



Education  
Sector

United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Ending school bullying: Focus on the Arab States

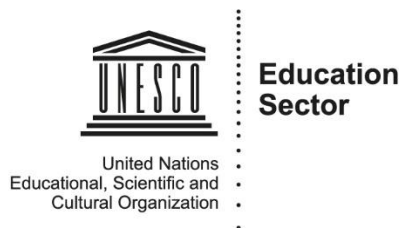
UNESCO's contribution to the policy dialogue on bullying and learning organized by the Regional Center for Educational Planning United Arab Emirates, April 2019



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### UNESCO Education Sector

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



### The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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# Ending school bullying: Focus on the Arab States

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## What are the nature, prevalence and consequences of bullying in schools globally?

### 1.1 Nature of bullying

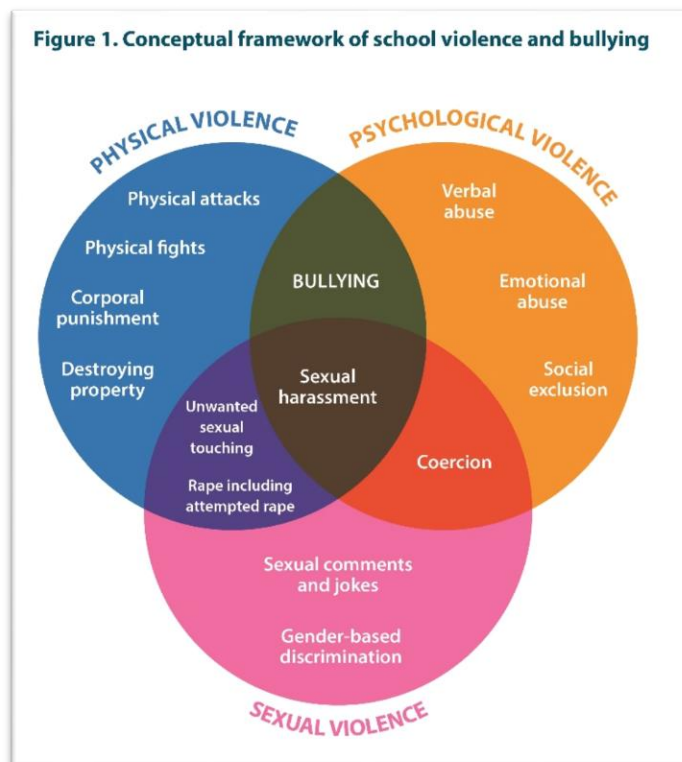
Bullying is a form of school violence. According to an agreed international definition, bullying is characterised by aggressive behaviour that involves unwanted, negative actions and an imbalance of power or strength between the perpetrator or perpetrators and the victim. Unlike isolated incidents of school violence, bullying is also characterised by repetition over time. The number of repetitions may vary and, for example, major surveys that collect data on bullying measure the frequency of bullying in different ways. The international Sustainable Development Goal Thematic Indicator 4.a.2 that measures the ‘percentage of students who experienced bullying during the past 12 months, by sex’, which was adopted in 2018, defines that the frequency of aggressions should be at least once or twice a month or more for a student to be considered a victim of bullying.

It is important to note that there is no standard definition of bullying across the six international surveys that collect data on the prevalence of bullying. Some of them do not even provide a definition. These surveys are the following:

- Two international surveys that measure the health behaviours of students as well as protective factors including school climate: the WHO Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and the Health Behaviours in School-aged Child survey (HBSC) conducted by the HBSC Consortium.
- Four international surveys that focus mostly on the measurement of learning outcomes of students but also ask questions on the school climate including bullying: the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study in Latin America (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo, ERCE in Spanish); the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS); the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA); and the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)<sup>1</sup>.

Depending on the survey, students are asked about their experience of different types of bullying including physical, psychological, sexual bullying and cyberbullying. Based on questions asked in the surveys, these different types of bullying can be described as follows:

- **Physical bullying** includes being hit, hurt, kicked, pushed, shoved around or locked indoors, having things stolen, having personal belongings taken away or destroyed, or being forced to do things.
- **Psychological bullying** includes verbal abuse, emotional abuse and social exclusion and refers to being called mean names, being teased in an unpleasant way, being left out of activities on purpose, excluded or completely ignored, and being the subject of lies or nasty rumours.



<sup>1</sup> The Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study is conducted by the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), which is managed by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago). Both PIRLS and TIMSS are managed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and PISA is managed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Detailed information about these surveys is provided in Section 6.1 of this paper.

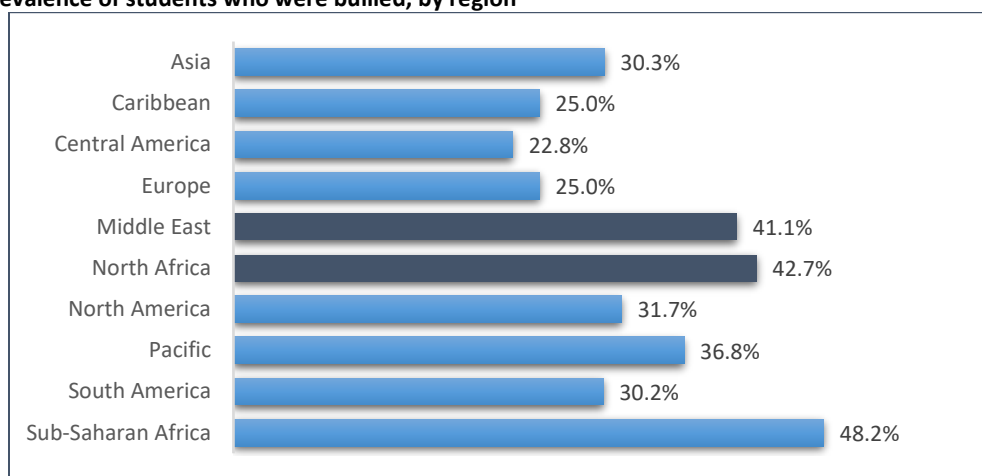
- **Sexual bullying** refers to ‘being made fun of with sexual jokes, comments or gestures’<sup>2</sup> in the GSHS.
- **Cyberbullying** includes being bullied by messages, i.e. someone sending mean instant messages, postings, emails and text messages or creating a website that makes fun of a student or by pictures, i.e. someone taking and posting online unflattering or inappropriate pictures of a student without permission. It also refers to being treated in a hurtful or nasty way via mobile phones (texts, calls, video clips) or online (email, instant messaging, social networking, chatrooms) and online hurtful behaviour.

