

# STRATEGIES TO END SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

The Experience Of Education Unions In Africa



## FOREWORD

The issue of gender-based violence in and around schools and other educational settings is particularly important to education unions and their members. Since everyone in schools – teachers, students, support personnel – can be perpetrator *and* victim, SRGBV is a violation of both the right to quality education and the right to decent working conditions.

Given the alarming statistics on the prevalence of violence and harassment in educational settings, there is no doubt that the time to act is *now*.

Over the last five years, Education International and its member organisations have demonstrated our commitment to ensuring SRGBV ends. We have done this, among other things, through resolutions adopted by our global Congress (the highest EI decision-making body) and by ensuring the issue gets on the agenda at major events such as our quadrennial EI World Women’s Conference.

UNGEI has played a key role in building a collective commitment to end SRGBV across the global education community. Of equal importance, we have created new and lasting connections between education unions and other partners working on SRGBV at regional and national levels. UNGEI has also helped to shift the global understanding that if we are to end SRGBV, teachers are part of the solution, not the problem.

For Gender at Work, this collective initiative has demonstrated that if we work with teachers and teachers’ unions, it is possible to transform the informal institutional norms, policies and practices that perpetuate gender-based violence. Empowering teachers to take ownership and develop their own strategies is a novel approach to address a problem that is globally pervasive and has proven intractable in the past.

We recognize that the greatest and most long-lasting actions must be taken in the places where teachers’ potential to be change agents can be most effective: in their unions, in their communities and in their classrooms. The *Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme enabled EI member organisations in different sub-regions of Africa to do just that.

The entire EI family, UNGEI and G@W take considerable pride in the leadership shown by the participating unions. It has been inspiring to see how union leaders, officials and members have seized the opportunity to make a difference. The experiences shared here include a rich variety of actions that education unions can take, as well as strategies and policies they can adapt and use in their efforts to address SRGBV in their different contexts.

The commitment of EI and EI member organisations, UNGEI and Gender at Work will not waver – we will continue to take action until there is an end to SRGBV in every single place that it currently deprives children of their right to quality education. We call on every reader to join us in this effort.

**David Edwards**

**General Secretary**  
Education International

**Nora Fyles**

**Director**  
UNGEI

**Sudarshana Kundu**

**Interim Executive Director**  
Gender at Work

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## School-Related Gender-Based Violence: A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION UNIONS’ DUAL MANDATE

All over the world, teachers and other education sector employees form unions to defend their interests as workers and as professionals, and to promote the universal right to education. Gender-based violence (GBV) in and around schools is of vital concern to education unions because it threatens both aspects of this dual mandate. GBV in schools and education institutions creates unsafe and discriminatory workplaces for employees. The persistence of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) also undermines the quality of education, depriving learners of their right to education and preventing educators from performing at their best. Education unions around the world increasingly see the elimination of SRGBV in all its forms as a key priority in the struggle to secure quality education for all and to protect the professional reputation and working conditions of their members.

Education unions are uniquely placed to take up this challenge. Created by and for education sector employees, education unions represent thousands – if not hundreds of thousands – of education workers and teachers at all levels, from early childhood education centres and primary schools to national universities. In many countries, education unions enjoy particular statutory rights to engage with governments and other stakeholders in negotiating policies and collective agreements to improve working conditions and the quality of education across the sector. Unions can mobilize vast numbers of teachers and education employees toward achieving shared goals and draw the necessary funds from membership dues to pursue those goals. Education unions are in it for the long run. Since gender-based violence in schools is a persistent, complex phenomenon, education unions that are members of Education International (EI) – the global federation of education unions and associations – have made an enduring commitment to fighting it in the long term.

This document draws on the experience of nine EI member organisations in seven African countries committed to combatting SRGBV in their contexts. It presents the wide

range of actions and strategies education unions can initiate to confront the challenges SRGBV poses to their students, members, organisations and societies. This collection of union experiences is intended to inform and inspire education unions and their members to test their own approaches to eliminating SRGBV. The document will also inform other stakeholders in the education sector interested in learning more about the unique strengths and specific roles education unions can play as partners in collective efforts to end SRGBV.

The document is divided into two parts. The first section focuses on actions these unions have taken internally to adapt decision-making structures, update policies and deploy resources to empower their members to act. The second section looks at how education unions have reached out to other stakeholders – legislators, ministries, civil society organisations, traditional leaders, parents, media and learners – to pursue coordinated strategies for change.

This document only tells part of the story. It describes actions unions have taken without exploring what it “feels like” for unionists and educators to act. SRGBV leaves no one indifferent. SRGBV deeply challenges us as learners, educators, workers, professionals, parents and citizens. The stories told by teachers, administrative staff and union activists who confront SRGBV are both troubling and inspiring. In addition to the current document, readers are strongly encouraged to read “Working to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence: Writings by Representatives of Education Union from Eastern, West and Southern Africa” in which individual teachers and union members write about their lived experience as change agents dedicated to eliminating SRGBV in their schools, institutions, communities and families.





## What is School-Related Gender-Based Violence?

SRGBV refers to threats or acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools. SRGBV prevents millions of children and adolescents worldwide – especially girls – from exercising their right to a safe, inclusive and quality education. It is a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics between men and women, and between teachers and students. Students, educators and education support personnel alike can be both victims and perpetrators of SRGBV. While men and women, boys and girls can all be affected, girls and women are most vulnerable to this type of violence.



SRGBV includes physical violence, bullying, verbal or sexual harassment, non-consensual touching, sexual coercion, assault and rape. Also, in some contexts where corporal punishment is still used as a form of discipline in schools, this often manifests in gendered and discriminatory ways. Other acts of SRGBV stem from everyday school practices that reinforce stereotyping and gender inequality, and encourage violent or unsafe environments.

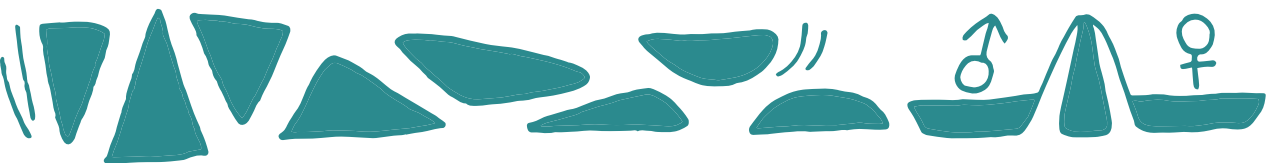
## Unions Take Action to End SRGBV - An Innovative Partnership

The *Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme was launched in January 2016 with the goal of putting teachers, education personnel and education unions at the forefront of efforts to end SRGBV. With financial support from Global Affairs Canada, this four-year programme built on a strategic partnership between the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) and Education International (EI), the world's largest federation of unions, representing 32 million education employees in 400 organisations in 170 countries and territories. Using Gender Action Learning methods facilitated by Gender at Work, the programme supported nine education unions in seven African countries – who together represent over a million teachers – to test different strategies to empower and mobilize teachers and education staff as active agents of change to address SRGBV in their respective contexts.

