NEPAL DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISE – FINAL REPORT

JULY 2020

Researchers: Dr. Pramod Bhatta and Ms. Labisha Uprety

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Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CEHRD	Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
CVICT	Centre for Victims of Torture
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal – Concern Centre
ECED/PPE	Early Childhood Education and Development/Pre-Primary Education
EDCU	Education Development and Coordination Unit
ESP	Education Sector Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HPE	Health and Population Education
HT	Head Teacher
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
I/NGO	International/Non-Governmental Organisation
LG	Local Government
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NASA	National Assessment of Student Achievement
NPA/C	National Plan of Action for Children
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
STL	Safe to Learn
SZOP	Schools as Zones of Peace
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
Unicef	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International development
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

"Safe to Learn" is a global initiative dedicated to ending violence against children in and around schools. It was launched in 2019 by a core group of members of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children: UNESCO, UNICEF, UK Department for International Development (DFID) and UNGEI. With a vision of ending all violence against children in schools by 2024, the programmatic and advocacy objectives of Safe to Learn are set out in a five-point Call to Action: (1) implement policy and legislation; (2) strengthen prevention and response at the school level; (3) shift social norms and behaviour change; (4) invest resources effectively; and (5) generate and use evidence.

The Call to Action was subsequently translated into a set of benchmarks, which were developed based on international child rights frameworks, UN tools and minimum standards, and best practice from the field of child safeguarding. For each benchmark, there are national, state and school-level 'checkpoints' or requirements that governments and the education sector should meet in order to ensure that schools are safe and protective. These benchmarks have formed the basis for a Diagnostic Tool which aims to measure the degree to which governments are meeting these standards.

This Diagnostic Tool has been used to conduct diagnostic exercises in five focal countries to gauge governments' compliance, identify best practices, gaps and priorities, and establish a baseline for tracking countries' progress. This report presents results from the diagnostic exercise conducted in Nepal from 15 January 2020–28 February 2020. Key informant interviews were conducted with officials at the national and municipal (*Palika*) levels, as well as with head teachers, teachers and students in 28 schools across 8 municipalities in all the seven provinces of the country. It should be noted that although the sample aimed to provide wide geographic coverage, it is not nationally representative of Nepal.

That said, the following findings present best practices that were found, challenges and gaps that remain, and recommendations to support the government and education sector to meet Safe to Learn benchmarks in order to ensure that schools are safe environments that enhance learning for all children.

Overview of salient best practices

Call to Action 1: Implement laws and policies
- The Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the Children's Act 2018 have explicit provisions related to prohibiting violence against children and punitive measures for the same.
- The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) includes the following strategy: "Ensure that schools are safe spaces to learn in and equip teachers and school managements with the skills to identify and address the bullying and harassment of and among students and staff in schools. Also, strengthen the grievance and complaint referral system in schools"
- Responses from school actors indicate that they are aware of the need to implement or are implementing violence prevention activities in conformity with the SSDP objectives.
- The majority of municipalities have included provisions related to prohibition of violence and schools as zones of peace in their municipal education acts/rules. Some municipalities have started to implement the "learning without fear" initiative as part of their local education mandate (e.g., Makawanpurgadhi Rural Municipality in Province 3).
- At the school level, there is a high level of awareness regarding the prohibition of violence against children and the legal repercussions of failing to do so.
- At the national level, both pre-service and in-service training programs have modules on practical and effective positive discipline and non-violent classroom management.

Call to Action 2: Strengthen prevention and response at school level

- The National Curriculum Framework includes specific approaches and principles to develop life skills and to promote equity and inclusion. Textbooks aligned to the curriculum also include key violence prevention strategies such as soft skills, fundamental rights, human rights, reducing gender-based violence, gender equality and social inclusion. Some teachers in the study were aware of these topics in textbooks.
- The national Complaint Response Guidelines lay out a confidential process for receiving and addressing incidences of violence in school through suggestion boxes and a selected committee to review reports. The majority of schools included in the study were familiar with this process.
- Schools reported having a gender focal person who is part of the committee opening and reviewing the issues in the suggestion box.
- The Education Regulations contains the national code of conduct for teachers that states the responsibilities of Head Teachers, SMCs, and (former) DEOs in ensuring compliance.
- Teachers Code of Conduct is painted on school walls. There are separate codes of conduct for teachers, students, parents and school management committee members
- Nepal has a national child helpline (Toll Free Number 1098) that can also be used for confidentially reporting cases of violence.
- Several national standards guide the development of school buildings and classrooms and ensure they are safe. Respondents at school level reported schools have been made safer for example with the provision of separate toilets for girls.

Call to Action 3: Shift social norms
- All interviewed schools described participating in awareness raising activities about children's rights.
- Government, together with development partners, including UNICEF, have developed materials at national level to disseminate to schools with activities and strategies to promote child-rights and create child-friendly schools.
- Extra-curricular activities are mandated by the Education Regulations and implemented in all schools. These support wellbeing and development of life skills.

Call to Action 4: Invest resources effectively
- The study shows that development partners are active in funding and implementing various activities aimed at making schools inclusive and safe spaces for learning. There is engagement from stakeholders at school, municipal and national levels in these activities.

Call to Action 5: Generate and use evidence
- Nepal participated in the WHO Global Schools-Based Student Health Survey in 2015.
- UNICEF and I/NGOs, have published various studies and reports. For example, Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN)'s annual report uses data from the national child helpline to report on the "State of Rights of Children in Nepal".

Overview of significant challenges and gaps

Call to Action 1: Implement laws and policies
- Nepal does not have a multi-sectoral Child Protection Policy or Framework.
- Municipalities did not show awareness of supporting schools with the SSDP objective of keeping schools safe by preventing and reporting violence.
- The Education Act, the Education Regulations, and the Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act 2018 do not have explicit provisions related to violence against children and punitive measures for the same.
- Whilst municipalities understand the law prohibiting corporal punishment in schools, few are taking action to oversee this and ensure compliance in schools.
- Nepal has not yet endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

Call to Action 2: Strengthen prevention and response at school level
- Municipalities have little knowledge of lessons and activities within the curriculum for preventing violence.
- There are no guidelines or focal person for schools to report instances of violence outside school, where needed. Likewise, there is no guidance on how schools can refer cases of violence to the relevant community services such as police, welfare, and health.
- There is no designated focal person at the national or municipal levels with responsibility for overseeing and responding to cases of violence against children in school.
- The municipalities interviewed have not dealt with any issues of non-compliance of code of conduct (despite being mandated to). Very few schools have developed and implemented ramifications for violation of the code of conduct.
- There is an absence of official pre- or in-service training for teachers on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.
- Whilst there are robust regulations around teacher licencing, there are no regulations in place to guide transition of teachers and ensure anyone who has been dismissed for bad behaviour is not simply transferred to another school.
- Whilst schools have appointed School Counsellors from within their staff, they are not capacitated with training on mental health, psychosocial support and referral procedures

Call to Action 3: Shift social norms
- Whilst many schools implement activities to address social norms that drive key forms of violence, the study did not find any evidence of schools or government monitoring and evaluating these activities and supporting evidence-based interventions.
- Whilst many schools implement extra-curricular activities these may not cover issues of preventing violence and staying safe.

Call to Action 4: Invest resources effectively
- Whilst Government funding may be allocated broadly to interventions such as safe buildings, life skills and child rights, there is no specific budget for violence prevention and response strategies and activities.
- The study findings show that there is negligible resource allocation from the private sector for prevention of various forms of violence in schools.

Call to Action 5: Generate and use evidence
- There are no explicit national policies or guidelines that outline protocols for how schools and districts should confidentially log reports and respond to violence at school. This may be the main reason for the lack of maintenance of systematic report-keeping at all levels of the education system.
- There is no regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools.
- There is limited evidence of government or schools conducting monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.

Key priorities and recommendations

- **Benchmark 1.1 - Prevention of violence in and around schools is identified as a specific strategy in the national education sector policy or plan.** The Constitution of Nepal 2015, the Children's Act 2018, and the SSDP include specific provision to ensure schools are safe spaces to learn, teachers have skills to identify and address bullying and harassment and the grievance and complaint referral system is strengthened. This should be fully integrated in the education system through explicit reference to prevention of violence and consequences in the Education Act, Education Regulations, and the Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act. A costed implementation plan with clear roles and responsibilities at each level – national, municipal, school – can help ensure effective implementation.

- **Benchmark 1.2 - There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and classroom management.** Schools in the study were aware of the prohibition of corporal punishment and said they practised positive discipline; however they had low awareness of the repercussions for enacting corporal punishment in schools. There is an opportunity to train and upskill municipal level officials to oversee that corporal punishment does not take place in schools and that those who do engage in it are reported.

- Induction training for teachers appears ad-hoc as it is often usually delayed. Whilst teachers report that induction training includes moral and ethical behaviour, the induction training could be strengthened with a mandatory introduction to child safeguarding including prohibiting corporal punishment, positive discipline and classroom management, to be completed before a teacher commences teaching in the school.

- **Benchmark 1.3 - The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in response and referral to incidents of violence are clearly set out in the multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework.** Nepal had a National Plan of Action for Children that included elements of child protection, however this is now outdated. There is currently no multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework. There is need to engage multi-stakeholders to develop a national child protection policy that standardizes child safeguards that must be applied at school level and includes an interagency protocol to report and refer cases of violence in schools and provide a coordinated response. The National Child Protection Policy and associated referral system will need to be disseminated to all users in an accessible way.

- **Benchmark 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.** Nepal should endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and in situations of armed conflict should implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. To this effect, bilateral and multilateral advocacy should be reinforced. Nepal can draw good practice from the 'Schools as Zones of Peace' initiative of 1996–2006 during the Civil war (Maoist conflict).

- **Benchmark 2.1 - Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children**. The primary and secondary curriculum include issues of violence and safe behaviour, promoting inclusion of marginalized groups and gender equitable relationships. However, not all teachers reported to be teaching these topics. One reason could be because teachers and schools experience pressure to focus on topics that will feature on board examinations. Municipalities are authorized to develop their own local curriculum and none in the study had developed curricula or promoted activities to prevent violence. Linkages between violence prevention and improving learning outcomes could be made explicit to municipalities. Whilst municipalities are not instructed to monitor the curriculum, a better understanding of the importance of life skills, equitable relationships and violence prevention strategies will assist them in supporting implementation in schools.

- **Benchmark 2.2 - Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards**.
  1) National guidelines to establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms. The Complaint Response Mechanism Guidelines provide clear process for schools to help students report instances of violence through suggestion boxes and a selected committee to open and deal with the issues. However, the Guidelines do not include a process for referring cases to the relevant services in the community, e.g. police, health, social services. This should be extended to include guidelines for Municipalities to support schools in the response and referrals. They could also include safe reporting processes that can be used during school closure, for example during COVID-19 pandemic or other emergencies.
  Whilst bodies/units/committees exist at Municipal and National level with responsibilities for overseeing gender and inclusion issues, there is no specific focal person with responsibility for responding to issues of

violence in schools and referring cases to the required authorities. Focal points should be identified and allocated these roles to help link the education sector with wider services and help manage specific instances of violence in school more effectively.

2) Norms and standards of ethical behaviour in Teacher Codes of Conduct. The Education Regulations contain the national code of conduct for teachers. The study found all interviewed schools have the code of conduct displayed on school walls. The content could be reinforced further by requiring every teacher to read and sign the code of conduct annually. The Ministry should also provide guidance to schools on the disciplinary action to be taken if standards surrounding violence are not adhered to and the role of Municipalities in monitoring such cases.

3) Policies that regulate hiring of new teachers and staff and their transfer to ensure suitability for working with children. The teacher licensing regulations are comprehensive; however, it would be very helpful to provide explicit guidance regarding how the background checks on teachers assessing their suitability for working with children can be conducted. These checks can then be extended to the transfer of teachers between schools. This will require collaboration and thinking through with police, justice and social welfare sectors to ensure they are fully conducted and recorded.

4) Pre- and in-service training on obligations for child safeguarding and reporting/response., Existing pre-and in-service curricula should be reviewed and examples of effective training for teachers on violence prevention in schools collated. Where needed, existing materials can be revised to provide more practical/effective strategies for positive discipline and classroom management, as well as content on violence reporting/response pathways, teacher obligations on child safeguarding and preventing revictimization. An effective way of training teachers at scale is through school-based training models. A clear, concise, user-centred and multi-lingual manual for teachers could be introduced for schools to lead their own professional development on preventing violence.

- **Benchmark 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.** Whilst many schools have identified a staff member to act as counsellor or focal person, few have received training. A School Counsellor training package should be developed and disseminated. This can draw from evidence of good practice amongst development partners. It can be incorporated into school-based training on preventing violence.

- **Benchmark 2.4 - The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind.** Schools report that the physical environment in and around schools has been made safer than before, including the provision of separate toilets for girls. More measures could be put in place to make commuting to and from school safer, especially for young children, and in schools that are located in hazardous areas.

- **Benchmark 3.1 - There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence**. Whilst there is support at national and school levels for disseminating information on child rights, there does not appear to be a specific policy or guidelines from MoEST that provides districts, municipalities and schools with strategies on how to widely disseminate information to school and community members on: a) Child rights *with regard to violence*, b) *laws prohibiting violence against children*. Plenty of materials exist (largely developed with support from Unicef and other I/NGOs) which could be used to generate such awareness-raising messages. It would be helpful to provide concrete guidance and specific activities that schools and district actors could implement around the laws prohibiting violence.

- **Benchmark 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.** There is no reference or guidance on evidence-informed social norm interventions that could be implemented; however many schools participate in such activities with support from NGOs. Government could collate evidence of what works and share this more widely with other schools through teacher training or provision of material packs to schools.

- **Benchmark 3.3 - Young people, parents, teachers and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on the topic of school violence.** Education Regulations mandates the need for organizing extra-curricular activities every Friday, focusing on sports, music, drama, environmental awareness activities, public speaking, essay-writing, etc, to ensure that students develop appreciation of national culture, are physically fit, and are socially and environmentally conscious and responsible. Preventing school violence can be better included in this by providing concrete guidance and specific activities that schools can use on the topic of school violence.

- **Benchmark 4.1 - Domestic resources that have been allocated to support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond to violence in schools.** As discussed in relation to benchmark 1.1, although the SSDP makes references to making schools safe places to learn and has put a budget towards this, an explicit objective to prevent and reduce violence in schools (with accompanying strategies, budgets and key performance indicators) would be much more powerful, targeted and effective. Government, donor and private sector funding could then be consolidated through support of or alignment with this strategy.

