

Safe to Learn Country Engagement

Ending violence in, around, and through schools

Violence in and around schools

Education has the power to improve the lives of children and transform societies. Yet, for far too many children around the world, schools are a place of violence and fear.

When children are not safe, they cannot learn. Violence undermines the transformational power of education; it negatively impacts the wellbeing and learning of children, reduces school attendance, lowers educational attainment, and leads many children to drop out of school¹.

We know that all forms of violence in and around schools and online, can and must be prevented. There is an established and growing body of research, evidence, and best practices on ending violence in and through schools².

- ⇒ Violence against children in and around schools is happening on an unimaginable scale, affecting 246 million children and young people each year. Marginalised and discriminated groups and children living in emergencies and protracted crises are disproportionately affected by school violence³.
- ⇒ Globally 793 million school-aged children live in countries where the legal system does not fully protect them from corporal punishment in school⁴
- ⇒ The World Bank estimates US\$11 trillion is lost in lifetime earnings, globally, as a result of violence against children in schools⁵.

Safe to Learn

Safe to Learn (STL) was formed as an action-oriented response to the demands of youth for support to end violence against children in schools. Made up of a powerful coalition of 14 cross-sector partners, including Education, Child Protection, Health, Social and Behaviour Change and Gender, Safe to Learn is uniquely positioned to accelerate action to end violence at the global and country level to end violence against children in, around, and through schools.

Safe to Learn's recent move to UNICEF as an education partner opens key opportunities to maximize the critical role of national education systems as a platform to end violence, and further embed violence prevention and response efforts within the education sector to achieve sustainable impact in countries.

To enhance country engagement, Safe to Learn is launching two programmes to better support the implementation of the five pillars of the Call to Action and leverage partners' operational presence, networks, and expertise.

¹ Perezneito, P., C. Harper, B. Clench and J. Coarasa, (2010) [The Economic Impact of School Violence](#), Plan International and Overseas Development.

² WHO (2010) [Violence Prevention: The Evidence](#)

³ Safe to Learn (2023) [School-related gender-based violence: achieving systematic, sustainable change – with youth and for youth](#)

⁴ Wodon, Q., Fèvre, C., Malé, C., Nayihouba, A., Nguyen, H. (2021) [Ending Violence in Schools: An Investment Case](#)

⁵ Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, End Corporal Punishment, Coalition for Good Schools, Safe to Learn (2023) [Ending corporal punishment in schools to transform education for all children](#) World Bank, DC.

Solutions: Safe to Learn’s Country Engagement Approach

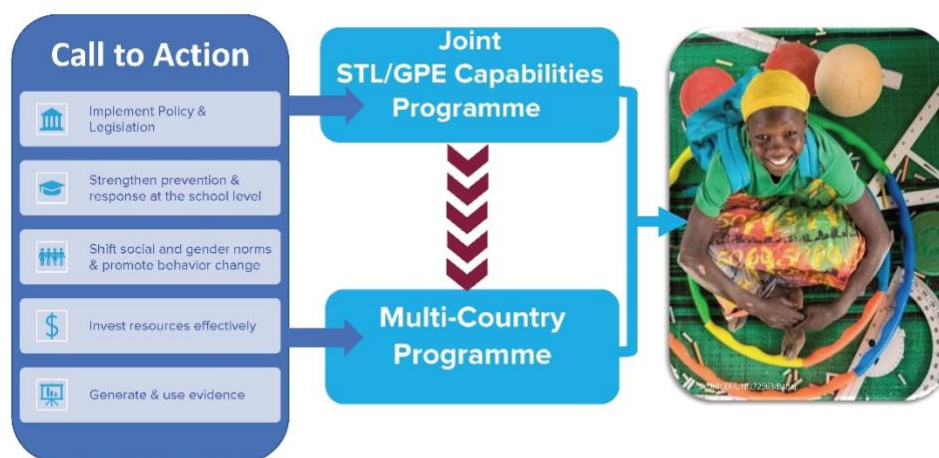
Safe to Learn’s country engagement approach will support countries to embed violence prevention and response in education at the national, sub-national, school and community levels. Interventions will build on the existing achievements and tools of Safe to Learn and its partners, including the [STL Technical Package](#), and continue to advance greater multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration.