UNESCO and partners developed a conceptual framework of the different forms of school violence, which shows bullying at the cross-section of the three main forms of school violence: physical, psychological and sexual violence (Figure 1) (UNESCO, 2019).

## 1.2 Prevalence of bullying

Globally, almost one in three students (32%) has been bullied by their peers at school on one or more days in the past month. There are significant differences between regions.

**Figure 2. Prevalence of students who were bullied, by region**



Data sources: Secondary analysis of GSHS & HBSC data

### Box 1. Prevalence of bullying in Arab States<sup>3</sup>

- The **Middle East**<sup>4</sup> has the third highest prevalence of bullying in the world, with 41.1% of students who report they were bullied at least once in the past month (range 17.5%-59.5%).
- **North Africa**<sup>5</sup> has the second highest prevalence of bullying in the world, with 42.7% of students who report they were bullied at least once in the past month (range 30.6%-70%).

<sup>2</sup> Sexual jokes, comments or gestures are characterised as sexual harassment in some countries, including from a legal perspective, but not in others, particularly in the school environment. For these reasons, they are referred to as sexual bullying by UNESCO. Sexual bullying is a form of sexual violence.

<sup>3</sup> The names of countries, territories and geographical areas used in this document are those used by the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS), which is the source for all data on bullying in Arab States presented in this document. These designations do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

<sup>4</sup> Including the following countries and territories: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, State of Palestine, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

<sup>5</sup> Including the following countries and territories: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

### 1.3 Prevalence of different types of bullying

In all regions except for Europe and North America, physical bullying is the most common type of bullying experienced by students and sexual bullying comes second. In Europe and North America, psychological bullying is reported more frequently than in other regions. Cyberbullying affects as many as one in ten children.

#### Box 2. Prevalence of different types of bullying in Arab States

In the **Middle East**, a similar proportion of boys who have been bullied report physical bullying (18.8%) and sexual bullying (18%) as the most frequent type of bullying they have experienced. The same pattern is seen for girls, with 10.1% reporting that physical bullying and 10.8% reporting that sexual bullying were the most frequent types they experienced.

Comparing with other regions in the world, the Middle East has the highest proportion of boys reporting sexual bullying as the most frequent type of bullying of any region.

Psychological bullying was the third most common form of bullying reported, by 3.7% of boys and 5.5% of girls who had been bullied.

In **North Africa**, physical bullying is the most frequent type of bullying reported by boys (23.4%), and sexual bullying the second most frequent (13.6%).

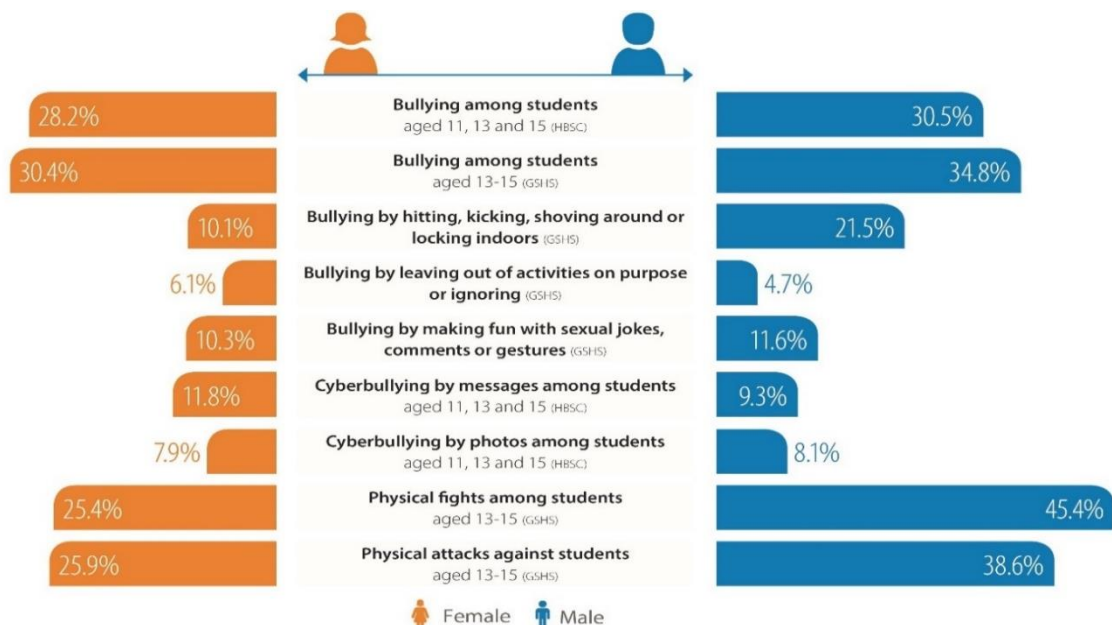
Sexual bullying is the most frequent type of bullying reported by girls (17.9%), and physical bullying the second most frequent (10.8%).

Psychological bullying is the third most common type of bullying reported by both boys and girls, with little difference between the sexes (5.4% versus 6.3%).

