

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

Sexual abuse in schools in Senegal



© 2017 Elin Martínez/Human Rights Watch

It's Not Normal



About us

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

We are called Human Rights Watch.



We work to make sure that everyone in the world is treated fairly and gets their rights.

About this report

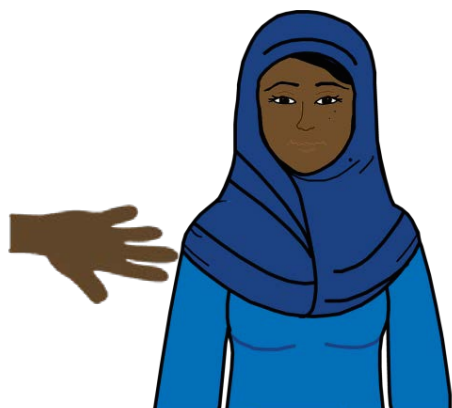


This report is about a country in Africa called Senegal.

It is about sexual abuse that can happen to girls at school in Senegal.

Sexual abuse is when someone does sexual things to someone when they don't want it.

For example, touching their body or trying to have sex with them.





This report is about sexual abuse that some teachers and staff at secondary schools may do to girls.



Secondary schools are schools that older children go to when they are about 11 years old.



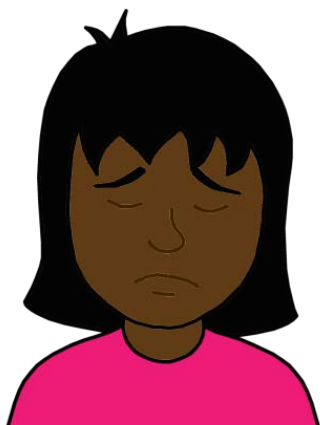
In 2017 and 2018 we spoke to people in Senegal to find out what was happening.

For example, we spoke to:



- Girls and young women aged 12 to 25
- Teachers
- Parents
- Organizations and health staff who support young women and girls

What we found out



Sexual abuse may happen a lot to girls at secondary school in Senegal.

But girls often feel they cannot talk about it.



Some teachers and staff at school may do sexual things to girls.

For example, some teachers may:

- Ask girls for their phone numbers
- Say sexual things to them
- Talk about their bodies and clothes in a sexual way
- Try to have sex with them or force them to have sex





The teachers may promise things to girls first, like:

- Money
- Good grades
- Food
- Mobile phones or new clothes



If girls say no, teachers may do more bad things to them, like:

- Give them lower grades
- Ignore them or leave them out of things that other students do



Some girls may think they are in a relationship with their teacher.

They may be told to keep what their teacher does a secret.



All these things are wrong and should never happen to school girls.

If teachers and staff do this they are breaking laws and rules and should be punished.

What is done about sexual abuse against school girls?



Some teachers have been sent to court for forcing girls to have sex with them. But not many.

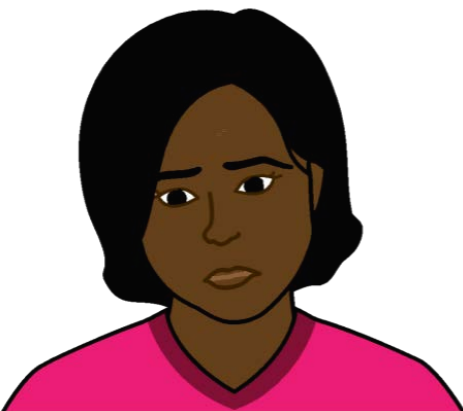
Not much is usually done about sexual abuse in schools.

This may be because:

- Many girls and their families find it hard to talk about sexual abuse.

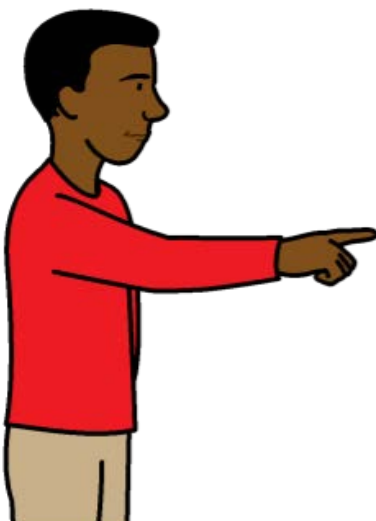
They may think that people will treat them badly because of it.

They may not tell anyone



- Teachers, parents and other students may blame girls if sexual abuse happens to them.

For example, they may say it is because of the clothes the girl wears





- Many schools do not look into sexual abuse that may happen.

If schools do look into sexual abuse, they may keep it private.

They may not tell the police or other organizations about it



- Some girls may not know that sexual abuse is happening to them or what to do about it



- Some girls may get pregnant because of sexual abuse.

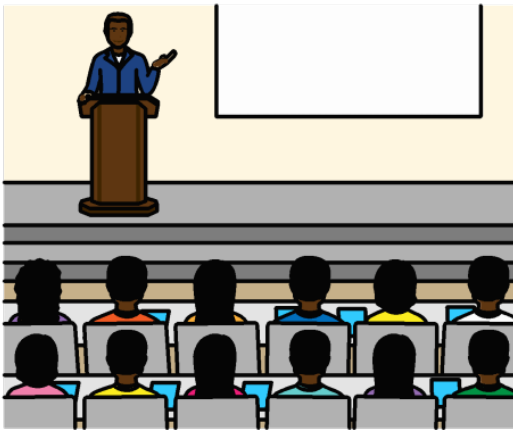
The family may not want to tell the school or the police.

