



Summary Brief

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Protecting girls' rights in and around schools

This brief was developed to support dissemination of key messages in [Mind the Gap 2: Seeking Safe and Sustainable Solutions for Girls' Education in Crises](#). It provides an overview of evidence and gaps related to school-related gender-based-violence and recommends actions and measures to protect women's and girls' rights within education.

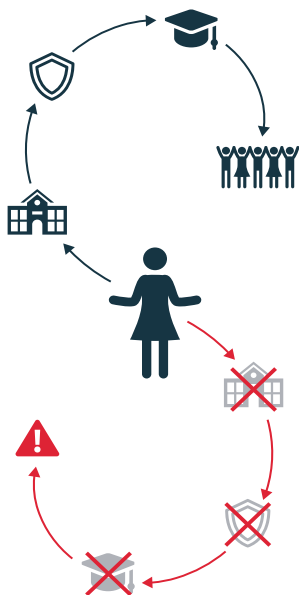


There is a virtuous circular relationship between the education and the protection of girls.

Girls' education and protection reinforce each other, leading to positive outcomes for the whole of society. Educated girls grow up to become productive and informed citizens who protect the rights of others.

But when emergencies block girls' access to education, it leads to a downward spiral of lost protection and permanent school dropout, making girls and their societies less resilient to future crises. They become vulnerable to violence and harmful practices and are prevented from exercising their rights as empowered, informed women.¹ It is estimated that:

1 See INEE (2021) Mind the Gap, Section 3.1 and 3.2.



- If all girls in developing countries completed primary school, child marriage would fall by 14%.²
- If they all completed secondary education, this would result in virtual elimination of child marriage and a 75% reduction in early childbearing.³

Girls in crisis-affected contexts experience high rates of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV)

While education can be a critical protective factor, many girls in crisis-affected countries experience high rates of violence in and around schools.⁴ Globally, an estimated 50% of children have experienced violence in and around schools.⁵ Analysis of available DHS data from 20 countries and VACS data from six sub-Saharan African countries, found that 29% of adolescent girls reported experiencing physical or sexual violence, and one in six girls (17%) reported having experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months.⁶

Ongoing challenges to designing effective interventions

Education actors face a number of challenges to preventing and addressing SRGBV.⁷

- At the **community level**, cases often go under-reported due to the stigma around SRGBV and the norms that prevent children from talking openly about violence.
- At the **school system level**, implementation challenges include a lack of sufficient resources or training to monitor and respond to cases on GBV, competing priorities and human resource constraints, lack of monitoring, and lack of strategies to address discriminatory gender norms.
- At the **policy level**, the barriers to implementation include lack of resources, challenges in coordination between actors, and resistance to gender equality work.

2 UNHCR. (2018). Her turn: It's time to make refugee girls' education a priority. <https://www.unhcr.org/herturn/> http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/Girls_in_Conflict_Review-Final-Web.pdf

3 Wodon et. al. (2018). Missed opportunities: The high cost of not educating girls. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29956>

4 See INEE (2021) Mind the Gap, Section 3.1 and 3.2.

5 Safe to Learn (2020). Ending violence in and through schools. Call to action. <https://www.end-violence.org/safe-to-learn#call-to-action>

6 Evans, D., Hares, S., Holland, P., & Mendez Acosta, A. (2021). Adolescent girls' safety in and out of school: Evidence on physical and sexual violence from across sub-Saharan Africa (CGD Working Paper 597). Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/adolescent-girls-safety-in-and-out-of-school.pdf>

7 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.

Promising practices

There are a number of emerging good practices in preventing and mitigating the effects of SRGBV. The Mind the Gap 2 report highlights the following:

- **Advocacy and Legislative Approaches:** Global commitments and national legislative approaches have been effective in bringing attention to the issue of SRGBV. However, more research is needed on the enactment of policy and mobilization of commitments.⁸
- **Whole School Approach and Minimum Standards:** This strategy takes into account the interconnectedness of schools, communities and families in order to address the drivers of SRGBV and improve the school environment for students, staff and community members.⁹ Emerging evidence shows a positive impact of this approach on reducing SRGBV, shifting gender norms, and improving girls' school experience.¹⁰
- **Strengthening Institutional and Program Safeguards:** A strong institutional safeguarding approach can help reduce the risk of SRGBV and help girls feel safer participating in educational activities.¹¹ It can also strengthen response mechanisms, particularly for girls in crisis-affected contexts who are at increased risk of abuse.¹²

Gaps

Significant gaps remain in our understanding of SRGBV and policy implementation for addressing the issue, including:

- **SRGBV is common in crisis-contexts, but insufficiently captured.** Despite improvements in data collection and monitoring, there are still gaps in understanding of the nature and scope of SRGBV. Countries vary widely in terms of their data collection and reporting, which makes it difficult to get reliable and comparable estimates on the prevalence of SRGBV. Very limited data is available on SRGBV in learning spaces for refugees and internally displaced persons.¹³
- **Risk factors for gender-based violence (GBV) have increased during COVID-19 lockdowns.** So far, comprehensive data on the prevalence of GBV during COVID-19 lockdowns and school closures is unavailable. However, there are widespread concerns that girls have been at increased risk of violence particularly within the household. Lockdowns may have increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, early and forced marriage, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.¹⁴

8 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.1.