- **Benchmark 4.2 - Development partners provide resources targeting national or subnational level to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.** The MoEST should also aim to coordinate all donor/NGO activities to ensure a joined-up approach and sharing of lessons learnt. If an explicit SSDP objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the MoEST should ensure that all donor/NGO activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it.

- **Benchmark 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.** As discussed, if an explicit SSDP objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the MoEST should encourage the private sector for resource mobilisation and ensure that all private sector activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it. Further work may need to be done to elicit such funds.

- **Benchmark 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.** Whilst reporting of incidents of violence is clearly understood and undertaken at school level, it does not yet get reported through the system. There should be a process within the education system and Municipalities to systematically track, monitor, collect and report data on the prevalence of various forms of violence in the schools and against children. Focal points at each level of the system should receive guidance and training on how to confidentially log complaints of violence in school and report through the system.

- **Benchmark 5.2 - There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools using methods that follow high ethical standards.** Central Bureau of Statistics and MoEST should consider participation in regular international or national school-based surveys on prevalence and forms of violence in schools.

- **Benchmark 5.3 - Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trialled models and approaches.** The study points towards a lack of mechanisms at the national, sub-national and school levels to systematically evaluate practices related to reduction and prevention of violence against children that are being implemented at municipal and school levels either through the municipality/school's own initiative or through support from NGOs/CBOs. This has resulted in a lack of understanding regarding what interventions have the potential to prevent violence in school. It is therefore urgent to ensure that the SSDP includes support for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up in their strategy.

Summary table of Benchmark Indicator Status based on the Diagnostic Exercise

A = In place	B = Partially in place	C = Not in place

Please note: The below assessments were based on the findings from the study. Discussion and rationale are provided in the report.

Call to Action	Benchmark Indicator	Sub-Indicator	National	State	School
1. Implement laws and policies	1.1 Prevention of violence in and around schools is identified as a specific strategy in the national education sector policy or plan.		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place
	1.2 There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and classroom management.	Laws that prohibit corporal punishment are implemented and enforced.	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place
		Teacher training covers positive discipline and classroom management.	B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
	1.3 The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education in response and referral to incidents of violence are clearly set out in a multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework.	A national and multi-sectoral policy framework outlines the role of key formal actors.	C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
		The Ministry of Education has established a national child protection/safeguarding policy which is enforced.	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place
	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.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
2. Strengthen prevention and response at school level	2.1 Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children.		B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
	2.2 Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards.	National guidelines to establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms.	B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
		Norms and standards of ethical behavior in Teachers Code of Conduct.	B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
		Pre- and in-service training on obligations for child safeguarding and reporting/response.	B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
		Policies that regulate hiring of new teachers and staff and their transfer to ensure suitability for working with children.	B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Not in place
	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.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
	2.4 The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind.		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place
3. Shift social norms and behavior change	3.1 There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence.		B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
	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.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
	3.3 Young people, parents, teachers and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on the topic of school violence.		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place
4. Invest resources effectively	4.1 Domestic resources have been allocated to support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond to violence in schools.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
	4.2 Development partners provide resources targeting national or subnational level to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place
	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.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
5. Generate and use evidence	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.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
	5.2 There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools using methods that follow high ethical standards.		B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place
	5.3 Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trialed models and approaches.		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place

1. Introduction

'Safe to Learn' (STL) Campaign is a global initiative that was launched at the Education World Forum in January 2019 in which core partners, including the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, UNESCO, UNICEF, UK Department for International Development (DFID) and UNGEI, adopted a <u>Call to Action</u> that set out a five-point policy agenda to end all violence in schools by 2024. The action points in this agenda included:

1. **Implement policy and legislation:** National, regional and local governments develop, fund and enforce laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and around schools, including online violence.
2. **Strengthen prevention and response at the school level:** School staff, students, and management committees provide safe and gender-sensitive learning environments for all children that promote positive discipline, child-centered teaching and protect and improve children's physical and mental wellbeing.
3. **Shift social norms and behavior change:** Parents, teachers, children, local government and community leaders recognise the devastating impact of violence in schools and take action to promote positive social norms and gender equality to ensure schools are safe spaces for learning.
4. **Invest resources effectively:** Increased and better use of investments targeted at ending violence in schools.
5. **Generate and use evidence:** Countries and the international community generate and use evidence on how to effectively end violence in schools.

This Call to Action was translated into a set of benchmarks, which were developed in relation to international child rights frameworks, UN tools and minimum standards, and best practice from the field of child safeguarding. For each benchmark, there are national, sub-national/district and school-level 'checkpoints' or requirements that governments and the education sector should meet in order to achieve their accountabilities in ensuring that schools are safe and protective. These benchmarks and checkpoints formed the basis for a Diagnostic Tool that aimed to measure the degree to which governments were meeting these standards. This Diagnostic Tool was then used to conduct diagnostic exercises in five focal countries, including Uganda, South Sudan, Jordan, Pakistan and Nepal. The aims of these diagnostic exercises were to:

1. Gauge the degree to which governments were meeting the requirements set out by STL benchmarks/checkpoints
2. Identify best practices, gaps and priority actions with governments in order to meet STL benchmarks/checkpoints
3. Establish a baseline that will then demonstrate focal country progress from 2019–2024

This report presents the results of the diagnostic exercise conducted in Nepal from 15 January 2020–28 February 2020. It provides an overview of the context and policy landscape regarding violence in schools, the methodology and salient findings from the diagnostic exercise, and a set of actions that can support national and local governments to meet STL benchmarks and ensure that schools are safe, protective and can enhance high quality learning for all children. The study reveals examples of good practice in some municipalities that could be shared with others to scale what works. It should be noted that although the sample aimed to provide wide geographic coverage, it is not nationally representative of Nepal.

2. Background

The Children's Act 2018 perhaps offers the most comprehensive definition of violence against children in Nepal. Section 7(5) of the Act states: "Each child has a right to be protected against all types of physical or mental violence and punishment, neglect, inhumane behaviour, gender based or discriminatory abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation committed by his/her father, mother, other family members or guardian, teacher or any other person"[1]. Likewise, the "Policy Provision for Learning Without Fear 2011" of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) makes reference to eliminating all forms of punishment in school premises in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular

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[1] Ministry of Law and Justice. 2018. Children's Act 2018. Kathmandu.

activities, bullying, caste/ethnicity based discrimination and sexual violence (especially against adolescent females) in order to ensure learning without fear[2].

The above documents clearly state that violence is multi-dimensional (physical, mental or psychological), vary by one's identity (caste/ethnicity-based discrimination, gender based sexual violence) and could happen in all aspects of schooling (curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular). In such a context, various studies (further discussed below) have shown that different children are likely to experience different types and degrees of violence. For example, boys are more likely to face bullying whereas girls are more likely to experience sexual violence and early marriage. Likewise, primary children are more likely to face physical beating and humiliation from teachers compared to secondary students. Studies have also shown that children from the Tarai region are more likely to experience violence in schools compared to the hill and mountain regions. These studies point towards a need for the development of contextual mechanisms to redress violence.

Overview of violence in Nepal's schools

Although Nepal does not have systematic mechanisms for tracking, monitoring and reporting of violence against children in schools, various studies on the topic have shown a high prevalence of violence against children in Nepal's school system. The different forms of violence include, inter alia, physical punishment, bullying and sexual abuse. According to a study conducted in 55 public and private schools by Centre for Victims of Torture (CVICT) and Education Journalist Forum in 2007, about 82% of the student respondents had stated that they were subjected to some form of punishment from the teachers. Likewise, a study done by UNICEF and CVICT in 2004 had shown that children received various forms of physical and mental punishment from the teachers in the name of either improving the students' learning or making them disciplined[3]. It was reported in the study that beating and humiliating in front of peers were some of the most common forms of punishment by the teachers, and that primary level students were more likely to experience such violence as they cannot resist or retaliate teachers' actions. A study conducted in a public school in 2006 revealed that about 41% of the 150 respondents had experienced exposure to sexual abuse in the school[4]. A more recent study[5] shows that eight out of 10 children in Nepal experience violence either in the family, amongst peers or in the school. However, even relatively new studies focusing or referencing Nepal make use of data that is at least a decade old, which points to the fact that there have been no recent and systematic efforts at ascertaining the nature and magnitude of violence against children. Likewise, a more recent survey (2015) by the Global School-Based Health Survey Nepal report shows that 50.6% of the surveyed students aged 13–15 years reported being bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey[6]. Studies have also shown that boys are more likely to be bullied than girls, and that the incidence of bullying is higher in the Tarai as compared to the hills[7].

With regards to gender-based violence in Nepal's schools, Parajuli et al. have stated that some common forms include: teasing at school or on the way to school, bad touch (including attempts to touch sensitive parts), use of vulgar words, gazing with sexual flavour, invite for dating in lonely places, coerce to unwanted sexual activity, discrimination based on sex, and physical punishment by the teacher[8]. They found that that school dropout of Tamang girls is largely due to gender-based violence faced by these girls in the schools. Other studies have also confirmed that girls are victims of traditional practices like early and forced marriage, dowry related abuse, and sex trafficking[9].

Effects of violence on children's learning

Various studies, both in-country and globally, have shown a negative correlation between exposure to various forms of violence and retention and learning in schools. In general, students who face violence at the school are more likely to dropout earlier, lose interest in education, face psychological problems, achieve lower in tests, and are more likely

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[2] Ministry of Education. 2011. Policy provision for ensuring learning without fear. Kathmandu.

[3] UNICEF and CVICT. 2004. Violence against children in Nepal: A study of the system of school discipline in Nepal. Available from: http://unicef.org.np/uploads/files/257552063463493755-voilence-against-children-series-2.pdf

[4] Rajbanshi, Laxmi. 2012. Prevalence of sexual abuse among school children. Journal of Chitwan Medical College. Vol. 1, No. 2, 69-71.

[5] See, for example, Unicef ROSA. 2016. Violence against Children in Education Settings in South Asia: A Desk Review. The data cited for Nepal are not recent.

[6] Please see: https://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/gshs/gshs_fs_nepal_2015.pdf

[7] Based on NASA report for 2011. This is also stated in the Global School-Based Health Survey Nepal, which shows that there is almost 10 percentage points difference between the bullying experienced by boys and girls.

[8] Parajuli, M.N., Yamphu, I., Gurung, L. & Sapkota, S. 2012. *Tamang Adolescent Girls and Its Impact in School Dropouts: A Case of Rasuwa and Lalitpur Districts*. Kathmandu.

[9] Rana, N. 2006. The experience of being victims of school bullying: A phenomenological study. PhD diss., Kathmandu University.

to end up being bullies themselves. A study by the United Nations found that 14% of dropouts had left school in Nepal due to fear of the teacher[10]. A more recent study by the Education Review Office, Nepal on National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) showed that nearly 53% of the assessed students were bullied in schools by their peers and others, and the average performance of the bullied students was substantially lower than that of non-bullied students[11]. This is a finding that has been consistently reported in the previous reports as well ever since NASA was initiated in 2011[12].

There is urgent need for appropriate support services to enable children to recover from the impact of violence as well as work on long term strategies to prevent violence against children in schools. Preventing violence in childhood and providing services for its victims can make gains in the health and wellbeing of the world's children and, in so doing, provide the foundation for improved growth of communities in which they live and grow as well as better investment of government resources. This is all the more relevant in the current COVID-19 pandemic context. Many children may be exposed to new forms of violence such as cyber-bullying and cyber sexual harassment as many schools have resorted to online teaching. Past epidemics tell us that confinement and intensified economic pressures on households may exacerbate stress, tension and discord and increase violence against children, exploitation and child labor. Some impacts will be felt throughout the crisis, and some may be felt long after the pandemic is resolved. In efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children, the Government of Nepal, in collaboration with development partners, have aimed to prevent and respond to violence against children in and around schools through the implementation of certain policies and interventions. However, gaps remain and this STL diagnostic exercise will help to highlight these and provide concrete strategies moving forward.

3. Methodology

As discussed, this diagnostic exercise has had three main aims: 1) to identify good practices and gaps in government efforts to address violence in schools, 2) to identify priority actions with Ministries moving forward and 3) to establish a baseline with which to measure progress from 2019–2024. The sampling strategy, research tools and information collection process were designed to meet these aims.

Sampling strategy

The sampling approach for the study drew respondents from across Nepal yet it does not constitute a nationally representative sample. Such a sample would have been beyond the aims of the diagnostic exercise, as discussed in the executive summary. However, in order to establish a baseline and ensure inclusiveness and coverage, all seven provinces of the country were included in the survey. From each province, at least one municipality (local government or *Palika* as it is commonly known) was selected taking into consideration the rural-urban dimension of the municipality[13]. However, in Karnali Province two municipalities (one urban and one rural) were selected given the geographical diversity of the province. Thus, in total eight municipalities were selected, of which five were rural municipalities and three were urban municipalities. From each municipality, four schools were selected; however, in Karnali province, two schools were selected from each of the two municipalities. The schools selected were either basic (grades 1–8) or secondary (grades 1–10 or 1–12). In total 28 schools were selected, 11 basic and 19 secondary, including both rural and urban. The selection of the municipalities and schools was done in close coordination with the MoEST officials.

