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GOOD POLICY AND PRACTICE
IN HIV AND HEALTH EDUCATION

BOOKLET 8

# Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying

GOOD POLICY AND PRACTICE IN HIV AND HEALTH EDUCATION

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# EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSES TO HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

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# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| EFA | Education for All |
| GALA | Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action |
| GALE | Global Alliance for LGBT Education |
| GLEN | Gay + Lesbian Equality Network |
| GLSEN | Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| IDAHO | International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia |
| IGLHRC | International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission |
| IGLYO | International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organization |
| ILGA | International Lesbian and Gay Association |
| LGBTI | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| OHCHR | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| STI | Sexually transmitted infection |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

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# DEFINITIONS

The volume uses the following definitions which, wherever possible, are consistent with UN definitions.

**Atypical gender identity** If a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender does not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (see gender identity), then that person can be described as having an atypical gender identity.

**Bisexual** A bisexual is defined as a person who is attracted to both men and women. Some men and women have adopted the term to describe their *identity*.

**Gay** The term 'gay' can refer to same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual behaviour, and same-sex cultural identity in general. However it often refers to men who experience sexual attraction to and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with other men.

**Gender and sex** The term 'sex' refers to biologically determined differences, whereas 'gender' refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

**Gender identity** Refers to a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.[1]

**Homophobia** Fear, rejection, or aversion, often in the form of stigmatising attitudes or discriminatory behaviour, towards homosexuals and/or homosexuality.

**Homosexual/homosexuality** Homosexual describes a person who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex.

**Intersex** A person who is born with male and female, primary and secondary sexual characteristics.

**Lesbian** Lesbian women experience sexual attraction and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with other women.

**Sexual orientation** A person's capacity for profound emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.[2] For example, gay men experience sexual attraction to and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with other men. Lesbian women experience sexual attraction and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with other women. Bisexual individuals are attracted to both men and women.

**Transgender** Transgender describes a person whose gender identity differs from their sex at birth. Transgender people may be male to female (female appearance) or female to male (male appearance). Transgender people may be heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

**Transphobia** Transphobia is fear, rejection, or aversion, often in the form of stigmatising attitudes or discriminatory behaviour towards transgender people, including transsexuals and transvestites.

**Transsexual** A transsexual person is a transgender person who is in the process of, or has undertaken, treatment (which may include including surgery and hormonal treatment) to make his or her body congruent with their preferred gender.

**Transvestite** A transvestite is a person who regularly, although part-time, wears clothes mostly associated with the opposite gender to her or his birth gender.

1 Council of Europe (2011), *Report on Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Europe*, 2nd edn, Paris: Council of Europe.

2 International Commission of Jurists (2007), *Yogyakarta Principles - Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity*. http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.pdf

# FOREWORD

Homophobic bullying is a global problem. A violation of learners' and teachers' rights, it impedes our collective ability to achieve a quality Education for All. Yet until now, little attention has been paid to addressing its causes and effects. This is in part due to context-specific sensitivities and a lack of recognition and understanding of the problem. This volume of good policies and practices enables teachers, administrators, policy-makers and other education stakeholders to develop concrete actions to make education safer for all.

Acknowledging that the education system reaches beyond the traditional classroom into homes, communities, religious centres and other learning contexts, the volume focuses on addressing educational practices in formal learning environments. Its primary audience is policy-makers, planners and professionals in the education sector; however we hope that it will also be of relevance to other United Nations agencies, development partners and civil society organizations, by inspiring innovative approaches to addressing and preventing homophobic bullying in a range of learning contexts.

This volume is part of a popular UNESCO series of good policy and practice. It marks the first of several contributions to school-based health promotion that UNESCO will produce to complement our work on HIV and sexuality education. We welcome any feedback and encourage users to contribute to the development of the series by sharing their input and experiences.

As educationalists, we have a duty to provide a secure environment for all learners. We invite you to use this volume, share it with colleagues and partners, and impart your own experiences. Let's make learning safer by stopping homophobic bullying now.

Qian Tang, Ph.D.
Assistant Director-General for Education

Booklet 8

# EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSES TO HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This publication is part of a Good Policy and Practice series that addresses key themes of UNESCO's work with the education sector including HIV and AIDS and safe, healthy educational environments for all learners. This volume, on the theme of homophobic bullying in educational institutions, builds on UNESCO's work on gender, discrimination and violence in schools.

Homophobic bullying[3] is a gender-specific type of bullying that is based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. This volume explains why homophobic bullying is an important issue for the education sector and describes what the sector is doing and can do to address the problem. Tackling homophobic bullying can be challenging, especially in contexts where homosexuality is a sensitive issue or is illegal, and some countries have been able to make more progress than others. However, many countries have existing policies and interventions to prevent and address bullying in educational settings and these can provide a framework within which to incorporate action to tackle homophobic bullying. There are also good practices than can be applied universally, regardless of the country context.

Education helps young people to develop knowledge and skills and increases their future life opportunities. Going to school or college is about more than just learning. It is also important for young people's social and psychological development, and should provide them with a safe, structured environment, emotional support and the opportunity to interact with their peers. The right to education has been recognised since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education. The right to education without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is set out in the Yogyakarta Principles.[4]

But, every day, learners around the world are denied the basic right to education because of bullying in school. Many parents and educators view bullying at school as 'normal', but the United Nations World Report on Violence against Children in 2006[5] showed that bullying is a serious educational problem. The report points out that sexual and gender-based violence and

3 For the sake of simplicity, the term homophobic bullying is used inclusively throughout this document as short hand for bullying on the basis of either sexual orientation or gender identity. While homophobic and transphobic bullying share several common characteristics, young transgender people also face particular challenges in educational institutions that demand specific strategies, examples of which are included in this document.

4 The 2006 Yogyakarta Principles affirm the primary obligation of States to protect human rights, and address a broad range of human rights standards and their application to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. See: International Commission of Jurists (2007), *Yogyakarta Principles - Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity*. http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.pdf

5 Pinheiro, PS, (2006), *World report on violence against children*. Geneva: United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children. http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/reports.html

bullying is directed against girls by male teachers and classmates and also against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) young people. Research shows that sexual and gender-based bullying affects any learners perceived as not conforming to prevailing sexual and gender norms, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. This specific type of bullying, referred to as homophobic bullying, has serious repercussions for education. It violates the right to education and undermines educational achievement. Homophobic bullying occurs in all countries regardless of beliefs or cultures. Just as discrimination based on race, sex, color, disability or religion is unacceptable, so is discrimination based on sexual orientation and actual or perceived gender identity. All learners have an equal right to quality education in a safe school environment.

This volume reflects growing recognition that homophobic bullying in educational institutions is a global problem that affects all learners. It draws on evidence and experience that was presented at the first UN international consultation on homophobic bullying in educational institutions convened by UNESCO in Brazil in December 2011. The consultation brought together representatives from education ministries, UN agencies, NGOs and academia from more than 25 countries around the world.[6] Participants issued a joint statement that called upon governments to provide universal access to a high quality education by eliminating the unacceptable and devastating prevalence of homophobic bullying in educational institutions around the world.[7]

This was reinforced by a statement from the UN Secretary-General on Ending Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, in response to a report[8] prepared by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights.[9,10] The Secretary-General described homophobic bullying as a "*moral outrage, a grave violation of human rights*" and urged countries to "*take the necessary measures to protect people – all people – from violence and discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity*".[11,12]

This volume aims to encourage concerted action by highlighting the scale and consequences of homophobic bullying and to share good policy and programming approaches. Interventions are needed at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the education system and examples are included from all three levels. Working in tertiary institutions may be the most acceptable place to start in countries where sexual orientation and gender identity are sensitive issues. In less challenging contexts, it is more feasible to work in primary and secondary schools, and most initiatives have focused on these levels of the education system. It is however equally important to tackle homophobic bullying in tertiary settings, where learners are also at risk. The emphasis in this volume is placed on prevention, as a safe learning environment is key to educational achievements.

Intended mainly for policy makers, planners and professionals in the education sector, we hope the volume will also be of interest and value to donor and UN agencies, civil society organisations, researchers and others working on education, sexuality, gender, and youth issues. The rest of the volume is organised as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the rationale for the education sector to address homophobic bullying, providing an overview of the nature, extent and consequences of homophobic bullying in educational institutions.
- Section 3 provides a practical guide to possible action that can be taken, which countries can adapt according to what is feasible in their specific context.
- Section 4 outlines strategies to prevent and address homophobic bullying in educational institutions, highlighting examples of good policy and practice as well as research findings, innovative interventions and lessons learned.[13]
- Section 5 provides some concluding remarks.

6 The full list of organisations represented at the Consultation is available through the following link: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/gender-equality/anti-bullying/anti-bullying-participants/

7 UNESCO (2011). http://www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/single view/news/unesco_leads_a_landmark_anti_bullying_initiative/.

8 The Human Rights Council expressed *"grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity"* and requested the High Commissioner to conduct said review. UN General Assembly (2011*), Human Rights Council Seventeenth session: Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.* http://www.dayagainsthomophobia.org/IMG/pdf/UN_SOGI_Resolution-English.pdf

9 OHCHR (2011), *Discriminatory Laws and Practices and Acts of Violence against Individuals Based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.* http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/19session/a.hrc.19.41_english.pdf

10 The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has emphasised that homophobia should be considered as equivalent to sexism, racism or xenophobia

11 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, 8 December 2011. http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=5747

12 Other relevant messages include the Secretary General's Video message to Human Rights Council Meeting on Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity (March 2012), *http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=5900* ;and the Secretary-General's Opening Address to the African Union Summit (January 2012). http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41073

13 Resource materials can be accessed at the UNESCO HIV and AIDS Education Clearinghouse website: http://hivaidsclearinghouse.unesco.org/search/format_liste.php?Chp11=Homophobic%20bullying%20in%20educational%20institutions&lang=en

# 2. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

## 2.1 Bullying in schools

Bullying in educational institutions is a serious issue. It adversely affects the health and well-being of learners and makes educational settings unsafe (see Box 1). Bullying is intended to cause hurt or fear, is systematic and repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power. Although bullying can sometimes involve physical violence, there is a difference between violence that needs to be addressed as a criminal offence and violence that needs to be addressed by the education authorities. For example, a knife attack should be dealt with by the police, while violence such as pushing, kicking or fighting should be addressed by the education authorities.

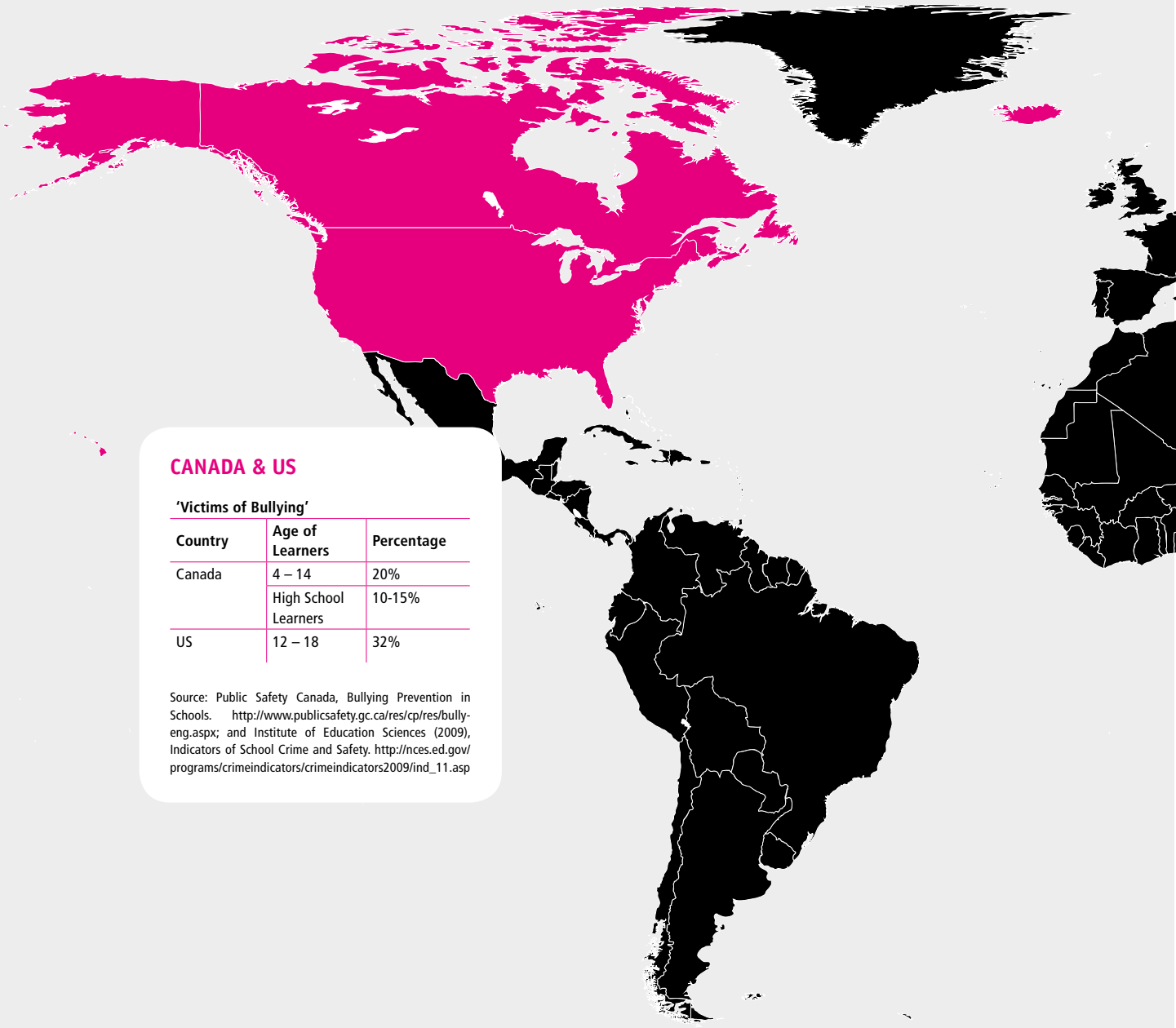
Bullying is common in every part of the world (see Figure 1, next page). While research on this topic varies in terms of how bullying is defined, studies consistently show a substantial portion of the youth population to be involved either as victims, perpetrators, or both.

**Box 1: What is bullying?**

Bullying can include teasing, taunting, use of hurtful nicknames, psychological manipulation, physical violence or social exclusion. A bully can operate alone or within a group of peers. Bullying may be direct, such as one child demanding money or possessions from another, or indirect, such as a group of learners spreading rumours about another. Cyber bullying is harassment through e-mail, cell phones, text messages and defamatory websites. Children may be more vulnerable to bullying if they live with a disability, express a sexual preference different from the mainstream, or come from a minority ethnic or cultural group or a certain socio-economic background. For both the bully and the student who is bullied, bullying results in interpersonal difficulties and poor school performance. Learners who are bullied are more likely than their peers to be depressed, lonely, or anxious and have low self-esteem. Bullies often act aggressively out of frustration, humiliation, anger and in response to social ridicule.

Source: UNESCO (2011), *Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers*. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001841/184162e.pdf

Figure 1: Bullying in Schools – A Global Issue



## CANADA & US

**'Victims of Bullying'**

| Country | Age of Learners | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Canada | 4 – 14 | 20% |
| | High School Learners | 10-15% |
| US | 12 – 18 | 32% |

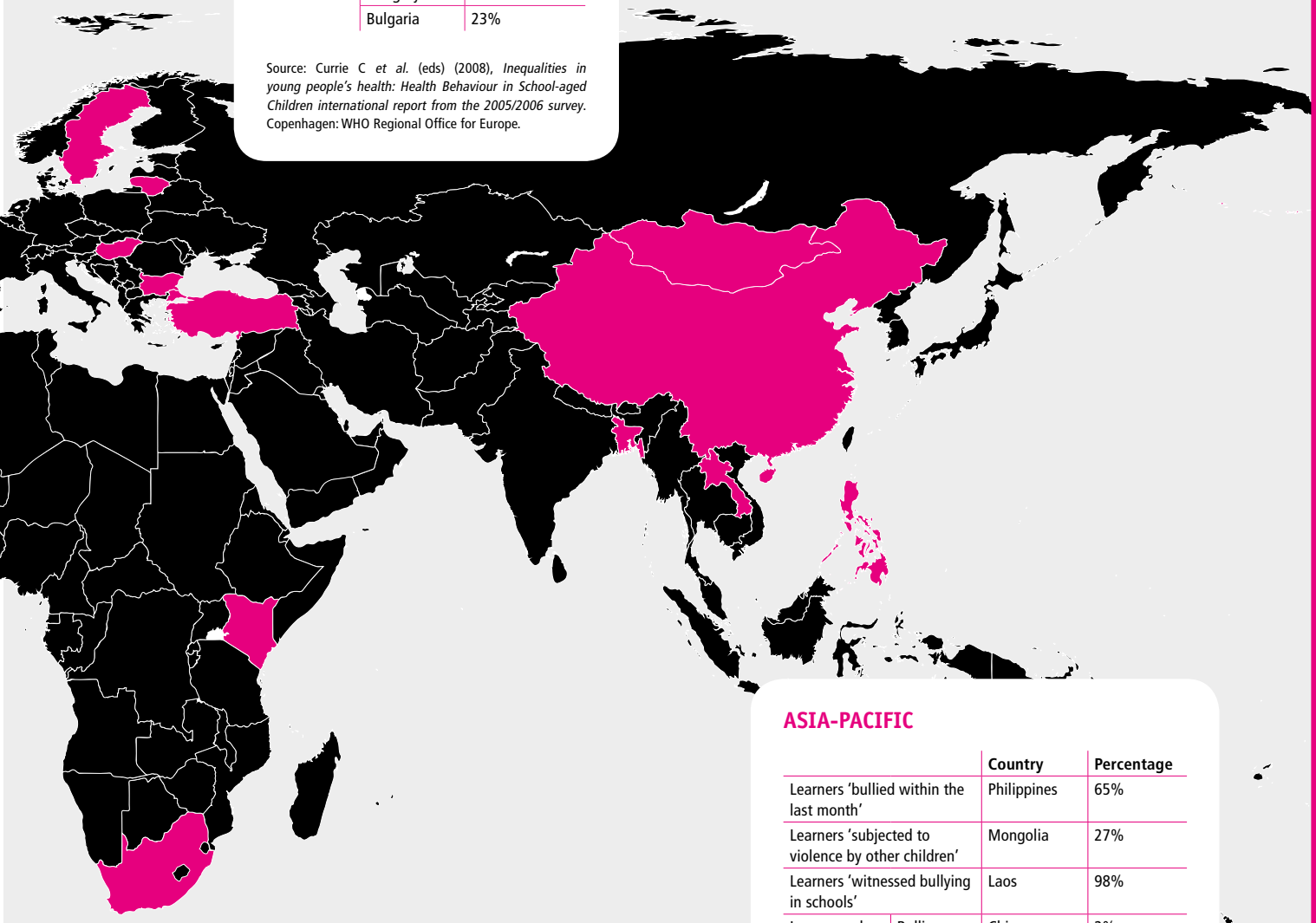
Source: Public Safety Canada, Bullying Prevention in Schools. http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/bully-eng.aspx; and Institute of Education Sciences (2009), Indicators of School Crime and Safety. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2009/ind_11.asp

## EUROPE

**'Bullied in the recent past'**

| Age of Learners | Country | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | Sweden | 4% |
| | Turkey | 33% |
| 13 | Sweden | 4% |
| | Lithuania | 29% |
| 15 | Iceland | 3% |
| | Hungary | 3% |
| | Bulgaria | 23% |

Source: Currie C *et al.* (eds) (2008), *Inequalities in young people's health: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children international report from the 2005/2006 survey.* Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.