### 1.4 Factors that influence vulnerability to bullying

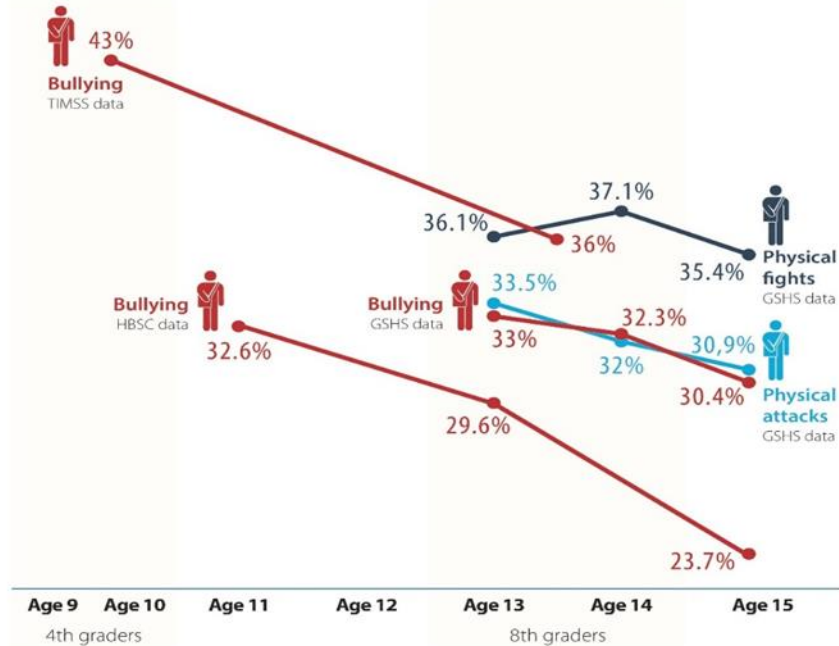
**Sex differences:** Bullying affects both girls and boys, but there are some differences between the sexes. Physical bullying is more common among boys than among girls, while the opposite is true for psychological bullying.

Figure 3. Percentage of students who were bullied by type and sex, by region



**Age differences:** age is also a factor that influences the probability for children to be bullied (and also to be involved in a physical fight or physical attack). As children grow older, they are less likely to be bullied. In contrast, older students appear to be more at risk of cyberbullying than younger students.

**Figure 4. Percentage of students who were bullied, by age**

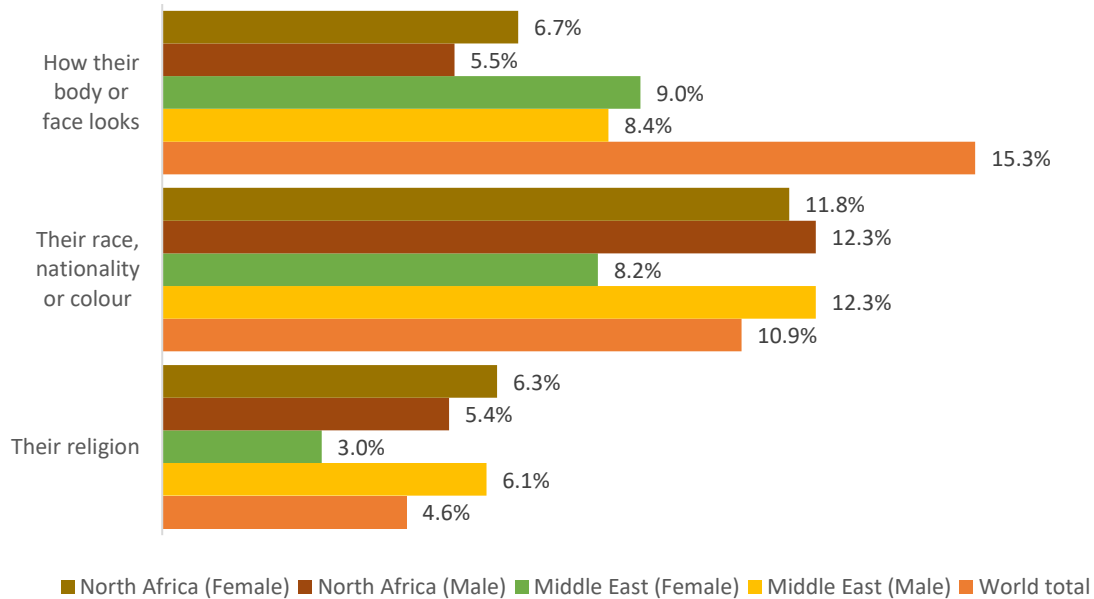


Data sources: Secondary analysis calculations based on GSHS and HBSC data; TIMSS. The HBSC and GSHS data reflect the global median prevalence whereas TIMSS data show the international average.

**Perceived differences:** in general, children who are perceived to be “different” in any way are more likely to be bullied.

- **Physical appearance:** International surveys reveal that physical appearance is the most common reason for being bullied reported by students (15.3%)
- **Race, nationality or skin colour:** “race, nationality or skin colour” is the second most frequent reason for bullying reported by students (10.9%)
- **Religion:** compared to other reasons, religion is mentioned by far fewer students as a reason for being bullied (4.6%).
- **Socio-economic status:** socio-economic disadvantage is associated with increased risk of bullying.
- **Migrant status:** Immigrant children are more likely to be bullied than their native-born peers.
- **Not conforming to norms related to masculinity and femininity:** many studies show that students perceived as not conforming to norms related to the expression of masculinity and femininity (boys seen as “effeminate” and girls seen as “too masculine”), are more at risk of school bullying than those who fit into traditional gender norms.

**Figure 5. Percentage of students who were bullied because of their physical appearance; race, nationality or colour; or religion, in the Middle East and North Africa**



(Data sources: Secondary analysis of GSHS data)

### Box 3. Factors that influence vulnerability to bullying in Arab States

In the **Middle East**: in contrast to other regions, race, nationality or skin colour is the most frequent driver of bullying reported by male students. Physical appearance comes second for boys while it is a slightly more important driver for girls. Religion is mentioned by a smaller number of both boys and girls.

In **North Africa**, race, nationality or skin colour is also the most frequent driver of bullying reported by male and female students.