In the municipality, survey questionnaire was administered to the education officer. Likewise, in each school, questionnaires were administered to four students from grade 8 of basic level (two boys and two girls), four teachers from the same level (two males and two females), and head teacher (HT) or deputy head teacher. Teachers were randomly selected by the researcher from a list of all full-time teachers working in the school, stratified by gender. In schools with two or fewer female teachers, all female teachers were surveyed. Where there are no female teachers,

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[10] United Nations. 2006. 'World Report on Violence against Children.' New York (as cited in Unicef ROSA 2016 above).
[11] Education Review Office. 2019. Report on the National Assessment of Student Achievement in Mathematics and Nepali for Grade 5. Kathmandu.
[12] The 2011 NASA report had stated that 43% of the students had been bullied at school, and such students scored lower compared to non-bullied students.
[13] It should be stated upfront that the Municipalities are a new structure in the federal restructuring of the country, which have been constitutionally mandated with the management and delivery of basic and secondary education within their jurisdiction. This includes the implementation of the SSDP.

four male teachers were selected instead. The researcher randomly selected two female and two male students from the class list. In addition to the survey, open ended interviews were conducted with the education officer, representatives of local NGOs/CBOs and MoEST officials. The summary of respondents is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of selected Municipalities and Schools

Province	Municipality	No of schools	Type	Level	Location
1	Manebhanjyang	4	Government	Secondary	Rural/Peri-urban
2	Laxminiya	4	Government	Secondary	Rural
Bagmati	Makawanpurgadhi	4	Government	Secondary	Rural/Peri-urban
Gandaki	Pokhara	4	3 Government 1 Public Trust	Basic + Secondary (2 + 2)	Urban
5	Geruwa	4	Government	Basic + Secondary (2 + 2)	Rural
Karnali	Birendranagar	2	Government	Secondary	Urban
	Gurans	2	Government	Basic + Secondary (1 + 1)	Rural
Sudur-Paschim	Tikapur	4	Government	Basic + Secondary (3 + 1)	Urban/Peri-urban

Table 2: Summary of respondents

Organization	Category of respondent	No. of respondents by Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
MoEST	Joint Secretary	1	0	1
NGOs	Field officers	2	1	3
Local Governments	Education Officers	8	0	8
Schools	Head Teachers/Principals	26	2	28
Schools	Teachers	54	49	103
Schools	Students	60	53	113
Total		**151**	**105**	**256**

Information collection process

This diagnostic exercise entailed a review of relevant laws, policies, guidelines and reports; as well as interviews conducted with key stakeholders at the national, municipal and school levels. By combining a document review with key informant interviews, this diagnostic exercise sought to ascertain not just which legislation, policies and guidance exist on paper, but also the extent to which they have been disseminated and implemented in practice.

The document review was conducted by reading and documenting information from available legal, policy and strategic plan documents, and analysing existing literature and studies related to violence against children in and around schools in Nepal. The findings have been discussed under the STL five-point policy agenda: (1) Implementing policy and legislation; (2) Strengthening prevention and response at the school level; (3) Shifting social norms and behaviour change (4) Investing resources effectively; and (5) Generating and using evidence. These have been embedded in the main findings report and analysis for the purposes of giving context to the primary research conducted in schools and among stakeholders.

For the key informant interviews, participants were interviewed face-to-face using semi-structured questionnaires to elicit their responses. Answers were captured manually and later uploaded electronically using the solstice software. Adult participants were briefed on the purpose of the exercise and how their responses would be used, before being asked to provide voluntary consent in writing. Head teachers gave consent in *loco parentis* for the pupils, who in turn were briefed on the purpose of the exercise and thereafter gave their verbal consent.

Since the Diagnostic Tool was developed at the global level, customisation was necessary before it could be used with respondents in Nepal. Thus, a two-day orientation and training program was held in Dubai to ensure the suitability of

the tools and adapt them to the country context. During the workshop, the lead researcher, a representative from the MoEST, and a UNICEF Nepal country office representative, came together to customise the interview guides for the context of Nepal. Specific changes included age and context-appropriate language, particularly for students. Statements, words or phrases that invoked misinterpretation were reviewed, reworded or otherwise changed to minimise misunderstanding or confusion. The questionnaires were translated into Nepali before being used in the field.

Limitations of the study

The sampling approach for the study drew respondents from across Nepal. However, it does not constitute a nationally representative sample. Due to fewer female teachers at the basic level, the share of female teachers is slightly lower than that of male teachers. Moreover, due to the workload of the teachers and some teachers remaining absent at the time of the school visits, it was not possible to interview 112 teachers as planned, and the study could interview only 103 teachers.

4. Findings and Analysis

The Safe to Learn Call to Action sets out a five-point agenda to end all forms of violence in schools by 2024. This Diagnostic Exercise has aimed to gauge the degree to which the Government of Nepal has been able to meet the Benchmarks that have been set out for each of the five Call to Action areas. As discussed previously, for each benchmark there are national, district/municipal and school-level 'checkpoints' or requirements that governments need to meet in order to achieve their accountabilities in ensuring that schools are safe for and protective of children.

The following tables outline the status of each of the STL benchmarks and assessments of the degree to which these have been achieved based on an analysis of the information collected during this Diagnostic Exercise. Each benchmark/checkpoint has been assessed based on the following measures: A: in place; B: partially in place; C: not in place. The assessment is followed by a discussion of findings to provide the rationale for such assessment.

Findings for Call to Action 1: Implement laws and policies

Assessment scale regarding national, district and school-level checkpoints/requirements: A = In place; B = Partially in place; C = Not in place

Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/Municipality	School
1.1	**The national government includes prevention of violence in and around schools as a specific strategy in education sector policies, plans and budgets**	Prevention of violence in and around schools is identified as a specific strategy in the national education sector policy or plan[14]	The District/local authorities support the implementation of the national (or sub-national) plan or policy in schools	School implements violence prevention activities in conformity with national or subnational objectives.
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place

Discussion

- **National level:** The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP; 2016–2021), which is the education sector plan (ESP) and the guiding document for the school sector in Nepal includes a specific strategy to prevent bullying and harassment in and around schools and strengthen the grievance and referral system in schools. The SSDP also makes reference to some broader, related objectives and strategies to reduce violence. The plan document, in its mission, goal and purpose statements makes reference to making schools inclusive and equitable, reducing disparities (p. 17), enhancing the relevance and quality of the learning environment (p. 17), and to "mainstream comprehensive school safety and disaster risk reduction in the education sector by strengthening school-level disaster management and resilience amongst schools, students and communities and to ensure that schools are protected from conflicts" (p. 18) thereby strengthening resilience of the school system. Level-wise objectives and strategies related to STL as described in the SSDP are as follows:
    - **SSDP Objectives for Basic Education (including ECED) (p. 39, 43):** (i) To promote a rights-based approach to ECED/PPE programs for developing the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and moral potential of children below five years, and ensure school readiness; (ii) To promote life skills and value-based education and impart early orientation on the national economy and harmony in socio-cultural diversity.
    - **SSDP Strategies for Basic education (p. 40):** (i) Establish and strengthen diagnostic and referral mechanisms to identify and support children with disabilities, including the establishment of specialized ECED/PPE facilities and home-based support for children with complex or severe disabilities; (ii) Ensure gender-sensitive learning environments and district and school-based support structures, including strengthening the national gender education and gender focal point network to address gender-based violence in schools in order to increase girls' participation and their completion of basic education; (iii) **Ensure that schools are safe spaces to learn in and equip teachers and school managements with the skills to identify and address the bullying and harassment of and among students and staff in schools. Also, strengthen the grievance and complaint referral system in schools;** (iv) Scale up school health and nutrition activities, prioritizing schools in food deficient areas, including the continuation and need-based expansion of school-based nutrition programmes, such as midday meals in the Karnali districts; and, (v) Strengthen coordination between central level ministries for integrated interventions across health, nutrition, education and protection, and take a more holistic approach to drive results for children in education.
    - **Secondary Education:** The SSDP does not have an explicit objective for prevention of violence at the secondary level but there is a strategy (p. 48) which states: Increase the participation and completion of girls in secondary education through strategies aimed at (i) push factors such as strengthening the gender network and peer support and the establishment of gender-sensitive learning environments that take the specific needs of adolescent girls into account, and (ii) pull factors such as ending early marriage and reducing the expectation of girls' involvement in home based chores and labour.

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[14] See 'Guidelines for education sector plan preparation' (UNESCO, GPE 2015) or 'Guidelines for developing gender-responsive education sector plans', (GPE, UNGEI, UNICEF, 2017)

- **Municipal level:** The Municipalities (or *Palikas* as they are commonly known) are a new structure in the federal restructuring of the country, which have been constitutionally mandated with the management and delivery of basic and secondary education within their jurisdiction. This includes the implementation of the SSDP. Out of the 8 municipalities, education officers from 6 municipalities (66%) stated that they were fully aware of the SSDP strategy and objectives related to reducing all forms of violence in the schools. Many of the municipal education officers are new in their roles and responsibilities in the municipality. However, the majority of them have worked previously in the education bureaucracy and therefore they have a good understanding of the SSDP provisions related to reducing and/or prohibiting various forms of violence in the schools. The remaining 2 officers who expressed no awareness had been newly deputed to the municipalities without being given any training and orientation on the education sector plan of the MoEST.

- **School-level:** Responses from the school head teachers (HTs) suggest that more than 50% of the HTs are aware of the policies and laws regarding the prohibition of corporal punishment, sexual harassment and other forms of violence at the school level. However, only around 34% of the teachers stated that they were either fully or partially aware of SSDP objectives related to prevention of violence in schools, even though the majority of them have heard about the SSDP. This suggests that while the majority of HTs and a significant proportion of the teachers were aware of SSDP objectives related to prevention of violence in schools, further dissemination of SSDP is needed to ensure implementation of violence prevention activities in conformity with SSDP objectives.

1.2	**There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and classroom management[15]**	Laws that prohibit corporal punishment include clear guidance on implementation, with a process for non-compliance	District oversees implementation of law and details compliance measures.	School implements law or has an independent policy and there are repercussions for non-compliance.
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place

Discussion

- **National Level:** Article 39 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 related to the Rights of the Child states that: 6) No child shall be recruited or used in army, police or any armed group, or be subjected, in the name of cultural or religious traditions, to abuse, exclusion or physical, mental, sexual or other form of exploitation or improper use by any means or in any manner; 7) No child shall be subjected to physical, mental or any other form of torture in home, school or other place and situation whatsoever; 8) Every child shall have the right to juvenile friendly justice; and. 9) The child who is helpless, orphan, with disabilities, conflict victim, displaced or vulnerable shall have the right to special protection and facilities from the State.
- Likewise, the Children's Act 2018 (promulgated and enacted by the Federal Government of Nepal to Amend and Codify Laws related to Children) has a number of provisions related to protecting children. These include: (i) Right to Protection (Every child shall have the right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence and torture, neglect, inhuman behaviour, gender based or untouchability related abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation by her/his father, mother, other family member or guardian, teacher and other persons; (ii) Child protection standards (Every school, public body, private sector and social organization that directly works with children shall formulate and enforce child protection standards at institutional level in order to prevent violence against children or child sexual abuse, ensure protection of children and to immediately act on complaints); (iii) Local level to enforce rights of children (If a person violates the rights of a child spelled out in Section 2 or does not fulfil her/his duties towards the child spelled out in Section 3, the child or the stakeholder concerned may file an application with the judicial committee of the local level where the child is residing in order to enforce the said rights or fulfilment of duties); (iv) Enforce the

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[15] See *Teaching without violence: prohibiting corporal punishment* (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2019)

rights of the child (Notwithstanding what is contained in Section 64, in case a person violates the rights of a child pursuant to Section 2 or does not fulfil the duties towards a child pursuant to Section 3, the child or stakeholder concerned may file an application directly to a high court concerned to enforce the exercise of the said right or fulfilment of the said duty); (v) Offences against children (If a person engages in any act of violence pursuant to Subsection 2 or sexual abuse pursuant to Subsection 3, it shall be deemed an offence against children under this Act; (vi) To be reported (If the father, mother, guardian and those who directly provide services to children such as caregivers, teachers, health-workers or any other person come to know about an incident of violence against children or child sexual abuse that has taken place, that is taking place or that is going to take place, she/he shall inform the nearest police station immediately); (vii) Rescue, protection and health check-up to be done (If police personnel receive an information, complaint or report about an incident of violence against children or child sexual abuse, she/he shall write, or cause to write, necessary details and register it, and if the child needs to be rescued, immediately rescue her/him and refer her/him to a temporary protection service) and (viii) Punishment (If any person, organization or agency violates any of the child rights spelled out in Section 2, or does not fulfil any of the duties towards a child spelled out in Section 3, such person or the chief of such organization or agency shall be imposed with a fine of up to fifty thousand rupees).

- In this way, both the Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the Children's Act 2018 have explicit provisions related to violence against children and punitive measures for the same. The Eighth Amendment to the Education Act has included new provisions related to making schools safe spaces for teaching-learning and prohibiting physical and mental torture in schools. In this regard, Clause 16(c)1 states that schools should be made safe places for learning, and Clause 16(k) prohibits expulsion from schools and carrying out physical or mental torture or harassment against children[16]. But there is no explicit provision of punitive measures in the Amended act. Likewise, it should be highlighted that the Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act 2018 does not have explicit provisions related to violence against children and punitive measures for the same.

- **Municipal level:** Interviews with the municipal education officers show that all of them are aware of the provision of law prohibiting corporal punishment in the school. Review of the education act/rules formulated by the municipalities reveals that they have included provisions related to making schools safe for learning, prohibiting all forms of violence (physical and mental) in schools and to making schools "zones of peace". Makawanpurgadhi Rural Municipality in Bagmati Province has also included provision related to learning without fear within school premises, and the education officer stated that the municipality has started to implement the "Learning without Fear" initiative as part of its education mandate.

- **School-level:** At the school level, there is a high level of awareness regarding the prohibition of all forms of violence against children. More than 64% of the HTs and 52% of teachers stated that they were fully or partially aware of the provision of explicit laws regarding the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools. However, interviews revealed that there was low level of awareness amongst the HTs and teachers regarding the legal repercussions for not adhering to that law. Further, even among those who stated their awareness regarding the legal repercussions, there was no adequate and uniform understanding regarding the legal repercussions for violating such law. Interestingly, only 6% of the students stated that they knew of any laws/rules that prohibit physical punishment in schools, and only 16% thought that their teachers followed such a law. These findings point to the need for widespread dissemination of legal repercussions for indulging in corporal punishment.

		Teacher training on positive discipline and classroom management is included in pre- and in-service training	District ensures that teachers receive thorough training in techniques of classroom management.	Teachers have received training on positive discipline and classroom management in the last three years
			Assessment	

[16] The Eighth Amendment to the Education Act, 1971, approved on 29 June 2016.

		B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place

Discussion

- **National level:** At the national level, both pre-service and in-service training programs have modules on (1) practical and effective positive discipline and non-violent classroom management, and, (2) teacher obligations on child safeguarding. However, these modules do not seem to contain explicit reference to 'violence reporting and response referral pathways for districts and schools'. Further analysis of the curriculum of university's teacher colleges (responsible for teacher education or pre-service training) and MoEST's education training institutions is required to affirm this. In addition, while Nepal has a policy to provide mandatory induction training to all newly recruited teachers before they are placed in the schools, there are variations in the implementation of this policy, which has resulted in many newly recruited teachers receiving the induction training well after they have been placed in the schools and classrooms and have assumed the teaching responsibilities. Therefore, all the newly recruited teachers may not receive the job induction training prior to starting their teaching career.