## AFRICA

**'Various types of bullying'**

| Country | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Kenya : Nairobi Public Schools | 63-82% |

**'Experienced bullying once or twice in the past month'**

| | |
|---|---|
| South Africa | >50% |

Source: Jones, N., *et al.* (2008), *Painful lessons: The politics of preventing sexual violence and bullying at school.* Woking/Londres, Plan/Overseas Development Institute. (Working Paper 295)

## ASIA-PACIFIC

| | | Country | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Learners 'bullied within the last month' | | Philippines | 65% |
| Learners 'subjected to violence by other children' | | Mongolia | 27% |
| Learners 'witnessed bullying in schools' | | Laos | 98% |
| Learners who identified as: | Bullies | China | 2% |
| | Bullies and Victims | | 1.5% |
| | Victims | | >13% |
| Learners who admitted 'bullying someone at least once in the past year' | | Bangladesh | 30% |

Source: Pinheiro, PS, (2006), *World report on violence against children.* Geneva: United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children. http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/reports.html

## 2.2 Homophobic bullying

Although bullying can affect all learners, those viewed as different from the majority are most likely to be targeted (see Box 2) . Learners whose sexuality is perceived to differ, or whose gender identity or behaviour differs from their biological sex, are especially vulnerable. Bullying on the basis of perceived sexual orientation or gender identity is a specific type of bullying and is defined as homophobic bullying.[14] Schools can be among the most homophobic social spaces. Studies in a range of countries show that young people are more likely to experience homophobic bullying at school than in the home or the community.[15,16,17] Homophobic bullying does not only affect learners who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex. In a study in Canada many more learners reported being victims of homophobic bullying than who actually identified as LGBT.[18] And, as one male student in New Zealand said, "*I got called gay for writing poetry because I am a boy*."[19]

### The nature and extent of homophobic bullying in educational institutions

Homophobic bullying can take various forms including teasing, name calling and public ridicule, spreading rumours, intimidation, pushing and hitting, stealing or damaging belongings, social isolation, cyber bullying, physical or sexual assault, and death threats.[20]

According to research conducted by Stonewall, homophobic bullying is the most common form of bullying in the UK.[21] In Israel, homophobic comments were found to be common, most often heard in the corridors and in the classroom between lessons, and boys reported hearing insults more often than girls especially in the gym or sports field. In China, 'cissy boy' is used by learners and teachers as a term of abuse for boys perceived to be lacking masculine characteristics.

The following quotes taken from a survey in 37 countries in Europe[22] and from a study in Australia[23] highlight individual experiences of homophobic bullying in schools and the lack of support from school authorities.

14 For the sake of simplicity, the term homophobic bullying includes transphobia and is used inclusively throughout this document as short hand for bullying on the basis of either sexual orientation or gender identity.

15 Takacs J, (2006*), Social exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Europe*. Brussels: ILGA-Europe and IGLYO.

16 Hillier *et al.* (2010), *Writing themselves in 3. The third national study on the sexual health and well-being of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people*, Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University.

17 Many of these studies are school climate surveys which could therefore already include a bias.

18 Stop Bullying ! Canada. http://stopbullyingcanada.wordpress.com/statistic/

19 New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Out There, Rainbow Youth, (2004) *Safety in our Schools, an action kit for Aotearoa New Zealand schools to address sexual orientation prejudice.*, Wellington: OutThere; and Nairn K.; SmithA.B. (2003), Taking Students Seriously: their rights to be safe at school. *Gender and Education*, (15):2.

20 Jennett M, (2004), *Stand up for us, challenging homophobia in schools*, UK: Department of Health.

21 Stonewall, 2009, *The Teachers' Report*. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4003.asp

22 Takacs J, (2006*), Social exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Europe*. Brussels : ILGA-Europe and IGLYO.

23 Hillier A, Turner A, Mitchell A, (2005), *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The 2nd national report on the sexual health & well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University.

*"Lots of… sniggering when we pass by, insults written on our tables, things said behind our backs"* France

*"Mostly verbal abuse, being excluded from activities, being ignored… they threw things at me, spat on me, damaged my belongings"* Hungary

*"being spat on, legs being constantly kicked from behind as you attempt to walk away…thrown against walls and threatened"* Australia

*"Physical violence happened only once – but verbal violence every day"* Slovakia

*"They stole my wallet and cut it up, because they thought I was gay"* Portugal

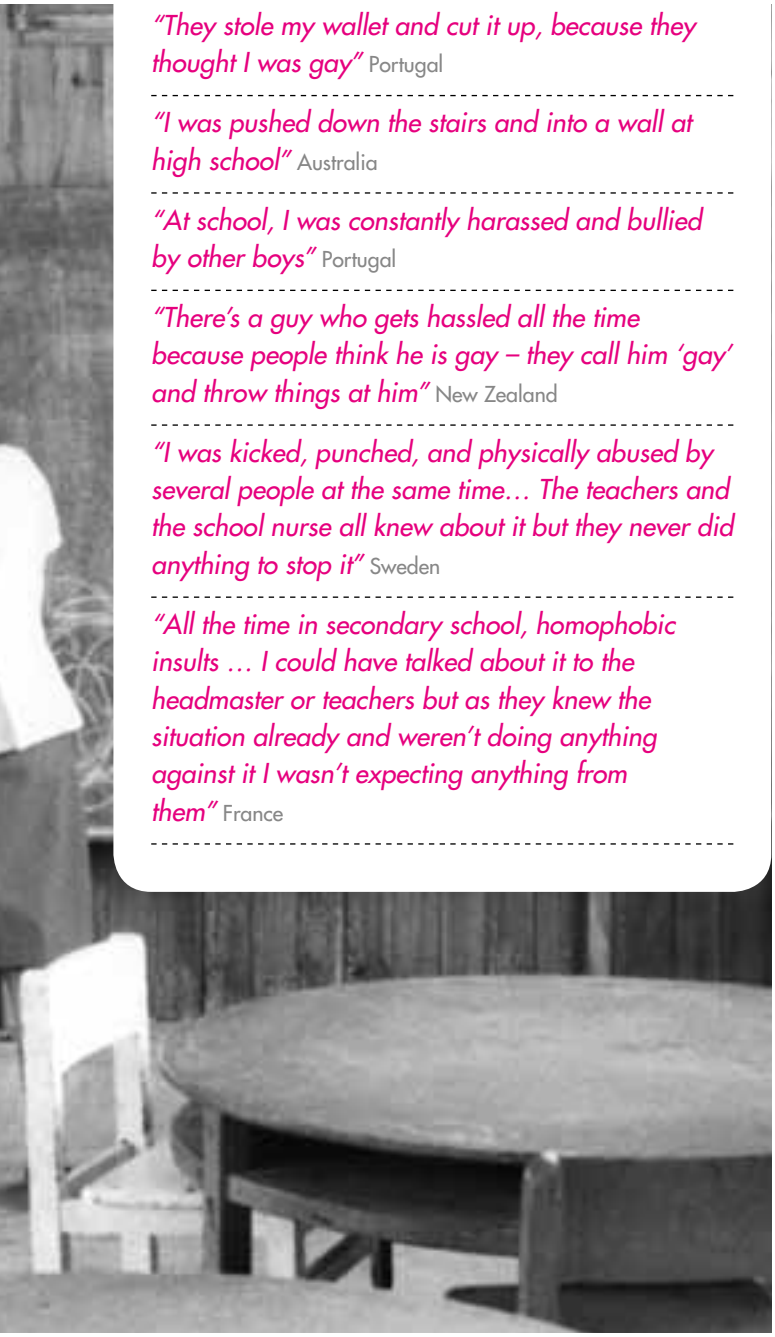
*"I was pushed down the stairs and into a wall at high school"* Australia

*"At school, I was constantly harassed and bullied by other boys"* Portugal

*"There's a guy who gets hassled all the time because people think he is gay – they call him 'gay' and throw things at him"* New Zealand

*"I was kicked, punched, and physically abused by several people at the same time… The teachers and the school nurse all knew about it but they never did anything to stop it"* Sweden

*"All the time in secondary school, homophobic insults … I could have talked about it to the headmaster or teachers but as they knew the situation already and weren't doing anything against it I wasn't expecting anything from them"* France



*Young lesbians in Ireland described their experience of homophobic bullying in a survey conducted by the NGO BeLonG To. One said "I have been a victim of homophobic bullying on many occasions, in and out of school. I have been physically attacked three times in the last five years. I have been verbally insulted because of my sexuality by a teacher and by students. I have also seen others experience homophobic bullying. For example, people in school who are perceived as camp are called gay persistently, and my friends get names shouted at them. It had an immense impact on me, to the point where I knew I couldn't live in a country that allowed this behaviour and, at one point, I thought about suicide. I never reported the bullying, even when I was physically assaulted, as I believed that nothing would be done about it. Having a support network, belonging to the BeLonG To youth group, being among people who understand and knowing that I'm not the only one going through homophobic bullying has helped me."*

*Another reported similar experiences. "I've had words such as dyke and queer screamed at me on the streets and in school, and been 'squared up' to. I've also seen other people attacked and verbally abused. Bullying made me feel horrible, depressed and self hating. I ended up going to counselling for three years. After years I reported the bullying to school officials, and the bullies were punished. I had the support of friends and the teachers were amazing. There was also a counselling service at school."*

*Other female learners surveyed said that homophobic bullying "made me look forward to changing schools…. it also made me miss a lot of days at school, because I just didn't want to go in" and "I used to ditch school, or lock myself in the school bathrooms and self harm. I felt unwanted".*

In countries with advanced electronic communications, cyber bullying is on the increase, with youth viewed as different from the majority at greater risk, regardless of whether they experience other forms of bullying. A study in the US has shown that nearly 60% of cyber bullying victims where also victims of school bullying, and that while girls were cyber bullied at a slightly higher rate than boys, the big difference was among nonheterosexually identified youth, where 33% were cyber bullied versus 15% of heterosexually identified youth.[24] The study also showed that while school bullying decreases by nearly 50% between the ages of 14 and 18, cyber bullying only decreases from 17% to 13%. Cyber bullying differs from other types by enabling the bully to remain anonymous. In addition, it may reduce the feeling of responsibility and accountability of bullies, as there is no face-to-face contact.[25]

Homophobic bullying is usually perpetrated by other learners but, in some cases, by teachers or other staff. Research in five universities in Lebanon conducted by the organisation Helem[26] found that learners had experienced homophobic bullying by fellow learners and staff, including harassment, blackmail and deprivation of academic rights. One student was told by his university teacher "*I cannot have you in my class*" and was isolated by fellow learners.

Bullying may be done by individuals or small or large groups. Boys are more likely to be the perpetrators of bullying than girls.[27] As well as the bully and the bullied, homophobic bullying also involves and affects other learners, including those who witness or are bystanders to bullying. In a study in Israel, for example, half of respondents who had experienced homophobic bullying said that other learners did not intervene or ignored the abuse, while some said peers collaborated with the instigators.

24 Kessel Schneider *et al.* (2012), Cyberbullying, School Bullying, and Psychological Distress: A Regional Census of High School Students. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(1) 171-177.

25 Juvonen J, Gross EF, (2008), Extending the school grounds? - Bullying experiences in cyberspace. *J Sch Health*. 78(9): 496-505.

26 Helem. http://www.helem.net/

27 Kimmel, M., Aranson, A, (2003), *Men and Masculinities; A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*. California: ABC-CLIO.

## Box 2: Available evidence on homophobic bullying in schools[28]

Although relatively few countries have collected data on homophobic bullying in educational institutions, available evidence from all regions of the world suggests that the scale of the problem is significant.

- A high proportion of lesbian, gay and bisexual learners report homophobic bullying in Chile (68%), Guatemala (53%), Mexico (61%) and Peru (66%).[29] In Brazil, more than 40% of gay men reported that they had been physically assaulted when they were at school.[30]
- In South Africa, lesbians and gays report experiencing high levels of verbal, sexual and physical abuse in school, mainly from other learners, but also from teachers and school principals.[31] In a survey of those who had left school, 68% of gay men and 42% of lesbians reported that they had experienced hate speech at school and 10% had experienced sexual violence.[32] Research among Grade 11 learners in a private secondary school in Johannesburg found high levels of verbal bullying, including name calling, teasing, suggestive or abusive language, cruel remarks, and indirect bullying through rumour spreading and social isolation, with boys more likely to be bullied and to be perpetrators.
- In Ireland, 58% of learners reported homophobic bullying happening in their schools, 34% reported homophobic comments by teachers and other staff members and 25% had been physically threatened by peers.[33] In another study, over 50% of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people reported experiencing homophobic bullying at school.[34]
- In the UK, 90% per cent of secondary school and more than 40% of primary school teachers reported homophobic bullying, name-calling or harassment in their school; secondary school teachers identified homophobic bullying as the second most frequent form of bullying

28 Evidence of homophobic bullying is neither mainstreamed in existing data collection tools nor collected systematically in the Education Sector. When it is gathered it is done by researchers and advocates that are particularly interested in the topic. Comparison across countries, as well as extrapolation to national level, for the data quoted below is not possible as the proportions are among those surveyed which might involve survey bias. In addition the data comes from different samples, using different data collection tools.

29 Caceres *et al.*, (2011), *Final report: Estudio a través de Internet sobre "Bullying", y sus manifestaciones homofóbicas en escuelas de Chile, Guatemala, México y Perú, y su impacto en la salud de jóvenes varones entre 18 y 24 años.*

30 UNESCO (Representative in Brazil), (2009), http://www.ypinaction.org/files/01/94/Homophobia_in_schools.pdf

31 Gay and Lesbian Network, (2011), *Homophobia in schools in Pietermaritzburg*. Pietermaritzburg: Gay and Lesbian Network,

32 Behind the Mask (2010), http://www.mask.org.za/homophobia-at-schools/

33 Mayock P *et al.*, (2009*), Supporting LGBT lives: A study of the mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people*, Ireand: BeLonG To & GLEN.

