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LEARNING BRIEF #1



School-related, gender-based violence

# Ending violence in schools: Lessons from the Girls' Education Challenge

Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



The **Girls' Education Challenge (GEC)** is the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's 12-year, £855 million Global Fund which aims to improve the educational opportunities of the world's most marginalised girls. The GEC is comprised of two types of project: 1) GEC-Transition (GEC-T) projects, which work within schools and support girls most at risk of dropping out; and 2) Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) projects, which target highly marginalised girls who have already dropped out or who have never been able to enrol in school.

Across the globe, an estimated 246 million girls and boys experience violence on the way to school, on school grounds and in classrooms.<sup>1</sup> School-related, gender-based violence (SRGBV) can be physical, psychological and/or sexual. Although boys and girls are both affected by these types of violence, unequal gender norms place girls at a much higher risk of experiencing sexual violence.

In lower to middle-income countries, approximately 60 million girls are sexually assaulted on their way to school<sup>2</sup> and up to 10% of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 reported incidences of forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts in the previous year.<sup>3</sup> These, and other forms of violence, can significantly impede a girl's focus, self-esteem and attendance in school, thereby undermining any effort to improve learning.<sup>4</sup> This is why many GEC projects have a concerted focus on addressing SRGBV<sup>5</sup> as well as ensuring that safeguards are in place for their own activities and organisations.

That said, schools can also be an entry point for preventing future cases of SRGBV by shifting norms and behaviours around violence. [The Safe to Learn \(STL\) initiative](#), a global partnership aiming to end violence in and through schools<sup>6</sup>, identifies four types of school-related violence that indicate potential entry points for change.<sup>7</sup> These include:

- 1. Violence perpetrated by teachers and other school staff** – including corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, and other forms of bullying
- 2. Violence that takes place between peers in and around schools** – such as bullying and harassment, sexual and gender-based violence and physical and psychological violence
- 3. Violence in the home and/or community** that has an impact on schools
- 4. Attacks on schools** carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious or criminal reasons – against students, educators and education institutions



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The STL initiative has called on governments to adopt a five point [Call to Action](#), which sets out, in high-level terms, what is required to end violence in schools and create safer learning environments. To date, 15 Ministries of Education<sup>8</sup> have endorsed the Call to Action's five points, which include: (1) implement policy and legislation; (2) strengthen prevention and response at the school level; (3) shift social norms and behaviour change; (4) invest resources effectively; and (5) generate and use evidence about school violence.

The STL initiative has produced guidance on ways in which ministries of education can translate the Call to Action into concrete interventions<sup>9</sup> and this Learning Brief aims to further contribute to this end. GEC projects have a wealth of learning and experience with regard to implementing policy, strengthening school responses, and shifting norms and behaviour around violence.<sup>10</sup> Thus, this Brief has collated and synthesised this knowledge in order to further support governments, donors and implementing partners in their efforts to reduce SRGBV.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.end-violence.org/safe-to-learn>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> [School-related, gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all](#) – UNESCO Digital Library

<sup>4</sup> Further studies exploring the links between learning without fear and outcomes such as attendance and learning include: Kibriya et al (2018), Office of the SRSG on Violence against Children (2013), Greco et al 2018, Cools and Kotsadam (2015), and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Analysis from the Centre for Global Development recently identified that being in school may be protective of the most extreme forms of sexual violence but not against other forms (Evans et al 2022). GEC projects have qualitative evidence of inappropriate relationships between teachers and girls, and have noted a high prevalence of sexual abuse perpetrated by male pupils and male teachers.

<sup>6</sup> [Global Working Group to end SRGBV and the Coalition for Good Schools](#) are other important partnerships working towards this aim.

<sup>7</sup> [Safe to Learn Synthesis report: STL Synthesis Report FINAL.pdf](#)

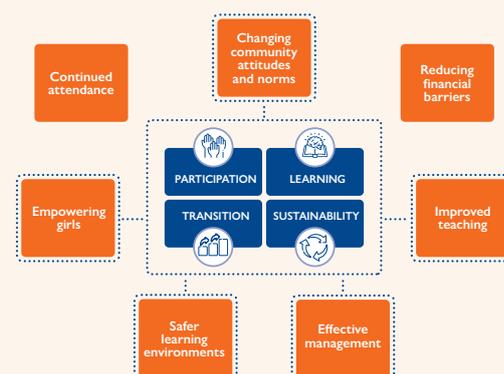
<sup>8</sup> Cambodia, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan and Uganda. Four of these are countries in which the GEC is implemented (Ghana, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Uganda).

