



Wilton Park



Report

## **Ending Sex for Education, Fees, Grades and First Jobs**

Monday 12 – Wednesday 14 June 2023 | WP3191

In association with:

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# Ending Sex for Education, Fees, Grades and First Jobs

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In association with Girls First Finance<sup>1</sup> (GFF) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

### Summary

Young people who lack access to affordable forms of funding for their education, too often face coercion to have sex for education fees, passing grades, jobs and advancement. In its most extreme and common practices, the problem of financial “sponsors” exploiting mostly girls desperate to fund education expenses as well as the rampant abuse of “sex for grades” at education institutions globally is widely known, yet under-researched and under-discussed.

This is an issue in all continents. A 2014 UNESCO report about school-related gender violence across the world found that sextortion — among other types of sexual abuse — is widespread in many regions. The UK Office for National Statistics says full time students are at least three times more likely to experience sexual assault than any other occupation type with 11.6% of female students having reported being victims of sexual assault in the past year. The World Bank reports that approximately 1 in 5 female university students experience some type of sexual assault in North America. Surveys across the African continent indicate that as many as 50% of young women enrolled in higher education in Africa are forced to seek older male “sponsors” to meet their funding gaps, exposing them to sexual abuse, exploitation, and assault. Even more – 90% – surveyed in Girls First Finance focus groups report being affected by “sexually transmitted grades” in which professors require sexual favours for passing marks.

This Wilton Park conference will focus on how to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of girls and young women by authority figures during their education and early work experience journeys. It will gather diverse participants to progress this needed international conversation and foster a network of engaged organisations to cooperate for change.

<sup>1</sup> GFF is a social enterprise that provides loans, mentorship, counseling and safeguarding support to young women to help them avoid sexual exploitation during their studies and first jobs.

## Context

In 2019, Wilton Park held a conference (WP1696) to discuss violence against youth in tertiary education. This has had an impact. It resulted in a draft safeguarding code of practice and the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) used learnings from this conference to strengthen its safeguarding measures across FCDO Higher Education and Skills programming. Other steps taken since include the G7 and the UN making commitments to safe learning environments in 2019, 2020 and 2021. And in 2019, governments, employers and trade unions agreed to a global International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention to End Sexual Violence and Harassment in all forms of work, including interns and apprentices, and the formal and informal economy.

However, these international commitments have not always resulted in change in practice. Safeguarding policies and laws against sexual violence are not universally or even widely enforced. This conference will explore how to challenge and transform these social norms to prevent violence and exploitation from taking place, increase the enforcement of these safeguarding policies and create safer learning environments. It will also address systemic causes and at-scale solutions around education financing and funding, exploring how funders of education and training can use their power to give recommendations more teeth as well as identifying new approaches to provide effective safeguards. To this end, participants will review a draft of a new report co-authored by Girls First Finance and the FCDO's Work and Opportunities for Women Programme on the extent, impact and causes of sex for education fees, grades and first jobs.

The conference will also contribute to a new global campaign – *Rights, Freedom, Potential* – launched by the FCDO under its 2023 International Women and Girls Strategy to drive conversation and action on women's and girls' rights.

## Goals and Objectives

- Increase understanding of the prevalence and impact of sex for education fees, grades and jobs and assess existing and potential prevention and safeguarding solutions, including some of the promising approaches that have been trialled in schools.
- Address barriers to safe and scalable forms of affordable loans for students for tuition and living expenses, in both higher- and lower-income contexts.
- Contribute to a new Charter to End Sex for Education Fees, Grades and Jobs as a potential tool for ending sex for fees, grades and jobs.
- Foster a network of engaged organisations to take this agenda forward.
- Gain buy-in from key educational, government and financial stakeholders to a plan of action to advance this agenda at international forums and conferences in 2023/4 to further promote and gain additional support for change, including from political leaders.

## Executive summary

The Wilton Park conference '*Ending Sex for Education Fees, Grades and First Jobs*' brought together 39 participants from government, academia, multilateral donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), development finance institutions (DFIs) and the private sector to explore how to prevent the sexual exploitation of girls and young women in educational and work contexts, strengthen safeguarding, and identify cost-effective and scalable financing solutions to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation of girls and young women during their studies and early careers.

## Key issues discussed:

- Official data on violence against women and girls are unlikely to capture the full extent of sexual exploitation in education and work settings because questions about sexual pressure are often not included in existing surveys. An online survey created by GFF found that two thirds of respondents out of 2500 had experienced sexual pressure, which is significantly higher than official data.
- Sexual exploitation in education and work settings comprise three separate phenomena:
- 'sex for education fees'; (2) 'sex for grades'; and (3) 'sex for jobs'. While sex for education fees might be solved through financial means, this is not necessarily the case for sex for grades or sex for jobs. The reason for this is that sex for grades or sex for jobs include abuse of entrusted authority for sexual purposes. This abuse of entrusted authority should be addressed via interventions such as legal recognition of sexual exploitation as a form of corruption, social norms change to challenge patriarchy, training in gender-based violence (GBV) for teachers and employers, and enforced codes of conduct in workplaces.
- Providing financing to girls and young women can help reduce sex for education fees. However, there is a lack of public and private funding for this. DFIs face challenges in financing girls in education because there is no guarantee of repayment, in comparison to financing entrepreneurs who have an income and therefore greater capacity to repay.
- Some promising funding programmes exist – such as Kenya's Higher Education Loans Board ([HELB](#)), [Chancen](#) and [GFF](#) – but more funding is needed for sustainability and scale up.

