



WANTED:

Schools free from sexual violence and harassment

Educators have a professional, moral and legal duty to protect learners from any harm while they are at school.

They therefore have a leading part to play in protecting learners from sexual violence and harassment – which currently is occurring at too many of our schools.

To support them in doing so, the Department of Education has developed *Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Violence and Harassment*.

In Generations 4 we focused on:

- Understanding the types of behaviour considered to be acts of sexual violence and/or harassment;
- The importance of a clear learner's Code of Conduct to express types of behaviour that are unacceptable, as well as consequences a learner would face should they break these school rules; and
- The Code of Ethics for educators, as well as the legal obligations and restrictions concerning the actions of educators.

In this issue of Generations, we'll be looking at a number of strategies schools can use to help prevent incidents of sexual violence and harassment from taking place.

These range from practical steps to creating a safer school to shifting attitudes to do with gender relationships.

Straight talk:

DEFINING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In the *Guidelines*, the basic definition of sexual harassment is **unwanted conduct of a sexual nature**. It includes any **unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct**.

The *Guidelines* state that sexual attention is sexual harassment if:

- The behaviour is repeated (although a single incident can be considered as being sexual harassment);
- The recipient (or person on the receiving end of such behaviour) has made it clear that she/he considers the behaviour to be offensive; and/or
- The perpetrator (or person carrying out the action/s) know, or should have known, that the behaviour is unacceptable.

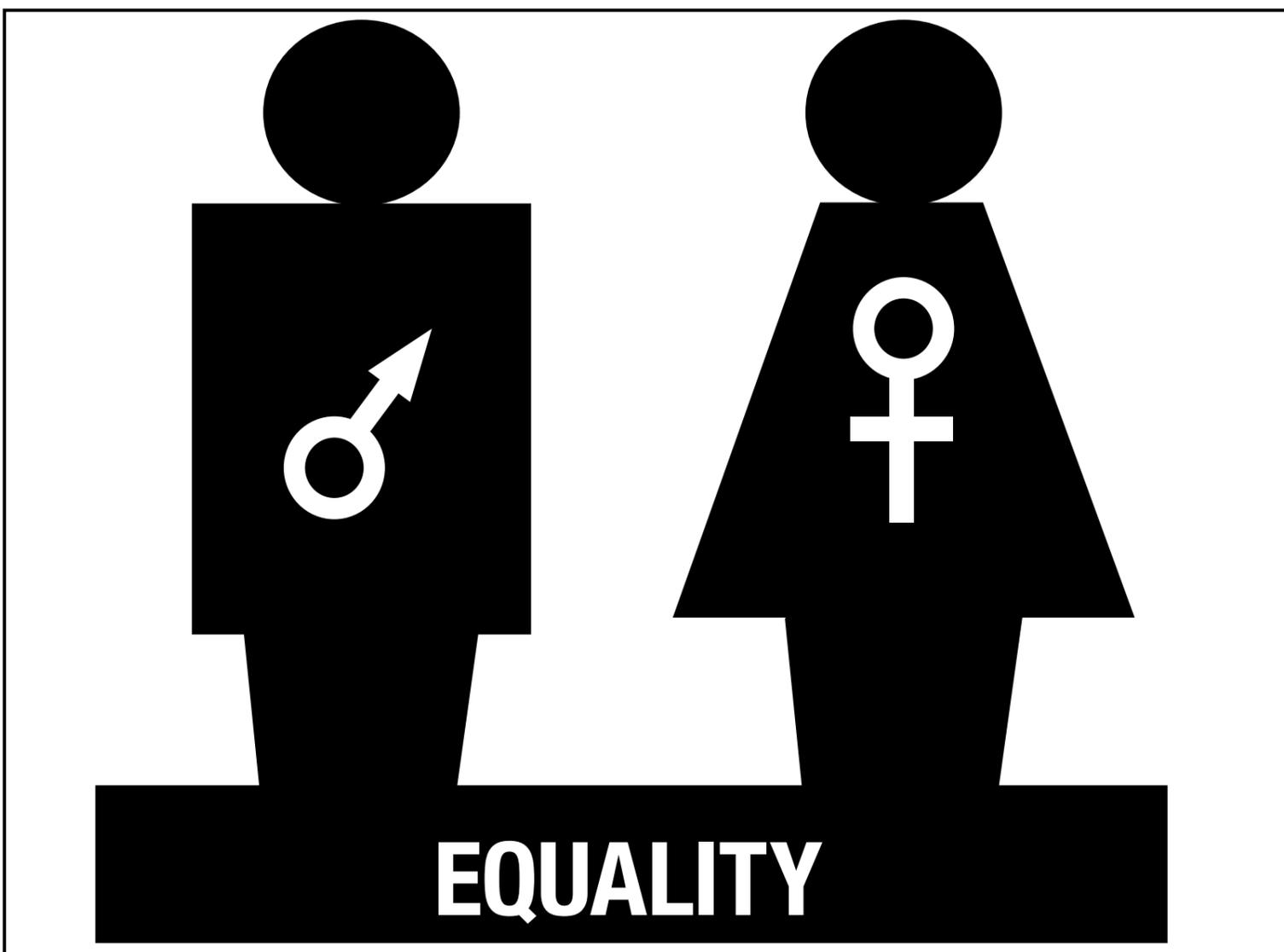
Sexual harassment can be committed by and against **a male or a female person**.