<sup>9</sup> [STL Global Programmatic Framework .pdf \(end-violence.org\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> The GEC also has knowledge regarding generating and using evidence about school violence, but for the purposes of focusing this Learning Brief on interventions to reduce SRGBV, we will focus on the first three actions only.

### The Girls' Education Challenge Learning Brief series:

To capitalise on its vast portfolio of 41 projects, operating across 17 countries, the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) has compiled a wealth of project learning regarding key interventions related to girls' education. While these Learning Briefs are rooted in both quantitative and qualitative evidence, they are not research papers or evidence reports. Rather, they provide a synthesis of learning from GEC intervention designs and implementation approaches that have been paramount for supporting improvements in girls' learning. The GEC projects take a holistic approach to improve the educational environment and conditions that support improved learning, participation, transition and sustainability outcomes. This Learning Brief is focused on interventions in the following areas:



## GEC project approaches to SRGBV

Given the overarching aims of addressing current forms of SRGBV and preventing future occurrences, GEC projects have drawn from three broad intervention approaches, which include:

- 1. Strengthening reporting, referral and response systems:** This includes establishing reporting mechanisms at school and district levels; identifying focal points and survivor-centred referral pathways within schools, communities and districts; and providing training and sensitisation for staff, school management committees and students about these initiatives.
- 2. Safer environment strategies:** This includes developing zero-tolerance policies and codes of conduct for all school actors; providing non-violent classroom management tools for teachers; and shifting norms and attitudes (particularly with community members, families, men and boys) through advocacy work and discussions aiming to prompt critical self-reflection.
- 3. Supporting girls' awareness of violence:** This includes supporting girls' articulation and/or awareness of different types and degrees of violence; making girls aware of their rights and any relevant laws or policies (or lack thereof); and supporting awareness and use of any new or established reporting mechanisms, referral pathways and focal points.

These approaches were integrated into many projects' Theories of Change at the beginning of the second phase of the GEC in 2018, based on lessons learned from the GEC's first phase. Only half of the projects in GEC 1 included violence-related interventions, and results suggested that, in general, girls feared violence at school, particularly corporal punishment, and either did not know how or if they could report or had little faith in reporting systems if they did exist. Recommendations for GEC 2 included the need to address SRGBV early in a project's lifetime, use a deep and intensive approach, and engage all relevant stakeholders more substantially – including girls themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Learning from this, in the second phase of the GEC, all projects addressed SRGBV to some degree, with 17 implementing substantive interventions located within one or more of the above approaches to address SRGBV.<sup>12</sup> Figure 1 maps the degree to which a combination of the three approaches was used. Nine projects implemented activities drawn from all three intervention areas of strengthening reporting systems, safer environments and raising girls' awareness. Figure 2 demonstrates the midline and endline evaluation results associated with these interventions, which included reductions in girls feeling unsafe, reductions in parents perceiving schools as unsafe and reductions in corporal punishment.

Figure 1 – GEC project approaches to SRGBV



Figure 2 – Midline and endline results from interventions

	Baseline	Mid/endline
% of girls who feel unsafe at school	3%	1%
% of parents who perceive the school as unsafe	12%	7%
Incidence of corporal punishment	56%	44%

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that girls feeling safe can indeed be cultivated when only two intervention areas are prioritised, such as strengthening reporting systems and girls' awareness of these. Moreover, focusing solely on safer environments interventions, such as shifting attitudes and behaviours of teachers, can also have a positive effect on learning, as this can result in immediate reductions of corporal punishment in class or teacher-perpetrated sexual harassment.<sup>13</sup> This finding validates the notion that any substantive effort to prevent SRGBV, especially when designed and implemented well, will contribute to girls feeling safe at school and thus form the foundation for girls' focus, attendance and motivation for learning. That said, it should be noted that eliminating SRGBV is not sufficient on its own to raise learning outcomes. Strong pedagogy, curricula and materials, amongst other factors, are imperative for this. However, feeling safe is a necessary condition for meaningful learning to occur, particularly for the most marginalised girls.<sup>14</sup> The following section elaborates on factors that affected the degree to which SRGBV interventions were designed and implemented well in order to create the necessary conditions for learning.