## Education International Creates an Enabling Organisational Environment to End SRGBV

As the global voice for education employees, Education International has played a key role in building momentum to take action to end SRGBV across the education union movement. In 2014, a side event on SRGBV held at the EI World Women's Conference showed that many EI member organisations across the globe were keen to work on eradicating SRGBV. The following year, the 7<sup>th</sup> EI World Congress adopted a resolution on SRGBV which called on all EI member organizations to take action against SRGBV in their respective contexts. Including an explicit reference to SRGBV within the global EI Gender Equality Action Plan in 2015 was another key step in strengthening the institutional framework and enabling organisational environment for EI and its member organisations. At the 8<sup>th</sup> EI World Congress in 2019, NAPTOSA and SADTU, two South African unions who had participated actively in the *Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme, brought forward a resolution calling on member organizations to end the corporal punishment. The resolution was adopted unanimously.





# 1. EDUCATION UNIONS LOOK INWARD

## 1.1. EMPOWERING MEMBERS: Education Unions Strengthen Internal Decision-Making Structures to End SRGBV

The long history of trade union struggles around the world shows that when people understand their rights and come together to defend them, they can bring about positive change. Education unions are using a similar approach to fight SRGBV. SRGBV affects everyone but not in the same way or to the same degree. Once empowered to act, underrepresented groups and individuals have consistently demonstrated their leadership capabilities as agents of change. Education unions therefore pay particular attention to ensuring that those most affected by SRGBV can come together, tell their stories and be heard. This has entailed changing formal decision-making structures to enhance representation and catalyse action. Actions taken by unions to change their decision-making structures include:

- mandating specific positions and structures at various levels to fight SRGBV;
- enhancing women's participation in decision-making spaces to advance gender equality;
- creating opportunities for young union members to organize and tackle SRGBV;
- honouring members living with disabilities and albinism, and LGBTI members;
- holding responsible entities accountable for advancing work to end SRGBV.

### Unions mandate specific positions and structures to advance work to end SRGBV at national, provincial, district or school levels

#### Unions form change teams to test approaches to end SRGBV at all levels

Unions participating in the *Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme formed SRGBV change teams consisting of four or five people from different parts of the union with a clear mandate to identify, test and learn from promising strategies to fight SRGBV. The composition of these change teams varied widely from one union to another. For example:

- ZNUT's national change team integrated Directors of different services, giving the team access to a broad range of resources, programmes and actors across the union.
- KNUT took a "bottom-up" approach by appointing four active classroom teachers, unelected into any other union role, to form the main change team to fight SRGBV at the grassroots level, supported by a second change team at head office in Nairobi.
- Two unions (ETA and SLTU) appointed their Presidents, and GTU appointed its General Secretary, as members of their respective SRGBV change teams, demonstrating their high level of commitment to this work.
- ETA's change team also integrated a representative from the Ministry of Education, which gave the union greater access to information, influence and resources to address SRGBV.

- KNUT and ETA also drew instructors from teachers colleges into the change team to ensure that new teachers are better prepared to deal with SRGBV at the beginning of their careers.
- All of the union change teams included the union's Gender Coordinator who generally led in convening the team and coordinating their efforts.

Many unions see the change team structure and mandate to test out different approaches to fight SRGBV as a powerful mechanism to find new, creative approaches to complex issues. Based on this experience, ETA and ZNUT chose to replicate the SRGBV change team structure across Ethiopia's nine regions and Zambia's ten provinces respectively.

#### Unions form "SRGBV Reference Groups" to support efforts to end SRGBV at all levels

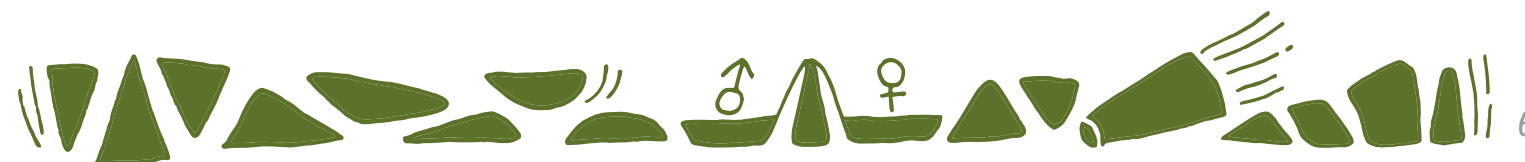
Some unions also formed "Reference Groups" as a larger constituency of committed members from different parts of the union to support the work of the change team. At ZNUT, SRGBV Reference Group members have advanced the union's work to combat SRGBV in their respective areas by supervising pilot schools, facilitating conversations with teachers, mentoring youth members and helping to set up provincial change teams. BETUZ's Reference Group initially consisted of 30 members following its first meeting in July 2016. By 2019, its membership had risen to 86 people (50 women, 36 men) based in all 10 provinces of Zambia. BETUZ uses a WhatsApp group to coordinate actions, share experiences and seek advice as incidents of SRGBV arise. This virtual network has proven a cost effective mechanism to support reference group members and sustain the union's actions across the country.

#### Unions mandate Gender Coordinators to lead efforts to end SRGBV

Many education unions have designated positions to lead the union's efforts in favour of gender equality, and increasingly these positions are mandated to address SRGBV. In some unions, Gender Coordinators are elected office bearers; in others, they are appointed staff positions in the National Secretariat. Position titles vary from one union to the next, and may be a full time or part time function but each plays a key role in advancing gender equality within unions and classrooms. The leadership that Gender Coordinators have demonstrated in advancing their union's work to end SRGBV in recent years cannot be overstated. Gender Coordinators have also noted that their visible engagement on this issue has garnered greater support for gender equality more broadly from both male and female leaders across the union.

