Report

Addressing violence in and through education

Monday 22 – Wednesday 24 January 2024 | WP3235

In association with:

GPE / CGD / FCDO / Coalitions for Good Schools

Report

Addressing violence in and through education

Monday 22 – Wednesday 24 January 2024 | WP3235

In association with UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Centre for Global Development and the Coalition for Good Schools. With support from Safe to Learn.

Executive Summary

- Solutions to ending violence in schools exist but more needs to be done to develop informative evidence from programme experience, in an accessible and transferable way to allow significant scale up.

- Violence in Schools has to be addressed through multisectoral approaches, which produces complexity and gaps due to siloed nature of some work. Intentionally supporting multisectoral coalitions and networks can help address this, as well as ensuring that child protection and gender expertise is properly resourced within national and multilateral education investments.

- Promising models suggest that Ministries of Education are well placed to hold accountability, and coordinate with other, relevant line ministries, as well as crowd in relevant child protection, health, legal and gender expertise.

- There is a critical need for increased political will on ending violence in schools, at the national and international level. Participants from different sectors coalesced around joint advocacy at select, upcoming moments (outlined in *Next Steps*.)

- There was a joint commitment to collaborate more through research, evidence and programmatic intervention, including agreement to develop a shared global research agenda, strengthen data collection and explore greater linkages between violence prevention and foundational learning.

- There was strong affirmation that a diversity of voices need to be part of prioritisation, decision-making and learning on this agenda, including children and young people; survivors; civil society; teachers; child protection, gender and education experts and practitioners.

Introduction

Education can contribute to transforming societies, it can reduce exposure to violence, and play a key role in shifting harmful social and gender norms and objectives. However, 1 billion children – up to half of the world's children aged 2-17 years' old - experience violence globally. This violence takes place on route to schools, and at schools, and is perpetrated by teachers, school staff and other students. Prevalence is highest in low- and middle-income countries where nearly a third of children are regularly exposed to physical or sexual violence at school. Girls and boys are both exposed to violence but girls are often more vulnerable to the most extreme forms of sexual violence. And some groups of children, including children with disabilities and LGBTQ+ children, are especially vulnerable to physical and psychological bullying.

Violence against children is a major obstacle to learning. It has devastating effects on brain development and health outcomes. And it harms children's potential - school violence is associated with lower educational achievement and reduced adult income.

Evidence shows that this violence *is* preventable. Learning from pioneering schools and governments shows us that there is a key opportunity to build education systems free of violence, reduce school dropout and improve learning outcomes. Addressing school violence is central to achievement of the two G7 endorsed Global Objectives on Girls Education agreed in 2021, the national SDG4 benchmarks, SDG4 and to wider gender equality objectives.

The Wilton Park conference aim was to build a shared understanding of the priorities for ending violence in and through schools. A core set of actions to advance progress were discussed, including how to use the existing evidence and promising approaches for developing interventions on school violence to drive reform across education systems. It aimed to secure high level buy-in from key education stakeholders to drive forward more concerted, joined-up action to prevent violence in and around schools, before, during and after the conference. A key element of this was engaging with existing partners, coalitions and movements on the issue.

The conference supported the FCDO International Women and Girls Strategy and global campaign – *Rights, Freedom, Potential* – which aims to drive conversation and deliver progress on the empowerment and rights of women and girls around the world in the context of growing global threats and shocks.

Terminology
The below report uses 'VIS' as an acronym to save space but notes that the issue at hand is broader than 'violence in schools', and this was reflected in the pre-read and in the discussion at Wilton Park. There are a range of terms used to describe this issue, and which may be preferred in different fora (VACiS, VIAS, SRGBV etc.) The report author acknowledges the discussions around the need to look at the issue as violence in education, beyond just primary and secondary formal school settings as well as harnessing education to address violence. The author also acknowledges that the violence is not just in schools, but in, around, on the way to and through schooling. As such the author requests people read 'VIS' to include the above considerations.

