



Concept Note: Safe to Learn Regional Roundtables Series 2022 – 2024

Together to end violence in and through schools

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art 26).¹

Background and introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear: education is the most powerful way to prevent violence and enhance resilience, therefore promoting peace. Yet, this potential is too often overlooked or ignored, or not exploited enough. Worse even, schools and other educational institutions can on the contrary be used to perpetrate or condone violence. Still too many girls and boys experience violence in and around their schools, on the way to and from schools and online. That violence can be physical, sexual, or emotional and comes in many different forms, including but not limited to corporal punishment, attacks, bullying and cyberbullying, sexual and gender-based violence. It is perpetrated by their peers as well as by adults. Globally: 150 million children, half of all students aged 13-15 years, experience peer-to-peer violence in and around school;² 1 in every 3 students aged 13-15 experience bullying;³ 732 million school-aged children live in countries where the legal system does not fully protect them from corporal punishment in school.⁴

Violence against children has catastrophic consequences: no matter the type and setting where it takes place, violence negatively affects students' education, health, development, and well-being. These can follow children as they grow into adolescence, youth, and adulthood. Long-lasting consequences can be carried from generation to generation. Violence also prevents many children, especially girls and children from marginalized groups, from attending school and accessing equal educational opportunities. The costs for education systems, health systems, child protection systems and society are very high. Evidence shows that this violence severely impacts educational outcomes and undermines educational investments. Due to violence against children in school an estimated \$11 trillion is lost in lifetime earnings globally.⁵

How to stop ignoring the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and start making progress towards realizing its wisdom? Evidence shows us the way. Research indicates what needs to be done to effectively prevent and respond to violence and ensure girls and boys are safe in, around and through schools. Cost-benefit analyses by The World Bank indicate that investing in tackling violence in school is a smart economic investment: the benefits of investing in preventing violence in and through schools are likely to “far outweigh the costs.”⁶

About Safe to Learn

Safe to Learn's mission is to end violence against children in and through schools in every country across the world. Launched in 2019, this global multi-agency and multi-sectorial initiative brings together civil society, United Nations System, donors, global partnerships, the business sector, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children. Its 14 partners are major global leaders in education, child protection, health, and violence prevention. Safe to Learn (STL) strategically builds on their complementary strengths and expertise to ensure children are safe to learn, no matter how or where their education may be provided.⁷





Ending violence in and through schools refers to two aspects of ending violence.

- First, ending all **violence that happens while at school**, on and around school grounds, while getting to and from school, and in online activity linked to a student's school life.
- Second, using school as an entry point to **reduce violence in other areas of children's lives** (in the home, community, and online, as well as other interpersonal violence).

Call to Action

1. Implement laws and policies
2. Strengthen prevention and response at the school level
3. Shift social norms and behaviour change
4. Invest resources effectively
5. Generate and use evidence

Safe to Learn work is rooted in the Safe to Learn **Call to Action** which sets out in high level terms based on global evidence what needs to happen to end violence in and through school. As of January 2022, the Call to Action has been endorsed by 15 countries worldwide.⁸ **A 3-years STL Strategy (2021-24)** adopted by all STL members in 2021, strategically guides STL partners in their efforts to embed violence prevention and response in education worldwide through two main intervention pillars: country level and global advocacy. One of the main intervention areas of the STL country-level strategic pillar is to 'organise regional roundtables for evidence and tools dissemination'.⁹

Safe to Learn Members

- **Civil society** - the Civil Society Forum to End Violence against Children (CSO Forum)
- **Donors** - Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK FCDO), the World Bank.
- **Global partnerships** - Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (GP EVAC), the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBCE), the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), the United Nations Girl's Education Initiative (UNGEI).
- **United Nations System** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO). Safe to Learn is also supported by the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (UN SRSG VAC).

Countries that have endorsed the Call to Action

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1. Cambodia | 6. Jamaica | 11. Nepal |
| 2. El Salvador | 7. Jordan | 12. Sierra Leone |
| 3. Georgia | 8. Lebanon | 13. South Africa |
| 4. Ghana | 9. Mexico | 14. South Sudan |
| 5. Honduras | 10. Moldova | 15. Uganda |





About the Safe to Learn Regional Roundtables

Goal

The Safe to Learn Regional Roundtable Series aims to support countries that have expressed leadership and vision in ending violence in and through schools by providing a platform for sharing knowledge, expertise, and tools and for informed peer to peer dialogue, to accelerate progress to ensure all girls and boys in all their diversity are safe to learn.¹⁰

Objectives

1. Support informed cross-country peer to peer dialogue to build knowledge, inspire action and increase awareness, incentive, and accountability at the country level.
2. Provide a platform to elevate practice-based evidence and local expertise on prevention and response to violence in and through schools.
3. Support evidence-based policy and programming by sharing evidence and tools on what works to prevent and respond to violence in and through schools, as well as reflections on lessons learned and challenges.

