

Safe to Learn in Action

How Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda are meeting the challenge of ending violence in schools

“Safe to Learn” is a global initiative dedicated to ending violence against children in and through schools. Its objectives are set out in a five-point Call to Action, subsequently translated into a set of benchmarks that governments and the education sector should meet in order to ensure that schools are safe and protective. This document presents a summary of key findings from four diagnostic exercises conducted in Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda in 2020, to measure the degree to which these countries are meeting the benchmarks.



1. Implement laws and policies

The four countries have laws and policies to protect children from violence; Uganda, South Sudan and Nepal specifically ban corporal punishment in school and Pakistan has laws prohibiting corporal punishment in some provinces.

Education sector plans in all four countries recognize prevention of violence. In Uganda, the *National Strategic Plan on Violence against Children in Schools (NSP VACiS) and Reporting, Tracking Referral and Response (RTRR)* guidelines coordinate actors from all sectors to end violence in schools. Other countries could also

harmonize their policies, laws and processes in a multi-sectoral child protection policy framework.

Many stakeholders at national, sub-national and school

Ending violence in and around schools requires coordinated efforts at multiple levels.

level demonstrate awareness of national laws and policies although fewer are taking action to oversee implementation and ensure compliance in schools. Law enforcement could be improved by communicating key messages to all stakeholders, providing guidance on implementation, and a process for non-compliance, where this does not exist.



2. Strengthen prevention and response at school level

There are good examples in all countries of government and schools taking action to create safe learning environments.

The curriculum in all four countries includes, to varying degrees, life skills components on safe behavior, inclusion and equitable relationships. All countries also have, to varying degrees, regulatory frameworks including Teacher’s Code of Conduct, Standards for Safe School Buildings, Teacher Recruitment Policy.

In some cases, weaknesses or loopholes within these frameworks remain, which need tightening to enable full implementation. Few teachers are familiar with their Code of Conduct. This could be enhanced by implementing annual orientation and signing of the Code of Conduct for all teachers, with monitoring by Head Teachers and local government.

Some schools, in all countries, have a focal person for violence and some have reporting mechanisms in place. Many teachers still need support to use positive discipline methods, teach children about violence and safe behaviour, challenge social and cultural norms, promote equal relationships, understand and use child safeguarding practices and report instances of violence. Whilst there are pockets of good practice, often led by development partners, more could be done to ensure all teachers are capacitated.





3. Shift social norms and behaviour change

Some teachers, children, and local government – in all four countries – are advocating against violence, promoting children’s rights and ensuring schools are safe spaces for learning. This is being done in various ways, including mobile cinema in Pakistan, awareness rallies on children’s day in Nepal and radio programmes in South Sudan. In Uganda, the National Strategic Plan on Violence against Children in Schools includes specific strategies to disseminate information to schools and communities on children’s rights with regard to violence. The impact of these initiatives could be strengthened by also challenging the social norms that drive the violence, addressing gender discrimination or taboos on sexuality. Concrete guidance and specific strategies can be provided for schools and government officers to implement behavior change communications and activities at all levels.



4. Invest resources effectively

There are examples where government funds have been allocated to making schools safe. However, lack of domestic resourcing is a significant gap that could prevent progress in ending violence.

There is also limited evidence of collaboration with private sector to fund interventions to end violence in schools. Development partners provide funds, technical assistance, and programmes for prevention and response to violence in schools, in all four countries. This is much needed to compliment limited domestic budgets.

If an explicit education sector plan objective can be developed for reducing violence in schools, the Ministry of Education (perhaps in collaboration with other ministries responsible for child protection) should ensure that all development partner activities and funds are aligned and coordinated to support it.

<https://www.end-violence.org/safe-to-learn>

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This document presents selected key findings from the Synthesis Report of Safe to Learn diagnostic exercises in Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda, 2020. The report was the outcome of a collaborative effort of members of the Safe to Learn coalition with support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the United Nations Children’s Fund and The World Bank. It presents findings from four diagnostic exercises that were technically supported by Cambridge Education under contract with UNICEF. It benefitted from the collaboration of governments and in-country partners in the four countries and from contributions of teams and individuals within and outside of UNICEF.



5. Generate and use evidence

All countries have some processes in place to generate evidence on the prevalence of violence in schools. This includes international studies as well as processes for reporting cases of violence in school. The existing processes could be consolidated in a robust, national data collection system that reports and monitors incidents of violence from school level up to national level, for example including violence reports in existing education management information system (EMIS). In all countries, some development partner violence-prevention interventions have been evaluated and findings disseminated. It is important to share these findings and use them to inform replication and scale-up.

Recommendations

- Ensure strategies to prevent violence in and around school are explicitly included in the education sector plan and accompanied by key indicators, action plans and budgets and that these strategies are resourced
- Include support for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of violence prevention initiatives in all education sector plans
- Strengthen dissemination of national policies, plans and guidelines on preventing violence in school to sub-national and school levels and ensure stronger enforcement at these levels
- Ensure the Ministry of Education is included in the national child protection policy framework and participates in the multi-sectoral child protection coordination mechanism
- Increase focus on shifting social norms to end violence against children in school, including through greater use of existing platforms (for example: student curriculum, teacher training, etc)
- Ensure better coordination, monitoring and evaluation of interventions to improve prevention of violence in schools
- Strengthen the role of government officials at sub-national level in oversight of the implementation of violence prevention and response measures
- Increase investments targeting at ending violence in schools – including domestic resources, donor funding and private sector financial and non-financial resources