Evidence, data and promising practice

Improving collection and use of data

- There is a lack of data at a community, national, regional and global level on violence in schools, with violence indicators lacking from many existing education surveys and data sets, and similarly a lack of education indicators in violence against children surveys.
- There is a dearth of data to inform policy and programming for younger children as most international surveys collect data on children above 12 years old. This is preventing data informed interventions to prevent VIS in primary schools. There was discussion around examining best ways to secure data on violence from younger children and ways to collaborate on this.
- A standardised survey mechanism could be integrated into national data collection systems and collected at regular intervals to track the prevalence of violence in schools.
- There was consensus on the utility of a global status report on responses to violence in school, including information on solutions and example countries that could support accountability and drive investment.

Research and evidence generation

- There is a need to define a shared global research agenda on generating systematic evidence on the prevalence, impact and interventions for school violence. It was noted that this would need to:
    - Take into account the cultural and contextual differences across each country and establish well-tailored national research agendas;
    - Collaborate with countries that are already committed to the cause across different regions;
    - Help strengthen the research capacity of local practitioners by communicating and understanding what is needed in the country.
- Funding and supporting youth-led, trauma-informed and survivor led research. It was noted that the youth consultation ahead of the conference called for data-driven and evidence-based decision-making.
- Recognising the value and importance of practice-based learning as an important value-added contribution to contextualising data.

Dissemination and uptake of evidence

- Existing evidence needs to be made more visible and coordinated, to share and disseminate through existing coalitions such as Safe to Learn and the SRGBV Working Group as well as new, education-specific fora.
- Ensuring that VIS is discussed at key sectoral, research conferences including SVRI and CIES.
- Promoting and supporting the rolling out of the Safe to Learn diagnostic tool in more countries.

Promising models

- VIS is part of a wider continuum of violence, and require disaggregated approaches and responses. Sexual violence or emotional violence may be conceptualised differently to physical violence and may need discreet responses or foundational responses that address the underlying problems.
- Evidence of progress and what is working was shared by a range of participants. Promising models included those developed by Breakthrough in India; the Good Schools Toolkit in Uganda; Right to Play's approach in Pakistan which was evaluated through What Works to Prevent Violence programme. Ministry of

Education representatives from Nigeria, Indonesia, Tunisia and Zimbabwe also shared lessons from the national level.

- The following factors for successful implementation of policies, laws and interventions were discussed:
    - ⊄ Designing interventions through multi-stakeholder consultation and in close partnership with government (local and national) to enable buy in and implementation.
    - ⊄ Working with 'missing middle' stakeholders between schools and political will, such as bureaucrats, teachers' unions, school leadership, parents, community and religious leaders.
    - ⊄ Working with teachers as agents of change, including supporting and encouraging their understanding of the issue, and training in positive discipline strategies.
    - ⊄ Creating clear mechanisms and institutional frameworks to enable and enforce existing and new legislation.
    - ⊄ Effectively engaging with civil society to inform local level plans along with holding government to account.
    - ⊄ Producing accessible materials to enable change at the school level without overburdening teachers, educators and members of the school community.

"It takes the whole global village to support and protect the whole potential of every child"

Mobilising political will, policy change and implementation

Advocacy
- The narrative around VIS can be fragmented, given that it is "owned" by different sectors and spaces. There was agreement on the importance of concise language and shared terminology that all actors in different sectoral spaces can recognise, but that different "arguments" and cases work for different audiences.

- More powerful language is required to cut through at a political level, and enable Ministers of Education to make an investment case. Ideas discussed included:
    - o Exploring links between violence prevention and foundational learning as messaging that could garner broader support.
    - o Highlighting the importance of socio emotional skills as a key foundational skill, alongside literacy and numeracy.

- This year was agreed to be a strategic year to coordinate more advocacy and campaign efforts, to mobilise political action, including at the following events: AU Year of Education, Education World Forum, G20 and G20 Education Ministerial and Global Education Meeting being run by UNESCO, leading into the Ministerial on Violence Against Children in Colombia.