<sup>11</sup> Given that there was a more concerted focus on SRGBV in phase 2, this Brief elaborates on GEC2 projects only.

<sup>12</sup> A 'substantive intervention' is defined as an activity or set of activities that was intentional, aimed at reducing one or more forms of SRGBV, repeated over time, and was monitored or evaluated in some way. This led to projects being excluded from the review if their SRGBV work was lighter touch. Examples of this include adding a 15 minute session on corporal punishment to the end of a teacher training on numeracy. Moreover, a majority of the 17 projects reviewed for this brief were GEC-T projects, which work within the formal school space. LNGB project interventions are located within project-controlled community-based learning centres. However, this did not preclude LNGB projects transferring lessons over to the formal school system, particularly for schools to which formerly out-of-school girls have transitioned.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that it can be considered unethical to raise girls' awareness of violence or do safer environments work without reporting/referral systems in place. Of the five projects who did not work on improving reporting systems, three of these identified this as a gap within their Theory of Change that had come about from an assumption that reporting systems were already strong. Two of the projects worked in fragile and conflict-affected regions where reporting systems were very weak or non-existent, so girls were advised to use the projects' own internal reporting systems instead.

<sup>14</sup> To demonstrate the counterfactual, four GEC2 projects that failed to meet their learning targets identified SRGBV as a major constraint on girls' educational opportunities, yet did not include any interventions to address it.

## Factors for success

This section draws out the core elements that seem to have influenced positive changes related to attitudes towards gender-based violence, teacher practice, girls' perceptions of safety, and the quality of reporting and referral systems. It is structured to provide brief but important reflections.<sup>15</sup>

### Factors affecting overall SRGBV intervention design and implementation:

**1** A project team's depth of understanding of gender, education and violence, and their ability to apply this nuanced knowledge to local contexts, is an important foundation for more effective SRGBV work, and allows for the development of well-designed Theories of Change. Where GEC project teams have not understood or appreciated the complexity of the gendered social norms lying behind SRGBV, or conducted a thorough gender, equity and social inclusion (GESI) analysis, interventions have tended to be more surface level at best (such as adding safeguarding messaging into broader discussions with teachers or parents), or gender exploitative at worst (such as advising girls on how they can change their behaviours to avoid abuse).

**2** Projects that address multiple drivers of SRGBV by implementing a combination of high-quality interventions will have greater success.<sup>16</sup> This implies that a holistic approach that includes strengthening reporting systems, making environments safe and making girls aware is optimal.<sup>17</sup> However, strong design and implementation of safer environments strategies can also be effective on their own. Targeted work with teachers on corporal punishment or with community members on sexual violence can have immediate and multiplier effects. The following sections will elaborate further on these.

### Stronger reporting systems: What do better performing projects do differently?

**1** Support the dissemination and implementation of any national SRGBV policies. Often national policies on violence and referral pathways exist, but these are not widely disseminated nor are there accompanying implementation frameworks that provide explicit guidance or instruction for district, school or community stakeholders that enable people to put these into practice. Successful projects provided explicit instructions themselves and/or support Ministries of Education to develop these.

**2** Ensure that any existing structures or referral pathways are survivor centred, child sensitive, easily accessible and functional. While it is important to work with existing structures, such as community-based groups or district-level protection committees, assumptions should not be made that they are functional or effective. For example, there were many instances in which meetings were not productive or led to concrete action, or where projects identified that services were not child friendly or accessible. Consistent capacity building, mentoring and follow up are necessary to ensure that survivors are referred to the services they need, such as counselling, child protection, law enforcement or medical treatment.

**3** Create survivor-centred reporting and response mechanisms from scratch if necessary. Some projects found that when they surveyed the quality and accessibility of available reporting pathways for survivors, the gaps were so large that in many cases they had to create new referral processes. This was important and beneficial work but took time and resources. Creating new systems for reporting also risks reliance on project staff and funding for continued implementation.

**“Targeted work with teachers on corporal punishment or with community members on sexual violence can have immediate and multiplier effects.”**

<sup>15</sup>For more detail on the interventions themselves, as well as additional evidence collected on these, please contact [learningteam@girlseducationchallenge.org](mailto:learningteam@girlseducationchallenge.org).