## Policy recommendations

### All actors

- Ensure that all discussions and policy design to address the sexual exploitation of girls and young women include input from survivors of sexual exploitation.

### UN agencies

- Add questions on sexual exploitation to existing surveys such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Violence Against Children (VAC) surveys to build the evidence base on sexual exploitation.

### National governments and donors

- Leverage existing social protection systems to include add-ons that address the sexual exploitation of girls and young women.

### Bilateral and multilateral funders

- Explore blended finance options with DFIs to offer guarantees on commercial loans for education.

### DFIs

- Consider funding programmes such as HELB, Chancen, and GFF which have proven to be effective and therefore have a higher probability of return.

- Explore impact bonds<sup>2</sup> as a potential funding solution to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation of girls and young women.

### **Philanthropists**

- Consider funding social norms change programmes and comprehensive sexuality education, as well as loans schemes such as HELB, Chancen and GFF.

### **Educational institutions**

- Develop and enforce robust hiring practices; codes of conduct for all staff, including specific protocols on student-staff relationships; and supportive procedures for survivors, including confidential/anonymous reporting mechanisms, informal and formal processes to hear complaints, and sanctions/consequences for people found guilty of sexual exploitation.
- Proactively consider the risk that fees are being paid by sexual exploitation, and implement plans to prevent that, including innovative student funding models.

### **Academia/civil society**

- Advocate for the importance of including sexual exploitation as part of GBV at global/regional forums such as the UN General Assembly, Women Deliver, the Global Forum for Adolescents, the World Economic Forum (WEF), the G7 and the African Union. Develop a plan for how to do this.
- Develop a glossary of terminology on sexual exploitation to ensure a shared understanding.
- Develop a discussion paper to expose the issue of sexual exploitation and where it sits within the wider ecosystem of education, adolescent development and GBV.

## **Introduction**

In 2019, the UK FCDO convened a gathering at Wilton Park of tertiary education experts, safeguarding activists, and young people from around the world to share understandings of safe education and how to achieve it. That conference fed into FCDO safeguarding policies and helped inform the design of its current and future education programmes.

In June 2023, FCDO in partnership with GFF took the discussion a step further by exploring sexual exploitation in both education and employment at another Wilton Park conference entitled '*Ending Sex for Education Fees, Grades and First Jobs*'. This report documents the discussions from that conference.

## **Objectives**

The conference objectives were to explore how to challenge and transform social norms to prevent the sexual exploitation of girls and young women in educational and work contexts and to strengthen the enforcement of safeguarding policies in these settings. It also aimed to identify cost-effective and scalable solutions around education financing and funding to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation of girls and young women during their studies and early careers. The overall objective was to design a plan of action to which all participants could commit, which would address the systemic causes of sexual exploitation of girls and young women in education and work settings.

<sup>2</sup> Impact bonds are outcomes-based contracts. They use private funding from investors to cover the upfront capital required for a provider to set up and deliver a service. The service is designed to achieve specific measurable outcomes. The investor is repaid only if these outcomes are achieved. Outcomes-based contracts (including impact bonds) differ from traditional contracts by focusing on the outcomes rather than the inputs and activities. Impact bonds are differentiated from other forms of outcomes-based contract by the explicit involvement of third-party investors. See <https://golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk/the-basics/social-impact-bonds/> for more information.

The conference will contribute to a new global campaign – Rights, Freedom, Potential – launched by the FCDO under its 2023 International Women and Girls Strategy to drive conversation and action on women’s and girls’ rights.

## Participants and pre-readings

There were 39 participants – from government, academia, multilateral donors, NGOs, DFIs and the private sector – spanning 12 countries. Participants were sent GFF’s draft Connecting the Dots report.

## Background

Ending GBV – including sexual exploitation<sup>3</sup> – is a priority for the UK government, as set out in the FCDO’s [International Women and Girls Strategy](#), where Ending Violence is one of the ‘3 Es’, along with Educating Girls and Empowering Women.

GBV is underpinned by prejudicial attitudes towards women and girls. It is an abuse of human rights and undermines the potential of women and girls to learn and develop with dignity, confidence and self-esteem. It can have serious, lifelong implications on women’s and girls’ health, wellbeing, earnings and productivity. It can also have negative impacts on education outcomes, particularly during adolescence when girls are at a higher risk of sexual violence. However, GBV is preventable. Through the FCDO’s [What Works to Prevent Violence](#) programme, the UK has pioneered approaches around the world that have shown reductions in violence of around 50%.

Young women aged 16-25 are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation at work due to their lack of workplace experience and financial insecurity. In addition to effects at the individual level, sexual exploitation of women and girls negatively impacts education institutions, employers, and countries (in terms of reduced productivity and earnings).

## Prevalence of sexual exploitation/sextrafficking of women and girls in education and work settings

Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that, across their lifetime, [one in three women](#) (around 736 million as of 2021) are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner (87% of incidents) or sexual violence from a non-partner.