34 Minton *et al.*, (2008), An exploratory survey of the experiences of homophobic bullying among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered young people in Ireland, *Irish Educational Studies*, 27(2):177–191.

after abuse relating to weight.[35] A survey of young lesbian, gay and bisexual learners found that 65% had experienced bullying, including verbal abuse, physical abuse and death threats.[36] Another study found that 80% of respondents had experienced name-calling and 55% had rumours spread about them.[37] A Department for Education survey of 300 secondary schools in England and Wales in 2002 found that 82% of teachers were aware of verbal incidents and 26% were aware of physical incidents of homophobic bullying. The situation is worse in faith-based schools, where 75% of young gay people have experienced direct homophobic bullying compared to 65% overall, and 47% disagree that their school is an accepting, tolerant place where they feel welcome, compared to 35% overall.[38]

- A survey in Belgium of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who had attended school in the previous three years revealed that 48% had experienced teasing and ridicule, 39% name calling, 36% social isolation and 21% intimidation. Similar findings have been reported in France,[39] Hungary,[40] the Netherlands[41] and Spain.[42] In the Netherlands, 35% of these learners reported never or seldom feeling safe at school compared with 6% of learners in general. In Israel, 38% of lesbian, gay and bisexual learners report verbal abuse and 8% physical assault in school.[43]

- In the US, more than 84% of young gay, lesbian and bisexual learners had been called names or threatened, 40% had been pushed or shoved, and 18% had been physically assaulted at school.[44] More than 90% of transgender learners reported derogatory remarks, more than half had experienced physical violence, and two-thirds said they felt unsafe at school.[45] In another study, 57% of respondents reported that homophobic

comments were made by school staff.[46] A study in elementary schools found that bullying is common, especially for learners not conforming to gender norms.[47] In Canada, over 50% of gay, lesbian and bisexual learners and 75% of transgender learners report verbal harassment; 10% report regularly hearing homophobic comments from teachers.[48]

- A study in India and Bangladesh found that 50% of homosexual men experienced harassment from learners or teachers in school or college.[49] In Japan, 83% of gay and bisexual men had experienced homophobic bullying at school.[50] In Hong Kong, 42% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners report verbal abuse and 40% social isolation in school.[51] In a national study of same sex attracted young people in Australia, 61% reported verbal abuse, 18% physical abuse and 69% other forms of homophobic bullying including social exclusion; 80% said that this bullying was most likely to take place at school.[52] In New Zealand a survey of young gay men and lesbians in schools found that 76% and 64% respectively reported verbal bullying.[53]

35 Stonewall, (2009), *The Teachers' Report*. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4003.asp

36 Stonewall, (2007), *The School Report*. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4004.asp

37 Warwick I, Douglas N. (2001), *Safe for all, a best practice guide to prevent homophobic bullying in secondary schools*. Education Policy Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

38 Stonewall. *Working with faith communities*. Stonewall education guide. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/5761.asp

39 Rebeyrol, A *et al.*, (2010) *2008 Rapport sur la prévention des discriminations à raison de l'orientation sexuelle en milieu scolaire. Paris :* ministre de l'Éducation nationale.

40 Béres-Deák R & Rédai, D, (2011), *Images of Hungarian teenagers about homosexuals – experiences of a school project*. http://www.sociologija.si/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Abstrakti.pdf

41 Dankmeijer, P (2001), *Gerapporteerde onveiligheid door homojongeren vergeleken met heterojongeren*. Amsterdam: Empowerment Lifestyle Services. http://www.edudivers.nl/doc/peters_publicaties/Dankmeijer%20%27Gerapporteerde%20onveiligheid%20door%20homojongeren%20vergeleken%20met%20heterojongeren%27%20%282001%29.pdf

42 Galan *et al.*, (2009), Achieving real equality: A work in progress for LGBT youth in Spain. *Journal of LGBT Youth*. 6(2), 272-287.

43 Pizmony-Levy *et al.*, (2008), Do my teachers care I'm gay? Israeli lesbigay school learners' experiences at their schools. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 5(2), 33-61.

44 GLSEN, (2009), *National school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

45 Greytak E *et al.*, (2009), *Harsh realities: The experiences of transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York : GLSEN.

46 McFarland W, (2001), The legal duty to protect gay and lesbian learners from violence in school. *Professional School Counseling*, 4(3), 171-180.

47 GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2012), *Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States, A Survey of Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

48 Taylor *et al.*, (2011), *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final Report*. Toronto:Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

49 Bondyopadhyay A, Khan S, Mulji K (2005), *From the front line: A report of a study into the impact of social, legal and judicial impediments to sexual health promotion, care and support for males who have sex with males in Bangladesh and India*. Naz Foundation International

50 GayJapanNews, Global Rights *et al.*, (2008), *The violations of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in Japan*. A Shadow Report Submitted to the Human Rights Committee. http://www.iglhrc.org/binary-data/ATTACHMENT/file/000/000/159-1.pdf

51 Fridae, (2010), http://www.fridae.asia/newsfeatures/2010/08/13/10223.hong-kong-ngo-fights-homophobia-in-schools

52 Hillier *et al.* 2010. *Writing themselves in 3. The third national study on the sexual health and well-being of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University.

53 Hendrickson M, (2007), 'You have to be strong to be gay': Bullying and educational attainment in LGB New Zealanders. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 19(3/4), 67-85. http://www.youth-suicide.com/gay-bisexual/news/austra.htm#New-Zealand

### The educational consequences of homophobic bullying

*"Physical and other forms of humiliating and abusive treatment are not only a violation of the child's right to protection from violence, but also highly counterproductive to learning"*[54]

Homophobia and homophobic bullying undermine educational and learning opportunities. Cases have been reported in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and in Latin America of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender learners being denied access to school.[55] Access to school is a particular problem for transgender learners, because issues such as school uniform policy and sanitation facilities are binary and do not accommodate transgender learners.

*In Nepal, a 13 year old transgendered student recently arrived at the Blue Diamond Society*[56] *after having been forced to drop out of his village school due to ongoing harassment. He requested help with education. Following advocacy by Blue Diamond, the student has been able to start Grade 7 as an openly transgendered student at the Durbar High School in Kathmandu.*

Source: Times of India, 2011. *Nepal's oldest school starts sexual revolution.*

There is clear evidence from many countries that being subjected to homophobic bullying can result in:

- Reduced school attendance
- Early school drop out
- Poorer academic performance and achievement

Homophobic bullying, in particular intimidation, public ridicule and having belongings stolen, is strongly associated with absenteeism. In some cases, learners miss classes or pretend to be ill to avoid admitting to the loss of books, equipment or homework.

*"Sometimes I would be at home saying I was sick when I wasn't but I would become physically sick at the thought of going to school" New Zealand*[57]

Almost one in three lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners in the US reported regularly missing classes because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. A similar proportion reported missing at least one entire day of school in the past month. These learners were three times more likely to have missed classes than the general population of secondary school learners.[58] High levels of harassment of transgender learners are related to increased absenteeism, as well as decreased educational aspirations and lower academic performance, with almost half of transgender learners missing a class because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable and nearly one in six facing harassment so severe that they are forced to leave school.[59] In the UK, seven in ten lesbian, gay and bisexual learners who experienced homophobic bullying reported that this had a negative impact on their school work, with 50% of those affected missing school and 20% missing school more than six times.[60]

In some cases, homophobic bullying forces learners to drop out of school altogether.[61] For example, in a US study, 28% of gay men and lesbians who had experienced homophobic bullying had dropped out of school early.[62] Research commissioned by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland showed that 19% of young people who were bullied in school because of their sexual orientation achieved lower results than anticipated and 10% left school earlier than they would have liked.[63] Other research in Ireland has shown similar findings, with almost one in ten of those who had experienced homophobic bullying leaving school early.[64] In a study in 2007, the School Mates Project highlighted the negative educational effects of homophobic bullying

54 UNESCO and UNICEF, (2007), *A human rights-based approach to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO.

55 Jolly S, (2010), *Poverty and sexuality: What are the connections? Overview and literature review*. Stockholm: SIDA

56 Established in 2001, the Blue Diamond Society is a Nepalese NGO that works at a national level and with communities in Kathmandu to improve the sexual health, human rights and well being of sexual and gender minorities in Nepal http://www.bds.org.np/aboutus.html

57 New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Out There, Rainbow Youth, (2004), *Safety in our Schools, an action kit for Aotearoa New Zealand schools to address sexual orientation prejudice*. Wellington: OutThere.

58 GLSEN, (2009), *National school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

59 Greytak E *et al.*, (2009), *Harsh realities: The experiences of transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

60 Stonewall, (2007), *The School Report*. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4004.asp

61 Jolly, S, (2010), *Poverty and sexuality: What are the connections? Overview and literature review*. Stockholm: SIDA.

62 Telljohann, S.K. and Price, J.H., (1993), A Qualitative Examination of Adolescent Homosexuals' Life Experiences: Ramifications for School Personnel, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 26:1, 41-56.

63 Carolan, F. and Redmond, S. (2003), The needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT). Belfast: Youthnet. See also Government of Ireland, (1995), *Charting Our Education Future*. Dublin: Governement Publications.

64 Minton, Dahl, O'Moore and Tuck *et al.*, (2008), An exploratory survey of the experience of homophobic bullying among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered youtn people in Ireland. *Irish Educaitonal Studies*, 27:2 177-191.

in Austria, Italy, Spain, Poland and the UK. These included higher rates of absenteeism and truancy and lower rates of entry into higher education. A 2006 study[65] from France found that 8% of respondents reported dropping out of school as a consequence of homophobic bullying.

In Argentina, transgender learners reported that they stopped studying, either because of homophobic bullying by other learners or because they are denied entry by school authorities. Of those surveyed, 45% dropped out of secondary school and only 2.3 % completed college.[66]

In India and Bangladesh, a number of homosexual men surveyed reported that because of homophobic bullying they had ended their education early.[67]

Missing school affects academic performance. Leaving school early affects academic achievement. Learners who leave school early have fewer qualifications and this, in turn, influences their future employment prospects. Educational performance and achievement are also adversely affected by the loss of confidence, reduced self-esteem, fear, psychological stress and social isolation associated with homophobic bullying.

A study in Scotland found that 26% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners felt that their schoolwork had suffered as a result of homophobic bullying while 12% had truanted because of homophobic bullying.[68] In the US, learners who were frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation reported significantly lower grades than those who were not. They were also twice as likely not to be planning to pursue post-secondary education compared with a national general sample of learners.[69] In Brazil, victimisation was shown to be related to negative educational outcomes and these negative outcomes are more pronounced in cases of homophobic victimisation.[70] The experience of Dervin, a young man from Jamaica, described below, illustrates the impact that homophobic bullying can have.

*"Thankfully, people are paying more attention to homophobic bullying and its consequences. But it is too late for those who have committed suicide and those of us who have been the victims of bullying. I'm not the most masculine person and I was teased a lot in primary school – an age when words hurt most. When I went to an inner city high school I promised myself it would be different and for the first few months I tried my best to be 'manly'. It didn't work. The teasing started again. Rumours started to circulate. I had a hard time. My grades fell dramatically. I started skipping classes and skipping school. I often stayed in bed and cried. I blamed myself for the hostility and prayed to God to change who I am. I tried to emulate the boys who were teasing me. I changed the way I looked and started disrespecting the teachers and getting suspensions every week. In Grade 8 I decided that I couldn't let the situation steer me in the wrong direction. I have friends and a loving family. It doesn't go away completely – there are still some who say hurtful things – but it does get better."*

Dervin Osbourne

65 SOS Homophobie, *Analyse statistique des résultats de l'enquête sur l'homophobie en milieu scolaire*. http://www.sos-homophobie.org/sites/default/files/analyse_enquete_milieu_scolaire.pdf?q=documents/analyse_enquete_milieu_scolaire.pdf

66 Dubel and Hielkema (eds), (2010), *Gay and lesbian rights are human rights*. The Hague: HIVOS.

67 Bondyopadhyay A, Khan S, Mulji K, (2005), *From the front line: A report of a study into the impact of social, legal and judicial impediments to sexual health promotion, care and support for males who have sex with males in Bangladesh and India*. Naz Foundation International.

68 O'Loan, S., McMillan, F., Motherwell, S., Bell, A., and Arshad, R, (2006), *Promoting equal Opportunities in Education: Project Two, Guidance in Dealing with Homophobic Incidents,* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Education Department.

69 GLSEN, (2009), *National school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

70 Alexander M and Santo J, (2011), Effects of homophobic versus non-homopohobic victimisation on school commitment and the moderating effect of teacher attitudes in Brazilian public schools, *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8: 289-308.

### Impact of bullying/homophobic bullying on mental and psychological health

Homophobic bullying can adversely affect young people's mental and psychological health and this also has a negative impact on their education. Studies show clear associations between repeated, long-term homophobic bullying at school and depression, anxiety, loss of confidence, withdrawal, social isolation, guilt and sleep disturbance.[71] Learners who are subjected to homophobic bullying at school are more likely to think about harming themselves and more likely to commit suicide than young people overall.

There is also evidence to show that young people who have been subjected to homophobic bullying at school are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs, which in turn is linked with poor educational attendance and performance, and are also more likely to engage in high-risk sexual behaviour.

- In Ireland, a large study established a clear link between homophobic bullying and thinking about suicide amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.[72] Most started to become aware of their sexuality at the age of 12; 16 was the average age at which they started to self harm and 17 the age at which they were most likely to contemplate suicide.
- In Northern Ireland, gay men who were bullied in school were more likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem, have been referred for professional help, have self-harmed, have considered suicide and have attempted suicide. In the UK, research revealed that half of lesbian and bisexual women aged under 20 report self-harm compared to one in 15 teenagers generally.[73]
- A multi-country study in Latin America[74] reports that around 10% of respondents said that bullying made their lives "hard and sad", 25% said that the experience made them "insecure"; almost 15% of the Chilean respondents reported contemplating suicide.
- A US study reported that suicidal intentions were strongly linked with homophobic bullying in school, with those reporting higher levels of bullying also reporting higher levels of suicidal intentions. Another study found that 33% of transgender young people had attempted suicide as a result of discrimination and bullying.[75]
- In the Netherlands, 9% of gay learners and 16% of lesbian learners have attempted suicide at least once, while 50% report suicidal thoughts, compared to 30% among heterosexual youth.[76]

There is increasing evidence that the mental and psychological health of bullies is also affected. Perpetrators of bullying are reported to have more depression, and are more likely than are their peers to be involved with antisocial behaviours and legal problems later in adulthood.[77] Studies also suggest that around half of all children involved in bullying (generic) are both victims and perpetrators, and that they are the most troubled of all children involved in bullying.[78] In addition, a study in Israel found that bullies' feelings of suffering, humiliation and anger often explain why they move from verbal to physical violence.[79]

71 Hillier A, Turner A, Mitchell A., (2005), *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The 2nd national report on the sexual health & well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University; and Taylor *et al.*, 2011), *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final Report.* Toronto: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

72 Mayock P *et al.*, (2009), *Supporting LGBT lives: A study of the mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.* Ireland: BeLonG To & GLEN.

73 Stonewall, (2008), *Prescription for Change*. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/prescription_for_change.pdf

74 UPCH/PAHO, (2011), Estudio a través de internet sobre bullying y sus manifestaciones homofóbicas en escuelas de Chile, Guatemala, México y Perú, (in press)

75 Clements-Nolle K *et al.*, (2006), Attempted suicide among transgender persons: The influence of gender-based discrimination and victimisation, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 51(3): 53-69.

76 Keuzenkamp S, (2010), *Steeds gewoner, nooit gewoon. Acceptatie van homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

77 Salmon G, James A, Smith DM, Bullying in schools: self reported anxiety, depression, and self esteem in secondary school children, *BMJ* 1996: 317(7163) 924-5; and Olweus D, Bullying at school: basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program, *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*, 1994: 35(7) 1171-90. Quoted in Kim YS. Bullying and suicide: A Review, *Int J Adolesc Med Health*, 2008: 20(2) 133-154.

78 United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, (2005), *Regional Desk Review: North America.* http://www.violencestudy.org/r27

79 Geiger B, Fischer M (2006), Will Words Ever Harm Me? Escalation from Verbal to Physical Abuse in Sixthgrade Classrooms. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 21(3): 337-57.

## 2.3 Why the education sector should address homophobic bullying

Many education ministries and institutions have taken steps to challenge bullying based on race, religion or disability but few are addressing bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This is mainly because the extent of the problem of homophobic bullying has not been recognized and the methods to respond and prevent it are not widely known, but also because wider social attitudes and sensitivities about homosexuality and atypical gender identity impede action.

However, homophobic bullying has an impact on those who are bullied, those that do the bullying, bystanders and the school in which bullying takes place, and, as the previous section has shown, it has serious educational consequences. Homophobic bullying is therefore an educational problem that must be addressed by the education sector. More specifically, the education sector should address homophobic bullying, regardless of whether homosexuality is accepted in a specific context because of the impact of homophobic bullying on the right to education and Education for All, because it is a form of discrimination and exclusion, and because it violates the principle of safe schools (see Box 3).

- **The right to education** – Homophobic bullying is a threat to the universal right to education as reflected in the Millennium Development Goals. The Dakar Framework for Action[80] also expresses the connection between the right to quality education and the right to safe and violence-free learning environments. The education system has the responsibility to ensure the right to education. Homophobic bullying undermines all three dimensions of a human rights-based approach to education – access, quality and respect within the learning environment.
- **Education for All** – Homophobic bullying is a barrier to achieving the Education for All goals related to educational access, retention and achievement. As the evidence presented earlier in this section shows, homophobic bullying has a significant impact on school attendance, early school drop out, and academic performance and achievement. The story of Kath from Thailand on the next page illustrates how failure to address the needs of all learners undermines Education for All.

### Box 3: Human rights and education

The goal of a human rights-based approach to education is to assure every child a quality education that respects his or her right to dignity and optimum development. It has three dimensions:

- The right of access to education – on the basis of equality of opportunity and without discrimination on any grounds.
- The right to quality education – to fulfil his or her potential, realise opportunities for employment and develop life skills on the basis of a broad, relevant and inclusive curriculum and child-friendly, safe and healthy environments.
- The right to respect within the learning environment – equal respect for every child, including respect for identity, integrity and participation rights, and freedom from all forms of violence.

A rights-based approach to education increases access to and participation in schooling as it fosters inclusion, diversity, equal opportunities and non-discrimination. It improves the quality of education by promoting student-centred and participatory teaching practices and by creating a safe learning environment, both of which are fundamental for learning to take place.

Respect for human rights supports the social and emotional development of children by ensuring their human dignity and fundamental freedoms, which are necessary to reach their full potential. Moreover, respect for human rights fosters respect for differences, which is critical to violence prevention. A human rights-based approach leads to the creation of a safe environment conducive to learning where teachers and learners together enjoy and fully benefit from the educational process.

