Assessing Girl Friendly Schools

A Visualisation Tool

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Introduction to the girl friendly school visualisation tool

This tool scores different dimensions of schools to assess whether or not they can be considered girl friendly schools (GFS), creating a visual image of the accumulated score. The tool has been developed with a number of aims in mind, including i) facilitating an evaluation of schools, ii) facilitating (multi-) stakeholder discussions on a school with a view to improving understanding between stakeholders, which can lead to iii) improving girl-friendly measures in schools through multi-stakeholder engagement.

The tool has been developed on the basis of reviews of literature, program documentation on GFS and discussions between researchers at the University of Amsterdam and practitioners working on GFS. The checklist aims to incorporate the aspects of GFS that were regarded as being most important. The format of the tool is based on the Girls QUAT tool developed by International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI)[1].

How to use the tool

Below you will find a scoring sheet with four dimensions. Under each dimension there are nine statements to be scored. 1 point should be awarded if the point is true and 0 points awarded if the point is false. If it is not possible to judge the statement completely true or completely false, or if you cannot reach a consensus on the point, you can allocate 0.5 points. You then add up the scores for each dimension. These scores will be inserted into the visualisation tool, connecting the points to develop a visual image. The below section provides suggestions for how you can use this tool with various stakeholders.

Suggestions for using the GFS visualisation tool with different stakeholders

This tool can be used as a way of evaluating schools in terms of how girl friendly they are, but is also useful for discussing the development and implementation of girl friendly policies and programs. The tool works best when it is used in conversation with multiple stakeholders, for example, principals, teachers and staff in the school, the girls and young women who go to the school, boys from the same school and even the broader community. When conducting multi-stakeholder discussions, it is critical that all those taking part feel comfortable in speaking out about their views and experiences.

Please note that a number of questions that can be used as a starting point for a dialogue between stakeholders are included in this document (below the diagram).

Using the tool with principals, teachers and staff

The tool can be used to structure group discussions among different staff members. In this case, the group discusses each of the points on the checklist to develop a score together. It may be that as a group, you agree on whether a point is addressed by the school or not, or that you disagree. If managed well, this process in itself can thus already be eye-opening, and result in productive discussions that improve understanding between staff members and can contribute to the school becoming more girl-friendly. An alternative is to score the categories individually (by giving each staff member a form to fill in) and then collecting these and using the comparison between different scores as a starting point for discussions.

Using the tool with female students

The girl-friendliness of a school has the biggest effect on the girls and young women who attend the school, and it is therefore strongly recommended to have their input on this subject. In this way, you will better understand whether the policies and programs that you believe the school is delivering

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[1] ICDI (2012) "GIRLS-QUAT" Quality Assessment Tool of Services for Girls and Young Women". International Child Development Initiatives (www.icdi.nl)

are really what young women feel they are receiving. There are a number of ways that you can use this tool with young women; the best approach will depend on how comfortable they are with openly and critically discussing the school with their peers or teachers. The more comfortable the young women are in scoring the various elements of the school, the more honest their answers will be, and therefore the more useful the answers can be in developing the girl-friendliness of the school.

Option 1 – Female students are a part of the discussion with principals, teachers and staff

If girls and young women are comfortable being open and critical in front of school staff, one option is that the discussion with staff and female students can be held altogether – and therefore the scoring can be done by discussing and developing consensus (if possible) on each of the points. If this option is taken, it is crucial that the students are given the space and freedom to contribute to the discussion and that if they disagree with staff perspectives, that this disagreement is accepted and respected.

Option 2 – Female students have their own discussion

A second option is that you share the tool with girls and young women, and ask for them to sit together in a group and discuss each of the points on the checklist and develop a score together. They can then share the final scores with you (and if possible a short report on how the discussion went – for example, if there were any points of disagreement and if so, the reasons for these disagreements). You can compare these scores with those developed by staff to see where there is consensus and disagreement. The comparison of these different sets of input will be useful in itself, but if it is then possible to have a discussion between students and staff, it is likely that more useful input will be gathered that can support enhancing the girl-friendliness of the school and could result in increased understanding between the groups.