### Young members take action to end SRGBV

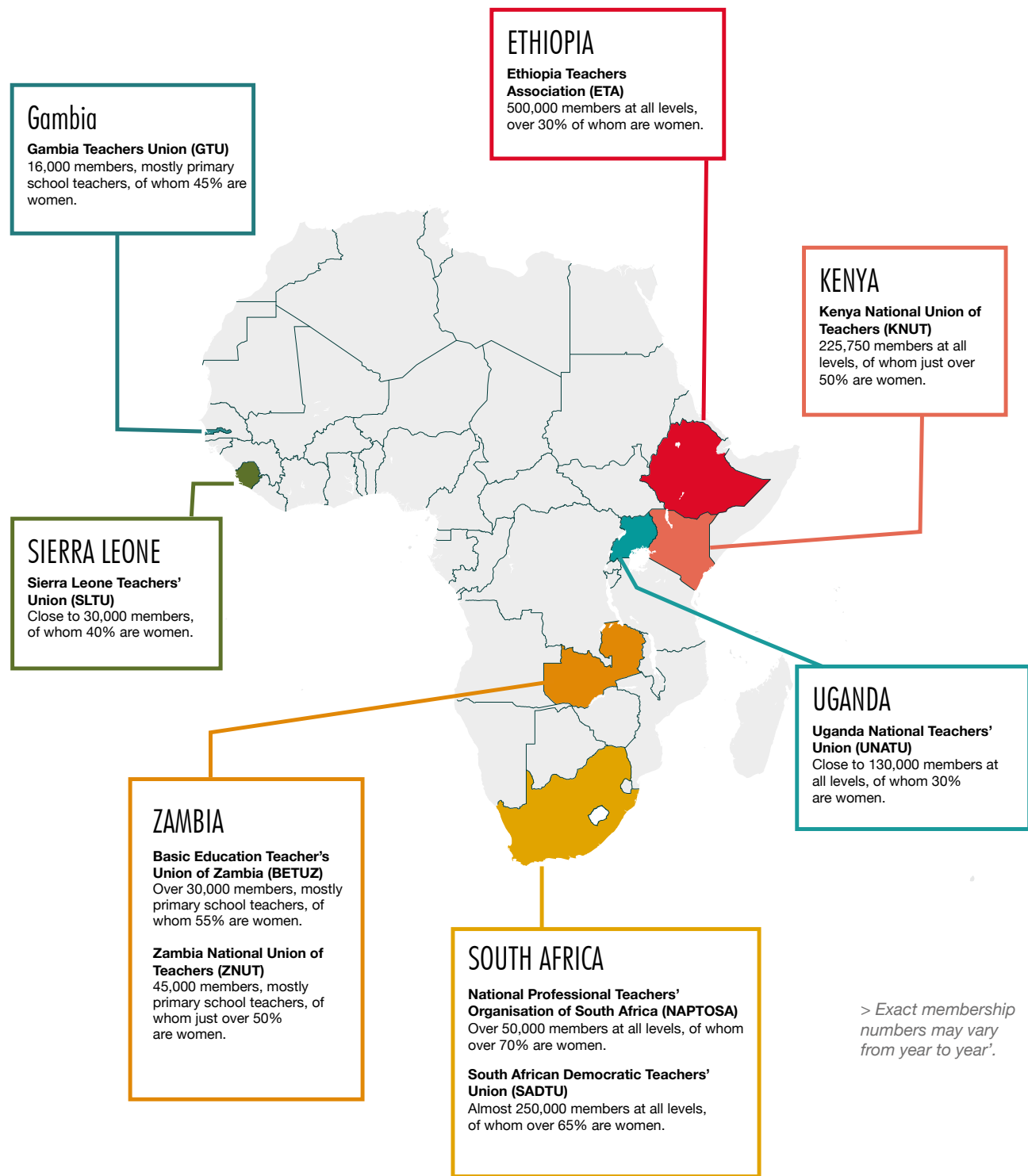
Several unions have found strength in mobilizing young members in the fight against SRGBV. For some, teachers at the start of their career are deeply concerned about the impact SRGBV has on the reputation and practice of their chosen profession. Others note that, because they are closer in age, young teachers are more effective in sensitizing their peers and students about the impact of SRGBV and how best to respond. Young teachers are also more vulnerable to SRGBV than more senior educators. Getting involved to fight SRGBV has offered some young union members an opportunity to demonstrate their leadership in classrooms, schools, communities and union settings. In recent years, several unions (e.g. BETUZ, UNATU, ZNUT) have amended their Constitutions to establish Youth Committees or Youth Wings at national, provincial and branch levels, with special responsibilities for combatting SRGBV. In this way, opening space for young members can help the union both to prepare a new generation of leaders and advance its work on SRGBV.





Unions Participating in the Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV programme by country and approximate membership

The nine unions that participated in the four-year programme represent some of the largest, oldest and most influential education unions in Africa.



It is important to note that many other education unions in Africa and around the world have taken action to end SRGBV in recent years. This document limits its scope to the nine unions that participated in the Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV programme.

Women often lead union efforts to end SRGBV

SRGBV is not a “women’s issue.” It creates unsafe working conditions and can tarnish the professional reputation of all teachers. Nevertheless, when education unions act to end SRGBV, it is often their women leaders who take the lead in advancing union efforts and hold decision makers accountable for taking the challenge seriously. Maybe this is because women are more likely to have a personal experience of SRGBV than their male counterparts, whether as schoolgirls or as adults in the workplace. Or perhaps it is because victims of SRGBV tend to disclose to women, often to a female teacher. In contexts where cultural norms prevent people from openly discussing SRGBV, men may be unaware of the experiences and concerns of their female colleagues. Creating safe spaces where women can share their experiences or providing platforms for them to voice their concerns thus enables everyone to better understand the frequency and impact of SRGBV.

Historically, women have been disproportionately underrepresented in union elected bodies relative to their numbers within the teaching profession, so many unions have taken specific measures to increase the number of women office bearers. Many unions have established Women’s Committees at the national level and many union Constitutions provide for women’s representation at the provincial, district, branch and school levels (e.g. SLTU, ZNUT). Union Constitutions also often guarantee that Women’s Committees are represented on other key decision-making bodies such as the

Executive Council and the Congress or National Conference. Many unions have adopted constitutional amendments to reserve quotas for women in all elected bodies. This quota is 30% in many unions (e.g. ETA, ZNUT) while, for others, the goal is gender parity in all positions (SADTU). Some unions have witnessed important changes as a result of these quotas and goals. At ZNUT, for example, more women now stand for office and more men advocate in support of women candidates, which represents a significant shift in organisational norms when compared to the past. In 2019, women held 35% of elected positions at ZNUT, compared to 10% five years before.