To guide countries, Safe to Learn updated its Call to Action, which sets out five priority areas that are based on global evidence on what needs to happen to end violence in and through schools:

1. Implement policy and legislation
2. Strengthen prevention and response at the school level
3. Shift social and gender norms and promote behavior change
4. Invest resources effectively
5. Generate and use evidence

Working with and through partners and building on the Call to Action, Safe to Learn is launching:

1. **A Joint Safe to Learn and Global Partnership for Education Capabilities Programme**, which will specifically strengthen the capacity of education ministries to identify and address systemic gaps and challenges to end violence in schools. This will include technical guidance and advisory support on prevention and response to violence in, around, and through schools. The programme will initially be implemented in 2 countries over the course of 2023-2024, with the aim of scale up to other countries starting in 2024.
2. **A Safe to Learn Multi-Country Programme**, which will bring the five pillars of the Call to Action into action by supporting countries to embed violence prevention and response in and through education. Over 4 years, the programme will be implemented in 10 countries, with cross-cutting technical support and guidance from the Safe to Learn Secretariat, UNICEF and STL partners. Where applicable, the multi-country programme will support Ministries of Education to implement priority actions resulting from the STL-GPE capabilities grant.



Together, these two programmes offer countries meaningful support to put the Call to Action into action

The programmes emphasise an increased role of the education sector in tackling violence against children in, around and through schools. They will support education actors to collaborate with other key sectors to implement evidence-based interventions and recommendations identified through formative research on the social and behavioral drivers of violence and the Safe to Learn [benchmarking tool](#) and [diagnostics exercise](#). Both of which enables measurement of countries progress towards ending violence in schools.

Together with partners, local education groups, and other key coordination mechanisms, Safe to Learn will work with education ministries and in coordination with other relevant sectors, to embed violence prevention and response mechanisms in education systems.

Key programming strategies include a whole-school approach applied using gender transformative and social and behaviour change strategies to end violence, combined with efforts and investments across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

The Safe to Learn STL-GPE capabilities grant and Multi-Country Programme will drive progress in five strategic result areas at the country level, aligned with the Call to Action:

- 1. Implement policy and legislation:** National policies and legislative frameworks embed violence prevention and response in education sector planning, budgeting, reporting, and monitoring at national, subnational, and local level.
- 2. Strengthen violence prevention and response at school level:** Prevention and response mechanisms are systematically integrated at school level to support children's wellbeing including proper referral mechanisms. The ability of school management committees, school staff, and students to understand, detect, and report violence is ensured. Learning environments that promote positive discipline, child-centered teaching, and protect and improve children's physical, psycho-social, and mental wellbeing are enabled.
- 3. Shift social and gender norms and promote behaviour change:** Social and behavioural drivers of violence in schools are identified and addressed to create an enabling and supportive environment. Social and gender norms that condone violence are transformed to enable children's access to violence-free learning environments.
- 4. Invest resources effectively:** Evidence-based investments are increased and targeted towards ending violence in, around, and through schools.
- 5. Generate and use evidence:** Countries and the international community generate and use context-specific evidence to understand the drivers of violence and what works to address it to inform interventions. This includes identifying social and behavioural drivers that cause distortion of education outcomes such as harmful social and gender norms and stereotypes that may be reproduced in and through education systems.

Safe to Learn and UNICEF offer key technical expertise at global, regional, and national levels across a variety of sectors. The combination of UNICEFs operational presence in over 190 countries with the presence and expertise of Safe to Learn partners enables the much-needed sustainable and systemic change to ensure children are safe to learn.