

ASSESSING GIRL-FRIENDLINESS OF SCHOOLS

A VISUALISATION TOOL

Safe Environment

Safe Environment

Inclusivity &
Connectedness

Inclusivity &
Connectedness

Staffing &
Management

Staffing &
Management

Health & Protection

Health & Protection



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1 INTRODUCTION

Schools being “girl-friendly” is regarded as an important means to enhance girls’ school enrolment and regular attendance, in contexts where for various reasons, not all girls and young women (regularly) go to school.

The “girl-friendly school” visualisation tool (GFS tool) scores schools on four different dimensions, with each dimension sub-divided into nine criteria, to assess whether a school can be considered girl-friendly. The tool allows for the creation of a visual image of the total score in a spider chart. The GFS tool can be used by organisations or departments working with schools, or by schools on their own for:

1. Monitoring and evaluating girl-friendliness of schools,
2. Facilitating (multi-)stakeholder discussions with a view to improving understanding between stakeholders on (current and potential) ‘girl-friendliness’ of schools, which can lead to
3. Taking measures to improving girl-friendliness of schools.

The criteria for GFS in the first edition of the tool (2018) were 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 format of the tool is based on the Girls QUAT tool developed by International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI).¹ The tool was revised following a study on the experience of 18 ‘Her Choice alliance’ partner organisations who had used the 2018 GFS tool as part of their programmes in seven different countries. This second edition of the tool thus builds on the 18 organisations’ experiences and recommendations.

BOX 1: Organisations’ responsibilities:

Organisations and facilitators who use the GFS tool are not responsible for facilitating or funding measures to improve the girl-friendliness of a school. In other words, while organisations that wish to support schools in implementing changes can do so, it is not obligatory. An example of how facilitators can be involved in the process of making schools more girl-friendly is through creating action plans with participating schools, and getting the commitments of stakeholders to implement the plans.

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

2 HOW TO USE THE TOOL

Section 3 below presents a scoring sheet with four dimensions of girl-friendly schools. Under each dimension there are nine statements relating to the criteria to be scored. The scores for the statements in each dimension have to be added up and these total scores are then inserted into the visualisation tool, connecting the points on each axis of the spider chart to develop a visual image.

Section 2.1 provides suggestions on how this tool can be used in sessions with different stakeholders and Section 2.2 gives advice to facilitators on how to prepare for and conduct the sessions.

2.1 Using the GFS visualisation tool with different stakeholders

This tool can be used as a way of assessing 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, female and male students, and the district education office and broader community. When conducting multi-stakeholder discussions, it is critical that all those taking part feel sufficiently safe to speak out about their views and experiences, either within the group as a whole or within sub-groups. Please note that a number of questions that can be used as a starting point for a dialogue between stakeholders are included in Section 5.

2.1.1 - Using the tool with school principals, teachers and other staff

The tool can be used to structure group discussions among different staff members working in a school. In this case, the group discusses each of the criteria on the checklist to develop a score together. The participants in the group may agree or disagree on whether a criterion is addressed by the school. If managed well, this process in itself can 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. Alternatively, each staff member can score the criteria individually (each staff member having a copy of the form with criteria). The individual scoring sheets can then be collected and the different scores can be used as a starting point for discussions.

2.1.2 - Using the tool with female students

The girl-friendliness of a school has been found to have an important effect on the girls and young women who attend the school, and it is therefore strongly recommended to gather their views on the girl-friendliness of their school. In this way, the question can be answered whether school policies and programs are: a) in line with female students' needs, and b) are delivered in a way that meets their needs.

There are a number of ways that this tool can be used with female students; the best approach will depend on how comfortable they are with openly and critically discussing the school with their peers or teachers.

Option 1

Female students are a part of the discussion with principals, teachers and other staff

If girls and young women feel sufficiently safe to openly voice their opinions in front of school staff, then a joint session can be organised in which staff and female students come together to score the GFS criteria. Staff and students would then jointly discuss and come to an agreement regarding the scoring for each of the criteria. If this set up is used, 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. As noted in section 3.1 below, if participants cannot reach an agreement on a score, a 'compromise' score can be given, i.e. half a point (0.5) instead of a '1' or a '0'.

