



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**.

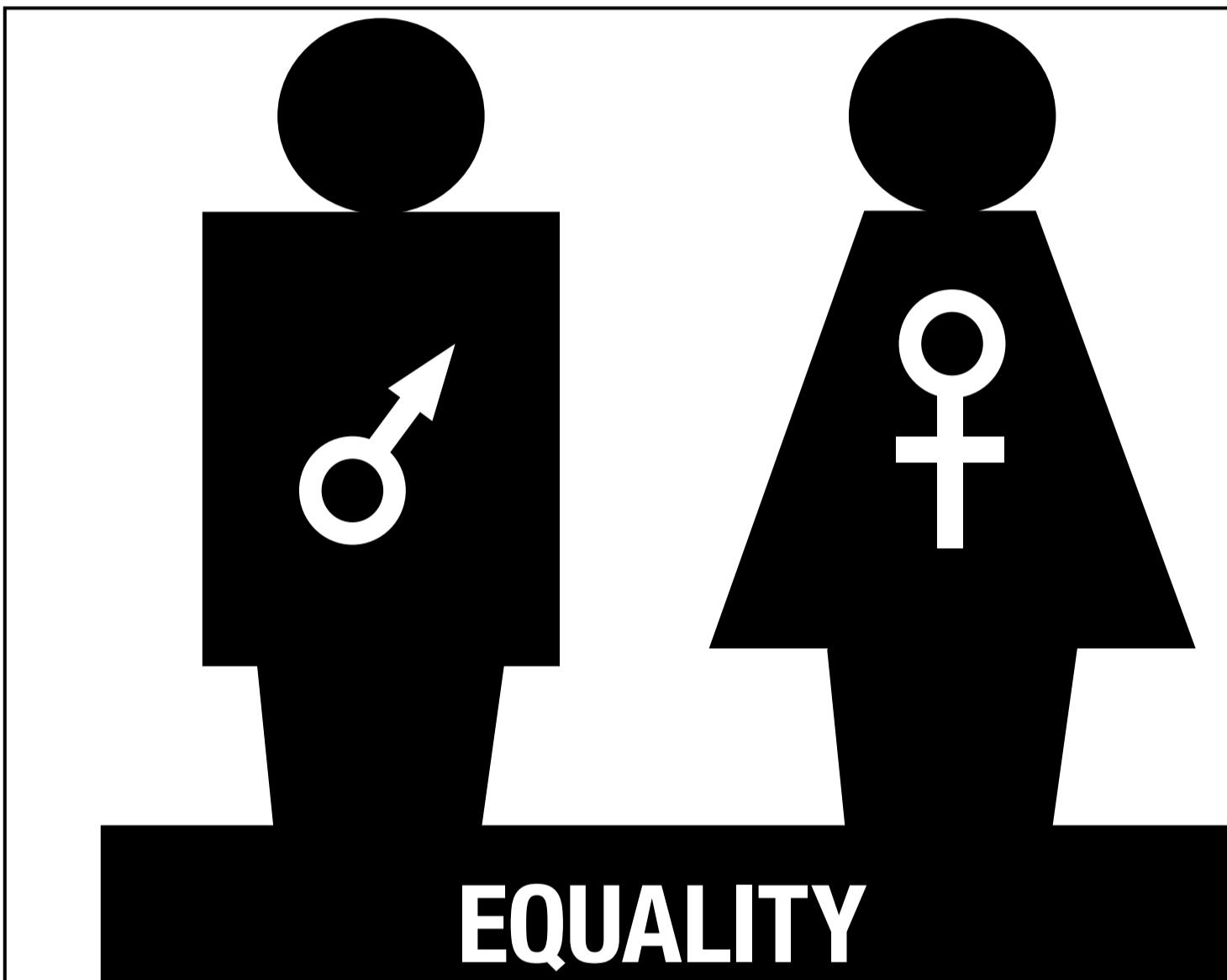
Straight talk:

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;



EQUALITY

- 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).

GENDERATIONS

Caring School Communities



To get your own copy of the Guidelines, contact the Gender Equity Directorate at the Department of Education:
Tel: (012) 312-5420/8
Fax: (012) 312-5218
Email: ramatlo.c@doe.gov.za

PART 5 of 6

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.

SOME CAUSES OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

The reasons for people behaving in sexually abusive ways towards others are complex.

Sometimes it relates to the personal experiences of an individual. For example, people who were abused as children may become abusers themselves as adults.