In March 2023, GFF published a [survey](#) online asking girls and young women about their experiences of sexual exploitation in education and work settings. It included the question “*Have you ever felt pressured or forced to engage in sexual acts?*”. Two thirds of respondents overall and 80% of respondents in sub-Saharan African reported experiencing this, with GFF’s report suggesting that the WHO’s definition of violence does not capture sexual pressure and may not capture sexual exploitation more broadly. Further investment in data and evidence, including longitudinal studies and building questions on sexual exploitation and abuse into larger prevalence studies, will be helpful in understanding the scale, impact and drivers of the issue in different contexts and with groups of girls and young women who might be at higher risk.

<sup>3</sup> This report refers to both ‘sexual exploitation’ and ‘sextrafficking’. These are generally used interchangeably to give an accurate reflection of discussions at the conference. Sextrafficking should be understood as emphasising the corruption aspect of sexual exploitation (the *quid pro quo* exchange between the perpetrator and the survivor).



Boys and young men can also experience sexual exploitation in education and work settings. Two hundred boys responded to GFF's survey (10% of all respondents). In South Africa and elsewhere, the phenomenon of 'Spicy Mummies' (similar to 'Sugar Daddies') is recognised as a problem. Furthermore, in South Africa, gender diverse people experience sexual exploitation at a rate of one in two (i.e., more than women who experience it at a rate of one in three, according to the WHO statistic cited above). 75% of students with disabilities have reportedly experienced sexual exploitation.

GFF's research suggests that there are 100 million girls and young women at risk of sexual exploitation globally, with the real figure likely up to three times that number.

### **Box 1: Nana's\* story – Chutes and Ladders**

GFF have made a film in Nairobi which documents the story of a 15-year-old girl named Nana\* who had experienced sexual exploitation from a "sponyo" or sponsor.

Nana and her brother had tried to find a way to resist the approaches of the sponyo by asking a maths teacher to pay her school fees. Nana is a gifted maths student, so the teacher agreed to pay the fees. Nana wanted to study law, but she followed the maths pathway given the benefactor's wish to support her to study maths.

Nana's brother was then dismissed from school due to his unpaid school fees (equaling USD 8). Their father committed suicide over his inability to finance his children's education. Nana's benefactor continued to pay her school fees but tragically was killed in a traffic accident. This left Nana at risk of the advances of sponyos. She was then drugged and raped by a man.

Nana still hopes to finish school one day but lacks funding to do so.

\*Nana is a pseudonym to protect her identity.

### **Causes of sexual exploitation/sexortion of women and girls**

Sexual exploitation/sexortion is a multi-causal phenomenon. Causes include patriarchal social norms; corruption, including the abuse of teachers' professional authority; the financial insecurity of girls and young women; a lack of support networks for girls and young women; and university funding structures that incentivise management to ignore sexual exploitation perpetrated by professors.

#### **Patriarchal norms**

Sexual exploitation/sexortion is a manifestation of patriarchy, i.e., a system of maintaining gender – as well as class, racial and heterosexual – privilege through crude forms of oppression, such as violence, and more subtle ones, such as laws. Sexual exploitation/sexortion is the result of the cultural normalisation of violence against women and girls, especially sexual violence. Individuals are rooted in culture, and everyone – women and girls, and men and boys – receives social validation when acting in socially approved ways. This makes culture very pervasive and persistent.

The causes of violence against children (VAC) are often patriarchal and often overlap with the causes of GBV. Up to one [billion](#) children have experienced violence worldwide and this frequently leads to other experiences of violence later in life.

#### **Corruption**

The issue of sex for grades and sex for jobs differs from that of sex for education fees because the former involves an abuse of entrusted authority by a teacher or employer for sexual purposes. In contrast, sex for fees usually involves a sponsor/sugar daddy relationship which, although exploitative, is not an abuse of entrusted authority.

The abuse of entrusted authority by a teacher or employer is a form of corruption, which is why the term 'sextortion' is often used. This corruption perspective is needed to understand and address the issues of sex for grades and sex for jobs. While sex for fees might be addressed through financial means such as loans to girls, this is not necessarily the case for sex for grades and sex for jobs because the teacher or employer's abuse of authority cannot be solved by financing girls. Funding is still needed to address this abuse of authority, but it must be targeted at providing access to quality social norms change to challenge the idea that sexual exploitation of girls and young women is acceptable.

The expression 'sex for grades' suggests that sex is the starting point of the exchange. However, if instead one says, 'grades for sex', one shifts the focus to the *power* that the teacher has to get sex from his student. In doing so, the teacher violates his professional ethics and abuses his authority to get sex, which is a form of corruption.

Sextortion can make the survivor seem complicit because it can appear that she "agreed to it" and is assumed to have some responsibility for it. This is related to the idea of the *exchange* between the perpetrator and the survivor. It is easy to say that one should not blame the survivor, but it is hard to do this in practice because of social norms about men's entitlement to sex. For example, if a woman or girl knocks on the door of her employer/teacher at night to have sex, people may say she is complicit. However, this is not the case. It is always the fault of the person engaging in sexual corruption, i.e., the one holding the power in the exchange.