Formal representation does not automatically guarantee full participation. Many unions have created other opportunities for women to enhance their leadership skills. Starting in 2016, NAPTOSA’s School of Leadership and Governance (SOLAG) has empowered both women leaders and young leaders within the union. In 2016, ETA introduced a Women’s Caucus to enable women delegates to meet prior to their National Conference, to share their issues and strategize together. At BETUZ, the Women’s Committee is represented on the Resolutions Committee to ensure all resolutions debated at the National Quadrennial Conference reflect women’s concerns. Similarly, SADTU’s gender policy identifies actions to ensure women are involved in collective bargaining and that women’s interests inform the negotiating agenda. Because SRGBV touches women members so deeply, they seize these organisational spaces to push the union to take greater action, clearly demonstrating individual leadership and collective influence.



EML Events Ethiopia



In 2017, ZNUT modified its Constitution to establish Youth Committees of eight to ten members each: one at the national level and one in each of the ten provinces. The National Youth Committee is made up of five women and five men representing all regions of the country and has a Director who reports to the ZNUT Gender Director. Youth Committee members take active leadership in combatting SRGBV in their local areas.



## Unions create space for vulnerable members

Whether as adults or children, people of non-conforming genders and people living with disabilities or albinism are at greater risk of harassment, exploitation and violence. Some unions have taken particular measures to ensure the voices of vulnerable members are heard and acknowledged within the union. For example, SADTU ran a series of events on inclusivity in 2018, including a three-day national seminar bringing together teacher representatives living with disabilities and albinism and LGBTI members in each of the nine provinces, followed by local events in four provinces. Roughly 1,300 union members used these spaces to challenge the deeply entrenched social norms that can perpetuate discrimination and violence against vulnerable groups.

*[NAPTOSA members] accept that we are leaders in our communities and acknowledge that this may require us to speak out when others remain silent; to be innovative in solving problems when others wait for instruction; to obey the dictates of our own conscience, even when this is inconvenient.”*  
NAPTOSA Charter of Professionalism

## Responsible bodies are held accountable for their actions to end SRGBV

Union structures function with elaborate accountability mechanisms. Once relevant bodies have adopted policies and mandated positions to implement them, responsible actors are required to report progress toward set goals at regular intervals. Union accountabilities run both up and down the hierarchy. For example, KNUT’s efforts to fight SRGBV were reported to 2,100 delegates from all 110 branches at the Annual Delegates Conference (ADC) in 2016, 2017 and 2018. At the 2018 ADC, both the National Executive Council’s (NEC) report and the Secretary General’s speech to delegates highlighted KNUT’s SRGBV-related activities. Since 2019, KNUT’s Branch Executive

Committees are required to report monthly to the National Executive Council on SRGBV activities, including the frequency of SRGBV trainings and number of SRGBV clubs in schools in their area. These top down and bottom up reporting mechanisms ensure all structures are held accountable for fulfilling union’s commitment to end SRGBV.

## 1.2 OWNING THE ISSUE: Unions Embed Their Commitment To Ending SRGBV In Policy Frameworks

Many unions demonstrate the concern and political will of their members to create learning environments and educational institutions free of gender-based violence by embedding their intentions into the framing documents that define them as organisations. For unions, the process of proposing, revising and adopting these policy frameworks offers the opportunity to engage members in debating the issues and a mechanism to mobilize members toward a shared goal of ending SRGBV. Once the commitment to work on SRGBV is affirmed and formalized into policies at various levels, it holds enduring legitimacy within the union membership. Actions taken by unions to change their policy frameworks include:

- Adopting formal resolutions on SRGBV
- Entrenching the union’s commitment to ending SRGBV in its constitution
- Updating gender equality policies to target SRGBV
- Adopting other internal policies such as sexual harassment policies and standing orders to make union’s free of SRGBV.

The examples noted in this section are binding on members to different degrees but all offer compelling examples of the unique role that education unions can play as membership-based institutions.





## Union governance bodies adopt formal resolutions on SRGBV

When governance bodies adopt resolutions, they provide members the opportunity to debate an issue and build commitment to address it. Following the adoption of the EI Resolution on SRGBV in July 2015, several member unions formalized their commitment by adopting their own resolutions at different levels. For example, NAPTOSA's National Executive Council (NEC) adopted an "SRGBV Framework" in November 2016, which provided for a plan of action to engage NAPTOSA structures and members at national, provincial and branch levels. Also in 2016, UNATU's Quinquennial Delegates Conference – the supreme governing body of the union – adopted a resolution calling on the union to empower teachers to play a key role in creating safe school environments for learners and reporting cases of SRGBV. Since then, UNATU's Women's Round Table Conferences have brought forward follow up resolutions to the main Annual Delegates' Conference (ADC) every year to continue urging the union to act against SRGBV.

## Unions integrate their commitment to end SRGBV into Constitutions

Other unions opted to entrench their commitment at the highest level by modifying their Constitutions to make explicit the union's intention to end SRGBV. ETA's 2012 General Assembly revised its Articles of Association by introducing new provisions outlining its efforts to end SRGBV. At its National Conference in September 2017, ZNUT included eliminating SRGBV as an objective within its Constitution. These constitutional amendments affirm each union's deep-rooted commitment to fight SRGBV as core to its raison d'être.

*SADTU considers the inclusion of its members and learners living with disabilities and albinism, and LGBTI members, as an opportunity to "restore the character of SADTU as a union of revolutionary professionals and agents of change that embrace diversity, inclusivity and equality." SADTU Takes Action to End SRGBV*

## Union Gender Policies address SRGBV

Over the years, many education unions have adopted gender policies to promote gender equality within the union and through education. Some unions have recently updated their gender policies to reflect current thinking about SRGBV. For example, in July 2017, ZNUT's National Executive Committee approved changes to the *Union Gender Policy* to add a large section on SRGBV, including a clear definition, the impacts of SRGBV, expected results of combating SRGBV, and strategies to achieve these results. SADTU updated its gender policy in August 2017 to include "eradication of gender-based violence and other forms of violence against women, girls and boys" as one of its specific goals and noted that addressing SRGBV is "key to the attainment of gender equality."