## 1.5 Consequences of bullying

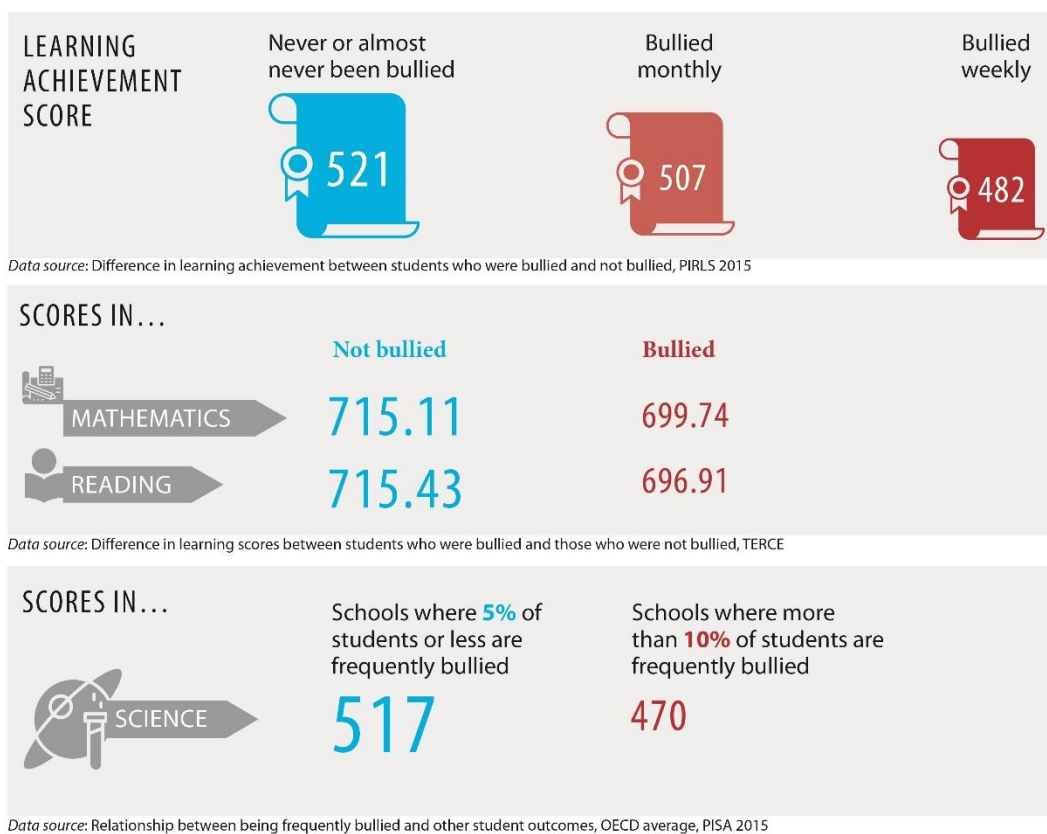
### Educational consequences

Bullying has many negative educational consequences for victims and for the entire school community:

- **Lower sense of belonging:** Children who are frequently bullied are nearly three times more likely to feel like an outsider at school than those who are not frequently bullied.
- **Higher absenteeism:** They are more than twice as likely to miss school as those who are not frequently bullied.
- **School dropout:** Children who are frequently bullied are also more likely to expect to leave formal education after finishing secondary school compared with children who are not frequently bullied.
- **Lower learning outcomes:** Children who are bullied have worse educational outcomes than children who do not. They score lower in mathematics and reading tests, and the more often they are bullied the worse their score. School bullying affects the overall attainment of the student population of a school. Poor discipline and an unsafe school environment are associated with lower academic achievement and, more specifically, students in schools where bullying is frequent score lower in science tests than those in schools where bullying occurs less often.



**Figure 6. Impact of bullying on learning outcomes, mean scores<sup>6</sup>**



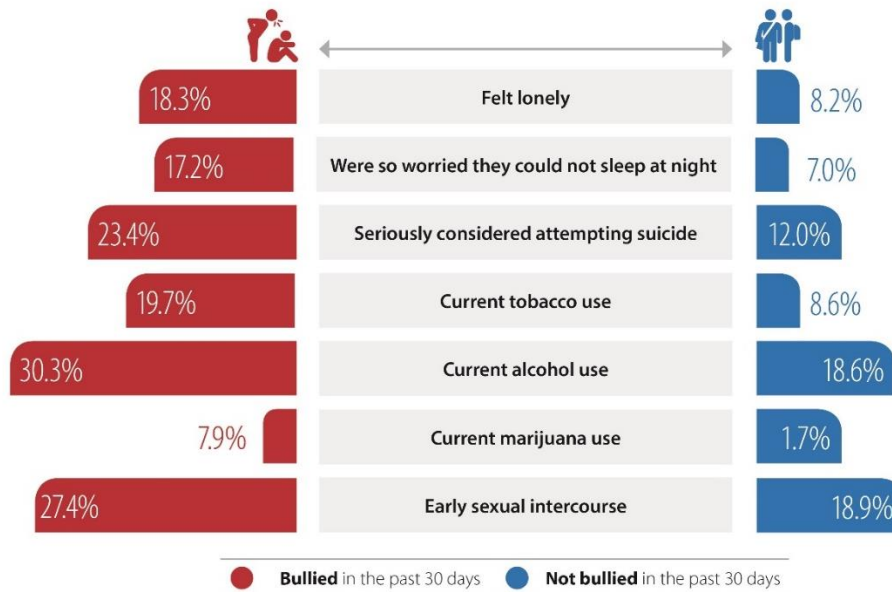
### Health consequences

Bullying can have a significant negative impact on children’s mental health, quality of life and risk behaviours.

- Children who are bullied are around twice as likely to feel lonely, to be unable to sleep at night and to have contemplated suicide as those who are not bullied.
- Bullying is also associated with higher rates of smoking, alcohol and cannabis use, and earlier sexual experience.
- Self-reported quality of health and life satisfaction is lower among children who are bullied and who are both bullies and victims of bullying than those who are not involved in bullying.