Framing sextortion as corruption might help people see it as a serious crime. If a man is convicted of corruption, which is a criminal offence, it might be taken more seriously than an accusation of sexual violence, which is often (wrongly) not considered harmful.

### **Financial insecurity**

The financial insecurity of girls and young women can increase their risk of sexual exploitation. Respondents to GFF's survey were clear: education is needed to get out of poverty, and financing is needed to pay for this education. 45% of respondents reported that they had entered relationships solely to pay for education costs. Regarding tools that could have prevented exploitation, the most prevalent response was related to money, chosen 29% of the time.

However, providing unaffordable loans to girls could exacerbate cycles of debt, as has been seen in some [microfinance lending](#). Furthermore, financial solutions that only focus on school fees are often insufficient since other factors can lead to sexual exploitation cases in schools. For example, some girls experience sexual exploitation in schools where male teachers control access to menstrual products. Financial support must therefore be sufficient to cover the true costs of studying (and not working), loans must be affordable, and financial support should also be accompanied by other comprehensive support for students' needs.

### **Lack of support networks**

Lack of emotional support for girls is a key causal factor in sexual exploitation. For example, girls who are orphaned are likely to be targeted by perpetrators. Although this may relate to girls' financial insecurity, it is also caused by a lack of emotional support meaning it is harder for them to resist sugar daddies. In some cases, family members may endorse their daughter having a sugar daddy because of the material gifts they enjoy that arise from the relationship.

We need to ask whether girls at risk of sexual exploitation have anyone to talk to when faced with the advances of sponyos/sugar daddies. Do girls' parents, educators and peers have the tools to discuss the risk of sexual exploitation with them? Do girls feel comfortable in confiding in any of those people, given that there is considerable sensitivity regarding discussions about sex in many countries and contexts? Do girls feel they have the option of saying no to sponyos/sugar daddies? It is important to consider the answers to these questions when thinking about how to end sexual exploitation/sextortion.



Furthermore, findings from GFF's survey show that only 2% of respondents reported the sexual exploitation they had experienced to authority figures out of fear of retribution, which highlights the perceived lack of support for survivors from formal authority figures.

### **University funding structures**

Funding systems within universities can contribute to the sexual exploitation of young women because professors are usually responsible for securing departmental funding. Universities are therefore more likely to ignore sexual exploitation perpetrated by these professors. Many universities also wilfully ignore that student fees may come from sponsors/sugar daddies.

### **Lack of financial support as a systemic failure**

There is a significant funding gap for secondary and especially tertiary education in much of the world. This is unlikely to change in the near future due to donors' other funding priorities, such as the war in Ukraine. DFIs and international finance institutions (IFIs) more broadly were under-represented at this conference, although those in attendance shared some insights about the challenges in funding girls' education. These include the pressure to guarantee a return on investment – which is difficult when funding education rather than entrepreneurship – and the fear of being associated with sexual exploitation scandals that may occur in the education sector.

IFIs in general do not see girls/young women as 'bankable' because they are still in education. However, GFF's experience suggests that young women default on loan repayments at a third of the rate of young men in Kenya but that banks are unaware of this. The example of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh proved that, contrary to popular belief, women were bankable microfinance clients and then other financial actors stepped into that space too. The challenge is to prove that young women who have not yet finished college – and therefore have no guaranteed income or business plan – are worth taking a risk on.

The employment challenge in countries such as Kenya compounds the problem because IFIs are aware that girls/young women may not go on to earn money and therefore may be unable to repay their loan. There are anecdotal reports that students in Kenya (especially girls) are often unwilling to take out loans due to fear of defaulting on repayment. However, there is also evidence of widespread use of mobile phone loans in Kenya (and elsewhere), which suggests that there is already high demand for loans and willingness to take them out.

GFF loans have an interest rate of 18%, which is the accepted cost of capital. Grants and government loans are not sustainable due to a lack of government funding (as noted in the presentation on Kenya's HELB scheme in Box 3 below). Even subsidised loans are equivalent to grants if the loan does not cover the full cost of capital. Whilst advocating for more government funding for grants or loans is a potential longer-term solution, there is a need to find an immediate solution for girls/young women who face sexual exploitation to pay education fees. The private sector has an essential role to play in filling this immediate funding gap.

However, often donors and NGOs think that such an interest rate is too high. It is well documented that some women microfinance clients have sold assets to pay back high interest loans. Girls and young women from low-income households may also face harassment from their husbands for taking out high interest loans. This underscores that girls and young women in need of education funding must be key stakeholders in policy design. GFF's anecdotal experience shows that young women find 18% interest rates over a year to be acceptable because much higher monthly interest rates on other loans are common in many countries. GFF clients have also lost access to finance when their governments capped interest rates because banks refused to lend to them at low rates due to them being considered high risk clients.

Blended finance is a potential solution to the funding gap in girls' education. For example, a bilateral or multilateral donor could guarantee the risk of a loan provided by a DFI. DFIs have also faced this pushback from some civil society actors. There has separately been pressure on US Senators from American teachers' unions to prevent US funding going to education in developing countries because it undermines the state delivery of education.

