

Safe to Learn

Gender Technical Note

Annex to the Safe to Learn strategy and result framework 2021-24

The purpose of this note is:

- 1** To promote a common understanding of the gender transformative approach of Safe to Learn in the context of the new Safe to Learn Strategy (2021-24) and its results framework;
- 2** To clarify gender-related definitions to be used in implementing the STL strategy and its results framework.

Why a gender transformative approach is needed for Safe to Learn?

- Sustainable solutions to violence require to identify, name, and tackle root causes for violence, not only respond to its manifestation or mitigate its consequences. Violence is the result of the combination of context-based risk factors. Among them, patriarchy is arguably one of the most pervasive, universal and critical one. Patriarchy is based on unequal gender norms and endorses the use of power over others to sustain the domination of a certain group (usually heterosexual males) on others (females, children, LGBTIQ+, racial groups). Patriarchy also manifests at the systemic level and perpetuates violence at that level too. As such, if we are to end violence, we need to acknowledge this and adopt a gender transformative approach.
- **Gender inequality and violence mutually reinforce each other, with gender inequality increasing vulnerability to violence¹** and violence often used to **enforce** unequal gender norms.
- **Violence happens along a gendered continuum**, where **gender norms** and socially constructed **power relations** and dynamics, based on gender identity and/or gender expression (as well as on age and other) play a key role. Differences in the social value assigned to males and females in the **patriarchal system** create a **hierarchy** that **typically** grants more power, privilege and resources to **males over females**. **Patriarchal norms** devalue females and reinforce males dominance and aggression justifying violence, blaming victims for the violence they experience and prioritizing the reputations of perpetrators, families and institutions over the well-being of those who experience violence², alighting the **continuum of violence**. The **patriarchal system** installs a hierarchy among forms of violence that tends to acknowledge the severity of some (when men are mostly victims) while undermining the impacts of others (that women and children mostly experience).³
- **Girls and boys experience different forms of violence, with forms of violence and risk factors influenced by gender and social norms and power dynamics – and evolving following the life cycle**. For example, girls are particularly at risk of sexual violence and harassment, including on the way to and from school,⁴ while boys are more likely to have been involved in a physical fight, have been physically attacked⁵ and experience harsh discipline.⁶ Boys

¹ UNICEF, 2021

² Ibid.

³ STL Strategy 2021-2024, based on Hume, M. (2004); Hume, M. (2009); Heise, L. (1994); Heise, L. (1998). See also Fèvre, C. (2013) and Fèvre (2015).

⁴ UNICEF, 2014. Evidence from Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Kenya shows for example that on the way to and from school respectively 23%, 19% and 27% of girls experience sexual violence versus 15%, 7% and 14% of boys respectively. Such high rates of violence create barriers to girls' education access and retention and contribute to the high rates of early pregnancies. 120 million girls are estimated to have suffered some form of forced sexual contact before the age of 20 years.

⁵ Ibid 45.4% of boys and 25.4% of girls have been involved in a physical fight in the past year; 38.6% of boys and 25.9% of girls have been physically attacked in the past year.

⁶ Across all regions in PISA data boys report a higher median prevalence than girls of feeling they have been more harshly disciplined than other students



are more likely than girls to experience physical bullying, while girls are more likely to experience psychological bullying, to be cyberbullied via messages or bullied based on physical appearance.⁷

