

# School-Related Gender-Based Violence

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# **School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)**

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## Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) knows no boundaries. This global phenomenon does not discriminate on the basis of geography, culture, ethnicity, or economy, and is often tolerated and sustained by the very social institutions – such as schools – where children are expected to be safe and protected.

GBV is a brutal violation of human rights. It is one of the worst manifestations of gender discrimination and a major obstacle to achieving gender equality.<sup>1</sup>

Violence that occurs in and around schools (also known as school-related gender-based violence or SRGBV) continues to be a serious barrier in realizing the right to education. Girls are most at risk of GBV in and around schools, but boys may also be targeted. The experience, or even the threat, of SRGBV often results in poor performance, irregular attendance, dropout, truancy and low self-esteem. Violence can also have serious health and psychological implications that can have long-lasting effects.

It is important to understand the particular implications of GBV in and around schools and how educational institutions can and should be an important force for protection and change. However, the evidence base for the global scale and nature of SRGBV is limited, and there is little collective intelligence to date on best practices in either preventing it or responding to it.

Drawing primarily from Leach, Dunne and Salvi's 2013 global literature review,<sup>2</sup> as well as from selected literature from francophone African countries, this paper aims to articulate the issues, causes, challenges and opportunities in policy and programming, with a specific focus on school-related violence against girls.

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<sup>1</sup> Leach, Fiona, Máiréad Dunne and Francesca Salvi, *A global review of current issues and approaches in policy, programming and implementation responses to School Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) for UNESCO Education Sector*, University of Sussex, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

# I. Why is SRGBV a Priority?

## A) Definition and Manifestations of SRGBV

SRGBV occurs all over the world, but manifests itself differently in various cultural and geographical contexts (see Box 1). Although its manifestations may vary, all instances relate to, "acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence inflicted on children in and around schools because of stereotypes and roles or norms attributed to or expected of them because of their sex or gendered identity. It also refers to the differences between girls' and boys' experience of and vulnerabilities to violence."<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, sexual violence by boys or men (teachers and learners) against girls has received increased attention as a major concern.<sup>4</sup> Emerging research is also highlighting the more complex nature of violence in schools and has shifted the usual authority/age hierarchy to address violence by students (usually male) against teachers (usually young and female), as well as female teachers perpetrating violence against male students. Corporal punishment and bullying are included as forms of SRGBV. Increasingly recognized issues are homophobic bullying, bullying based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender-identity, cyber bullying and the fear of violence itself.<sup>5</sup>

Incidences of SRGBV can occur in the classroom, in teacher residences, toilets, dormitories, and the roads and areas near schools, among others. This type of violence is made up of a variety of actions that include, but are not limited to<sup>6</sup>:

- i) Bullying, including verbal and/or physical harassment;
- ii) Sexual harassment, also referred to as 'teasing' or insinuation;
- iii) Sexual acts in exchange for good grades or for the paying of school fees;
- iv) Non-consensual touching or sexual assault;
- v) Seduction or sexual harassment of learners by a teacher; and
- vi) Tolerance (or encouragement) of male dominance or aggression within the school environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Greene, Margaret, et al., *A girl's right to learn without fear: Working to end gender-based violence at school*, Plan International, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Devers, Marie, et al., *Les violences de genre en milieu scolaire en Afrique subsaharienne francophone: Comprendre leurs impacts sur la scolarisation des filles pour mieux les combattre*, République Française: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européens, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Booklet 8: Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying. Good Policy and Practice in HIV & Health Education*, UNESCO, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, *Abus, exploitation et violence sexuels à l'encontre des enfants à l'école en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre*, 2006, p. 3.

### Box 1: Manifestations of SRGBV by Region<sup>7</sup>

In sub-Saharan Africa, the problem of SRGBV has received more public and scholarly attention because of high HIV prevalence rates, including among school-aged girls. School-based violence is commonly manifested through student and teacher sexual assault against girls, sexual harassment, and rape.

In Asia, an authoritarian and hierarchical model of teaching and social relations predominates, and both social and educational realms are highly influenced by differences in caste, ethnicity and religion. Particular manifestations of SRGBV in the region have included cases of acid being thrown on girls going to and from school, in addition to rape and sexual abuse.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, a culture that sanctions violence within the family and community contributes to school-based violence, as does the prevalence of youth gangs. Incidences of teacher-student rape, bullying, and harassment of girls by boys at school have been observed.