The family may want to talk to the man who made the girl pregnant in private instead



This makes girls feel unsafe because nothing is done about sexual abuse.

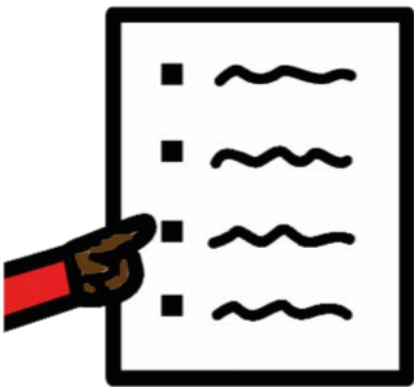
What the government and schools are doing



Some schools and teachers have worked to stop sexual abuse.

For example, some schools:

- Speak up about sexual abuse and say it is wrong
- Have training and events about sexual abuse



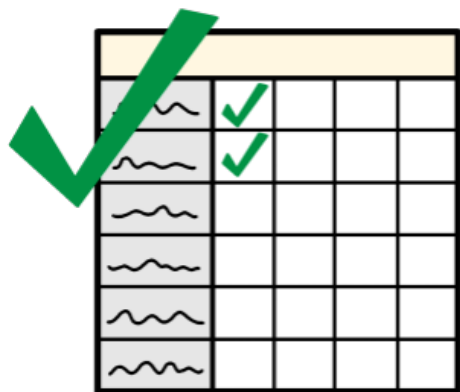
The government in Senegal has done things like:

- Made a plan to make sure more girls can go to school and that more schools are safe
- Set up some groups that work to keep children safe



But the government has to do much more to stop sexual abuse in schools.

What we want the government in Senegal to do



Do more to stop sexual abuse against girls at school

The government in Senegal should do the following things:

Make a plan to stop sexual abuse in schools.

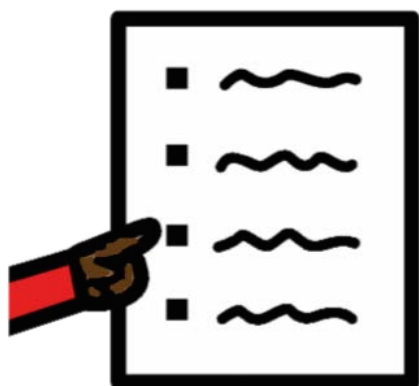
The plan should make it clear:

- What sexual abuse is
- What should be done if someone speaks up about sexual abuse

Make better rules that school staff and teachers must promise to follow.

For example, rules that say that sexual abuse is always wrong.

Make sure that everyone in schools can see the rules.



The government should make sure that schools do the following things:



Look into all sexual abuse that may happen at school

It should be easy and safe for girls to speak up about sexual abuse at school.



For example, there could be a phone number for girls to call.

Or a safe person to tell who does not work for the school.



Girls should get support straight away if sexual abuse happens to them.

For example, they should get medical care and support to cope and feel better



People in charge of schools
should look into all sexual abuse.

They should tell the police if a crime
may have happened.



Teachers and staff who may be guilty
of sexual abuse should stop work while
the school looks into what happened.



Teachers and staff who are guilty of
sexual abuse should be punished.

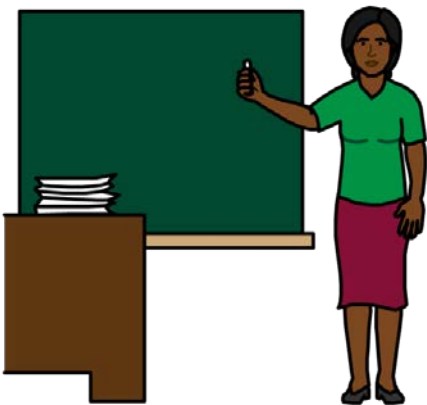
The government should make sure that schools do the following things:

Give teachers and staff at school the right training



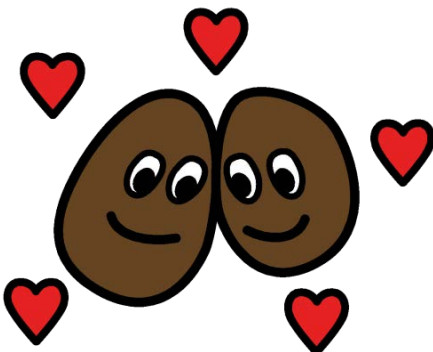
All teachers and people in charge of schools should get training about sexual abuse, the law and children's rights.

This includes new teachers and school staff who have not started yet.



Teach young people at school about safe sex and relationships and their rights

This education should be good and based on true facts.



Young people should learn about:

- Good relationships
- How to stay safe from a disease called HIV or from getting pregnant



Girls should also know that sexual abuse is not their fault and that it is good to speak up about it.



The government in Senegal should also:

- Make sure that education at secondary school is free with no extra costs
- Change the laws to keep children more safe from sexual abuse