- **Municipal level:** As mentioned earlier, with the promulgation of the federal constitution in 2015, the roles and responsibilities regarding the management and delivery of school education have been devolved to the local governments (municipalities). However, in-service teacher training function has not yet been devolved to the municipalities; it sits at the provincial level (provincial educational training centres or ETCs) and partly at the district level (education development and coordination units or EDCUs). Therefore, there is a lack of awareness amongst the municipal education officers regarding the content and provision of pre- and in-service training.

- **School level:** Responses from the school level further show that newly recruited teachers are placed in the classrooms without systematic job induction training. For example, only about 8% of the teachers and 19% of the HTs stated that they were aware of newly recruited teachers receiving induction training on positive discipline enforcement in the classrooms, avoiding revictimisation of students and referral pathways for children at risk. The induction training program is organized at the district level by the EDCUs, and teachers who have undergone this training after their recruitment have stated that there are modules related to the above areas in the training program. However, the majority of head teachers stated that all newly recruited or transferred teachers are oriented on issues related to high moral behavior and prohibition of violence against children in the school itself before they are deputed to the classrooms.

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.**	A national policy framework, strategy or other system that outlines the role of the Ministry of Education as part of the national child protection system alongside other formal actors (Health, Social Welfare, Justice, Police)[17]	There is district-level coordination of national policy framework and support for implementation in schools	School follows national and/or district policy and coordinates with local authorities and other duty bearers
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place

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[17] These set out the mandated roles and responsibilities of state actors in the national child protection system. See section 2.1, UNESCO/UNWOMEN 2016 for a discussion of child protection systems

Discussion

- **National level:** In 2004, the Cabinet of the Government of Nepal endorsed a ten years National Plan of Action for Children (NPA/C; 2004–2015) under the leadership of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. The plan was developed as a national response to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children held in New York in 2002, which called for the development of plans of actions for children to boost their rights to education, health, protection, and to contribute to the control of HIV/AIDS. The NPA/C had four objectives: (a) Promote the rights of every child; (b) Eliminate all forms of exploitation, abuse and discrimination against children; (c) Promote child-friendly environments, focusing on education, health, nutrition and other sectors; and, (d) Increase the access of children to all basic needs, facilities and services, ensuring quality. However, the final evaluation of the NPA/C conducted in 2016 showed that the "plan was not implemented as a plan", and that "there is no evidence that the plan was able to influence the policy and planning landscape for children in the country"[18]. There is no evidence that such a national plan of action has been devised in the subsequent years.

- **Municipal level:** At the municipal level, there is little awareness of the existence of such national framework of plan of action for child protection. Nonetheless, officers from 6 municipalities stated that provisions related to prohibiting physical and mental violence in schools and making schools safe places for learning are included in their municipal education act/regulations/rules. Makawanpurgadhi Rural Municipality in Bagmati Province stated that it has started to implement the "learning without fear" initiative.

- **School-level:** Responses from the schools indicate that 64% of the HTs and 40% of the teachers stated that they were aware of the existence of a national plan of action for child protection. However, most of the HTs and teachers expressed little awareness of their specific roles and responsibilities in the implementation of such a plan of action in the schools. Nonetheless, they stated that they were aware of the need for child protection and were committed to not using violence against children and to protecting and supporting all children as required. In almost all schools, various local NGOs (mostly with support from I/NGOs) have implemented various child protection programs. These include the formation of ward level child protection committees including representation of local elected officials to oversee cases related to children, and formation of child clubs at the school level. The desk study provided evidence of Mercy Corps STEM II project strengthening municipal level safeguarding by drafting child protection policies and child protection committees at ward and municipal levels.

	The Ministry of Education has established a national child protection/safeguarding policy with the requirement that all sub-national authorities and schools under their purview develop their own localized policies.[19]	The district authorities support the establishment of localized and coordinated school child protection policies, and has identified one focal point with overseeing and responding to concerns	School follows national policy or independently has established child safeguarding policies and procedures
	Assessment		
	B = Partially in place	**B = Partially in place**	**B = Partially in place**

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[18] Cabran, M., and Joshi, D. 2016. The Nepal National Plan of Action for Children, 2004–15. Final Evaluation. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and Unicef Nepal Country Office.
[19] See UNICEF 2012; Keeping Children Safe 2014.

Discussion

- **National level:** The MoEST does not have a separate national child protection policy, framework or action plan. Further, as stated in 1.3 above, status of the National Plan of Action for Children (NPA/C; 2004–2015) remains unclear at the moment. The Children's Act 2018 also does not have explicit role for the MoEST. Likewise, there is no explicit requirement that all sub-national authorities and schools under its purview develop their own localized policies. But MoEST has launched various campaigns such as ending corporal punishment in schools, child-friendly school national framework, 'Schools as Zones of Peace' (SZOP), and learning without fear that have provisions related to protection of children in schools.

- **Municipal level:** At the municipal level, at least three of the municipalities (Geruwa, Makawanpurgadhi and Pokhara) have a separate act/rule for child protection and/or protection of vulnerable children. Most of the municipalities stated that they have included provisions related to banning all forms of violence against students in their newly formulated local education laws. The municipalities have a judicial committee headed by the deputy mayor to settle legal issues, and within this committee there is a designated officer (legal facilitator) to support the work of the committee. All issues, including those related to children, are handled by this committee.

- **School level:** All school respondents stated unanimously that they have adopted the child friendly school policy and the inclusive education policy of the MoEST. HTs and teachers stated that they do not practice corporal punishment in the schools and teach in a violence-free environment. More than 60% of the HTs stated that the school has designated focal teachers (male and female teachers for boys and girls, respectively) to receive and address specific issues from children.

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[20].**	The Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict have been brought into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate.	The Guidelines are widely disseminated by District authorities so that all parties engaged in conflict are aware of and able to abide by them.	School level plans in place to reduce risk of attacks, to respond quickly to risks, and to have a clear plan for safe school re-opening after attacks happen.
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	**C = Not in place**	**C = Not in place**

Discussion

- **National level:** Nepal has not yet endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. It should be noted that schools in Nepal were highly affected by the Maoist Insurgency spanning from 1996-2006. During that time, under the initiative of a coalition of national and international NGOs and Unicef, a 'Schools as Zones of Peace' (SZOP) initiative was launched to garner political commitment to protecting the schools and children from the armed conflict to make schools free from all forms of political activities, and direct and structural violence. With the resolution of the conflict in 2006, the relevance of the SZOP has attenuated. However, there have been multiple instances of schools being forced to close by splinter factions of the Maoist party, school children being used forcibly in political rallies and events, and school premises being used for political campaigns and meetings. No new initiatives have been devised at the national level to protect schools from potential conflicts that may arise in the future.

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[20] The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries the opportunity to express support for protecting education from attack during times of armed conflict; the importance of the continuation of education during war; and the implementation of concrete measures to deter the military use of schools. See more details: http://www.protectingeducation.org/safeschoolsdeclaration

- **Municipal level:** The Municipalities, being new entities in the federal set-up, are not familiar with Safe Schools Declaration. None of the municipalities had developed action plans to protect schools in times of conflict, although they have formulated legislation related to disaster risk management. Further, municipalities expressed ignorance with respect to how many schools in their locality have been implementing the safe schools declaration, if any. However, most of the municipal education officials are aware of the SZOP initiative, and to keep schools free from political conflicts.

- **School-level:** Responses from school levels indicate that there are no school-based action plans to reduce risk of attacks, to respond quickly to risks, and schools do not have a clear, written plan for safe school re-opening after attacks happen. This is partly because the perceived likelihood of such political and armed conflicts resurfacing in Nepal have decreased significantly after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006 and the completion of federal restructuring. The other reason is that schools have not been issued relevant directives to formulate such plans. However, HTs and teachers reported that they are committed to make schools safe from political conflicts (as they have done in the past), and in the case of perceived threats to schools from political conflicts, they would negotiate with local political leaders to ensure that schools are not forcibly closed and the negative effects are minimized.

Summary of findings for Benchmark 1

This section provides an overview of the findings from the document review and field research surrounding Benchmark 1 of the STL Call to Action.

Summary of best practices and/or positive findings
- The Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the Children's Act 2018 have explicit provisions related to prohibiting violence against children and punitive measures for the same.
- The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) includes the following strategy: "Ensure that schools are safe spaces to learn in and equip teachers and school managements with the skills to identify and address the bullying and harassment of and among students and staff in schools. Also, strengthen the grievance and complaint referral system in schools"
- Responses from school actors indicate that they are aware of the need to implement or are implementing violence prevention activities in conformity with the SSDP objectives.
- The majority of municipalities have included provisions related to prohibition of violence and schools as zones of peace in their municipal education acts/rules. Some municipalities have started to implement the "learning without fear" initiative as part of their local education mandate (e.g., Makawanpurgadhi Rural Municipality in Province 3).
- At the school level, there is a high level of awareness regarding the prohibition of violence against children and the legal repercussions of failing to do so.
- At the national level, both pre-service and in-service training programs have modules on practical and effective positive discipline and non-violent classroom management.

Summary of gaps and challenges for each benchmark indicator
- Nepal does not have a multi-sectoral Child Protection Policy or Framework.
- Municipalities did not show awareness of supporting schools with the SSDP objective of keeping schools safe by preventing and reporting violence.
- The Education Act, the Education Regulations, and the Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act 2018 do not have explicit provisions related to violence against children and punitive measures for the same.
- Whilst municipalities understand the law prohibiting corporal punishment in schools, few are taking action to oversee this and ensure compliance in schools.
- Nepal has not yet endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

Ways the government could address gaps
The following recommendations aim to support the government and education sector to achieve the STL benchmarks, based on the best practices and gaps found.

- **Benchmark 1.1 - Prevention of violence in and around schools is identified as a specific strategy in the national education sector policy or plan.** The Constitution of Nepal 2015, the Children's Act 2018, and the SSDP include specific provision to ensure schools are safe spaces to learn, teachers have skills to identify and address bullying and harassment and the grievance and complaint referral system is strengthened. This should be fully integrated in the education system through explicit reference to prevention of violence and consequences in the Education Act, Education Regulations, and the Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act. A costed implementation plan with clear roles and responsibilities at each level – national, municipal, school – can help ensure effective implementation.

- **Benchmark 1.2 - There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and classroom management.** Schools in the study were aware of the prohibition of corporal punishment and said they practised positive discipline; however they had low awareness of the repercussions for enacting corporal punishment in schools. There is an opportunity to train and upskill municipal level officials to oversee that corporal punishment does not take place in schools and that those who do engage in it are reported.

- Induction training for teachers appears ad-hoc as it is often usually delayed. Whilst teachers report that induction training includes moral and ethical behaviour, the induction training could be strengthened with a mandatory introduction to child safeguarding including prohibiting corporal punishment, positive discipline and classroom management, to be completed before a teacher commences teaching in the school.

- **Benchmark 1.3 - The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in response and referral to incidents of violence are clearly set out in the multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework.** Nepal had a National Plan of Action for Children that included elements of child protection, however this is now outdated. There is currently no multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework. There is need to engage multi-stakeholders to develop a national child protection policy that standardizes child safeguards that must be applied at school level and includes an interagency protocol to report and refer cases of violence in schools and provide a coordinated response. The National Child Protection Policy and associated referral system will need to be disseminated to all users in an accessible way.

- **Benchmark 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.** Nepal should endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and in situations of armed conflict should implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. To this effect, bilateral and multilateral advocacy should be reinforced. Nepal can draw good practice from the 'Schools as Zones of Peace' initiative of 1996–2006 during the Civil war (Maoist conflict).

Findings for Call to Action 2: Strengthen prevention and response at school level

Assessment scale regarding national, district and school-level checkpoints/requirements: A = In place; B = Partially in place; C = Not in place

Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/District	School
2.1	**Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children[21]**	National curriculum includes age appropriate approaches that (i) develop life skills, (ii) teach children about violence and safe behavior, (iii) challenge social and cultural norms and promote equal relationships.	District supervises and assures information and curriculum is implemented in schools	Schools deliver formal school syllabi that includes life skills, safe behavior, and equal relationships.
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place

Discussion

- **National level:** The National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal includes specific approaches and principles to develop life skills and to promote equity and inclusion. Life skills, equity and inclusion are also mainstreamed throughout the National Curriculum Framework. Based on the framework, the national curriculum includes topics to teach children in schools about 1) life skills, 2) violence and safe behaviour, and, 3) promoting inclusion of marginalized groups and gender equitable relationships. The textbooks for grades 6–8 (and for other grades as well throughout school education) have dedicated chapters on soft skills, fundamental rights, human rights, reducing gender-based violence, and promoting gender equality and social inclusion. There are also topics on peace and harmony, and human values. Such topics are included mostly in subjects such as Social Studies, Health, Population & Environment, and Moral Education

- **Municipal level:** At the municipal level, there is a general lack of awareness regarding the content of the national curriculum as well as the role of the municipality in implementing the national curriculum. The Education Act and Education Regulations delegate the responsibility for monitoring and ensuring that the schools implement the national curriculum to the District Education Officer. In the federal context, the existing district education offices have been dissolved and converted into EDCUs, and many of the functions delegated to them in the pre-federal structure have been removed. The responsibility for monitoring of curricular implementation has not been delegated to the municipality, but the Constitution gives the responsibilities to the municipalities for the implementation of the local curriculum. In basic education, municipalities are authorized to develop their own local curriculum (20% weightage) in addition to the national curriculum. In the municipalities that were covered in this study, we did not come across any municipality that had developed local curriculum with content focusing on making schools safe from all forms of violence. The local curriculum of the municipalities focused mainly on local culture, tourism, improved agriculture, and optional English.