Straight talk:

DEFINING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The *Guidelines* define sexual violence as **any sexual act or attempted sexual act using intimidation, threats of violence, or physical force**.

- Such acts at school may include:
- Assault, forced sex or rape;



- Sexual harassment; and
- Sexual abuse through the sexualised touching of another's intimate parts, and/or forcing any person to touch any person's intimate parts.

Know the signs

Some signs that point to a learner having been abused are easy to see, such as bruises or scratches resulting from physical abuse.

But there are also types of behaviour to be aware of that could also signal abuse:

- Loss of self-esteem and confidence;
- Depression;
- Emotional withdrawal;
- Absenteeism;
- Loss of interest in school work and resulting drop in achievement;
- Difficulty in concentrating in class; and
- Anger, which may be expressed towards the perpetrator, but may also be directed towards others.

Remember: Educators have a legal duty to notify authorities if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child is being abused or is in need of care.

A Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa

The Bill of Responsibilities is a resource for schools developed by the Department of Education and the National Religious Leaders' Forum in 2008.

This Bill outlines the responsibilities that flow from each of the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Educators should use this Bill to teach learners about rights, responsibilities, and our country's Constitution.

The following is the responsibility related to the right to equality:

The right to equality places on me the responsibility to

- treat every person equally and fairly, and
- not to discriminate unfairly against anyone on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth.

South Africa is a diverse nation, and equality does not mean uniformity, or that we are all the same. Our country's motto: !KE E: /XARRA //KE, meaning "Diverse people unite", calls on all of us to build a common sense of belonging and national pride, celebrating the very diversity which makes us who we are. It also calls on us to extend our friendship and warmth to all nations and all the peoples of the world in our endeavour to build a better world.

To get your copy of the Bill, visit www.education.gov.za or contact the Gender Equity Directorate (turn to page 3 for contact details).



You've got the will. Now find the way.

Schools are not islands: they are part of our broader society. So what happens in schools will in many ways reflect what goes on outside the school gates. The high levels of sexual violence and harassment taking place in South Africa generally therefore make the work of teachers in this sensitive area that much more difficult. But it doesn't make it impossible. A combination of commitment; creativity; practical planning; and good teaching and management practices go a long way towards making schools safe havens for educators and learners alike.

Schools can lead the way!

Our country's past is full of stories of injustice and oppression.

To ensure that this culture of injustice is truly put behind us, it is up to each one of us to practice the democratic principles set out in our Constitution.

Remember that schools themselves have enormous power to change communities – for the better.

By building and maintaining a human rights culture with values such as human dignity, equality and freedom as its pillars, schools have the power to improve the learning and teaching experience of their own community, but also to lead all of us towards a society free from sexual violence and harassment.

A simple starting point for understanding gender is to recognise that it begins with sexual difference.