- Girls and boys are not homogenous groups, and violence may result from the interaction of gender⁸ with other social markers of difference⁹ - such as age, disability, socio-economic status, migrant status, race, nationality, caste.
- **School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)** is a human rights violation which hampers achieving universal education.¹⁰ SRGBV can take place both in physical spaces or online. SRGBV is defined as "acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics. It also refers to the differences between girls' and boys' experiences of and vulnerabilities to violence (UNESCO GMR, UNGEI, 2015).¹¹ SRGBV can manifest in the form of physical violence, bullying, verbal or sexual harassment, non-consensual touching, sexual coercion and assault, and rape. Corporal punishment and discipline in schools often manifest in gendered and discriminatory ways. Other implicit acts of SRGBV stem from everyday school and classroom practices that reinforce gender stereotypes, discrimination and violence. Lastly SRGBV can take place online.
- **Schools and education are part of communities and society.** As such, a school may reflect the community that hosts it or serve as an agent of change for that community – in a community which condones violence and gender inequality the school may align with this or promote change within and beyond its walls. **Violence and gender inequality can be tackled through schools and education**, which can play an important role in promoting social norms change, reshaping masculinities and feminities, refusing the normalisation and acceptability of violence, strengthening life skills, empowering girls and promoting and supporting change.
- **Social norms and beliefs are a key contributing factor to violence against children** (for example to violence against children with disabilities). **Restrictive social norms about gender identity and sexual orientation also contribute to violence against LGBTQI+ children**, those perceived as LGBTQI+ **and those who do not conform to stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.** These students are particularly vulnerable to school violence and bullying, perpetrated by both their peers and teachers.¹²
- **Violence against children and violence against women are linked**, with children living in household affected by intimate partners violence more likely to experience violent discipline at home.¹³ Children who live in a conflictive household, where the mother or other women are chronically abused tend to have higher probability to either perpetrate violence or be victimized when they grow up, which is made visible through the **intergenerational transmission of violence**¹⁴, which has a **strong gender dimension** made visible through the **gendered continuum of violence.**¹⁵
- **Violence against girls (and women) and gender inequalities** are exacerbated by the **Covid-19 crisis and related confinement measures.**¹⁶ School closures and education disruption bring high risks for education and gender equality.¹⁷ **Emerging data show that since the COVID-19 outbreak violence against girls (and women), particularly in the form of domestic**

7 UNESCO, undated. There are however differences according to geographical regions, which should be analysed and considered for intervention design.

8 UNICEF, 2021.

9 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, undated.

10 Ibid

11 UNGEI, UNESCO, 2015

12 For further details: UNESCO, 2019 and O'Malley, 2018

13 UNICEF, 2021

14 UNICEF, 2006

15 Fulu, E., R. Jewkes, T. Roselli and C. Garcia-Moreno, 2013; Contreras, M., et al., 2012

16 UNFPA, 2020

17 GPE, 2020





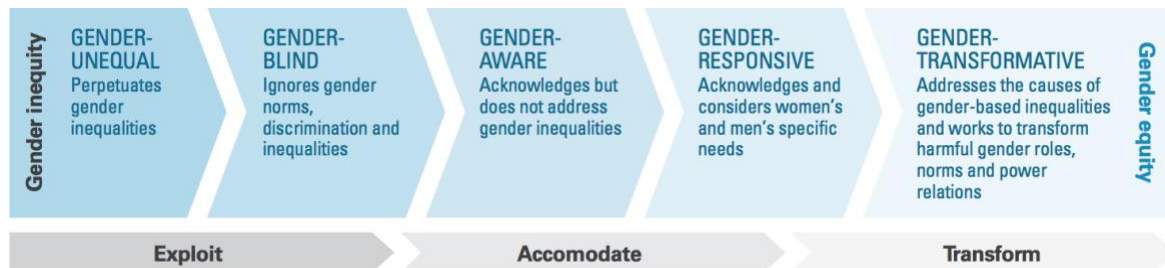
violence, has intensified. ¹⁸ Adolescent girls are in a particularly vulnerable situation due to both their age and gender. It is estimated for example that as a result of the pandemic, over the next decade, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of **child marriage**.¹⁹

- **Violence against girls (and women) is exacerbated in humanitarian contexts and during armed conflict.** Armed groups have targeted and attacked female students and teachers and their schools due to their opposition to girls' education and gender equality in countries experiencing armed conflict. These attacks included bombings of girls' schools, abduction, rape, forced marriage and other gender-based violence against girl students and female teachers by armed parties. The types of attacks that girls experience, including rape, makes it particularly difficult for them to continue their education due to pregnancy and the stigma of sexual violence, as well as the health consequences.²⁰

What is gender transformation?

A gender transformative approach is an approach that **addresses the root causes of gender-based violence and gender-based inequalities and works to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power imbalances at the roots of gender-based violence**,²¹ to start a virtuous cycle of non-violence and gender equality. It goes beyond looking at differences based on sex and differentiated practical needs of men and women, girls and boys. It seeks to challenge unequal gender norms and discrimination that are both socially constructed to strengthen equality and inclusion.

The gender transformative approach in the gender continuum



Source: UNICEF and UNFPA, Technical note on gender-transformative approaches to the Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase II: a summary for practitioners, 2020. Adapted, with permission, from: Pederson, A. et al. 'Gender-transformative health promotion for women – a framework for action', Health Promotion International, vol. 30, no. 1, March 2015.