<sup>6</sup> Surveys use different achievement scores. They are based on the achievement across all participating countries. The scale centerpoint is set to correspond to the mean of overall achievement or mean performance across countries. PIRLS: The scale has a typical range of achievement between 300 and 700. The centerpoint is 500. TERCE: The centerpoint is 700 for both reading scores and mathematics scores. PISA: the mean performance for science is 493.

**Figure 7. Differences in mental health status and the prevalence of risk behaviours between students who were bullied and those who were not bullied**



Source: Secondary analysis calculations based on GSHS data.

## 1.6 Changes in the prevalence of bullying over time

Bullying has decreased in almost half of countries and territories with available trend data. Of 71 countries and territories with trend data on the prevalence of bullying for a period ranging from four to 12 years between 2002 and 2017, 35 have seen a decrease, 23 have seen no significant change and 13 have seen an increase in prevalence.

Cyberbullying is a growing problem. Data from seven countries in Europe show that the proportion of children aged 11-16 years who use the Internet and who had experienced cyberbullying increased from 7% in 2010 to 12% in 2014.

### Box 4. Trends in the prevalence of bullying in Arab States

Among the eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa where trends data are available for different periods of time, we can observe the following trends:

- **Decrease in the prevalence of bullying:** the prevalence of students who were bullied decreased in **Lebanon** (2005-2017)
- **Increase in the prevalence of bullying:** the prevalence increased in **Morocco** (2006-2016) and the **UAE** (2005-2016)
- **Stability in the prevalence of bullying:** the prevalence remained stable in **Egypt** (2006-2011), **Jordan** (2004-2007), **Kuwait** (2011-2015), **Oman** (2005-2015) and **Yemen** (2008-2014).

Data sources: Secondary analysis of GSHS data (UNESCO, 2019)

## 2. What has been the international response to bullying led by the United Nations?

A series of emerging international partnerships and collaborative campaigns have pulled together strengths and resources of the United Nations, civil society, and the private sector, to increase the momentum at global level to address violence against children, including school bullying. Examples of ongoing international partnerships in which UNESCO actively participates include the following:

- **Safe to Learn campaign:** Safe to Learn is a five-year global campaign to end violence in schools. The campaign was launched at the Education World Forum in January 2019 and involves the following core partners: the secretariat of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and its members DFID, UNESCO, UNGEI and UNICEF. Objectives of the campaign are to increase political commitments to adopting and implementing legislation, policy and practice; raise awareness and actions of parents, teachers, children and community leaders; provide more and better financing; and, strengthen monitoring all forms of violence including bullying in schools, and accountability. The campaign is framed by a Call to Action that countries can endorse, for example during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019 or the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2019. The Call to Action includes the following five priorities:
  - Implement policy and legislation
  - Strengthen prevention and response at the school level
  - Shift harmful social and gender norms and change behaviours
  - Invest resources effectively
  - Generate and use evidence
- **Power of Zero campaign:** UNESCO, the US-based NGO No Bully, and corporate companies such as Facebook, Microsoft, Hasbro Corporate and AT&T, have come together to convene a broadly based consortium, and launched in January 2019 a campaign named “the Power of Zero”, which seeks to promote digital civility and combat cyberbullying amongst children. Partners will work together to provide early childhood educators and families with books, games and learning materials to prepare young children for the technology and connectivity they will experience in their lives. These materials will help them develop core abilities such as inclusivity, critical understanding, respect and creativity that they need in the digital age to and use the Internet safely and effectively, including the prevention of cyberbullying.
- **Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV):** UNESCO and UNGEI co-chair the Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence. It mobilizes over 40 international organizations working to end SRGBV including bullying, and enables strong and common messages. In 2016, UNESCO and UN Women published the [Global guidance on addressing SRGBV](#) (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016), which provides a comprehensive, one-stop resource on school-related gender-based violence. The guidance includes clear, knowledge-based operational guidance, as well as diverse case studies and recommended tools for the education sector and its partners working to eliminate gender-based violence including bullying in and around schools.
- **2019 World Anti-Bullying Forum:** In 2018, UNESCO and The National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC) at Dublin City University established a UNESCO Chair to tackle bullying in schools and cyberspace. This Chair is a global partnership to involve researchers and academics in Ireland and across the world. Working with UNESCO and other partners, the Chair is organizing the second World Anti-Bullying Forum that will take place in Dublin, Ireland, on 4-6 June 2019. The Forum will broaden the knowledge base of bullying and create a stronger bridge between the disciplines, and spread knowledge to more practitioners, researchers and decision-makers around the world.

### 3. UNESCO's role in the international response to bullying

As the UN specialized agency for education, and entrusted to lead the Global Education 2030 Agenda through SDG 4, UNESCO's work focuses on the prevention of and responses to bullying in and through education, aiming at ensuring the right to education of all children and young people in safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments (SDG Target 4.a).

To ensure a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment

UNESCO's approach to supporting global efforts to combat bullying includes the following three areas of work:

- Providing the most up-to-date and comprehensive global evidence on school- violence and bullying.** UNESCO compiles, analyses and shares the most up-to-date and comprehensive global evidence on the scale, nature, drivers and consequences of school violence and bullying. UNESCO also documents and shares best policies and practice to prevent and address school violence, with a particular focus on education sector policies and programmes. A typical example is the publication [Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying](#) (2019), which presents a comprehensive overview of the nature, scope and impact of school violence and bullying based on data drawn from all international surveys that collect data on school bullying from 144 countries and territories in all regions of the world. The report also provides lessons learnt on key factors that contribute to the success of national responses to school violence and bullying, based on a series of case studies from countries that have succeeded in reducing the prevalence of school violence and bullying or in maintaining a low prevalence.
- Advocating with Member States to strengthen national education sector responses to school violence and bullying, and supporting the development and implementation of evidence-based policies and programmes.** Based on the best evidence available worldwide, UNESCO and partners have developed a conceptual framework to improve the understanding of both the nature of school violence and bullying and of effective responses, including the description of the various components and key principles of a comprehensive national response (see section 4).