- **School level:** At the school level, 69% of the students stated that various topics related to life skills, violence and safe behaviour, inclusion, equity, and human rights are included in the curriculum and textbooks and have been taught in the class. They stated that such topics are included more in subjects such as Social Studies, Moral Education, and Health, Population and Environment (HPE). In the case of teachers, nearly 35% stated that topics related to life skills, violence and safe behaviour, inclusion, equity, and human rights are included in the curriculum and textbooks. The lower response rate from teachers can be attributed

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[21] Section 3, WHO 2019, Schools-based Violence Prevention: A Practical Handbook. This links to Benchmark 3.2 and 5.3

	to the fact that they are subject teachers, and all of them may not be aware of the inclusion of these topics in specific subjects mentioned above. However, the majority of teachers stated that they try to integrate soft skills within the subject(s) they teach. It should be emphasized that the national curriculum and textbooks for these different subjects include activities and community work that require students to engage in group activities and go outside of classrooms. However, the extent to which such activities and community work are rigorously implemented in the schools and changes in the students' skills and attitudes remains an area for further investigation. In the schools in Karnali and Sudur Paschim Provinces (Provinces 6 & 7 respectively), I/NGOs were implementing additional, dedicated classes on soft skills for the upper basic and secondary level students.			
2.2	**Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards[22].**	National guidelines detail process by which all schools respond to child protection concerns, including referral to services. The Ministry of Education has a focal point.	District has step-by-step procedures for schools to follow and has identified one focal point with overseeing and responding to concerns.	System for responding to child protection concerns is in place following district or central guidelines, or school if no policy. School has focal point with responsibility for responding to protection incidents.

Assessment		
B = Partially in place	**C = Not in place**	**B = Partially in Place**

Discussion

- **National level:** The MoEST has approved the "Policy Provision for Ensuring Learning without Fear" in 2011. The implementation guideline of this Policy requires the schools to establish monitoring mechanisms by involving the school's internal stakeholders (such as SMC and PTA) and by using indicators to monitor the school's overall environment with respect to learning without fear. However, the implementation guideline does not describe the details of the monitoring mechanism and the type of indicators to be used in such monitoring. The former Department of Education[23] of MoEST issued Complaint Response Guidelines 2016 to guide the development and institution of systematic procedures at the school level for receiving and addressing complaints from students, especially those related to incidents of physical, mental and sexual violence. This guideline requires that all the secondary schools appoint a female teacher as gender focal person and set up a complaint box compulsorily in the school premises within easy access for all students. The guideline also requires the school to form a committee consisting of the gender focal person, School Management Committee (SMC) chairperson or woman member of committee, school Principal and one girl student and one boy student from the Child Club. These members should be present during the opening of complaint box and their main role is to hear the issues and solve them.

- MoEST also has a dedicated "inclusive education" section in the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD). This section is responsible for inclusive education and gender equity, and is headed by an under-secretary who also serves as the focal point for all activities related to equity and inclusion, including coordinating with activities of the I/NGOs and the gender equity network (GEN). However, this person does not serve as a focal point for reports of violence against children.

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[22] See UNICEF 2012; Keeping Children Safe 2014; UNGEI 2018. This links to benchmark 1.3 above.

[23] The Department of Education has been restructured into Center for Education and Human Resource Development or CEHRD after the federal restructuring.

- **Municipal level:** At the municipal level, there are no dedicated mechanisms or step-by-step procedures for schools to follow in reporting cases related to violence against children. However, the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has mandated the formation of a 3-member Judicial Committee at the municipal level headed by the deputy mayor/vice chair, and there is a dedicated section for overseeing issues related to women, children and social protection. The Judicial committee has a focal point/unit that is entrusted with overseeing and responding to concerns. However, this committee is responsible for the entire municipality and whilst it may sometimes address issues of violence, it does not focus specifically on cases of violence in the schools.

- **School level:** At the school level, more than 50% of the students stated that there is the provision of a grievance or complaint box, in accordance with the Complaint Response Guideline, to receive complaints from the students related not exclusively to cases of abuse and violence but also other aspects as well. However, only about 38% of the students said that they had been formally informed by the school management of such provision. Likewise, 71% of the HTs stated that such complaints handling mechanism exists at the school and that all students have been informed of this. In Province 2, schools surveyed reported that NGOs such as Aasman Nepal had provided the complaint boxes to them rather than it having been placed by government/public school authorities. The box is locked and is managed by a committee comprising a teacher (usually the gender focal person) and student representatives (male and female representatives of the school's child club). In the interviews, HTs and teachers stated that minor cases are dealt with and settled at the time of opening the complaint box itself whereas cases that are serious and cannot be settled within the committee are taken to the head teacher or the SMC. It was also stated that the majority of complaints are anonymised as students are told not to write their names in the complaint. However, in cases where student identity is revealed, it was stated that the Committee would keep the identity of the concerned student confidential. In the interviews, HTs and teachers stated that any severe case of violence or harassment against students by either the teachers or the administrative staff is immediately brought to the attention of teachers through the students themselves.

	National guidelines clearly outline norms and standards of ethical behavior to be included in Teacher Codes of Conduct.	Codes of conduct required for all staff including District and Schools. District/sub-national authorities ensure compliance of Codes of Conduct in schools	School has Code of Conduct that is publicly posted and requires all teachers to understand and comply; Ramifications for violations are proscribed and enforced; requires written signatures by all staff; includes Codes of behavior for students.
	Assessment		
	B = Partially in place	**C = Not in place**	**B = Partially in place**

Discussion

- **National level:** The Education Regulations contains the national code of conduct for teachers[24]. The code of conduct has 11 points of which the last point states that teachers should not engage in physical and mental torture of students. It should be noted that this provision was added after the amendment to the regulations in 2009. The Education Regulations further states that it is the responsibility of the head teacher to document whether the teachers have followed or not followed the code of conduct, and it is the responsibility of the school management committee to document whether the head teacher has followed or not followed the code of conduct. It also states that in case of non-compliance, description of the same should be submitted to the concerned district education office. It should be noted that with the abrogation of the district education offices, the provision has not been automatically transferred to the municipal office. In the case of district education officer, the regulation does not explicitly state if such officer is responsible for ensuring compliance against the teacher code of conduct. It does not specifically spell out the role of the DEO in ensuring such compliance. Therefore, based on the above provision, it can be stated that the national Teacher Code of Conduct does not have explicit standards for: 1) disciplinary action if standards surrounding violence are not adhered to; 2) requirement of every teacher to sign the Code of Conduct on an annual basis.

- **Municipal level:** At the municipal level, there is no separate code of conduct for the municipal officers, and none of the municipalities included in the study have taken any initiative for enforcing the code of conduct at the school level. Schools responded that even in the past, there was no follow-up from the DEOs regarding the code of conduct and none of the head teachers recalled submitting report to the DEO on non-compliance.

- **School level:** At the school level, all schools interviewed had publicly posted their code of conduct. This is usually done by painting the code of conduct either on the exterior wall of the main school building or on the boundary wall adjacent to the main gate of the school. In many schools, the code of conduct was also printed on flex boards and posted in the school office and teachers' rooms. In the majority of the schools, it was stated that the painting and printing of the code of conduct has been supported by NGOs. However, in many schools, the painting had been worn out and was in need of fresh painting. In the schools, there are separate codes of conduct for teachers, students, parents and school management committee members. In some schools, the student code of conduct was also posted in the classrooms, whereas the teacher code of conduct was posted in the common teachers' room. However, very few teachers admitted to reading and signing the code of conduct. Only 2 schools had included ramifications for violation of the code of conduct.

	The establishment of safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for students is mandated for all schools. There is a working, accessible national reporting mechanism such as a national child helpline.	District supports schools in implementation of reporting mechanism and ensure availability of support mechanisms. It has its own mechanism for response when reports are elevated.	Students are aware of and use reporting mechanism to report experiences of violence. It is linked to support services and includes a monitoring system for reporting and accountability.
	Assessment		
	B = Partially in place	**C = Not in place**	**B = Partially in place**

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[24] For details please see: Education Regulations, Chapter 12, No. 133.

Discussion

- **National level:** As stated above, the national Complaint Response Guidelines provide guidance to districts and schools on how to establish safe and confidential reporting and response mechanisms for violence. Nepal also has a national child helpline (Toll Free Number 1098) that can also be used for reporting violence. This helpline has been operated and maintained by a national NGO called Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and Nepal Telecom. In addition, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has the provision of Child Protection Committees at the central, district and municipal levels who can deal with reports of violence from schools although this currently takes place in an ad-hoc way without a formal referral system.

- **Municipal level:** Response from 6 (out of 8) municipal officers indicates limited awareness regarding the need to support schools in implementation of reporting mechanisms and ensure availability of referral and support mechanisms.

- **School level:** At the school level, more than 50% of the students indicated that they are aware of the provision of a grievance or complaint box, and its utility to report various issues, including those of bullying, harassment and other forms of violence. However, only 15% of the students had full information about the national child helpline (including the exact toll-free number).

National pre- and in-service training for school staff includes their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.	District authorities ensure that teachers receive pre- or in-service training on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.	All schools staff receive pre- or in-service training on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations. Staff are adequately trained to prevent revictimization of children and are knowledgeable about the referral pathway in place in the locality.
Assessment		
B = Partially in place	**C = Not in place**	**B = Partially in place**

Discussion

- **National level:** The customized teacher professional development (TPD) packages for early childhood, basic and secondary level teachers have been developed by the National Center for Educational Development (now merged into Center for Education and Human Development) and are delivered through the provincial

ETCs. The TPD modules[25] for basic and secondary levels, short sessions on knowledge about children and learners, learning environment and classroom management, identification of students' learning difficulties and remedial teaching, student-centred teaching-learning activities, effective classroom management and child-friendly teaching learning. However, these modules do not contain explicit sessions on violence and safe behaviour, teacher obligations on child safeguarding, and violence reporting and response referral pathways at school and municipality levels. However, there is a targeted training module on comprehensive sexuality education for secondary teachers teaching health, population and environment, that has dedicated sessions on human rights related issues in sexuality and reproductive health, adolescent-friendly health services, gender and sexual violence and harmful behaviours, sexual transmissions, contraceptives and HIV/AIDS, etc.

- The national Teacher Competency Framework 2016 has identified 8 competencies of which three are directly related to safe schools. These are: (i) knowledge about learners/children, (ii) learning environment and classroom environment, and, (iii) legal bases and professional conduct. Review of recent training modules developed by CEHRD has included sessions on effective classroom management, management of learner psychology, integrity, and critical thinking and life skills[26]. However, interviews with CEHRD officials engaged in TPD programs in the past suggests that there is little or no focus on (1) teacher obligations on child safeguarding, and, (2) violence reporting and response referral pathways for districts and schools. Likewise, based on a quick review of the curriculum of the Teacher Service Commission for teacher licensing and teacher recruitment examinations, there is little evidence of inclusion of content on these topics, suggesting a lesser focus on them in TPD programs.

- **Municipal level:** The municipalities are yet to have any involvement in in-service TPD. However, the EDCUs continue to perform the task of conducting induction training for newly recruited teachers. Responses from some of the teachers who have taken such training reveals that whilst aspects of positive discipline and classroom management are emphasized in the training, there is no focus on teacher obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.

- **School level:** The majority of teachers and HTs (88% and 71%, respectively) indicated that they have not received any training on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations in the past three years. Further, teachers and HTs stated that whatever training has been provided in this regard was through the NGOs and not through MoEST institutions. These responses indicate that teachers are not adequately trained to prevent revictimization of children and are not knowledgeable about the referral pathway in place in the locality. However, HTs stated that newly recruited teachers are provided with a general orientation, including on the above topics, by the HT and senior teachers before they are sent to the classrooms.

There are national policies that regulate hiring of new teachers and staff and their transfer to ensure suitability for working with children.	Districts implement the policy requiring background checks when recruiting or transferring teachers.	School follows or has individualized methods to vet staff to ensure their suitability for working with children; it requests new hires or districts to report previous convictions or reasons for transfer.
Assessment		
B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place

[25] http://nced.gov.np/main/bmV3cHVibGljYXRpb24=

[26] CEHRD. 2019. Teacher Professional Development Training Curriculum Collection (Model and Technical). Kathmandu.

Discussion

- **National level:** There are various ways in which teachers are selected and recruited for public schools in Nepal. It is now mandatory that all teachers have received the teaching license. According to the Teacher Service Commission Regulations, the following people are ineligible: (a) Non-Nepali citizen, (b) Not attained the age of 18 years, (c) Having unsound mind, (d) Convicted of a criminal offence of moral turpitude from a court, (e) Dismissed from service having been rendered disqualified for government service or teachers service in the future, (f) Having no educational qualification acquired pursuant to Rule 9, (g) Having no training acquired pursuant to Rule 9. Likewise, the same regulation bars the following people from becoming teachers: (a) Non Nepali citizen, (b) Not attained the age of 18 years, (c) Above the age of 40 years, (d) Having unsound mind, (e) Convicted of an offence of moral turpitude by a court, (f) Dismissed from service having been rendered disqualified for government service or service of teacher in the future, (g) Not obtained the Teaching license, and, (h) Not acquired training referred to in Rule 9. The Teacher Service Commission is mandated to issue teaching license as well as conduct examinations for vacant teacher positions by districts. Application forms for both teaching license and teacher recruitment does not require the applicant to disclose information related to criminal offences in the past[27]. Apart from these provisions, there are no separate national guidelines that provide guidance to districts and schools on how to conduct background checks before hiring of teachers to assess their suitability for working with children. Likewise, there are no additional national guidelines that provide guidance to districts and schools on how to ensure that teachers who are dismissed for bad behaviour are not simply transferred to another school.

- **Municipal level:** At the municipality, none of the education officers stated that mechanisms exist to conduct background checks on teachers when recruiting or transferring them. This is because licensing and recruitment of teachers for permanent positions is done centrally by the Teacher Service Commission.

- **School level:** At the school level, 100% of the HTs and teachers stated that schools do not conduct a background check of teachers deployed through the Teacher Service Commission to ensure their suitability for working with children before they are recruited or placed in the classrooms. It was stated that such checks may already have been done at the time of recruitment by the Teacher Service Commission. However, in the case of teachers that are locally hired by the school, HTs and teachers stated that they conduct informal background checks (although there is no formal policy in any of the schools) to ascertain if the selected candidate had previous history of violence against children.