Option 2

Female students have their own discussion

A second option is to share the tool with female students, and they jointly discuss each of the criteria on the checklist and agree on a score. They can then share the final scores with the facilitator (and if possible a short report on how the discussion went, for example, whether there were any areas of disagreement and if so, the reasons for these disagreements). The facilitator can compare their final scores and/or spider chart with that developed by staff to see where there is consensus and disagreement, and explore the differences and commonalities in scoring of criteria. 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: a) enhance the girl-friendliness of the school and b) may contribute to increasing 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 that they individually complete the scoring. The individual sets of final scores (and spider charts) 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 involving female students and staff, to better understand their points and opinions that lead to their scoring.

2.1.3 Using the tool with other stakeholders

Facilitators may also find it useful to go beyond school staff and female students and use the tool with other stakeholders, such as male students, the wider community, such as parents or community leaders, or educational officers. Several Her Choice partners reported that it was useful to involve other stakeholders in the sessions, such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) member, community leaders, and educational officers. These stakeholders may act as liaisons between students, parents and schools, and may have necessary position and/or means to facilitate the implementation of initiatives to increase girls-friendliness of the school as identified during sessions.

2.2 Conducting sessions: advice for facilitators

The following section presents some practical advice for facilitators who will conduct sessions using the GFS tool. The ‘tips and tricks’ are based on the experiences of Her Choice partners who have previously used the GFS tool.

Preparation

1. Be well aware of the aims of using the tool, scoring criteria, terminology and spider chart construction so you are able to clearly explain to participants how the sessions will be done, with who and why, and you will be able to guide discussions.
2. Practice filling in and drawing the spider chart *before* you conduct a session with participants for the first time.
3. Translate the tool, especially the criteria statements, in local languages prior to the sessions, not during them. Doing so allows for clear understanding by facilitators and participants, and reduces the time needed for sessions.
4. Draw the empty spider chart on a flip chart paper before the session or bring a large printed copy of the chart.
5. Bring stationary: Copies of scoring sheets, flipchart paper, markers, and tape.
6. Plan sufficient time for the sessions: sessions generally last at least one-and-a-half hours, but can take more time. This time frame allows for a clear and in-depth introduction to the aims of the tools and session procedures, and allows for in-depth discussion of the scores.
7. Organise the tool sessions as part of the organisation’s regular program visits to schools. Doing so reduces travel costs and session expenses.

Conducting sessions

1. Provide a clear introduction, explaining the session aims and procedures. To motivate participants to actively take part, clarify the relevance of using the tool in relation to the local context and issues young (school-going) women face in the community. For instance, a central concern in the community and school may relate to teenage pregnancy, high school drop-out rates, or girls’ safety in education. Linking the tool to community concerns is likely to increase participation.

2. The tool is designed to support efforts to make schools more girl-friendly. It is important *not* to present the GFS tool as a 'negative check list', that is, to assess what a school has not accomplished. Doing so can discourage school staff from participating. Often, and for rural schools especially, issues of funding or dependence on higher administrative levels can strongly affect schools' ability to meet criteria. Therefore, it is important to encourage participants in the work they are doing and to present the tool as a supportive mechanism, rather than as a 'negative checklist'.
3. As much as possible give every participant or participant group their own scoring sheet as doing so will increase their engagement.
4. If a session has more than 20 participants, split the total group into sub-groups of 10. If multiple stakeholders are present, make sure that each sub-group includes a few of each stakeholder 'type'. Discuss and fill out the GFS criteria in spider charts in each sub-group (e.g. one per sub-group), and then average the scores of the groups into a total school score and spider chart. A potential additional activity is to have sub-groups present their scores and spider charts to one another for further discussion.
5. When logistically possible, conducting multiple sessions using the tool at the same school over an extended period (for example, twice a year) can help partners and participating schools to monitor progress made. It also allows partners to identify obstacles to progress and support participants in identifying priorities.

3 CHECKLIST GIRL-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

3.1 Instructions

Please look carefully at the four tables below, each of which relates to a different dimension of girl-friendliness and includes nine GFS related statements or criteria. Please identify whether a particular statement does or does not apply to the school.

Score one (1) point when the statement applies to the school that is being assessed, and zero (0) points if the statement does not apply. If a straightforward answer cannot be given or it is not possible for participants to come to an agreement regarding the score give the statement half a point (0.5).

Add the total scores per dimension and insert this total score into the spider-chart on the axes that correspond with the dimensions. For instance, if the total score for the dimension *safe environment* is 4, a dot is put at point 4 of the safe environment axis. Connect the dots on the four axes to create a visual image (see Section 5 for an example of a completed spider-chart).

