WHAT'S POSSIBLE? ENDING VIOLENCE IN, AROUND, AND THROUGH SCHOOLS

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE BRIEF SERIES

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

unicef

SOCIAL + BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

November 2024

CONTENTS

03 What's at stake?

05 What's possible?

06 Change the drivers of violence classroom by classroom

07 The good schools toolkit in Uganda

10 Student-led anti-bullying in Indonesia

13 Promoting social stability through education in Lebanon

16 Safe to Learn

18 Related tools and resources

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This brief was developed in collaboration with the Downie Street Collective, Nicole Gallant and Donald Jordan, under the guidance of a steering committee comprising Divya Lata, Massimiliano Sani, Ukasha Ramli, Audrey Franchi and led by Line Baago-Rasmussen. Thank you to UNICEF and Safe to Learn colleagues for their review and valuable inputs: Christine Kolbe-Stuart, Catherine Flagothier, Dipak Naker, Kristen Hansen, Stephen Blight. We are grateful to colleagues and partners in government agencies, NGOs, private sector, UN and other international agencies, UNICEF SBC Global Technical Team, UNICEF Country and Regional Offices, who were interviewed as key informants for this briefing series.

For further information contact:

Line Baago-Rasmussen, SBC in Education Specialist, UNICEF NYHQ at lbrasmussen@unicef.org

SNAPSHOT

Education Goals

Enabling safe learning environments: Preventing and responding to violence in, around, and through schools to improve learning outcomes, shift harmful social and gender norms and behaviours, and breaking intergenerational cycles of violence.

SBC Interventions

Shifting community dynamics; positive norms promotion; social cohesion; frontline workers training; positive discipline, gender transformative programming; adolescent empowerment; civil society alliances; rights promotion and protection; trust building.

This brief is part of a series about social and behaviour change in education. It is meant to make you think out of the box, reflect, ponder, and get inspired about the potential that social and behaviour change in education presents to ensure every child can learn in a safe and enabling environment. Rather than being a guidance per se it provides a snapshot of programmatic thinking and case examples, as well as a collection of resources, which you can use to continue exploring and unleashing the potential of Social and Behaviour Change in Education!

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Every child has the right to live and learn free from fear, yet **violence against children in, around, and through schools** is pervasive in nearly every country on the globe. Violence is directly detrimental to learning outcomes and hence a key determinant for the learning crisis. Corporal punishment is proven to be consistently associated with lower learning outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy.

When children are not safe, they cannot learn. A child who has just been hit will have a brain in shock mode. Corporal punishment triggers harmful psychological and physiological responses. Children do not only experience pain, sadness, fear, anger, shame, and guilt, but feeling threatened also leads to physiological stress and the activation of neural pathways that support dealing with danger. Evidence shows that violence in and around schools – in all its forms – **has detrimental impacts on a child's well-being and educational attainment, decreases school attendance, and leads to higher dropout rates.** This in turn exacerbates protection risks such as child marriage and teenage pregnancies.

Some children are at higher risk of violence due to intersectional factors including age, disability status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. Gender affects how violence is experienced by children. Girls in particular are disproportionately affected by the most severe types of sexual violence and may suffer more consequences of sexual violence, including community rejection, gynecological conditions, and unwanted pregnancies.

Violence undermines the transformative power of education with impacts at both individual and societal level by negatively affecting children's brain development, physical and mental health, and hampering prospects for gender-equality, and socio-economic equity. A World Bank and Safe to Learn study estimates that **violence in schools amounts to an 11 trillion USD loss in lifetime earnings.** Violence also contributes to a destabilising cycle where boys are more likely to become perpetrators and girls more likely to become victims later in life.

A child's experience in school has an impact far beyond the classroom. The classroom reflects the surrounding society, and the reverse is also true. Social and gender norms and behaviours, power dynamics, and gender stereotypes that drive violence are replicated both within and beyond school walls.

Around

732 million

School aged children live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohbilited

Over

115 million

Children and youth experience school-related gender-based violence every year

[1] Quote from key informant interview SBC in Education review by Downie Street 2023.

‘What’s possible with social and behaviour change in education? Everything. What’s possible without it?’ [1]

WHAT’S POSSIBLE?

A Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) approach to education can facilitate a better understanding of why children are left behind, out of school, not learning, experiencing violence, racism, stigma, or exclusion in and around schools. SBC is a means by which to identify and address the social and behavioural determinants that influence children's learning, access to, and experience of education. By effectively identifying and targeting social and behavioural barriers at all levels of the education system, SBC can provide strategies for addressing the identified challenges through a whole-of-school approach and measure the effectiveness of education systems in creating an enabling, safe, and equitable learning environment for every child.

Adopting a social and behaviour change approach to education means tapping into a thus far under-used potential for enabling the education sector to overcome both educational and social challenges and barriers that cause distortion of educational outcomes at big societal cost too. Moving into this space also means contributing to results in other areas such as advancing gender equality, disability inclusion, and preventing harmful social and gender norms and stereotypes that may be reproduced in and through education systems.

“What does good education mean to us?” [2]

[2] Quote from key informant interview SBC in Education review by Downie Street 2023.

CHANGE THE DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE CLASSROOM BY CLASSROOM

Schools and education systems are central to ending violence against children in all settings. The education sector has a key role to play in addressing harmful social and gender norms, behaviours, stereotypes, and unequal gender and power dynamics that may be reproduced in schools and education systems and communities beyond.

This brief provides case examples that highlight how social and behaviour change approaches, and the application of a whole of school approach, can advance violence prevention and response in, around, and through schools. A whole of school approach considers all levels of the socio-ecological framework, which displays the complex interplay between the individual, parents/caregivers and family, community, institutional/societal, policy and systems level. Education systems encompass all levels of the socio-ecological model including policy makers, school management, parents, teachers, and children themselves. The framework helps understand the risks children face at each level as well as what can protect them from violence in and around schools. Types of violence, risk, and perpetrators change based on context - hence there is need for formative research and a solid theory of change to effectively address the drivers of violence.

The Good Schools Toolkit in Uganda

Student-led anti-bullying in Indonesia

Promoting social stability through education in Lebanon

THE GOOD SCHOOLS TOOLKIT IN UGANDA

Case example of a Safe to Learn supported intervention by Raising Voices.

Promising practices

Recognise the problem

According to a 2019 UNICEF baseline report, 35.5 per cent of students in Uganda had been caned in the preceding week and 52 per cent saw or heard another student being beaten. This indicates a social expectation for teachers and school leaders to interact with children through classroom and school management practices based on control and fear. As part of the development of the Good Schools Toolkit, these expectations were confirmed through dialogue with a diverse range of stakeholders, including teachers and parents. Through the use and scale up of the toolkit, social expectations around the use of violence in schools are starting to change.

Initiate dialogue

The development of the Good Schools Toolkit started in 2007 with the first edition out in 2011. Collecting data on violence rates in and around schools represented a first foundational step in understanding the extent and nature of the problem. Importantly, engaging in conversations with various stakeholders, including youth, parents, community members, teachers, faith leaders, and policymakers proved instrumental. These dialogues were used to understand the drivers behind the behaviours and develop a strategy to address them building on children's own perspectives and experiences of violence.

Promising practices

Call attention to positive values and protective norms

To accurately frame which norms were at stake, an opinion infrastructure and a multi-year communications campaign was designed with the intent to reach multiple sources, channels, and types of people over time. The insights from this process were incorporated into a long-term system-wide strategy to shift the narrative around harmful norms: from fear as a tool to elicit compliance and control children, to engaging children in the learning process with dignity and respect.

Promote a constructive alternative to the existing behaviour

Interventions were shaped through curiosity - constantly and consistently asking questions. By engaging teachers' unions in a way that spoke directly to the heart of their community, it was possible to open a dialogue around child-centered teaching and learning approaches that give children a voice, dignity, and access to multiple modes of learning. In addition to co-creating practical evidence-based interventions with and for teachers to implement in schools, peer-support mechanisms were created to reach a critical mass of education professionals who had become familiar with the alternative approaches.

Identify and engage agents of change

Ultimately, teachers and students became agents of change invested in a different relationship with and between students, grounded in dignity and respect. The infrastructure of the interventions enabled networks of teachers to support each other - and networks of students to interact with each other around their evolving positive experience of school. The learning laddered up to a systems approach, which now informs policy country-wide in nearly 1,500 schools.