Expected Results

By the end of the roundtable series (end 2024) at least 15 countries will have made tangible progress towards strengthening their education systems using the call to action to ensure all children are safe, as shown by, within the participating countries:

- Increased number of countries that have endorsed the **Call to Action**
- Increased number of countries that commit to undertake a **Safe to Learn Diagnostic** (or a Safe to Learn benchmarking exercise)
- **Progress in benchmarking**, in countries that have undertaken a STL diagnostic

Overall, the roundtables are expected to result in **deepened engagement** on ending violence in and through schools in participating countries and in **increased knowledge** by participants on what works to prevent and respond to violence in and through schools and achieve results under the Call to Action. While roundtables will be technical, they are also well positioned to be leveraged as advocacy platforms to mobilize support and collaboration around STL and its goals. Relevant **country experiences and 'practice-based evidence' emerged from the roundtables will be elevated to the regional and global level**. Learning generated from the roundtable discussions within regions will be documented in a series of **knowledge products**, to enable policymakers and practitioners in participating countries, and the global international development community to learn from solutions and challenges raised by participants and better bridge evidence, policy, and practice as well as global advocacy and country-level work.

Indicators:*

- Number of participating countries that have endorsed the Call to Action by end 2024
- Number of participating countries that commit to undertake a STL diagnostic (or benchmarking exercise) by end 2024
- Percentage of participating countries that have undertaken a diagnostic exercise and have achieved benchmarks progress against the Call to Action by end 2024

*Baselines and targets will be defined by the task force once countries confirm their participation.





Thematic focus

The overall series is designed around the Call to Action as the common, clear, and actionable high-level framework, endorsed by STL members and country endorsees.

The thematic focus of the roundtables series for each region will be designed with in-country partners around the specific priority needs of participating countries. Each region will be able to focus on up to three selected points of the Call to Action. The roundtable series will be tailored to the specific regional contexts, building as far as possible on on-going processes of each specific region, and leveraging them as entry points to strengthen mobilization in this field of work. Should some countries want to play a leadership role in the series, there is a possibility for this.

The roundtables will be human-centred, ensuring their format provides participants with the opportunity for active participation. Participants will have the opportunity for cross-country peer-to-peer dialogue and for sharing knowledge, expertise, tools on what works to prevent violence in and through schools, as well as challenges faced across countries in this field.

Participants

A series of roundtables - 3 per region - will convene as their main target **government officials**, as duty bearers who have the technical capacities, decision-making power, and access to senior leaders to influence and accelerate the work to end violence in and through schools. To guarantee a meaningful process and continuity of discussions, each country will be required to attend the entire series of roundtables.

Government delegates (**five** per country) will include representatives from the Ministry of Education and other line ministries working on violence in school in countries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs (and/or the Ministry of Gender, or Children Issues), the Ministry of Health (depending on country context) and the Ministry of Tertiary Education (depending on the topic of the roundtable).

The Safe to Learn roundtables will provide an opportunity to have diverse perspectives informing the discussions, in line with the Safe to Learn strategy to unite a variety of sectors and organisations in a collaborative partnership to ensure children are safe to learn. Other country level participants that may be invited to attend the events or part of them include practitioners (teacher representatives), representatives from civil society (CSOs, INGOs, youth), United Nations system agencies from countries and the private sector. Global and regional level representatives from STL members and sister organisations may join as auditors, organisers, or as speakers and facilitators (in addition to country-level speakers).

Countries and regions

The roundtables target countries that have endorsed the STL Call to Action. Additional countries that have expressed leadership and vision in ending violence in and through schools in geographical regions 'sub-represented' in Safe to Learn, are welcome to join.

Participating countries will be clustered in regions based on their contextual similarities- including language, geographical area, time zone - demands and needs, with each region comprising maximum 5 countries.

Regions and countries include:

- 1. Sub-Saharan Africa:** Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda.
- 2. East Asia and Pacific (EAP):** Cambodia and 4 additional countries from EAP that have expressed leadership and vision in ending violence in and through schools.¹¹
- 3. Latin America and Caribbean:** El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico.
- 4. Middle East and North Africa:** Jordan, Lebanon and 2 or 3 additional Arabic-speaking countries that have expressed leadership and vision in ending violence in and through schools.