What most cases of sexually abusive behaviour have in common is the abuse of power, often physical, against someone who is unable to protect themselves against this abuse.

For example, older and stronger children may abuse younger children, whether they're girls or boys.

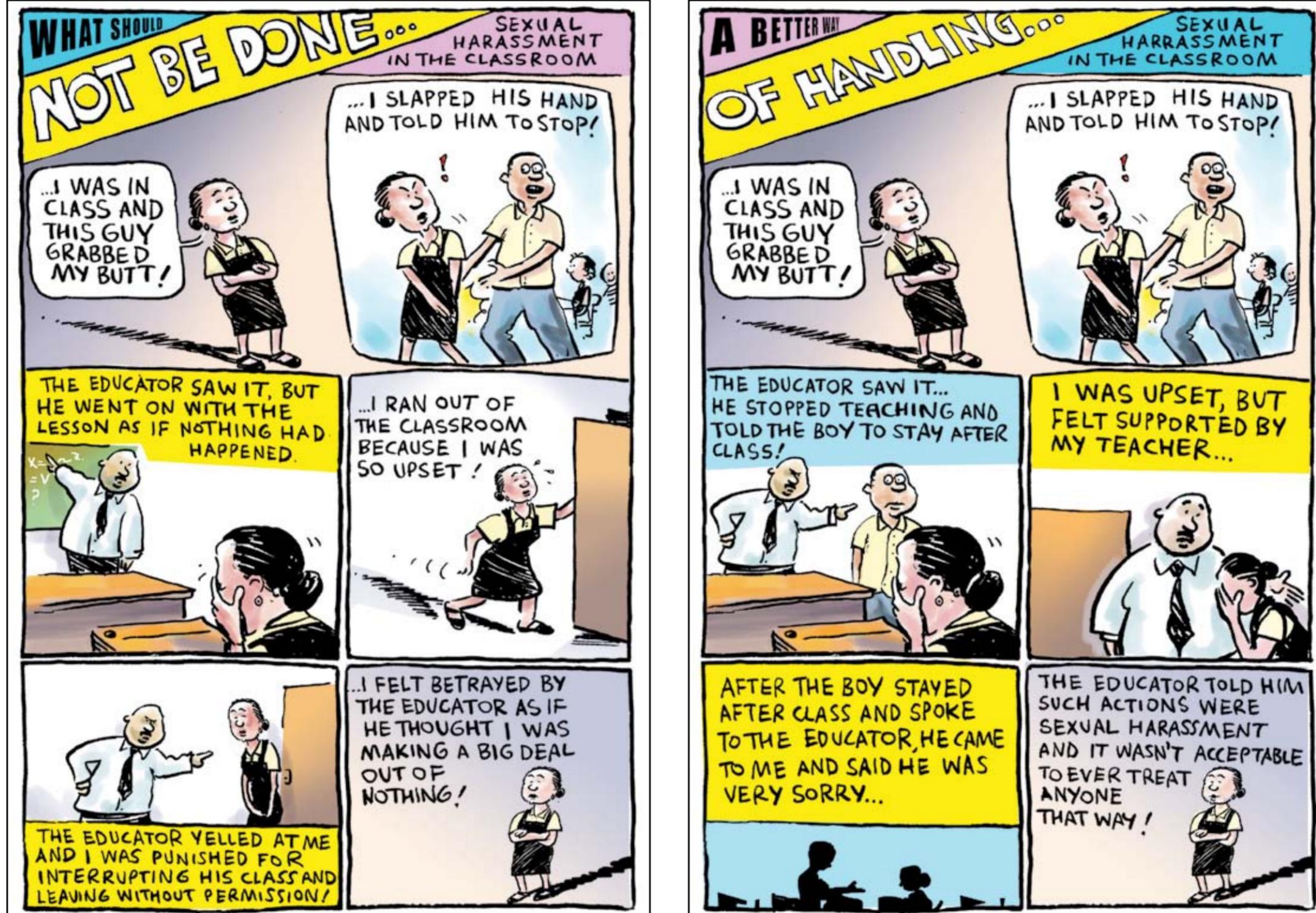
Female adults have been known to sexually abuse younger children.

But statistics show that it is most often male adults who commit this abuse.

Women and children are most often their victims.

Getting to grips with gender

One important factor behind sexually abusive behaviour is something that many people either find confusing, or don't really want to know about: gender.



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.

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.

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.

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.

Start with yourself: At home

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?