Form guardian coalitions

In addition to the credit shared throughout the coalition of organisations who formed part of this effort, allies both inside and outside of the Ministry of Education offered timely political leverage; a handful of civil society leaders courageously led a 'coalition of the willing'; donors invested in a five-year plan - and then invested for another five years. The coalition was given time to hone their evidence-based change process. Uganda has seen several interventions that have come with bilateral donor funding but the key insight for long-term sustainability has been to ensure local ownership of interventions and for local stakeholders to be the central protagonist for their development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Evaluate, improve, and evolve

As with any change effort, there were some unintended consequences such as pushback from some parents and policy makers. However, learnings were taken in stride, and quarterly 'reflect and act' sessions were conducted to disaggregate and analyse data, stay committed to the work despite the critique, and even publish null effects of some interventions that did not work.

Over the course of 2020-21, Safe to Learn supported Raising Voices to scale up the implementation of the Good Schools Toolkit, reaching 1,000 schools, including 100 newly recruited secondary schools. The Good Schools Toolkit continues to support progress towards ensuring that children learn free from fear by **decreasing physical violence by school staff, decreasing violence between children, and increasing children's feelings of well-being and safety at school** in Uganda. The intervention also supported the development of a *Good Schools Mobile App* to build knowledge on violence prevention and track progress on the implementation of the toolkit.

Promising practices

Promising practices

Currently, more than 1000 primary schools are in step 4, the sustaining phase, meaning they have integrated the process in their day-to-day operational policies. More than 500 secondary schools have committed to do the same by 2026. According to a randomised control trial, the prevalence of past week physical violence was lower in the intervention schools than in control schools and no adverse effects related to the intervention was detected. 434 children were referred to child protection services in connection with disclosures linked to the study.

STUDENT-LED ANTI-BULLYING IN INDONESIA

Example built with extracts from UNICEF programmatic responses to the Safe to Learn Call to Action – Roots Indonesia student-led bullying prevention.

Recognise the problem

Three out of 4 children and adolescents who have experienced at least one type of violence in Indonesia report that the perpetrators are their friends or peers. Overall, 41 per cent of students aged 15 years experienced bullying at least a few times a month [3]. Humiliating language, physical fights and harassment from other students are the most common factors students mention when characterizing their schools as unsafe.

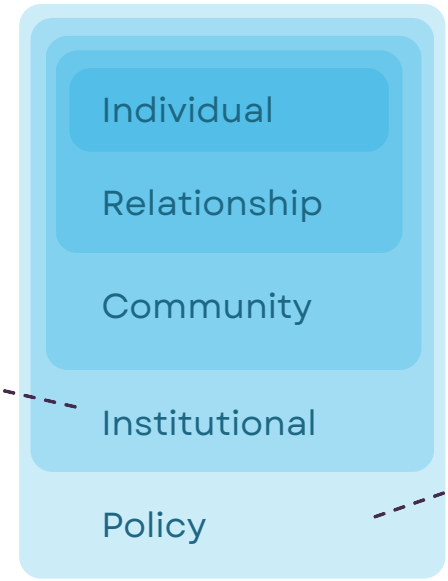
Create an enabling environment for social change

A school-based bullying prevention programme was introduced to create child friendly, safe, and supportive learning environments. The initiative is adapted from a North American Roots programme. It aims to improve peer relationships and reduce bullying and

[3] Nationally representative data on bullying in Indonesian schools from PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2018.

violence incidents among junior high school students in targeted schools by addressing different levels of the socio-ecological framework:

Increasing awareness and understanding by teachers on how bullying affects their students through providing them with knowledge and resources on how to deal with the incidents through positive discipline



Changing social norms towards the consideration of bullying as unacceptable behavior between individuals

Establishing a more positive school climate through the participatory development of an antibullying policy

Identify change agents

As part of the Roots programme, agents of change are identified in a way which guarantees that their combined activities involve the entire student community based on social network theory. Roots trains 30-40 students in each school as change agents, teaching them to identify problems and to initiate school anti-bullying activities.

Create an enabling environment for social change

The innovative approach of Roots Indonesia is based on various key social and behavior change elements:

- **Social network theory** is used to identify the student agents of change. These are highly connected with the potential to influence the behaviour of a large number of peers.
- **Participatory action research** (PAR) methodology – the change agents participate in regular afterschool sessions to identify problems in their schools and solutions.