UNESCO has shared this conceptual framework and concrete examples through global symposiums and regional consultations that brought together policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners including members of the school community. By encouraging a regional approach, UNESCO has promoted collaboration and networking between countries in Asia-Pacific, East and Southern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, ensuring the sharing of best practices from each region and a reflection on how to overcome common challenges more efficiently. For example, UNESCO has organized a series of multi-country and regional capacity-building workshops in Africa and in the Caribbean using the Global Guidance to address SRGBV.

At country level, UNESCO has supported a number of processes including the following:

- Education sector diagnosis and response planning in selected countries in West and Central Africa and the Caribbean
  - Development of the *Connect with Respect* programme, which is a curriculum-based capacity-building process to assist teachers to deliver classroom programmes in early secondary schools for preventing gender-based violence including bullying; and roll-out of the *Connect with Respect* programme in several countries in Asia and the Pacific and Eastern and Southern Africa.
  - Pre- and in-service teacher training on the prevention of SRGBV in the Russian Federation.
- Providing leadership to improve the measurement of school violence and bullying within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** UNESCO led the development of the definition of SDG Thematic Indicator 4.a.2 to measure “safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments” (Target 4.a): “Percentage of students who experienced bullying during the past 12 months, by sex”. In January 2018, UNESCO presented a draft definition to the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG), which is the body in charge of the overall process for selecting SDG4 indicators. At the request of the TCG, UNESCO convened an expert group to finalize the full definition by making recommendations on how to address the methodological challenges when reporting on the indicator. The expert group successfully completed its work in July 2018 and the new indicator was endorsed by the TCG. Thanks to this new indicator, comparable data on the prevalence of different types of school bullying is now collected in 190 countries and territories. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) published a first report for the indicator in October 2018.

## 4. What entails a comprehensive anti-bullying policy?

Based on the documentation of best practice from around the world, which shows that “school and system wide interventions” are particularly effective in countering school violence, UNESCO and partners have developed a conceptual framework that describes the key components of a **comprehensive and effective national education sector response to school violence including bullying** (see figure 8 below). A comprehensive response should encompass the following **six components**:

1. Leadership: laws, policies and education reforms
2. Safe physical and psychological school environment
3. Curriculum, teaching and learning
4. Reporting mechanisms, counselling and support services and referral
5. Partnerships, participation and empowerment
6. Evidence: monitoring of school violence and bullying and evaluation of responses

A comprehensive response is often referred to as a “whole school” response or approach.

**A robust policy and legal framework** to prevent and address bullying is essential and is the first step in developing a response to bullying, as it provides the foundation for strategic and operational planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and creates an enabling environment. It is instrumental for national governments to demonstrate **leadership** on the need to prevent and address bullying and convey a clear message that bullying is unacceptable. It frames the response to bullying within existing and future **education reforms** to improve access to quality education. Evidence shows that many countries already have very comprehensive anti-bullying policies. However, these policies are not properly implemented and, as a result, they have no impact in terms of reduction in the prevalence of bullying. This is the reason why an effective anti-bullying policy should clearly spell out the various components of a comprehensive response to bullying, articulate linkages between those components, and provide clear guidance for the implementation of those different components including plans, protocols and other mechanisms.

### 4.1 Key principles of an effective anti-bullying policy and overall response to bullying

Analysis of good practice has identified a number of key principles of an effective anti-bullying policy and overall response to bullying. This policy should be:

- **Rights-based using a “do no harm” approach** – The anti-bullying policy should ensure the right of all children to quality education in safe and non-violent learning environments. Children’s rights, needs, safety and protection should be at the centre of the policy.

**Figure 8. Conceptual framework for an effective national response to school violence and bullying**



Source: Adapted from UNESCO & UN Women, 2016 (Page 36).

- **Evidence-based** – All measures described by the anti-bullying policy should be based on scientific evidence, both international evidence on effective responses and studies conducted at national level on the prevalence, nature and consequences of bullying.
- **Learner-centred** – A learner-centred and inclusive anti-bullying policy addresses the different perspectives, needs and experiences of all students.
- **Inclusive** – The anti-bullying policy should take into consideration the needs of all children, including children from traditionally marginalized or excluded groups, who are often more vulnerable to bullying.
- **Participatory** – Children should be consulted during the development of the anti-bullying policy, and considered as key participants and experts in identifying solutions to address bullying. The policy should also make clear that students will be involved in the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the policy.
- **Gender responsive and transformative** – The anti-bullying policy must be based on a strong gender and rights analysis, as bullying may affect children in different ways depending on their sex and other elements related to how they conform or not to existing norms related to masculinity and femininity. The policy should consider measures to challenge and transform established harmful norms around gender and power that fuel bullying, based on existing evidence.
- **Age-appropriate** – The anti-bullying policy should take into consideration age differences in relation to the prevalence of bullying, and to how the response is relevant depending on the developmental age of children.
- **Context-specific** – The anti-bullying policy should be grounded in broader national and international legal and policy frameworks for eliminating violence against children. However, proposed interventions should be based on rigorous situation and needs analysis in each country.

## 4.2 Key components of an effective anti-bullying policy and overall response to bullying

### Safe physical and psychological school environment

An effective anti-bullying policy should emphasize the need for every school to provide a safe physical and psychological learning environment, and provide guidance and standards for achieving this. The psychological environment includes the school climate, classroom management and discipline, and the relationship between teachers and students and between students. All countries that have succeeded in curbing the prevalence of bullying have made a strong commitment to promoting a “positive” school climate or culture, which is reflected in their policies. Practical measures to ensure a safe physical and psychological school environment should be described in detail in a code of conduct.