BOX 2: Adaptations by organisations

The present tool is intended to be generic, with criteria that would apply in many contexts. However, organisations can adapt the criteria to suit their particular contexts, and type of participants. These adaptations can include adapting language and terminology as well as removing or inserting criteria. For instance: the criteria can be adapted to suit government standards of girl-friendly schools, or a criterion can be added that scores whether there is a place for girls to dispose of used sanitary pads.

However, please note that the total number of criteria for each of the four dimensions must be the same in order for the spider-chart to work. Therefore, if one criterion is added to one dimension, a criterion should also be added to each of the other three dimensions. Similarly, if one criterion is removed in one dimension, a criterion should also be removed from each of the other three dimensions. The spider chart should be also adjusted, i.e. if one criterion is removed the maximum point for each axis is 8; if one criterion is added the maximum for each axis is 10.

The paper tool can be translated into a digital tool by inserting the criteria and scoring into an Excel spreadsheet. In Benin, the THP Benin office created a digital version, allowing them to project the criteria and scoring onto a screen. Once the scores had been decided, the spider chart was created through an Excel chart option and projected for all the participant to see. [In Excel, the spider chart option may be called a 'Radar Chart.'] This method does require extra costs and equipment such as a generator and projector.

3.2 Scoring tables

	Dimension 1 - Safe Environment	SCORE (0, 0.5 or 1)
1.	School grounds are free of physical dangers and hazards, such as broken glass	
2.	School compound/play ground is fenced	
3.	School has a child protection policy/system	
4.	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.)	
5.	Corporal punishment is never used as a disciplinary method	
6.	School applies a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in school by students	
7.	Should students sexually harass girls, the school applies appropriate disciplinary methods	
8.	School applies a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment by teachers and other staff members	
9.	Should teachers and/or other staff members sexually harass girls, the school applies appropriate disciplinary methods	
TOTAL SCORE		

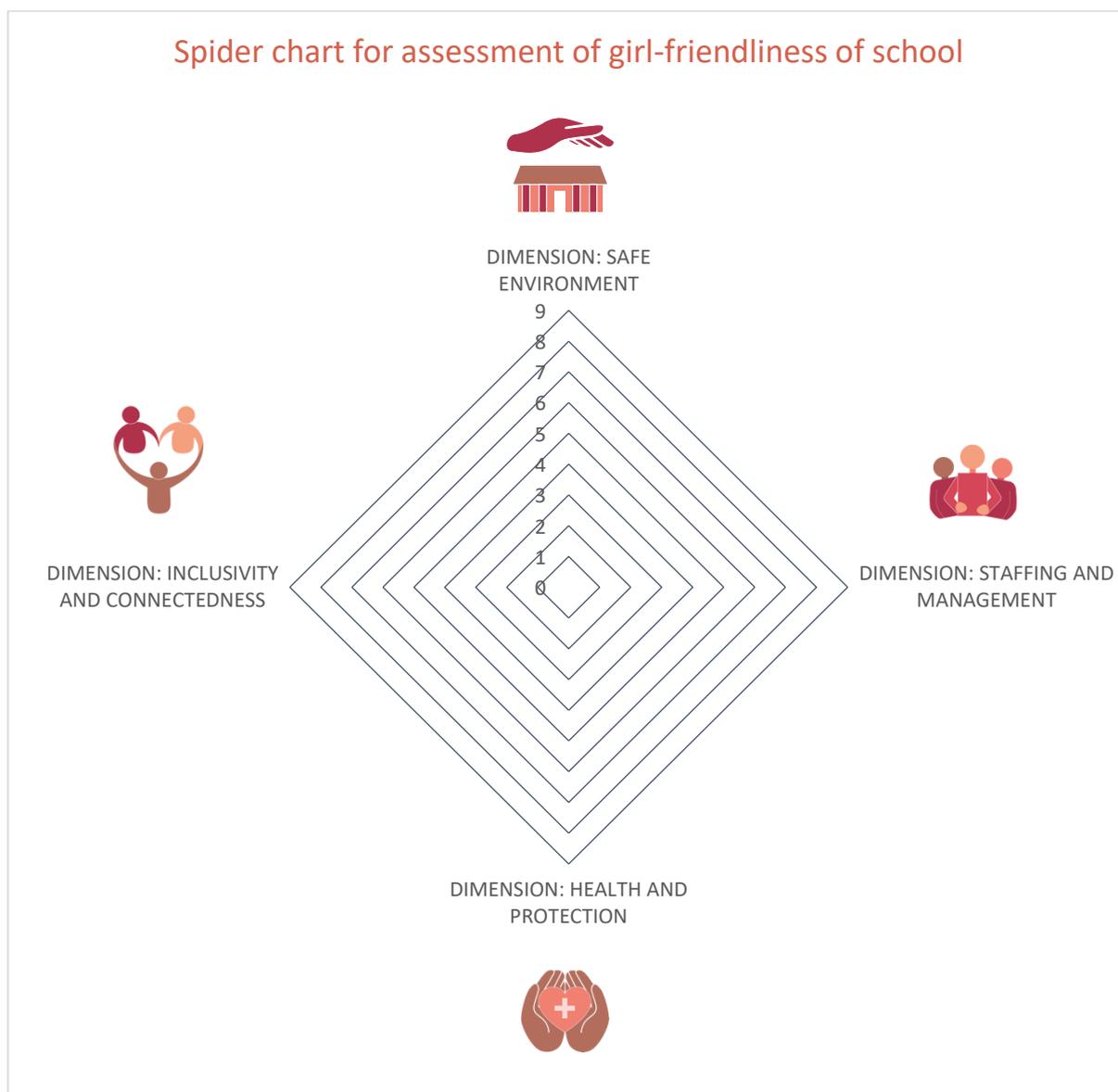
	Dimension 2 - Staffing & Management	SCORE (0, 0.5 or 1)
1.	There is equal enrolment of boys and girls	
2.	The school takes measures to promote equal enrolment of boys and girls	
3.	There is a gender balanced teaching staff	
4.	The school takes measures to promote a gender balance amongst teaching staff	
5.	All school staff know the content of the school child protection policy/system	
6.	All school staff respect the school child protection policy/system	
7.	All teaching staff have received teacher training	
8.	The school has a counsellor or teacher trained in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)-related issues and gender sensitivity that girls can turn to	
9.	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		

