape. Trauma is often the result of overwhelming stress that exceeds one’s ability to cope, or process the emotions associated with that experience.

Trolling: Deliberately provoking others through inflammatory language and upsetting content, usually online; often synonymous with online harassment.

Violence: This refers to all forms of physical or psychological violence, injury and abuse; neglect or negligent treatment; maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual exploitation or abuse.

Violence, psychological: This refers to harassment, confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation or any other treatment that may diminish a learner’s sense of identity, dignity, emotional state, and self-worth.

Violence, sexual: This encompasses any sexual act, attempt to engage in a sexual act, unwanted sexual advances or other similar action by any person – regardless of their relationship to the victim – in any setting.

Vulnerable child: A child living in circumstances that poses a threat to the child’s physical, social, emotional, psychological or spiritual wellbeing, or who lacks adequate care and protection.

Witness: In the context of violence, a witness is a person who is present at and sees a violent act.

What is the National Safe Schools Framework?

The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is a comprehensive document that provides a vision and the guiding principles for building safe and supportive school communities, centred on the wellbeing of learners and educators. It identifies seven standards to help Namibian schools to create conducive teaching and learning environments. The Framework relies on an evidence-based approach to school safety, and provides key stakeholders with detailed guidance on how to carry out their responsibilities for creating and maintaining safe schools.

1.1 Purpose of the NSSF

Given the critical importance of education in building the foundation for a strong and informed society, the issue of school safety cannot be ignored. But school safety must be balanced with the overall mission of schooling, which is to promote the holistic wellbeing of learners and educators through mutual care and support, while championing academic excellence, civic values and healthy lifestyles for children and educators.

In line with its comprehensive approach to school safety, the NSSF offers insight into:

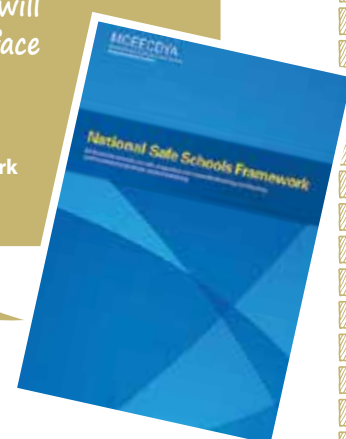
- ▶ the root causes of violence and harmful behaviour in the Namibian context;
- ▶ how to recognise the various types of violence and harmful behaviours taking place in schools; and
- ▶ the impact of violence on the educational experience of both learners and teachers.

The purpose of the NSSF is trifold:

1. To provide a common national approach that helps schools and their communities to ensure that the conditions in which Namibian learners study are safe, healthy and conducive to learning.
2. To consolidate existing laws, policies and good practices, providing school communities with a practical guide for achieving safety in their specific context by: minimising the risk of harm; celebrating diversity; and ensuring that all members of the school community feel respected, valued and included.
3. To reduce, minimise or remove obstacles to school safety through a coordinated and monitored set of targeted programmes and interventions delivered through collaborative engagement by all key stakeholders.

"In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing."

National Safe Schools Framework of Australia, 2010.



1.2 Key objectives of the NSSF

The NSSF was designed to assist schools to meet the objectives highlighted below.



Creating a safe school requires the school and the broader community to work together and deliver a common message. The NSSF describes how minimum safety standards for schools can be established, implemented and monitored, and outlines the roles of school personnel, parents, communities and government actors.

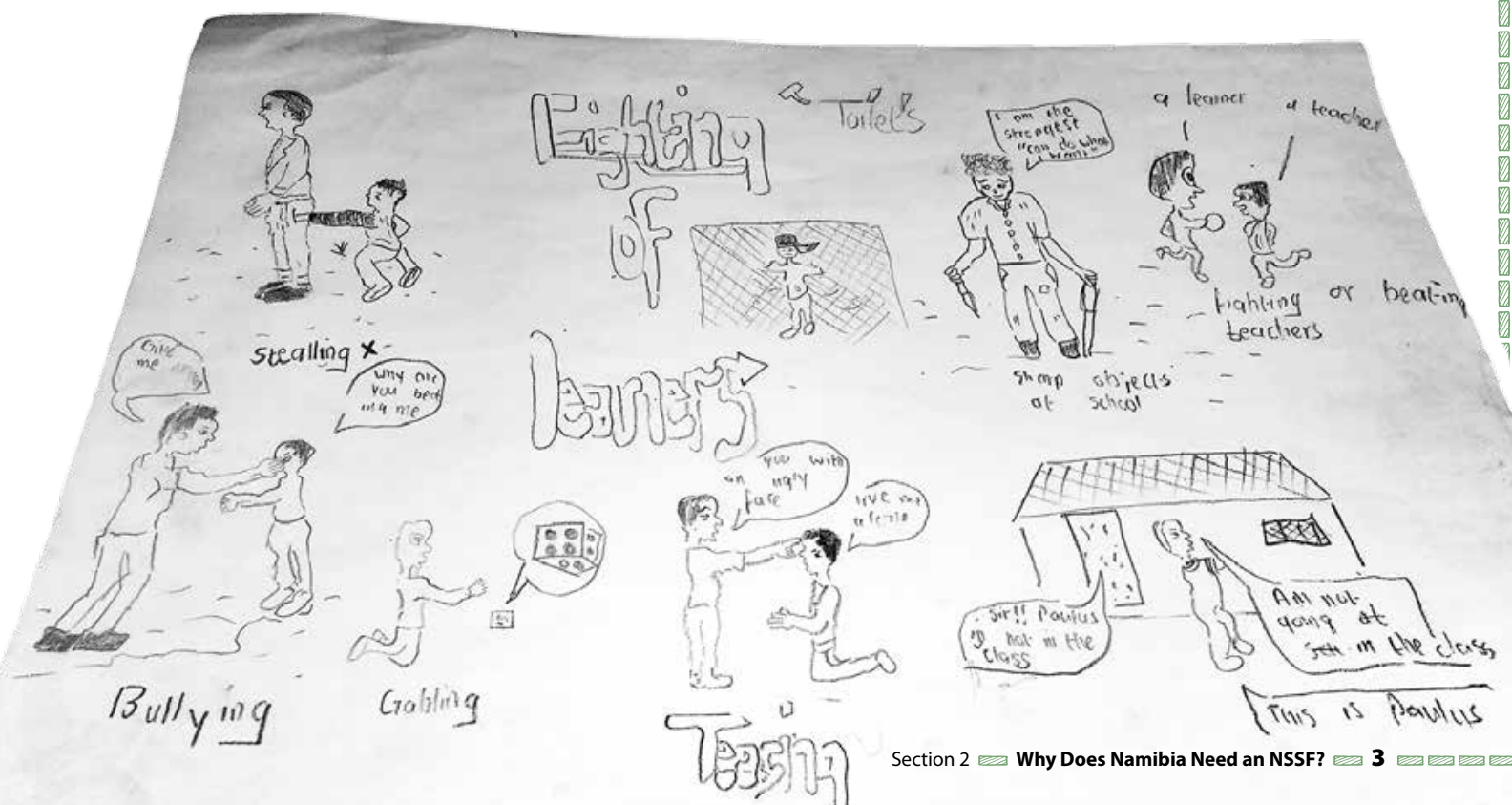
The safe schools agenda cuts across many sectors, and the NSSF seeks to improve cross-sectoral accountability in a harmonised and transparent way. The inclusion of a broad range of actors outside the education sector is a key success factor that should contribute to quality inclusive education in a safe and conducive learning environment for all learners in Namibia.

Why does Namibia need an NSSF?

Before delving further into the details of the NSSF, it is important to explain why such a framework is needed in Namibia. This section provides details on violence in Namibian schools, and describes some of the risk factors for children. It also discusses the impact of violence on both learners and educators, and explains why incidents of violence often go unreported.

2.1 Understanding violence in Namibian schools

Educational settings expose many Namibian children to violence, which can lead them to believe that violent practices and behaviours are normal. Learners may be subjected to corporal punishment, humiliating forms of psychological punishment, or sexual or gender-based violence. Fighting and bullying are commonplace in schools. Children living with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV or AIDS, children from poor families and children from marginalised groups are more likely to fall victim to bullying (McGrath 2007). Schools are also influenced by events in the wider community, such as gang culture and gang-related activity involving alcohol and drugs.



Namibia has a robust legislative framework on education, characterised by progressive policies and plans that support the achievement of national education goals. Yet, several challenges persist, posing barriers which often keep Namibian learners from attending school. In public schools these barriers include: a shortage of well-trained and passionate teachers, especially in very remote schools; limited teaching and learning materials and playground apparatus; overcrowded classrooms; and limited access to water, electricity, sanitary facilities and Internet connectivity.

The following few highlights from seminal studies undertaken in recent years provide clues about the types and extent of threats to learners' safety and wellbeing in Namibian schools:



Schools should be places of safety where parents and guardians entrust their children's education to the care of teachers and educators, But the data above demonstrate that several forms of violence often occur in schools in Namibia.

The following are among the characteristics of a school affected by a violent culture:



Widespread use of physical punishment and rare offers of praise (positive reinforcement) are among the key drivers of systemic school violence (Legal Assistance Centre 2016).

