

## SAFE TO LEARN PROGRESS 2019-2023 - THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

### Call to Action Benchmark Assessment

The Safe to Learn Call to Action is a global commitment to end violence in, around and through schools. It sets out a shared 5-point policy agenda for governments, civil society, development partners and the private sector: implement laws and policies, strengthen school-level prevention and response, promote behaviour change and shift harmful social and gender norms, invest resources effectively, and generate and use evidence.

The Call to Action is operationalised through a set of benchmarks, informed by international child rights frameworks, United Nations guidance and minimum standards, and good practice from the field of child safeguarding and child protection. The benchmarks provide guidance to implement the Call to Action, setting out the accountabilities of the education sector and providing a framework for measuring progress. By meeting these benchmarks, countries can systematically address violence as a barrier to learning and uphold children's rights to safety, protection and education.

This report reviews national progress against the Call to Action benchmarks for the period 2019 to 2023. The report was developed based on a desk review of national policies, plans and partner programme documents. Progress against each benchmark was then rated by the government, in coordination with the UNICEF Country Office. The assessment can be used by stakeholders to identify priorities for future action and to strengthen national efforts to create safe and enabling learning environments for all children.

**Benchmark Met:** Yes, In progress, Unable to assess, No.

#### Call to Action area 1: Implement laws and policies

#### Benchmark

#### Benchmark Met

**1.1 The national government includes prevention of violence in around schools as a specific strategy in education sector policies, plans and budgets.**

Yes  Unable to assess 

The Education Development Strategy 2014-2020 emphasizes violence prevention in specific objectives related to child protection, teacher training, and the empowerment of children, parents, and community members. Activities include training for teachers and school administrators, enhancing the capabilities of school inspectors, enabling effective monitoring and reporting, and empowering children, parents, and community members in violence prevention and reporting.

Objective 2.7. of the Education 2030 Strategy provides for reducing school dropout, bullying and violence (including gender-based violence) in educational institutions and in communities. This includes children from vulnerable families, at risk and/or those with special needs. There is a target to increase by 40 per cent the number of identified cases for which assistance is provided by 2025.

The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova was amended in 2022 to include a definition of bullying. Online Child Safety Standards were later enacted, and included prevention and intervention processes in cases of bullying. The 2024-2026 National Plan for Children's Online Safety is pending approval, based on the national response model of the WeProtect Global Alliance for the prevention and combating of abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

**1.2 There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and effective classroom management.**

In progress 

The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (approved by the Parliament in 2014) includes commitments to ensure a protective environment for children.

**1.3 The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education in response and referral to incidents of violence are clearly set out in the multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework.**

In progress 

There is a Child Protection in Education Policy, developed by the Ministry of Education and Research (MER), along with an implementation guide.

Multisectoral cooperation is governed by GD 270/2014, and outlines the specific roles the education sector plays in identifying and responding to violence. Similarly, the National Programme for Child Protection for 2022-2026 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the MER in reaching Objective 2: zero tolerance of violence against children (VAC), along with two other line ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Internal Affairs).

**1.4 The country has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and in situations of armed conflict is implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.**

Yes 


The Republic of Moldova endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) in 2019 and is part of the implementation network on the SSD.

**Call to Action area 2: Strengthen prevention and response in education systems and schools**

**Benchmark**

**Benchmark Met**

**2.1 Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children.**

Unable to assess 

‘Harmonious Family Relations’ is an optional subject for secondary school students, focusing on the formation of relationships based on gender equality, mutual respect, and assertive communication. The ‘Personal Development’ school curriculum also includes a module on personal identity and harmonious relationships. This emphasizes self-awareness and acceptance, responsibilities, gender roles, stereotypes, and assertive/ non-violent communication.

**2.2 Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards.**

In progress 


The MER has supported the development of school-level Child Protection Policies. This included 21 schools that developed child protection policies in 2021 in partnership with UNICEF. Teachers, support staff, students, and parents actively participated in policy development.

Through the national Child Helpline, UNICEF has supported adolescents to lead campaigns in schools, spreading messages of non-violence.

**2.3 Each school has at least one focal point who is capacitated to provide front-line mental health/psychosocial support to children experiencing violence.**

Unable to assess 

**2.4 The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind.**


Unable to assess 

### Call to Action area 3: Shift social and gender norms and promote behaviour change

#### Benchmark

#### Benchmark Met

**3.1 There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence.**

Unable to assess 

**3.2 Specific, evidence-informed interventions are researched and implemented, addressing social norms that drive key forms of violence and/or helping children manage risks.**

In progress 

The game design by Terre des hommes (Tdh) has been informed by research findings (see benchmark 3.3).