Sources: UNESCO and UNICEF, (2007), *A human rights-based approach to Education for All*; UNESCO, (2011), Stopping violence in schools: A Guide for Teachers.

80 United Nations, (2000), *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. New York: United Nations; World Education Forum, (2000), *The Dakar Framework for Action*, Paris: UNESCO ; UNESCO (2005), *Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2005*, Paris: UNESCO.

- **Discrimination and inclusion** – Homophobic bullying is a form of discrimination, based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Just as discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race, sex, color, disability or religion is unacceptable so is discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Eliminating discrimination and promoting emotional health and well-being improve the learning environment and long term social and economic development. Homophobic bullying also undermines inclusion in educational institutions. Inclusive education means that all schools reach all learners and identify and address the barriers to accessing educational opportunities. Inclusive education requires inclusive policies, school environments, curricula and training of teachers.[81]

*"Schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all."* [82]

- **Safe schools** – Schools should be safe sanctuaries,[83] but homophobic bullying undermines the principle of safe schools. It makes schools unsafe for those who are subjected to it, is detrimental to other learners and has an adverse effect on the whole school environment. If a school is not safe, vandalism against school property increases, abusive behaviour toward school staff escalates, conflict among peer groups heightens and learning becomes difficult. The most common response among young people who feel unsafe is that they close themselves off from others. Learners will respond in the same way if a school is not welcoming. Creating a welcoming school goes hand-in-hand with safety.

*I was born as a man, but never felt comfortable living as a male, wearing men's clothing and conforming to male gender roles. That did not mean I wanted to be a woman, but rather somewhere in between male and female. I am transgender, or kathoey in Thai. We do not see ourselves as men and our gender identity is separate from our sexual orientation. As a transgender person I may dress in women's clothing but that does not mean I am attracted to men. But there is a common misconception that equates transgenders with gay men or lesbians.*

*In elementary and high school I could not express my identity openly. I had to wear uniforms for boys and have teachers call me by the male name given to me at birth, despite my objections. When I first came out as transgender in high school, others treated me as a joke or thought that I was going through a phase. Some teachers expressed sympathy, but they believed that I became this way due to misdeeds in a past life. Needless to say, I felt ashamed and struggled to reconcile my religion with my identity. I often found myself feeling misunderstood and ostracised by learners and teachers alike.*

*Education policy in Thailand has focused on promoting 'Education for All' and 'gender equality' but while the needs of many disadvantaged communities have begun to be addressed, progress has yet to be seen for transgender learners. Transgenders routinely feel out of place at school as we do not fit easily into the dichotomy of male and female learners and are therefore invisible. To fully realise Education for All, we need to recognise that gender equality should be universal for all human beings, including transgender people. Teachers often lack understanding of the needs of transgender learners. There are different school uniforms for boys and girls and transgender learners cannot wear uniforms of the opposite sex.*

*To address these problems and truly support Education for All, educators need to foster a supportive learning environment for transgender learners and support them to attend college. In advocating for gender equality we must ensure that gender never serves as an impediment or basis for discrimination in education.*

Kath Khangpiboon, Thai Transgender Alliance

81 UNESCO, (2009), *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education.* Paris: UNESCO.

82 UNESCO, (1994), *The Salamanca Statement.* Paris: UNESCO.

83 Education International (2009), Schools Shall be Safe Sanctuaries: A Declaration by Education International. http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/2009_leaflet_Schools-As-Safe-Sanctuaries_en.pdf

## 3. TAKING ACTION: OPTIONS FOR INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

Tackling homophobic bullying in educational institutions is a difficult issue and what can be done will depend on the country context – including its laws and culture - so the range of options presented reflects this. However, it is important to recognise that even in the most challenging contexts it will be possible to do something. As mentioned in earlier chapters homophobic bullying like bullying in general, creates unsafe schools regardless of the motivation for bullying. It is up to the educational authorities to draw on existing policies that prevent violence and bullying to make learning safer.

This section provides some practical guidance on possible action that can be taken at the national level and at the school level in countries that are just starting to address the issue. More detailed examples of best policy and practice can be found in chapter 4, some of which might be more applicable to a country that has already implemented policies and practices to address the issue. While these examples often come from developed countries, and might not be fully replicable, they can be adapted to different contexts and used as a basis for action.

## National level

### Policies

Effective policies are based on good evidence. In many countries, the absence of a policy framework to tackle homophobic bullying reflects a lack of evidence about the extent of the problem. In such contexts, collection of data using credible research methods is an important first step.

In other contexts, lack of a clear policy may reflect lack of political commitment. Addressing sexual diversity and gender identity in schools is often a sensitive topic and there may be strong resistance from politicians, religious leaders and others. Consequently education ministries may be reluctant to tackle the issue of homophobic bullying. Evidence again plays an important role, but action is also required by educators, parents, teachers unions and others with a stake in the education system to mobilise political commitment. In countries where policies do not exist key steps to consider include:

- Strengthen the evidence base by collecting data on the nature and scale of the problem in educational institutions and the impact of homophobic bullying on educational goals.

In Ireland, for example, it was the findings of a comprehensive national survey which led to education ministry action to address homophobic bullying in schools as well as inclusion of young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people as a key population in the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

- Identify possible allies and work together to use the evidence to raise awareness of key stakeholders, including education officials, teachers associations, community leaders and parents, about the nature, scale and impact of homophobic bullying.
- Work with education authorities, community and religious leaders and the media to secure support and disseminate clear messages about the unacceptability of all discrimination, including homophobic bullying.
- Identify or develop specific national and local policies that could provide a framework for work on homophobic bullying, including policies on confidentiality, discipline, safety, student welfare, citizenship, comprehensive sexuality education, rights of learners living with HIV, anti-bullying or anti-violence. A generic anti-bullying policy or other policies that address discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, and sex, can be an entry point to address homophobic bullying.

In the UK, for example, civil society organizations such as Stonewall have worked closely with the Department for Education to integrate anti-homophobic bullying within existing policy frameworks. Advocacy that takes an educational approach and builds on existing commitments to tackle bullying and violence has proved to be an effective strategy.

- Where such policies do not exist, identify international and regional policy frameworks that could be used as a starting point for developing policy (see Box 4).

#### Box 4: International and regional frameworks

International conventions and instruments can provide a starting point for development of national policies. Examples include Education for All, the Dakar Framework for action, the Yogyakarta Principles and human rights frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Policy frameworks and commitments at regional level can also provide a basis for policy development. Examples include:

- In 2011, the General Assembly of the Organisation of American States adopted a resolution condemning discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation and gender identity, urging states to adopt the necessary measures to prevent, punish and eradicate this kind of discrimination.
- In 2010, the 47 member states of the Council of Europe committed to a broad range of measures to combat sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. The measures are set out in a Council of Europe Recommendation and represent the world's first comprehensive intergovernmental agreement on the rights of LGBT people.
- In 2008, Latin American and Caribbean education and health ministers issued the Ministerial Declaration Educating to Prevent, which acknowledged the need to address the needs of people with diverse sexual orientations and identities and articulates measures to promote safe and inclusive schools.

### Interventions

At the national level, the extent to which the issue of homophobic bullying can be addressed in teacher training and in school curricula will vary. However, even in contexts where this may be difficult, some action can be taken. Where feasible, consideration can also be given to identifying possible interventions and providing guidance on these to local education authorities and schools. Possible steps include:

- Review materials and messages in key subjects in teacher training and school curricula and remove any elements that reinforce prejudice and stereotypes.

- Identify where sexual diversity and gender identity and the issue of homophobic bullying can be integrated into the teacher training and school curriculum.
- Base the curriculum on a human rights-based approach.
- Provide pre and in-service training on skills to address bullying in general, and if the context permits it, homophobic bullying.
- Collect evidence about effective interventions, including school-wide interventions and specific interventions both with those who are subjected to bullying and those who perpetrate it.
- Identify potential partners that could support implementation of interventions, including pilot projects in schools, such as civil society organizations including teachers unions.

## School level

### Policies

In some countries it may be feasible to develop specific school anti-homophobic bullying policies, while in others it may be more appropriate to incorporate homophobic bullying into existing school policies on anti-bullying, violence and safe schools. In some contexts, even this may be difficult, so policies will need to focus on more general issues such as human rights, tolerance and respect. As with action at the national level, key steps to consider include:

- Collect evidence about the extent of the problem and impact of homophobic bullying. For example, staff and learners can keep a record of all incidents of homophobic bullying or teasing, staff can monitor student absence and parents can be sensitized to recognize the signs of bullying.

GALE has developed a toolkit that includes helpful guidelines on how to collect data including design of questionnaires and surveys, and includes questionnaires that have been developed specifically to measure homophobia in schools: the School Climate Survey and the School Safety Quick Scan, both of which have been widely used. The School Safety Quick Scan is available in three versions, for primary school learners, secondary school learners and teachers. Because of its focus on safety in general and short length, it can be used in a range of school contexts including those where addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues may be difficult.

- Raise awareness of education authorities, school principals, teachers, parents and communities about the problem and promote support for an inclusive anti-bullying policy.
- In context constrained environments develop a generic anti-bullying policy based on rights, including the right to Education for All.

In Colombia, the NGO Colombia Diversa is working in public and private schools in Bogota and Medellin, documenting homophobia and related bullying and raising awareness of teachers, learners and parents. Colombia Diversa works closely with the city authorities and has also produced teaching materials for education on sexual and gender diversity including educational videos.

In Ireland, a national campaign[84] succeeded in raising awareness among the wider public as well as school staff and learners. In response to the campaign, feedback from school principals and teachers was positive, with increased awareness that "*it's an important topic to deal with in schools*".

In the Netherlands, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the organisation COC is working to create awareness of homophobia among school boards and to encourage boards to make schools a safer environment. COC developed a booklet of stories about young people's experiences of being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender in school, which resulted in a number of schools signing a Memorandum of Understanding in which they committed to take responsibility to combat homophobia.

### Interventions

In countries where there is a policy framework, schools can be guided by this. However, in many contexts, no such policy exists. Despite this, school principals and teachers can still take action to prevent and address homophobic bullying and to create a supportive environment, including providing training and support to staff and support to learners. The goal is to put in place concrete actions to prevent or address bullying, and to ensure that these cover gender-based and sexual bullying. To this end, work on gender stereotypes will need to be developed. Possible steps include:

- Identify strengths and opportunities that exist in the school to tackle bullying and consult staff, learners and parents about the values they wish to promote and to establish clear rules and responsibilities.
- Take a strong stand on the unacceptability of homophobic bullying and language by learners and staff. In countries were homosexuality is illegal or a

84 By the NGO 'BeLonG To'

sensitive issue, the emphasis should be placed on the unacceptability of gender-based bullying and language.

- Provide training for staff to ensure they are aware of homophobic bullying, know how to act and step in when bullying occurs. In countries were homosexuality is illegal or a sensitive issue, the training should be on violence prevention and gender-based bullying and language, how to recognize it and act upon it.
- Establish confidential mechanisms for reporting and responding to incidents of bullying, and provide support for learners who are bullied as well as for bullies and bystanders and make sure learners and staff know where to go to for help.
- Identify unsafe areas and consider how the school can be made safer outside the classroom, for example, in corridors, outlying areas, sports facilities and during break times, and develop a system for monitoring all areas of the school so no locations are unsupervised.
- If human and financial resources are available, establish school counselling or mentoring services with appropriately trained staff and links to other services or consider establishing mediation services that involve staff and learners or peer support mechanisms (see next chapter for further details).
- Use the expertise of NGOs. Given a country's context, identify appropriate support groups such as anti-violence, rights-based, child protection or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender NGOs. Establish referral mechanisms to these groups, and develop joint activities for implementation in the educational institution.

GALE has produced a toolkit which aims to make schools more accessible for all learners and to tackle the high rates of school drop out because of homophobic bullying.[85] This toolkit is applicable to a wide range of contexts. The toolkit has five parts:

1. Project implementation tools – This offers a range of tools on how to start a strategy or a concrete project.
2. Tools for managers and authorities – This offers tools to convince stakeholders of the need for change and guidelines on how to do it.
3. Tools for staff – This provides tools for staff and for teacher trainers.
4. Tools for learners – This provides suggestions for student action and participation.
5. Tools for parents - This offers information for parents and tools to involve parents.

GALE has also developed practical tips for dealing with resistance to the introduction of school policies and measures to tackle homophobic bullying (see Box 5).

### Box 5: Dealing with resistance to change in schools

- Create a sense of urgency (convince management and other pioneers that homophobia and homophobic bullying are real problems but also that they can be tackled)
- Form an internal coalition (which includes preferably a representative from the management, the safety and the care coordinator, and a few interested and committed teachers)
- Develop a school vision (which outlines how the school views safety and support for all learners and how the school will deal with critical questions from parents and learners)
- Share the vision with the staff team and formulate a concrete implementation plan (formal and informal curriculum, teaching, discipline, student support, safety in all areas of the school)
- Ask and support the staff to overcome problems (team discussions, training, coaching, individual advice)
- Ensure that short-term successes are seen and rewarded (fun lessons, enthusiastic responses from learners, appreciation for teachers and learners with inspiring and practical ideas)
- Consolidate the improvements and keep moving (integrate effective interventions into regular classes and activities, make sure they become part of the regular school routine)
- Anchor the change (make arrangements which ensure new staff and learners adopt and learn, for example by introductory training of new teachers, introduction to the school ethos and guidelines with new learners and codifying guidelines, procedures and curriculum content)

Source: GALE, (2011), *GALE toolkit working with schools 1.0: tools for school consultants, principals, teachers, students and parents to integrate adequate attention of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics in curricula and school policies.* Amsterdam: GALE.

85 Dankmeijer, P (editor) (2011), *GALE Toolkit Working with Schools 1.0. Tools for school consultants, principals, teachers, learners and parents to integrate adequate attention of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics in curricula and school policies.* Amsterdam: GALE The Global Alliance for LGBT Education. www.lgbt-education.info

## 4. GOOD POLICY AND PRACTICE

Tackling homophobic bullying requires action both to prevent it and to address it when it happens. Many countries have measures in place to deal with bullying and these can be adapted to respond to specific forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Available evidence and experience suggests that an effective education sector response to homophobic bullying includes interventions in the following areas:

- Policy
- Curriculum and its implementation
- Support for all learners
- Partnerships and coalitions

At national, local and school level, policies are needed that establish a clear position on anti-bullying to protect learners and staff and that address the needs of those who are subjected to bullying, the perpetrators and the bystanders. Policies should take a system-wide approach that includes the school environment, the needs of staff and learners, the skills and competencies of teachers, and the school curriculum. Policies have a key role to play in creating a supportive and safe environment for youth in which bullying is less likely to occur. National policies must be well communicated and enforced by ministries and schools. For policies to be developed and implemented they must be recognised as important and have the support and commitment of education authorities, school boards and principals. In some contexts, this requires action to raise awareness that homophobic bullying is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Effective responses depend on training and support for all school staff, and on teacher commitment, confidence, knowledge, attitude and skills. What is included in the school curriculum is also important, as this can promote respect for diversity or it can reinforce homophobia. The extent to which the specific issue of homophobia and homophobic bullying can be addressed in the curriculum and where in the curriculum it is addressed depends on the country context and what is feasible.

Educational institutions also need to provide appropriate support for learners who are targeted by homophobic bullying, as well as for those who perpetrate it and for those who witness it. Again, what can be done will depend on the country context and available resources. Strategic partnerships and working with a broad range of stakeholders are essential to tackle homophobic bullying in educational institutions. Involving education managers, school principals, teachers and other school staff, teacher and student unions, parents and parent-teacher associations, civil society organizations and the wider community in developing, implementing and monitoring action is critical to successful efforts.

While action in each of these areas is necessary and important in its own right, maximum impact requires action across all of them. This section looks at each area in turn, with examples from a range of countries.

## 4.1 Policy

This section describes examples of the types of national and local, and school level, policies that can be used to address homophobic bullying in educational institutions. The section also includes examples of action that can be taken at the school level to promote a supportive environment.

### National and local policies and programmes

Countries have a range of national and local policies and programmes. Some are general, and some are specific to the education sector. These include:

- Constitutions, laws and anti-discrimination policies that include protection from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Policies to address discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and sexual identity that are specific to the education sector
- Policies to address bullying and violence in general in schools and to promote safe schools
- Policies that specifically address homophobic bullying in schools

## Constitutions, laws and anti-discrimination policies that include protection from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity

**Nepal & Hong Kong**

The Nepal Supreme Court[86] and the Hong Kong Court of Appeals[87] have ruled to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Philippines**

The Philippines has introduced legislation in recent years prohibiting discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders in some circumstances.[88]

**South Africa**

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is prohibited by the Constitution, and the ***Equality Act (2000)*** specifically addresses discrimination and hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation. The Department of Education's Social Cohesion and Equity in Education Unit is tasked with promoting the values enshrined in the constitution in the education system. In 2011 it issued a training manual, Values in Action, for those responsible for school governance, which includes a section dedicated to sexual orientation. In 2005, the Department, in collaboration with the National Religious Leaders Forum, released a publication 'Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools – A guide for teachers', which seeks to educate young people about rights and responsibilities including the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.