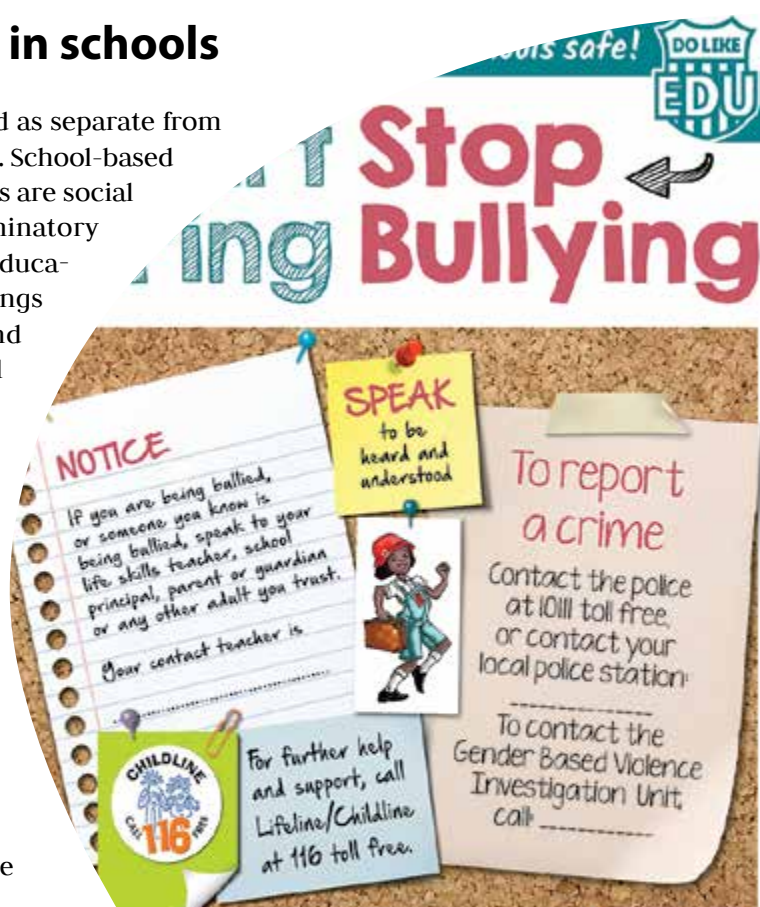
The prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence in Namibia's schools are yet to be fully and systematically documented. Nor has a mechanism to report on violence against children in school or during their daily commute been developed and implemented. As well as addressing the sources of violence at schools, this Framework describes a system of self-assessment and documentation that will contribute to a better understanding of trends in school violence, which in turn should lead to better violence prevention and management.

Despite the lack of hard data, some recent studies provide evidence revealing the common occurrence of classroom disturbances, intimidation of learners, vandalism, cheating, theft, abusive language, sexual abuse, gender-based violence, physical fighting and bullying in Namibian schools (Burton and Leoschut 2013; Urban Trust of Namibia 2013; Burton, Leoschut and Popovac 2011). Research conducted for the NSSF revealed that many learners do not attend school because they feel unsafe, either at school or on the way to or from school, and violent incidents often go unreported. In addition, consultations with children and young people revealed that girls staying in school hostels feel particularly at risk because supervisors are not always present and numerous incidents of vandalism have taken place.

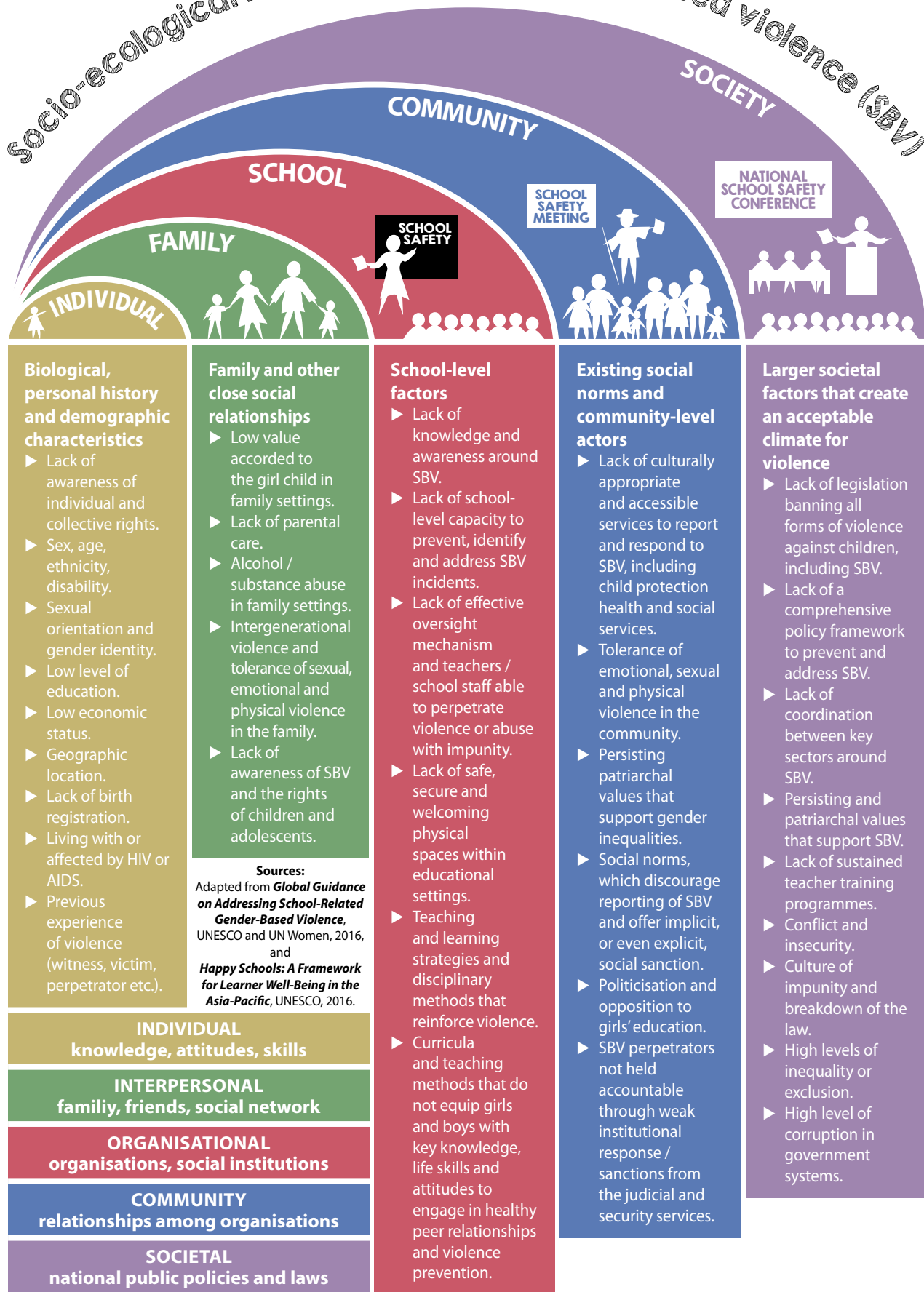
2.2 Understanding violence in schools

Violence and abuse in schools cannot be considered as separate from the broader environment in which a school operates. School-based violence is a complex, multifaceted problem. Schools are social spaces that reflect power relationships and discriminatory practices present in the wider society. Violence in educational settings often reflects violence in other settings in the children's lives, such as in their families and communities. Violence is further embedded in social and cultural norms around authority, hierarchy, gender discrimination and discipline. These same norms determine society's response to violence (or lack thereof).

In this context, several United Nations agencies and other organisations use a "socio-ecological" model to explain violent behaviour in school settings – shown on the next page. This model differentiates between risk factors at five levels: individual, family, school, community and society. The more risk factors a person is exposed to, the higher the probability that s/he will become involved in crime and violence – as either the victim or the perpetrator.



Socio-ecological model explaining school-based violence (SBV)



While exposure to these risk factors does not necessarily *cause* violence, it increases the likelihood of adopting violent behaviour. For example, poverty is one risk factor. Most people living in poverty do not resort to violence, but they are more vulnerable to its impact. At the other end of the spectrum are *protective factors* that help decrease the probability that a person will engage in, or be the victim of, violent behaviour. For example, a child growing up in a supportive and caring family environment is less likely to resort to violence than a child who experiences violence at home.

Reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors helps to prevent violence in schools by addressing its root causes. This approach shifts the perception of a learner as a ‘bad’ perpetrator to one of a learner who has been exposed to risk factors and is in need of support.

The role of bystanders must also be taken into account. Many school-based instances of learner bullying and violence take place in front of other learners, who often exacerbate the problem by egging the perpetrator on or simply failing to intervene. Several studies stress the important role that bystanders can play, and suggest ways to improve the outcome of their involvement (Frey, et al. 2009; Glew et al. 2005; Rivers, et al. 2009; Craig, Pepler and Atlas, 2000).

2.3 Types of violence in Namibian schools

Violence in schools can take different forms and occur at different levels of severity. Identifying the different types and the perpetrators involved can help schools to address the problem. Based on Global School-based Student Health Surveys in 2006 and 2013, the aforementioned studies and research conducted for the NSSF, the five types of violence most prevalent in Namibian schools can be summarised as follows:



While these categories are useful, it is important to bear in mind that violence is often a combination of two or more forms, e.g. bullying can take the form of sexual abuse that leads to psychological harm, self-violence or suicide. (See the Glossary for definitions of these terms.)