In the Middle East, psychological and physical violence were the most highly reported types of SRGBV.

In the United States and Western Europe, bullying and dating violence, cyber-bullying, homophobic violence, and school shootings have been reported as common.

## B) Prevalence and Drivers of SRGBV

### **Prevalence**

Gender based violence (GBV) is deeply rooted in many societies, and is often sanctioned through cultural practices and norms, or through misinterpretation of religious tenets.

The 2006 United Nations Study on Violence against Children notes that schools have an important role to play in protecting children from violence. Sadly, however, it is in educational settings that many children are exposed to sexual violence based on their gender.

SRGBV is not only widespread, but remains grossly under-researched and under-reported. The fragmented and inadequate efforts that have been undertaken to study it so far have resulted in limited national prevalence data.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, *Engendering Empowerment: Education & Equality*, UNGEI, 2012, p. 54.

Most research has taken place in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on sexual violence against girls, partly driven by concerns over exposure to HIV. A UNICEF study conducted in Botswana in 2000 demonstrated that, of 560 students, 70 per cent had experienced sexual harassment.<sup>8</sup> In addition, 20 per cent of respondents had been asked for sex by a teacher. A 2010 survey by the Ministry of National Education of Côte d'Ivoire found that approximately 50 per cent of teachers reported having sexual relations with students, with figures as high as 70 per cent in one region.<sup>9</sup> A 2011 ActionAid/Institute of Education study of 1,082 girls in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique reported that sexual relationships between students and teachers were mentioned regularly in focus group discussions, although only in Kenya did girls report being forced to have sex with a teacher (5 per cent of girls).<sup>10</sup>

Although there are fewer in number, studies on SRGBV have also taken place in other regions: A 2011 Save the Children study in Yemen revealed that 31 per cent of schoolchildren were exposed to sexual abuse.<sup>11</sup> A similar 2008 study in Lebanon revealed that 16 per cent of schoolchildren reported sexual abuse, with the majority being girls.<sup>12</sup> In Peru, 169 teachers were reported for rape or other inappropriate behaviour in 2007 alone.<sup>13</sup>

### **Drivers**

The predominance of violence against girls in school reflects deeply entrenched social and cultural norms that reinforce gender inequality and an imbalance of power – between males and females and between adults and children. Prevailing gender norms may legitimize violent behaviours toward girls, thereby rendering these acts invisible and reinforcing gender identities that subordinate girls. Boys may also be targets if they do not conform to prevailing norms of masculinity.

SRGBV is more prevalent in times of social and political upheaval, crisis and conflict. In periods of conflict, schools may become ideological battlegrounds, placing girls at increased risk of sexual violence from parties to the conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Social structures and institutions, including families, schools and communities, support these norms. Schools, in their role of guiding the 'socialization' of children, may implicitly legitimize and reinforce harmful gender norms through tacit or explicit approval of the status quo. Educational institutions, as respected centres in a community, can unwittingly feed a wider enabling environment in which GBV flourishes.

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<sup>8</sup> Leach et al., p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of National Education of Cote d'Ivoire, *Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Students and Teachers on STIs, HIV/AIDS, and Pregnancy and a Situation Analysis of Orphans and other Children made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS in Abidjan-1, Aboisso, Man and Korhogo*, 2010, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Leach et al, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *El Comercio*, 13 December 2007, p. 4 (cited by Leach et al.)

<sup>14</sup> Devers et al., p. 10-13.

The absence of mechanisms that function to keep harmful gender norms and practices in check allows for the continuation of SRGBV. Systems for identifying and reporting SRGBV, for example, are under-resourced and under-developed. In addition, the rights of children are not well understood and are rarely part of the school curriculum. At the same time, judicial systems tend to be poorly equipped to address crimes against children and issues of sexual misconduct.

Even when children are aware of their rights and where reporting systems do exist, victims of violence may not feel like they are safe or protected to be able to report their experiences of violence. Social service, medical and other support systems for victims are few and tend to be poorly resourced. To address the strong social factors that work to maintain the practice of SRGBV, a more comprehensive, multi-sectoral and multi-actor response is necessary.