## Policies to address discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and sexual identity that are specific to the education sector

**Taiwan**

***Gender Equity Education Act 2003*** addresses equal opportunities in education and seeks to eliminate gender stereotypes from the curriculum. It also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in schools and identified gay, transgender and pregnant students as 'disadvantaged' and mandates special assistance for them.[89]

**US**

The legislative office of the American Civil Liberties Union has been strongly advocating for the **Student Non-Discrimination Act**. If signed into law, this would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination and harassment in public schools based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

**El Salvador**

The government's Secretariat for Social Inclusion is responsible for monitoring implementation of **Presidential Decree 56**, which prohibits direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity within the public sector. The Secretariat is also working with the Ministry of Education to raise awareness of the problem of bullying and has encouraged school principals to address cases of homophobic discrimination and bullying.

## Policies and programmes that specifically address homophobic bullying in schools

**UK**

The UK has used existing policy on safe schools. Working within the framework of the **Safe School Policy**, it was possible to secure broad consensus and support from a wide range of allies, including faith-based groups, for addressing homophobic bullying. Schools are now legally obliged to address homophobic bullying. The government has made tackling this issue a priority. The Anti-Bullying Team of the Department for Education has worked with the NGO Stonewall to draft anti-bullying advice for schools and the official school inspection body now includes consideration of homophobic bullying and safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual learners in inspections.[90]

86 *Babu Pant and others v Government of Nepal and others* (2007), Nepal Supreme Court.

87 *Leung T.C. William Roy v. Secretary of Justice* (2006) 4 HKLRD 211, Hong Kong, SAR, China, Court of Appeals.

88 House Bill 1483: *An Act Defining Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Providing Penalties Therefore.*

89 Caceres C *et al.*, (2009), *Review of legal frameworks and the situation of human rights related to sexual diversity in low and middle-income countries*, Geneva: UNAIDS.

90 Ofstead (2012), *The Framework for School Inspection.* http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection-january-2012

**Brazil**

The **Brazil without Homophobia programme** was initiated by the Government of Brazil in 2004 and has since evolved into a funded department. The Ministry of Education implementation plan includes the **Schools without Homophobia programme**, which is being implemented by four civil society organisations. The programme focuses on regional meetings with state leaders and organisers of social movements on the theme of combating homophobia in schools, qualitative research in state capitals about homophobia in the school environment and development of a training kit on homophobia for students and education professionals. Key priorities have included transforming the curricula to include sexual and gender diversity and training and empowering educators to teach the new curricula and maintain safe spaces for students in classrooms. The Ministry has also united teachers through a **national organisation focused on the elimination of homophobia in the school environment**. Young people have participated in the development of both programmes by participating in local, regional and national consultations.

**Ireland**

Schools are governed by the **Education Act 2000** and the **Equal Status Act 2000-2008** and "have a responsibility to address homophobic bullying and respect for difference and diversity when addressing bullying." [91]

**Israel**

The Ministry of Education has made a commitment to expanding education for acceptance throughout the system and to provide educators with training and tools to assist learners suffering emotional distress because of their orientation and gender identity. In 2009, the Minister of Education presented a **clear policy against homophobia**, noting that everyone has the basic right to live their life and be who they are, free of fear and without being a target of hate, mockery and condemnation. In May 2011, the Ministry called all school heads to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia[92] with appropriate educational activity and assistance from the ministry's counselling service and in collaboration with NGOs.

**Finland**

The Ministry of Education created a **programme to address bullying, including homophobic bullying**. All materials were provided freely to schools to encourage them to take part.[93]

91 GLEN, Department of Education and Science (2001), *Lesbian, gay and bisexual students in post-primary schools, guidance for principals and school leaders*, Ireland: GLSEN.

92 IDAHO. http://www.dayagainsthomophobia.org/-IDAHO-english,41-

93 LGBT Youth Scotland, (2011), *Challenging homophobia together, research report and a guide to developing strategic partnerships in education*, Scotland: LGBT Youth.

In a few countries, local policies have been developed to promote safe schools and non-discrimination and, in some cases to prohibit bullying and harassment of learners on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (see Box 6). 'Safe schools' and 'anti-discrimination' approaches offer the education sector and its institutions legal protection for fulfilling student access and safety in a way that is non-controversial. There is emerging evidence to show that effective local policies that are properly enforced can have a positive impact in terms of preventing bullying. For example, learners are less likely to experience homophobic bullying in US schools in states with comprehensive laws or policies. Research in Australia found that state-level policies that promote 'safe and supportive schools' and an 'anti-discrimination and anti-homophobia' approach at the state level are associated with the best outcomes in terms of school-level anti-homophobia policies and social support.[94]

### Box 6: Model district policy on transgender and gender non-conforming learners

In the US, GLSEN has developed a model district policy, which outlines best practices for schools to ensure that all learners are safe, included and respected in school, regardless of their gender identity or expression. The model policy covers a range of issues including:

- Responsibilities – Each district and school is responsible to ensure that all learners, including transgender and gender nonconforming learners, have a safe school environment. This includes ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment, or bullying is given immediate attention, including investigating the incident, taking appropriate corrective action, and providing learners and staff with appropriate resources. Complaints are to be taken seriously and handled in the same manner as other discrimination, bullying, or harassment complaints.
- Names and dress – Learners have the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity. Learners shall have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity consistently asserted at school, within the constraints of the dress codes adopted by the school. School staff shall not enforce a school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender nonconforming learners than other learners.
- Gender-segregated areas and activities – Learners should be able to access restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to their gender identity. School staff may designate one or more restrooms to be gender-neutral, meaning that they are accessible to learners of all genders.
- Official records – To the extent that the school is not legally required to use a student's legal name and gender on school records or documents, the school shall use the name and gender preferred by the student. School IDs, for example, are not legal documents and should use the student's preferred name.
- Privacy and confidentiality – All persons, including learners, have a right to privacy, and this includes the right to keep one's transgender status private at school. The district shall ensure that all medical information relating to transgender and gender nonconforming learners shall be kept confidential in accordance with applicable state, local and federal privacy laws. School staff shall not disclose information that may reveal a student's transgender status to others, including parents and other school staff, unless legally required to do so or unless the student has authorized such disclosure. Transgender and gender nonconforming learners have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much to share private information.
- Training and professional development – To the extent funding is available, the district shall implement ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members to prevent, identify and respond to bullying, harassment and discrimination. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to: developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target and witnesses to the bullying; research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of learners who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment, such as transgender and gender nonconforming learners; information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying and internet safety issues as they relate to cyber bullying.

94 Jones T, (2011), *Sexual subjects: GLBTIQ student subjectivities in Australian Education Policy*, Unpublished thesis, La Trobe University.

### School policies

There are also a range of policies and programmes at the school level. Again, some are general and some are more specific. These include:

- Policies on violence and bullying in general
- Policies on diversity including sexual diversity
- Policies on bullying that include homophobic bullying

The most common type of policy in schools in most countries is a general anti-bullying policy. Some explicitly mention bullying related to disability, race and religion, but most do not specifically mention bullying related to sexual orientation or gender identity. However, existing school policies on violence, bullying, discrimination or safe schools can provide an entry point for schools to address homophobic bullying. In some countries, for example Colombia, action on homophobic bullying in schools is addressed within broader concerns about human rights. And the characteristics of effective school anti-bullying policies and programmes, which are summarized in Box 7, could be adapted to include homophobic bullying.

**Box 7: Characteristics of effective school anti-bullying policies and programmes[95]**

- Start when children are still young before their attitudes and behaviours become fixed.
- Ensure that the anti-bullying policy covers everyone in the school community.
- Involve all key stakeholders – school principals, staff, learners, parents and the wider community – in developing, implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of school anti-bullying policies.
- Develop a comprehensive prevention strategy that includes staff training and using appropriate outside expertise.
- Ensure that the policy includes a clear action plan to make the victim safe and provide support, decide on sanctions and rehabilitate offenders.
- Put in place systems for learners and staff to report bullying, for example, confidential complaints systems, using school or community child protection officers.
- Ensure that all school staff take action to prevent bullying and address any form of bullying in a consistent and systematic way.
- Make the anti-bullying policy visible, including in the staff handbook, school prospectus and at open days and parents evenings.[96]
- Monitor student behaviour, especially when there is evidence that bullying may be taking place.

95 These characteristics are based on findings from United Nations Secretary General (2006), *World Report on Violence Against Children*, Geneva: UN. *http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/reports.html*. See also: Green M, (2006), Bullying in Schools: A Plea for a Measure of Human Rights. *Journal of Social Issues*,62(1): 63–79; and Smith, P. *et al.* (Eds) (2004), *Bullying in Schools: How Successful Can Interventions Be?* Cambridge, CambridgeUniversity Press.

96 Jennett M, (2004), *Stand up for us, challenging homophobia in schools*, UK: Department of Health.

In the US, every programme designed by GLSEN has specific school objectives with the overall goal of the development of a healthy school climate and to make schools work better for the wellbeing of the learners. This matches the concerns and priorities of educational professionals and administrators (please see section below on creating a supportive school environment).

Recognition of schools, teachers and learners for making progress is important. For example, in the UK, Birmingham City Council has set up a Bullying Reduction Action Group, which has put in place a system for awarding certificates to schools that have taken part in anti-bullying activities.[97]

*At the Srithana Commercial and Technology College in Chiang Mai, Thailand, a number of initiatives have been put in place to meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners. These include the establishment of a flexible school policy that enables transgender learners to wear the uniform of their choice, 'rainbow' toilets that are not designed as male or female, and a rainbow club where learners can meet and address issues of concern.*

In some countries, schools are required to develop and implement diversity policies, and these also provide an opportunity to tackle homophobic bullying (see Box 8). In Australia, for example, school audits and sexual diversity checklists have been developed to help schools to consider how they are progressing in addressing sexual diversity in the school environment, student well-being practices, community partnerships, teaching and learning, and school strategic plans.[98] This approach may not be possible in all countries, but some of the characteristics identified below can be applied more generally.

### Box 8: Characteristics of schools with an effective diversity policy

- The school sets clear rules on how to behave right at the beginning of the school year and all staff enforce the rules.
- The school organises mutual social support among teaching staff and learners.
- The school cultivates an open attitude.
- The school offers explicit information about gender, diversity and discrimination.
- There is a procedure, open to everybody, for handling complaints and preferably an independent committee to judge the complaints.
- There is a school counsellor who knows how to support learners and staff who have complaints about discrimination and other negative behaviour.
- Learners and teacher initiatives to combat discrimination and to improve the school climate are welcomed.

Source: Dankmeijer, P (editor), (2011), *GALE Toolkit Working with Schools 1.0. Tools for school consultants, principals, teachers, learners and parents to integrate adequate attention of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics in curricula and school policies.* Amsterdam: GALE The Global Alliance for LGBT Education.

A number of organisations have developed tools to assist schools to assess their diversity policies. For example, in the Netherlands, EduDivers and the National Hetero-Homo Education Alliance have developed a checklist to assess whether a school has an adequate diversity policy (see adapted version in Box 9). Again, this may not be feasible in all contexts, but elements could be adapted to local situations.

97 Allens Croft Primary School. http://bham.webschools.co.uk/allenscroft/achievements.htm

98 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, *How to support sexual diversity in schools: A checklist*, Melbourne: La Trobe University. http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/downloads/arcshs-research-publications/SexualDiversityChecklist.pdf

### Box 9: Checklist for assessing diversity policies in schools

1. **School vision.** The school has a vision on diversity and discrimination; staff are aware of and promote it.
2. **A shared vision on bullying and homophobic bullying.** The school has a vision on how to prevent and stop negative behaviour, harassment and bullying in general and homophobic bullying specifically; staff are aware and promote it.
3. **Education about gender.** The school offers lessons on equal treatment of men and women and challenges stereotypical gender roles.
4. **Education about discrimination.** The school offers classes on discrimination which include prevention of negative behavior towards people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
5. **Correct negative behaviour immediately.** School staff correct negative behaviour and homophobic comments immediately and the school has a clear team agreement on how to handle such negative behaviour.
6. **Explicit denouncement of homophobia.** The school makes very clear that negative behaviour is unacceptable, especially when learners or teachers discriminate, bully, call names or otherwise marginalize learners because of the sexual orientation or perceived orientation. It is not enough to discipline negative behaviour, it is also important to explain its impact.
7. **Counsellors deal with issues.** The school has counsellors or mentors who can be approached when learners have problems. These could be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender learners but could also be homophobic learners who need to learn more appropriate responses and improved social behavior.
8. **Systematic policy.** The school management develops a quality policy, which systematically raises awareness and creates action by management, staff and learners to prevent and stop negative behaviour and the appreciation of diversity. Such a plan of action should be embedded in the broader context of the policy on school security, good citizenship, positive social behavior and non-discrimination.
9. **Support for learners.** Staff or learners who decide to be open about their sexual orientation receive support. This can be done through moral support, information sessions, discussion about peer support, changing the school administration to accommodate names and sex changes, assigning toilets to transgender learners and dealing with discomfort about sharing showers.
10. **Support for school-improving initiatives.** School management take seriously proposals made by learners or staff and establishment of Gay Straight Alliances are encouraged.

In a few countries, schools have anti-bullying policies that include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Evidence shows that in schools with such policies, learners report hearing fewer homophobic remarks and experiencing lower levels of victimisation related to their sexual orientation. Staff are also more likely to intervene when hearing homophobic remarks and learners more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff than learners at schools with a general or no policy.[99]

In Ireland, for example, lesbian, gay and bisexual learners report less harassment in schools that have clear anti-homophobic bullying policies.[100] Dissemination and implementation of such policies are associated with learners feeling safer, feeling better about themselves, experiencing less verbal and other homophobic abuse, and being more likely to describe their school as an accepting tolerant place where they feel welcome. These policies are also associated with highly significant decreases in risk of thinking about or engaging in self-harm and of contemplating or attempting suicide because of homophobia.[101]

99 GLSEN, (2009), *National school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

100 GLEN, Department of Education and Science (2001), *Lesbian, gay and bisexual students in post-primary schools, guidance for principals and school leaders*, Ireland: GLSEN.

101 Jones T, (2011), *Sexual subjects: GLBTIQ student subjectivities in Australian Education Policy*. Unpublished thesis, La Trobe University.

## Creating a supportive school environment

The curriculum is only a small part of what learners learn at school. They also learn from what they see and hear around them. Safe, respectful, non-discriminatory school environments, with positive examples set by school principals, teachers and other school staff, are also critical. School principals must make clear that homophobic bullying and language, directed at learners or staff, are as unacceptable as racist language or bullying against persons with disabilities. And the entire school community must also support the message that homophobic bullying, like violence and sexual harassment, are unacceptable in the school environment.

Non-bullying specific programmes that address school climate can be used as an entry point in countries where homosexuality is illegal or a sensitive issue, where bullying is not considered a problem, or even for younger students. Such an entry point might gain more support as a healthy school climate, including a safe environment, is a preoccupation of educationalists and school administrators. Policies and programmes to address any of the four essential dimensions of school climate (see Box 10), will have a positive impact on creating a healthy climate.

### Box 10: Four Essential Dimensions of School Climate

**Safety**

- Rules and norms
- Physical safety
- Social and emotional security

**Teaching and Learning**

- Support for learning
- Social and civic learning

**Interpersonal Relationships**

- Respect for diversity
- Social support – adults
- Social support – students

**Institutional Environment**

- School connectedness/engagement
- Physical surroundings

Source: Cohen, J., McCabe, E.M, Michelli, N.M & Pickeral, T. (2009), School Climate : Research, Policy, Teacher education and Practice, *Teachers College Record*, 111(1) 180-213. http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/documents/policyscan.pdf

While some examples are provided below (see Box 11), priorities and where to start will be dependent upon the country and school context.

### Box 11: Establish safe spaces

Safe spaces are places within educational institutions where learners can be free from danger and free to be themselves. In a number of countries, school authorities or learners have established safe spaces in schools, as places where homophobic bullying and harassment are not tolerated, where self-expression is welcomed and where mutual respect and dignity are promoted. In some places, safe spaces are also used for counselling and peer support. Safe spaces have been shown to reduce social isolation and improve self-esteem and academic performance.[102]

For example, in the US, GLSEN has developed a safe space kit for middle and high schools and, in China, the Boys and Girls Clubs Association of Hong Kong offers counselling and safe spaces in schools and youth centres. In the Netherlands, with the support of the Dutch government, grassroots organisations have established real and online safe spaces, called *Jong & Out*, for young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

102 Mayberry, M. (2006), School reform efforts for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students, *The Clearing House*, 79(6), 262-264; Russell, S., McGuire, J., Laub, C., and Manke, E., (2006), *LGBT student safety: Steps schools can take, (California Safe Schools Coalition Research Brief No. 3)*. San Francisco: California Safe Schools Coalition; Harris Interactive and GLSEN, (2005), *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, a survey of teachers and learners*. New York: GLSEN.

Strategies for creating a supportive environment include action by teachers in the classroom and action by learners themselves. In the classroom and outside it, teachers can play a vital role in challenging homophobic language and verbal abuse. GLSEN has developed a teachers' guide on how to develop the ThinkB4YouSpeak campaign, which addresses homophobic name calling in the school environment. Stonewall in the UK has implemented a programme to tackle homophobic language in primary schools. In New Zealand, an action kit for schools provides practical tips on how teachers can develop a safe and supportive classroom environment (see Box 12).

### Box 12: Practical tips for developing a safe and supportive classroom environment

- Establish guidelines about name calling and link to existing anti-bullying policies.
- Address all name calling immediately.
- Make no assumptions about learners sexuality or gender identity.
- Avoid negative terminology.
- Include positive role models in teaching.