2.4 Impact of school-based violence on learners

The negative impact of school-based violence on learners/children is well documented. For example, studies in South Africa by Leoschut (2009) and Du Plessis (2008) found that violence and crime in the school environment has serious implications for children’s physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. The profound effect of violent experiences on children’s socialisation and development can persist well into adulthood. Children who study in a violent environment achieve poorer academic results than those who do not, and children who are bullied often exhibit a marked decline in school achievement and reluctance to participate in school activities and to socialise with peers. Bullying can also result in dropout from school, as bullied learners may fear returning to school (Burton, Leoschut and Popvac 2011; Legal Assistance Centre 2016; Burton and Leoschut 2013).

Violent school settings have a detrimental impact on mental health, and increase the risk of substance abuse and suicide. Children who are bullied are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities that they previously enjoyed. A very small number of bullied children might retaliate, some using extremely violent measures.

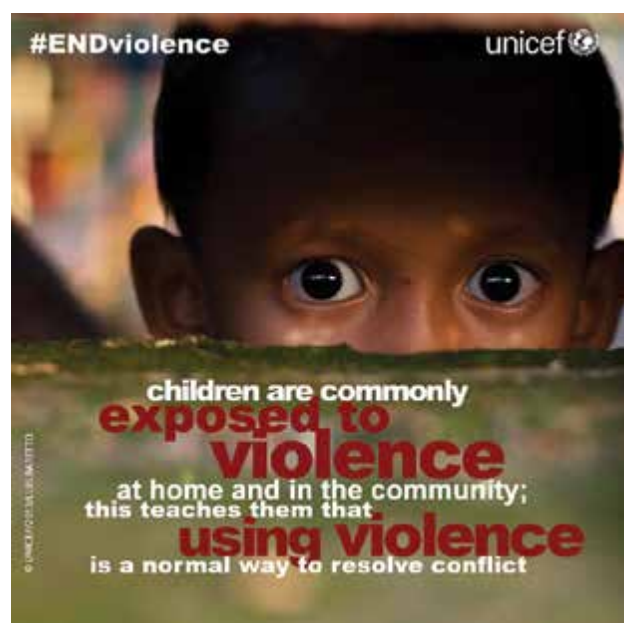
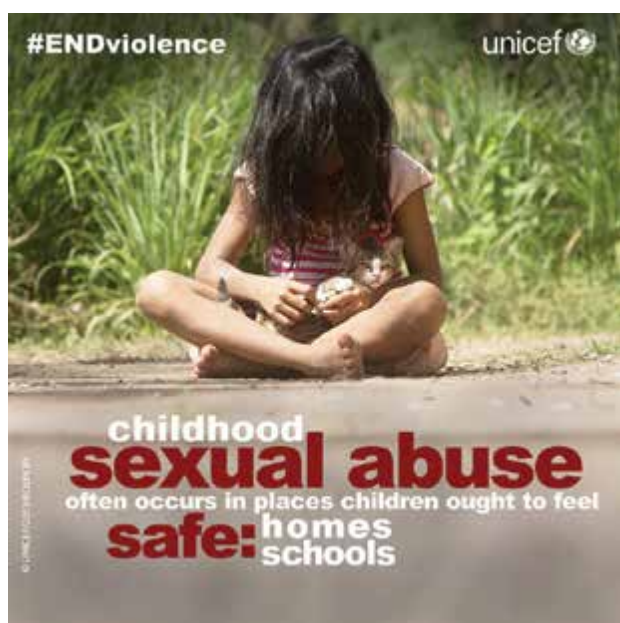
2.5 Impact of school-based violence on educators

Just as learners cannot learn, educators cannot teach in an environment of disruption and violence. The main concern articulated by principals and teachers during the NSSF consultation process was growing pressure from ‘low-level disruption’ caused by the now most common forms of poor behaviour, the distinctive features of which are constant challenges to authority, persistent refusal to obey school rules, and frequent verbal abuse of staff. The effects of such behaviour, if unchallenged, are corrosive, and when sustained over a long period, can have a negative impact on educators’ health and welfare.

Little research has been conducted on the impact of school violence on educators, but discussions held with educators during the NSSF consultations revealed feelings of frustration, stress, incompetence, anxiety and depression. Educators felt isolated and unsupported, especially when verbally attacked by confrontational parents. As a result, they reported increased fear and avoidance behaviour toward learners in what they perceive as potentially dangerous situations. These factors probably contribute to high levels of educator absenteeism and alcohol abuse, as noted in the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III Report of 2011. Many educators require ongoing emotional and professional guidance.

2.6 Barriers to identifying and reporting on violence and abuse

Cultural norms appear to be a key constraint hindering timely identification, documentation and reporting on violent incidents in the Namibian context, both in schools and at home. Widespread unease on the part of parents and educators alike to open discussions on issues such as sexual exploitation and abuse is well documented, and was also revealed during the NSSF consultative process. Lack of comprehensive teacher training, and failure to reach out to learners and parents, further compound cultural norms which discourage reporting of violence and abuse. Fear of police involvement and recrimination, and the associated stigma, are other major impediments. Lack of vital services or referral mechanisms can also contribute to the problem. Community resources to support victims and families may be insufficient, or effective school policies and procedures may be lacking. In other cases there may be a lack of coordination among key agencies (education, health, safety and security) in charge of managing case reporting, documentation and follow-up.



Establishing a framework for safe schools in Namibia



3.1 Methodology

In response to the problems described in the previous sections, the MoEAC and UNICEF decided to jointly develop a set of guidelines and identify strategies for enhancing school safety and improving the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of learners and educators. Once the two entities agreed on the Framework's scope and purpose, a literature review was carried out to identify and analyse promising policies, practices and approaches used by primary and secondary schools in Namibia and other countries to create safe schools with excellent academic and performance outcomes.

Stakeholder engagement and collaboration was critical to the development of the NSSF. Involving the wider community strengthened the sense of ownership, inclusivity, transparency, appropriateness and clarity of the Framework. Groups consulted included the Safe Schools Working Group and officials of the MoEAC, MoHSS, MoSS and MGECW. In addition, consultations were held with Namibian civil society, representatives of academia (including the University of Namibia), and experts in the fields of human rights, violence prevention, and mental and psychosocial health.

Also consulted were members of school communities in Hardap and Ohangwena Regions, including education officials, principals, teachers and parents. Input from children and learners was also gathered through consultations with learners attending various schools in Khomas, Hardap and Ohangwena Regions. These consultations gave participants an opportunity to raise issues and ask questions, and provided an opportunity for those developing the Framework to hear new ideas and build relationships.

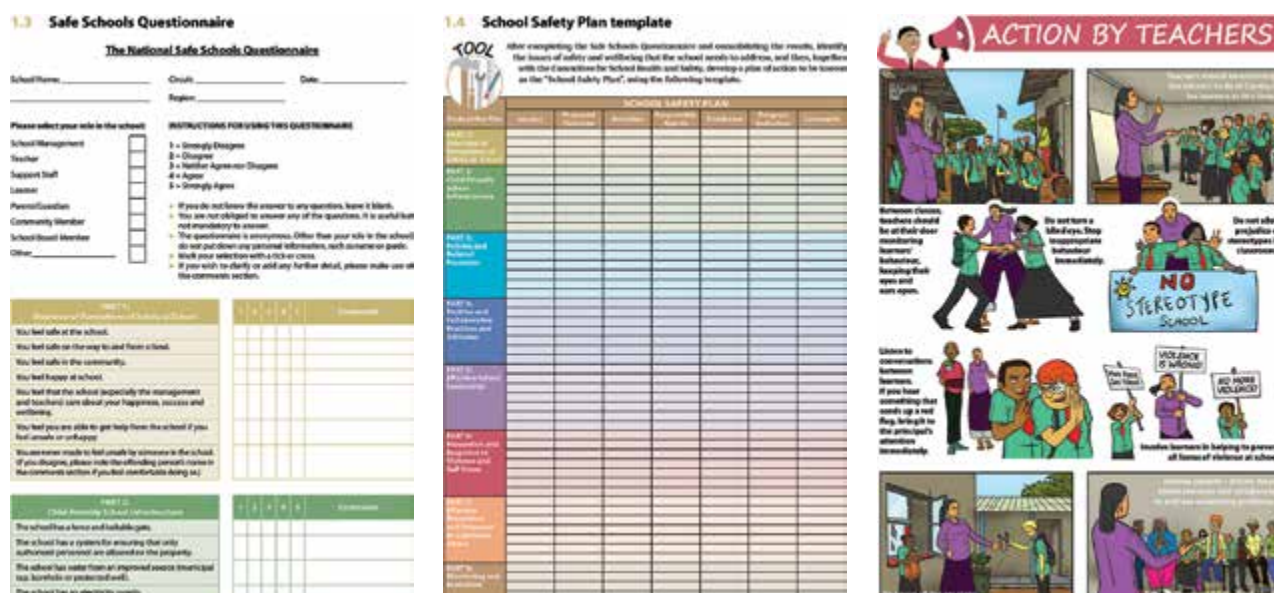
3.2 National Safe Schools Steering Committee

Senior government officials, representatives of the relevant UN agencies, child-care professionals and civil society representatives were invited to be members of the NSSF Steering Committee tasked with overseeing the development of the NSSF. A common understanding of what constitutes a ‘safe school’ in Namibia was developed by the participants in a workshop convened at the outset of the consultation process. Complex issues were discussed and ideas generated to inform the direction of the subsequent consultations and the content of the NSSF.

3.3 NSSF structure

The NSSF consists of three separate but closely related components.