<sup>16</sup>UNGEI (2017, p. 12). 'A Whole-School Approach to prevent School-Related Gender-Based Violence: Minimum Standards and Monitoring Framework'. New York: UNGEI

<sup>17</sup>This chimes with other evidence that a 'whole-school' approach to tackling SRGBV is most effective. Examples include the Good Schools Toolkit, developed by Raising Voices in Uganda as part of the first phase of the Girls' Education Challenge (Devries et al 2015) and work conducted by UNGEI and FAWVEZI in Zimbabwe (UNGEI/UNICEF 2021).



### CASE STUDY: Closing the Gap (ACTED), Pakistan

The project has identified holistic strategies that aimed to have a sustainable impact on addressing corporal punishment. This includes having regular safeguarding refresher training; reviewing and updating codes of conduct for all project teams; integrating positive discipline into teacher development training; increasing the level of community engagement and ensuring this was incorporated into workplans. It has been important to strengthen the community's understanding of child protection and safeguarding so that they can identify, prevent and report such concerns and understand the negative impact that corporal punishment can have on a child's emotional well-being and educational attainment.

In addition to the regular sessions on child protection, both teachers and community members have been given positive discipline and parenting techniques to ensure that children can grow and flourish in a safe and secure environment. The voluntary School Management Committee has had new topics on codes of conduct for teachers and facilitators integrated, so that committee members are aware of expected the behaviours of staff and how to report safeguarding concerns.

**4. Develop good working relationships with the relevant government agency or department.** Such collaboration increased project understanding of the context, which reporting mechanisms and case management protocols already existed, and enabled more relevant intervention designs. This left behind a legacy of stronger national and district-level reporting mechanisms and more gender-sensitive responders.

**5. Develop a survivor-centred practice of ‘case conferencing’, in which district-level, multi-sectoral teams come together to address a survivor’s needs.** This helps to increase collaboration between service providers. For contexts with existing but weak referral pathways, this has been an effective approach. It is practical (focused on real and active cases) and routine (building accountability on actions).

**6. Establish multiple ways of reporting at the school level, including anonymously.** Many projects found it challenging to provide truly anonymous ways of reporting for girls and encountered challenges relating to girls’ concerns that reports would not be kept anonymous, concerns that the method of reporting would expose them as the whistleblower (e.g through their handwriting within suggestion boxes), issues around access to phone or email-based methods, and difficulties in securing private conversations with the person to whom they wished to report. The Marginalised no More project, led by Street Child in Nepal established multiple ways to report through 1) improved Complaint Response Mechanisms; 2) communication boards; and 3) counselling desks. They also had Elected Safeguarding Focal Points at community and school level.

**7. Ensure at least one focal point is female.** Especially where there are male teachers and teacher-perpetrated abuse is prevalent.

**8. Use direct messaging (such as WhatsApp) among community members and champions to keep discussions active on the broad challenges girls face (rather than individual cases where direct messaging would not be appropriate for confidentiality reasons).** This strengthens peer support and accountability and can also be used to support district protection officers.

**9. Work with the leaders of particularly hard-to-engage communities.** In Zimbabwe, the SAGE project, led by Plan International, engaged with religious leaders in the closed Apostolic communities. This was a successful strategy as the leaders themselves endorsed and set up clear reporting mechanisms.

**10. Involve government protection officers in training sessions, such as those conducted for community members.** This builds linkages and the capacity of protection officers, who are then able to lead such training themselves.

#### What interventions did not work?

- Projects that set up brand new helplines that were entirely dependent on project staff and funding
- Interventions that assumed that if a referral pathway existed it was functional.
- Putting a suggestion box in schools is not always a safe or anonymous way to report violence. Explicit instructions to place boxes in a discreet location is necessary, along with multiple ways of reporting.



## Safer environment strategies: What do better performing projects do differently?

### 1. Analyse and engage with potential perpetrators in a positive, constructive way.

The Jjelimishe (Educate Yourself) project, led by I Choose Life in Kenya, worked with motorcycle taxi drivers (referred to as 'boda-boda riders') who often offered girls' rides to school in exchange for sex when they could not pay with cash. The project team directly engaged with the riders to increase awareness of the risks girls face and imbue a greater sense of responsibility. Riders began to report and exclude those who took girls without payment and behaved inappropriately.

