



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **SLF School Climate Survey finds that Schools Need Stronger Support Systems and Comprehensive Sex Education**

ST. AUGUSTINE (August 25, 2021) - The Silver Lining Foundation (SLF) today released its second **National School Climate Report: Bullying and Gender-Based Violence in Secondary Schools**. This research is a follow-up to the [2016 study of the same name](#), which highlighted the importance of tracking changes in bullying and school climate factors in secondary schools. Following approval by the Ministry of Education, SLF – in collaboration with the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network Trinidad & Tobago (ASPnet) – administered 2,284 surveys to students from 39 schools across Trinidad and Tobago. This sample size was 3.5 times larger than the group surveyed in 2016.

The 2019 Bullying and Gender-Based Violence in Secondary Schools report assessed the impact of various predictors of bullying behaviours, which provided greater clarity into the variance in bullying perpetration and victimization. The report outlines major findings:

- **Individual Aggression**
  - Boys experienced more physical acts of bullying than girls.
  - Girls reported more incidences of ostracism and were slightly more likely to be the subject of rumours, while boys engaged in ostracism of peers slightly more than girls did and were slightly more inclined to be the originators of rumours.
- **Homophobia (recipients and perpetrators of homophobic taunts)**
  - Homophobia was associated with significant perpetration of bullying. Bullying decreased with students' exposure to positive attitudes towards LGBTQ persons.
- **School Climate Factors (such as willingness to help, school rules and personal safety)**
  - Students' learning experiences were being negatively impacted by the school conditions.
  - Students felt safer at school when there was a clear understanding of the school rules and the consequences of breaking these rules.
- **Exposure and Attitudes to Sex Education and to LGBTQI+ persons**
  - More students noted the value of sex education, for helping them feel prepared for sexual situations, including reducing issues of consent.
  - Greater percentages of boys reported being touched in private body areas without consent and of receiving sexually explicit gestures than girls.
- **Self-esteem, Empowerment and Social Support**
  - Empowered students were less likely to bully and demonstrated less aggression.

- Social support more significant in its role in preventing victimization, despite inversely impacting bullying perpetration.

“This study demonstrates the desire for an education system and environment that better serves those within it,” said Krystal Ghisyawan, Lead Researcher of the study and Director of Research & Development at SLF. “Administrators, teachers and students have unique needs that can be addressed through a school-wide approach to social and emotional learning that extends into family and community involvement. Education does not occur within fortresses, thus this study recognises that multi-institutional transformation is necessary for long-term, lasting reformation of our social relationships and future outcomes.”

“The National Climate Survey 2019 Report provides compelling evidence that young people need and want access to comprehensive sex education in secondary schools. This means teaching and understanding consent, bodily autonomy, and mutual respect,” said Dr Angelique Nixon, Project Lead Researcher of the *Sexual Culture of Justice* Project. “The report also reveals how necessary it is for young people to be empowered and included in the creation of an enabling and safe learning environment for all students. This means teachers and counsellors must be supported and better equipped to provide social, emotional, and social justice learning, as well as creative strategies and restorative justice approaches to dealing with violence.”

Based on the findings of the study, a number of recommendations are made, including school climate reformation, incorporating social and emotional learning and social justice learning into the school curriculum, creating stronger support systems and fostering personal development.

SLF hopes that the findings of this survey will motivate policymakers and educators to encourage proper discourse on Comprehensive Sex Education and integrating Social and Emotional Learning into the school curriculum. The data presented in this report provides a solid evidentiary basis for education reform and for creating stronger support systems in hopes to end violence in schools, particularly those that are gender-based.

An executive summary, the complete report and shareable infographics can be found at [www.silverlingtt.com](http://www.silverlingtt.com).

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### **About the Survey**

This survey is funded by the European Union as a part of the **Sexual Culture of Justice (SCJ): Strengthening LGBTQI and GBV Partnerships, Capacity and Efficacy to Promote and Protect Rights in Trinidad and Tobago**, a human rights project spearheaded by the Institute for Gender & Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of the West Indies (UWI) St Augustine campus, and was done in collaboration with the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet).

### **About SLF**

SLF is a youth-led and youth-focused non-profit organisation (NPO) acting to serve the interests of marginalised youths of Trinidad & Tobago within the framework of sexual diversity and gender expression. We are guided by a three-pronged approach to the idea of youth empowerment under the framework of support, education & advocacy (S.E.A).

Jeremy Steffan Edwards

**Executive Director**

**The Silver Lining Foundation**

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