1. **Introduction and Overview:** This component presents the comprehensive NSSF approach to building safe schools in Namibia. It explains why and how the NSSF was created, and describes the vision, guiding principles and minimum standards for safe schools, as well as roles and responsibilities of the major education stakeholders.
2. **Practical Guide:** This component offers user-friendly guidelines for meeting the minimum standards for building and maintaining safe schools, as well as instructions for assessing and monitoring school safety.
3. **Resource Kit:** This component includes activities, tools and information designed to support schools’ efforts to achieve the NSSF goals and to carry out activities suggested in the **Practical Guide**.



The NSSF was designed to guide schools in the use of a common approach to achieving safe school environments, in accordance with their specific contexts and challenges. It can be used by all national actors involved in ensuring that schools, educational facilities and their surroundings are child-friendly, physically safe and protected from harmful influences.

3.4 NSSF policy context

The NSSF was designed to align with the overall framework of global and national legal and policy instruments that guide Namibia. This section touches briefly on these commitments, describing their relationship to the new Framework.

3.4.1 International policy environment

Namibia has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Youth Charter – all designed to define and protect children’s rights. These commitments, insofar as they define rights related to protection from violence, abuse, discrimination and similar harmful behaviours, oblige the Government of Namibia to take action on school safety.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

United Nations
General Assembly
1990

Governments must ensure that every person under the age of 18 is protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Article 19 requires States Parties to *“take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”*.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Organisation of
African Unity (OAU)
1990

Ratified by Namibia in July 2004, the ACRWC addresses various rights and responsibilities of children, including rights to education, non-discrimination and health services. Article 16 declares that States Parties *“shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse, while in the care of the child.”*

African Youth Charter

African Union (AU)
Commission
2006

This charter, ratified by Namibia in May 2006, makes explicit provision for the development of life skills as part of the education curriculum. Article 2 declares that State Parties *“shall take appropriate measures to ensure that youth are protected against all forms of discrimination ...”* Further, the Charter notes that change is required in several areas, including: development of education, skills and competence; employment and sustainable livelihoods; youth leadership and participation; health and welfare; peace and security; environmental protection; and cultural and moral values.

3.4.2 National legislation and policy environment

The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990) is the fundamental and supreme law of the land. In its Preamble, the Constitution states the following, inter alia: ***“Whereas the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is indispensable for freedom, justice and peace ...”***. Thus the Constitution acknowledges the inherent dignity of all citizens, including adults and children. This is the first protection that the Namibian Constitution accords to the country’s children.

Constitution of the Republic of Namibia

Drafted and adopted by the
Constituent Assembly
(forebear of Namibia's
National Assembly)

1990

Article 8(2)(b) stipulates that children may not be subjected to any form of torture, inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment or punishment, in either the national or the domestic environment. Rights of protection are afforded to all children, including those without families and those with disabilities. Article 20(1) states that “*All persons shall have the right to education,*” and Article 20(2) stipulates that “*Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge.*”

Education Act, 2001

(Act No. 16
of 2001)

NOTE:

This Act is under review, and will be replaced by the Basic Education Act currently being drafted.

Education Act 16 of 2001 establishes the framework for Namibia's education system. Sections 55(1) and (2) set out general rules of conduct and a learners' code of conduct: “*The Minister must make general rules of conduct which must be incorporated into the learners' code of conduct of all state schools*” (55(1)); and “*... a school board of a state school must, after consultation with the school parents, learners and teachers of the school, draft and adopt a learners' code of conduct*” (55(2)). Article 56(1) expressly prohibits corporal punishment in schools: “*A teacher or any other person employed at a state school or hostel or private school commits misconduct, if such teacher or person, in the performance of his or her official duties, imposes or administers corporal punishment upon a learner, or causes corporal punishment to be imposed or administered upon a learner.*”

Child Care and Protection Act, 2015 (Act No. 3 of 2015)

The Child Care and Protection Act (which replaced Children's Act 33 of 1960) conforms to Namibia's regional and international agreements regarding children. This Act represents a comprehensive legal framework which, among other things, specifies legal mandates to prevent and respond to neglect, abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children. Importantly, it also imposes a legal responsibility on all professionals who work with children (in the welfare, education, health and other sectors) to respond to violence occurring in the children's lives. For teachers and school principals, this legal responsibility includes mandatory reporting of a child who may be in need of protective services. Failure to do so is a criminal offence, punishable by a substantial fine or jail time. The Act clearly states that any person who has control of a child, including the child's parents, must respect the child's right to physical integrity. Respecting physical integrity means preventing bodily injury, implying that disciplinary measures must not include corporal punishment.

This Act also protects the *dignity* of the child, which is vital. Degradation of a child's dignity is a common form of punishment used in Namibian schools.

Combating of Rape Act, 2000

(Act No. 8
of 2000)

The Combating of Rape Act generally provides for combating rape, and sets down the requirements for protecting victims of rape and sexual abuse. It is considered to one of the most progressive rape laws in Southern Africa. This Act recognises that rape is not just a sexual crime, but a crime of violence and power in which sex is used as the weapon.

**Education
for All
National
Plan of Action
2002-2015**

The Education for All National Plan of Action 2002-2015 (adopted in 2002) is an affirmation by the Namibian Government of the four key goals in education: access, equity, quality and democracy. This affirmation is consistent with the notion that education cultivates the values, attitudes and conduct essential for personal growth, self-actualisation and peaceful coexistence.

Education Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013)

Namibia's policy on inclusive education has the potential to play a vital role in successful promotion of the NSSF vision. This policy calls for access to high-quality education for all Namibian learners, free from discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, health or disability, pregnancy, socio-economic background or geographic location.



Inclusive education aims to ensure that schools are supportive and engaging places for all school community members. It builds communities that value, celebrate and respond to diversity. It is underpinned by respectful relationships between learners and school community members, and is supported by collaborative relationships with parents and communities through communication, learning partnerships and consultative decision-making.





3.4.3 Education and Health

In 2008 Namibia developed the National Policy for School Health, and in 2016 launched the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP). Being safe and protected is integral to children's health. Schools are unique settings that offer an opportunity not only to impart education, but also to improve the health of learners, school personnel, families and community members. Namibia's National Policy for School Health aims to provide effective, sustainable and comprehensive school health programmes for primary and secondary schools. It was designed to promote an integrated approach to health at schools. In 2016 the MoHSS and MoEAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the joint implementation of the ISHP.

Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP)

The ultimate goal of the ISHP is the attainment of health and social wellbeing for all schoolgoing children. The main objectives of the ISHP are as follows:

1. Deploying primary health-care strategies and approaches in schools to strengthen prevention and promote the protection of the school learner against communicable and non-communicable diseases; discrimination; violence against children; harmful substances; and physical, psychological and emotional harm.
2. Creating an awareness in schools to promote primary healthcare amongst schoolgoing learners and their communities.
3. Enhancing the protection of school learners against diseases.
4. Creating a safe and conducive school-learning environment that includes agreed minimum standards of infrastructure and services provided by the MoEAC at all schools and hostels, in which learners can fully utilise their cognitive skills.

Namibia also adopted the World Health Organization's (WHO) "Health Promoting School Initiative" as a key strategy for minimising and alleviating health-related barriers to education.

The NSSF was designed to support and enhance these national and international commitments, thereby contributing to the provision of child- and youth-friendly education and health services for all Namibian learners.

The NSSF vision

The vision underlying the NSSF is that Namibian schools are safe for learners, teachers and other members of the school community.

4.1 Guiding principles

The NSSF vision is supported by the following guiding principles:

Children's rights are respected and promoted.

A whole school, evidence-based approach to school safety is adopted.

School safety is promoted through partnership with the broader community.

Learners play an active role in developing safe and supportive schools.

A child-centred approach is used, focused on meeting children's needs rather than on punishment.