2.3		Ministry of Education has a training program or special curriculum for school counselors that includes children's mental health and well-being; and has arrangement or referral procedures when a child or his/her family needs specialized services.	District has support mechanism for school counselors and refers to specialized services to assist schools when necessary.	School counselor is in the school and is capacitated to provide front-line mental health/psychosocial support to students; and has identified a referral source for range of specialized services (mental health, medical, family services...)
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	**C = Not in place**	**B = Partially in place**

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[27] For details, please see: http://tsc.gov.np/doc/1530074522Darkhasta%20Pharam.pdf

	Discussion • **National level:** The MoEST does not have provision to provide counselors to schools. In such a context, it asks schools to designate teachers to also act as counselors. Since there is no position of school counselor in the school education system in Nepal, there is no separate and dedicated training package or program for the same on: 1) Children's mental health and wellbeing, 2) referral procedures for when a child needs specialized services/care. • **Municipal level:** At the municipality level, all the education officers stated that there are no support mechanisms for school counselors. Further, they expressed ignorance about the number of schools with counselors within their jurisdiction. • **School level:** Responses from the schools indicate that there are no full-time school counselors who are capacitated to provide front-line mental health/psychosocial support to students. Public schools are not provided with resources to recruit or hire such counselors. Nearly 84% of the HTs and 74% of the teachers stated that there is no counselor in the schools to provide such counseling to students as required. In schools where they exist, they have been designated from among existing teachers and are mainly responsible for maintaining student discipline. There is no systematic training for such designated teachers. However, in few schools, it was reported that they have received some training from various NGOs in the past, although not specifically focusing on referral services for the students that may need them. Province 3 (Bagmati Province) has the programme of "One school one nurse", and in the rural municipality covered in province 3, it was stated that these nurses also act as counselors, especially for the female students. In at least 4 schools, toll free numbers of the national child helpline, police, and ambulance were publicly displayed on the buildings.			
2.4	**The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind[28].**	There are established national standards for school buildings and grounds that address student safety	The District authorities are aware of national standards and monitor improvements to schools' physical environment.	School design reflect national guidelines. The community, students and staff have mapped unsafe areas and have identified solutions for these areas. Sanitary facilities are safe and secure, classroom architecture and design is gender-responsive, and students move freely to and from school.
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	**B = Partially in place**	**B = Partially in place**

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[28] UNGEI 2018 Domain 7; WHO 2019 Section 6.

Discussion

- **National level:** At the national level, there are a number of national standards to guide the development of school buildings and classrooms. According to the Education Act and Education Regulations, a school has to provide details of its physical infrastructure while applying for operation. Annex 3 of the Education Regulations specifies the infrastructure for establishing and operating a school, including the provision of separate toilets for girls, and adequate playground. The school building design protocols are approved by the Department of Urban development and Building Construction (DUDBC) and schools have to choose from the protocols while constructing new buildings. In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake, the government has approved a comprehensive school safety masterplan and toolkit that ensures that all school buildings are resilient to earthquakes and other natural disasters. The DUDBC design protocols have also been updated/revised post-2015. There is no explicit guidance on mapping of unsafe areas and making classrooms gender-responsive. However, the standards for WASH facilities have been made more gender-responsive especially with the inclusion of menstrual pads and incinerators for proper disposal of used pads.

- **Municipal level:** All the municipalities interviewed were aware of these national standards and the need to enforce them at the school level. The newly constructed buildings have to be inspected and approved by engineers/sub-engineers based at the districts and municipalities before schools can receive the completion certificate. In the case Tikapur municipality, it has identified unsafe playgrounds and made them safe by supporting soil filling and leveling of the play grounds and installing play materials especially for small children in the schools that were visited.

- **School level:** The schools do not have their own individual guidelines regarding standards for building, toilets and playgrounds. They adhere to the national standards in the construction of classrooms, toilets and playgrounds. From the student respondents, 65% felt that the buildings and playgrounds had been made safer, 53% thought that the toilets had been made safer, and 65% felt that the classrooms had been made more inclusive and participatory. Likewise, in the case of teachers, 71% felt that the buildings and playgrounds had been made safer, 83% thought that the toilets had been made safer, and 86% felt that the classrooms had been made more inclusive and participatory. These show that in general, classrooms, playgrounds and toilets have become safer compared to the past. In some schools that are located near to rivers and highways, student safety was raised as a concern, and schools had made it mandatory for parents of young children to come to the school to receive them. A school surveyed in Laxminiya Rural Municipality in Province 2 stated that they often deployed someone to help students cross the main road outside their school, especially in light of common road accidents in the area.

Summary of findings for Benchmark 2

This section provides an overview of the findings from the document review and field research surrounding Benchmark 2 of the STL Call to Action.

Summary of best practices and/or positive findings

- The National Curriculum Framework includes specific approaches and principles to develop life skills and to promote equity and inclusion. Textbooks aligned to the curriculum also include key violence prevention strategies such as soft skills, fundamental rights, human rights, reducing gender-based violence, gender equality and social inclusion. Some teachers in the study were aware of these topics in textbooks.
- The national Complaint Response Guidelines lay out a confidential process for receiving and addressing incidences of violence in school through suggestion boxes and a selected committee to review reports. The majority of schools included in the study were familiar with this process.
- Schools reported having a gender focal person who is part of the committee opening and reviewing the issues in the suggestion box.
- The Education Regulations contains the national code of conduct for teachers that states the responsibilities of Head Teachers, SMCs, and (former) DEOs in ensuring compliance.
- Teachers Code of Conduct is painted on school walls. There are separate codes of conduct for teachers, students, parents and school management committee members
- Nepal has a national child helpline (Toll Free Number 1098) that can also be used for confidentially reporting cases of violence.
- Several national standards guide the development of school buildings and classrooms and ensure they are safe. Respondents at school level reported schools have been made safer for example with the provision of separate toilets for girls.

Summary of gaps for each benchmark indicator

- Municipalities have little knowledge of lessons and activities within the curriculum for preventing violence.
- There are no guidelines or focal person for schools to report instances of violence outside school, where needed. Likewise, there is no guidance on how schools can refer cases of violence to the relevant community services such as police, welfare, and health.
- There is no designated focal person at the national or municipal levels with responsibility for overseeing and responding to cases of violence against children in school.
- The municipalities interviewed have not dealt with any issues of non-compliance of code of conduct (despite being mandated to). Very few schools have developed and implemented ramifications for violation of the code of conduct.
- There is an absence of official pre- or in-service training for teachers on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.
- Whilst there are robust regulations around teacher licencing, there are no regulations in place to guide transition of teachers and ensure anyone who has been dismissed for bad behaviour is not simply transferred to another school.
- Whilst schools have appointed School Counsellors from within their staff, they are not capacitated with training on mental health, psychosocial support and referral procedures

Ways the government could/should address gaps

The following recommendations aim to support the government and education sector to achieve the STL benchmarks/checkpoints, based on the best practices and gaps found.

- **Benchmark 2.1 - Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children.** The primary and secondary curriculum include issues of violence and safe behaviour, promoting inclusion of marginalized groups and gender equitable relationships. However, not all teachers reported to be teaching these topics. One reason could be because teachers and schools experience pressure to focus on topics that will feature on board examinations. Municipalities are authorized to develop their own local curriculum and none in the study had developed curricula or promoted activities to prevent violence. Linkages between violence prevention and improving learning outcomes could be made explicit to Municipalities. Whilst Municipalities are not instructed to

monitor the curriculum, a better understanding of the importance of life skills, equitable relationships and violence prevention strategies will assist them in supporting implementation in schools.

- **Benchmark 2.2 - Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards**.
  1) National guidelines to establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms. The Complaint Response Mechanism Guidelines provide clear process for schools to help students report instances of violence through suggestion boxes and a selected committee to open and deal with the issues. However, the Guidelines do not include a process for referring cases to the relevant services in the community, e.g. police, health, social services. This should be extended to include guidelines for Municipalities to support schools in the response and referrals. They could also include safe reporting processes that can be used during school closure, for example during COVID-19 pandemic or other emergencies.
  Whilst bodies/units/committees exist at Municipal and National level with responsibilities for overseeing gender and inclusion issues, there is no specific focal person with responsibility for responding to issues of violence in schools and referring cases to the required authorities. Focal points should be identified and allocated these roles to help link the education sector with wider services and help manage specific instances of violence in school more effectively.
  2) Norms and standards of ethical behaviour in Teacher Codes of Conduct. The Education Regulations contain the national code of conduct for teachers. The study found all interviewed schools have the code of conduct displayed on school walls. The content could be reinforced further by requiring every teacher to read and sign the code of conduct annually. The Ministry should also provide guidance to schools on the disciplinary action to be taken if standards surrounding violence are not adhered to and the role of Municipalities in monitoring such cases.
  3) Policies that regulate hiring of new teachers and staff and their transfer to ensure suitability for working with children. The teacher licensing regulations are comprehensive; however, it would be very helpful to provide explicit guidance regarding how the background checks on teachers assessing their suitability for working with children can be conducted. These checks can then be extended to the transfer of teachers between schools. This will require collaboration and thinking through with police, justice and social welfare sectors to ensure they are fully conducted and recorded.
  4) Pre- and in-service training on obligations for child safeguarding and reporting/response., Existing pre-and in-service curricula should be reviewed and examples of effective training for teachers on violence prevention in schools collated. Where needed, existing materials can be revised to provide more practical/effective strategies for positive discipline and classroom management, as well as content on violence reporting/response pathways, teacher obligations on child safeguarding and preventing revictimization. An effective way of training teachers at scale is through school-based training models. A clear, concise, user-centred and multi-lingual manual for teachers could be introduced for schools to lead their own professional development on preventing violence.

- **Benchmark 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.** Whilst many schools have identified a staff member to act as counsellor or focal person, few have received training. A School Counsellor training package should be developed and disseminated. This can draw from evidence of good practice amongst development partners. It can be incorporated into school-based training on preventing violence.

- **Benchmark 2.4 - The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind.** Schools report that the physical environment in and around schools has been made safer than before, including the provision of separate toilets for girls. More measures could be put in place to make commuting to and from school safer, especially for young children, and in schools that are located in hazardous areas.

Findings for Call to Action 3: Shift social norms and behaviour change

Assessment scale regarding national, district and school-level checkpoints/requirements: A = In place; B = Partially in place; C = Not in place

Item	Standard	National	Sub-National/District	School
3.1	There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence.	National government and policy supports the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage stakeholders on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the national level.	Districts support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage schools, community members/leaders on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the district level.	Schools support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage students, teachers, parents and community members on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the school level.
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	C = Not in place	B = Partially in place
	Discussion • **National level:** At the national level, there does not appear to be a specific policy or set of guidelines at the MoEST that provide districts, municipalities and schools with strategies on how to widely disseminate information to school and community members on: a) Child rights with regard to violence, b) laws prohibiting violence against children. However, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of the MoEST has developed some materials to be disseminated to schools and to be used in teacher training programmes. For example, in 2013 the CDC developed a resource material "Integrated Child-friendly School Resource Material", which contains chapters on (a) Child-friendly School: Concept and Use; (b) Peace Education; (c) Human Rights Education; and (d) Citizenship Education and Life System. The preface of the book states that it is mainly targeted towards teachers and how they can make their classrooms more child-friendly. Likewise, Plan Nepal and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare have jointly published "Learning without Fear Teaching Methods" in 2013[29] that focuses not only on the various forms of physical and psychological punishments and their effects on child learning but also alternative methods of positive discipline enforcement. Nepal has also adopted and widely disseminated the National Child Friendly School Framework for Quality Education in 2013 (with support from Unicef, Save the Children, World Education and Association of International NGOs in Nepal) that provides a range of indicators for making schools child-friendly in various domain areas. • **Municipal level:** Municipal education officers stated that the municipalities have been active in organizing inter-school tournaments (mainly sports, public speaking and quiz competitions) that bring together students, teachers and community members. However, to date these tournaments have not focused specifically on issues of child rights or laws prohibiting violence. There is no evidence to suggest that municipalities have started to support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage schools, community members/leaders on child rights and laws prohibiting violence in schools within the municipal jurisdiction.			

[29] The document is available at:
http://www.ccwb.gov.np/uploads/Resource/CCWB%20Publication/Learn%20Without%20Fear%20Learning%20_%20Training%20Manual%202067.pdf

	• **School level:** Responses from school actors (teachers and students) indicate that schools support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage students, teachers, parents and community members on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the school level. The majority of students stated that they have participated in awareness raising rallies on occasions such as Children's day, women's day, education day, HIV/AIDs day, etc. On such occasions, they carry placards with various awareness raising messages. Teachers and students also stated that they have been involved in organizing and participating in street drama, essay writing, public speaking, quiz competitions wherein topics related to gender-based violence are included. The support from NGOs has been crucial in schools to organize such events.			
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[30].	National policy supports the development and implementation of evidence-informed initiatives[31] that address broad social norms that drive key forms of violence (e.g. bullying, digital safety, sexual abuse and exploitation, youth and gang violence).	Districts support the implementation and monitoring of initiatives in schools/communities that address social norms that drive key forms of violence.	Schools support the implementation and monitoring of initiatives in the school and surrounding community that address social norms that drive key forms of violence.
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	**C = Not in place**	**C = Not in place**

	Discussion • **National level:** At the national level, there is no evidence of the existence of national policies/guidelines that provide guidance on implementing or researching interventions to address social norms surrounding violence (like bullying and online harms, sexual abuse and exploitation, youth and gang violence) in the schools. However, as stated above, Unicef and various I/NGOs have been active in supporting the develop, adaptation and dissemination of evidence-based resource materials and implementing teacher training programmes in targeted schools to bring about changes in attitudes and practices related to violence against children. • **Municipal level:** At the municipality level, none of the municipalities stated that they have been supporting the implementation and monitoring of initiatives in schools/communities that specifically aim to address social norms driving key forms of violence, such as those related to child marriage and menstruation. • **School level:** At the school level too, there is no indication/evidence that schools have supported the implementation and monitoring of initiatives in the school and surrounding community aiming to address social norms that drive key forms of violence. The schools have also not evaluated the effectiveness of the various awareness raising activities they have conducted in the school-communities. However, in a school located in urban municipality (in squatter settlement) in Gandaki Province, we found evidence of teachers and students intervening in a case where a student who also worked as a domestic maid was sexually abused. The case is ongoing in the court. Likewise, in another school in Karnali province, it was stated that students with support from the child protection committee

[30] WHO 2019 Section 3
[31] INSPIRE (2016) offers strategies to draw from

		had taken action against child marriage when their peer was involved in the same. In a school in Sudur Paschim Province, the head teacher was actively involved in successfully reintegrating a grade 9 student who had left school because of early marriage. In Province 2, where child marriage still persists in pockets, one school claimed to have intervened when a minor student was about to get married		
3.3	Young people, parents, teachers and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on the topic of school violence.	Ministry of Education supports national, contextualized communication initiatives to raise awareness on violence in schools.	District level strategy for implementation of media, arts, or other awareness raising activities	Extra-curricular or community-based arts, drama, print documents, or other activities that promote awareness at the school and for parents and families
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place	B = Partially in place

Discussion

- **National level:** At the national level, the Education Regulations mandates the need for organizing extra-curricular activities every Friday, focusing on sports, music, drama, environmental awareness activities, public speaking, essay-writing, etc., to ensure that students: (i) develop appreciation of national culture, (ii) are physically fit, and (iii) are socially and environmentally conscious and responsible. The Regulation also encourages schools to form Scouts and Junior Red Cross Circle units. Likewise, the Ministry directs schools to celebrate national and international days such as education day, children's day, women's day, day for campaign against gender-based violence, etc. These occasions actively engage students and teachers, and are used for awareness-raising and empowerment activities, including engaging in dialogue and action against violence in the larger school community. However, there is relatively little focus on spreading messages related to punitive actions for those who engage in various forms of violence against women and children.