**3.3 Young people, parents, teachers, and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on school violence.**

Yes 

In 2022, UNICEF enabled 50 per cent of teachers in Moldova to improve teaching quality, including addressing challenges like violence and student absenteeism. Ten percent of those benefiting are Ukrainian teachers, gaining skills in social cohesion and emergency education.

During 2019-2020, UNICEF and Tdh partnered to supply 24 schools with board games created in 2018 by Tdh, in partnership with UNICEF and the Oak Foundation. These games, including 'Memo's World-Without Stereotypes' and 'BOOM,' were designed to help children identify and report cases of violence. The game design, informed by an earlier survey, focuses on preventing violence, addressing gender and ethnic discrimination, and encourages the use of reporting mechanisms such as Child Helpline. Tdh trained 42 female teachers from 24 schools to integrate these games into the school curricula and to develop facilitation skills for discussions on violence prevention, identification, and reporting.

As part of this project, 150 children from 30 schools in 30 communities were trained as agents of change, attending a one-month Summer School called 'Adolescent Leaders for Gender Equality-ALEG.' The students learned about bullying, tolerance, diversity, gender equality, and acquired skills for resilience, emotional management, self-awareness, stress management, and peaceful conflict resolution. Upon returning to their schools, these young agents of change established peer educator teams and child/youth-friendly spaces known as 'Club ALEG.' Students formed 'initiative groups' in each school to address violence through social theater, peer- to-peer education, and engagement in identifying problems and difficult situations.

In 2021, over 80 adolescents went through training on preventing violence against children, reporting mechanisms, and active participation. This initiative led to the execution of 40 child-led campaigns in schools, promoting the Child Helpline and spreading messages of non-violence.

In partnership with La Strada International Center, in 2023 eight schools from the Republic of Moldova, implemented the Online Child Safety Standards in 2023. The aim of the training was to provide operational tools regarding the protection of children/students in the online environment and didactic resources necessary to organize the educational process about online safety. Frontline professionals-psychologists from the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services from 12 districts were trained on identification and prompt intervention in cases of online sexual abuse of girls and boys.

In 2023, UNICEF and Tdh built capacities of school professionals to identify and report bullying in schools via a training of trainers for 20 national facilitators. During 2023, a student peer-to-peer programme focused on the prevention of bullying reached 3,829 students (1,994 girls and 1,835 boys).

## Call to Action area 4: Invest resources effectively

### Benchmark

### Benchmark Met

#### 4.1 Domestic resources allocated to support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond to violence in schools.

Unable to assess 

Annexe 2 of the [2030 Education Strategy](#) provides estimated financial resources.


#### 4.2 Development partners provide resources targeting national or subnational level to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.

Yes 

With the support of development partners, Tdh and Plan International (a CSO Forum member) work on Safe Schools programming.

UNICEF partners with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family to implement the National Program for Child Protection for 2022-2026 and is actively engaged in adolescent empowerment within education, focusing on prevention, response, and support services for child protection. [1]

#### 4.3 There is private sector engagement in the provision of financial and non-financial resources including technical support, expertise and advocacy towards ending violence in schools.

Unable to assess 

## Generate and use evidence

### Benchmark

### Benchmark Met

#### 5.1 Information and reporting of incidents allow for disaggregated baseline information and monitoring of trends and that reflect needs and gaps in the system.

Unable to assess 

The education sector shares disaggregated [data on violence against children](#) yearly.

#### 5.2 There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools using methods that follow high ethical standards.


In progress 

Moldova undertook PISA in 2023. PISA results indicate that over 44 per cent of students do not feel safe in their classrooms and in other places at school, additionally, 25 per cent of girls and 22 per cent of boys reported being exposed to bullying at least a few times a month.

The Government of Moldova led the implementation of the first Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) in Europe in 2019 and published the [VACS report](#) in 2020. The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection, and Family coordinated the implementation of the VACS in collaboration with development partners.

In 2019, UNICEF commissioned a study on adolescent bullying in Moldova, finding that 86.8 per cent of 6th to 12th-grade students are affected. One in three adolescents are both a victim and perpetrator of bullying. Physical violence also affects a third of students. The [study](#) highlights that in Moldova, violence, including bullying, is culturally accepted, particularly as a way for men to assert their status.

**5.3 Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trialled models and approaches.**

Unable to assess 

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## Notes and References

[1] Safe to Learn Country Engagement Task Force mapping 2023.