Promising practices

- **Child participation –** Students participate in every programme stage, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Agents of Change are supported by young facilitators from local children's organisations.
- **Creative communication** – Students use visual and art (posters and dramas) to communicate the school anti-bullying agreement/policy to other students and teachers.

The activities culminate in a school-wide declaration against bullying. Student-led anti bullying activities in the schools are implemented in collaboration with teachers, school authorities, and civil society.

Move the needle at scale

UNICEF supported the piloting of Roots in South Sulawesi and Central Java provinces and the national government to evaluate the programme and to develop scale-up plans based on results.

More than

10,000

students reached in 2018 &

4,421

students reached in 2019 through government-led replication of the bullying prevention model designed and piloted in 2017

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection adapted a model like Roots Indonesia in

7

additional provinces, training

280

students as agents of change in 2019

ROOTS has been adapted and is being scaled-up and combined with a programme with a teacher training component to strengthen teachers' knowledge and self-efficacy on positive discipline.

PROMOTING SOCIAL STABILITY THROUGH EDUCATION IN LEBANON

Promising practices

Example built with extracts from reports on Safe to Learn supported collaboration with International Alert: Promoting social stability through education: Guidance for educators - International Alert (international-alert.org) and Safe to learn - Learning notes from Lebanon - International Alert (international-alert.org)

Recognise the problem

In Lebanon education settings are impacted by social tension linked to increased economic crisis, teachers' strikes, and the move of thousands of Lebanese students from private to public schools. Studies found that students in both public schools and non-formal education centres reported verbal violence by teachers and instances of physical violence applied as a form of discipline. In public schools, violence has been found to occur mainly in the transition between shifts in a two shift system that is applied to accommodate all students. Mostly, public school teachers are not aware of child protection policies and non-formal education teachers are often uncertain of their right to intervene in cases of bullying.

Identify the building blocks of social cohesion in education

With support from Safe to Learn, International Alert implemented a safe learning intervention seeking to address education challenges through building a cohesive approach. For the purposes of the intervention 'a learning space – a school, a non-formal education (NFE) center or a community center is defined as 'cohesive' when students, educators, other school personnel and caregivers from

Promising practices

all backgrounds are free from violence and bullying, have a sense of belonging to the school as an entity, share a sense of solidarity with others in the school community, and follow the school rules'. Learning spaces play an active role in the broader community and connect community members around the shared value of education.

Social stability is defined as 'a feature of learning communities that are able to address and prevent violence against children and where students, staff and caregivers share a sense of belonging to the school and surrounding community'.

Build an understanding and share knowledge for peace

International Alert developed and implemented a safe learning intervention, which employed the following strategies to build a programme for social cohesion in Lebanese schools:

- Understand the meaning of social cohesion in the local context
- Take into consideration all types of learners, regardless of their background, gender, ability and learning style
- Seek to reduce divisions between groups and to increase connections
- Build an understanding of schools as places where students can learn to respect cultural diversity
- Build strong relationships based on trust between teachers and students

Indicative results

Some of the interventions to foster social cohesion included emotional regulation to nurture non-violence, building anti-discrimination attitudes including recognising bias, and providing skills for non-violent conflict resolution. During a 24-week course of peace education classes, 97% of the 6-11 year old participants learned skills to resolve conflicts peacefully. Children from

previously opposing communities started regularly attending joint activities and playing together on the street. Teachers reported that the cases of violence among both groups of children dropped, and that tension between the wider families decreased.

Insights

The case examples illustrate the importance of changing the enabling environment to prevent and respond to violence in schools. In **Uganda**, given the widespread use of corporal punishment in schools, the social expectations around the use of violence needs to be changed to promote a safe learning environment. In **Indonesia**, building strong relationships with school staff and engaging them and school principals from the initial phase have proven critical. Furthermore, building school staff capacity on social network theory and ensuring active participation and peer nomination for the selection of change agents was found important to ensure an enabling environment. Especially because this is not a commonly used method for selecting students to lead activities in schools. This also tells us that 'only' training teachers in positive discipline, while omitting to ensure that the social environment is accepting of the use of positive discipline, underestimates the social context that teachers face, which may hamper change. This in turn, emphasises the importance of using the **whole school approach**, which ensures engagement across all levels of the school environment. In **Lebanon**, leveraging schools to build foundations for social cohesion through skills for non-violent conflict resolution, addressing bias through anti-discrimination attitudes, and building trust and connections across cultural diversities showed promising results and potential.