*"The association shall take the necessary measures against its members whenever they are found guilty of committing sexual harassment and provide the necessary support to make the guilty legally liable." (p. 5). ETA Gender Policy*

## Union Codes of Conduct, Sexual Harassment Policies and Orders support efforts to end SRGBV

Some unions have adopted internal policies to protect their members and uphold the teaching profession. For instance, NAPTOSA *Charter of Professionalism* provides powerful language of relevance to ending SRGBV. The Charter stipulates that "we refrain from improper or inappropriate relations with learners, be these physical, sexual, political or emotional. Rather, in all our actions and words, in and out of our educational institutions, we will promote by example the integrity of our profession by modelling respect for diversity, compassion and commitment". It further states that annually, all participants in Union Site Representative meetings reaffirm their adherence to the NAPTOSA Charter.

*"We want SRGBV programmes to remain in our books for a long time. It must form part of ZNUT even when we are no longer there. It must be in our DNA."*  
ZNUT change team member – April 2018

SADTU's National General Council adopted a sexual harassment policy in October 2017. The policy applies to all SADTU leaders, staff and members and lays out procedures to lodge and investigate complaints while respecting confidentiality. In this way, SADTU seeks to free not only schools but also the union itself of gender-based violence.

Like other trade unions, BETUZ adopts Standing Orders to set out procedures for its key meetings, which make explicit the norms and behaviours all members are expected to respect. Since discriminatory discourse and inappropriate behaviours can surface at gatherings within any organisation, the Standing Orders for BETUZ's 2018 National Quadrennial Conference prohibited sexual harassment between members during the Conference. Proposed by the National Executive Committee, issued in writing at the outset of the National Conference, read out by the General Secretary and formally approved by all delegates, the Standing Orders offer a powerful mechanism both to raise awareness and hold individuals accountable.

*"Sexual or other forms of harassment will not be tolerated. Harassment includes verbal or physical aggression against another person due to his or her race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, national origin or disability. It also extends to pestering and unwelcoming sexual advances."*  
- Standing Orders, BETUZ 2018  
National Quadrennial Conference





### 1.3 WALKING THE TALK: Education Unions Resource Initiatives to End SRGBV

As education unions have increased their efforts to fight SRGBV in recent years, they have found creative and sustainable practices to resource them. Education unions rely almost entirely on membership dues – paid by unionized classroom teachers and support staff – to fund their operations. Membership dues enable unions to defend their members’ interests independently and require careful stewardship and accountability by union office bearers and staff. Actions taken by unions to translate their intentions into long-lasting action include:

- Integrating SRGBV-related programmes into annual workplans and budgets;
- Mainstreaming SRGBV awareness raising activities into other on-going programmes;
- Using regular internal communications instruments to sensitize members;
- Collecting and analysing data from members regarding their understanding and experience of SRGBV.

### Unions integrate work on SRGBV into annual work plans

Unions with long standing gender equality programmes have allocated a percentage of annual operating budgets at the national level toward implementing their *Gender Policy*. Unions involved in the *Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme report annual gender-equality budgets ranging from USD 12,000 to USD 70,000, depending on their size and location (e.g. ZNUT, KNUT, SADTU). SRGBV change teams have drawn on these budgets to support their work. Some unions plan to designate a distinct SRGBV-related line item in their national budgets (e.g. SLTU). Others encourage provincial and branch level union structures that also draw on membership dues to prioritize SRGBV-related allocations into annual plans in their areas (e.g. SLTU, KNUT). To ensure the sustainability of initiatives addressing SRGBV, SLTU is advocating for governing bodies in schools to allocate resources for activities to address SRGBV at local level. Some unions (e.g. UNATU) have sought support from their Development Cooperation partners – education unions in the Global North – while others have secured support from local NGOs or national government (e.g. ETA).



UNGEI Comms Team

### Unions “mainstream SRGBV” into regular activities at little or no extra cost

Since resources are always limited, many unions have found creative, low-cost solutions to ensure that work on SRGBV advances unimpeded. Many speak of “mainstreaming SRGBV into everything we do.” Concretely, this entails seizing every opportunity to raise members’ awareness of SRGBV through regular union meetings and programmes. For instance, at BETUZ, SRGBV-related issues are raised consistently during the union’s recruitment drives to explain to new members how the union both defends their interests and upholds the code of professional conduct which prohibits inappropriate relations between teachers and learners. BETUZ reference group members raise SRGBV issues when elections are conducted in their districts.

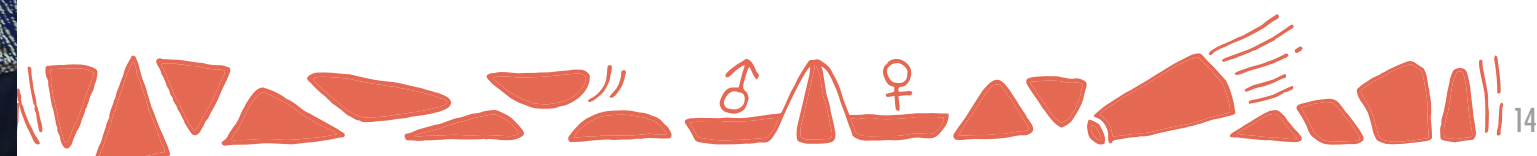
Since 2016, UNATU has integrated SRGBV messaging into its campaigns and regular training throughout Uganda: *Stop Child Labour and Early Marriage Campaign*, *Teachers’ Action for Girls*, annual membership education and training for union leaders from the National Executive Committee all the way to local school representatives and in-service training. These programmes make visible the threat SRGBV poses to quality education and the wellbeing

of teachers. Given its reach, UNATU estimates it has engaged roughly 150,000 teachers in discussions on SRGBV and the union’s role in fighting it.

In 2016, KNUT appointed four classroom teachers in four different districts to carry out work on SRGBV in their respective classrooms, schools and districts. The union mandated these teachers to explore how peer-to-peer interactions between teachers at the school level might bring about changes in teachers’ behaviours and attitudes toward learners and create safer learning environments. KNUT representatives from schools across each district were trained to sensitize their peers, learners and parents on SRGBV. Once trained, KNUT members return to their schools to train other KNUT members and non-member teachers in each location. Taking the four districts together, between 2016 and 2019, change team members trained almost 1,000 KNUT school representatives out of the nearly 8,000 KNUT members who teach in the total 870 primary schools and 389 secondary schools. Since KNUT members represent 58% of all teachers in these districts, this approach creates a ripple effect among peers, within schools and in communities to change behaviours and challenge norms that sustain SRGBV.



