

Tip sheet



Safeguarding in formal education programmes

For CSOs in Nigeria

This tip sheet outlines risks of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) and other harms and abuses in CSO programmes in formal education in Nigeria. The tip sheet is for civil society organisations (CSOs) working on education in Nigeria and specifically focuses on children in primary / junior schools.

[Click here](#) to read an accompanying tip sheet on safeguarding CSO non-formal education programmes.

Relevant laws and standards in Nigeria

- **Federal Republic of Nigeria Child rights Act (2003)**

Part 1, Section 2: *"Every person, institution, service, agency, organisation and body responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by the appropriate authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, welfare, number and suitability of their staff and competent supervision"*.

The policy is being implemented in 29 states, but 7 states are yet to adopt it.

- **Federal Ministry of Education (FME) National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools in Nigeria (2021)**

Section 5: *"(a) to create a safe learning environment for school users... (h)strengthen coordination among relevant institutions on school safety comprehensive education policies and security"*.

- **Safe School Declaration (SSD, 2015)**

Currently being utilised mostly in the Northeast education programmes under the humanitarian emergency groups. Safety is the focus in the declaration.

- **National School Based Management Policy (NSBMC) Policy (2010)**

Safety is mentioned in Section 1.6 (g): *"Making the school environment safe and healthy for teachers, learners and the local community in general."*

- **Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education 6th Edition (2014)**

This is a mandatory policy for all Government approved schools.

- **National Teacher Education policy, (pre-service and in service) (2014)**

Prescribes opportunities for the continuing professional development of teachers and managers of basic education in Nigeria.

- **The Nigerian Teachers Code of Conduct (TCoC) 2006 revised (2013)**

Safety issues are embedded in clauses 36, 38, 42, 43. For example, (43) *"Teachers should not under any circumstance administer any corporal punishment except otherwise permitted by the school authority"*.

- **The Law against Persons with Disabilities prohibition Act (2018) Disability Act**

- **National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Prohibition Act (2015)**

The offer of free education is sometimes used as a bait by traffickers

- **Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) Act (2004)**

The Act is live, but data shows there are 13.2 children out of school. There is no action to tackle challenges of unlawful collection of levies in schools, large number of dropouts, retention of girls and funding issues for families and schools.

- **National Gender Policy (2006 revised 2021)**

Safety is not mentioned throughout the policy paper.

- **Individual schools have their own rules.**

These needs to be routinely reviewed. One focus is ensuring safety of children in school.

- **School regulatory bodies, relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) and civil society in collaboration with Parent-Teacher Associations**

Promote non-violent punishment in schools.

Examples of CSO involvement in education programmes

- Universal basic education programme (UBE): Access, equity, quality basic education, school improvement, teaching and learning, promotes girl child education, literacy and numeracy, inclusive education, school improvement, civic and security education.
- Early childhood care development and education (ECCDE) programme: Adequate care and protection, learning through play, child rights awareness and sensitisation, psychosocial development, promoting establishment of early childhood education (ECE) facilities.
- Family Life Health and Education programme: Sex education for boys and girls, life, and skills education.
- Entrepreneurship education programme: Skills acquisition, value orientation, vocational skills for youth employment, leadership.
- Gender and inclusive education: Gender equality, girls' education, gender mainstreaming, gender inclusion.
- Public private partnership education: Improving infrastructure in schools and improving governance in education.

Risks of SEAH and other harms and abuses in formal education programmes

The list below outlines risks identified in different formal educational programmes that CSOs engage in.

- **Child to child**
 - Risks of bullying, fighting, beating, slapping, and other injuries resulting in physical and psychological harm and affecting academic performance. The consultations suggested that boys may be at more risk of bullying than girls.
 - Risks of body shaming and name calling. Specific groups of children who are at higher risk include children with disabilities, vulnerable children of minority groups (tribe, religion), poor performing children, child brides and pregnant girls. This can cause emotional, psychological harms, discrimination, stigma and depression and an inability to continue school. Overall girls are more at risk of body shaming by peers and older children.
 - Risk of inappropriate body touching. Data shows that more commonly boys touch the bodies of girls.
- **Travel to / from the formal education setting**
 - Children may face a series of risks due to the location of the schools. Such risks include rape, sexual abuse, and harassment, often by boys. Adolescent girls are at higher risk.
 - Accidents from crossing the road and transport risks of overloaded motor bike; physical harms injuries, fatigue from walking for long hours.
- **At the education facilities**
 - Inappropriate body touching by teachers.
 - Corporal punishment by teachers.
 - Discrimination, harassment, and psychological harm by teachers.
 - Areas with fewer people around were identified as areas where children are at higher risk of SEAH and other harms and abuses (by teachers or other children). Examples include toilet areas, science or computer laboratories, agricultural sites/school garden, empty classrooms, places in school not designated for play, school assembly hall, around the school gate, staircases and in dormitories if in a boarding school.
 - Excursions and field trips were also identified as situations where children felt that they were at higher risk of abuse.
 - Neglect and negligence treatment are important as they often drive psychological needs which can result in emotional abuse.

