Expert Consultation on Bullying and Cyberbullying

UNESCO’s work to support education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and other forms of school-related violence

10 May 2016

Christophe Cornu, Senior Programme Specialist and Team Leader Section of Health and Education, Education Sector
Outline for presentation

1. Why a focus on school-related violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?

2. UNESCO’s activities to support education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

3. Other activities to address school-related violence including bullying

‘Regularly people tell me I do not have the right to live.’
Nikita, age 18, trans man, Russia
Why a focus on school violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?
High prevalence of school violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

A significant proportion of LGBT students experience homophobic and transphobic violence including bullying in school:

- **Southern Africa**: 18.4% to 44.3%
- **Asia** / Thailand: 55%
- **Europe** / 28 countries: 68%
- **Latin America** / Mexico: 50-75%
- **North America** / USA: 85%
- **Pacific** / Australia: 61%
High prevalence of school violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

LGBT students report a higher prevalence of violence including bullying at school than their non-LGBT peers.

e.g. New Zealand
LGB = bullied weekly x 3
T = bullied weekly x 5

High prevalence of school violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

LGBT students are more likely to experience such violence at school than at home or in the community.

Percentage of LGBT students reporting ever experienced prejudice/discrimination in different settings:
- School: 61.2%
- Family: 51.2%
- Community: 37.7%
- Friends Circle: 29.8%

Source: J. Takacs, 2006
High prevalence of school violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

Students who are not LGBT but are perceived not to conform to gender norms are also targets = clearly a form gender-based violence
Why? Negative impact on education, health and well-being

**Education**
Victims more likely to:
• feel unsafe in school
• miss classes
• drop out
• achieve **poorer academic results** than their peers.

**Health and well-being**
Increased risk of anxiety, fear, stress, loneliness, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, self-harm, depression and suicide, which also adversely affect learning.

LGBT students and young people are **between two and more than five times more likely to think about or attempt suicide** than their heterosexual peers.
Current national education sector responses fail to address the problem

Few countries have education sector responses to prevent and address SOGIE-based violence.

In countries where the education sector is trying to respond to the problem, responses are not comprehensive (whole-system and whole-school approach) and therefore often ineffective.
Why are national responses failing to address the problem?

Monitoring of SOGIE-based violence in schools: few governments routinely collect data on the nature and prevalence of violence including bullying in educational settings, and only a handful of countries gather specific data on homophobic and transphobic violence. It contributes to low awareness of the problem and lack of evidence for planning effective responses.

National education and school policies: some countries have education sector policies that address violence including bullying, and/or discrimination. However very few refer explicitly to violence and/or discrimination based on SOGIE.

Curricula or learning materials: most of them are ‘hostile’ or ‘non-inclusive’. Negative messages on LGBTI people and SOGI, or invisibility.
Training and support for teachers and other staff: In most countries, staff lack training and support to address SOGI and to respond to homophobic and transphobic violence. Mostly in-service training on a small scale and not mandatory.

Support for students and families: providers are often ill-equipped to deal with homophobic and transphobic violence

Information and strategic partnerships: partnerships with civil society (LGBTI organizations) and the community (parents, students, religious leaders, etc) are crucial but still limited.

Evaluation of policies and programmes: Only 3 countries have conducted large-scale evaluations of programmes to prevent and address homophobic and transphobic violence in schools.
UNESCO’s activities

I was told I brought shame to my society and my religion.
I have endless nightmares and suffer depression.

Nora, 25, Lesbian, Middle East
UNESCO’s activities to support education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

In December 2011, UNESCO convened the first-ever United Nations international consultation on homophobic bullying in educational institutions (mostly UN, NGOs and academia).

Documentation of good policy and practice to prevent and address homophobic bullying from all over the world was compiled in UNESCO publication, launched in 2012.
Global initiative launched in 2013: *Education and Respect for All*

- Generate evidence and document best practice
- Support regional mobilization and leadership
- Strengthen international policy engagement
- Improve national education sector responses in selected countries
Global review: data from 94 countries and territories (literature review, survey in 12 countries, 53 key informants, 2 regional consultations)

Global report “Out In The Open: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression”, launched on 17 May 2016 (main report online + summary report in English and French)
UNESCO HQ, Paris, 17-18 May 2016:

- **Presenting the evidence**: Launch of the report

- **Sharing best practices**: Sharing of experiences at governmental/ministerial level, and contributions from civil society

- **Political commitment**: *Call for Action by Ministers* to strengthen and scale up responses to school-related violence, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression
Other activities to address school-related violence including bullying
UNESCO’s work to prevent and address SRGBV in general

2014: Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV was established under the leadership of UNGEI and UNESCO to bring together a wide range of partners committed to ending gender-based violence in and around schools.
Plans to expand our work on school-related violence including bullying and cyberbullying

- **New international programme**, building on past achievements and momentum, to support countries to improve how they prevent and address all forms of school-related violence and bullying (pending funding).

- January 2017: **international symposium in Seoul, Republic of Korea**. It will aim to explore actions that can be taken at country level, to address all types of school-related violence including bullying, and particularly cyber bullying, in close collaboration with other UN agencies and bodies.

- In line with the recommendations from the UN SG report on protecting children from bullying, that will be released later this year.
THANK YOU


#OutInTheOpen