Option 3 – Female students score individually

A final option is that female students are given the scoring sheet and visualisation tool and fill this out individually, these can then be collected and compared with each other – possibly developing an average score for each of the dimensions – and then compared with the score(s) developed by staff. Again, this input will prove even more useful if it is possible to have a discussion with the female students involved, to better understand their points and opinions that lead to their scoring.

Using the tool with other stakeholders/the wider community

You may also find it useful to go beyond school staff and female students to use the tool with other stakeholders, such as male students, or the wider community, such as parents or community leaders. The three options above provide examples of how this can be done.

Instructions

Please, look carefully at the nine statements in the four boxes or 'dimensions' below and score 1 point when the statement is true and applies to the school you are assessing, and 0 points if the statement is false and does not apply. Sometimes a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' cannot be given or it is not possible to come to an agreement on the answer. When this is the case, give the statement half a point (0.5). Add the total scores per dimension and insert these into the diagram below on the principal axes. Connect the points to create a visual image.
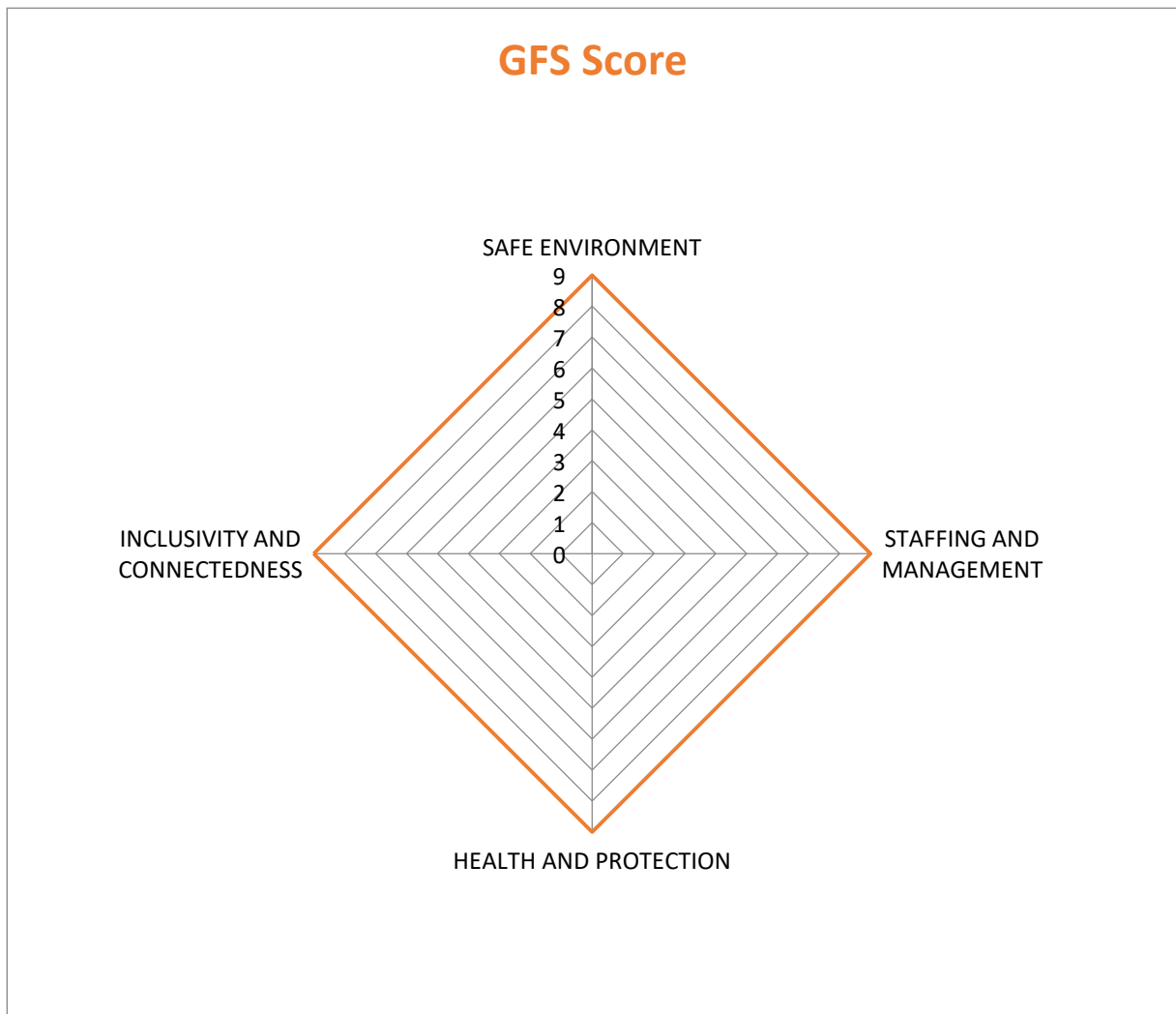
Scoring

