



**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL-RELATED  
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: A CASE STUDY OF DICK  
NDLOVU HIGH SCHOOL IN ZWELIBOMVU,  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**May 2023**



## PROJECT BACKGROUND

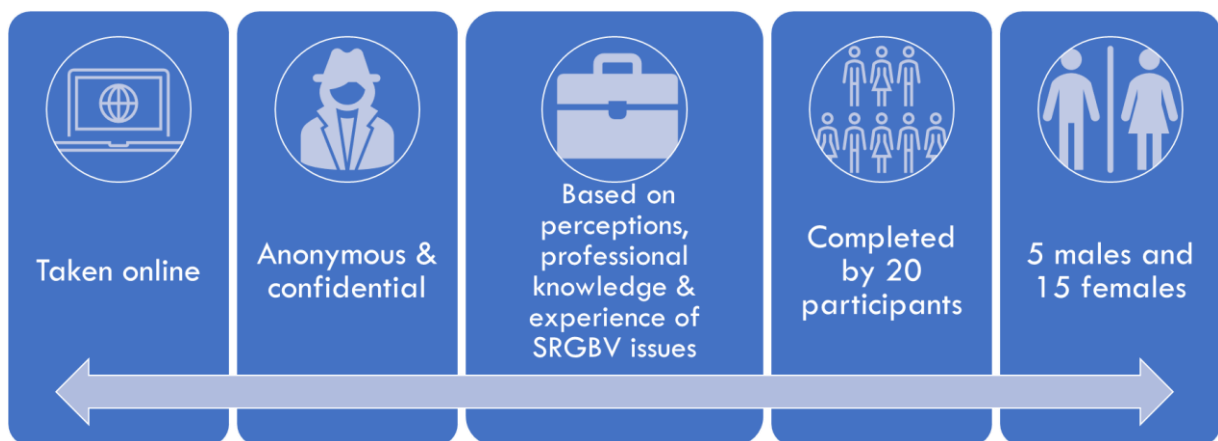
The Masiphephe Network, hereinafter referred to as “the Network”, has been working with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on the development of local, community-based strategies to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) violence in 12 schools in Gauteng (GP), Mpumalanga (MP) and Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN). The Network is funded by the United States Agency for International Agency (USAID) and its implementation is led by the Centre for Communication Impact (CCI). CCI works in partnership with the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) Gender, Health, and Justice Research Unit (GHRJU) as well as six community partner organisations, namely: Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT), Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke), Ethembeni Crisis Care Centre (ECCC), Gugu Dlamini Foundation (GDF) and Project Association Southern Africa (PSASA).

The Gender, Health and Justice Unit (GHJRU) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) conducted a baseline study through a survey in 12 schools, on behalf of the Network. Dick Ndlovu High School, in Zwelibomvu, was one of the schools that participated in the study. A baseline study is the collection of data to analyse an existing situation to identify the starting point for an intervention or a support response. The purpose of the survey was to gain some understanding of the nature of SRGBV in the specific school.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed methods approach. The initial stage of this research involved conducting a survey to gather data from a sample of 20 educators. An educator in the context of this study includes administrative staff, learner support agent (LSA), school-based support team (SBST), teacher, teacher’s assistant (TA) and member of the school management team (SMT).

**Figure 1: Summary of Research Methodology (Survey)**



The professional capacities represented were as follows: TA (n=11), teacher (n=6), school management team (SMT) (n=2) and LA (n=1). Also, learners did not participate in this survey. In certain cases, the total number of responses in this report may not equate to 20 due to the respondents having the option to select multiple choices. Consequently, the total number of responses could exceed 20. Additionally, for non-mandatory questions, the number of responses may be lower than 20.

The second phase of the research involved conducting a validation workshop with a group of educators, comprising both survey participants and non-participants. A total of 22 educators actively participated in the workshop. The purpose of the validation workshop was for the members of staff/research respondents to authenticate the research findings as a true reflection of the situation at the school.

