

The Africa Regional SGBV Network Learning Brief Series

Fostering a Multisectoral Response to Violence Against Children
in East and Southern Africa

Learning Updates from Swaziland (Brief #3)

Nearly half of girls aged 13-24 in Swaziland suffer some form of sexual violence, according to the country's 2007 Violence Against Children (VAC) survey. About 10% of girls reported experiencing sexual violence in school in particular. The Africa Regional Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Network, set up in 2006, is addressing VAC in four countries. This *Learning Brief* is one in a series of five that share critical, initial understandings of VAC that will help us respond more effectively to the problem.

SWAGAA

The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) is recognized as Swaziland's leading SGBV prevention, response, and advocacy organization. It has worked for the last two decades to address SGBV in Swaziland. In response to



OVER A THIRD
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the scale of
violence
against children

in Swaziland, SWAGAA launched a girls' empowerment clubs (GEC) program in schools around the country. The clubs were effective in improving girls' social assets, increasing their awareness and positively changing their attitudes towards SGBV - including improving their intention to report SGBV experiences. The intervention was

less successful in changing the possibility that students would decline - or report - unwanted sexual advances from teachers or fellow students. SWAGAA is working to build girls' self-efficacy against school-related gender-based violence.

What We're Already Learning

Through a baseline study in 3 public secondary schools, SWAGAA talked to school-going girls aged 16-18 years. ***This is what they told SWAGAA:***

- Over 1 in 5 girls feel unsafe or fearful walking to school.
- 15% of girls feel unsafe or fearful *in* school.
- Over a third of girls (35%) agree that sexual abuse is common in their school.
- A quarter report receiving unwanted sexual comments from their fellow students.
- 1 in 5 girls report being coaxed into having sex when they did not want to.
- 62% would not refuse a teacher's request for sex
- 66% would not refuse a fellow student's request for sex
- Most girls are comfortable with the idea of reporting sexual harassment by a student (81%) or by a teacher (77%) to an *external service provider*. They are less comfortable reporting to teachers. 32% of girls felt they couldn't turn to a female teacher to report an experience of school-based sexual violence and 72% felt they couldn't turn to a male teacher.

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What We're Doing about It

SWAGAA is tackling SGBV in schools in three different ways:

- 1) Helping girls to take more control of their school experience through a new self-efficacy module in the Girls' Empowerment Clubs
 - 2) Encouraging girls, and giving them the channels, to report SGBV through the Clubs
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3) Working with teachers and school authorities - making sure they understand Ministry of Education Policies and Regulations related to SGBV in Swaziland. SWAGAA wants teachers to become anti-SGBV champions in their schools.

Since 2006, the Africa Regional SGBV Network has worked to build effective responses to SGBV in low-resource settings, focusing on those who have experienced violence, as well as on violence prevention. From 2014-2017, the network is addressing the needs of two vulnerable populations – children and refugees.

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