It refers to how society shapes the identity of each person based on whether the person is a "male", or a "female".

For example, society has certain expectations of how males and females should behave, and the roles they should play.

Males are expected to be assertive and dominating, and to have positions of authority (for example, as "man of the house").

Female are expected to be submissive and caring, and to respect the authority of the male.

Gender in our daily lives

Because these gender expectations are so widespread in our society, many of us come to see these defined identities as being "normal", or "natural".

For example, cleaning and making food are generally regarded as women's work.

In the staffroom, it may be seen as "normal" therefore, that the female staff members make tea for their male colleagues.

In the classroom, girl learners are often expected to clean the classrooms.

It is in all these everyday gestures and experiences that gender impacts on the lives of men and women, girls and boys.

Gender can be limiting

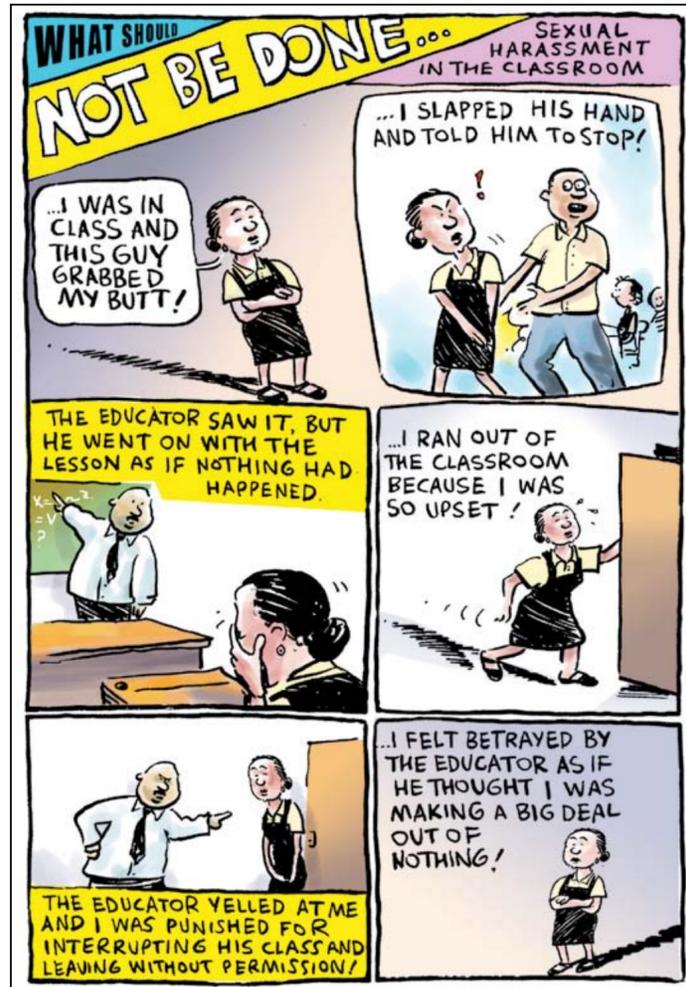
Several problems can arise from this.

One is that the identity and expectations placed on one because of one's sex may not reflect the qualities and abilities of the individual.

For example, a man may have qualities that would make him an ideal "house-husband", running the home and caring for the children.

However, society expects him, as a male, to go into the world and be the bread winner.

Even though this may not suit his abilities or desires, he may do what society expects of him, rather than facing consequences that may come from him taking on a role that society defines as being for females.



Gender and power

Where gender issues can really create problems is when the power relations between males and females are very unequal.

Our Constitution may officially describe men and women as being equal, but the reality is often very different.

Men, who are also physically stronger, often enjoy more power in society than women.

The abuse of this power is a major factor behind incidents of sexual violence and harassment.

Be gender aware

While our laws and constitution give males and females equal status in society, and guarantee certain rights to everybody, the reality on the ground can be very different.

