



The Gender Tool Box gathers knowledge material and method support on gender equality in the form of Tools, Briefs and Thematic Overviews.

Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society.

[BRIEF]

Gender-Based Violence and Education

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the most extreme expression of unequal gender relations in society and one of the most widespread violations of human rights. While GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, it also affects men and boys. These abuses take place all over the world in homes, schools, work-places and communities. But GBV is preventable and education and educational institutions can play a central role in ending GBV. This brief provides an overview of the relationship between education and GBV.¹ It illustrates how education can reduce exposure to, and perpetration of GBV, but also highlights the negative impact GBV can have on lifelong learning.

Schools, from primary level to higher educational institutions, vocational training and non-formal education, are important sites for normative change and have the potential to address gender inequalities and prevent GBV. A range of school-based programs have been developed that not only raise awareness about GBV, but also build the skills of students and staff to create equitable and respectful relationships. However, schools and other educational institutions do not have a universal, nor automatically positive, impact on reducing GBV. Schools can for instance also be a site of GBV. Direct exposure to school-related GBV (SRGBV) includes sexualised bullying, sexual harassment, forced sexual acts in exchange for good grades or male dominance or aggressions within the

school environment. SRGBV also include harassment and physical or sexual assault while walking to and from school.

Schools need to actively promote a gender equal, respectful, non-violent culture with gender aware pedagogy amongst students, teachers and other staff. The potential for young people to act as agents of change provides one of the greatest hopes for achieving the social transformation necessary to end GBV and can be unlocked through high-quality, gender sensitive education.

Definition of Gender-based violence (GBV)

Sida defines GBV as “any harm or suffering that is perpetrated against a woman or girl, man or boy and that has a negative impact on the physical, sexual or psychological health, development or identity of the person. The cause of the violence is founded in gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination”.²

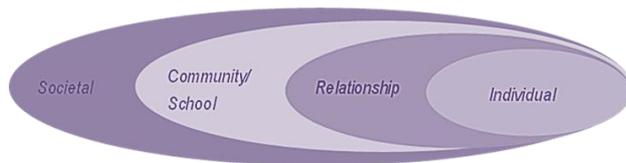
CAUSES OF GBV

The drivers of GBV are multiple and complex, but gender discriminatory norms and unequal balance of power between girls, women, boys and men are the overarching root causes. To be able to understand the drivers of GBV

¹ This brief is to a great extent based upon the Sida consultancy “Unlocking the potential for change: Education and prevention of Gender-based violence” (2013) written by Fergus, L and van’t Rood, R.

² GBV includes acts of physical, sexual and psychological violence directed at individuals or groups because of their biological sex and/or their specific gender role in society. It primarily affects women and girls and is usually perpetrated by a male known to the victim, but can also affect men and boys, most notably as rape or sexual assault, particularly in conflict settings.

in schools and other educational institutions it is important to understand that there is no single factor that can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk of GBV than others. The ecological framework³ clearly shows how interpersonal violence is the outcome of interaction between many factors at the societal, community, relationship and individual levels.



Schools and other educational institutions are not isolated from traditions, culture, norms, customary laws and governmental policies that exist in the country and the community, nor from individual experiences of students and staff both outside and inside schools and educational institutions. If not addressed properly, schools and other educational institutions can implicitly legitimize and reinforce harmful gender norms. Schools can normalize a violent environment both in the classroom and outside it by using authoritarian pedagogy that strengthens the unequal power balance between teachers and students, by allowing corporal punishment, and by not properly addressing sexualized bullying. Schools and higher education institutions can reinforce traditional gender norms when men and boys are expected to be strong and respond with violence, or when encouraging men to apply to male dominated sectors and women to female dominated sectors. It is therefore necessary to address gender norms at all levels and across multiple settings to prevent GBV in schools and the society at large.

IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON GBV

The number of years a person spends in school has been shown to have a positive correlation with a decrease in both future victimisation and perpetration of physical and sexual violence.⁴ Education increases women's employment opportunities and socio-economic status. The empowerment of women reduces the unequal power relationship between women and men which has been identified as the root cause of GBV. However the level of education is a very blunt measurement, and if not properly addressed, schools can instead turn into reproducers of harmful societal norms and practices and become unsafe.

³ S. Bott, A. Guedes et als. (forthcoming) Prevention Module, UN Women Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, citing Krug et al. (2002).

⁴ Plan International (2012) *Because I am a girl: State of the World's Girls*.