States and political champions
- There was a focus on the powerful role of states championing what is working within regional and global forums (for example, through the African Union and ASEAN; and the G7 and G20.)

- There was intent and energy for the institutions present to come together behind a joint mechanism or process for governments to signal commitment to the issue, such as the revamped Safe to Learn Call to Action.

- A 'big five' leaders committee or commission on this agenda was also discussed. These political champions could represent different contexts, and both collectively and individually elevate the issue on the high-level political agenda.

- There was alignment across multiple partners to put support behind the global initiative to end corporal punishment (hosted by WHO), so that we track progress in the 64 countries that have not banned Corporal Punishment.

- In terms of driving stronger buy-in domestically, states could explore a VIS strategy and policy unit to be led out of a Presidential unit or Prime Minister's office to elevate and enable buy-in from different ministries.

- In some breakout sessions, the following regional policy mechanisms were highlighted as interesting examples:
    - West and Central Africa Commitment for Educated, Health and Thriving Adolescents and Young People (2023) endorsed by Ministers of Health and Education from twenty three governments
    - African Union Continental Strategy on Education for Health and Well-being (2023) - with one of four pillars being on safe and inclusive learning environments.

Government of Indonesia case study:
A robust policy framework enabled by political will

In the past four years, the government has embarked on a radical education transformation called the "Emancipated Learning" movement which promotes a new paradigm where schooling is a joyful experience in which students are empowered with the agency to learn and explore. Furthermore, teachers are trained based on practice and empowered to co-create the curriculum with the principal as the instructional leader. To ensure "Emancipated Learning" implementation, having safe schools is a must. Students cannot learn optimally, and teachers cannot facilitate learning effectively if the environment isn't safe and supportive.

Indonesia's first policy addressing school violence was a Ministerial Regulation in 2015. The regulation set the foundation for building the system to prevent, respond, and penalise violence in school environments. It also mandates local governments and schools to make prevention programmes and establish an ad hoc response team if school violence occurs.

Indonesia enacting the new Ministerial Regulation for Prevention and Respond Sexual Violence in Tertiary Education in 2021. Tertiary Education was not covered by the regulation in 2015, thus it became our priority. The regulation mandates that each university establishes a permanent task force to create preventive programs and to respond if a case is found. When this regulation took effect, there was an uproar. Many universities, professors, public figures, even students were reluctant, complained, and refused the mandates. The government saw the wave after wave of protest, but stood firm to fight for the cause. They developed a comprehensive awareness campaign, based on data, engaged directly with multiple stakeholders, and over time the efforts were successful.

The successful momentum of their policy in 2021 led to the creation of new National Law in 2022 on Sexual Violence Crime. In 2023, it was time to update and improve the 2015 regulations by creating new ministerial regulations that work as a guideline and broaden the scope of protection that is not only functioning at school but also outside school if it involves students. It also addresses school violence in many forms—physical, sexual, and including physical and digital materials, online or offline.

These policies have laid the groundwork to enable changes at a system and school level. The government continues to approach ending school violence in a four-pronged approach:
"We **build** the momentum for law creation.
We **raise** support for the mandate,
We **pilot** programs to find the best practices, and

We **engage** with all stakeholders through many opportunities."

System and school level engagement and innovation

Systems

- Using education as an entry-point to address violence against children at scale was widely accepted and noted.
- The participants acknowledged the complex and sometimes messy nature of education systems which makes achieving change within them a challenge.
- A lack of supportive policy ecosystems can prevent the scale up of programmes, for example, when a new policy is enacted in a country that prevents girls who are pregnant from attending school.
- While much of the systems discussion focused on education systems, there was recognition that these overlap and interact with child protection for example through national action plans on violence against children, or VAWG. There was strong agreement on the benefits of the education sector crowding in and engaging and influencing these sectors.
- National and global policy frameworks and commitments on gender equality in and through education can also provide entry points to greater focus on VIS.
- CSOs play a critical and a catalytic role at the country level to agitate for systemic change, for example, when lobbying for national child helplines, or calling for the implementation of relevant National Action Plans. Youth delegates and others called for proper resourcing of coalitions and civil society movements to enable more advocacy to achieve change.