### Curriculum, teaching and learning

An effective anti-bullying should describe curricular and extra-curricular approaches that include contents on how to prevent bullying. The policy should also describe how teachers and other school staff will be trained through pre- and in-service training and will be supported by the school management and education authorities to prevent and address incidents of bullying. This implies to include in the policy a clear definition of what bullying is, as well as the different types of bullying, so that teachers and other school staff can immediately identify incidents of bullying and respond to these incidents when they occur. Beyond a summary of the description of the contents related to the prevention of bullying that teachers will have to deliver in the curriculum, the anti-bullying policy should also emphasize: (a) how teachers will be trained to deliver these contents, and (b) more broadly, how they will be trained in using different pedagogical approaches for classroom management, and alternatives to “traditional” discipline.

### Reporting mechanisms, counselling and support services and referral

A comprehensive anti-bullying policy should mandate, and provide guidance and standards for, the establishment and functioning of effective reporting mechanisms, and of counselling and support services and referral to mitigate the consequences and impact of school bullying. Approaches to support and referral to other services including health care, social protection and law enforcement vary across countries but these mechanisms and services should always be easily accessible, child-sensitive and confidential. Evidence has shown that promoting mediation and conciliation, and peer approaches used for counselling and mediation are useful can deliver good results.

### **Partnerships, participation and empowerment**

An effective anti-bullying policy should enable inclusive partnerships that involve the whole education system at national level and district level, and the whole school community at school level including parents. It should facilitate collaboration, linkages and synergies with non-education sectors and civil society organizations who are concerned with the rights, development and well-being of children and young people. A factor common to countries with an effective response to bullying is the empowerment and meaningful participation of students in initiatives to tackle bullying, particularly bystanders.

### **Evidence: Monitoring of school bullying and evaluation of responses**

An effective anti-bullying policy should include a monitoring and evaluation framework describing the instruments to collect routine data on the prevalence of bullying (both national systems and international instruments such as global surveys collecting national data) and relevant indicators; as well as methods to monitor the implementation of the policy and evaluate its impact.

The policy should also explicitly stipulate the responsibility of all sectors and stakeholders, particularly the education sector, in preventing and addressing bullying and describe how they will be held accountable for the implementation of the policy, including the availability of adequate resources.

Case studies of countries that have managed to reduce or maintain at a very low level, the prevalence of all forms of school violence including bullying<sup>7</sup> reveal that success factors are broadly consistent with most key elements of a comprehensive national response to bullying as listed above. However, the evidence from the case studies also shows that some countries have managed to reduce school violence and bullying without having in place all of these elements at a time; and that each country has a slightly different combination of the key elements of an comprehensive response, depending on the socio-cultural context which influences the education sector.

## **5. Who are the main stakeholders who should be involved in the development of an anti-bullying policy and its implementation? What are their respective roles and responsibilities?**

School bullying concerns everyone, as bullying is not isolated from other forms of violence, and nor are schools from the rest of society. Bullying is rooted in complex structural and sociocultural factors, such as social and cultural norms and power dynamics. Comprehensive, effective and sustainable anti-bullying efforts require a comprehensive and context-sensitive multi-sectoral approach with the education sector working in collaboration with many and varied stakeholders in other sectors, such as health, social services, law enforcement, and child protection authorities. The perspectives of these different stakeholders, together with what constrains and enables them to act, and what support, training and resources they need, needs full consideration in the development and implementation of anti-bullying policies and programmes.

School bullying  
concerns  
everyone

Broadly speaking, at country level, stakeholders/players at national or sub-national levels, including governments and education authorities in particular, are more involved in the development and support the implementation of the anti-bullying policy, whereas others, particularly those at the school and community level, are more involved in the actual implementation of the policy on the ground. The different categories of stakeholders or players should closely work together or interact with each other, for effective development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the anti-bullying policy.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2018, UNESCO commissioned case studies of countries who have managed to reduce or maintain a low prevalence of physical violence and/or bullying, in order to identify success factors. Case study countries were Eswatini, Italy, Jamaica, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Netherlands, Sweden and Uruguay. Case studies are included in the report *Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying*.

**National and subnational governments** have the responsibility to:

- Develop and enforce rights-based laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence including bullying in and around schools and online;
- Establish multi-sectoral child-friendly responses and referral mechanisms to support victims of violence in schools;
- Endorse and mandate or promote evidence-based anti-bullying programmes and interventions including national anti-bullying curricula; and allocate sufficient domestic resources to support people, programming and processes to end violence including bullying in schools;
- Institute an accountability framework that is backed up with a national monitoring and evaluation system, to monitor the prevalence, drivers and consequences of bullying, evaluate the effectiveness of the national anti-bullying laws, policies and programmes, and assess the performance of the multiple sectors involved in the implementation of these laws, policies and programmes.

**National and subnational education authorities**, usually represented by the Ministry of Education or its equivalent, have the responsibility to lead the development, implementation processes and monitoring and evaluation of national policies and programmes for the prevention of and responses to bullying in all education settings. Specific responsibilities, which may vary depending on the characteristics of the education system in the country, usually include the following:

- Developing and enforcing education sectoral regulations and policies that protect all learners from bullying and allocating adequate resources to address school bullying;
- Providing guidance and standards for schools to create safe and inclusive learning environments, strengthen school management, develop and enforce school policies and codes of conducts;
- Providing guidance for the development, review and improvement of inclusive school curricula, teaching and training materials, to ensure that they facilitate the development of appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills for the school community to prevent and address bullying;
- Developing and sustaining effective partnerships with other sectors and stakeholders involved in addressing violence against children, to ensure comprehensive services and support for all learners involved in or affected by bullying; and
- Instituting a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that the education sector policies and standards be consistently applied.

The school community, including the school management team, teachers and other school staff, students and their families/parents, as well as other community members who are connected to the school, are all key actors for the implementation of the anti-bullying policy.