Policy framework

The Swedish government puts improvement of women and girls' lives at the centre of its aid policy framework. For this, preventing GBV and assuring improved access to good quality education at all levels are central focus areas.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires all State 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 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (VAW) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) denounce violence and call for measures to protect all human beings, especially women and girls, from all forms of violence.

It is therefore necessary for schools and other educational institutions to apply strategies to prevent and respond to violence. Here, teachers play a key role and the introduction of gender-responsive pedagogics in the education process, as does sexuality education in the school curricula. This can help unlock the potential of schools as sites for empowerment of girls and boys and for the prevention of GBV.

Save the Children's Violence Free Schools in Afghanistan

In a baseline study, Save the Children found that in the 20 schools in Mazer-e-Sharif, the main categories of violence were: **a)** physical violence and humiliating treatment of children by teachers (often considered as an acceptable form of punishment); **b)** high levels of sexual abuse particularly against boys by male teachers; and **c)** violence by children against children.

Save the Children therefore used a holistic approach involving key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, leaders within the community, parents, teachers and girls and boys, to raise awareness of child rights, challenge beliefs and attitudes, influence behaviour and practices and provide alternatives to violence. As a result of the program, a significant decrease in physical punishment, bullying, harassment and violence in the targeted schools has been reported. Another result is that the overall school enrolment rate has increased by 17%.

STRATEGIC AREAS FOR INTERVENTION

General interventions with the objective to improve the quality and length of education are important to prevent GBV, but they are insufficient in isolation. Targeted action is also necessary, in the classroom, with teachers, and throughout the school environment. Sida can contribute to the prevention of GBV in schools and also in communities using the following strategies:

- Encourage educational reforms that strengthen gender equality in the overall educational system, for example interventions that include gender perspectives and tools (such as gender sensitive pedagogics) in teacher and counsellor training programs, and include sexuality education in school curricula.
- Use a “whole-school” approach where several interventions are done simultaneously in order to achieve more sustainable results. Such approach should target both girls and boys. For example:
 - Training for teachers on how to use gender-responsive pedagogics in the classroom is one of the keys to addressing GBV in education. Trainings should focus on raising awareness of gender stereotypes in the education process, improving abilities to analyse planning, and conducting lessons from a gender perspective.
 - Promote the development and implementation of school policies and action plans on how to address all type of violence, including GBV, to specifically foster a safe and discrimination free school. Examples of issues to be analysed and addressed: managers responsibility to prevent SRGBV; the role of the grading and exam system, including level of transparency, for discrimination and sexual harassment; the importance of school uniforms for boys and girls for their abilities to take part in different activities?
 - Integrate sexuality education in school curricula for primary and secondary schools.
 - Improve safety at, and on the way to and from school including by establishing a safe and violence-free environment by improving infrastructure such as transportation, separate sanitation facilities and improved lightening.
 - Create a gender aware counselling system that gives effective support to victims/survivors of GBV by training relevant staff.
 - Develop a gender-aware career guidance system for students.

As schools and other educational institutions are directly affected by the overall societal context, interventions can also focus on involving other key stakeholders in the

transformation of gender discriminatory norms, attitudes and behaviours. For example:

- Support and coordinate existing government and civil society initiatives from different sectors working to enact laws and improve existing laws on GBV and education.
- Involve local communities and parents through parent-teacher associations to change attitudes and behaviours on a societal level, but also assure that educational institutions are held accountable in their preventive work.
- Support group education (outside school) combined with community mobilization. These interventions usually provide training on topics like masculinities, gender equality and GBV to adolescents who in turn mobilise others through different community events.⁵

Example of group education intervention

Program H seeks to engage young men and their communities in critical reflections about rigid norms related to manhood. It includes group educational activities, community campaigns, and an evaluation model (the GEM scale) for assessing the programme's impact on gender-related attitudes. Program H was developed and validated in Latin America and the Caribbean by Promundo and has later been adapted in other contexts around the world.

FURTHER READING

[UN Girls' Education Initiative](#) (UNGEI) resources (by theme including GBV)

UNESCO, 2014: [School-related gender-based violence](#): A global review of current issues and approaches in policy, programming and implementation responses to School Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV).

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), 2005: [Gender Responsive Pedagogy- a teacher's handbook](#)

⁵ Emma Fulu, Alice Kerr-Wilson James Lang (2014) What works to prevent violence against women and girls? Evidence Review (Dfid).