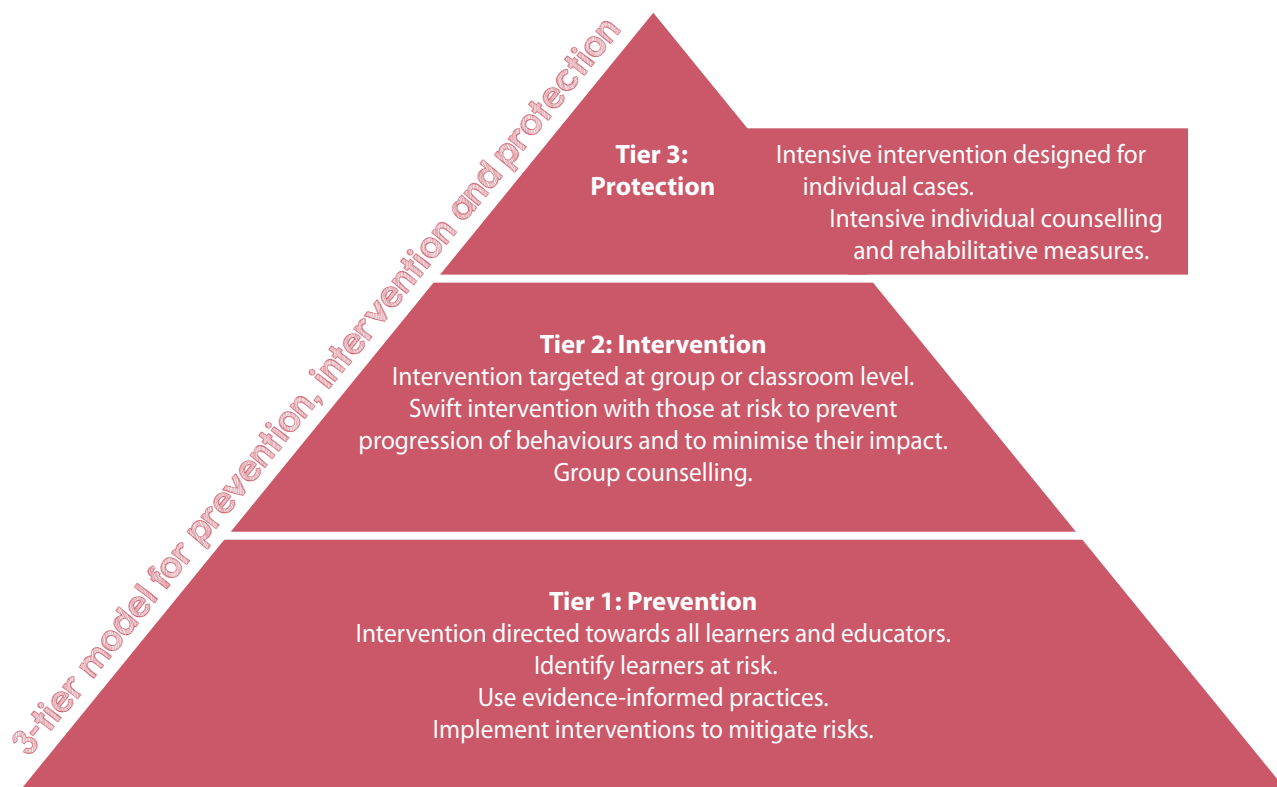


4.2 Comprehensive framework for safe schools

One influential approach to school safety is centred on the use of several tiers of intervention related to both academic and behavioural concerns. The three-tier model addresses prevention, intervention and protection.

- ▶ **Tier 1 - Prevention:** a broad-based approach that targets interventions to all learners
- ▶ **Tier 2 - Intervention:** interventions target a more specific group and/or classroom
- ▶ **Tier 3 - Protection:** a more intensive intervention for individual learners with more serious concerns.

Graphically, the three-tiered approach can be represented as follows:



Source: Adapted from Marston 2003.

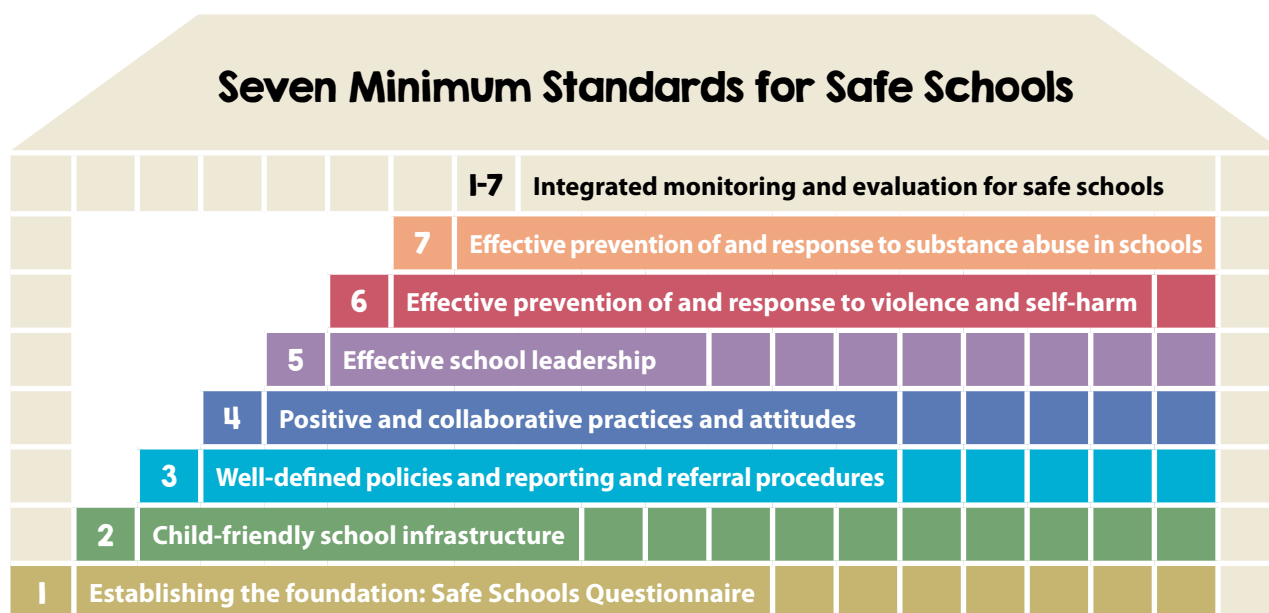
This three-tiered approach is widely used as a model for conceptualising a range of interventions to prevent learners from developing severe behavioural problems. While useful, the model does not suggest how to integrate the interventions, nor does it place enough emphasis on the importance of combining interventions in schools with interventions in communities, and of close cooperation with other stakeholders. The NSSF overcomes these shortcomings by adopting a more comprehensive approach. It stresses support for the overall wellbeing of learners, as well as the need for integrated services to minimise (and, wherever possible, remove) health- and safety-related barriers to education.

To effectively create and maintain a safe and conducive school environment, the learners must have meaningful involvement in designing and implementing school safety policies. Learner participation can help to identify problems and solutions, because learners have unique knowledge and perceptions about their schools. Moreover, participation in decision-making processes has a positive effect on learners' self-esteem, and helps them to develop social and citizenship skills and tolerance for the opinions of others. The NSSF complements Namibia's Social Accountability and School Governance (SASG) programme, which provides learners with an opportunity to participate in school governance, and is aligned to the flagship SASG programme named the "Start Caring – Stop Bullying" campaign.

Seven minimum standards for creating and maintaining safe schools in Namibia

Learners have a fundamental right to learn in a safe, supportive environment, and to be treated with respect. Similarly, educators, parents and other local community members have the right to feel safe, supported and respected in the school context.

Drawing on national and international research and promising practices, in addition to the feedback from stakeholders gathered during the NSSF consultative process, the following seven standards, and the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of these standards, were identified as essential for building and maintaining safe and supportive teaching and learning communities in Namibian schools. The NSSF **Practical Guide** offers guidance to help schools meet these standards, and the **Resource Kit** contains further tools and information.



Note: The colours used in this diagram correspond with the colour coding of the sections in the **Practical Guide**.

The MoEAC has a robust framework for quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation, namely the **National Standards and Key Performance Indicators (NSKPIs)**. The seven standards of school safety identified above fit into the NSKPIs as shown on the following pages.

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND INDICATORS		NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS STANDARDS
1.	PROVISION OF RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS AND HOSTELS	
1.1	Provision of human resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of teaching staff Provision of support staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective school leadership
1.2	Provision of physical resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of basic services Provision of basic communication facilities Provision of suitable school building with equipped classrooms, specialised rooms and a resource centre and offices Provision of learning support materials and consumables 	Child-friendly school infrastructure
1.3	Provision of finance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy of finance from Government Collection of fees Fundraising by the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective school leadership
1.4	Provision of resources for hostel	Child-friendly school infrastructure
2.	CURRICULUM AND ATTAINMENT	
2.1	Implementation of the curriculum	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adherence to and sound interpretation of national and regional policies Quality of year plans/schemes of work Quality of lesson plans Quality of assessment plans Priority to achievement of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools
2.2	Extra-curricular activities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole-child development through participation in sporting, environmental and cultural activities Uptake by learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools
2.3	Intellectual attainment	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attainment of appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy Attainment of planned knowledge and understanding, skills and competencies, in all subjects, but particularly in English, Mathematics, Science, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Arts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes
2.4	Personal and social development	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of positive values and attitudes Development of social skills Attainment of life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND INDICATORS		NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS STANDARDS
3.	THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS	
3.1	Quality of the teaching process	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Range and appropriateness of teaching approaches ● Teacher's expositions and explanations ● Teacher-learner dialogue ● Learner-centred methods ● Use of available teaching resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm ▶ Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
3.2	Suitability to learners' needs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pace of learning ● Relevance to learners' interests and experience ● Matching teaching to the learning styles of learners ● Attention to those with special needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm ▶ Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
3.3	Quality of the learning process	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Motivation of learners ● Progress in learning ● Independent learning ● Co-operative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm ▶ Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
3.4	Assessment and evaluation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Methods of assessment and recording ● Assessment as part of teaching and learning ● Use of assessment information ● Development of self-evaluation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
4.	THE SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL UNIT	
4.1	Morale of the school	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of identity and pride in the school ● Sense of security, equality and fairness ● Quality of communication within the school ● Sense of commitment to achieve well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm ▶ Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
4.2	Effective use of time	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attendance ● Punctuality: school day ● Punctuality: lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND INDICATORS		NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS STANDARDS
4.3	Values and norms	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High ethical standards Mutual care, respect and tolerance Self-discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
4.4	Pastoral care and guidance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the background of learners Provision for the emotional, physical and social needs of learners Guidance, support and supervision on personal and moral issues Transfer of information about learners who change schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
4.5	Curricular and vocational guidance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and advice in preparation for choice in education, training or employment Accuracy and relevance of information and advice 	Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes
4.6	School discipline	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School rules on discipline System for enforcing the rules Operation of the disciplinary system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
5.	MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL AND HOSTEL	
5.1	Policy, planning and implementation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals, objectives and policies Self-evaluation School development planning Implementation of plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures Child-friendly school infrastructure Creating a foundation: Safe Schools Questionnaire
5.2	Curriculum and attainment	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of relevant information to teachers Effectiveness of timetabling Curricular breadth, choice and equity Action to promote attainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
5.3	Administration	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lines of delegation and responsibility Storage and retrieval of information Compliance with Government requirements Management of absenteeism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures Creating a foundation: Safe Schools Questionnaire