EML Events Ethiopia





*“Some teachers now carry a pointer instead of a cane – and children have told me that they have come back to school now that teachers are carrying pointers instead of canes.” SLTU Change Team member*

SADTU approached Regenesys Business School in Johannesburg to customize a post-graduate diploma in public management for its members, including a module on SRGBV. A total of 15 SADTU leaders, including nine provincial gender convenors, four national office bearers, the chair of Free State and Deputy Secretary of Western Cape undertook the programme in 2018. A component of action research enabled SADTU to better analyse and document existing initiatives dedicated to ending gender-based violence, including how the union manages specific cases. Bringing this group together in a diploma programme allowed the union to produce a paper and design a framework to shape its SRGBV-related efforts into the future.

ETA’s experience demonstrates the strategic role teachers colleges can play in building teachers’ understanding and capacity to fight SRGBV. At the Kotebe Metropolitan University in Addis Ababa, roughly 300 teacher candidates receive life skills orientation in their first term on campus every year, including discussion of SRGBV and skills such as self-confidence, managing peer pressure and responding to sexual harassment. Just before graduation, the same students participate in a four-day training-of-trainers workshop focussed on how to engage other teachers meaningfully in discussions on how to eliminate SRGBV in schools. The training is designed to enable graduates to raise issues related to SRGBV with their future colleagues, be better equipped to counsel learners and respond to incidents of SRGBV when they arise. Since all teachers become members of ETA when appointed to new positions, the Association remains connected to these trained graduates. Building on the experience at Kotebe Metropolitan University, ETA organized a workshop on SRGBV for gender focal points at 32 teachers colleges from across the country in 2018, jointly funded by ETA and the Ministry.

## Unions raise members’ awareness of SRGBV through regular communications

Communicating regularly to members is a key function performed by all unions. Education unions used a wide range of internal communications strategies to raise members’ understanding and ability to respond to incidents of SRGBV. For example, GTU organizes study circles that bring together chairpersons from roughly 10 nearby schools to read and discuss newspaper articles on cases of SRGBV. The chairpersons are trained to deal with minor misdemeanours and to report more serious cases to the GTU Secretariat. The chairpersons in turn bring together the school representatives into study circles and the school representatives are then responsible for setting up SRGBV clubs with learners in their respective schools. GTU also developed booklets on “Eliminating Corporal Punishment” and “Eliminating Sexual Abuse” and a flier explaining how, where and to whom reports can be taken.

NAPTOSA News Flashes are distributed to all 50,000 members on a regular basis to raise awareness about the incidents of SRGBV and responses to them. Since 2018, NAPTOSA allocates two pages to advocating against SRGBV in the diaries it sends to all members every year. Published annually and widely distributed, UNATU’s “The Teachers’ Voice” has included articles related to SRGBV since 2016, such as the importance of girls’ education and adherence to the Teachers’ Code of Conduct.

## Unions collect and analyse data on the incidence and perceptions of SRGBV

Education unions are uniquely placed to understand teachers’ perceptions and experience of SRGBV and have developed internal research capacity to inform their strategies. Some unions have used data

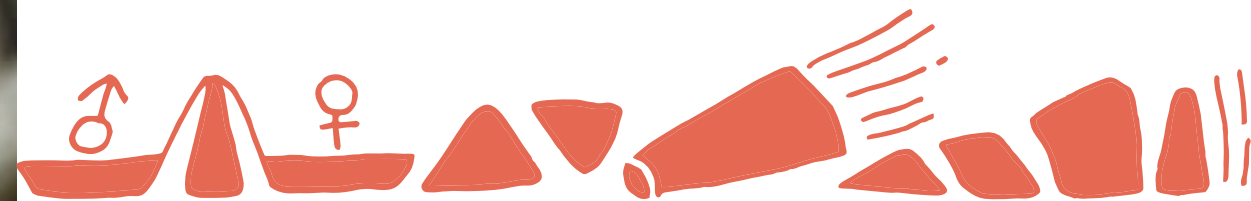
collection to strengthen their approaches to combatting SRGBV at various levels. SADTU’s national change team members developed an extensive survey to determine union members’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviour regarding gender-based violence in schools. It was administered to over 600 members in 2017 though various union meetings and helped the union identify approaches to train newly elected union leaders on the issues.

*In 2014, ETA recognized that violence against girls in secondary schools was poorly understood in Ethiopia. Research carried out with almost 600 students and 130 teachers of both sexes in five randomly selected schools gave alarming results that informed recommendations to different stakeholders, including the Federal Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women and Children, Regional Education Bureaux and Zonal Bureaux. The study prompted ETA to develop methodologies to further research the incidence and prevention of SRGBV at school level. By 2016, the School Violence Index (SVI) was developed and tested to enable Ethiopian secondary schools to assess their own practices and vulnerabilities to violence. The SVI provides a user-friendly guide on how to design and facilitate a participatory violence self-assessment by school management, ETA members, learners and local communities. Once a school has undertaken the assessment, they can identify concrete actions to reduce violence and quantifiable measures that allow school management to track progress over time. In the pilot phase, SVI was tested in 32 schools. Since 2016, ETA has drawn on its own resources to support an additional three or four schools a year to make use of the School Violence Index.*

EML Events Ethiopia







## 2. EDUCATION UNIONS REACH OUT

While they can make a significant contribution to eliminating SRGBV by sensitizing and mobilizing their broad memberships, education unions cannot do it alone. Education unions are present at all levels of the education system. In classrooms, union members can engage learners to understand and stand up for their rights to a safe learning environment. In schools, union members can promote a “whole school approach” by engaging school leadership, parents’ associations, local police, social services and traditional leaders to improve safety in and around schools. Unions attract local and national media attention to raise awareness of SRGBV on a broad scale. At national level, they can influence government policies and priorities to better address SRGBV. In many countries, efforts to end SRGBV have created new, generative collaborations between unions and multiple stakeholders across and beyond the education sector.

### 2.1 WORKING WITH OTHERS: Unions collaborate with other stakeholders to shape policy and practice

#### Unions collaborate with the government to shape policies that address SRGBV

In most countries, the Ministry of Education or Teachers Service Commission’s *Teachers’ Code of Conduct* provides the key policy defining appropriate behaviour of teachers in schools and classrooms and disciplinary measures when the *Code* is breached. In recent years, education unions in several countries (e.g. South Africa, Ethiopia, Zambia, Sierra Leone)

have worked closely with the employer to revise national *Codes of Conduct* to address SRGBV more explicitly and to ensure preventative and punitive measures guarantee due process for members accused of non-compliance. Ministries and Teacher Service Commissions have also come to rely on education unions to promote understanding of and respect for the provisions of the *Codes* among their membership.