### 2. Support teachers and school management staff with methods to maintain discipline in a classroom without using violence or verbal abuse, grounded in content aimed at changing attitudes.

Projects have been more successful when they have addressed teachers' beliefs that corporal punishment is the only classroom management tool at their disposal. The Making Ghanaian Girls Great! project, led by Plan International in Ghana, provided teachers with effective alternative ideas and methods, particularly for large class sizes. As a result, girls and boys reported that teachers had stopped using corporal punishment and wider incidence of caning had gone down by 25%.

### 3. Facilitate critical self-reflection about gender and use of violence amongst teachers.

The Closing the Gap project, led by ACTED in Pakistan, designed teacher training which included space and time for teachers to reflect on their own experiences, attitudes and choices relating to child discipline (including how they experienced violence as children and how they reprimand their own children as parents). This allowed teachers to have a deeper understanding of the harm and disadvantages of corporal punishment, verbal abuse and inappropriate relationships, thereby raising the likelihood of attitudinal and behaviour change.

### 4. Approaches to gender-based violence, including bullying and corporal punishment, should be supported by a wholesale shift in culture at school and at home.

Critical self-reflection and non-violent methods should also be shared with headteachers, school management committees, parents and community members, as these stakeholders can have an effect on teacher practice and behaviour.

### 5. Work with boys and men to change their perceptions of girls' rights.

Boys' Clubs have provided an important forum for introducing activities that challenge negative notions of masculinity, interrogate gender norms, and discuss how to build healthy relationships between boys and girls. Successful projects found that engagement happened most effectively when it was: 1) delivered by a skilled male facilitator from the same community, with a very strong understanding of gender; 2) conducted at a time and in a place aligned with individuals' needs; 3) conducted consistently with the same individuals over at least a six-month period; and 4) respectful and allowed for discussion, disagreement and respectful contestation.

### 6. Inclusive participation can create empathy and reduce bullying amongst peers.

Clubs and activities which included girls with disabilities and discussed issues around stigma and bullying have significantly reduced bullying. Leonard Cheshire's model of child-to-child clubs, in which children with and without disabilities come together to cover a life-skills curricula in after-school sessions, contributed significantly to dispelling stigma, discrimination and bullying through fostering acceptance, friendships and socialisation inside and outside the classroom.

#### What interventions did not work?

- Telling teachers not to use corporal punishment without giving them alternative ways of maintaining discipline in a classroom or how to deal with a learner who acts inappropriately
- Failing to build in 'practice' time into training sessions for teachers so they can actually practice positive discipline skills or strategies they are trained on.

#### CASE STUDY: SOMGEP-T, Somalia

SOMGEP-T decided to make the reduction of corporal punishment a major part of their broader teacher professional development component, and its measurement became one of their three indicators for improved teaching practice. With access to a large cohort of teachers, and collaborative MoE relationships in place, the project was well positioned to test how they could contribute to a wholesale shift in attitudes towards and practice of physical violence in the classroom.

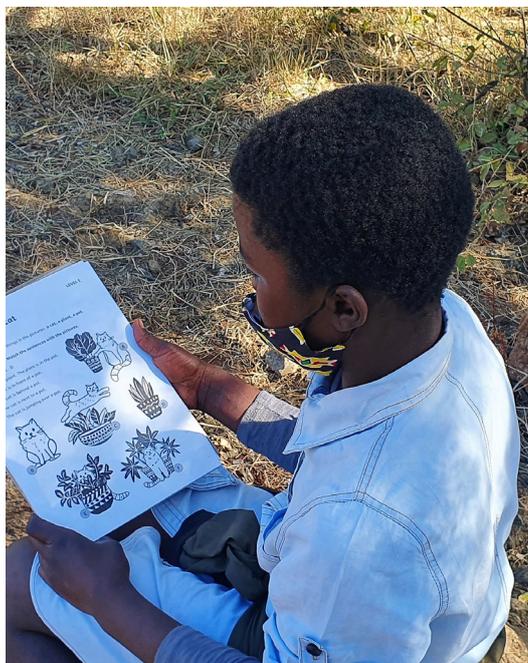
The cornerstone of the project's intervention in this area was targeted and well-monitored training sessions for teachers on non-violent classroom management. Training sought to fundamentally reframe the relationships between teachers and students and give teachers the practical skills they needed to implement more respectful and non-violence praise and reward systems. Space was found to listen to teachers' concerns over this new approach, and help them work through their own plans for what they would do upon their return to school.