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND INDICATORS		NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS STANDARDS
5.4	Leadership	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional competence, commitment and perceived quality Ability to direct, inspire and motivate Inter-personal relationships and teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes
5.5	Management of staff	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precise definition of the school's staffing needs Optimum allocation of staff to duties Definition of the duties of all staff Ensuring compliance Monitoring of performance and identification of their needs Staff development Grievance procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures Creating a foundation: Safe Schools Questionnaire
5.6	Management of physical resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilisation of resources Maintenance Inventory control Management of resources for teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures Child-friendly school infrastructure Creating a foundation: Safe Schools Questionnaire
5.7	Management of finance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilisation of funds received School Board involvement Budgeting and accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures
6.	LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY	
6.1	Links with parents	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures for communicating with parents Quality of information given Co-responsibility of school and parents for learners' progress Parental involvement in school activities Parental contributions to the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools
6.2	Links with the community	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The functioning of the School Board Action to secure community support Assistance from the community to the school Assistance from the school to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools
7.	LINKS WITH OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE REGION	
7.1	Provision of resources for work with cluster	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of staff time Finance for travel and joint working Support for the cluster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective school leadership Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND INDICATORS		NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS STANDARDS
7.2	Effectiveness of the cluster <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning of cluster activities ● Co-ordination of programmes ● Contribution of the school to the cluster ● Use made of information from the cluster ● Knowledge of work in other schools ● Understanding of the structure and workings with the region of the regional office ● Quality of communication in both directions ● Quality of response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective school leadership ▶ Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes ▶ Effective prevention and response to violence and self-harm ▶ Effective prevention and response to substance abuse in schools ▶ Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures

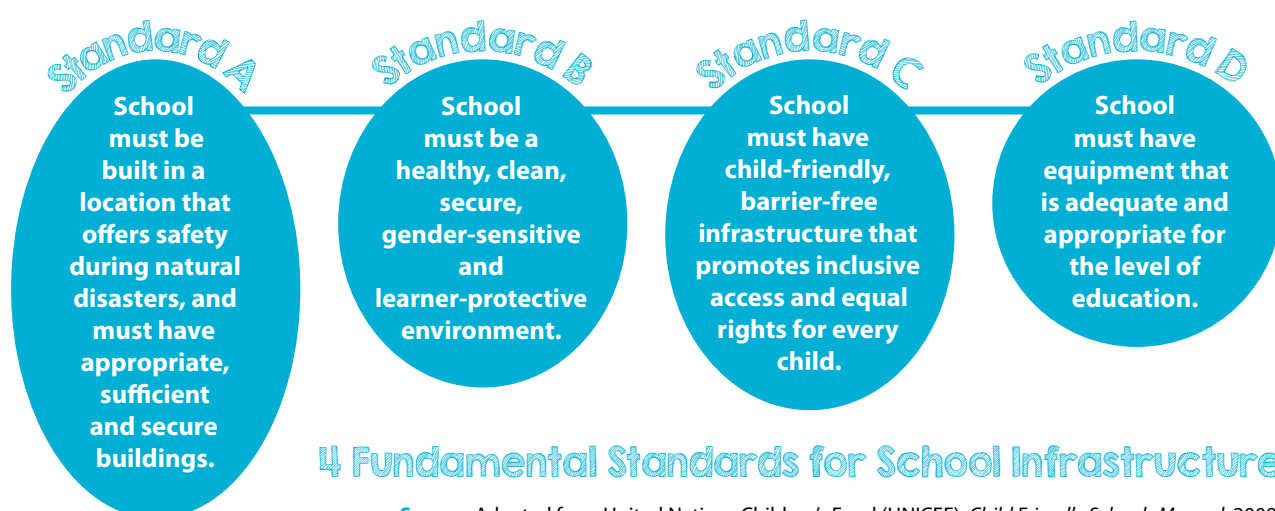
5.1 Establishing the foundation: Safe Schools Questionnaire

Safe schools do not develop overnight; change takes place step by step. To establish a safe school, it is essential to establish a starting point from which to build. The NSSF calls for using a “Safe Schools Questionnaire” to establish the starting point. The responses to the questionnaire can be used to create a baseline for each of the seven Safe Schools Standards. A baseline per standard is critical, as it provides the school with a point from which to trace and monitor its progress toward an overall safer environment.

Information and guidance regarding the use of a school safety questionnaire is provided in Section 1 of the **Practical Guide**, and the full “National Safe Schools Questionnaire” is provided under Standard 1 in the **Resource Kit**.

5.2 Child-friendly school infrastructure

Drawing on UNICEF’s child-friendly school approach as well as regional best practices, and bearing in mind conditions and challenges specific to Namibia, four fundamental standards on school infrastructure have been identified, as follows:



Source: Adapted from United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Child Friendly Schools Manual*, 2009.

Guidelines on standards for school infrastructure can be found in Section 2 of the **Practical Guide**, and further information is provided under Standard 2 in the **Resource Kit**.

5.3 Well-defined policies, reporting and referral procedures

Sound school-based policy development plays an essential role in violence prevention and control. By anticipating safety problems and actively addressing them, schools increase their ability to avoid and/or respond to a crisis.

A solid foundation for developing a safe school environment requires clearly articulated school-based policies that are:

- ▶ in line with national standards;
- ▶ established through collaboration among all stakeholders, including learners and communities; and
- ▶ implemented fairly and consistently.

When developed proactively by school management, teachers, parents and learners, such policies will set out expectations for, and increase ownership by, all stakeholders.

Policies create norms for acceptable behaviour. The norms created through the school-based policies must be promoted, discussed and practised in the school's everyday life. Policies must state clearly that the school will not condone any form of violence, and policy-based strategies must be formulated to drive behaviour towards a caring and supportive school climate. Policies should focus less on banning violence and more on fostering positive, respectful standards throughout the school.

Schools must establish policies and procedures covering topics such as:

- ▶ preventing, managing and responding to school violence;
- ▶ anti-bullying;
- ▶ school building security;
- ▶ school health;
- ▶ codes of conduct for educators and learners;
- ▶ record-keeping for effective monitoring and referrals;
- ▶ positive approaches to discipline;
- ▶ quality teaching and learning to promote academic excellence;
- ▶ parental and community involvement in the school;
- ▶ guidance on children who leave school premises;
- ▶ visits to the school;
- ▶ substance abuse and weapons;
- ▶ the school hostel (where applicable);
- ▶ extramural activities; and
- ▶ security during children's commute to and from school.

Detailed guidance on developing such policies is provided in Section 3 of the **Practical Guide**; further information can be found under Standard 3 of the **Resource Kit**.

The overall responsibility for instituting standards, overseeing implementation and monitoring and evaluating all school safety-related matters in Namibia rests with the MoEAC, through its National Steering Committee for Safe Schools, which falls under the National School Health Task Force (SHTF). The operational scheme is outlined in Section 6 of this document.

Schools should create a coordination mechanism to ensure that their referral policy is being implemented consistently, as outlined in the diagram on the next page.

Guidance for developing referral procedures to augment school readiness to respond to identified threats to school safety is provided in Section 3 of the **Practical Guide**, and additional information can be found under Standard 3 in the **Resource Kit**.

The basic coordination mechanism for referrals

The following is an example. The exact steps to be taken will differ based on the incident and circumstances.



5.4 Positive and collaborative practices and attitudes

The term “school climate” can be defined as the learning environment and relationships that exist within the school community. Such a climate is healthy and positive when all members of the community feel safe, included, valued, accepted and actively engage in positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusivity form the bedrock of a positive school climate and culture of mutual respect and collaboration. This type of environment can play a crucial role in preventing inappropriate behaviour.

A key element of a positive school environment is the extent to which learners feel connected to the school, which can be gauged in part by their active engagement in school-based academic and social opportunities. This sense of “connection” is fostered in a school environment where teachers and other adults create opportunities for learners to feel valued, supported, appreciated, involved and engaged in the school setting. Recent research suggests that, from birth, children instinctively seek to connect with others, and that those who feel a sense of connection to their community, family and school are less likely to misbehave (Shochet et al. 2010).

A positive school environment is one in which learners enjoy being at school, feel that they belong to the school community, believe that teachers care about them and their learning, believe that education matters, have friends at school, believe that discipline is fair, and have opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

Involving parents and the broader community in school safety initiatives creates further collaboration. Parental involvement in children’s learning, for example, has been found to be positively related to greater academic achievement. School safety, in particular, requires collaboration not only with parents but with the entire local community – including law enforcement agencies, government agencies, social services, businesses and faith-based organisations. A comprehensive school safety approach focused on *prevention, intervention and response* helps all stakeholders to share and learn from the knowledge and expertise of others. This type of broad-based collaboration brings schools and services together to provide support for learners and their families, leading to outcomes that surpass those that the school alone could achieve. Ideas for building partnerships are provided in Section 4 of the **Practical Guide** and under Standard 4 in the **Resource Kit**.

5.5 Effective school leadership

5.5.1 Principal

Effective leadership is central to education quality and the safety and wellbeing of learners, staff and the broader school community. Each individual aspect of a school (its infrastructure, learning materials, hygiene facilities etc.) has only a minor impact on learning, but their combined impact is enormous. Creating the conditions for a positive impact is the responsibility of the school principal.