A useful tool to help males and females to enjoy more equal relationships is for everybody

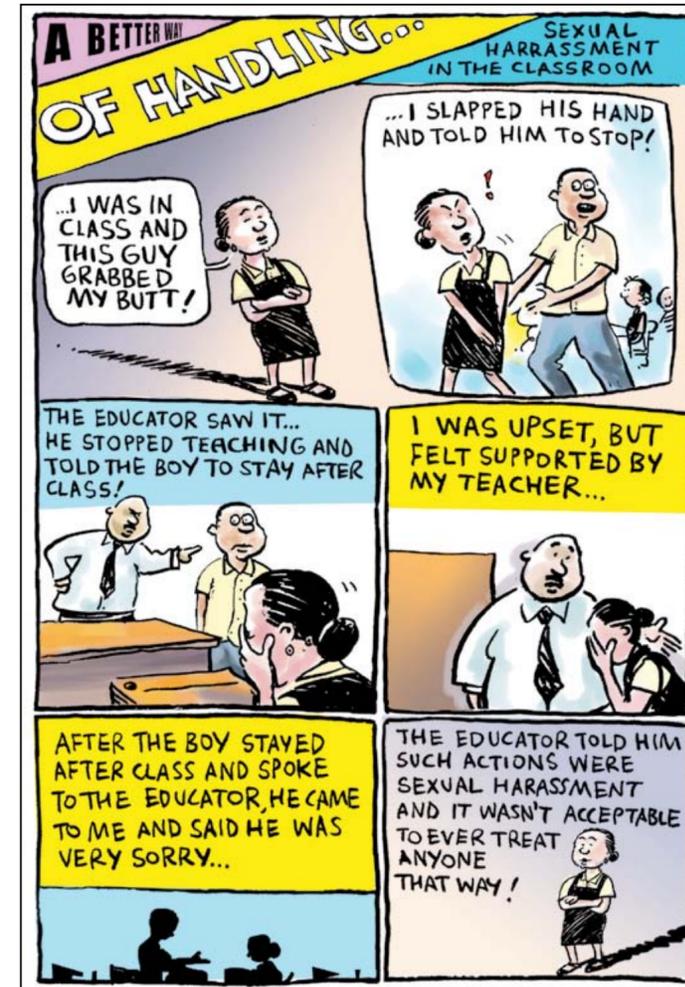
to identify behaviour that stems from these unequal power relations between genders.

For example, males are expected to be sexually assertive, while females are expected to be available to male sexual advances.

However, for many women, such sexual advances are unwelcome, and they experience it as sexual harassment or abuse. The law exists to protect women from such unwelcome sexual harassment – but it is up to them to recognise it as such, and to stand up for their rights.

Being able to see that what is apparently "normal" behaviour is actually an expression of unequal gender relations is one step towards being able to protect your rights.

And, most importantly, once teachers know their rights and can exercise them, they will be in a better position to know the rights of their learners and protect them.



EDUCATORS: WALK THE TALK

Leading by example is the best way to teach learners to treat each other with dignity and respect.

This is what makes it important for educators not only to have a clear understanding of what gender is, but also to self-reflect and recognise assumptions, attitudes and types of behaviour that are based on out-of-date gender identities.

Each of us can self-reflect by asking ourselves questions that explore whether males and females in our personal lives, are treated equally:

• Do I expect females in my family to do the cooking, cleaning and to serve the males? Or are these household duties shared equally between the genders?

• Are young males in my family given more freedoms and resources than the young females? Or are they equally shared?

• Who in my family makes the decisions? The males or females?

Start with yourself: In the staffroom

The same kinds of questions can be asked about gender relations between adults in your workplace. Remember that you're trying to identify whether male and female colleagues enjoy equality in their relations:

• Do males generally have more authority over female colleagues in my staffroom?

• Do male teachers often comment on female colleagues' appearance, rather than the other way round? Are such comments about their appearance welcomed by females, or could they be seen as being inappropriate/sexual harassment?

Start with yourself: In the classroom

Educators shouldn't think that teaching learners about gender is only the job of the Life Orientation (LO) teacher.

All subject areas and lessons present opportunities to build gender awareness and gender sensitivity in learners.

