

Together to #ENDviolence

Global Policy Briefing

Key Messages

Make schools safe,
non-violent and inclusive

2030 Policy Objectives

Make schools safe, non-violent and inclusive. All governments and relevant actors in humanitarian settings should incorporate violence prevention and response in their education sector policies, budgets and plans; and make adequate investments to implement measures to make all schools safe for children while promoting a culture of non-violence.

KEY MESSAGES

- Schools have a transformative role in children's lives. Let us ensure it is always a positive one, and never a traumatic one.
- For all girls and boys to learn, they need to have access to safe, non-violent and inclusive learning environments, independently of where they learn – at home, at school, or online.
- The global pandemic has highlighted the critical protective role of schools in children's lives. For children affected by violence or neglect at home, school is often the only hope. Schools must ensure all children are safe and secure.
- Teachers everywhere need to be empowered, incentivised and equipped to make their classrooms safe havens for children.
- Preventing violence in school has the potential to break inter-generational transmission of violence, ensure that educational environments are safe, inclusive and gender responsive, and positively transform families, communities, and societies.
- All governments should ensure that violence prevention and response measures, including removing violence-related barriers to return to school post COVID-19, are part of school reopening plans, particularly for girls and children most at-risk of not returning.
- All governments should commit to and allocate investments for policy and programmes to end violence in and through schools.
- All donors should commit a percentage of education spending to remove violence-related barriers to enable a safe return to school.

KEY STATISTICS

- 261 million schoolchildren experience peer violence.
- 732 million children aged 6-17 – half of all school-aged children – live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited.
- In some countries, up to 30-40 per cent of girls experience sexual violence before the age of 15.
- Physical violence and bullying are widespread in schools globally. Every month, 32.4 per cent of children have been bullied at school, a number that translates to one in every three kids.
- One in three children aged 13-15 reported bullying, including cyber-bullying (12 per cent of children aged 6-11 who use the internet in Europe). Cyberbullying exposes both girls and boys to sexual exploitation, harassment and emotional violence.
- Adolescents (15-19 years of age), in particular adolescent girls, are at higher risk of experiencing physical and sexual abuse, including dating violence, intimate partner violence and early marriage. Adolescent boys are at a higher risk of homicide and in some countries, sexual violence.

WHY NOW?

The global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the protective role schools often play in children's lives. When schools closed, countless children were left unprotected, losing access to critical services, while being increasingly exposed to other forms of violence – such as online violence or abuse within the home, whether that be as victims or as witnesses.

At their best, schools and teachers help vulnerable children recover, become resilient and thrive. They also often help to identify signs of abuse, provide first support, and often report violence to relevant support services. This protective and transformative role can break the inter-generational transmission of violence, while effectively addressing harmful social norms and gender inequalities that drive violence. All of which has extensive economic and social benefits for society and directly contributes to positive learning outcomes.

Teachers and other school staff can misuse their power by using corporal punishment, humiliation, or sexual harassment. Girls, and sometimes boys, can become subjected to gender-based violence on their ways to and from school; and students – both girls and boys – can mistreat others in person or online through bullying, physical fights, emotional violence, and sexual harassment. Consequences are often traumatic and long-lasting, negatively impacting students' ability to focus, succeed in school, and enjoy their learning experiences.

At the time when the world assesses the best ways to reopen schools, let us maximize their protective role, while also acknowledging that schools can play a toxic role when violence is undermined or normalized, and when gender norms, harmful stereotypes and unequal power dynamics are enforced through the school environment.

Now more than ever, is the time to ensure all children have access to safe, non-violent and inclusive learning environments. Together, let's make sure that the education systems we build forward are not only stronger, bolder and better, but also safer – for every child, everywhere.

HOW?

To ensure all girls and boys have access to safe, non-violent, and inclusive learning environments, governments can prioritize the following actions:

- Ensure that violence prevention and response measures, including removing violence-related barriers to return to school post COVID-19, are part of school reopening plans, particularly for girls and those children most at-risk of not returning.
- Commit to and allocate investments for policy and programmes to end violence in and through schools.
- Implement policy and legislation by including prevention of violence as a specific strategy in education sector policies, plans and budgets; prohibiting corporal punishment and putting in place policies to support positive discipline and classroom management; and strengthening the role of the Ministry of Education in the national child protection system.
- Strengthen prevention and response at the school level by embedding violence prevention strategies in curriculum-based activities for children; establishing child safeguarding policies in schools; providing front-line mental health and psychosocial support to children experiencing violence; and building safe school environments.

- Shift harmful social norms and behaviour by building children, teacher and school staffs' understanding of child rights and laws protecting children from violence; and implementing and evaluating interventions addressing social norms that drive key forms of violence, including those that perpetuate gender inequalities. In addition, prioritise engaging young people, teachers and community members on the topic of school violence.
- Invest resources effectively by allocating domestic resources to support people, programming and processes to end violence in schools; providing donor funding to support effective interventions; and engaging the private sector to provide financial resources and technical support, expertise and advocacy.
- Generate and use evidence by tracking the reporting of incidents; collecting data on the prevalence and forms of violence; and ensuring a rigorous evidence base while designing interventions.
- All donors should commit a percentage of education spending to remove violence-related barriers to enable a safe return to school.

Support and Resources available

[Safe to Learn | End Violence \(end-violence.org\)](https://end-violence.org)

[INSPIRE Seven Strategies](#)

[WHO school-based violence prevention](#)

[UNGEI school-related gender-based violence prevention](#)

Safe to Learn during – and after – COVID-19

- [Safe to Learn During COVID-19: Recommendations to prevent and respond to violence against children in all learning environments](#)
- [Supporting schools to provide a safe online learning experience](#)
- [Learning Must Go On: Recommendations for keeping children safe and learning during and after the COVID-19 crisis](#)
- [Reopening Schools Safely: Recommendations for building back better to end violence against children in and through schools](#)
- [Strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence as schools reopen](#)
- [Safe Back to School Practitioners Guide](#)
- For these resources and more, visit [Safe to Learn COVID-19](#)

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Solutions Summit Series



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