

# Back to school is not always cool when it comes to GBVF



**T**he annual back-to-school period is generally a time of great excitement and fresh new beginnings for South Africa's young people. For many, however, it can also be a period of escape (at least for a little while each weekday) from gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) taking place in their homes.

“Shockingly and sadly, the back-to-school period can also mark the start of a fearful and confusing time when our youth are exposed to abusers in and around the education system – whether these be educational professionals or classmates – resulting in many of our school-going youth becoming victims of GBVF themselves,” says Tshepo Sefothelo, Executive Head: Marketing & Communication of the GBVF Response Fund.

The GBVF Response Fund encourages South Africa to consider these facts:

The study revealed that more than 65% of primary school-aged children, and 89% of adolescents were reported to have used violence.

A study by the South African Medical Research Centre (MRC) for the Department of Health, which sampled 14,776 school-going youth, revealed that: 17% of students carried weapons, 41% of students were bullied, 14% belonged to gangs, 15% had been forced to have sex, 15% had been

threatened or injured on school property, 19% were injured in fights and 32% felt unsafe at school.

Although physical punishment in schools was prohibited by the 1996 South African Schools Act, it had continued with between 22% and 74% of learners reporting being hit or caned at school (according to a Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention's 2012 National School Violence study).

And, more recently, between April 2020 and July 2021, more than 160 cases of sexual misconduct perpetrated by male teachers were reported to the South African Council for Educators.

“As a society, we have a responsibility to create a safer and (physically, emotionally and psychologically) healthier youth. We need to set the example in building-up and educating future generations to treat (themselves and) others with kindness and respect, through healthy forms of communication.

Parents, other caregivers and educators need to be role models to this end, and even more importantly (alongside members of our justice system), be a safe haven for our youth to speak up, so that they can be protected from harmful situations. We need to work together to put an end to GBVF in our lifetime,” concludes Sefothelo.

*Source: Women on top, ngopulse.net*