- **Municipal level:** At the municipal level, there was no indication of specific strategies for implementation of media, arts, or other awareness raising activities aimed at reducing and preventing various forms of violence. However, all the municipalities covered in this research had developed a common academic calendar for all schools within their jurisdiction, which included specific time slots for conducting such extra-curricular activities within the academic year. However, there was no specific reference in the calendar to activities aimed at prevention of violence.

- **School level:** Responses from students, teachers and head teachers indicate that extra-curricular activities are regularly held at the school level, often but not exclusively focusing on promoting awareness at the school and for parents on topics related to various forms of violence, child rights, disaster risk reduction and resilience, etc. The extra-curricular activities conducted have included street drama, awareness rallies, public speaking and quiz competitions, etc.

Summary of findings for Benchmark 3

This section has provided an overview of the findings from the document review and field research surrounding Benchmark 3 of the STL Call to Action.

Summary of best practices
- All interviewed schools described participating in awareness raising activities about children's rights.
- Government, together with development partners, including UNICEF, have developed materials at national level to disseminate to schools with activities and strategies to promote child-rights and create child-friendly schools.
- Extra-curricular activities are mandated by the Education Regulations and implemented in all schools. These support wellbeing and development of life skills.

Summary of challenges and gaps
- Whilst many schools implement activities to address social norms that drive key forms of violence, the study did not find any evidence of schools or government monitoring and evaluating these activities and supporting evidence-based interventions.
- Whilst many schools implement extra-curricular activities these may not cover issues of preventing violence and staying safe.

Overview of ways the government could/should address gaps
The following recommendations aim to support the government and education sector to achieve the STL benchmarks/checkpoints, based on the best practices and gaps found.

- **Benchmark 3.1 - There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence**. Whilst there is support at national and school levels for disseminating information on child rights, there does not appear to be a specific policy or guidelines from MoEST that provides districts, municipalities and schools with strategies on how to widely disseminate information to school and community members on: a) Child rights *with regard to violence*, b) *laws prohibiting violence against children*. Plenty of materials exist (largely developed with support from Unicef and other I/NGOs) which could be used to generate such awareness-raising messages. It would be helpful to provide concrete guidance and specific activities that schools and district actors could implement around the laws prohibiting violence.

- **Benchmark 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.** There is no reference or guidance on evidence-informed social norm interventions that could be implemented; however many schools participate in such activities with support from NGOs. Government could collate evidence of what works and share this more widely with other schools through teacher training or provision of material packs to schools.

- **Benchmark 3.3 - Young people, parents, teachers and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on the topic of school violence.** Education Regulations mandates the need for organizing extra-curricular activities every Friday, focusing on sports, music, drama, environmental awareness activities, public speaking, essay-writing, etc, to ensure that students develop appreciation of national culture, are physically fit, and are socially and environmentally conscious and responsible. Preventing school violence can be better included in this by providing concrete guidance and specific activities that schools can use on the topic of school violence.

Findings for Call to Action 4: Invest resources effectively

Assessment scale regarding national, district and school-level checkpoints/requirements: A = In place; B = Partially in place; C = Not in place

Item	Standard	National	Sub-national/District	School
4.1	Domestic resources that have been allocated to support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond to violence in schools.	Educational system budget includes costed strategies for violence prevention and response, adequate resourcing and reflections in budgets.	District receives and allocates resources for violence prevention and response	School receives earmarked budget for violence prevention and response
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	**C = Not in place**	**C = Not in place**
	Discussion • **National level:** The national education budget of the MoEST does not include a specific line for the development and implementation of violence prevention and response interventions. Further, there are no other explicit budget lines/activities that address violence in schools. This is not to say that MoEST resources are not targeted for making schools safe. In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake and other natural disasters, MoEST continues to allocate budget for safe school construction including retrofitting. Likewise, the government allocated budget for WASH, including separate toilets for girls. • **Municipal level:** None of the respondents from the municipalities stated that they have received and allocated resources for violence prevention and response at the municipal and school levels. There was also no evidence of the municipalities allocating budget for these purposes from their fiscal equalization grants. • **School level:** Responses from school actors also indicate that none of the schools have received any earmarked budget from the national government specifically for violence prevention and response.				
4.2	*Development partners* provide resources targeting *national or subnational level* to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches	Development partners provide targeted funds, technical assistance, and programmes through implementing partners for prevention and response to violence in schools	District coordinates, monitors and reports on use of targeted resources	School access targeted resources for prevention and response to violence.
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	**B = Partially in place**	**B = Partially in place**
	Discussion • **National level:** At the national level, the Government of Nepal has received some funding and technical assistance for reduction of violence against children, including programmes targeted at the schools. Some of the major agencies that have supported violence-prevention initiatives include Unicef, USAID, Norway (Girls' education, GBV-free schools, gender audits), Finland (integration of soft skills), Save the Children and World Education (Child-friendly schools, learning				

without fear). However, most of these interventions are in the form of projects targeting specific regions/districts of the country, and as such do not have a national coverage. Further discussion is provided in 5.3 below.

- **Municipality level:** In the municipalities covered in this study, various NGOs are involved in implementing programmes addressing various forms of violence in schools and communities. The NGOs are mandated to work closely with the concerned municipality, including getting their annual program and budget approved from the municipality, involving municipal officers in monitoring, supervision and follow-up visits, and submitting implementation progress reports of the interventions. Response from the municipality officers suggests that they do not engage in separate monitoring activities of such initiatives, largely in the absence of required human resources but they do take part in joint monitoring and follow-up visits.

- **School level:** All the schools interviewed stated that they have received some support from I/NGOs for making schools safe and addressing violence. Examples of such support include interventions for enhancing girl's education and empowerment, girl-friendly WASH facilities, making classroom furniture child-friendly especially for the early grades, supporting in the formation and operation of child clubs, disaster resilience, teacher training, and related areas. However, schools stated that the resources allocated for such interventions are spent directly by the concerned NGO and are not reflected in the school's annual budget.

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.	Private philanthropy, foundations, CSR, social impact investors, etc., provide targeted funds, technical assistance and programmes through implementing partners for prevention and response to violence in schools.	District coordinates, monitors and reports on use of targeted resources	Schools access targeted resources for prevention and response to violence.
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in place

Discussion

- **National level:** There is no evidence to suggest that the private sector has provided specific earmarked funds or technical assistance for the development and implementation of violence prevention and response interventions in the schools.

- **Municipality level:** At the municipality level, none of the selected municipalities acknowledged receiving funds from private sector for the development and implementation of violence prevention and response interventions, nor was there any coordinating, monitoring and reporting on use of targeted resources.

- **School level:** None of the schools included in the study stated that they had received resource from private and philanthropic organisations targeted for addressing various forms of violence and their prevention.

- The above findings clearly reveal the need for enhancing private sector engagement with school education, especially in terms of making schools safe places for enhanced learning.

Summary of findings for Benchmark 4

This section provides an overview of the findings from the document review and field research surrounding Benchmark 4 of the STL Call to Action.

Summary of best practices
- The study shows that development partners are active in funding and implementing various activities aimed at making schools inclusive and safe spaces for learning. There is engagement from stakeholders at school, municipal and national levels in these activities.

Summary of challenges and gaps
- Whilst Government funding may be allocated broadly to interventions such as safe buildings, life skills and child rights, there is no specific budget for violence prevention and response strategies and activities.
- The study findings show that there is negligible resource allocation from the private sector for prevention of various forms of violence in schools.

Overview of ways the government could/should address gaps
The following recommendations aim to support the government and education sector to achieve the STL benchmarks/checkpoints, based on the best practices and gaps found.

- **Benchmark 4.1 - Domestic resources that have been allocated to support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond to violence in schools.** As discussed in relation to benchmark 1.1, although the SSDP makes references to making schools safe places to learn and has put a budget towards this, an explicit objective to prevent and reduce violence in schools (with accompanying strategies, budgets and key performance indicators) would be much more powerful, targeted and effective. Government, donor and private sector funding could then be consolidated through support of or alignment with this strategy.

- **Benchmark 4.2 - Development partners provide resources targeting national or subnational level to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.** The MoEST should also aim to coordinate all donor/NGO activities to ensure a joined-up approach and sharing of lessons learnt. If an explicit SSDP objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the MoEST should ensure that all donor/NGO activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it.

- **Benchmark 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.** As discussed, if an explicit SSDP objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the MoEST should encourage the private sector for resource mobilisation and ensure that all private sector activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it. Further work may need to be done to elicit such funds.

Findings for Call to Action 5: Generate and use evidence

Assessment scale regarding national, district and school-level checkpoints/requirements: A = In place; B = Partially in place; C = Not in place

Item	Standard	Central	Sub-national/District	School
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[32]	Central information system that records incidents and monitors trends, fed by District or local authorities	District has record keeping of incidents occurring in schools	Maintenance of confidential records about protection related incidents in the school
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	C = Not in place	C = Not in Place
	Discussion • **National level:** At the national level, the MoEST does not have a national system that collects data from districts, municipalities and schools regarding violence-related incidents. Although there is an Integrated Education Management Information System in place to collect various education-related data directly from the schools, the system is not used to collect data on incidences of violence. • **District/Municipal level:** Responses from the municipalities suggest that they do not have any systematic procedures in place to keep records of violence-related incidences occurring in schools. As mentioned earlier, the municipalities have a judicial committee under the chair of the deputy mayor/vice-chair to adjudicate all the complaints registered at the committee, including possible incidences related to violence against children reported to the committee. It should be stated that even in the past, when district education offices had the major responsibility for the management and delivery of school education, there was no systematic recording of violence related incidences if at all reported by the schools. • **School level:** At the school level, 82% of the HTs and 82% of teachers interviewed stated that the school does not have a policy or process for confidentially logging reports and responses to violence in the school. In the schools where such a mechanism exists, it was stated that the confidential report is maintained by the HT but there is no mechanism for extracting summaries of such cases and reporting to higher up authorities, as the majority of such cases are settled at the school level itself. Cases that cannot be settled at the school level are deferred to the District Administration Office, and or/to the court. • There are no explicit national policies or guidelines that outline protocols for how schools and districts should confidentially log reports and responses to violence at school. This may be the main reason for the lack of maintenance of systematic report-keeping at all levels of the education system.			
5.2	There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools *using methods that follow high ethical standards* [33].	National Statistics Office and Ministry of Education monitor data on prevalence and forms of violence through regular participation in	District support implementation of school-based survey programmes	Comprehensive questions on prevalence and forms of violence are included in regular school-based survey programmes.

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[32] UNESCO-UNWOMEN 2019 Global Guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence, Section 2.6
[33] Such as through the relevant modules of the Global Schools-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS)

		international school-based survey programmes (every 3-5 years)		
		Assessment		
		B = Partially in place	**C = Not in place**	**C = Not in place**
	Discussion • **National level:** As mentioned in 5.1 above, the MoEST and other national statistics office (such as the Central Bureau of Statistics) have not regularly collected data on prevalence and forms of violence through a national school-based survey programme. However, there have been intermittent surveys conducted by various agencies that have captured information related to incidences of bullying and physical abuse by teachers. For example, in 2015 Nepal conducted the WHO Global Schools-Based Student Health Survey[34]. • From the side of non-state or non-governmental organizations, organizations such as CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal) publishes annual report titled "State of Rights of Children in Nepal" based on the number of complaints received through its national child helpline as well as a survey of the news[35]. This report is published online and includes disaggregated data on the nature and frequency of complaints and legal measures taken to address them. CWIN also maintains an online dashboard of the child helpline data. Unicef has also conducted and published research studies related to violence against children in school settings, often in partnership with organizations such as CWIN and CVICT (Centre for victims of Torture, Nepal). Such studies have been conducted intermittently. However, there are no annual surveys to systematically monitor and report on the incidences of violence against children in Nepal. • **Municipal level:** There is no evidence from the study that the municipalities (or districts previously) have engaged in conducting their own monitoring of incidences of violence in school-communities, evaluations of potential violence prevention initiatives at the school level or in supporting the implementation of violence reduction and violence prevention programmes at the school level. • **School level:** At the school level, none of the interviewed schools had conducted regular surveys either within the school or in the school community related to ascertaining the incidences of various types of violence. However, some schools have stated that they had mobilized students to collect various data from the community as part of community work in subjects such as social studies and health, population & environment, related to the number of adult illiterates and out-of-school children, incidence of child marriage, etc.			
5.3	Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trailed models and approaches [36].	National Governments conduct robust monitoring and evaluations of violence prevention initiatives in order to inform replication and scale-up.	Districts support implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.	School support implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.
		Assessment		
		C = Not in place	**C = Not in place**	**C = Not in place**

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[34] For further details, please see: https://www.cdc.gov/gshs/countries/seasian/nepal.htm
[35] For further details, please see: https://www.cwin.org.np/index.php/resources/category/7-fact-sheets
[36] See WHO 2019 Section 9

Discussion

- **National level:** The MoEST has neither systematic procedures for collection of data and information on incidences of violence against children, nor any dedicated mechanisms in place to track, monitor and evaluate any violence prevention initiatives implemented at the district/municipal and/or school levels in order to inform replication and scale-up. There have been some evaluations of violence prevention activities implemented through donor-funded projects. A recent such evaluation is the mid-term review report[37] of the "Zero Tolerance: Gender Based Violence Free Schools in Nepal" project implemented collaboratively by USAID and Unicef through national and local NGOs in about 200 public schools in four districts of the Tarai Region. Likewise, in 2017, Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI) conducted a "Situational Assessment for Improved Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response in Selected Districts of Nepal" with support from UNFPA. The study was conducted in four districts of the far-western development region (Bajhang, Bajura, Baitadi and Achham) and explored perception of five key target groups: Police, Health Service Providers, Journalist, Men and Boys, and GBV survivors regarding GBV.

