



**Gender-based violence in and around schools prevents millions of children worldwide from fulfilling their academic potential**

*The EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO and UNGEI call for urgent action to combat school-related gender-based violence*

**NEW YORK, 10 March 2015** – Gender-based violence in school settings is having a damaging impact on the education of millions of children across the world according to [a new paper released today](#) at the Commission on the Status of Women, by the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO and United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI).

“During the 20 years since the Beijing Declaration on women’s empowerment was adopted, we’ve seen increased activity and interest in stamping out gender-based violence. But gender based violence in and around the classroom has largely been invisible,” said Nora Fyles, Head of the UNGEI Secretariat. “The elimination of school-related gender-based violence cannot be left to chance. National governments with civil society and other development partners must do more to protect children and prosecute perpetrators if quality, inclusive education for all is to be achieved.”

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), which includes verbal or sexual harassment, sexual abuse, corporal punishment and bullying, can result in increased absenteeism, poor performance, school dropouts, low self-esteem, depression, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, all of which have a detrimental impact on learning and wellbeing.

However, the true scale and impact of SRGBV remains hidden due to a lack of evidence. More extensive and robust data are needed, as well as comparative surveys and approaches to data collection.

“It is clear that SRGBV is creating a dangerous learning environment for children all over the world, especially for adolescent girls,” said Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO. “School should be a safe haven for young people, especially for those in marginalized and conflict-affected countries. It is vital

that the international community works together to ensure better research is carried out to understand the scale and scope of SRGBV and to develop policies to eliminate it post-2015.”

Studies suggest that adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, harassment and exploitation, including in school settings. Data shows that 10% of adolescent girls in low and middle income countries reported incidences of forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts in the previous year. And a national survey in South Africa showed that almost 8% of all secondary school girls have experienced severe sexual assault or rape while at school.

SRGBV isn't just confined to low income countries but is a global phenomenon. A study in the Netherlands found that 27% of students had been sexually harassed by school personnel.

While studies on sexual violence show a greater prevalence among girls, further research into SRGBV reveals that boys are also at risk.

One of the most widely documented forms of violence in schools is bullying. An estimated 246 million boys and girls experience verbal bullying each year.

Chronic poverty, conflict and crises, unstable living conditions and discrimination due to sexual orientation, disability or ethnicity are all factors that amplify the risk of SRGBV.

“We know that SRGBV impacts children’s health and well-being, as well as school participation, learning and completion,” said Aaron Benavot, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report. “Addressing SRGBV will increase attendance, enhance children’s quality of education and improve learning outcomes. This must be a vital component of any post-2015 agenda.”

The EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO and UNGEI call for:

- National governments to incorporate SRGBV prevention, protection and accountability mechanisms into national policies and action plans.
- Better research and monitoring so that the prevalence of SRGBV, its impact on children’s education and the risk factors within different countries and contexts can be fully understood.
- Teachers, health workers, police, local communities, religious leaders and civil society organisations to work together – at the local and national level – to implement programmes that effectively combat SRGBV.
- Tackling SRGBV to be clearly recognized as a vital part of achieving equality in education within the education goal of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

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**Notes to Editors**

Developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report is an authoritative reference that aims to inform, influence and sustain genuine commitment towards Education for All.

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