Some DFIs are hesitant to fund education due to the fear of being associated with sexual exploitation scandals in that sector. However, this is not the case for all DFIs (for example, the World Bank is the largest funder of education globally).

Two examples of successful financing solutions were shared, as documented in the boxes below.

### **Box 2: Case study: Chancen**

[Chancen](#) is a social enterprise that provides education funding to women in developing countries. Its clients agree to pay back 1.8 times the amount borrowed over any time period, which offers more flexibility than a loan with a fixed repayment period. The net effective interest rate using this structure is 18%. Chancen also provides mentoring to women to help them resist the advances of sugar daddies.

In a case study, 37% of Chancen clients did not go on to find employment. Chancen accepts this risk because it does not see itself as providing loans to women but is instead entering into agreements with them. This is an important distinguisher: a woman enters into the agreement on the understanding that she will only have to repay the money if she gets a job. This increases her confidence to borrow.

Chancen monitors educational institutions to see whether its clients who study there go on to get jobs. If they do not, it does not fund other clients to study at those institutions.

Women who go through the programme become alumnae and support others. This is a critical factor in its success.

There is an opportunity for impact investors, central banks, foundations, IFIs, DFIs, and other actors not present at the conference to fund organisations like Chancen.

### **Box 3: Case study: HELB**

The Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in Kenya provides education loans to students embarking on tertiary education within and outside Kenya. It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1995.

HELB loans cover: 1) tuition fees, 2) books and stationery, and 3) accommodation and subsistence, with an emerging focus on accelerated e-learning.

HELB loans aim to overcome the gap between the rich and poor in society, with a focus on equity rather than equality. They are particularly aimed at female students, orphaned students and students with disabilities, as well as students from low-income households generally. HELB has taken inspiration from the book *Radical Inclusion* by David Moinina Sengeh, which challenges readers to identify the exclusion that individuals experience. HELB staff observe that boys tend to overstate their poverty to receive greater funding whereas girls are more inclined to hide their poverty level, which results in smaller loans.

HELB is a *revolving fund*: it is only sustainable if clients repay their loans so that new clients can be funded. Clients tend to repay their loans because the marketing tells them that repayment will help other students receive a loan. Some funding also comes from the government Exchequer as HELB subsidizes its loans' interest rate to 4%, which also limits its ability to provide full funding to all eligible borrowers because the government funding is limited and fluctuates due to demand for funding from other government departments.

The cost-of-living crisis, Covid and global inflation have decreased the value of loans and resulted in a large funding gap for HELB. There is an opportunity for IFIs, DFIs and commercial banks to fill this gap.

HELB-funded student nurses have gone on to work on the Covid response in Kenya and elsewhere, demonstrating the positive impacts of loans at individual, societal and global levels.

## **Potential solutions to change social norms that enable sexual exploitation/sexortion**

There is a range of potential solutions to disrupt harmful social norms that enable sexual exploitation/sexortion. These include adopting survivor-centred and rights-based approaches, providing comprehensive sexuality education in schools, raising awareness about sexual exploitation, using technology to improve reporting mechanisms, and adding targeted social norm support to existing social protection systems. In South Africa, a GBV strategy that challenges social norms has been implemented across higher education institutions to address the issue of sex for university grades. This is done via awareness raising and capacity building for staff and students, improved reporting mechanisms for survivors, and a specific protocol on staff-student relationships.

### **Survivor-centred and rights-based approaches**

It is essential to adopt a survivor-centred approach to ending sexual exploitation/sexortion. This means including survivors of this form of sexual exploitation and pressure in all discussions, asking them what could have prevented the situation, not blaming them, and ensuring a Do No Harm (DNH) approach to data gathering. GFF's online survey – which had 2500 respondents, of whom 80% identified as survivors – is an excellent example of gathering survivor-driven feedback and should be expanded further. All policies and recommendations should come from survivors and individuals who have supported them.

It is also essential to adopt a rights-based approach to ending sexual exploitation/sexortion. This means not ignoring it even if it is not illegal in certain countries. There are three rights-based frameworks in which sexual exploitation/sexortion can be situated:

- The [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) gives the broad framework of the legal equality and bodily integrity of women and girls. It has been ratified by 189 countries.
- International Labour Organization [Convention 190](#) on Violence and Harassment establishes a global obligation to guarantee workplaces free of violence and harassment. It has been ratified by 31 countries.
- The [Incheon Declaration](#) for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 mentions the need to eliminate GBV 21 times, including sexual harassment and violence (although the term 'sexortion' is not used).

### **Comprehensive sexuality education**

Comprehensive sexuality education in every secondary school is critical to prevent future sexual exploitation/sexortion because it teaches about consent and rights and creates a safe space for all adolescents to talk about sex. However, teachers may be uncomfortable talking about sex with teenagers, so training will need to be provided to them.

Parents and guardians also need to be involved in the support structures for their adolescent children when addressing sexual exploitation/sexortion. This could be done via parent-teacher meetings. There is also a role for religious leaders and elders, who can have significant influence, especially in rural communities. If community elders/chiefs recognise the importance of addressing sexual exploitation/sexortion, this may encourage others to take it seriously too.