The next phase of the research involved a review of the code of conduct. The question we aimed at answering through the review of the code of conduct for learners is: *“Does the school code of conduct for learners meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the DBE?”* To answer this question, the schools were requested to submit their current copy of the code of conduct for learners. The documents were evaluated to determine whether they meet the criteria of what a code of conduct for learners should entail as highlighted in the NSSF and the school governing body (SGB) Records Manual. The code of conduct for learners was reviewed and the recommendations derived from the review are integrated into the latter part of this report.

Lastly, a DBE provincial validation workshop was held on 19 April 2023 where forty-two (42) individuals attended the workshop. The delegates represented the DBE (district, provincial and national); the schools (i.e., Ohlange, Dick Ndlovu, JE Ndlovu and Ndengetho), South African Council for Educators (SACE) and the Masiphephe Network.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

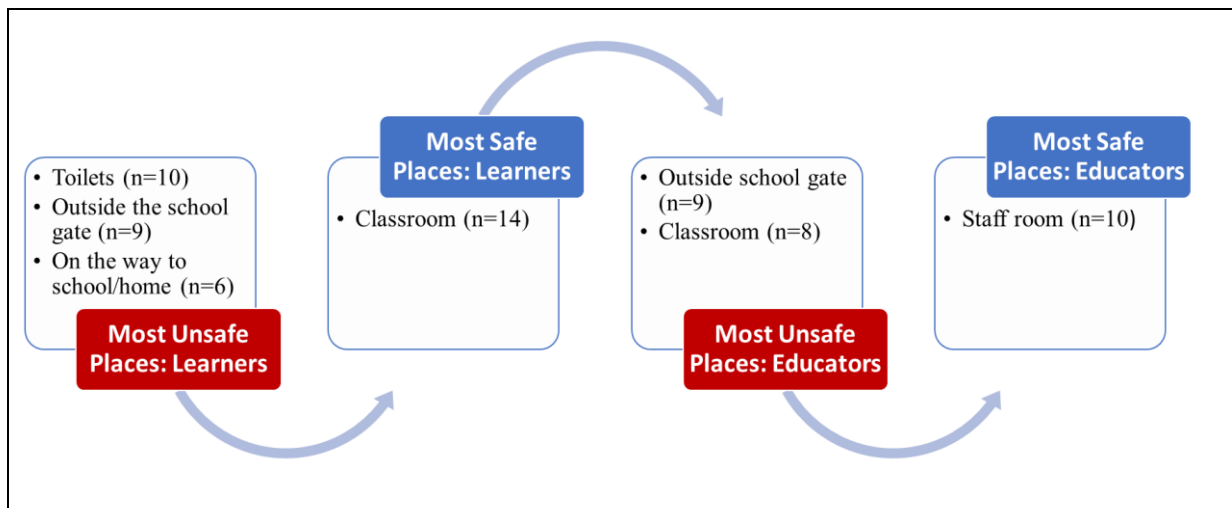
The numbers and percentages, throughout this report, refer to the number of times a specific option was selected by the respondents who took the survey. This report should be read in conjunction with the provincial report which provides a detailed discussion of the findings.

### 1. MOST COMMON TYPES OF SRGBV

Learner-on-learner violence	Learner-on-educator violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal abuse (n=18)</li> <li>• Physical abuse (n=15)</li> <li>• Bullying (n=15)</li> <li>• Cyberbullying (n=13)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal abuse (n=19)</li> </ul>
Educator-on-learner violence	Educator-on-educator violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal abuse (n=15)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal abuse (n=15)</li> </ul>

It was reported during the school’s validation workshop that learners are most likely to respect male educators more in comparison to their female counterparts.

## 2. VIEWS OF SAFETY



The educators who attended the validation workshop expressed their worry regarding the poor security at the school. It was reported also that the fence was cut/vandalised by members of the community which makes it easy for people to gain access to the school premises.

## 3. MOST COMMON SRGBV ROOT CAUSES

- Alcohol or substance abuse by learners (n=13)
- Peer pressure (n=11)
- Low educational ambition (n=9)
- Violence in the home (n=9)
- Bullying (n=7)

### 3.1 WEAPONS

- Weapons are brought to school by learners (n=19).
- The most common types of weapons brought to school by learners are knives (n=17).
- In-school weapons used by learners during acts of violence are school desks and chairs (n=10).
- Learners bring weapons for protection (n=7).
- Weapons are mostly confiscated during raids by the police (n=7), during searches at the school gate (n=4) and following reports by fellow learners (n=4).