Ways CSOs can help schools mitigate the different safeguarding risks

Policies and procedures

- Promote and apply relevant laws with school management for teachers and children.
- Support the school to review the school's rules and code of conduct for children, teachers, CSO staff, parents/caregivers, and all school visitors.
- Ensure schools have relevant government approval to accept CSO in schools.
- Increase surveillance or checks of high-risk locations in school grounds.
- Curtail movements around the school after school hours.
- Stop military or other security personnel's use of school grounds for any activity.
- Establish a security clearance system for entry into schools.
- Support schools to consider age and gender appropriate supervision arrangements, including in boarding schools.
- Promote and seek funding for a professional guidance counsellor in schools who understands safeguarding and can counsel students as needed.
- Support the school to appoint a designated trained staff safeguarding officer. The focal person should be accountable to Head Teacher who has the ultimate safeguarding responsibility.
- Develop a public statement of commitment to child safety and protection compliant information strategically placed in the school.
- Develop and implement performance management procedures which includes safeguarding as part of the review.
- Ensure schools have a recruitment policy which protects children through including mandatory criminal history checks and pre-employment reference checks.
- Encourage the school to have provisions for menstrual hygiene kits including traditional and tech innovations.
- Livelihood initiatives to support income for the families
- Construction of key amenities like toilets and ablution blocks

Training and awareness

Staff and other adults

- Train teachers and staff on safeguarding and understand the impact to children achieving their educational goals. Include awareness raising on the school rules and regulations and Code of Conduct.
- Staff should be trained on how to identify and respond to different abuses and how to provide care and support for individual survivors.
- Reporting mechanisms should include reporting of colleague staff and reporting from children who experience abuse.
- Increase awareness of the risks in School Based Management Committees/Parents Teachers Association (SBMCs/PTAs) and have regular, open discussions about risks.
- Conduct training and re-orientation for all school staff on safe alternatives for discipline and punishment. Create space for dialogue to take place and encourage positive stories to be shared.
- Increase awareness of local community leaders and faith leaders of the risks in schools.

Children

- Ensure children know how to report abuse if they observe or experience it
- Support schools to educate children on how to identify and respond to different abuses and how to provide care and support for individual survivors.
- Increase awareness amongst students and all staff on bullying and other forms of abuse. Establish anti-bullying groups/clubs.
- Sensitise students about safety information and to always stay in safe places and avoid loitering around or staying back in isolated classrooms after the school's closing hours.
- Build awareness of and capabilities in peer support, care and psychological first aid so that children can identify and support others, especially survivors.
- Tailored interventions based on the intersectionality of vulnerable children such as orphans, children separated from their parents and families, or children in family's dependent on humanitarian assistance, those living with different forms of disabilities.

Reporting and response

- Support schools to put in place and promote reporting procedures, such as complaints boxes and toll-free lines, and encourage reporting. Include groups of different students in the process.

- Support schools to put in place measures so that reports are responded to in an appropriate manner and necessary referrals are made.

Culture

- Ensure that schools create safe learning environments based on equality and mutual respect amongst students.
- Ensure that teachers and staff behave in line with the code of conduct and show by example to children on behaviour.

Advocating to Government

- There is an opportunity for joint and collective action in inter-agency cooperation's – Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAS) including Ministry of Health, Education, National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), the GBV services, Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARCs), CSOs.
- Governments should assign responsibility, accountability, and budgets for any SEAH / Safeguarding mitigation activities. This will happen through budget line for SEAH in proposals, budget defence, appropriation and eventual release. The institutions responsible include the education related MDAs, the legislature and budget office.