At the same time, you should reflect on how your own gender stereotypes or expectations play out among their learners in the classroom:

• Do boys assert themselves more in class than girls, for example by putting their hands up to answer questions more often? If so, are girls encouraged to be more confident and to speak up in class?

• Are classroom chores such as cleaning divided equally between boy and girl learners?

• Do you have higher expectations of boy learners in subjects such as maths and science than of girl learners? How can you encourage and support girls to overcome the gender stereotype that "girls aren't clever enough to do the really hard subjects"?

• Are boys discouraged from following careers that are traditionally seen as being for women, such as teaching and nursing?

• Many textbooks represent males and females in ways that reflect the out-of-date ways of thinking about gender. For example, some History books only show men being active decision-makers and are completely silent about the role women have played. Pointing these biases out to learners is one way of making them aware of gender-related issues, as well as helping them to become critical thinkers.

• People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA): Offers gender workshops to schools nationally. Tel: (011) 642-4345

• Child Welfare SA: Offer resources and workshops to schools nationally. Tel: (011) 492-2950 Email: gauteng1@childwelfare.org.za

• Life Orientation (LO) has a major part to play There is a wealth of opportunities for LO educators to build a sense of equality between boy and girl learners.

In both primary and high school LO curricula, Learning Outcomes focus specifically on power relations between males and females. Most importantly, the curricula also set out the goals of building self-esteem and self-awareness in all learners. Equally, they cover "citizen education", which promotes the human rights values that are at the heart of our modern democracy.

All of this should not only build a sense of empowerment in potential victims of sexual violence and harassment, but also communicate a sense of "right" and "wrong" that will make it less likely for learners to become perpetrators of this unacceptable behaviour.

• Lesson plan: Exploring the impact of gender Here is a suggestion of an activity LO teachers could use to explore gender stereotypes and their effects.

1. Brainstorm with your class all the words describing "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics. Write each word on a card or piece of paper.

2. Give each learner one or more of these cards, and ask them then to pass the cards to the next learner, until you say stop.

3. When you say stop, ask the learners to tape the card that they have received on to the front of their clothes.

4. Ask each learner to describe how they feel about being "labelled" with that particular characteristic.

5. Discuss how fixing roles for males and females can limit the life opportunities for both men and women. Ask the class to imagine a world where each individual is free to follow their personal interests and fulfil their own potential, regardless of their gender.

- Adapted from *Gender and relationships, A Practical Action Kit for Young People*, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001.

• Where to find support
• Contact your district or regional education office and speak to the gender focal person about holding a gender workshop at your school.