### 3.2 THE USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCES BY LEARNERS

- Learners are more likely than educators to attend school intoxicated or use substances on school premises (n=16).
- Types of substances used by learners are alcohol (n=19), tobacco products (n=13), marijuana (n=7) and incika (n=7).

## 4. MOST COMMON IMPACT OF SRGBV ON VICTIMS

### 4.1 Impact on Learners

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Physical Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling sad and hurt (n=14)</li> <li>Having low self-esteem (n=12)</li> <li>Feeling angry (n=11)</li> <li>Feeling embarrassed (n=11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical fighting at school (n=11)</li> </ul>
Sexual Impact	School-related Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contraction of HIV and other STIs (n=13)</li> <li>Unwanted pregnancy (n=12)</li> <li>Engaging in risky sexual behaviour (n=11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Missing school (i.e. truancy) (n=16)</li> <li>Failing or doing poorly at school (n=12)</li> </ul>

### 4.2 Impact on Educators

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Work-related Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling angry (n=8)</li> <li>Feeling sad and hurt (n=8)</li> <li>Having low self-esteem (n=7)</li> <li>Feeling embarrassed (n=6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absenteeism (n=12)</li> <li>Ineffective teaching (n=12)</li> </ul>

## 5. DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

- Verbal warning (n=6) and reporting (n=5) to parents are the common types of actions taken in the school against learners who commit acts of SRGBV.
- Verbal (n=5) and written (n=4) warnings were reported as the predominant disciplinary measures used against educators who commit acts of SRGBV. Most of the respondents (n=9) reported that they did not know what actions are taken against educator perpetrators because issues of discipline are between the concerned educator and the principal.

## 6. REPORTING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- Twelve (12) respondents reported that the school does have a formal SRGBV reporting process in place.
- Learners report mostly to educators (n=7) followed by LSAs (n=6) whereas educators report mostly to the principal (n=7) or their colleagues (n=6).

## 7. SUPPORT

### 7.1 AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL WORKER

- Four (4) respondents reported that there is no social worker available to the school while 10 reported that there is a full-time social worker, four (4) reported that there is a social worker that assists when requested by the school and two said that there is a part-time social worker.
- It was confirmed during the validation workshop that the school does not have an in-house social worker, therefore they refer to one outside of the school.

- It was revealed that there are two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that come to the school often to provide SRGBV-related programmes to learners.

## **7.2 STAKEHOLDERS OFFERING SUPPORT TO VICTIMS**

- The school social worker (n=9) is the main stakeholder that offers support to the school.
- Victims are referred for SRGBV services through the SGB (n=6), the SMT (n=6), the LSA (n=6) or directly via telephone, email or referral form (n=5).

## **8. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING**

### **8.1 EDUCATORS AND SGB TRAINED TO DEAL WITH SRGBV**

- It is concerning to note that when the respondents were asked if educators and SGB have been trained on how to deal with SRGBV issues, only three (3) respondents out of 20 said yes.
- It is also a matter of concern that educators have not been trained on the mandatory reporting of child abuse and maltreatment. For details on mandatory reporting, please refer to the recommendation section of this report. For a more comprehensive discussion consult the provincial report.
- Educators reported that they are not capacitated on issues of SRGBV because only the SMT is workshopped on these issues and the information is not cascaded down to them.
- Important to note is that educators who participated in the validation workshop expressed that they sometimes do not report cases of learners being abused due to fear of putting their lives in danger.

### **8.2 LEARNERS EDUCATED ON ISSUES OF SRGBV**

#### **8.2.1 Issues of SRGBV Included in the School Curriculum**

- Seventeen (17) respondents reported that SRGBV issues are included in the school curriculum through Life Orientation (LO).
- However, it was revealed during the validation workshop with the school that LO does not cover issues of SRGBV sufficiently.