- **District/Municipality level:** None of the municipalities included in the study had any systematic mechanisms to support implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.

- **School level:** At the school level, there is no evidence to indicate that any of the schools have supported implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.

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[37] The report is available online at: https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/files/resources/Mid%20term%20report%20zero%20tolerance-gender%20based%20violence%20free%20schools%20in%20Nepal_0.pdf

Summary of findings for Benchmark 5

This section provides an overview of the findings from the document review and field research surrounding Benchmark 5 of the STL Call to Action. The major findings and recommendations include:

Summary of best practices and/or positive findings

- Nepal participated in the WHO Global Schools-Based Student Health Survey in 2015.
- Unicef and I/NGOs, have published various studies and reports. For example, Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN)'s annual report uses data from the national child helpline to report on the "State of Rights of Children in Nepal".

Summary of gaps for each benchmark indicator

- There are no explicit national policies or guidelines that outline protocols for how schools and districts should confidentially log reports and respond to violence at school. This may be the main reason for the lack of maintenance of systematic report-keeping at all levels of the education system.
- There is no regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools.
- There is limited evidence of government or schools conducting monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.

Ways the government could/should address gaps

The following recommendations aim to support the government and education sector to achieve the STL benchmarks/checkpoints, based on the best practices and gaps found.

- **Benchmark 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.** Whilst reporting of incidents of violence is clearly understood and undertaken at school level, it does not yet get reported through the system. There should be a process within the education system and municipalities to systematically track, monitor, collect and report data on the prevalence of various forms of violence in the schools and against children. Focal points at each level of the system should receive guidance and training on how to confidentially log complaints of violence in school and report through the system.

- **Benchmark 5.2 - There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools using methods that follow high ethical standards.** Central Bureau of Statistics and MoEST should consider participation in regular international or national school-based surveys on prevalence and forms of violence in schools.

- **Benchmark 5.3 - Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trialled models and approaches.** The study points towards a lack of mechanisms at the national, sub-national and school levels to systematically evaluate practices related to reduction and prevention of violence against children that are being implemented at municipal and school levels either through the municipality/school's own initiative or through support from NGOs/CBOs. This has resulted in a lack of understanding regarding what interventions have the potential to prevent violence in school. It is therefore urgent to ensure that the SSDP includes support for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up in their strategy.

5. Recommendations

The following summarises key priorities and recommendations organised around the five benchmarks:

- **Benchmark 1.1 - Prevention of violence in and around schools is identified as a specific strategy in the national education sector policy or plan.** The Constitution of Nepal 2015, the Children's Act 2018, and the SSDP include specific provision to ensure schools are safe spaces to learn, teachers have skills to identify and address bullying and harassment and the grievance and complaint referral system is strengthened. This should be fully integrated in the education system through explicit reference to prevention of violence and consequences in the Education Act, Education Regulations, and the Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act. A costed implementation plan with clear roles and responsibilities at each level – national, municipal, school – can help ensure effective implementation.

- **Benchmark 1.2 - There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and classroom management.** Schools in the study were aware of the prohibition of corporal punishment and said they practised positive discipline; however they had low awareness of the repercussions for enacting corporal punishment in schools. There is an opportunity to train and upskill municipal level officials to oversee that corporal punishment does not take place in schools and that those who do engage in it are reported.

- Induction training for teachers appears ad-hoc as it is often usually delayed. Whilst teachers report that induction training includes moral and ethical behaviour, the induction training could be strengthened with a mandatory introduction to child safeguarding including prohibiting corporal punishment, positive discipline and classroom management, to be completed before a teacher commences teaching in the school.

- **Benchmark 1.3 - The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in response and referral to incidents of violence are clearly set out in the multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework.** Nepal had a National Plan of Action for Children that included elements of child protection, however this is now outdated. There is currently no multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework. There is need to engage multi-stakeholders to develop a national child protection policy that standardizes child safeguards that must be applied at school level and includes an interagency protocol to report and refer cases of violence in schools and provide a coordinated response. The National Child Protection Policy and associated referral system will need to be disseminated to all users in an accessible way.

- **Benchmark 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.** Nepal should endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and in situations of armed conflict should implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. To this effect, bilateral and multilateral advocacy should be reinforced. Nepal can draw good practice from the 'Schools as Zones of Peace' initiative of 1996–2006 during the Civil war (Maoist conflict).

- **Benchmark 2.1 - Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children.** The primary and secondary curriculum include issues of violence and safe behaviour, promoting inclusion of marginalized groups and gender equitable relationships. However, not all teachers reported to be teaching these topics. One reason could be because teachers and schools experience pressure to focus on topics that will feature on board examinations. Municipalities are authorized to develop their own local curriculum and none in the study had developed curricula or promoted activities to prevent violence. Linkages between violence prevention and improving learning outcomes could be made explicit to municipalities. Whilst municipalities are not instructed to monitor the curriculum, a better understanding of the importance of life skills, equitable relationships and violence prevention strategies will assist them in supporting implementation in schools.

- **Benchmark 2.2 - Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards**.
  1) National guidelines to establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms. The Complaint Response Mechanism Guidelines provide clear process for schools to help students report instances of violence through

suggestion boxes and a selected committee to open and deal with the issues. However, the Guidelines do not include a process for referring cases to the relevant services in the community, e.g. police, health, social services. This should be extended to include guidelines for Municipalities to support schools in the response and referrals. They could also include safe reporting processes that can be used during school closure, for example during COVID-19 pandemic or other emergencies.

Whilst bodies/units/committees exist at Municipal and National level with responsibilities for overseeing gender and inclusion issues, there is no specific focal person with responsibility for responding to issues of violence in schools and referring cases to the required authorities. Focal points should be identified and allocated these roles to help link the education sector with wider services and help manage specific instances of violence in school more effectively.

2) Norms and standards of ethical behaviour in Teacher Codes of Conduct. The Education Regulations contain the national code of conduct for teachers. The study found all interviewed schools have the code of conduct displayed on school walls. The content could be reinforced further by requiring every teacher to read and sign the code of conduct annually. The Ministry should also provide guidance to schools on the disciplinary action to be taken if standards surrounding violence are not adhered to and the role of Municipalities in monitoring such cases.

3) Policies that regulate hiring of new teachers and staff and their transfer to ensure suitability for working with children. The teacher licensing regulations are comprehensive; however, it would be very helpful to provide explicit guidance regarding how the background checks on teachers assessing their suitability for working with children can be conducted. These checks can then be extended to the transfer of teachers between schools. This will require collaboration and thinking through with police, justice and social welfare sectors to ensure they are fully conducted and recorded.

4) Pre- and in-service training on obligations for child safeguarding and reporting/response., Existing pre-and in-service curricula should be reviewed and examples of effective training for teachers on violence prevention in schools collated. Where needed, existing materials can be revised to provide more practical/effective strategies for positive discipline and classroom management, as well as content on violence reporting/response pathways, teacher obligations on child safeguarding and preventing revictimization. An effective way of training teachers at scale is through school-based training models. A clear, concise, user-centred and multi-lingual manual for teachers could be introduced for schools to lead their own professional development on preventing violence.

- **Benchmark 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.** Whilst many schools have identified a staff member to act as counsellor or focal person, few have received training. A School Counsellor training package should be developed and disseminated. This can draw from evidence of good practice amongst development partners. It can be incorporated into school-based training on preventing violence.

- **Benchmark 2.4 - The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind.** Schools report that the physical environment in and around schools has been made safer than before, including the provision of separate toilets for girls. More measures could be put in place to make commuting to and from school safer, especially for young children, and in schools that are located in hazardous areas.

- **Benchmark 3.1 - There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence**. Whilst there is support at national and school levels for disseminating information on child rights, there does not appear to be a specific policy or guidelines from MoEST that provides districts, municipalities and schools with strategies on how to widely disseminate information to school and community members on: a) Child rights *with regard to violence*, b) *laws prohibiting violence against children*. Plenty of materials exist (largely developed with support from Unicef and other I/NGOs) which could be used to generate such awareness-raising messages. It would be helpful to provide concrete guidance and specific activities that schools and district actors could implement around the laws prohibiting violence.

- **Benchmark 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.** There is no reference or guidance on evidence-informed social norm interventions that could be implemented; however many schools participate in such activities with support from NGOs. Government could collate evidence of what works and share this more widely with other schools through teacher training or provision of material packs to schools.

- **Benchmark 3.3 - Young people, parents, teachers and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on the topic of school violence.** Education Regulations mandates the need for organizing extra-curricular activities every Friday, focusing on sports, music, drama, environmental awareness activities, public speaking, essay-writing, etc, to ensure that students develop appreciation of national culture, are physically fit, and are socially and environmentally conscious and responsible. Preventing school violence can be better included in this by providing concrete guidance and specific activities that schools can use on the topic of school violence.

- **Benchmark 4.1 - Domestic resources that have been allocated to support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond to violence in schools.** As discussed in relation to benchmark 1.1, although the SSDP makes references to making schools safe places to learn and has put a budget towards this, an explicit objective to prevent and reduce violence in schools (with accompanying strategies, budgets and key performance indicators) would be much more powerful, targeted and effective. Government, donor and private sector funding could then be consolidated through support of or alignment with this strategy.

- **Benchmark 4.2 - Development partners provide resources targeting national or subnational level to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.** The MoEST should also aim to coordinate all donor/NGO activities to ensure a joined-up approach and sharing of lessons learnt. If an explicit SSDP objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the MoEST should ensure that all donor/NGO activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it.

- **Benchmark 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.** As discussed, if an explicit SSDP objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the MoEST should encourage the private sector for resource mobilisation and ensure that all private sector activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it. Further work may need to be done to elicit such funds.

- **Benchmark 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.** Whilst reporting of incidents of violence is clearly understood and undertaken at school level, it does not yet get reported through the system. There should be a process within the education system and municipalities to systematically track, monitor, collect and report data on the prevalence of various forms of violence in the schools and against children. Focal points at each level of the system should receive guidance and training on how to confidentially log complaints of violence in school and report through the system.

- **Benchmark 5.2 - There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools using methods that follow high ethical standards.** Central Bureau of Statistics and MoEST should consider participation in regular international or national school-based surveys on prevalence and forms of violence in schools.

- **Benchmark 5.3 - Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trialled models and approaches.** The study points towards a lack of mechanisms at the national, sub-national and school levels to systematically evaluate practices related to reduction and prevention of violence against children that are being implemented at municipal and school levels either through the municipality/school's own initiative or through support from NGOs/CBOs. This has resulted in a lack of understanding regarding what interventions have the potential to prevent violence in school. It is therefore urgent to ensure that the SSDP includes support for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up in their strategy.

6. Conclusion

This diagnostic study has revealed that Nepal has formulated and implemented various legal and policy provisions to address and reduce various forms of physical and mental violence and torture against all children and to make schools safe for learning. These include the Constitution of 2015, the Children's Act 2018, recent amendments to the Education Act, as well as policy directives and guidelines of the MoEST aimed at promoting child friendly schools and learning without fear. These are aimed at making schools safe places for learning and prohibiting all forms of violence against children in schools. However, the laws, policy directives and guidelines issued by the MoEST are yet to include robust mechanisms for reporting, monitoring and follow up of cases and perpetrators to discourage and prevent violence in schools.

There is a high level of awareness amongst both teachers and students regarding the prohibition of corporal punishment and other forms of psychological and sexual violence in schools. Such a high level of awareness is the essential first step towards making schools safe. However, despite such measures, incidences of violence against children continue to be reported in the mainstream media, showing that Nepal has a long way to go before such awareness is materialized into safe teaching-learning practices in the schools and classrooms. This calls for further integration of these topics in the pre-service and in-service teacher training curriculum as well as in teacher licensing and recruitment examinations conducted by the Teacher Service Commission.

There is an absence of systematic measures for tracking, monitoring and reporting on the incidence of violence against students in schools. In the absence of such mechanisms, it is difficult to ascertain the spatial and temporal changes in the incidences of violence. Likewise, there is an absence of mechanisms for seeking and evaluating locally relevant and successful practices for addressing school violence. Inclusion of such mechanisms at the federal, provincial and municipal levels would go a long way in identifying successful practices and their scale-up nationally.

In all the schools visited, the role of I/NGOs has been important in awareness raising and practising inclusive behaviours. However, there are issues related to coordination and sustainability. It appears that various activities are being done in silos and without effective coordination and communication. Therefore, there is a need for better and enhanced coordination at the federal, provincial and local levels to integrate all such efforts towards making schools safe spaces for all children.

Further, it appears that activities aimed at making schools safe are not yet made an integral and core part of classroom teaching-learning processes but are seen as additional, separate and peripheral activities. Therefore, there is a need for constant and refresher reminders to teachers, either in the form of training programs or periodic awareness messages that could be disseminated to teachers through face to face and online means, including the mobilization of teacher professional organizations in the same. There is also a need for documentation and dissemination of non-violent teaching-learning and positive discipline enforcing measures that could guide the behaviour and practices of teachers in the future.

In the federal context, the function for the management and delivery of school education has been devolved to the local governments (rural and urban municipalities). However, this lowest tier of government that is also the closest to the school appears to be the least aware and least prepared to deal with school education, including making schools safe spaces for learning. Therefore, there is a need for further engagement of the federal government with the municipalities with respect to making schools safe for children from all kinds of violence in the days to come. This could start with the development of information, education and communication (IEC) materials that summarize the various policy and legal dimensions of making schools safe for learning, orienting the local level education officers on the same, and building their capacity to support schools in this direction.

Finally, in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is highly likely that students are exposed to new forms of violence such as cyber bullying and cyber sexual harassment as many of them are engaged in online teaching-learning activities. Therefore, it is essential that due steps are taken to enhance the knowledge, awareness and readiness levels of parents, teachers and students to identify and deal with such forms of violence in a timely manner.