



# Safe to Learn

Ending violence in  
and through schools



## THE FACTS

School should be a place of **hope and opportunity**, where children are safe to learn and **develop the skills and experiences** they need to thrive. But **physical, sexual and psychological violence** in and around schools affects children and young people everywhere.

**720 million**

children live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited

**50%**

of children experience violence in and around school

**1 IN 3**

students aged 13–15 experience bullying

**1 IN 3**

students aged 13–15 are involved in physical fights

**2 in 3**

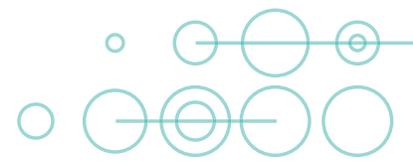
young people said they worry about violence in and around schools.\*

\*Respondents to UNICEF global poll of over 1 million young people across 160 countries.



**24,000+**

young people offered up solutions\*



# INTRODUCTION

**Safe to Learn** is a five-year initiative dedicated to ending violence in schools so children are free to learn and pursue their dreams.

**Our vision** is to work with governments, civil society organizations, communities, teachers and children themselves to generate commitments and create action to end all violence in every school by 2024.

Safe to Learn was inspired by the voices of young people around the world who know that violence in schools stands as a huge obstacle to a better future. In South Africa in December 2018, 100 young people from across the world drafted the **#ENDviolence Youth Manifesto**, informed by a UNICEF global poll of one million young people. Their message: enough is enough — leaders at every level, and young people themselves, need to put violence in schools at the top of the global agenda.

The world is listening. **A coalition of partners has joined together to build on the important work already being done to end violence in and through**

**schools.** Partners come from both the education and child rights communities; they include governments, UN agencies, Civil Society and leading voices for progress on both SDG 4 and SDG 16, underscoring that there are multiple wins if we end violence in and through schools.

**Current partners include:** the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), 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, and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, which plays a convening and coordinating role for Safe to Learn.



**We have developed a five-point Call to Action** which sets out in high-level terms what needs to happen to end violence in schools. Since January 2019, **11 countries have endorsed the Call to Action** (see map, page xx). They recognize that every child deserves the safety and security that makes learning possible — in school, at home and in the wider community. And if we succeed, **the gains will be enormous** — better learning outcomes, a higher return on education investments, and an opportunity to break the intergenerational cycle of violence. Working together, we can mobilize new resources, advocate for policy changes, share proven solutions, test new ideas and rally the world to ensure every child — including the most marginalized children who face disproportionate levels of violence — is safe to learn.





# Call to Action



**Every child deserves to be safe and secure in school so that they can learn, grow and develop the skills and confidence they need to lead healthy and prosperous lives.**

**Schools have the potential to be transformative** in promoting positive social norms and gender equality. But for too many girls and boys around the world, school is a place of violence and fear. Schools also provide a valuable entry point for working with families and communities to end violence against children more broadly. Physical, sexual and psychological violence in and around schools, including online, affects children and young people everywhere.

**Violence is often a result of unequal gender and power dynamics.** Girls and boys experience different forms of violence. Girls are more likely to experience psychological bullying, sexual violence and harassment; boys more likely to experience corporal punishment and physical violence; children who do not conform to

gender norms or stereotypes are particularly vulnerable to violence and bullying. Children with disabilities are more than three times as likely as their peers to suffer physical violence in schools, and girls with disabilities are at up to three times greater risk of rape. In fragile, conflict and crisis contexts, students and staff face risks greater risks, such as targeted and indiscriminate attacks from the military or other groups.

**Violence impedes learning and is detrimental to children's well-being.** It decreases self-esteem, reduces attendance, lowers grades, leads many children to drop out of school altogether and can result in serious health issues. It also contributes to a destabilising cycle of violence where child victims are more likely to be perpetrators or victims later in life.



Whether sexual exploitation for grades, corporal punishment in the classroom or bullying and harassment, all forms of **violence in schools can and must be prevented**. It is both the right and the smart thing to do—morally, socially and economically—as it enhances a child’s chances of staying in school, increases their ability to fulfil their potential and breaks the cycle of violence.

### **Together we can end violence in schools.**

We must ensure that children’s voices are heard, and they have the space to take action. Teachers, communities, governments and leaders must be accountable for prevention of and response to violence, and prioritize the individual needs and well-being of the child and everyone in the school community.



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

## **We call upon partners to support national and sub-national governments.**

### **Implement policy and legislation**

National, regional and local governments develop and enforce laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and around schools, including online.

- Ministries of education implement policies to improve systems, capacity, and skills to prevent and respond to violence in schools across the education system.
- National governments prohibit corporal punishment in schools and promote positive discipline.
- National governments establish multi-sectoral child-friendly response and referral mechanisms to support victims of violence in schools.
- National governments endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.



## 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.

- School curricula are reviewed and strengthened to include effective approaches to preventing violence and promoting equality and respect.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures, such as codes of conduct, digital safety guidance, or violence reporting procedures are implemented and monitored in schools.
- Schools ensure the physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of all students in mind.



## Shift social norms and behavior change

Parents, teachers, children, local government and community leaders recognize 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.

- Schools promote child-rights education and ensure children and teachers know their rights and respect the rights of others.
- Schools, parents and community leaders work together to promote non-violent behaviors and promote a safe school environment.
- Students, parents, caregivers, teachers and



community members empower one another to speak up and take positive action against violence that they or their peers have experienced.



## Invest resources effectively

Increased and better use of investments targeted at ending violence in schools.