### C) Consequences of SRGBV

There are significant consequences to SRGBV, with some of the clearest relating to physical and psychological health, and academic achievement. The physical health consequences of forced sex include exposure to sexually transmitted diseases as well as unwanted conception, high-risk adolescent pregnancy and childbirth, and unsafe abortions. Psychologically, the experience of sexual violence has the tendency to block the development of social skills and undermine self-esteem, and may lead to eating disorders, depression, insomnia, feelings of guilt, anxiety and suicidal tendencies.<sup>15</sup> Exposing students to violence within the school environment can also lead to further violence that they may perpetrate or receive.<sup>16</sup>

Victims of sexual violence also suffer academically: girls may demonstrate poor performance, reduce their engagement in school activities, or drop out entirely due to low self-esteem, reduced concentration, and anxiety. When teachers demand sex from female students and 'reward' them for sex with high grades in tests and exams, the idea is perpetuated that academic success is tied to girls' sexuality rather than their intellect.

Such notions deeply impact girls' perception of themselves as students, and cast academic pursuits in an improperly sexualized light. Also, because of school dropouts relating to SRGBV, girls (who are disproportionately affected by SRGBV) suffer from significantly lowered earning potential, not to mention all the other development outcomes related to girls' education.<sup>17</sup>

When gender-based violence is tolerated and condoned at school, there are broader societal consequences on gender equality. Victims feel less able to take action, and perpetrators may feel immune. These feelings and harmful behaviours go beyond the school setting and contribute to the perpetuation of inequality and GBV more widely in society. By the same token, schools have the opportunity to challenge

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Leach et al., p. 20-23.



norms, to create new rules, and to help individuals learn new, more equitable behaviours that will be of benefit in school and in society at large.

#### D) Gaps in Knowledge of SRGBV

Despite knowledge of the consequences of SRGBV, the issue remains under-researched and under-reported, with most studies coming out of sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser extent, North America and northern Europe. A number of remaining gaps in knowledge of SRGBV are outlined in the Leach et al. review, which point to the need for further investigation to better understand and design interventions to address this problem.

Some of the gaps include:<sup>18</sup>

- i) **Research on non-heterosexual forms of violence:** There is, as yet, little research on SRGBV that goes beyond examining heterosexual forms of violence, perpetrated mostly by male teachers and students on female students;
- ii) **Knowledge of student-on-teacher violence:** The fact that teachers, especially young female teachers, are also exposed to sexual violence, either by other staff or by older (usually male) students, has been largely ignored;
- iii) **Link between SRGBV and other forms of violence:** The continued resistance to eliminate corporal punishment in schools and families is closely linked to the social acceptance of other forms of GBV, such as domestic violence and child sexual abuse, and to the culture of male domination that prevails in many school settings. This has important implications for effective intervention and, in the long term, for the achievement of global development goals;<sup>19</sup>
- iv) **Separation of SRGBV and bullying:** A lack of awareness of the gender dimensions of bullying and the tendency to treat it as a phenomenon separate from GBV is not helpful in either understanding the scale of the problem or how best to address it;
- v) **Understanding of teachers' perceptions:** Little research has been carried out regarding teachers' perceptions of GBV and how they deal with it in the school environment. We need to know more about the factors that can influence teachers' attitudes and behaviour regarding the institutional violence they witness, and often take part in, on a daily basis;
- vi) **Education, access and achievement:** Although we recognize that SRGBV constitutes a major barrier to educational access and participation, as well as to the achievement of quality and equality, we know little about

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 21-24.

<sup>19</sup> See 'Prohibiting and eliminating corporal punishment of children – a key element of state responsibility for eliminating violence against women and girls', submission to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, October 2012.

how this violence impacts retention and achievement. The link is still tenuous; and

- vii) **Links between SRGBV and other social arenas:** The links between SRGBV and other social arenas are under-developed. Gender differences are often treated as 'natural', and used as a default explanation of gendered outcomes. Not only is this self-fulfilling, but it also works to remove the perception of SRGBV as a problem and insulate it from insights into social behaviour that can be drawn from studies in other fields, such as organizational and professional practice or analyses of the intersection between gender, sexual and other identities (race, class, religion, etc.).

## II. Key Policy and Programme Responses to SRGBV

A range of actors at the global, regional, and national levels have utilized both policy and programming responses to address SRGBV.