What does this mean for Safe to Learn?

Gender equality, a fundamental human right, is a necessary foundation for ending violence in and through schools and is one of the core principles at the heart of the STL 3-year strategy (2021-2024), which is aligned to the SDGs – particularly 4, 5 and 16. Safe to Learn **gender transformative approach** is rooted into **STL vision** that:

1. All children everywhere, including the most vulnerable ones, have access to **safe, non-violent and inclusive** learning environments and
2. All actions aimed at improving **learning outcomes** adopt a violence prevention, gender transformative, and inclusive lens to have greater impact.

This approach has the potential of really being **transformational**, being a **collective effort** from a major coalition of governments and global organisations that have joined forces to reduce violence in

¹⁸ UN Women, 2021

¹⁹ UNICEF, 2021

²⁰ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.

²¹ UNFPA, UNICEF, 2020





schools and use schools as a platform for safer communities. Safe to Learn members include major organizations and experts working for gender equality. Safe to Learn is part of The Global Working Group to end SRGBV, led by UNGEI/UNESCO, which convened an expert group on measurement of SRGBV.

Safe to Learn gender transformative approach will be mainstreamed along all phases of STL work – including situation analyses and diagnostics, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting – and **along all components of the two strategic pillars of the STL strategy**, (i) **global advocacy** and (ii) **country engagement** in its three **levels of country of focus** – (1) **differentiated approach** (2) **STL label of quality** and (3) **capacity strengthening**.

Tools and principles to apply the gender transformative approach of STL include:

- Ensuring that **gender analysis** is applied to all STL tools, benchmarks, standards and programming guidance so that the differential impact of violence on boys and girls and gender diverse children is taken into account.
- Strategies, interventions and investments seek to address these gendered barriers and risks and as such work to shift gender norms and unequal power dynamics that lead to violence.
- **Being inclusive-** hardwiring gender equality, including where boys are at a disadvantage, analysing the intersectionality of vulnerability – and **engaging** both girls and women and **boys and men** in transformational change.
- Generating and using **gender data:**
 - Ensure **gender statistics/** that all data generated by STL and partners are disaggregated at minimum by gender, disability and age.
 - Ensure that data collection methods take into account social and cultural factors that may introduce error, underreporting, or bias in the data.
 - Ensure that data are collected in an ethical, age-appropriate and gender sensitive way, ensuring the safety and confidentiality of participants reporting on violence.
- Using data from **Gender norms scales** that measure gender attitudes and beliefs along with prevalence data to demonstrate results/impact.
- Encouraging partners (including STL grantees) to use **tools** that embed gender analysis and disaggregated data to design and report on programmes/interventions.
- Adopting an **intersectionality perspective**²² that acknowledges that girls and boys are not homogenous groups, and that violence and inequality may result from the interaction of gender with other social markers of difference.

Definitions²³

Gender - The socially and culturally constructed ideas of what it is to be male or female in a specific context.

Gender analysis - A critical and systematic examination of differences in the constraints and opportunities available to an individual or group of individuals based on their sex and gender identity.

Gender-Based Violence - Violence directed at an individual based on their biological sex, gender identity, gender expression or failure to adhere to socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity.

Gender equality - The state of being equal in status, rights and opportunities, and of being valued equally, regardless of sex or gender identity and/or expression.

Gender equity - Fairness in treatment of all people regardless of sex or gender identity and/or

²² Adapted from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, undated

²³ Sources: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, undated; UNICEF, UNGEI, Global Working Group to end SRGBV, UNESCO, Safe to Learn, 2019; UNICEF, 2021.





expression. This concept 'recognizes that individuals have different needs and power based on their sex or gender identity and/or expression, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies inequities.'²⁴

Gender norms - The collectively held expectations and beliefs about how people should behave and interact in specific social settings and during different stages of their lives based on their sex or gender identity.

Gender sensitive indicators - involving gathering sex-disaggregated data and ensuring that data is analysed through a gender lens.

Gender transformative approach - approach that addresses the root causes of gender-based violence and gender-based inequalities and works to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power imbalances.

School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) - acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics. It also refers to the differences between girls' and boys' experiences of and vulnerabilities to violence. (UNESCO GMR, UNGEI, 2015). SRGBV can take place both in physical spaces (ex. in and around schools as per the above definition) and online.

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²⁴ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, undated.





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