- National Governments increase domestic resources to support people, programming, and processes to end violence in schools.
- Donors increase resources targeted at the country and global level to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.
- The Private Sector increases financial, technical and in-kind resources to end violence in schools.



## Generate and use evidence

Countries and the international community generate and use evidence on how to effectively end violence in schools.

- Governments, schools and donors support the disaggregated data collection and monitoring of activities that prevent violence in schools.
- Donors and research partners increase investment in research and evaluation about interventions to prevent violence in schools (in particular longitudinal studies).
- Schools collect disaggregated data on incidents of violence in a safe and ethical manner to support targeted and better-quality interventions.





# #ENDviolence Youth Manifesto

The youth manifesto calls on world leaders to end violence in and around schools.





The **Youth Manifesto** was written on December 1st, 2018 by more than 100 young people from around the world. These young people gathered at the Junior Chamber International (JCI) African Youth Development Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, at a session facilitated by UNICEF, Global Citizen, JCI and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children ahead of the Global Citizen Mandela 100 Festival. The Manifesto draws on the input of one million young people who responded to a global poll conducted by UNICEF.



## OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

### Diversity & tolerance

**Equality is the foundation** of promoting diversity and tolerance in schools. Equality should be taught and demonstrated at home and reinforced in schools. We must recognize that we are all equal. Our differences, including culture, gender, identity, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, race, ethnicity, migration status, and religion make us unique and should be celebrated rather than divide us. Our curricula, teachers, society, media, and institutions like government, bear a responsibility to promote, practice, teach and ensure that schools are a safe and inclusive space for everyone. They have responsibility to remove and prevent stigma that holds us back from equality in the classroom and in the world.

### Protection for all students

In keeping with the principle of peaceful, respectful coexistence, and as institutions through which change can be made, schools, in collaboration with parents, peers and society at large, must **care for, support and protect all students**—those who experience violence and those who engage in violent behaviour.



## WE COMMIT

### Being kind

We commit to being respectful and careful in how we treat our community and to speak up when it is safe to do so. Kindness is a responsibility that begins with each of us.

### Reporting violence

We commit to breaking taboos and the victimization around reporting violence. We will seek out trusted authorities such as teachers, counsellors, community representatives and other students when we witness or learn of violence in and around school. We also commit to creating youth-led channels for reporting violence.

### Taking action

We commit to start and support initiatives that will promote unity, curiosity, and mutual respect at home, in school, and in our communities—including online. We will protect each other and have each other's backs.





## WE DEMAND

### **Take us seriously**

We demand that our parents, guardians, school as an institution, policymakers, and communities recognize our essence of being, our equality, our right to dignity, our right to exist in harmony in environments that are free of violence in all its forms. We demand that where violence may exist it must be addressed with the required urgency, without placing the burden on the child.

### **Establish clear rules**

We demand the protection and prevention of all forms and levels of violence in schools governed by clear rules, regulations, and action plans to enable reform and recourse for a safe learning environment for all.

### **Make laws restricting weapons**

We demand that policymakers pass and implement laws restricting the presence and use of any objects as weapons in schools, including but not limited to guns and knives.

### **Ensure our safety to and from school**

We demand safety on our journey to and from school. We don't want anyone to harm us in any way. We also demand to be protected by the law, and punishment for the lawbreakers.

### **Provide secure school facilities**

We demand safe learning environments, including buildings and grounds, playing fields, and fixed equipment. We want hallways, classrooms, and bathrooms with gender neutral options to be adequately lit. We expect security measures like gates, cameras, and properly trained security personnel where appropriate. School staff and students need instruction about what to do in the case of an emergency.

### **Train teachers and counsellors**

We demand that teachers and counsellors undertake on-going training and are able to identify, respond to, support and refer learners who are affected by issues of school-based violence to appropriate services. Training should equip teachers and counsellors to be emotionally intelligent, to deal with inclusivity and diversity issues and to provide positive discipline for all children.

### **Teach consent and respond to sexual violence**

We demand that all schools teach all students, regardless of age, gender identity, sex, disability, religion, race and sexual orientation, to respect one another's physical and sexual boundaries. All schools must provide accessible and reliable means of reporting cases of sexual harassment and assault (be it physical, psychological, emotional and/or verbal) as enshrined within school governing documents/policies which must be inclusive.





## Countries that have Endorsed the Call to Action

Since January 2019, 11 early adopting countries have formally endorsed the five-point Call to Action, which urges governments, civil society, funders, educators and communities to do more to reduce violence in and around schools so children are safe to learn. We invite other governments to add their support and help grow a global movement to make schools a safe place for all children.



As of July 2019



**Cambodia**



**Ghana**



**Georgia**



**Indonesia**



**Moldova**



**Mexico**



**Sierra Leone**



**South Africa**



**South Sudan**



**Nepal**



**Uganda**





# SAFE TO LEARN PARTNERS



## GET INVOLVED

### Leadership

Affirm your high-level support for our Call to Action. Consider any specific commitments you can make.

### Communications

Share key Safe to Learn moments across your communications channels and social media.

### Advocacy

Use your networks to promote Safe to Learn and generate new commitments and action.

### Finance

Consider supporting the End Violence Fund to provide critical finance for targeted interventions. Review your current budget priorities to ensure safe learning is adequately funded.

### Lesson learned

Share success stories, results, data and program models that are reducing violence in schools.

If you like to get in touch about engaging with Safe to Learn, please contact us via email at: [safetolearn@end-violence.org](mailto:safetolearn@end-violence.org)



**Every child  
deserves  
to be safe  
and secure  
in school.**

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#SafeToLearn

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