9 UNGEI. (2016). A whole school approach to prevent school-related gender-based violence: Minimum standards and monitoring framework. UNGEI. <https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Whole-School-Approach-to-Prevent-SRGBV-Minimum-Standards-Framework-UNG EI.pdf>.

10 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.2.

11 "Safeguarding" is an umbrella term that encompasses protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and child protection. For more details, see: INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.3.

12 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.3.

13 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.1.

14 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.1.

- **Legislation offers insufficient protection to girls:** While most crisis-affected countries have some legal protection from violence in schools in place, this often does not extend to comprehensive protection from corporal punishment, psychological violence and physical and sexual GBV. Of the 41 crisis-affected countries with available data, 14 (34%) offer no protection from violence in schools, and 23 (56%) offer limited protection, and only four countries (9.7%) offer protection from corporal punishment and all violence.¹⁵
- **Limited evidence on effective responses for SRGBV.** There is still limited evidence on effective programming and strategies to counter SRGBV, particularly within the humanitarian contexts.¹⁶ A rigorous review of approaches to addressing SRGBV found that the studies on the effectiveness or impact of these approaches were primarily of programs that lasted less than a year. Few studies engaged with policy, there were few qualitative, mixed methods, or longitudinal studies, and very few studies were from Asia or the Middle East.¹⁷

Recommendations

Coordinated and multi-stakeholder efforts are needed to ensure that girls are protected from all forms of violence in and around schools. Some suggested actions are listed as follows:

Programming

- Governments and education providers should strengthen institutional and program safeguarding to ensure that girls and boys are protected from SRGBV. Psychosocial support should be made available to survivors of SRGBV.
- Governments and education actors should collaborate with teachers, communities, and relevant stakeholders to develop, implement, monitor gender-responsive codes of conduct.
- Governments and education actors should provide support and training to teachers to create safe and gender-responsive learning environments, and to ensure that they are aware of and confident using SRGBV referral mechanisms.
- Governments and education providers should adopt promising approaches like Whole School Approach to change attitudes, behaviors, and practices across a range of actors in order to prevent SRGBV.¹⁸

¹⁵ Authors' calculations based on Mind the Gap 2, Annex 2.

¹⁶ See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.

¹⁷ Parkes, J., Heslop, J., Ross, F. J., Westerveld, R., & Unterhalter, E. (2016). A rigorous review of global research evidence on policy and practice on school-related gender-based violence. UNICEF.

¹⁸ UNGEI. (2016). Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence is Critical for Safe Learning Environments in Refugee Contexts. UNGEI. <https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/Addressing-school-related-gender-based-violence-is-critical-for-safe-learning-environments-in-refugee-contexts-%28briefing%20paper%29-2016-eng.pdf>

Policy and planning

- Governments should integrate SRGBV response and referral mechanisms into national policies and education sector plans to provide comprehensive protection at schools and on the way to and from schools.
- Donors and education actors should provide funding and technical support to governments of crisis-affected countries to design and implement policies and programs to address the causes of SRGBV and promote survivor-centered good practice to support and reintegrate survivors into learning spaces.
- Governments should integrate comprehensive sexuality education into national curricula to help young people to establish healthy relationships and make informed decisions about their sexuality.¹⁹

Funding

- Governments and funding partners should invest in research on addressing SRGBV. This should include research on the different protection needs of girls and boys, the drivers of SRGBV, and the effectiveness of strategies to counter SRGBV in crisis-affected contexts.

Data collection, monitoring, and analysis

- Data collection on sex-disaggregated data on violence in and around school should be integrated into national surveys; build-in impact evaluation into programme design and development to build more evidence on the impact of policy processes on reducing SRGBV.
- Governments and education providers and researchers should collect more and better data in order to strengthen our understanding of SRGBV in a range of contexts, including data on prevalence of violent incidents, children's responses to violence, the norms and structures underpinning violence, and school safety and other supportive environments; these data should be disaggregated by key social identity factors, such as gender.
- Researchers should adopt and follow robust ethical and child protection procedures and ensure that data is collected and presented in a way that respects privacy and confidentiality of the children and doesn't retraumatize survivors.

19 UNESCO. (2018). International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. UNESCO. <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>

Further resources on SRGBV:

- **ECW, INEE, UNGEI (2021). EiE-GenKit, Section 5.3: Gender in EiE Protection and Well-Being Interventions**. This resource offers guidelines to understand the rationale for, and how to reflect, gender responsiveness in protection and well-being interventions within EiE programmes
- **INEE (2019). INEE Guidance Note on Gender, Section 2.2: Protection and well-being**. This section of the guidance note offers guidelines for ensuring protection and wellbeing of children and for preventing and responding to gender based violence within schools.
- **UNGEI (2019). Ending school-related gender-based violence: a series of thematic briefs**. This series of briefs summarizes approaches to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).
- **IASC, GBV AoR (2018). How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area**. This “pocket guide” is designed to provide humanitarian practitioners with concrete information on how to support a GBV survivors in contexts where there is no GBV actor or referral pathway available.

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