5. South Asia: Nepal, Pakistan¹² (tbc).

6. Europe and Central Asia: Georgia, Moldova.

Note on regions 5 and 6: A limited number of countries have endorsed the Call to Action in South Asia, Europe and Central Asia. Regions 5 and 6 will be merged in one common roundtable during the first year of implementation. If feasible, they may be separated into 2 specific roundtable series afterwards.

Methodology

Roundtables will follow rigorous standards of peer-to-peer dialogue and learning processes, to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in bridging policy, practice and learning and best serve countries to make a real difference for children and students around the world.

There will be a series of three roundtables per region, to guarantee continuity of dialogue among the same participants and across countries. The first and third roundtable in each region will be held virtually and last about 90/120 minutes. The second roundtable might be virtual or in person, would public health conditions for travel and groupings allow. A virtual global convening may also be organised, to offer the opportunity for sharing and dialogue across the different regions.

The roundtables series follow a participatory methodology in all its phases, from design, to implementation, facilitation, and follow up. The collaboration with the **University of Edinburgh**, which also hosts the End Violence Lab, guarantees the roundtables follow **rigorous methodological standards** of peer-to-peer dialogue and learning processes, with the University advising on these matters. It will also allow to leverage on relevant learning opportunities that could be of service to participating countries.

Further details on the methodology and strategic approach of the Safe to Learn roundtables series will be provided in a Methodological Annex to this Concept Note (separate file, living document).

Coordination

The Roundtables are designed and coordinated by the Safe to Learn Regional Roundtables Task Force, to which the Safe to Learn global coalition of partners delegated the conceptualization and implementation of this initiative in 2022.

Led by the Safe to Learn Secretariat, the Task Force comprises five members of Safe to Learn that expressed interest and volunteered to be part of it and lead this initiative together, including: the **CSO Forum to End Violence Against Children (CSO Forum)**, **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)**, **UNESCO Headquarters**, **UNICEF New York Headquarters**, and the **Safe to Learn Secretariat/End Violence Partnership**. The Task Force collaborates with Safe to Learn partners and regional and country offices (or hubs) of Task Force members and sister organisations, including: The University of Edinburgh, The Coalition for Good Schools and Columbia University. Its membership is open and can evolve as per the STL regional roundtables initiative needs.

Regional and country ownership of the roundtables design and coordination will be made possible thanks to the collaboration between the STL Task Force with regional and country offices (or hubs) of Safe to Learn task force members.

Timeline

There will be three roundtables in each region, over a 3 year-period (for the Regional Roundtables Series Plan see Annex 1).



Annex 1: Safe to Learn regional Roundtables Series Plan



Regional Roundtables Series Plan 2022-24





¹Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available at [un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)

²United Nations Children’s Fund (2018). An Everyday Lesson #End Violence in Schools, UNICEF, New York.

³UNICEF (2021). Child Protection Advocacy Brief. Violence against Children. UNICEF, New York. Accessed on 21.1.2022 at [unicef.org/media/96686/file/VAC-Advocacy-Brief-2021.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/96686/file/VAC-Advocacy-Brief-2021.pdf)

⁴United Nations Children’s Fund (2018). An Everyday Lesson #End Violence in Schools, UNICEF, New York.

⁵Wodon, Quentin ; Fèvre, Chloe; Malé, Chata; Nayihouba, Ada; Nguyen, Hoa. 2021. Ending Violence in Schools : An Investment Case. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35969 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

⁶Ibidem, p. 1

⁷Safe to Learn members: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK FCDO), the United Nations Girl’s Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Civil Society Forum to End Violence against Children, the World Bank, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBCE), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

⁸These countries include Cambodia, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda.

⁹The three other intervention areas include: 1. Working through donors in education and through national education sector plan processes; 2. Working through [Pathfinding](#); Supporting the implementation of key priorities identified by the Ministry of Education in countries.

¹⁰Reference to STL strategy approved by partners (p. 60): ‘Regional roundtables will be organised to disseminate evidence on what works to prevent violence in and through schools and ensure safe and inclusive learning environments, as well as tools from the different STL partners.’

¹¹In EAP the roundtable series will be a follow up to the INSPIRE Conference held in 2021, attended by STL and EVAC, where Government leaders and representatives from 25 countries in East Asia and the Pacific reinforced their commitment to ending violence against children and highlighted the need for making mental well-being and prevention of violence an integral part of the learning recovery agenda as students go back to school. It will also follow the 2nd Asia-Pacific Ministerial Education Ministers’ Conference (APREMC II), to be held in June 2022.

¹²Despite not being a Safe to Learn endorsee, Pakistan has conducted a [Safe to Learn diagnostic](#).