#### **8.2.2 Existence of Peer Educator Programmes: Girls/Boys Empowerment Movement (GBEM)**

- GBEM clubs do not exist in the school.
- “The aim of GBEM is to encourage girls and boys to work together as equals and to foster respect for the human dignity and rights of both sexes. This is to foster gender equality values and promote positive gender norms through peer education and life skills” (DBE, 2021, n.p.). Peer education is one of effective ways of learning in that through teaching each other learners are able to solidify their knowledge and spread it within their community (Western Governors University, 2022).

## **9. LAWS AND POLICIES THAT ADDRESS SRGBV**

- In general knowledge of primary policies and frameworks that deal with issues of violence and GBV was very low among the respondents.
- The school has a separate educators’ policy in addition to the SACE Code of Professional Ethics. However, not all educators were trained on the educators’ policy.

- The school has no separate policies on bullying and harassment (general and sexual). Issues of bullying and harassment are imbedded in the code of conduct for learners.
- Most of the educators who participated in this study were not aware of the National Schools Safety Framework (NSSF). It, therefore, could not be established if the NSSF is implemented fully in the school.
- Not all educators who participated in this study had knowledge of the Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment. Therefore, the protocol may not be fully implemented in the school. This means that not all staff may be aware of the process to be followed when reporting offences that are sexual in nature as outlined in the protocol.

## 9.1 EXISTING SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEARNERS

- The school has a code of conduct.
- Six (6) educators reported that parents do sign the school code of conduct. It was, however, revealed that parents sign the code of conduct without reading through it.
- Eight (8) educators reported that learners do sign the school code of conduct.
- When asked if issues of SRGBV are included in the school code of conduct only seven (7) respondents said yes.

### 9.1.1 Review of the Code of Conduct

A tick (✓) means that the specific section of the code of conduct is included in the copy submitted for review, while a cross means (✗) that the section in question is missing from the reviewed code of conduct.

#### a) *Common elements of a school's code of conduct*

1. Introduction ✓
2. Aim of the code of conduct ✓
3. Rights of learners (educators) ✓ - Both rights of learners and educators are well stipulated.
4. Responsibilities of learners ✓
5. Responsibility of educators with regard to learners ✓
6. Responsibility of parents with regard to learners ✓
7. School rules, regulations and procedures ✓-These have been clearly stipulated and categorised. There is a section that explains in detail the procedures which the school follows to deal with misconduct.
8. Scope of the code of conduct and its legal implications ✗-This is not included.
9. Disciplinary procedures ✓ There is a section that covers the general order of discipline which comprises of the level of offences and the recommended corrective measures.

#### b) *School rules, regulations and procedures: elements 7 for codes of conduct*

1. School hours ✓
2. Absence and leaving the premises ✓
3. Dress code and appearance ✓
4. Rules promoting safety ✗-
5. Rules promoting healthy relationships ✗
6. Rules that promote responsibility towards school property ✓

7. Medical treatment and emergencies ✗
8. Communication and meetings ✓ Nothing is mentioned about meetings
9. Textbooks and stationery (caring for) ✗
10. Reports/assessments on academic progress ✓

c) *Guidelines for misconduct and disciplinary procedures - element 9 for codes of conduct*

- Statement that corporal punishment has been outlawed. ✓
- Types, levels and manners of dealing with misconduct. ✓ There is a table that comprises of a list of offenses and their grades and recommended corrective measures.
- Reporting misconduct ✓
- Who deals with misconduct and referral system for who deals with different levels of misconduct-✓
- Recording misconduct. ✓