 Dimension 3 – Health & Protection	SCORE (0, 0.5 or 1)
1. The school has a girls' room or safe room (where girls can e.g. change their clothes and menstruation pads when they have their monthly period, wash their hands, take a rest and discuss SRHR related issues)	
2. The school has a first aid kit	
3. The school has sanitary pads that girls can use	
4. The school facilitates regular health checks of students	
5. The school has a system in place to refer girls to sexual and reproductive health services	
6. Girls are able to access relevant SRHR-related information in school	
7. The school has separate sanitary facilities (toilets) for girls and boys	
8. The sanitary facilities (toilets) are sufficiently private	
9. The school has a functioning water point that is available to students	
TOTAL SCORE	

 Dimension 4 – Inclusivity & Connectedness	SCORE (0, 0.5 or 1)
1. The school is accessible for students with special needs	
2. The school provides support for students with special needs	
3. The school is open to married girls	
4. The school is open to pregnant girls and girls with children	
5. The school provides support for girls with children to continue their learning	
6. The school engages parents and/or the wider community in order to improve the quality of education provided	
7. 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	
8. The school informs girls about their rights	
9. Girls can express their thoughts and feelings freely, without judgment, in school	
TOTAL SCORE	

4 VISUALISING SCORES IN A SPIDER CHART

Below is an empty spider chart that can be used for visualising total scores for each dimension. The chart can be enlarged and adapted to suit a reduced or increased number of criteria. Changes can be made in the excel sheet that is linked to the spider chart (in the Word version of the visualisation tool or this [link](#)). To access the Excel sheet: Click on the spider chart, select 'edit data', and then select 'edit data in Excel'.



5 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. In your view or experience, are some dimensions or criteria on the checklist more important than others? Can you explain the reasons why?
2. Is there any important dimension or criterion that you felt the checklist missed?
3. Was there disagreement within the group on which score to give to certain criteria? What were the reasons for this disagreement?
4. On which criteria was it easy to reach a consensus? What made this easy, in your view?
5. On which criterion/criteria or dimension(s) did the school not score well? What were the reasons for these lower scores? What actions do you suggest are taken?
6. Based on your use of the visualisation tool, what next steps do you plan to take and who will take action to ensure these steps are taken (and when)?