However, it is important to go beyond comprehensive sexual education. South Africa is changing its approach to focus on *civic* education, with a focus on drugs and alcohol, which are a huge precursor to GBV. Education on these topics in secondary- and tertiary-level institutions is crucial.

### **Raising awareness about sextortion and framing it as corruption**

There is a lack of awareness about sextortion as an abuse for which there is recourse. Consequently, perpetrators feel entitled to demand sex for grades or jobs, whilst students or young employees accept sextortion as their only choice. *Naming* sextortion is the first step to addressing it as part of a broader pattern of GBV. *Shaming* it is critical to changing attitudes and behaviour. *Framing* it as corruption is also important. Impact can be hard to measure but two promising anecdotes presented at the event suggest that awareness raising about sextortion and framing it as corruption can be effective:

1. A police chief in Bosnia-Herzegovina compared a sextortion roundtable to discussions about domestic violence in which he had participated a decade earlier. At that time, there were no cases of domestic violence in his district, and it was not perceived as a problem. Domestic violence occurred but it was not discussed or prosecuted. Once awareness had been raised, this situation changed, and many cases are now brought every year. He expressed the hope that initiating discussion about sextortion would yield a similar result in the coming years.
2. In a study contrasting Tanzania and Colombia, researchers found that, because sextortion existed as a concept in Tanzania – thanks to outreach efforts by women judges – there were tools to work against its normalisation. In contrast, in Colombia, the absence of sextortion as a concept has contributed to its invisibility. Furthermore, Tanzanian law states that in sexual corruption cases, only the person abusing their authority is considered guilty. This contrasts with the country's Corruption Act which says that where the corruption is monetary, both parties might be considered guilty.

### **Using technology to improve reporting mechanisms**

Technology may lower the stigma and other risks associated with reporting sexual exploitation. For example, the NGO Not in My Country has developed technology to allow university students to provide anonymous feedback about professors and to report sextortion. If a pattern of sexually exploitative behaviour is observed through these reports, the NGO will work with students to pursue a complaint (if the student wishes). This is based on the belief that prosecutions are more likely to be successful if a pattern of behaviour can be documented.

### **Box 4: Case study: Addressing sex for grades at universities in South Africa**

The South African government has created a GBV policy framework that aims to tackle the root causes of GBV via three goals:

1. Create an enabling environment to inform, prevent, support and monitor GBV in higher education institutions, including a Special Responsible Office for safe reporting.
2. Create comprehensive awareness and prevention programmes for staff and students, including capacity and skills building for frontline staff (security, residence, student support services, management, student leadership, and campus health staff). This includes content on the role of drugs and alcohol as a precursor to GBV perpetration. Training is digital, which ensures greater accessibility for learners.

3. Create supportive and reparative procedures for complainants/survivors, including confidential/anonymous reporting, informal and formal processes to hear complaints, sanctions/consequences for people found guilty (exclusion for students, dismissal for staff), and psycho-social support and protection for survivors.

The policy includes a **specific protocol on staff-student relationships**, which discourages these relationships, although they are not forbidden. All such relationships must be disclosed. Failure to disclose results in dismissal of the staff member, since most staff-student relationships can lead to pressure on the student to provide sex for grades.

There has been a large increase in reporting of GBV cases from a few hundred in 2020 to 7000 per year in 2022, which is assumed to be related to the implementation of the GBV policy framework (although very few faculty members have so far been held accountable following reports about them). After five years, the government will review and revise the programme.

South African students have the option of studying for a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Civil Education to teach others about GBV.

### Leveraging social protection systems

There is a growing number of cash transfer plus social protection programmes that provide monthly or quarterly cash support to the most vulnerable households in addition to complementary services. For example, there are programmes to tackle toxic masculinities in Brazil via the [Bolsa Familia](#) programme, parenting sessions in the [Philippines 4Ps](#) programme, or family violence prevention in Peru's [Juntos](#) programme. Similar add-ons to social protection schemes, such as social norms change programmes to address the sexual exploitation of girls and young women, are an option to explore.

Currently, cash for education programmes tend to be aimed at children (up to 16/17 years). While there are some scholarship programmes at tertiary level, they tend to be small. To address the vulnerabilities that young women face at tertiary level, cash for education programmes would need to be expanded to cover tertiary education.

### Action planning

#### Framing and priming sexual exploitation

**Question:** How can sexual exploitation be framed so that it resonates with audiences and does not alienate people?

**Solution:** Share solutions at the same time as the problem to make people more comfortable to join the conversation.

- Highlight **abuse of power** as the key message as this should be understood by everyone. Reframe the issue as 'grades for sex', 'jobs for sex' and 'fees for sex' rather than the other way around to highlight this abuse of power.
- The framing of sex for grades and sex for jobs should focus on the role of entrusted authorities exploiting their power. The framing of sex for fees should note that it is still an abuse of power, but the abuse is not by an entrusted authority.
- It is important to expand the framing beyond education fees to cover living costs, schoolbooks and uniforms, etc.

#### Reasons to give to support this framing:

- Economic justice and equality are disrupted by sexual exploitation.
- Adolescence is when the brain develops and rewires, so it is particularly important to protect young people from trauma at this time.
- Sexual exploitation is often treated as consensual sex, but this is not the case.