Source: New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Out There, Rainbow Youth. (2004) *Safety in our Schools: An action kit for Aotearoa New Zealand schools to address sexual orientation prejudice*. .Wellington: OutThere

Learners themselves can play a significant role in challenging homophobic bullying (see also section on Support for learners). Teachers can work with learners to develop a code of conduct for the classroom, identifying what actions are acceptable and what actions would hurt others or disrupt the class. Learners have also been involved in developing guidelines (see Box 13).

In some schools learners have been involved in organising anti-bullying campaigns, often linked to human rights or other events. In the UK, a school in London with mostly Muslim learners set up an anti-bullying working party to develop a programme for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history month and, with the support of the school governors, used real life stories during school assemblies to create awareness and promote acceptance of difference. The effects have been very positive.[103] Another example is peer support, including through the establishment of Gay Straight Alliances (see section on Support for learners).

### Box 13: Involving young people in development of guidelines

Practical guidelines for inclusive education developed by young people themselves cover:

- Human rights education
- Sexuality and emotional education
- Curriculum and learning materials
- Anti-bullying and other inclusive policies
- Access to information and support
- External and community support
- Networking
- Safe environment
- Mainstreaming
- School democracy

Source: IGLYO (2007), *Guidenlines for an LGBTQ-inclusive education.* http://www.iglyo.com/content/files/educational/IGLYO_Educational-Guidelines.pdf

**103** Stonewall. *Stonewall education guide: Working with faith communities.* http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/5761.asp

## 4.2 Curriculum and its implementation

### The role of teachers and other school staff

Teachers are an essential element in an effective response to homophobic bullying. They spend the most time with learners and are an important source of accurate information. They are also adults with whom young people can discuss issues, can be role models and mentors, and are important advocates for healthy school environments. As well as intervening to stop bullying, teachers have a wider role to play in promoting inclusion and tackling discrimination, whatever form it takes. Teachers are not the only adults present in a school setting, and research from Colombia has highlighted the need to work with the whole school community, including security guards who control access to school premises.

Studies show that teachers can play a positive role. Teacher support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners is associated with feeling safer at school, missing fewer days of school, higher grades and educational aspirations, and a greater sense of belonging in school.[104] Learners in the US reported a safer and more supportive environment when teachers had been trained in sexual orientation-related prevention of violence and suicide.[105]

However, as individuals, teachers share the same values and beliefs as wider society and may convey, consciously or unconsciously, negative messages about learners who do not conform to gender norms, which can legitimise homophobic bullying.[106] This is confirmed by evidence that teachers may be less likely to intervene in homophobic bullying compared with other types of bullying. In Europe, 14% of learners who had negative experiences in school mentioned teachers as being the source or part of the problem. In some cases, teachers were described as passive outsiders who, instead of helping the learners who were being bullied, were perceived to be siding with the bullies. They talked about teachers who "*failed to provide help and guidance*" and who "*were not supportive at all*." [107]

In Israel, learners reported hearing derogatory remarks from staff and more than half of respondents said that teachers never intervened if homophobic verbal abuse took place when they were present; peers were more likely to intervene than teachers.

In the UK more than two in five teachers in secondary schools and three in ten in primary schools have heard homophobic language or negative remarks about gay people from other staff. Only 7% of teachers are reported to respond every time they hear homophobic language[108] and in another survey, 62% of lesbian and gay pupils reported that nothing happened after telling a teacher about homophobic bullying.[109]

The testimony of a young gay teacher in Brazil who was bullied at school, described below, illustrates the impact on learners when teachers do not intervene.

> *"I knew I was gay by the time I was nine years old. I was bullied, tormented at school but had to keep going every day to stop my mother being arrested. I went to seven different schools, because the teachers just did not know how to deal with me. I thought that being gay was a sin. Through my first relationship I became HIV positive. Since I left school I studied philosophy and went on to become a teacher because I recognise how important school is in the life of a child and I wanted to make a difference to the lives of others in the same position. In my school, there's a lot of indifference or else other teachers don't know how to deal with homophobic bullying so they refer to me because I am more assertive and confident. I deal with it because I choose to focus on what I can do rather than on what I suffered."*
>
> Kleber Fabio de Oliveira Mendes

Failure to intervene may be because teachers do not recognise the problem, because they want to help but do not feel prepared or supported to address the issues, or because they are fearful that, if they intervene, they may themselves be targeted.

104 Kosciw JG, Greytak EA, and Diaz EM, (2009), Who, What, Where, When, and Why: Demographic and Ecological Factors Contributing to Hostile School Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth, *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*; 38(7), 976-988; Hunt, R. and Jensen, J, (2007), *The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools.* The School Report, Stonewall, UK.

105 Russell *et al.*, (2010), Safe Schools Policy for LGBTQ Students, *Social Policy Report*, 24 (4):1-24

106 O'Higgins-Norman, J, (2009), Straight talking: Explorations on homosexuality and homophobia in secondary schools in Ireland. *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*, 9(4):381–393. O'Higgins-Norman, J, (2008), Equality in the provision of social, personal and health education in the republic of Ireland: The case of homophobic bullying? *Pastoral Care in Education*, 26(2):69–81.

107 Takacs J, (2006), *Social exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Europe*, Brussels: ILGA-Europe and IGLYO.

108 Stonewall, (2009), *Homophobic bullying in Britain's schools, the teachers' report.* http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/5761.asp

109 Dennel B and Paterson E, (2011), *Challenging homophobia together, research report and a guide to developing strategic partnerships in education*, Scotland: LGBTI Youth Scotland.

For example, in Ireland, 41% of teachers reported that they found homophobic bullying more difficult to deal with than other forms of bullying, either because of fear of being targeted themselves, or anticipated negative responses from parents, colleagues and school management.[110] In the UK, 40% of secondary school staff reported that they would not feel confident to provide pupils with information, advice and guidance on sexual diversity issues; only two in five secondary school teachers and less than half (46%) of primary school teachers describe their head teacher as demonstrating a clear leadership role in response to homophobic bullying.[111] In Sweden, only 8% of teachers felt they had been adequately prepared to address this type of bullying.

Teachers cannot address the problem of homophobic bullying alone. To be able to play a positive role, they need leadership and support from education authorities and school principals. Teachers also need to be aware of the issue of homophobic bullying and its impact on learners' education and well-being.

### Teacher training and resource materials

Training is critical to ensure that teachers have the knowledge, confidence and skills to deal with homophobic bullying. Ideally, the issue should be covered in pre-service training. In practice, most experience to date has been with in-service training or continuing professional development. Examples of training initiatives and resources for teachers are described below. In addition to teachers, all staff in an educational institution should know how to deal with homophobic bullying. Training and support is especially important for school counsellors, nurses, teacher and student representatives, but also for the wider school community.

In the UK, the Stonewall Education for All campaign addresses homophobic bullying in schools through activities, including surveys of teachers and learners and the Education Equality Index, a comprehensive annual benchmarking exercise for local authorities which shows how they address homophobia and homophobic bullying in their schools. Evidence suggests that teachers are more effective when their initial teacher training includes consideration of classroom discussion of sexual diversity and bullying. Stonewall received funding from the training agency for teachers to produce a guide for initial teacher training providers and has carried out training for trainers.[112] Their 2009 Teachers' Report found that 90% of secondary and primary school teachers believe school staff have a duty to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying and that lesbian and gay issues should be addressed in schools or through specific lessons. Three in four secondary school and two thirds of primary school teachers who have included sexual orientation issues in their classrooms report a positive reaction from pupils and 95% cent of teachers who have addressed these issues say they would do so again.[113]

In the US, elementary school teachers who have received professional development on addressing bullying report intervening in incidents of bullying and harassment, and most feel comfortable doing so. To help these teachers instil positive attitudes and respect for individual, family and cultural differences, including diversity related to sexual orientation and gender identity, GLSEN has developed a toolkit called Ready, Set, Respect,[114] which helps teachers to think about their approach to teaching about respect and includes grade-specific sample lessons with suggestions about inclusion and appropriate responses to disrespectful behaviour.

In 2010, the Danish Institute for Human Rights initiated the 'It takes all kinds – fighting homophobia in schools' project in 10 countries in Europe. The project works with NGOs, young people and teachers. The Institute has produced an educational toolkit for teachers in elementary and secondary schools, which includes teaching methods and tools, non-discriminatory practices, school structures and effective mechanisms for handling complaints.

GALE has also developed a toolkit to provide guidance on developing teacher training. This includes the possible objectives of training, the competencies (see Box 14) that teachers need and possible content of teacher training (see Box 15).[115]

110 Norman J, (2004), *A survey of teachers on homophobic bullying in Irish second-level schools.* Dublin: School of Education Studies, Dublin City University.

111 Stonewall, (2009), *The Teachers' Report.* http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4003.asp

112 Stonewall, (2011), *Initial Teacher Training: Developing an inclusive programme of study.* www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/teacher_training/default.asp

113 Stonewall. *Education for All.* http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/default.asp

114 GLSEN, (2012), *Ready, Set, Respect: Elementary School Toolkit.* New York: GLSEN.

115 Dankmeijer, P (editor) (2011), *GALE Toolkit Working with Schools 1.0. Tools for school consultants, principals, teachers, students and parents to integrate adequate attention of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics in curricula and school policies.* Amsterdam: GALE The Global Alliance for LGBT Education. www.lgbt-education.info

### Box 14: Teacher competencies

**Beginners:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Knowledge | Understands basic facts |
| Attitude | Sees herself or himself as tolerant |
| Planning | Chooses a programme |
| Implementation | Carries out programme |
| Reflection | Recognises successes and challenges |

**Advanced:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Knowledge | Places facts in context |
| Attitude | Recognises influence of heterosexual gender norms |
| Planning | Chooses from a variety of programmes |
| Implementation | Develops own programme |
| Reflection | Learns from negative feedback |

**Expert:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Knowledge | Looks for deeper understanding |
| Attitude | Explores own role as a change maker |
| Planning | Develops enhances methods |
| Implementation | Improves own weak points and trains others |
| Reflection | Systematically evaluates impact |

GLSEN has also produced a flexible framework for training, which includes a range of exercises that trainers can choose from.[116] Other organisations have also developed materials and curriculum guides for use in schools. In the US, the NGO Groundspark has produced a series of films for elementary, middle and high school classrooms that help open up age-appropriate discussions about diversity and bullying, with a strong focus on homophobia.[117] In Spain, organizations have produced materials for addressing issues through history, literature and other subjects.[118]

GALE has highlighted the need to monitor the effect of teacher training and the lack of evaluation. The teacher training package, Pride and Prejudice, developed in Australia, is one of the few examples where the impact on learners has been evaluated.[119] The package consists of a teacher manual and a video to show in classes. It outlines six classroom sessions that can be tailored to suit the needs of the particular class. The first session covers difference and reactions to it, exploring differences and peer attitudes, and helps learners to think about how they are different and how this relates to their experience of bullying. Other sessions cover gender, the experience and perspectives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, homophobia and challenging homophobia in the school and the classroom. Also in Australia, the publically-funded Safe Schools Coalition runs teacher training in schools in the state of Victoria.

In 2010, GLSEN evaluated the New York City Department of Education's Respect for All training programme for secondary school educators, which was established to ensure that every secondary school in the district had at least one staff member able to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender learners and to combat homophobic bullying and harassment. Findings showed that the training is effective in developing the competency of educators to address homophobic bullying and to contribute to safer school environments for learners. Following training, educators demonstrated increased knowledge of appropriate terms, increased awareness of how their own practices might have been harmful to learners, increased empathy for learners, increased support for action to make schools safer, including support for Gay Straight Alliances and integration of issues into the curriculum, and increased frequency of intervention in incidents of homophobic bullying.[120]

Failure to intervene in homophobic bullying is often linked to the difficulties many teachers experience in talking about sexuality in general and sexual diversity in particular, especially in societies where these are sensitive issues. Even in places where discussion of sexuality is included in the curriculum, this can be overlooked in practice if teachers are ill-prepared or uncomfortable.

Teacher training therefore also needs to address the issue of sexual diversity. For example, in Sao Paulo state in Brazil, an inclusive and transformative approach to teacher training on sexuality education has been developed that embraces sexual diversity. In South Africa, the NGO GALA conducted a national climate study on homophobia and homosexuality in secondary schools – the findings of which are to be published in June 2012 – including how teacher training curricula can integrate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.

And in Namibia, the Rainbow Project runs workshops for rural teachers. The focus is on human rights, with same sex issues addressed within the framework of human rights. These workshops explore social inclusion and exclusion from a rights perspective, based on teachers' own experiences, challenges related to human rights in general including issues affecting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, and how teachers can address human rights in school.

116 GLSEN. http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/educator/index.html

117 Groundspark. http://groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/elementary

118 Inclou Gais i lesbianes en l'educacio. http://www.arsmm.com/quaderns and Xega. http://xega.org/xega/.

119 Pride and Prejudice. http://www.prideandprejudice.com.au/index2.htm

120 GLSEN, (2010), *GLSEN Report: NYC Respect for All Trainings Increase Staff Competency at Addressing Anti-LGBT Bullying.* http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2587.html

### Box 15: What should be included in teacher training?

Training can be delivered through pre-service training or in-service training. Pre-service training can be provided by civil society organizations working in partnership with education ministries. Ideally, training should include:

- Safe and healthy school environments.
- Human rights, inclusion and non-discrimination.
- Raising awareness of the problem and the impact of homophobia and homophobic bullying.
- Basic information about gender, sexuality and sexual diversity.
- Reflection on personal values and attitudes and how use of language and practices can contribute to homophobia and discrimination.
- Skills and competencies including teaching methods, tools and practical classroom activities.
- Non-discriminatory practices.
- Practical plans of action.
- Preventing and dealing with homophobic bullying in the classroom and the school environment.
- Dealing with challenges, including difficult and confrontational situations, difficult questions, religious arguments, learners who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, parents or community leaders who may be critical, lack of support from colleagues and school management.

#### What should teachers be able to do as a result of training?

Training should provide teachers with the knowledge, confidence and skills to:

- Deal with homophobic bullying including verbal abuse and disrespectful attitudes.
- Facilitate age-appropriate classroom discussion of sexuality, sexual diversity and bullying.
- Instill positive attitudes and respect for individual, family and cultural differences, including diversity related to sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Provide appropriate support to victims of bullying and to bystanders as well as to help bullies to improve their behaviour.
- Ensure a safe school environment.

### Integration into the curriculum

The school curriculum can promote respect for diversity or it can reinforce homophobia. In some countries, curricula and teaching and learning materials still include stigmatizing and discriminatory information about sexual diversity and gender identity. Others do not recognize the existence of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people at all.

In countries where homosexuality is a sensitive issue, or for younger learners, stigmatizing and discriminatory information should be removed from the curricula and a human rights approach that includes equality and respect for all should be integrated. In such contexts, lessons to foster a healthy school climate can be taught. A healthy school environment will in turn reduce the likelihood of bullying, including homophobic bullying.

Ideally, the curriculum should address homophobia and homophobic bullying as well as taking an inclusive approach that includes positive examples relating to people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered in teaching and learning materials.[121] Curricula that are not inclusive contribute to invisibility and marginalization.

In the UK, lesbian, gay and bisexual learners in schools that teach about issues that are relevant to them are considerably more likely to feel respected and to be happy at school.[122] Teaching about such issues is also important for all learners, to promote mutual respect and social inclusion.

With respect to preventing and addressing homophobic bullying, the following aspects of curricula and learning materials should be considered:

- Do existing curricula and learning materials convey negative messages about sexual diversity and gender identity or reinforce existing gender norms?
- Where in the curriculum should issues related to sexual diversity, gender identity and homophobic bullying be addressed?

Possible approaches include:

- Integration in life skills education
- Integration in sexuality education or health education
- Integration in human rights, citizenship or civics education
- Mainstreaming across a range of subjects such as art, literature, history, philosophy or social studies

121 IGLYO, (2007), *Guidelines for LGBTIQ-inclusive education*, Brussels: IGLYO. http://www.iglyo.com/content/files/educational/IGLYO_Educational-Guidelines.pdf

122 Stonewall, (2007), *The School Report*. http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4004.asp

To what extent and where these issues are addressed in the curriculum depends on what is feasible and practical and this varies between countries.

### Sexuality education

The Special Rapporteur on the right to education noted that "*in order to be comprehensive, sexual education must pay special attention to diversity, since everyone has the right to deal with his or her own sexuality.*"

Source: OHCHR. Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, November 2011

The International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education[123] recommends that a comprehensive curriculum encompass information, values, attitudes and social norms, interpersonal and relationship skills, and responsibility. Information should cover non-discrimination, equality and gender roles, and sexual diversity. Values, attitudes and norms should include the principles of tolerance, respect, human rights, and equality. Teaching about responsibility should include encouraging learners to take responsibility for their behaviour towards other people through respect, acceptance, tolerance and empathy for all people regardless of their health status or sexual orientation.

Box 16, taken from the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, illustrates how sexuality education can address homophobic bullying in education for learners at different ages.