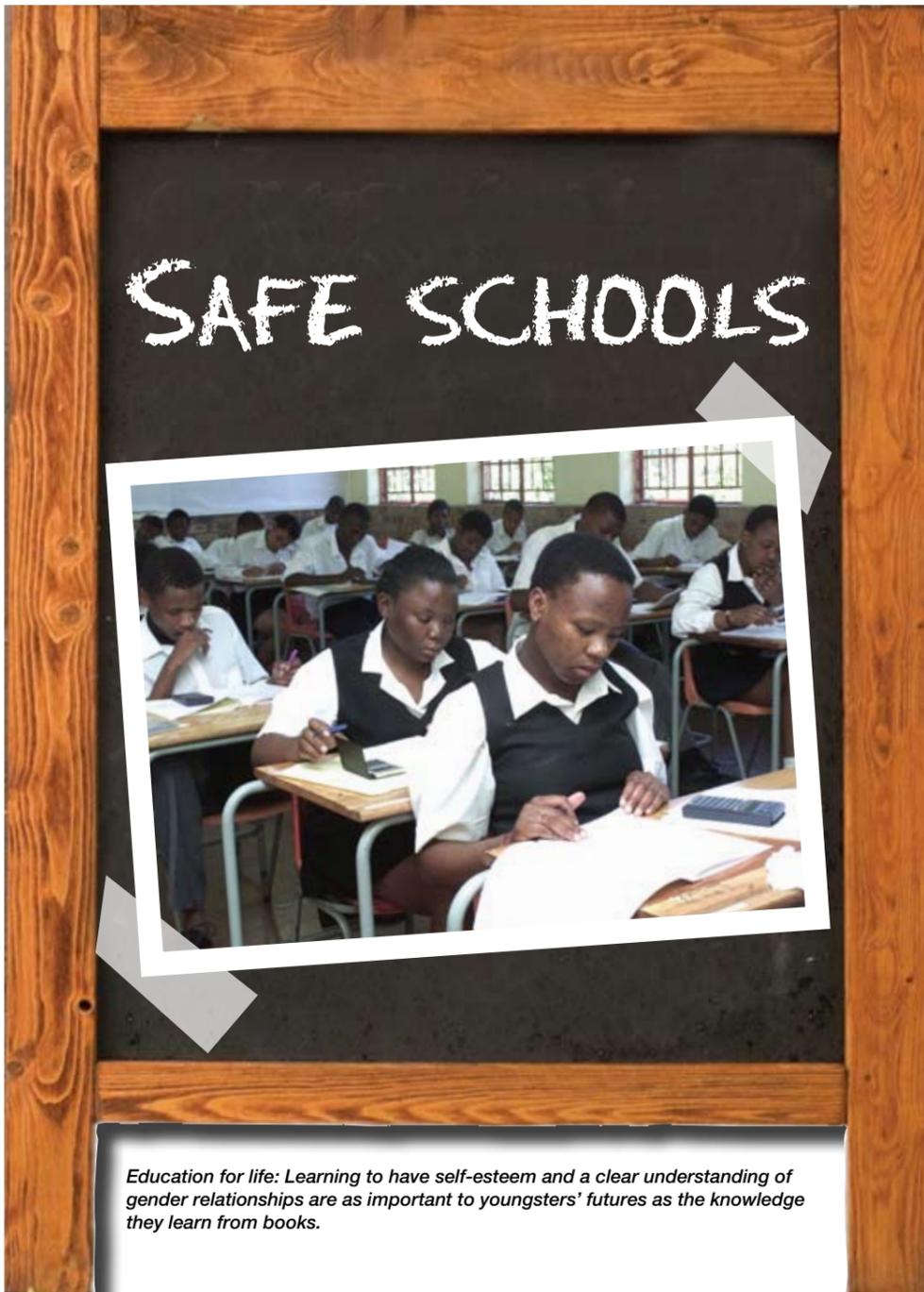
• Families SA: Offers gender workshops to schools nationally. Tel: (011) 975-7106/7/8

YOU'RE NOT ALONE
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HELPLINE
0800 202 933

Contact details:
Website: www.education.gov.za
Thutong Education Portal:
www.thutong.org.za

GENDERATIONS

Practical ways to make the difference



Education for life: Learning to have self-esteem and a clear understanding of gender relationships are as important to youngsters' futures as the knowledge they learn from books.

There are plenty of concrete steps schools can take to create a safer school environment.

While some of them could involve all teachers and learners, others are steps that school management teams (SMTs) could take.

Identifying areas of higher risk

SMTs could undertake a "safety audit" of their school. This involves identifying specific places on the school grounds where incidents

of sexual violence and harassment have occurred, or are more likely to occur, such as in the school toilets or remote areas of the school grounds.

In the same way, SMTs could identify times of day when learners or teachers may be more at risk.

For example, these could be times when there are few other people around, such as early in the morning or after school hours, or during "free times" at school such as during the morning break or lunch.

Taking steps to lower the risk

Once the SMT has completed the safety audit and identified areas and times of greater risk, they should come up with strategies to reduce such risks.

For example, senior learners and/or teachers could take turns monitoring risk areas such as toilets or remote areas of the school.

Most importantly, schools must ensure that they have developed a Code of Conduct that clearly sets out rules learners are expected to follow while at school, and punitive measures they will face if they break these rules. **For detailed information on this, see "Setting out school rules for learners" in Generations 4.**

SMTs should also make sure that educators are well aware of all the legal obligations and restrictions that exist for practising educators.

For detailed information on this, see "Educators and the law" in Generations 4.

Off the school grounds

Keep in mind that some places where learners and teachers may be at risk are not on the school property at all. For example, many learners are particularly vulnerable when travelling to and from school.