**Question:** How to get the issue on the global agenda (governments, multilaterals, funders, employers, programme delivery)?

**Solution:** Drive the discussion and build momentum by:

- Using evidence to demonstrate that this is a global problem.
- Using campaigns to ensure the issue is talked about, including through side events and speakers at global events such as the UNGA Global Education Forum.
- Leveraging the capacity of the [Brave Movement](#) to bring the conversation to a global level.
- Incorporating sexual exploitation into the agenda of the [Safe to Learn](#) global initiative. This coalition controls significant financing of education in low- and middle-income countries.

**Question:** How to build the data and evidence?

This is key for visibility. Transparency International's [Global Corruption Barometer](#) did not formerly measure sextortion so it provided an inaccurate picture of corruption. Due diligence in supply chains sometimes looks for evidence of human trafficking but does not currently look for sexual exploitation.

**Solutions:**

- Add questions on sextortion to regular and large-scale surveys – e.g., the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and VAC surveys. This would help address sample biases in online self-reported surveys.
- Use social media like Facebook to disseminate anonymous surveys, recognising that existing methodologies for collecting data may not yield accurate results given the sensitive nature of the questions (i.e. focus groups or surveys conducted in schools do not lead survivors to feel safe from retribution or public humiliation to discuss issues openly).
- Invest in longitudinal studies on adolescents and youth – e.g., ODI's [GAGE](#) study, the WHO Global Adolescent Survey ([GEAS](#)), and the [Young Lives](#) survey where the same individuals are followed over time – both programming participants and control groups – to see what works in the short- and long-term in diverse contexts.
- Add a training module on sexual exploitation for researchers collecting data on GBV via the surveys listed above.
- Test the effectiveness of interventions by having baselines and longitudinal data monitoring.
- Design key performance indicators (KPIs) on corruption and integrity for corporate supply chains.
- Develop shared learning spaces (e.g., a WhatsApp group, a resource hub, a list of relevant events, policy documents).
- Amplify survivor voices, including via digital tools, whilst ensuring a DNH approach.

**What can education institutions do to address sexual exploitation?**

**Key advocacy messages:**

- Education is a basic human right; sexual exploitation is hindering women's and girls' right to education.
- Education institutions can contribute to an enabling environment to counter education/grades/jobs for sex.
- The power of education to transform gendered social norms.

**Question:** What can education institutions do to prevent sexual exploitation and change behaviour at scale?

**Solutions:**

- Develop mandatory gender transformative curricula that is evidence-based, play-based, context-specific, age appropriate, and which encourages boys and men to reject violence/entitlement to sex.
- Encourage cross-learning on the delivery of gender transformative curricula, including strategies for overcoming political resistance (e.g., the [United Nations Girls' Education Initiative](#) (UNGEI) have a partner coalition for ending gender stereotypes).
- Explore whether these curricula could be credit based so there are incentives to complete them, particularly in higher education settings. Engage student leaders and student-led organisations in the design and delivery of these curricula.
- Include and scale up psychosocial support mechanisms for survivors.
- Ensure that teachers are held accountable through codes of conduct and annual review processes and are aware of expected standards of behaviour. Learn from the South African example discussed in Box 4.
- Examine and address systems that perpetuate violence (e.g., tenure, internships and research funding structures).
- Create a badge for education institutions that take these issues seriously. Take inspiration from the garment industry where factories are audited by professional inspectors and receive badges if they pass.

**Question:** What professional development/training is necessary?

- Develop specific terminology to describe the range of acts that can constitute sexual harassment, abuse and GBV.
- Train teachers (both pre- and in-service training) on their role in challenging gender norms. Provide regular training on safeguarding, prevention and response. Ensure this is an ongoing process that reinforces messages and adapts and responds to the changing nature of sexual exploitation.
- Consider accredited training certification for security staff/others who interface with students.
- Develop a code of ethics, ensuring it is visible and signed off by all staff.
- Support student voice and engagement, e.g., student activism to prevent/respond to sexual exploitation.

**Question:** How can funders/governments/civil society hold educational institutions and partners accountable?

- Introduce mandatory reporting of sexual exploitation in all education programmes.
- Explore whether universities can be ranked by their prevention and response to sexual exploitation to incentivise institutions to take action. Include anti-corruption organisations in education programme design.

**Question:** How can educational institutions create an enabling environment to address sexual exploitation?

- Create clear policies and structures for prevention, mitigation, and response, including safeguarding policies, coordinated accountability systems and transparency for all students and staff.
- Ensure there is dialogue on safeguarding policies with a broad range of actors and groups in universities to get buy-in.
- Consider campus safety audits to cover protocols, tribunals, and the effectiveness of response mechanisms.
- Explore digital pathways for reporting, including anonymous procedures.

- Develop recruitment protocols to ensure robust selection processes, e.g., values-based interviews.

### **What are the challenges that development practitioners face in getting finance to young women and girls?**

#### **DFIs:**

- Often focus on specific SDGs;
- Predominantly focus on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) rather than education;
- Usually have limited ability to fund the public sector directly or indirectly;
- Are usually limited to funding projects of a certain value.