### Box 16: Tolerance and respect

| Age | Learning objectives | Key ideas |
|---|---|---|
| 5-8 years | Define 'respect' | ▪ The values of tolerance, acceptance and respect are key to healthy relationships<br>▪ Every human being is unique and valuable and can contribute to society by being a friend, in a relationship and giving love<br>▪ Every human being deserves respect<br>▪ Making fun of people is harmful |
| 9-12 years | Define the concepts of bias, prejudice, stigma, intolerance, harassment, rejection and bullying | ▪ It is disrespectful and hurtful and a violation of human rights to harass or bully anyone on the basis of health status, colour, origin, sexual orientation or other differences<br>▪ Stigma and discrimination on the grounds of difference are a violation of human rights<br>▪ Everyone has a responsibility to defend people who are being harassed or bullied |
| 12-15 years | Explain why stigma and discrimination and bullying are harmful | ▪ Stigma and discrimination are harmful<br>▪ Stigma can also be self-inflicted and can lead to silence, denial and secrecy<br>▪ Everyone has a responsibility to speak out against intolerance and bias<br>▪ Support mechanisms exist to assist people experiencing stigma and discrimination, e.g. homophobic bullying |

123 UNESCO, (2009), *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers and health educators*, Paris: UNESCO.

In Kenya, the Centre for the Study of Adolescence in collaboration with Rutgers WPF and the Ministry of Education is piloting comprehensive sexuality education in Kenyan secondary schools. The curriculum addresses sexual diversity in an innovative and creative way by using computers and participatory teaching methods to demystify myths about sexual diversity and open space for dialogue and debate on sexual diversity. Box 17 shows part of the information discussed in the curriculum.

**Box 17: Topic: Same sex attraction or homosexuality**

Adolescence is a time when many people become more aware of their sexual orientation. Sexual orientation means to whom a person feels sexually and romantically attracted. Most people are attracted to people of the opposite sex (men are attracted to women, and women are attracted to men). Feelings of being attracted to the opposite sex are called heterosexual feelings. Some people feel romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same sex (some men feel attracted to men and some women feel attracted to women). This attraction to the same sex is called homosexuality. At some point in their lives, most people have sexual feelings, thoughts, dreams or attractions to someone of the same sex. Two close friends (either two boys or two girls) might have a crush on each other – they like being together and at times feel physically attracted to each other. Some people remain attracted only to people of the same sex. Although some religions and cultures consider homosexuality to be wrong and abnormal, most experts think that people's sexual orientation and feelings are not something they can control – any more than they can control the colour of their skin. In other words, homosexuality is not a deliberate choice that someone makes. Therefore, it cannot be changed through praying, will-power or having sex with someone of the opposite sex. During adolescence, some people come to realise they are homosexual. This realisation can be a difficult one. You may feel very different than everyone around you, and you may feel very alone. If you are going through something like this, try to find someone to talk to, such as a youth counsellor, a health provider, a teacher you trust, or an older family member – someone who will help answer your questions and ease your worries.

Adapted from: You, Your Life, Your Dreams: A Book for Adolescents, Family Care International, 2000

Where sexuality education is not a feasible entry point for such discussion, human rights education can provide a useful opportunity to address homophobic bullying in the context of equality, respect, discrimination and the unacceptability of abuse and violence.[124],[125] In some countries, a focus on traditional cultural values of respect and pluralism may be most appropriate. In Israel, following the Ministry of Education's decision to reform the civic studies curriculum, the NGO Hoshen was requested to develop a programme to educate high school learners, with the aim of creating a stereotype-free environment in schools. The programme is facilitated by Hoshen and other NGOs and includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender volunteers who visit schools to share their experiences.

Other countries have integrated these issues across the curriculum. For example, in the UK, Stonewall has produced curriculum materials for secondary schools including a film for young people on issues around friendship, coming-out and growing up with a booklet for teachers and discussion questions, and a teaching pack for secondary school teachers that provides ideas on talking about lesbian, gay and bisexual people and issues across several subject areas. In Northern Ireland, the Education Equality Curriculum Guide[126] offers a number of practical suggestions for addressing sexual orientation and homophobia through subject-based lessons, for example, history, geography, religious education, music, art, drama, as well as assemblies and school events. In other countries, schools have used literacy classes to promote discussion by including storytelling that describes homophobic bullying, while in others art classes have been used, for example, to develop anti-bullying posters.

## Working with younger learners

Another key question to consider is at what age discussion about sexual diversity and gender identity and bullying should begin in schools, and the best approach when working with young children. Working in primary schools provides an opportunity to develop positive values and attitudes in order to prevent homophobic bullying. Simple and age-appropriate approaches can be used to address topics such as use of derogatory language, kind versus hurtful behaviour, respect, gender stereotypes, and different types of families.

In some countries, there may be political or social resistance to addressing sexuality, sexual diversity and homophobic bullying with younger learners or those below the legal age of sexual consent. However, values and attitudes are formed early on. For example, Stonewall research in the UK found that homophobic bullying occurs in primary schools in children as young as ten and that teachers were unsure how to deal with the problem. In response, Stonewall launched a project to help teachers to implement and evaluate strategies to address sexual and

124 OSCE *et al.*, (2009), *Curriculum and Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice*, Poland: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. http://www.hrea.org/pubs/Compendium.pdf

125 Warwick I, Douglas., (2001), *Safe for all, a best practice guide to prevent homophobic bullying in secondary schools.* Education Policy Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

126 Cara Friend and The Rainbow Project, (2011), *The Education Equality Curriculum Guide Supporting teachers in tackling homophobia in school*, Northern Ireland: Cara Friend and The Rainbow Project.

gender diversity and equality in primary schools as well as a prevention programme to tackle homophobic bullying. The programme promotes 'safe messages' on bullying and offers a comprehensive pack of resources, including a kit for teachers, which is distributed through local authorities. Lessons learned in the process of developing a curriculum for primary schools included the importance of support from national and local government as well as from individual head teachers, of involving parents and of including activities that engage parents and children.

In Germany, the city of Berlin is introducing the teaching of sexual diversity, focusing on difference, tolerance and acceptance, in municipal primary schools.[127] The education department is developing educational materials for teachers that include picture books, games and a manual.

In Israel, the NGO Hoshen's kindergarten project aims to promote the awareness of school administrators and teachers about non-traditional families and gender roles. For teachers, Hoshen organises sessions in cooperation with established teacher training programmes and covers basic concepts related to gender identity and language, sexual orientation, together with recommendations on suitable books and activities that can be used with young children to promote equality and avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. This is aimed specifically at helping kindergarten teachers to deal with children raised in non-traditional families.

## 4.3 Support for all learners

Support needs to be provided for:

- Learners who are bullied
- Bystanders or witnesses to bullying
- Perpetrators of bullying

Learners who have been subjected to homophobic bullying may need counselling or other professional care, as well as the support of teachers and parents and peers to protect them from repeat victimization.

The perpetrators of bullying need counselling and support to change their behaviour alongside the enforcement of consequences. Bullies need to be helped by showing them they can work with others – by supporting them to develop social skills, engaging them in cooperative learning, giving them an opportunity to exercise power in a socially acceptable way, to act responsibly and to interact constructively with all their peers. Many schools will not have the resources or trained personnel to provide couselling and support. In such cases, the schools should try to identify outside resources that could be used and establish a referrals system.

Most learners are neither bullies nor bullied, they are bystanders when bullying takes place. They need to be empowered and educated to intervene and to report incidents of homophobic bullying. Action by learners to report bullying or who support each other to stop bullying should be recognized and acknowledged, and measures need to be in place to protect them from retaliation.

Empowering bystanders to intervene is critical, as they can play a key role in preventing or stopping bullying, whereas not intervening is often perceived as condoning bullying and can serve to escalate the problem. Recognising the important influence that bystanders have over bullies, the Canadian Safe Schools Network,[128] for example, is teaching learners not to stand by silently (for other tips for bystanders, please see Box 18).

Although there is little experience of approaches to working with bystanders to prevent and intervene in homophobic bullying, there is considerable experience of this in relation to bullying in general.[129] This shows that learners can be hurtful bystanders or helpful bystanders. Hurtful bystanders can instigate bullying, encourage bullying, join in bullying once it has begun or passively accept bullying by watching and doing nothing. In most cases, bystanders encourage bullies by providing them with an audience. Simply by being there and watching, bystanders give the message that they are interested and this gives the bully power and status. In contrast, helpful bystanders can directly intervene by discouraging the bully, defending the victim or redirecting the situation away from bullying. Helpful bystanders also seek help by rallying support from their peers to stand up against bullying or reporting the bullying to adults.

Few learners have the courage to intervene, or do not intervene because of fear that they too will be a victim, but research shows that when they do it, it can be more effective than adult intervention and can often defuse the situation quickly. Teachers can discuss with learners the ways in which bystanders can contribute to the problem or to the solution, how to decide when it is safe to intervene or when adult assistance is needed, and ways in which they can help to stop bullying. It is important to be clear that teachers will support them and that the school will not tolerate bullying in any form.

127 Portail Gay, (2011), *A Berlin, la lutte contre l'homophobie commence à l'école primaire*. http://www.portailgay.eu/spip.php?article7083

128 Canadian Safe School Network, (2008), *Kids Who Witness Bullying*. http://www.canadiansafeschools.com/students/stand/bystander.htm

129 See Education Development Center www.edc.org for more information on effective ways to prevent bullying including the Eyes on Bullying programme, Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders curriculum, Voices Against Violence campaign

**Box 18: Tips for helpful bystanders**

- Your involvement makes a difference.
- Stand up for the person being bullied.
- Don't join in.
- Help the victim walk away.
- Encourage other bystanders to help.
- Get help from an adult.
- Tell the victim you feel bad for them.
- Include the victim in activities.

Source: Eyes on Bullying. www.eyesonbullying.org

### Support from teachers and school services

Educational institutions can provide important support, although what is possible will vary from community to community and depend on available resources. Depending on the context, and the needs of learners, adult support can be provided by:

- Teachers
- School counsellors or nurses
- School social workers

There is often a perception that supporting the victims of homophobic bullying should be the role of school counsellors or nurses, or health professionals outside the school setting, in part because of the negative consequences on physical and mental health and in part because teachers do not always feel comfortable or confident about the issue. However, available evidence suggests that most young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners do not view themselves as ill and tend to talk to teachers first. This reinforces the importance of sensitising and training teachers and the need for homophobic bullying to be addressed as an educational rather than a medical issue. There may be exceptions to this, for example, if a student is depressed or suicidal. In such cases, a teacher may need to refer the student to a professional who is trained in suicide prevention. To this end, teachers need training to enable them to identify any warning signs.

In some contexts, well-trained counsellors and social workers can support teachers to prevent and address bullying, act as mediators, provide psychosocial support and work with the perpetrators and the victims of homophobic bullying, and make referrals if required. The supportive role that school counsellors and social workers can play is illustrated by the experience of Vanya, a young transsexual from South Africa, described below.

*"I was born with a boy's body but from an early age I wanted to be a girl. I could not understand why I was a boy. I do not feel like a boy, I never have and I never will. In Grade 6, I went to a new school and was made to feel that I was different. I was teased for stuttering and for being gay. But I knew that I was different from my gay friends and, when I was in Grade 7 I realised I was a transsexual after watching a TV programme. That was the first time that I tried to castrate myself. I came to high school with a totally different attitude from primary school. From day one I told myself that I would not allow anyone to bring me down. We had a social worker at school and we worked through my feelings. When I told her she cried and said had been waiting for me to confide in her. She helped me to get in touch with a psychiatrist who confirmed that I was a transsexual. I also had support from the school principal and my mother, who has accepted me as I am and encouraged me to be myself."*

Vanya

However, school counsellors, like teachers, may not always feel confident about addressing issues of sexual diversity and gender identity or know how best to support learners who are affected by sexual- and gender-based bullying.[130] In the Netherlands, the organisation EduDivers has developed a chapter on gay and lesbian student counselling in the National Toolkit for School Counsellors[131] and runs workshops for school counsellors.

### Peer support

The involvement of learners themselves in providing peer support is critical. Some countries have implemented peer mediation and conflict resolution programmes in schools, which train learners to support each other, report acts of bullying and learn strategies to resolve conflicts. Others, including Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, UK and US, have supported the establishment of Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) (see Box 19). GSA are student-led, school-based clubs that are open to all learners regardless of sexual orientation and that aim to improve the school

130 Kersten A and Sandfort T, (1994), *Lesbische en homoseksuele adolescenten in de schoolsituatie*, Utrecht: Interfacultaire WerkgroepHomostudies. http://www.edudivers.nl/doc/onderzoek/Kersten%20%27Homolesbische%20adolescenten%20in%20de%20schoolsituatie%27%201994.pdf

131 Dankmeijer P, (2006), *Homo-en transseksuele aandachtspunten in de leerlingenbegeleiding*, Leerlingenbegeleiding: Kluwer.

environment, challenge discrimination and homophobic bullying and support learners who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

In the US, since the Massachusetts state-sponsored Safe Schools Programme was introduced nearly two decades ago, GSA have been established in more than 3,000 high schools across the country with the aim of making schools safe for all learners, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity[132]. The Safe and Healthy LGBT Youth Project, funded by the US Centers for Disease Control has worked with 20 state and local education agencies to create safer spaces in schools through GSA. The GSA Network also launched the Make It Better Project to let learners, parents, teachers and school administrators know that there are concrete actions they can take to make schools safer for all learners. It incorporates video testimonials, tools and other media to engage schools. In the Netherlands, GSA have helped to raise school board awareness of homophobic bullying and introduced Purple Friday in December 2010, where teachers and peers were asked to wear purple to school that day as a statement against homophobia. "That created such a buzz that even the prime Minister wore a purple tie that day and made a statement against homophobia during his weekly press conference".

Research shows that learners in schools with a GSA report feeling safer and consequently are less likely to miss school, feel a greater sense of belonging, and experience less harassment. In some schools learners were also considerably less likely to experience violence, threats and injury at school or to miss school because they were afraid to go.[133,134,135,136] The effectiveness of GSA is increased by the existence of a policy mandate and whole-school approach and support from school management and local communities.

### Box 19: Setting up a Gay Straight Alliance

Egale Canada has produced practical tools to help school learners to set up Gay Straight Alliances based on 10 practical steps:

- Assess your schools' environment
- Follow all school and school board policies and guidelines
- Find a school staff advisor
- Speak to your school administration
- Inform guidance counsellors, social workers and other resource staff
- Find a meeting place
- Establish a plan and guidelines
- Advertise your group
- Provide incentives
- Implement activities

Source: New Equity in Education Resource Kit. More detail can be found at http://mygsa.ca/en/GSAGuide

132 GSA Network. http://www.gsanetwork.org/

133 Goodenow C *et al.*, (2006), School support groups, other school factors, and the safety of sexual minority adolescents, *Psychology in the Schools*, 43(5), 573-589; O'Shaughnessy, M., Russell, S.T., Heck, K., Calhoun, C., & Laub, C. (2004), *Safe Place to Learn: Consequences of Harassment Based on Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation and Gender Non-Conformity and Steps for Making Schools Safer*, San Francisco, CA: California Safe Schools Coalition.

134 See also: Lee C, The impact of belonging to a high school Gay Straight Alliance, *High School Journal*, 2002: 85(3) 13; Russell S *et al.*, Youth empowerment and high school Gay Straight Alliances, *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 2009: 38(7) 891-903.

135 Szalacha L, (2003), Safer sexual diversity climates: Lessons learned from an evaluation of Massachusetts safe schools program for gay and lesbian learners, *American Journal of Education*, 110(1) 58 -88.

136 Kosciw J and Diaz E, (2006), *2005 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

## 4.4 Partnerships and coalitions

Strategic partnerships and coalitions, and working with a broad range of stakeholders, are critical to successful efforts to tackle homophobic bullying in educational institutions. Partnerships can:

- Raise awareness of the issue of homophobic bullying and its impact on education and schools
- Ensure that teachers receive the support they need from their colleagues, school principals and educational authorities
- Mobilise support for action to tackle homophobic bullying from the whole school community
- Mobilise support for action to tackle homophobic bullying from the wider community
- Ensure that efforts to address homophobic bullying in schools are reinforced in the wider community
- Bring in expertise and experience from outside the education sector

The following example highlights the value of coalitions that bring together a range of education sector stakeholders to address the issue of homophobic bullying.

*The Network against LGBTphobia in educational institutions (Collectif éducation contre les LGBTphobies en milieu scolaire) comprises nine national unions and associations that represent most stakeholders in the education sector in France, including the main education personnel unions in both the public and private sector[137], one of the two main national parents' associations[138], the largest national university learners' union (UNEF), and two secondary education learners' unions[139]. When the Network was set up in 2004 there was little awareness of discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity in the education sector, and no national policies and programmes to address it. A few committed individuals started to raise awareness within their respective organisations, as the Network's coordinator explains: "Our organisations are not a hostile environment. But there is a need to inform people on these issues". Very soon the various organisations realised that they would be able to achieve more by joining forces. However the first time the Network requested a meeting with the Ministry of Education in 2005, they were referred to advisors in charge of health and disabilities at the Ministry, which highlighted the limited understanding of the authorities about homophobia at that time.*

*Changing perceptions and attitudes within the Network's organisations and the Ministry has been a slow process. The Network was only able to meet directly with the Minister of Education for the first time in 2009. Activities have included: the development of a leaflet on homophobic bullying and the response to homophobia which was disseminated to education personnel, parents and learners through the Network's nine organisations; awareness-raising workshops for organisations' members; a consultative role with the French authorities, including the Ministry of Education and the Ombudsman; and working in close cooperation with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender NGOs. The Network also supported a survey to assess a campaign conducted in high schools in 2010 by the Ministry of Education to promote a hotline for same-sex attracted or gender questioning young people. According to the Network's coordinator there have been some achievements. "At least now people talk about the issue of homophobia in schools, and the Network is often contacted by the media … the need to address homophobia was included in the administrative memo sent to all educational institutions in 2008 and 2009. However achievements are too few, for example the evaluation of the 2010 campaign shows that only a few schools decided to display the posters and the flyers, and when they did it was in the nurses' office…"*

137 Fep-CFDT, Ferc-CGT, FSU, Sgen-CFDT, UNSA Education

138 FCPE

139 FIDL and UNL

Parents, communities and religious leaders, parent-teacher associations, civil society organisations, teachers' unions and the media are all important partners. The following examples illustrate why and what they can contribute.