School level

- The role of teachers at the centre of the issue of VIS, from agents of change, to witnesses and perpetrators was discussed at length. There was also recognition that teachers are incredibly overburdened. Specific suggestions around working more with and supporting teachers included:
    - Life-long training on positive discipline for teachers;
    - Awareness raising and education for teachers on the issue;
    - Incentives to change their behaviour, where needed e.g. awards, recognition;
    - Working with teachers to develop national codes of conduct, framed around the international code of conduct developed by Education International, and to support the dissemination and implementation of these codes of conducts across all schools in all communities;
    - Supporting them to have a greater voice in discussions on VIS.

- Research and analysis into reporting systems both online (like examples in Tunisia and Peru) and offline, could be made accessible for all stakeholders to support innovation.
- Attendees were keen to emphasise how violence is experienced from a child's perspective. All approaches at a school level must be in coordination with efforts to end violence in all settings and contexts, from the home, on transport, in times and places of sport or religion, and increasingly online.
- Digital safety was discussed at different times as a key emerging issue to address, whether that be the increase in cyberbullying or the increase in online learning, without an associated rise in regulation and protection efforts on those online platforms. Some institutions noted an increased focus on digital safety in some form and there was broad agreement on the need to learn more about this issue and increase efforts in this area.

- Youth delegates emphasised the importance of creating, supporting and encouraging examples where young people are meaningfully consulted on developing their school's operational culture and influencing how students experience schools.

Case study: Evidence of barriers to school-based interventions, Connect with Respect

Connect with Respect is grounded in research on violence prevention, gender norms, and the programmatic experience of school-based interventions. The programme was piloted in seven countries, and collected data on teachers' perspectives and experiences from five countries (Thailand, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Eswatini and Tanzania). The following barriers to implementation were identified:

1. Limited teaching time: teachers faced challenges due to insufficient time allocated for teaching the programme, preventing the completion of all activities.
2. Behaviour management: Teachers experienced difficulties in managing student behaviour during programem activities, impacting the effective delivery of the programme.
3. Large class sizes: The size of the classes posed a challenge to implementing participatory activities effectively within the programme.
4. Sensitivity relating to culture and beliefs: Cultural beliefs and expectations created barriers to successfully implementing the programme.

Social norms

> "What is taking place in schools is normally a reflection of what is taking place within the broader environment"

- Social and behavioural change was noted across the board as being fundamental to achieve sustainable impact on reducing and ending violence in and around schools.

Tactics to challenge social norms

- Solutions must to be home-grown and context-specific to build ownership at a community and country level. Ensuring that practitioners, experts and those with lived experience are engaged in global dialogues is vital.
- Smart and strategic social media campaigns, and partnership campaigns with youth and survivor movements could be better deployed to raise awareness on the issue of violence, the impact it is having on children, and the impact on education systems.
- National dialogues that create opportunity to collectively explore attitudes and alternatives to violence play a critical role in influencing the national mood and collective will to address VIS.
- There was recognition on the need to continue, and increase the support and investments in CSOs and local coalitions that can mobilise communities and put pressure on governments.
- There could be greater learning from colleagues working on HIV and SRHR, particularly on engaging traditional and faith leaders.
- There was also discussion around the benefits of the power of stories and survivors and working with organisations and movements like Brave, to ensure survivors are informing change and have a strong voice on the social norms that enabled their abuse to take place.

