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**Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for
sustainable development in Africa: How to design and
implement an effective response through education and
training systems**

Sub-theme 1

**Common core skills for lifelong
learning and sustainable
development in Africa**

**Gender violence in schools as a factor in non-attendance at
school in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa**

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ABSTRACT

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1. ABSTRACT

1. In many countries, the available data show that girls are victims of different forms of violence that take place around, or even in, their school. This has a negative effect on their schooling and can even lead to them dropping out of school. Gender violence in the school environment has a number of dimensions: economic (in the case of transactional sex), social and cultural (taboo on sexuality, absence of sex education, gender inequality) and health-related. Such violence takes place in and around the school, and may be perpetrated by school teachers or members of staff, adults around the school, as well as male pupils. Gender violence in the school environment has a direct impact on girls' schooling, since it often results in them ceasing to attend school. This kind of violence would therefore appear to be, and must be considered, a major obstacle to the education of girls. Trivialized, it is often still a taboo subject, and this makes it difficult to identify, recognize and deal with incidents.
2. The prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence in schools have not yet been studied thoroughly and systematically in West and Central Africa. However there is now an urgent need for data to be gathered at national level in every African country.
3. Furthermore, although numerous international and regional legal instruments to protect children exist, they are not effectively implemented because of insufficient political commitment and resources. Gender violence in schools is often not sufficiently acknowledged as being a factor in non-attendance at school, and it is given little consideration in Education for All policies and programs.
4. In order to address this serious problem of gender violence in schools, preventive measures and measures to deal with cases (psychological, social, medical, legal and judicial measures) must be introduced without delay. Girls continue to face difficulties in gaining access to health care and psychological help because of the inadequacy, or even non-existence, of such services in schools; the financial constraints of their families; social and cultural inertia and the stigmatization from which victims of violence continue to suffer (especially against a backdrop of high prevalence of HIV/AIDS); but also because of the remoteness of health centers and the attitudes of health care professionals.