- **The school board and management team** (board members, principals, head teachers and administrators) have the responsibility to institute policies, rules and codes of conduct, and strategies to prevent bullying and respond to it; champion prevention and intervention efforts; monitor the prevalence of bullying in schools; and allocate time and human and financial resources to anti-bullying activities.
- **School educators and staff** play a key role in preventing bullying and responding to incidents of bullying. They play a critical role in modelling healthy relationships and creating a climate of support and empathy inside and outside of the classroom. For example, they can play the following specific roles in preventing and responding to school bullying:
  - Speak to students, school staff, parents and the community about bullying, to advocate for a holistic approach that involves the whole school community in anti-bullying efforts;
  - Teach students about their rights and the rights of their peers, teachers, family members and members of their community, and enlist students in setting the rules and responsibilities of the classroom, to create a culture of tolerance and respect among students;
  - Use positive and constructive discipline techniques and methods to ensure a safe classroom and school environment against violence including bullying;
  - Recognize students' vulnerabilities to, and early signs of involvement in, bullying;
  - Empower students by: teaching conflict resolution skills and life skills education; educating bystanders to tell adults; supporting victims; and recognizing and acknowledging the action of students who support each other;
  - Establish linkages with school counselling and referral systems.
- **Students** are central to preventing bullying and creating a school climate of respect and inclusion. They can provide their insights and input to the vision and planning for the school-based anti-bullying activities, strengthen the



linkages and communications between the school and their parents, act as peer educators to teach about what bullying is and ways to respond to it, and participate actively in evaluations of the effectiveness of school bullying programme.

- **Parents** can also provide their insights to the planning and evaluation of school-based anti-bullying activities, and share with school educators and staff the responsibility to teach their children about what bullying is and ways to respond to it. Parents and community leaders can work with schools to promote non-violent behaviours and promote safe school environment.

**Academics and researchers** have a key role to play to broaden the understanding of bullying for policy-makers and practitioners, and to improve the evidence base for creating more effective strategies, methodologies and tools to tackle bullying.

## 6. Collection of data on bullying and monitoring and evaluation of responses

### 6.1 Data on the prevalence of bullying

Over the past two decades, some 190 countries and territories have collected data on the prevalence of bullying through one or more international or regional surveys listed in the table below. These surveys, although led by international organizations or research consortiums, are usually conducted in close collaboration with national authorities.

In 2018, the Technical Cooperating Group for the selection of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 indicators endorsed the following international indicator – “Percentage of students who experienced bullying during the past 12 months, by sex” (SDG Thematic Indicator 4.a.2) – to measure countries’ progress towards achieving the SDG 4 target ‘safe and non-violent learning environment for all learners’. Data used for reporting against this indicator is collected through six of the above surveys: GSHS, HBSC, PIRLS, PISA, TIMSS at global level; and ERCE in Latin America. The annual report for the indicator is developed by the UIS.

**Figure 9. International surveys that collect data on bullying**

Survey	Managing institution	Year	Age group	Countries/regions
<b>School-based surveys assessing health-related behaviours and outcomes</b>				
<b>Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS)</b>	World Health Organization (WHO)	Since 2003; survey conducted every 3-5 years (for most countries)	13-17 year olds since 2013; and previously 13-15 year olds	96 countries and territories across all regions except Europe and North America
<b>Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (HBSC)</b>	HBSC Consortium	Since 1983; survey conducted every 4 years; next survey in 2012-2022	11, 13 and 15 year olds	48 countries and territories in Europe plus Israel, and North America
<b>School-based surveys assessing learning outcomes</b>				
<b>Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (ERCE) (Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study)</b>	Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE)/UNESCO	Since 2006; survey conducted in 2006 (SERCE) and 2013 (TERCE); next survey in 2019	8-9 year olds (Grade 3) and 11-12 year olds (Grade 6)	15 countries in Latin America (TERCE)

<b>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	Since 2001; survey conducted every 5 years; next survey in 2019	9-10 year olds (Grade 4)	65 countries across all regions
<b>Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	Since 2015; conducted every 3 years; next survey in 2021	15 years old	72 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America
<b>Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	Since 1999; conducted every 4 years; next survey in 2019	9-10 year olds (Grade 4) and 13-14 year olds (Grade 8)	77 countries and territories across all regions with the majority in Europe
<b>Violence Against Children Survey (VACS)</b>	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF, Together for Girls Partnership	Since 2007	18-24 year olds; 13-17 year olds	Reports available from 11 countries from Africa (8), Asia (2) and Latin America (1)

Besides the existence of the new SDG Thematic Indicator, which will allow comparison of data on school-bullying across regions and countries, very few countries routinely collect national data on bullying in schools. Education authorities and other governmental institutions need to institutionalize routine data collection to measure the prevalence of bullying and assess the impact of their efforts to prevent and address bullying. This can be done in different ways that are not exclusive:

- By including indicators and questions on bullying in routine data collection mechanisms aimed at collecting general data on education, such as the annual school census that is managed in many countries by Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).
- By setting up effective reporting mechanisms to register incidents of bullying in educational institutions. These mechanisms should be used both for organizing the response to incidents of bullying and monitoring the number and nature of those incidents.

Ad-hoc studies on the prevalence of bullying are interesting but they are not sufficient for a rigorous monitoring. Specific studies can bring an interesting qualitative perspective to understand better the types of bullying, drivers and consequences.

## 6.2 Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of an anti-bullying policy

The prevalence of bullying is an essential indicator of whether the implementation of anti-bullying policies is having an impact. However, there are other methods to evaluate these policies. A strong M&E framework needs to start with an agreement about what the implementation of the anti-bullying policy is trying to achieve, including quantitative targets, and how to achieve them. It is important to differentiate between routine monitoring of the implementation of the policy and evaluations. Equally, an M&E framework should outline monitoring at different levels including at the school level (e.g. use of positive discipline by teachers) and district and national levels (e.g. teacher training).

Evaluation of the anti-bullying policy should look at the following elements: impact, efficiency (implementing the policy in the best possible manner) and effectiveness (achieving the objectives set for the different components of the policy), including cost-effectiveness of interventions.

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The content of this paper is based mostly on the following two UNESCO documents: the *Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence*, published in 2016 in collaboration with UN Women, and *Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying*, published in 2019.

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UNESCO & UN Women. (2016). *Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence*.

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