### Parents and communities

Parents and wider society play an influential role in the development of children's and young people's values and attitudes concerning sexuality. The support of parents and the community is also critical if educational institutions are to challenge homophobia and homophobic bullying.

Education ministries and schools may be reluctant to raise the issue, especially in more conservative social contexts, because of concerns that this will be interpreted as promoting homosexuality. However, it is in the interest of all parents to fight against bullying at school as "*no parent wants his or her child or any child to be bullied […] equally no parent wants his or her child to be a bully.*"[140] In addition, parents are often more supportive than educators expect, especially when they are made aware of the extent and impact of homophobic bullying. For example, in Ireland, 90% of parents were in favour of the inclusion of issues relating to homophobia and 82% were in favour of the inclusion of the issue of sexual orientation in the post-primary school curriculum.[141]

Parents of learners who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender need support to help them understand and support their children and to deal with the issue of homophobic bullying at school. As Vanya's mother said "*as a mother I would have loved to know about different genders and sexual orientation, because most people just know that there are girls and boys. We don't have broader knowledge so I think as a mother one has to have more education, especially how to treat such a child, especially their emotional feelings. My message to other mothers would be, please let your children be who they are.*"[142]

In order to achieve support from parents, outreach and education activities for the parents will need to be implemented. In more difficult contexts such as where homosexuality is illegal or a sensitive issue, the emphasis should be placed on the rights to a safe learning environment and the need to reject any form of discrimination. A range of initiatives, by parents themselves, and also by NGOs, has sought to improve the awareness of parents of homophobic bullying and to provide support for parents of young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender learners. For example:

- In Mexico, the NGO FUNSEVIDA, which started as a support group for parents, family and friends, has also produced a video, Homophobia and HIV: Mothers and Fathers Speak, which includes testimonies of parents and has implemented a project on how to recognize homophobic bullying and what to do about it in six schools in the city of Jalapa, with the support of the State of Veracruz education ministry. Over 50 workshops have been held for teachers, other school personnel and parents of learners in secondary schools, and further workshops are planned.
- In Viet Nam, a website Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays aims to create a supportive environment for the parents and friends of young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and to help them to help their children. A mother of a homosexual son was quoted as saying "*We parents should be a little bit more tolerant and open-minded. When we cannot change it, we should accept it. Acceptance will help us see … things that encourage empathy between parents and their children, and then parents would be able to provide the children with advice on how to lead a better and more useful life of their own*".

Equally important is that schools ensure they are inclusive of all parents as well as of all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These parents can also be important partners in efforts to tackle homophobia and homophobic bullying in educational institutions. For example:

- In the US, Welcoming Schools is an initiative developed by parents and educators to respond to the needs of learners whose family structures are not well represented or included in school environments. It aims to address family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying and name-calling in schools. Welcoming Schools provides school staff, parents and guardians with lessons, tools and other resources to create learning environments where all learners are welcomed and respected. The cornerstone of the programme, the Welcoming Schools Guide, is based on research that shows links between academic achievement, emotional well-being and an inclusive school climate. The programme has been piloted and evaluated in school districts in three states and will be more widely disseminated.[143]
- In Quebec, Canada, the provincial government has funded the Coalition des Familles Homoparentales to develop a campaign to address intolerance towards gay and lesbian families. The campaign includes guides for parents and teachers and resources for learners and has trained 3,500 educators in 700 educational institutions.

140 GLEN, (2001), *Lesbian, gay and bisexual students in post-primary schools, guidance for principals and school leaders*, New York: GLEN.

141 McCormack, Orla and Gleeson, Jim (2010), 'Attitudes of parents of young men towards the inclusion of sexual orientation and homophobia on the Irish post-primary curriculum', *Gender and Education*, Vol 22, I.4: 385-400.

142 Morgan, R., Wellbeloved, J., and Marais C. (editors), (2009), *Trans: Transgender Life Stories from South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jacana.

143 Welcoming Schools. *The Welcoming Schools Guide*. http://www.welcomingschools.org/about/

Religious leaders can also provide important support for efforts to address homophobic bullying in schools. In the UK, Stonewall has secured the support of key religious leaders including the Archbishop of Canterbury who stated that "*Prejudice and violence against LGBTI people are sinful and disgraceful.*"[144]

> *In a French Catholic high school, a gay pupil initiated an exhibition on the International Day Against Homophobia with the support of the Direction. The diocese did not react negatively and the Deputy Director of the school explained that the aim of the founders of the school was to welcome every pupil and to reflect this commitment concretely and daily.*
>
> Source: Le Monde Magazine, June 11 2011. Contre l'homophobie, un lycée catholique mobilisé.

### Civil society

In many countries, civil society organisations have played a pioneering role in addressing homophobic bullying in educational institutions, through research, advocacy, raising awareness and policy work.

Civil society organisations have worked in partnership with education ministries in a range of countries to raise awareness, develop policies, guidelines and training for teachers, and support for learners. For example:

- In the US, the educational organisation GLSEN has collaborated with local, state and national coalitions and elected officials to create comprehensive legislation and policies to protect access to education for specific learners including in relation to actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The Pacific Sexual Diversity Network is working in collaboration with education ministries in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga to develop strategies to address homophobic bullying in educational institutions, and also runs workshops for teachers.
- In Ireland, the NGO BeLonG To has worked in partnership with the National Association of Principals and Teachers Unions, National Parents Association, the Office of the President, the Equality Authority and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to jointly address the issue of homophobic bullying. BeLonG To has worked in partnership with the Department for Children and Youth Affairs to develop guidelines on addressing homophobia and with the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network and the Department of Education to develop training for teachers and to create a programme that will be integrated into sexuality and relationships education; in 2010 3,500 teachers were trained. The Stop Homophobic Bullying in School campaign, which was launched by the education minister, was implemented in partnership with the Equality Authority. The campaign also secured the support of the Irish President. Partnership with the Central Policy Unit of the Department of Education has been critical to securing government commitment to combat homophobic bullying in schools.
- In South Africa, GALA and OUT LGBT Wellbeing have trained officials within the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education and those responsible for managing Life Orientation teachers and worked with learners in four secondary schools in Johannesburg to explore sexual diversity in the context of human rights.
- In Viet Nam, the Pioneer for Sexual Rights Alliance (P4SR) was founded in September 2011. P4SR has undertaken a range of activities including building evidence through a study of homophobia in schools and of current violence prevention and safety policies in schools; development of sexuality education curricula, including sexual diversity, for secondary and tertiary learners; organising a workshop on counselling services for young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their parents; sharing testimony about experience of homophobic bullying in schools and the community; and raising awareness among teachers and the wider public through exhibitions, performance art, museum displays and public events.
- LGBT Scotland has developed a toolkit on partnerships between education ministries and NGOs to tackle homophobia in schools. It is also implementing the Challenging Homophobia Together project in Scotland, which aims to reduce homophobia and homophobic bullying in schools through workshops and interactive lessons with learners, training and a toolkit for teachers, support to develop school policies that are consistent with current legislation and best practice, and support for learners who need information or advice.
- In Israel, the Ministry of Education has worked in partnership with the NGO Hoshen to develop activities to address homophobia and homophobic bullying. The Ministry explicitly recommends that schools invite Hoshen volunteers to share their experience with teachers, learners and school counsellors.

Civil society organisations have also implemented direct interventions in universities and schools to sensitise learners and prevent homophobic bullying. Some, but not all, involve peer approaches, with young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender in facilitating discussions. The NGO GALE estimates that there are 150 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender peer education groups in Europe, with around 2,000 volunteers reaching an estimated 400,000 learners and young adults every year. Their experience suggests that use of young peer educators and personal testimony helps to break down stereotypical images and to promote open and honest

144 Stonewall. *Stonewall education guide: Oh no! Not the gay thing!, leaflet on religious education.* http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/the_campaign/default.asp

discussions. However, many of these programmes have been implemented on a relatively small scale and further efforts are needed to ensure that they are fully mainstreamed in policy and practice. For example:

- In China, the Aibai Culture and Education Centre, a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organisation, works in universities to promote a supportive environment and eliminate homophobia among learners and teachers. In collaboration with student groups, Aibai organises talks and film shows. The initiative started in 2005 at the Beijing Forestry University, with support from the University Red Cross, and Aibai has since been asked to organise similar activities in 30 additional universities. The involvement of learners themselves has been fundamental to success. Another organisation, the Beijing-based support and rights group Common Language, is also conducting educational and anti-discrimination and anti-bullying activities on university campuses. These efforts have helped to change negative attitudes and to establish a GSA of young learners who have become key organisers of anti-bullying campaigns.
- In Turkey, the NGO Kaos GL visits universities at their invitation to increase student awareness about homophobia and to run university classes and, in 2011, visited 19 university campuses in 17 cities. Kaos GL is working closely with the largest teachers union in Turkey and with schools consultation departments.
- In Chile, the NGO MUMS is implementing workshops in schools in Santiago, under the auspices of the municipality, to address bullying and school violence within the framework of sexual diversity.[145]
- ABqueer is an association in Germany that is supported by the government to challenge homophobic bullying in primary and secondary schools through school-based interventions with learners as well as teacher training. Interventions in schools use a peer approach and discussions are facilitated by young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
- GALE is working with schools on diversity and homophobic bullying in the Netherlands and a number of other countries, for example supporting local partners to implement pilot projects in schools in Peru, Colombia and Chile.

### Using the media

In some countries, the media is being used to create awareness about homophobia and homophobic bullying in schools. In Ireland, the NGO BeLonG To's Stand Up! Campaign[146] used video statements and dramas to encourage heterosexual learners and staff to stand up against homophobia and the videos were watched by more than 900,000 people.

To build public awareness of sexual diversity, the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment in Viet Nam runs training sessions for chiefs of propaganda as well as training courses for journalists to write more objective articles on sexual minorities.

It Gets Better[147] is an internet-based project in the US founded in 2010 in response to a number of suicides among teenagers who were bullied because they were gay or assumed to be. The project aims to prevent suicide by conveying the message that these young people's lives will improve. The project has grown rapidly with over 200 videos uploaded in the first week and the project's channel on YouTube reaching a 650 video limit in the next week. The website includes more than 22,000 entries from people of all sexual orientations including many celebrities. A book of essays from the project was released in March 2011.

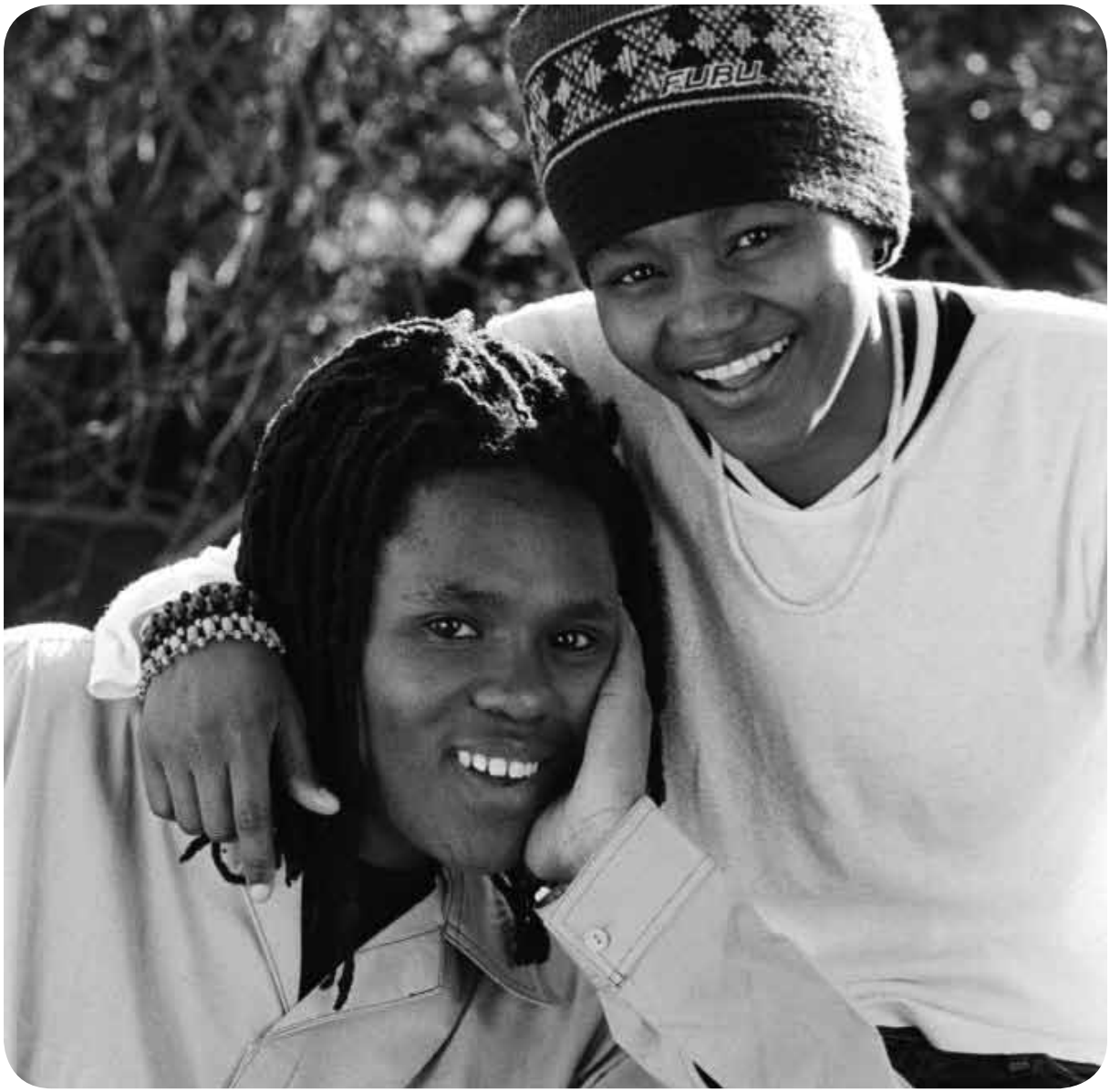
### Working with teachers' unions

In Spain, education unions provide regular training on homophobic bullying and related issues to educators. In Poland, the Campaign Against Homophobia has built close partnerships with the Polish Teachers Union, which has led to the developments of reports, and speeches at various campaign events, and agreements to co-host training sessions.

145 MUMS (Chile). www.mums.cl

146 BeLonGTo. *Stand Up ! Lets support out LGBT friends (video).* www.belongto.org

147 It Gets Better Project. http://www.itgetsbetter.org/




## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the Assistant Director-General for Education stated in the Foreword, homophobic bullying is a global problem. It is a violation of rights and impedes our ability to achieve a quality Education for All.

This volume of good policies and practices fills a need that teachers, administrators, policy makers, and other education stakeholders have, by providing practical guidance on how to respond to homophobic bullying to make education safer. There are many challenges involved in addressing homophobic bullying, especially in contexts where homosexuality is a sensitive issue or is illegal. However, there are entry points, such as policies and interventions that address violence and bullying in educational settings, which provide opportunities to address homophobic bullying.

The examples put forth come from a wide range of global contexts demonstrating that it is possible to address homophobic bullying in and through schools everywhere.

To reiterate the call of the Assistant Director-General: We invite you to use this volume, share it with colleagues and partners, and share your experiences. Homophobic bullying can be stopped, but only if we respond. We hope the suggestions in this volume help you to make learning safer and contribute to a quality Education for All.

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BOOKLET N° 8

# Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying

**GOOD POLICY AND PRACTICE IN HIV AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

This booklet is the eighth in a series of publications that address key themes of UNESCO's work in HIV and Health Education. It marks the first of several contributions to school-based health promotion that UNESCO will produce to complement our work in HIV and sexuality education. The booklet lays out the context, extent and impact of homophobic bullying and synthesizes lessons learned as well as good policies and practices for an education sector response to homophobic bullying.

Booklet 1 of the series provides an overview of why HIV and AIDS are important issues for the education sector, identifies weaknesses in current policy and programming responses, and highlights evidence gaps. Booklet 2 discusses issues affecting learners in the context of HIV and AIDS, including rights and access to education, protection, knowledge and skills, and care and support. Booklet 3 discusses issues affecting educators in the context of HIV and AIDS, including training, conduct, and care and support. Booklet 4 concentrates on the role and importance of strategic partnerships in developing education sector responses to HIV and AIDS, while Booklet 5 focuses on the topic of effective learning using illustrative examples. Booklet 6 discusses the key role of pre-service teacher training for the delivery of effective sexuality educations and HIV prevention education. Booklet 7 illustrates the links between gender, HIV and education, and highlights current thinking and experiences, innovative approaches and lessons learned, in order to inform policy and programming.

This booklet is intended mainly for education sector policy-makers, planners and managers. We hope it will also be useful for school governing bodies, administrators, head teachers, teachers and other educators who are tackling some of the challenges to create healthy learning environments.

For more information on UNESCO's work
on HIV and Health Education,
visit the website: http://www.unesco.org

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