EDUCATORS: WALK THE TALK

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

Many people become defensive, and can respond with aggression. Keep in mind that many people see their behaviour as being "normal" or "natural" because they have not yet understood how inequality between men and women has been set up by our society, but must now change.

If you feel that your school would benefit from an honest group discussion about gender relations between educators, the best idea is to call in external expertise to assist.

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

- 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@childwelfaresa.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 onto 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.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HELPLINE

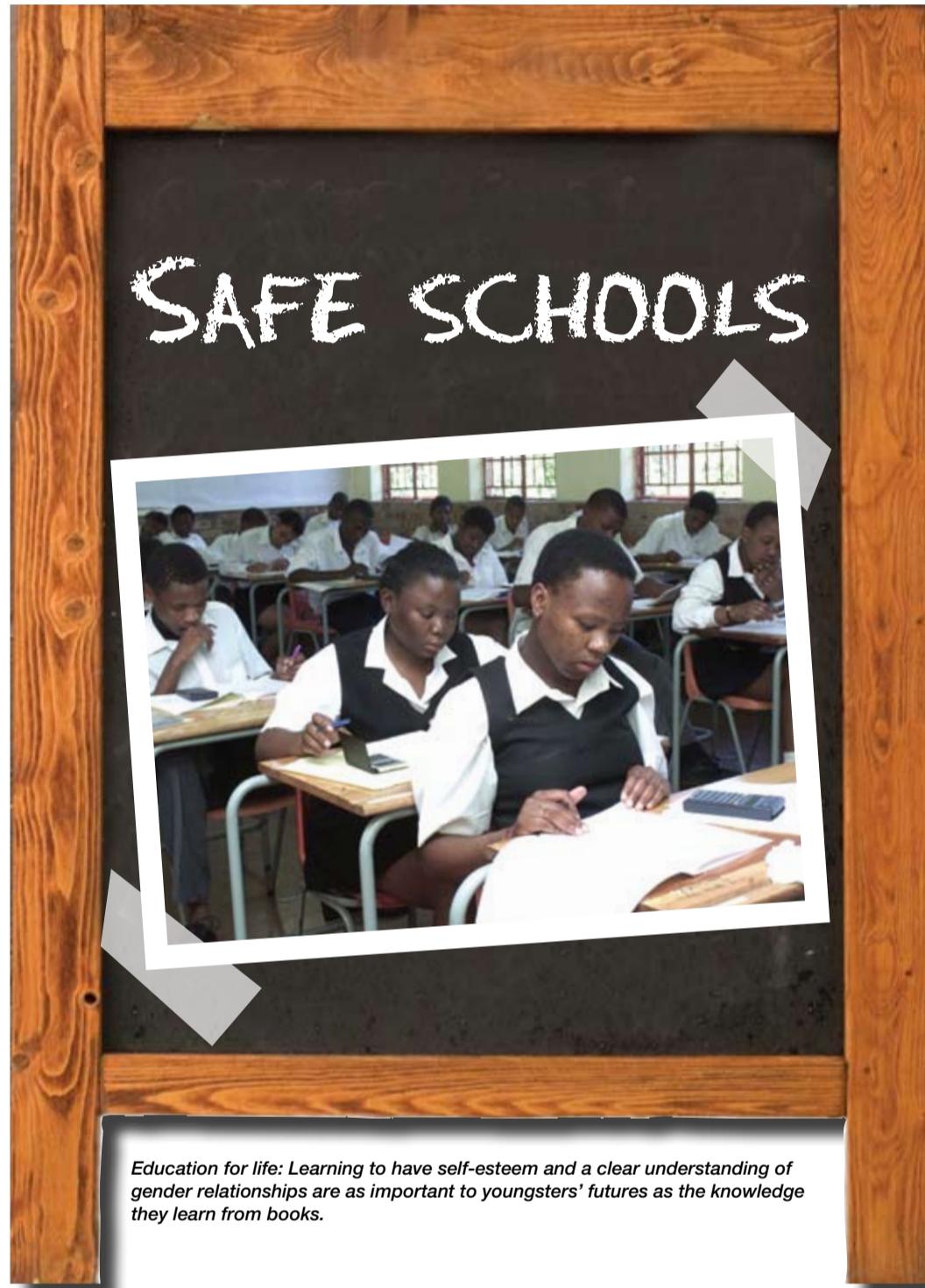
0800 202 933

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 individuals, organisations and/or government structures that could 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 gumboot 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