DFIs lend to banks which in turn can lend to girls. However, banks are often hesitant to provide loans to young women living in poverty due to:

- Reputational risks;
- Women and girls' lack of credit history;
- Lack of visibility on women and girls' repayment capacity due to high unemployment;
- The perceived ethical risk of lending to vulnerable populations.

#### **Other concerns:**

- Importance of finding scalable solutions, i.e., lending to a high number of young women.
- Importance of producing tailored solutions depending on the age group of the young women in question.

#### **Solutions:**

##### **1. Impact bonds**

**Pros:** Opportunity to engage a diverse range of investors to absorb risk. Encourage collaboration and sharing responsibility across partners and sectors.

**Cons:** Expensive and complex, and therefore slow to procure.

##### **2. Income share agreements, e.g., Chancen (see Box 3 above)**

**Pros:** Investors absorb risk whilst recipients only pay back when it is feasible. Encourages collaboration and community building with recipients.

**Cons:** Organisations with high liquidity are required to fund this model; not demonstrably scalable.

##### **3. Blended finance – where bilateral/multilateral donors guarantee the risk of a DFI/bank loan, e.g., guarantee funds.**

**Pros:** DFIs may be more willing to take on riskier clients; scalable.

**Cons:** There may be political opposition to this approach (e.g., opposition to the idea of public money supporting IFIs/DFIs).

The [Kenya social bond](#) was noted as a good example of blended finance.

##### **4. Standard student loans, e.g., GFF, LEAP**

#### **Questions to take forward:**

- How can organisations reduce risk for banks to lend?
- What should the role of philanthropy be in funding these projects?
- What should the role of legislation be in this area?

**Action point:**

Research different blended finance options appropriate to different stages in the education life cycle (e.g., to meet the needs of girls under 18 compared to women over 18) and the business case for different funders. Map the stakeholders that will be part of blended finance solutions.

**Charter to End Sex for Education Fees, Grades and First Jobs**

A draft Charter drawn up by GFF was presented to the group as a potentially useful tool to generate support, commitment and accountability for ending sexual exploitation in education and work settings. Whilst a Charter may not be the most appropriate instrument for all stakeholders, it could be useful as part of a multipronged advocacy strategy. For example, government stakeholders could use a Charter to advance discussions on sex for education fees, grades and first jobs at forums such as the G7 and bilateral forums. However, a diversity of stakeholders would also need to review each clause of the Charter in detail and secure buy-in from their organisations. Input from organisations absent from the conference would also be important to design a Charter that Government stakeholders feel represents the views of the relevant stakeholders. This would lead to the greatest buy-in from others who may wish to sign on in the future as any advocacy campaign gains momentum. It is also critical to get input from survivors. This Charter is still a work in progress.

**Immediate next steps****Side event at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**

Propose a side event on sex for education fees, grades and first jobs at the upcoming UNGA in September 2023<sup>4</sup>. This could be held at a hotel close to the UN building. It should be an open discussion covering all angles. This UNGA is particularly relevant because it will focus on the SDG progress report. At the time of drafting this readout, the draft SDG Mid Term Report did not refer to sexual exploitation (or even to GBV). The report notes that SDG 16 (to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies) is the most off-track of all the SDGs so this is an opportunity to raise the profile of sexual exploitation. Furthermore, sexual exploitation may not be considered violence by some actors, which provides an opportunity for advocacy. It will be important to invite survivors based in New York City to the discussion so that their voices are at the forefront (and to emphasise that sexual exploitation affects women and girls in the Global North as well as the South). This event should be included in the UNGA calendar now and a small working group should be created to develop this idea.

**Advocacy at global and regional conferences**

Encourage civil society and girl-led movements to discuss sexual exploitation at the [Women Deliver](#) conference in Kigali in July and at the [Global Forum for Adolescents](#) in October and its accompanying [1.8 billion campaign](#). The Global Forum starts on the International Day of the Girl (11<sup>th</sup> October 2023), which is an appropriate date to discuss the sexual exploitation of girls and young women. Other fora to target include the World Economic Forum (WEF), UNGEI, the G7, COP, the African Union and other regional fora (these should also be mapped). Develop a plan for how to do this (Who will attend the event? What will they say?).

**Add sexual exploitation questions to existing surveys**

Propose to relevant UN agencies and other organisations that they add questions on sexual exploitation to existing surveys such as MICS, DHS and VAC. Review existing MICS data and data from other surveys to see whether information about sexual exploitation is already being captured.

<sup>4</sup> Given the short timeframe, this would need to be actioned as soon as possible if stakeholders wish to pursue this approach.

## Conduct further research on sexual exploitation in education and work settings

Develop a glossary on sexual exploitation to agree on shared definitions of terms.

Develop a discussion paper to expose the issue of sexual exploitation and where it sits within the wider ecosystem of education, adolescent development and GBV.

## Personal commitments

Some personal commitments to address sexual exploitation in education and work settings included:

- Raising the importance of addressing sexual exploitation across their organisations.
- Highlighting sexual exploitation when engaging with UN agencies.
- Embedding an awareness of sexual exploitation into programme design and delivery.
- Developing tools (oversight, monitoring, compliance) for civil society partners to address sexual exploitation.

## Kavita Kalsi

Wilton Park | July 2023

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