Research suggests that the principal is the single most important person involved in creating a positive environment and carrying out programmes to combat school violence. Researchers have consistently reported that the principal’s leadership and vision predict the degree to which staff are able to affect needed reform, particularly in disciplinary matters (Hoover and Oliver 1996). In 2015 the MoEAC and UNICEF carried out a “Study of Positive Deviant Schools in Namibia”, which found that:

“... the particular skills which a principal requires in a township and rural school include an ability to work with a community where the social and cultural norms are often traditional, [since] in some communities they may have to deal with high levels of drug use and sexual abuse among learners and the impact of initiation ceremonies on teenage boys.” (MoEAC and UNICEF 2016)

The study underscored that traditional principals – who may be successful in urban middle-class schools using an authoritarian approach to management – are not likely to succeed in delivering school safety in schools in informal settlements, where community liaison and cultural sensitivity are critical. Guidance on leadership qualities for effective principals and how to apply these principles in practice is provided in Section 5 of the **Practical Guide** and under Standard 5 of the **Resource Kit**.

5.5.2 Committee for School Health and Safety

Safe schools develop through purposeful planning and organisation. This process begins with the formation of a Committee for School Health and Safety appointed by the School Board. The committee's mandate is to develop a comprehensive plan to prevent and respond to violence. The committee should include learners, educators, school administrators, parents and other relevant community members, as well as officials of the MoSS. The committee's primary functions are to: lead and coordinate efforts to identify needs; choose options; garner support from school and community stakeholders; and coordinate documentation, reporting, referral and support services. Detailed suggestions for forming the committee are provided in Section 1 of the **Practical Guide** and under Standard 1 of the **Resource Kit**.

5.6 Effective prevention of and response to violence and self-harm

Establishing an environment where young people feel safe, connected, valued and responsible for their behaviour and learning is a complex task. The key is to prevent all forms of violence – whether bullying, aggressive classroom behaviour, gun use or organised gang activity, and self-harm that could lead to suicide. The basic principles underlying effective strategies for addressing violent behaviours are the same as those for promoting healthy development and learning for all learners: *promoting positive behaviour, early intervention and targeted support*.

Many young people in Namibia face conditions that increase their risk of engaging in violent behaviour or turning to substance abuse. Responding to these risks before they become serious enough to affect their education is a challenge. The NSSF aims to prevent dysfunctional behaviours before they occur by identifying and addressing risk factors (such as social norms condoning violence) and strengthening protective factors (such as parental support). Early intervention to address aggressive behaviour and poor self-control often has a greater impact than intervention at a later stage, by redirecting a child's life path toward positive behaviours (Ialongo et al. 2001).

Suggestions for structuring and delivering effective violence prevention and response programmes can be found in Section 6 of the **Practical Guide** and under Standard 6 in the **Resource Kit**.

5.7 Effective prevention of and response to substance abuse in schools

Namibia's young people face situations that place them at risk of turning to substance abuse. They need information and support to avoid these risks before they impact on their education and other aspects of their lives. Primary school prevention programmes should be delivered to all learners through a comprehensive Life Skills syllabus. It is important to bear in mind that the potential impact of specific risk and protective factors evolves with age. For example, risk factors within the family have a greater impact on younger children, while peer pressure may be a more significant risk factor for adolescents (Gerstein and Green 1993; Kumpfer et al. 1990). Tips for assessing learners' risk for substance abuse can be found in Section 7 of the **Practical Guide**, and tools and other information are provided under Standard 7 of the **Resource Kit**.

Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

Successful implementation of Namibia's NSSF will depend on effective coordination of a multi-sectoral response involving the key stakeholders named in this section.

6.1 Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture Head Office

Senior officials based in the MoEAC Head Office will take the lead in providing, through the Ministry's Regional Education Offices, policies and guidelines pertaining to keeping schools safe and free from violence. Further, these officials will be responsible for the overall monitoring and impact evaluation of interventions undertaken to make schools safe and free from bullying, harassment, violence and exposure to drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, these officials will be responsible for facilitating national-level coordination amongst line ministries, civil society, academia and development partners through the National Safe Schools Steering Committee and the National School Health Task Force.

6.2 Regional Directorates of Education, Arts and Culture

Regional education officials will be responsible for providing an enabling environment that helps schools to successfully initiate and carry out activities necessary for the creation of safe schools.

The specific responsibilities of different regional officials can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ **Senior-level regional education officials** will have overall responsibility for coordinating actions by regional partners and monitoring implementation progress.
- ▶ **Regional school inspectors, RACE coordinators and school counsellors** will be responsible for delivering training on the NSSF and how to operationalise it, with an emphasis on the formation of safety teams and the development and execution of safety plans.
- ▶ **Regional school counsellors**, in addition to providing counselling services and making referrals for learners with urgent needs, will provide professional-development opportunities for educators to be informed as to how to address the social and emotional needs of learners and others at the school.
- ▶ **Regional office administrators** will be responsible for developing a system for receiving and managing reports of violent incidents (bullying, harassment and sexual violence) from schools. The system must meet the confidentiality standards prescribed by the MoEAC, and must provide for submitting reports to the MoEAC Head Office, which is in charge of compiling incident reports.
- ▶ **Regional school inspectors** are tasked with providing technical support to school principals and educators to ensure that curriculum content is delivered in an inclusive manner that contributes to the development of positive discipline practices (identified in Section 4.3 of the *Practical Guide*).

6.3 Schools

School management systems must ensure that structures, policies and procedures are in place and aligned with existing legislative frameworks (including the new Education Act, when passed into law), such that the seven Safe School Standards can be met.

NOTE WELL!

Schools should accord special attention to children who are particularly at risk, such as orphans, children with a disability, impoverished or socially marginalised children, those with special needs, and those made vulnerable by HIV and/or AIDS.

This process should commence with a clearly articulated vision and a set of objectives for the school pertaining to school safety. The **Practical Guide** and **Resource Kit** provide step-by-step guides for schools to follow, breaking down the task of creating a safe school into manageable steps. School management should become familiar with these NSSF documents before working through them systematically with the committee responsible for addressing school safety issues.

School managers will be responsible for reporting on their school's school safety achievements. The monitoring and evaluation framework devised for the NSSF (see Section 8 of the **Practical Guide**) will make this reporting task straightforward for schools. Regular self-assessments of progress will help the schools to assess where they have improved and where there is a need for more work. The reports will also be sent to the Regional Education Offices for consolidation.

6.4 Teachers

In accordance with the Child Care and Protection Act, 2015 (Act No. 3 of 2015), teachers and principals have a responsibility to maintain children's safety at school, and a duty to report reasonable concerns about a child's safety outside the school building. Appropriate actions and responses should become part of annual performance reviews.

A teacher must report his/her reasonable belief that a child is in need of protective services. Such a belief might arise in the case of a child who is, or is likely to be:

- (a) abandoned or orphaned and lacking care or support;
- (b) engaged in behaviour that is harmful or is likely to be harmful to the child or any other person, and the child's parent/guardian/caregiver is unable or unwilling to control that behaviour;
- (c) living or working on the streets or begging for a living;
- (d) neglected, maltreated or physically or mentally abused;
- (e) addicted to alcohol or another dependence-producing drug, and is or is likely to be without any support to obtain treatment for such dependency;
- (f) under 18 years of age and involved in a criminal matter;
- (g) an unaccompanied foreign child;
- (h) chronically or terminally ill and without a suitable caregiver; or
- (i) being kept in premises which are extremely overcrowded, highly unsanitary or dangerous.

A child in the following circumstances may be a child in need of protective services, and must therefore be referred to a designated social worker for an investigation:

- (a) a child who is a victim of child labour;
- (b) a child in a child-headed household;
- (c) a child who is a victim of child trafficking;
- (d) a child who lives in or is exposed to or is at risk of living in or being exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm his/her physical, mental, emotional or social wellbeing;

- (e) a child whose parent has been imprisoned and who lacks a suitable caregiver;
- (f) a child under 16 years of age who is found to be pregnant;
- (g) a child who has been the victim of a serious crime against his/her person;
- (h) a child engaged in commercial sex work, or a child who has been subjected to any form of sexual exploitation;
- (i) a child living in a violent family environment, including a child named in a protection order issued under the Combating of Domestic Violence Act, 2003 (Act No. 4 of 2003);
- (j) a child below the age of 16 years who is habitually absent from school;
- (k) a child whose parent, guardian or caregiver unreasonably withholds consent to necessary medical intervention or therapeutic intervention;
- (l) a child under 16 years of age who has any sexually transmitted infection, or any child with multiple or repeated sexually transmitted infections; and
- (m) a child involved in a case referred by the Children's Advocate for investigation.

Source: Child Care and Protection Act, 2015 (Act No. 3 of 2015).