1 = True
0 = False
0.5 = Unsure or no agreement

SAFE ENVIRONMENT	TRUE/FALSE
School grounds are free of physical dangers and hazards such as broken glass	
School compound/play ground is fenced	
School has a child protection policy/system	
School has measures in place to ensure girls reach the school safely (e.g. through community volunteers safeguarding the road, children travelling in groups etc.)	
Corporal punishment is not used as a disciplinary method	
School applies a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in school by students	
School applies appropriate disciplinary methods or referrals in cases where students sexually harass girls	
School applies a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in school by teachers and other staff members	
School applies appropriate disciplinary methods or referrals in cases where teachers and/or other staff members sexually harass girls	
TOTAL SCORE	

STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT	TRUE/FALSE
There is parity in enrollment between boys and girls	
The school takes measures to promote parity in enrollment between boys and girls	
There is a gender balanced staff	
The school takes measures to promote a gender balance amongst staff	
All staff know the content of the school child protection policy/system	
All staff respect the school child protection policy/system	
All staff have received teacher training	
The school has a counselor or teacher trained in SRH issues and gender sensitivity that girls can turn to	
The school is monitored by a third party (like Parent Teachers Association (PTA), School Inspection of Ministry of Education or District Education Office)	
TOTAL SCORE	

HEALTH AND PROTECTION	TRUE/FALSE
The school has a girls room or safe room (where girls can change their clothes and menstruation pads when they have their monthly period, wash their hands, take a rest and discuss SRHR issues amongst themselves in private)	
The school has a first aid kit	
The school has sanitary pads that girls can use	
The school facilitates regular health checks of students	
The school has a system in place to refer girls to SRH services	
Girls are able to access relevant SRH information in school	
The school has separate sanitary facilities (toilets) for girls and boys	
The sanitary facilities (toilets) are sufficiently private	
The school has a functioning water point that is available to students	
TOTAL SCORE	

INCLUSIVITY AND CONNECTEDNESS	TRUE/FALSE
The school is accessible for students with special needs	
The school provides support for students with special needs	
The school is open to married girls	
The school is open to girls with children	
The school provides support for girls with children to continue their learning	
The school engages parents and/or the wider community in order to improve the quality of education provided	
A suggestion/complaint box is available in school, which is regularly checked by the appointed person(s) and a protocol is in place on how these complaints should be handled	
The school inform girls about their rights	
Girls can express their thoughts and feelings freely, without judgment, in school	
TOTAL SCORE	

GFS Score

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

INCLUSIVITY AND CONNECTEDNESS

STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT

HEALTH AND PROTECTION

Discussion questions

The questions below can be used to start and guide discussions on the visualisation tool and the process leading up to the final scores.

1. Were there categories that you felt were more important than others? Why?
2. Is there anything important that you felt the tool missed?
3. Where was there disagreement within the group on which score to give? What were the reasons for this disagreement?
4. Where was it easy to reach a consensus? Why was this the case?
5. On which points did the service not score well? What were the reasons for these lower scores? What improvements do you suggest should be made?
6. Based on your use of the evaluation tool, what next steps do you plan to take and who will take action to ensure these steps are taken (and when)?