### A) Global and Regional Initiatives

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the most definitive global statement on the issue of violence, and requires States Parties to protect children from all forms of violence, to prevent and respond to violence, and to provide support to children who are victims of violence (article 19). The Optional Protocols to the Convention, as well as several other human rights instruments, include specific protections against violence. These actions represent immediate obligations under international law for all signatory member states. Governments have also committed to protecting children from all forms of violence at global conferences such as the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002.

In the wake of the 2006 United Nations Study on Violence against Children, global and regional initiatives to address violence against children have accelerated, serving to create enabling frameworks. These commitments have contributed to creating moral pressure for action at the country level, pressure for governments to take ownership of solutions to SRGBV, and pressure to establish norms. Examples include the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, a high-profile global campaign to address violence in schools, and the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG). The SRSG collaborates with national governments to establish or improve government regulations that address violence against children. However, both these global initiatives have a broad focus, and lack a gendered analysis of violence within schools. As a result, these efforts are less likely to bring about long-term change.

Regional initiatives include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, specifically Article 12, and the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children. The focus and purpose of these intergovernmental

projects involves providing guidance to national and local governmental initiatives addressing violence against children. However, most of these initiatives focus on violence generally, but do not address SRGBV specifically.

### **Box 2: International Instruments/Resolutions and Commitments**

Major international frameworks, such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (also known as the Beijing Platform for Action), denounce violence and call for measures to protect all human beings, especially women and girls, from all forms of violence.

Article 19 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures, including through education, to protect children from all forms of violence, including sexual abuse.

A 2007 United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/143 entitled 'Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women' calls upon the international community, including the United Nations system, to enhance national efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, including through 'the sharing of guidelines, methodologies and best practices'.

Article 12 of the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa calls on State Parties to take all appropriate measures to protect women, especially the girl-child, from all forms of abuse, including sexual harassment in schools and other educational institutions and provide for sanctions against the perpetrators of such practices.

### **B) National and Sub-National Responses**

National policy initiatives commonly take the form of laws, regulations, policies, and strategies enacted by parliaments or established by ministries of education, at times in conjunction with other ministries. These may be initiated by the government, or developed in response to civil society demands. A common policy strategy at the national level is the revision and enforcement of teacher codes of conduct, detailing "the set of recognized ethical norms and professional standards of conduct to which all members of a profession must adhere."<sup>20</sup> This focuses on explicit regulations relating to teacher conduct and may include specific reference to, and sanctions for, sexual violence.

Another example of a national-level policy response is a parliamentary bill. Between 2008 and 2011 in Kenya, for example, ActionAid collaborated with the Teachers'

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<sup>20</sup> Poisson, Muriel, *Guidelines for the design and effective use of teacher codes of conduct*, UNESCO, 2009, p. 13.

Service Commission, the Ministry of Education, the Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Children's Department in pushing for the drafting of a parliamentary bill to reinforce mechanisms for reporting violence and ensure teachers are discharged rather than transferred to other schools.<sup>21</sup> The bill will also seek to eliminate potential collusion by clearly stating that failure to report an offender is in itself an offence. A centralized database has been established to track teachers who commit sexual offences.

In terms of programmatic responses, SRGBV interventions are usually directed towards:

- i) Preventing violence by challenging the gendered attitudes and behaviours that foster it, including through the implementation of standards or rules, and/or explicitly promoting tolerance and equality often through alternative non-violent practices;
- ii) Establishing mechanisms that prevent violence before it happens;
- iii) Providing adequate levels of support where violence does occur;
- iv) Working in partnership with relevant actors and stakeholders to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families; and
- v) Ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Non-governmental organizations such as ActionAid, Concern, Plan International, and Oxfam, and a small group of multilateral and bilateral organizations including UNICEF and USAID, lead on SRGBV programming globally. A range of SRGBV responses has been employed, varying by approach, scope, targeted beneficiaries and level – albeit in a limited number of countries.

While most programmes focus on a single aspect of violence in schools (such as bullying), others address forms of school violence as interlinked, including sexual, physical, and psychological violence, as well as corporal punishment and bullying. In addition, while some programmes focus specifically on girls, others take a more inclusive approach and include boys. The 'girls only' approach sees school violence as being perpetrated mostly against girls,<sup>22</sup> and works to strengthen girls' empowerment both at school and in the community.