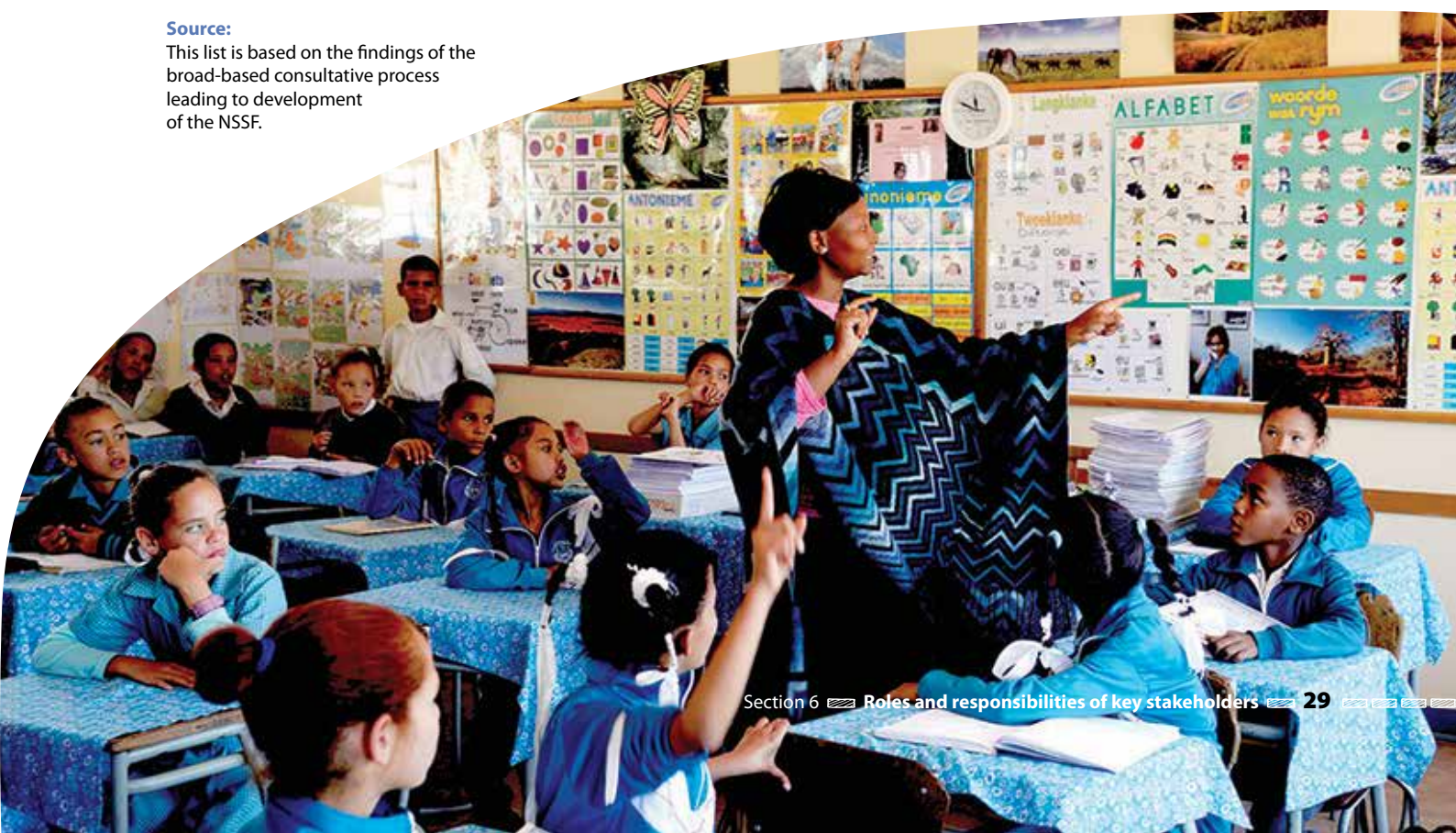
Teachers play a vital role in the environment, or culture, that develops at a school, hence teachers are critical to implementing the NSSF. The Framework should be instituted with full teacher engagement, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of the rationale behind the changes being instituted.

Teachers are also responsible for:

- ▶ adhering to the national “Code of Conduct for Teaching Service”;
- ▶ modelling positive behaviours;
- ▶ treating fellow teachers, learners and parents with respect;
- ▶ assisting in the development of the school safety plan;
- ▶ engaging with all school policies pertaining to school safety, and knowing the relevant procedures and guidelines;
- ▶ ensuring that all learners are supported through inclusive teaching and learning practices;
- ▶ practising positive discipline when managing disruptive behaviour;
- ▶ supervising school building and playground activities during break times;
- ▶ reporting misdemeanours;
- ▶ responding to bullying and violence as per MoEAC and school guidelines;
- ▶ forming cooperative and respectful relationships with parents/caregivers; and
- ▶ assisting with extracurricular activities.

Source:

This list is based on the findings of the broad-based consultative process leading to development of the NSSF.





6.5 Learners

The contribution of learners to creating and maintaining safe schools is both a right and a responsibility. Learners' rights are best promoted through the notion of "learner leadership". This term refers to education principles and practices that give young people opportunities and support to find their voices, to participate in decision-making, and to understand their rights and responsibilities as active citizens. When learners are given skills and opportunities to lead within their schools, they are empowered to have a real impact on their learning and school environment, and are better prepared to participate meaningfully in their community (Black and Simon 2014). At the

same time, learners are responsible for adhering to the Learner Code of Conduct and helping to create a conducive learning and teaching environment.

6.6 Parents and caregivers

Parents have a responsibility to be respectful to school personnel and to make efforts to engage in activities that will improve their parenting skills and ability to support their child's healthy development. Parents' role also includes providing their children with a home environment conducive to learning and personal development. Parents are expected to promote healthy behaviour in the home and to adhere to the principle of positive discipline (see *Practical Guide*, 4.3).



6.7 Non-governmental, civil-society and faith-based organisations (NGOs, CSOs and FBOs)



In many parts of Namibia, especially the rural and remote parts, there is a severe shortage of government ministry officials and services (such as social workers and counsellors, shelters, rehabilitation centres and career guidance and disaster relief services), or officials do not yet have the necessary skills, training or resources to provide tailored services. Schools may find that they are able to get support from one or more of the many NGOs, CSOs and FBOs working across Namibia. Schools should identify which NGOs, CSOs and FBOs are active in their own region, and seek to make contact with these organisations to understand their functions and determine whether there are opportunities for partnerships. NGOs, CSOs and FBOs should also proactively approach schools and offer guidance and support wherever feasible.

6.8 Other government ministries

6.8.1 Ministry of Health and Social Services

The MoEAC's Memorandum of Understanding with the MoHSS on the Integrated School Health Programme articulates the MoHSS's responsibilities to provide primary healthcare services for learners in primary and secondary schools. The MoHSS Directorate of Social Services is responsible for offering parenting classes, and for identifying and responding to psychological and emotional health issues among adolescent learners and educators. The MoHSS is also mandated to provide schools with general information pertaining to health, and to support the MoEAC in providing specialised services such as immunisation, screening for common diseases, and skills-based health awareness training.

6.8.2 Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare

Regional (and when possible constituency-level) social workers are responsible for responding to requests from schools to assist learners identified as requiring protective services or as presenting aggressive and violent behaviours. Social workers are responsible for referring learners in need of specialised psychosocial/emotional service, support and protection. They are expected to provide a bridge between schools and parents, supporting parents when necessary and providing social grants for children with disabilities and those in difficult socio-economic circumstances. The MGECW has a duty to ensure that state protection is afforded to child victims of violence.

6.8.3 Ministry of Safety and Security

Local police officers are responsible for assisting schools, playing a supportive liaison role by providing learners with appropriate information about drugs and alcohol, and, when requested, by conducting actions or interventions aimed at restoring discipline at a school. When legal procedures are applied to child offenders, MoSS personnel have to understand and utilise procedures that ensure respect for children's rights.

6.8.4 Ministry of Works and Transport

The MoWT is mandated to ensure that school infrastructure and maintenance meet national standards for school health and safety, and that necessary interventions are performed in a timely fashion. This becomes especially important in the context of emergency response, in which the MoWT plays a key role by assuring schools' readiness and ability to respond to disasters.

6.8.5 Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

In accordance with its mandate to provide strategic and technical leadership in relation to information and communication technology, this Ministry plays a vital role in disseminating timely and accurate information on school health and safety, including ensuring that the information is accessible to all, given Namibia's multilingual context.

6.8.6 Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration

To ensure that no child lacks proper documentation, the MoHAI is mandated to ensure that all children born in Namibia receive a birth certificate and other national documents. Any Namibian child who does not have a birth certificate must be issued such certificate in time to facilitate access to education and health services.

Section 7

Conclusion and practical use

To translate the theory of school safety into practice, educators need hands-on, practical tips and guidance. The user-friendly **Practical Guide** and **Resource Kit** (Parts B and C of the NSSF) will help schools to incorporate safety-related procedures and practices into their daily routine, step by step. The two documents are designed for use by school stakeholders, including principals, heads of department, teachers, learners and parents. The practical tools will also be valuable to regional school counsellors, RACE coordinators, inspectors, planners, school health task forces and other regional and national officials of the MoEAC.

By working systematically through the **Practical Guide** and making use of the activities and tools in the **Resource Kit**, schools will be able to put in place practices and processes needed not only to create a safe and supportive environment, but also to enhance learning outcomes.

Stakeholders working to strengthen safety in their schools and communities are encouraged to seek help and guidance from regional and national offices of the MoEAC, as well as from supporting ministries, development partners, NGOs and influential individuals in their communities. Creating safe schools is a shared responsibility.



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NOTE: These are the information sources cited in PART A of the NSSF. PART C (**Resource Kit**) contains an extensive **Bibliography**, including all sources cited in the three NSSF documents, and numerous other helpful sources.

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Namibia's **PART A** **National** **Introduction** **Safe Schools** **and** **Framework** **Overview**

PDFs of PARTS A, B and C
of the NSSF are available
at www.moe.gov.na and
www.unicef.org/namibia.

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THE WORD ABOUT THE NSSF,
AND TO IMPLEMENT IT!**



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