Steps can be taken to encourage learners to work together to protect one another, even when travelling to and from school. Forming a Girls and Boys Education Movement (GEM/BEM) Club at the school is one strategy schools could use to get learners organised and motivated to look after each other (see below for more).

Building networks of support

Ensuring the well-being and safety of all while at school is one of the central responsibilities of education officials, including teachers.

But schools can't – and shouldn't – do it alone. One strategy SMTs should include in creating a safe school is therefore to create a list of individuals, organisations and/or government structures that could be offer their support.

Some examples include:

- **Role models/school graduates:** Have any of your school's former learners gone on to become public figures, celebrities, or experts in the field of gender or social justice? Do you know of such a person who is part of your local community? If so, contact them and request that they support your school by giving a motivational talk to learners, or by holding a workshop for learners on issues related to sexual violence and harassment.
- **Non-Government Organisations (NGOs):**

There are many NGOs active in areas related to sexual violence and harassment, such as conflict resolution, human rights or gender awareness. Some operate on national and provincial levels, but you may also find an organisation in your own community that could support your school with their expertise.

- **Law enforcement agencies:** Contact your local South African Police Service (SAPS) station. Many participate in the "Adopt-a-Cop" programme, where a SAPS officer offers workshops and training both to learners and teachers in matters such as sexual violence and harassment. Officials from other departments, such as the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, and the National Prosecuting Authority could also be invited to present information and awareness workshops to your school community in relevant areas.
- **Social welfare and health agencies:** The Department of Social Development and Department of Health can also play a part in supporting your school, through information workshops or other initiatives.
- **Departments of education:** Most provincial departments have gender focal persons who are located at district and/or provincial offices. These officials can assist your school by providing training sessions for educators, school governing body (SGB) members, and learners.

Once your SMT has compiled such a list, make sure that steps are taken to contact each individual/organisation so that their practical support is secured.

Care committees/support teams

One valuable contribution some of these individuals/organisations could make is to be part of your school's care committee/support teams.

These are structures that schools should create to deal with any incidents of sexual violence and harassment, or of learner pregnancy, should they occur. The committee/team could include educators; members of the SMT; responsible senior learners; parents; members of the SGB; and officials or representatives from some of the organisations and departments listed above.

The committee/team should have clear lines of communication and responsibility, and have developed a plan of action to effectively and fairly manage any such incidents.

Watch out for Generations 6, when we'll take a close look at strategies for managing sexual violence and harassment at schools.

Have you heard about the GEM/BEM clubs?

These are school-based clubs made up of boys and girls.

They're motivated and thinking youngsters who are committed to the promotion of equal human rights, dignity for all, and mutual respect between boys and girls.

FOR LEARNERS, BY LEARNERS

These clubs are started, organised and run by learners themselves.

In this way, these young adults will learn to become self-reliant and active participants in life. Of course, they will need the support and

guidance of a number of adults, including their educators, and members of business and NGO communities.

THEY'RE ABOUT GETTING THINGS DONE

GEM/BEM clubs are the start of a movement – so they're about taking action, not just talking.

Some of the activities South African GEM/BEM clubs are involved in include:

- Starting campaigns to keep school premises clean and safe;
- Setting up recreational activities such as

drama, art or sports codes at schools;

- Edutainment events that include activities such as gumbot dancing, choir, drama, poetry and story telling, which use talent and entertainment to get important social messages across;
- Debating, especially on topics to do with healthy living and gender equality;
- Charity activities, such as collecting and donating clothes and food to those in need in a community;
- Forming walking teams to ensure the safety of learners on their way home; and

- Inviting speakers to present information on different topics in their schools.

START YOUR OWN GEM/BEM CLUB

For more information on how to set up GEM/BEM clubs at school, request a copy of the GEM/BEM Guidebook for Schools from the Gender Equity Directorate at the National Department of Education:

Tel: (012) 312-5383;

Fax: (012) 312-5218; or

Email: ramatlo.c@doe.gov.za or hlatshaneni.d@doe.gov.za