*In Ethiopia, the Federal Ministry of Education’s Code of Conduct provides for “School-Related Gender-Based Violence Complaint Investigation and Decisions Recommending Committees” to be established in all schools to implement the Code. In each school, ETA representatives hold two key positions on the seven-member committee: the gender representative who acts as the chairperson for the committee and the chairperson of the school’s Teachers’ Association. In the event of a split decision by the committee, it is the chairperson – that is, the ETA school gender representative – who makes the final decision. These provisions give ETA members statutory authority to investigate and determine the outcome of SRGBV cases involving both learners and the association’s members. ETA provides training to its members who sit on these committees. Because this is a nation-wide policy, dismissal due to SRGBV infractions effectively prevents the perpetrator from ever holding a teaching position in Ethiopia again.*



In some places, education unions have negotiated provisions into collective agreements to address SRGBV. For example, as a member of South Africa's Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), SADTU participated in negotiating a collective agreement intended to reduce the number of times that learners involved either as victims or as witnesses to cases of sexual misconduct are required to testify in disciplinary and dispute hearings. The previous procedure forced child witnesses to testify up to three times at different stages in the dispute resolution process, exposing them to secondary trauma. Perpetrators were often reinstated for lack of evidence since victims often refused to testify repeatedly. Going forward, children are now only required to testify once before a specialized arbitrator and the record of this testimony will serve in subsequent investigations without requiring the child to testify again. The agreement applies to all unionized teaching environments in South Africa, regardless of union affiliation. This collective agreement exhibits SADTU's commitment to both safeguard the rights of the child and uphold due process for its members accused of sexual misconduct. Since negotiating collective agreements is core union business, education unions

can bring concrete benefits to their members and learners alike by putting SRGBV on their negotiating agenda with employers.

*BETUZ recognizes the central role guidance counsellors can play in prevention and response to SRGBV. In 2017, BETUZ appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on Education to discuss the high level of early pregnancies among learners in Zambia. BETUZ argued that Guidance and Counselling Departments should be established in all schools, including primary schools. The Ministry of Education subsequently decided to deploy part-time guidance counsellors in all schools. BETUZ has worked with the Ministry to ensure guidance counsellors understand SRGBV more broadly, have relevant teaching materials to help prevent SRGBV and are trained to attend to learners experiencing SRGBV. BETUZ is now calling on policy makers to ensure these departments are well established and for guidance counsellors to become full time positions in all schools.*

*Following a "Discipline Conference" in South Africa in 2015, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) launched a Discipline Committee in which NAPTOSA and other unions were represented. The Committee contributed to the development of a "Handbook on School Discipline" for teachers. Faced with growing gang-related violence in and around schools, provincial delegates from Western Cape tabled a resolution at the NAPTOSA National Congress in 2016 calling for "immediate and appropriate action to taken by all stakeholders." NAPTOSA then published an open letter calling on the Minister of Basic Education to prioritise the safety of learners and teachers, providing an impetus to the formation of a National Committee on School Safety (NCSS). In 2017, NAPTOSA made a presentation at the "School Safety Summit" co-hosted by DBE and the South African Council for Educators (SACE). NAPTOSA now is represented at both the Steering Committee and the Working Group established following the Summit. As an example of their work, the NCSS, the DBE and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) are reviewing the teachers training curriculum to train young teachers to deal with SRGBV through their induction. Also under the NCSS mandate, the South African Police and Department of Justice have created community-based programmes on Learner/Educator safety. In 2019, NSSC developed a "Teachers Rights, Responsibility and Safety Handbook" with input from NAPTOSA.*



EML Events Ethiopia



## Unions engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue to address SRGBV

In many countries, education unions are well placed to engage with a broad range of stakeholders. In the Gambia, GTU is an active member of the *Promoting Rights in School Consortium*, *Education for All Campaign* and the *Network on Gender-Based Violence*, as well as chairing the *Child Protection Alliance*. With GTU taking a more visible stand against perpetrators of SRGBV in schools, there is growing trust and collaboration with organisations in these consortia and networks, leading to an increase in reporting of SRGBV incidents. At school level, GTU is also networking with the Mother's Clubs that focus on the issues affecting the girl child in schools and Parent Teacher Associations as platforms to discuss SRGBV.

Since 2016, UNATU has organized *Social Dialogue* meetings in Northern, Eastern, Southern and South Western regions of Uganda in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4: inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Members of Parliament, Ministry of Education and Sports officials, Ministry of Public Service officials, education development partners (UNESCO), parents, political leaders, religious leaders, school management committee members, Board of Governors members, head teachers, teachers and principals all participate in UNATU's *Social Dialogues*. UNATU has also integrated SRGBV issues into its community mobilization meetings on quality education and girls' schooling in Southern and Eastern regions (2016-17) and Central and South Western Regions (2018-19), engaging women councillors, women Members of Parliament, local councils, Head Teachers' Association members, teachers and local leaders. As a result, parents in Kapchorwa and Kween districts have built girls changing rooms and provided sanitary materials and other scholastic materials for the girls. Reduced teenage pregnancies and early marriages have been recorded in West Nile region due to serious measures taken by stakeholders and continued awareness raising by UNATU

through these community meetings and local radio. Some schools have reported a reduction in girls dropping out of school.

*GTU uses participatory approaches to support communities in finding local solutions to preventing SRGBV. The Bantaba (traditionally a meeting place under a large tree) brings village members together, seated in a circle, to discuss experiences and possible actions in their own language. Corporal punishment, children's rights, child marriage and female genital mutilation are some of the topics discussed in the Bantabas. GTU organises press conferences at the end of each Bantaba to further popularise the issues raised. The Bantabas are central to GTU's capacity building work with women and young people. With careful moderation, GTU members encourage women to use the Bantabas as a space to share their experiences of GBV. GTU then takes issues emerging in the Bantabas forward into formal planning at regional and national levels. In this way, the Bantabas allow for informal, grassroots, context-specific voices to influence formal GTU policy and strategy at a national level.*