### **Recommendations Based on Reviewed Code of Conduct**

1. *Medical treatment and emergencies-* An outline the procedures for responding to medical emergencies, including the role of the school nurse or medical personnel, the protocol for calling emergency services, and the procedures for obtaining consent for medical treatment.
  - i) Some learners may require medication or medical treatment while they are at school. The policy document should outline the procedures for administering medication and medical treatment, including the requirements for obtaining consent, the storage and disposal of medications, and the responsibilities of the school nurse or designated medical personnel.
  - ii) In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, it is important for schools to have a clear plan for responding to outbreaks. Provisions for the reporting, investigation, and response to cases of communicable diseases, as well as guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting affected areas should also be included.
  - iii) First aid - schools should have adequate supplies and personnel trained in first aid to respond to emergencies and injuries. An outline of procedures for providing first aid, including the responsibilities of faculty and staff, the availability of first aid supplies, and the training requirements for first aid providers.
2. *Statement on corporal punishment being outlawed:* The school's policy on corporal punishment should be clearly communicated to all members of the school community, including parents and guardians. The policy should be included in the school's code of conduct and made available to all learners and their families. The school should also provide education and training on positive discipline strategies and alternatives to physical punishment.
3. *Rules promoting safety-* Considering the current incidents of violence in schools, it is imperative to establish clear guidelines for ensuring the safety of learners and staff on campus. It is acknowledged that the code of conduct has a table that categorises offenses and their consequences. In addition to this, it is suggested that a section on the policy document be created that specifically addresses safety concerns, outlining measures to be taken and the responsibilities of all parties involved in maintaining a secure environment.



- i) *Bullying prevention*- a subsection outlining the school's stance on bullying, including its clear definition. Additionally, the document should provide information on resources and support systems available to learners who have been affected by bullying.
  - ii) *Drug and substance abuse prevention*- a subsection on the school's stance on drug and substance abuse, including its definition and the consequences for those who engage in it. The document should provide information on resources and support systems available to learners who have been affected by bullying.
  
4. *Regular communication with parents/guardians* - The policy document should outline the school's approach to regular communication with parents/guardians, including the use of newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and other forms of communication. The policy document should include guidelines for student-led meetings, such as the purpose, frequency, and responsibilities of the student leaders. Furthermore, the policy document should outline the school's emergency response plan, including procedures for communication and evacuation, as well as the responsibilities of all parties involved.
  
5. To cultivate a safe and secure school environment, it is essential to establish explicit guidelines that foster positive and healthy relationships among learners, faculty, and staff. These rules will contribute to a respectful and supportive atmosphere within the school community. In order to accomplish this, it is recommended to enhance the existing policy document with the following elements:
  - i) *Respectful communication*: Emphasise the importance of respectful and inclusive communication among all members of the school community. Encourage active listening, empathy, and constructive dialogue as fundamental aspects of building healthy relationships.
  - ii) *Conflict resolution*: Provide strategies and resources for conflict resolution, teaching learners effective ways to manage conflicts peacefully and respectfully. Encourage mediation and dialogue to resolve differences and discourage aggressive or violent behaviours.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### (i) *General Code of Conduct Recommendations*

- Workshop the entire school community – learners, educators, administrators, parents, and other community stakeholders. The school needs to, through advocacy, ensure that everyone knows and understand the content of the code of conduct.
- Review the code of conduct annually and ensure that learners are part of the process.
- Ensure that the code of conduct meets the criteria stipulated by the DBE as per above recommendations.
- Includes sections that deal specifically with SRGBV.
- Align the code of conduct to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Act 13 of 2021.

Moreover, even though it was revealed that issues of bullying and harassment (general and sexual harassment) are included in the code of conduct, the school needs to develop standalone policies dealing with these issues.

## **(ii) Safety and Security**

If the fence is still not fixed, we recommend that the school fixes it as soon as possible. We also noticed during the validation workshop that the school does not have formal security and therefore recommend that the SMT and the SGB prioritise safety and security by including the hiring of official security officers in the schools' annual budget. The SGB should also be trained and capacitated on fund raising so that they can raise funds for security if the school budget is limited.

## **(iii) Training and Capacity Building on SRGBV Issues and Important Policies**

Educators also need to be trained on mandatory reporting. Educators have an obligation, to report to a relevant authority, any offences against a child (i.e., learner) such as a sexual offence or any form of child abuse or maltreatment if they have knowledge, reasonable belief, or suspicion of it. There are different laws which cover this, as well as who to report to. We provide below examples of the laws which address these issues. The *Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools* (2019) sets out the reporting process for sexual offences.

The SGB plays a very pivotal role in the school, therefore it is important that all members of the SGB, are immediately trained on their roles and responsibilities and on how to deal with issues of SRGBV after being elected to office.