SRGBV programming also differs according to scope or focus. Single input interventions, for example, include stand-alone courses on sexual harassment or life skills classes on reproductive health. On the other hand, the multiple-input approach incorporates different parts of the educational system and diverse stakeholders.<sup>23</sup> This can be a coordinated intervention at the school, community, policy, and legal level. One example of the multiple-input approach was USAID's Safe Schools project, which combined student and community discussions with a community counselor programme.

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<sup>21</sup> Leach et al., p. 41.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

Programming targeted toward communities in the form of awareness-raising is also common. ActionAid used campaign activities and designated days focused on SRGBV, where local leaders and government officials participated. Also at the community level, 'Mother's Clubs' have been formed in some countries in Africa to mobilize community and leadership support for girls' education, to monitor girls' attendance at school, and to raise awareness about SRGBV, reproductive health, and available services, such as psychosocial support and reporting mechanisms.<sup>24</sup> Mother's Clubs also implement income-generating activities, such as the sale of handicrafts, to provide scholarships and other financial support to girls who would otherwise not be able to go to school.

Finally, some programmes to address SRGBV have been designed with a specific focus on violence, or with the 'whole school' approach that integrates violence into a broad programme of educational support. These could include gender training for teachers, curriculum revision, and economic strengthening projects aimed at reducing girls' financial vulnerability.<sup>25</sup> With the former, it can be easier to measure impact, while the 'whole school' approach is seen as bringing about more lasting change. ActionAid's Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania project adopted the 'whole school' approach, while their Stop Violence Against Girls programme adopted the 'violence only' approach.<sup>26</sup>

### **C) Effective Policy and Programme Interventions: Lessons Learned**

While a host of policy and programme responses to SRGBV have been implemented, they have often been weak, have not used gender-sensitive indicators or are not based on systematic gender analysis. Most have not been rigorously monitored or evaluated, and evaluations have been of poor quality. However, a review of national-level policy interventions identified some promising outcomes in preventing and addressing SRGBV.<sup>27</sup>

When governments take action on SRGBV, this has been found to encourage engagement on the issue among communities. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, strong backing from the Governor of Katanga Province and the regional Ministry of Education for USAID's C-Change project encouraged participation at the community level.<sup>28</sup> The review also found that NGO mapping and monitoring of existing policy frameworks relating to SRGBV helped support coordination and communication between different government bodies and across sectors.

ActionAid Mozambique published a detailed analysis of laws and policies regarding

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<sup>24</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *L'éducation comme vecteur de protection et de promotion de la santé des filles affectées par le conflit en Côte d'Ivoire*, UNICEF, 2011, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Booklet 7: Gender Equality, HIV and Education. Good Policy and Practice in HIV & Health Education*, UNESCO, 2012, pp. 30-45.

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF, *L'éducation comme vecteur de protection et de promotion de la santé des filles affectées par le conflit en Côte d'Ivoire*, UNICEF, 2011, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p 41.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

girls' education and protection, which influenced the government's revision to the penal code, including proposals on early marriage and the right of rapists to marry their victims as an alternative to a prison sentence.<sup>29</sup>

Promising programme approaches have also been identified in a recent evaluation by Parkes et al., which assessed the implementation of the Stop Violence against Girls project coordinated by ActionAid in Ghana, Mozambique and Kenya.<sup>30</sup> The evaluation found that: "an intervention that combined girls' clubs with forms of community dialogue and in-service training for teachers, School Management Committees, and others, led to changes in attitudes to gender and violence, and knowledge about how and where to report."

However, an open environment that encouraged discussion and sharing was required for girls to feel comfortable reporting the violence they experienced. Child Helplines and referral services have also been used as a critical first contact between child victims and protection services in national-level initiatives, such as UNICEF's programme in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence from the Leach et al. review also documents success in reducing violence. For instance, school codes of conduct for teachers and students, where students and teachers have a part in developing and enforcing school rules, have been shown to reduce levels of violence by increasing students' knowledge of their rights.<sup>32</sup> The teacher code of conduct is an example of how a popular policy tool could be implemented to address SRGBV at the programme level. However, even where codes of conduct do address SRGBV, enforcement has usually been extremely weak.