## Unions collaborate with other unions to address SRGBV

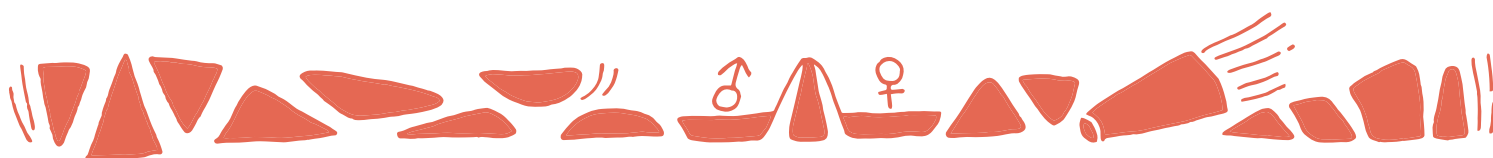
Because SRGBV is of concern to all education sector employees, unions have come together in many places to coordinate their efforts and increase their impact. SADTU is a powerful member of the COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions) and uses its position to influence national debates on gender equality and gender-based violence. At its 2018 National Congress, COSATU adopted SADTU's messages to develop banners on GBV. SADTU, in the voice of its President, called on National Congress delegates to "walk the talk" by electing

women as union officer bearers. This appeal contributed to COSATU achieving its 50/50 gender parity goal for the first time. In 2018, SADTU also played an active role in the *#TotalShutdown* mobilization across South Africa to end gender-based violence. In a country where GBV is often understood as domestic violence – that is, something that happens in the home – SADTU has directed attention to GBV in and around schools through national campaigns.

The three EI member unions in Zambia – BETUZ, SESTUZ and ZNUT – have collaborated closely in their efforts to end SRGBV. In 2019, they coordinated their efforts within the Zambia National Education Coalition to provide leadership training for University College students particularly focused on young women, including issues related to SRGBV.



Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/UNICEF





## 2.2 BREAKING THE SILENCE:

### Unions engage with the media to raise awareness of SRGBV among the general public

Local, national and at times international media coverage has drawn attention to high profile cases of SRGBV in many countries around the world. Media reports often either ignore the important role education unions play in responding to cases of SRGBV or portray unions in a negative light. In many countries, education unions have reached out to the media to raise broad public awareness about SRGBV and in the process become recognized as important sources of knowledge and influence when addressing cases of SRGBV.

For example, since 2015, BETUZ raises awareness of SRGBV through a live, Sunday morning, phone-in radio show on the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), as well as on a local radio station in Central province. These broadcasts reach teachers, learners and the broader community. Topics covered include the Zambian *Teaching Professional Code of Ethics* and other matters related to teachers' professional obligations. Radio discussions on SRGBV have drawn positive responses from large numbers of teachers, community members and other stakeholders and enhanced BETUZ's profile as an organisation committed to ending SRGBV. Other media sources, such as the Zambian Daily Mail newspaper, now turn to BETUZ for reliable information and informed opinions when reporting on incidents of SRGBV. In this way, BETUZ has managed to "getting out in front" of SRGBV when the media draws attention to incidents in schools, especially when teachers are implicated.

Radio remains an important communication medium in Sierra Leone as demonstrated during the Ebola crisis when radio broadcast lessons to students unable to attend school. Through radio and TV panel discussions, SLTU has successfully reached a wide audience by securing airtime on a popular evening programme where a SLTU teacher may be found speaking about SRGBV alongside a popular DJ. SLTU's newsletter "*The Teacher*"

reaches all 9,000 schools every term and includes a regular SRGBV news column. The newsletter also offers a platform for partner organisations like the Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools, the Head Teachers Council, the Council of Heads and Technical Institutions to provide articles related to SRGBV.

SLTU's work extends into the community where the union has involved local and traditional communicators in the campaign to address SRGBV. Working with the Town Crier who beats the drum and folk singers and musicians who convey messages in songs, the union is successfully initiating discussions on early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

In the Gambia, GTU is able to sensitize a broader audience on ways of reducing SRGBV through participating in the TV and radio Education Forums hosted by the Gambian Ministry of Education. With the live phone-in programs, GTU is able to share its experience of addressing SRGBV and respond to questions and misconceptions about SRGBV coming not only from the general public but also from its own members in isolated rural areas.

## 2.3 EMPOWERING LEARNERS:

### Union members help learners understand their rights and voice their concerns

Teachers and support staff are uniquely located to empower learners to prevent and respond to SRGBV. If learners understand their rights, learn to recognize SRGBV and know who to talk to if they witness or experience abuse, they can become active agents in ending it. The unions involved in the *Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme used a broad range of approaches to create space for learners to understand and assert their rights.

Several unions (e.g. KNUT, BETUZ, SLTU, UNATU), encouraged classroom teachers and school administrators to set up SRGBV school clubs or make use of existing clubs to discuss SRGBV. For example, at SLTU, learners in school clubs create dramatic sketches to sensitize fellow learners about SRGBV. Through producing these plays, the student actors are themselves conscientized and become agents of change in the school environment. School clubs encourage girl learners to be more vocal and boy learners to be more conscious of SRGBV. Children have proven effective in sensitizing their peers since children often learn better from each other. The club also provides a safe space to protect children who report incidents of SRGBV. When working with the school club, the members of SLTU move beyond their role as teachers and become ambassadors for SRGBV-free schools. These examples demonstrate how, once sensitized, union members are able to collaborate with learners in creating classrooms and schools free of SRGBV.

*"Learners who aren't comfortable expressing themselves in the classroom have found a voice in the club set up because we let them talk amongst themselves freely and in their local languages." BETUZ Change Team member*

As part of its campaign to end child labour and early marriages, UNATU developed and distributed 120 school compound sign points (Talking Compounds) to 12 schools in Zombo District in June 2019. Some of the messages directly tackled SRGBV, including "Stop violence against children," "School is a safe space," and "Report all violence against children." In Kenya, KNUT members place "NO TO SRGBV" posters on all classroom doors. They post newspaper articles telling stories of SRGBV on classroom walls and facilitate conversations with students. Suggestion boxes allow victims or witnesses of abuse – verbal, emotional or physical – to speak out anonymously.







## SUSTAINING ACTION- THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

The education unions profiled in this document have tested a broad range of strategies and approaches adapted to their local contexts in pursuit of one common goal: ending school-related gender-based violence. In a few short years, these unions have laid the foundations for sustained action – on their own and in collaboration with others – to meet this challenge well into the future. A growing number of stakeholders acknowledge SRGBV is a threat to achieving inclusive, quality education for all. Education unions have contributed to a growing sense of urgency within their respective contexts and across the globe. Much work remains to be done. Building on their accomplishments so far, education unions will continue to emerge as capable, committed actors and constructive partners in the global effort to end SRGBV.