Learners could learn issues of SRGBV through peer learning activities such as GBEM. It is therefore important for the school to encourage learners to form these clubs or to resuscitate the ones which were active before the Covid-19 pandemic. ADAPT committed to working closely with Kwa-Bhekilanga and Realogile to resuscitate and develop their GBEM clubs. The LSA plays a crucial role in this context particularly in facilitating peer learning activities. Additionally, ADAPT expressed their commitment to inquire with the DBE about the potential contract renewal for LSA.

## **(iv) Mandatory Reporting Training**

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***The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Act 13 of 2021 sets out the mandatory reporting of sexual offences, stating that any person:***

- ... who has knowledge that a sexual offence has been committed against a *child* must report such knowledge immediately to a police official.
- ... who has knowledge, reasonable belief or suspicion that a sexual offence has been committed against a person who is *mentally disabled* must report such knowledge, reasonable belief or suspicion immediately to a police official.
- A person who in good faith reports such reasonable belief or suspicion shall not be liable to any civil or criminal proceedings by reason of making such report.

**The *Children’s Act* (No. 38 of 2005) also covers reporting of sexual offences against children:**

The Children’s Act states that if there is a reasonable suspicion (on the part of particular professionals dealing with a child) that the child is being abused in a way that causes physical injury, sexual abuse or neglect, this must be reported. Persons in this category include a range of professions including legal practitioners, medical practitioners, traditional and religious leaders, psychologists and social workers, teachers and persons working in care facilities, amongst others.

If any person suspects that a child is being abused or in need of care and protection, they must report to a social worker, a designated child protection unit or organisation or to the police.

***There are also a number of other mechanisms for child protection:***

The *Domestic Violence Act* (1998) and the *Domestic Violence Amendment Act* (2022) allow a child who is experiencing any form of abuse – whether it is physical, sexual, psychological or emotional (amongst other acts of harm including harassment, intimidation or stalking) – to apply for a protection order. This order can be applied for by the child, a parent or legal guardian, or any other person with a ‘material interest’ in the protection of the child. A person with ‘material interest’ can include: a counsellor, a health service provider, a member of the South African Police Service, a social worker or a teacher, who has a material interest in the well-being of a complainant.

**(v) *Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)***

The findings show that unwanted pregnancy is very high in the school. Therefore, we recommend that the school make sexual and reproductive health and rights training and awareness for learners a priority. Furthermore, support should be provided for girls who fall pregnant to encourage them to stay in school.

**(vi) *Protection of Reporters***

Educators who attended the validation workshop explained that they are afraid to report issues of learners being abused because their lives would be in danger. We therefore recommend that the school principal, SMT or disciplinary committee ensure that information reported to them remains confidential and the anonymity of the reporter is upheld. Moreover, educators can report anonymously to the police through the Crime Stop Toll Free number 08600 10111 or the My SAPS App which can be downloaded from Google Apps.

**(vii) *The Need for an In-House Social Worker***

The school does not have its own social worker and we recommend for one to be hired. It is important that one is hired as soon as possible to assist the educators with learners depicting problematic behaviour and or need psychosocial services. As submitted by the National Association of School Workers (NASW), school social workers are vital because they “are an integral link between school, home, and community in helping students achieve academic success. They work directly with school administrations as well as students and families, providing leadership in forming school discipline policies, mental health intervention, crisis management, and support services” (n.d.: np).

**(viii) *Collaboration with Stakeholders***

Even though the workshop delegates shared that there are two non-governmental organisations that frequent the school and provide SRGBV interventions, it is recommended for the school to collaborate with other statutory (i.e., Department of Social Development, Department of Health, Thuthuzela Care Centre, etc.) and non-statutory stakeholders (i.e., community-based organisation and non-governmental

organisations). GBV issues are complex and cannot be handled by the school alone, it is important for the school to build relationships with stakeholders offering GBV services for support.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Department of Basic Education. (2021). Presentation to the portfolio committee on Basic Education, 17 August. Retrieved from: [Enter Title here \(pmg.org.za\)](#).
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