Using a social and behaviour change approach can inform programming for violence prevention and response in schools because it helps in understanding why violence is happening from different perspectives across the socio-ecological model.

Promising practices

To apply SBC in Education for purposes of violence prevention and response we need to identify the drivers of violence in schools and target those in our programming. If we can identify the drivers, we can also determine which of these to target and then build our prevention and response strategy around that information. The Behavioral Drivers Model is a useful tool to map which drivers are prevalent. Importantly, not all drivers will be relevant for a given behavior - social and gender norms will not necessarily always be at play. As such, social and gender norms are part of the different drivers that could influence behavior rather than the whole explanation.

SAFE TO LEARN

The *Safe to Learn Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool* builds on 5 key Calls to Action areas that are needed to effectively prevent and respond to violence in schools. The case examples from Uganda, Indonesia and Lebanon specifically focus on the **Safe to Learn Call to Action 3 on social and behaviour change.** They are illustrative of the importance of working through the lens of the socio-ecological model to understand where a given intervention sits and which drivers it is seeking to address to end violence against children in, around, and through schools.

A whole school approach *r*ecognizes that schools exist within a community and mirror the values, norms and ethos that its members hold. Applying this approach means strengthening the interconnectedness across the socio-ecological framework including between children, students, parents, community members, civil society organisations, teachers, school heads, faith-based leaders, education officials - towards a common goal of dismantling unequal and harmful norms and practices.

UNICEF's Education Strategy 2019-2030 'Every Child Learns' emphasises that education can counter the underlying causes of violence by fostering

values of inclusion, tolerance, human rights, and conflict resolution and commits to strengthen education systems on this basis. This includes education as a tool for transforming societies and economies – challenging rather than replicating harmful social norms and stereotypes.

This brief seeks to show how a coherent approach building on cross-sectoral interventions and social and behaviour strategies can support ending violence in, around, and through schools.

RUN WITH THE INSIGHTS AND CHANGE THE WORLD!

Social and behaviour change approaches can be incorporated into programme strategies that emphasise safety in, around, and through schools to realise every child's right to live and learn free of fear and violence. Here are some key examples from the literature:

- Developing policy to ban all forms of violence against children based on coordinated policy change with the education system.
- Promoting schools as a tool for transforming society by promoting non-violent behaviours and addressing social and gender norms and behaviours that drive violence
- Equipping parents and caregivers to keep children safe in coordination with programme and policy changes in the school systems.
- Engaging a diverse group of community stakeholders - including and especially children and adolescents - in redefining healthy, trusting relationships with adults and peers that increases safety in, around, and through school.
- Making schools safe, non-violent, and inclusive through collective, focused advocacy, collaborative evidence-based action, and sustained financing.

RELATED TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- Safe to Learn
- Action to end violence against children in schools
- Everybody Wants to Belong
- Raising Voices
- The Good Schools Toolkit
- Promoting social stability through education: Guidance for educators - International Alert (international-alert.org)
- Safe to learn - Learning notes from Lebanon - International Alert (international-alert.org)
- Therapeutic Adventures for Native American Youth
- Coalition for Good Schools
- Together for Girls
- Prevention of violence against children in and through schools in the Global South
- World Health Organization's School-Based Violence Prevention Handbook
- Dignity Framework
- Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Roundtable Safe to Learn
- Safe to Learn: Tracking progress in Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda
- Shifting Norms around Violence in Schools: A Guide for Trainers and Facilitators Working with Children and Young People
- South Sudan Diagnostic Exercise May 2020
- Social and Behaviour Change to Address Violence Against Children. Technical Guidance: Schools Edition
- What Works to Reduce Violence against Children and Women in the Home in Low- and Middle-Income Countries?
- Safe to Learn Pathfinding Countries

Learn more about SBC
Learn about building social change
Learn about SBC Impact on SDG4
Guidelines for Community Engagement and Social Accountability in Education