Financing and investing effectively

- There was acceptance that gaps in global education financing are impacting the resources for VIS, and that there is a need to continue to lobby for increased financing for education as a foundation in order to enable more efforts on VIS.
- The following are specific ideas that were discussed around how to mobilise more, and more effective, funding for VIS:
  - Evidence should highlight how the presence of school violence is detrimental to the outcome of donor and domestic investments in education, especially in terms of foundational learning. Such evidence should also be tailored to each country's context to advocate for a national investment case in preventing school violence.
  - Agreement to communicate to donors around the solutions that are available, as opposed to too much focus on challenges.
  - There was interest in supporting annual donor roundtables on the topic, including in the margins of existing education fora, and using a joint framework for action and support.
  - Examining conditionalities of funding was discussed, and encouraging donors to make sure VAC is included in education funding proposals.
  - Importance of coding expenditure to be clear about when money is going to VIS was agreed as being an important measure.
  - Develop explicit and transparently developed guidelines on where and how investments are most likely to have efficient and sustainable outcomes.

Government of Zimbabwe case study

The delegate representative from the Ministry of Education shared lessons learned on how they had addressed challenges to violence integration.

- Prioritising multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborative, to enable coordinated action and break down the siloed approach to the issue within the government and broader social.
- Drawing on global and regional materials and mechanisms to mobilise including: UNCRC reporting mechanism; SDG reporting, including on 4.7; Safe Schools Declaration; SADC minimum standards and AU policies.
- Awareness raising on taboo issues through working with arts, especially effective at landing the message at a community level.
- Considering whether violence prevention indicators could be embedded in national performance strategies (including tracking online safety for children).

The delegate noted a need to address some areas that have not been prioritised as much to date, including examining what happens to neglected children later in life and addressing tech facilitated violence against children.

Some immediate upcoming next steps included efforts to: mainstreaming safe school diagnostic tools; updating the teacher's code of ethics; safeguarding standards for non-teaching staff; and undertaking efforts to improve parent-teacher teamwork.

"It takes the whole global village to support and protect the whole potential of every child".

Summary actions and next steps

The following ideas and joint intentions were discussed, and attendees are encouraged to take these forward. Please see the full readout below, and Annex A for specific commitments that will be shared with participants only.

- Working more intentionally across sectors, including by participating in and ensuring cross-sectoral participation in existing coalitions (Safe to Learn; the SRGBV Working Group, Coalition for Good Schools).
- Increasing meaningful dialogue with teachers, children, youth and survivors when developing policy and programmes on VIS, including ensuring that there is representation in existing coalitions and networks.
- Testing and piloting targeted approaches for those most impacted by VIS including children with disability, those in crisis context, members of LGBVTQ+ community, and in the online space / cyber bullying.
- Developing clear, accessible, information on the state of relevant global architecture, collaborative platforms, coalitions and governance, given that this is currently difficult to navigate.
- Collectively raising this issue on the agenda at upcoming strategic political, and education sector, moments and events. Clear priorities were:
  - Education World Forum – London (May 2024)
  - AU Year of Education
  - GPE board meeting - Germany (June 2024)
  - ECW ExCom – Berlin (June 2024)
  - CIES – Miami (March 2024)
  - Summit of the Future – New York (September 2024)
  - SVRI – South Africa (October 2024)
  - Violence Against Children Ministerial – Colombia (November 2024)
- The development of a global shared research agenda on violence in schools, led and informed by country partners, mapping existing research in the space and building on the gaps.
- Hardwiring violence prevention into national education investments, and for funders to encourage and support education multilaterals to do the same.
- The production of a 'State of the World' report on violence in schools.
- Breaking down the global World Bank Investment Case, and adapting it to produce national level reports and data on the economic loss caused by VIS.
- Jointly calling on Ministries of Education to sign onto the Safe to Learn Call to Action.
- To further elevate political will the idea of coalition of a 'big five' leaders committee or commission on this agenda was discussed.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Emily Laurie with the additional input of the partners
Wilton Park | March 2024

Should you wish to read other Wilton Park reports, or participate in upcoming Wilton Park events, please consult our website www.wiltonpark.org.uk. To receive our monthly bulletin and latest updates, please subscribe to https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/newsletter/