Unfortunately, even when girls feel confident to report abuse, and reporting mechanisms are in place, SRGBV claims often do not reach resolution. Often, perpetrators are neither punished under criminal law nor sanctioned for professional misconduct by the Ministry of Education or the teachers' union. This stems from a number of factors, some of which include:

- i) Families and communities may suppress girls' reports out of shame, preferring to make informal arrangements such as demanding gifts from the accused teachers to compensate;
- ii) Victims and their families have limited trust in reporting mechanisms if they are managed by community leaders and teachers;
- iii) Judicial systems ignore complaints or provide insufficient penalties; and
- iv) Ministries of education fail to apply sanctions, preferring to remove accused teachers from schools and relocate them.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Unterhalter, Elaine, et al., *Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality: a rigorous review of literature*, UK Department for International Development, (forthcoming) October 2013.

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF, *L'éducation comme vecteur de protection et de promotion de la santé des filles affectées par le conflit en Côte d'Ivoire*, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Leach et al., p 37.

The Leach et al. review also highlighted the impact of projects in improving enrolment, retention and achievement, especially of girls. Some respondents attributed these results in part to the child-friendly environment created by the intervention: some children reported that they felt safer going to school and therefore attended more regularly. However, there is the danger of assuming a cause-and-effect relationship when it does not exist, as other factors – such as increased government funding, school feeding programmes, free uniforms, or simple demographics – may have also played a part.

Overall, researchers and practitioners stress the urgent need for existing, small-scale SRGBV studies to be complemented and extended by statistical data from large comparative surveys and multi-country studies. Continued research on SRGBV will help establish a strong evidence base on successful interventions, which will in turn promote more effective programme design.

### **III. The Way Forward: What Needs to be Done**

The lack of coordination in efforts by governments, ministries and agencies to tackle school violence and the need for joint action on SRGBV policy and programming is highlighted in a number of reports.<sup>33</sup>

A 2013 Overseas Development Institute report, commissioned by Plan International, identifies specific gaps in terms of: the limited evidence base; the lack of coordinated design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes; the lack of a multi-stakeholder approach; and the lack of recognition of the inter-linked nature of manifestations of school violence.

Inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, humanitarian programming, governments, schools, and other social and civil society institutions should address these gaps. The United Nations system has a particularly important role to play because of its connection to Member States and links to international conventions. These actors must employ a coordinated approach at all levels and among all stakeholders in order to set a forward-looking agenda to tackle the issue speedily and effectively.

Based on existing research findings and experience, the following principles (Table 1) recommend conditions and approaches that contribute to sound and effective responses to SRGBV:<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Leach et al., p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Greene et al. op.cit.,. The principles also draw on a Save the Children Sweden (2010) report, *Too Often in Silence: Addressing violence in schools, selected initiatives from West and Central Africa*, with Plan, Actionaid and UNICEF, and on the Concept Note prepared for the UN-Women Expert Group Meeting: Prevention of violence against women and girls, Bangkok, Thailand, 17-20 September, 2012.

**Table 1: Ten Principles for Effective Responses to SRGBV**

Clear conceptualization	A clear articulation of the problem to underpin policy and action.
Comprehensive and integrated action	Action plans that offer a holistic long-term strategy that build national child protection systems within a supportive policy environment. The action plan is complemented by community engagement to bring about a fundamental change in attitude and behaviour towards GBV at the community level.
Policies underpinned by robust, research-based evidence	National data collection that is centralized and adequately resourced for recording, reporting and monitoring violence in and around schools.
Effective legislation and regulation	Institutional capacity to implement policies to address SRGBV and enforce laws designed to bring perpetrators of violence to justice using standardized procedures for the police and judiciary and built-in monitoring mechanisms.
Inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration	Harmonization of policies and legislation and the coordination of responses across sectors and levels of government.
Safe and effective reporting and response	Local reporting and response mechanisms that are safe, effective and consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Well-supported and well-trained personnel	Strengthened pre- and in-service teacher education programmes and school-based support for teachers and managers, including the appointment of 'focal/focus' teachers as a first port of call for children who have experienced violence.
Transparency and accountability	Dissemination of reliable and up-to-date information about relevant policies and legislation through media channels suited to diverse locations and circumstances; awareness-raising among communities that is appropriately targeted and provides relevant information on complaints procedures.
Participation and inclusiveness	Inclusive approaches to working with communities that ensure that the concerns and experiences of diverse groups, including minorities, people with disabilities and people with low income, are not ignored.
Gender transformative teaching and learning mechanisms	Education content, including curricula, textbooks, pedagogy and classroom practices that are gender-sensitive and contribute to gender equitable attitudes and non-violence.



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