## Supporting girls' awareness of violence: What do successful projects do differently?

**1. Develop interventions rooted in girls' own lived experiences of SRGBV.** Projects that created space for girls to narrate their experiences of SRGBV were able to develop more coherent and fit for purpose strategies for reporting systems and/or safer environments strategies. Throughout such sessions projects utilised the GEC safeguarding guidance around Do No Harm approaches to ensure that girls were not retraumatised and that interactions were managed ethically and safely.

**2. Support girls to map the locations and details of where they feel safe or unsafe within schools and communities, as this provides valuable information as to who perpetrators are and what forms abuse takes.** This enabled a more relevant and localised response, and increased girls' awareness at the same time.

**3. Integrate gender training to address a culture of 'victim blaming'.** The EAGER project, led by IRC in Sierra Leone, integrated gender modules into their training of girls' club mentors in order to locate violence in an understanding of unequal gender norms. When mentors have the skills to recognise that unequal power relationships create a culture that puts the responsibility on girls and women to avoid violence (and blames them if they do not), they are more able to recognise this injustice, call out peers and pre-empt the use of victim blaming messages in girls' clubs (i.e. messages about choice of clothing, relationships with boys or encouraging a docile demeanour). Girls and boys can also be supported to locate violence within an understanding of gender norms so that they too can challenge victim blaming messages amongst others and themselves.



### CASE STUDY: IGATE (World Vision), Zimbabwe

IGATE found that they could achieve breakthroughs in shifting a culture of silence around gender-based violence when girls had a more direct voice in the structures mandated to protect them, and a trusted network or channel for them to report into.

IGATE supported girls to articulate their experiences of SRGBV and develop scorecards based on their concerns. The girls then assessed their schools and communities against these, presented results to key stakeholders and worked with them to develop strategies to address issues. As a result, this led to an increase in the number of girls and community members reporting abuse and protection issues.

However, in score carding sessions, it was clear that girls needed champions to stand with them and challenge issues that were otherwise diminished or not believed. This network of support is best comprised of those with a track record of supporting girls and should not be assumed to be the ones mandated within existing structures. Male champions in particular are key allies in assuring girls' voices are heard in community spaces.

## Value for money

An analysis of projects' budgets indicates good cost efficiencies for work tackling SRGBV; costs range from £4 to £28 annually per beneficiary.<sup>18</sup> As previously noted, direct causality between SRGBV activities and learning outcomes is difficult to evidence. However, based on the costs of interventions and intermediate outcomes such as girls feeling safe or teachers reducing the use of physical punishments, inferences for some projects can be made regarding cost effectiveness. Additionally, there are economic gains associated with preventing violence; it is estimated that for every £1 spent on safer environments, there is a return of £87.<sup>19</sup> To put this in perspective, the Good Schools Toolkit in Uganda is estimated to cost £11 per pupil or £70 per case of violence averted.<sup>20</sup>

Three notable examples of good value for money work tackling SRGBV include:

- The [IGATE](#) project, led by World Vision in Zimbabwe, had an annual cost per beneficiary of £6 for its interventions that included the SRGBV scorecard system, establishment of safe spaces, approach to corporal punishment and building of referral pathways. Endline Evaluation results indicated greater awareness of child protection issues by teachers and community members, and greater feelings of safety by girls when travelling to school.
- The [SOMGEP-T](#) project in Somalia also had a low annual cost of £4 per beneficiary. Success was reflected in the increased use of non-violent discipline methods in schools – the result of the project's capacity-building efforts with teachers and Community Education Committee (CEC) members. Corporal punishment observations went from 57% to 0% from baseline to endline. Endline Evaluation interviews also showed that girls felt safer because of the involvement of CEC members and the increased involvement of girls' club members in school monitoring and conflict resolution.
- [ACTED](#) Pakistan was also cost effective; with an annual cost per beneficiary £20 it had good referral mechanisms, a qualitative approach to address corporal punishment in robust teacher training, strong engagement with boys and men, and mainstream reporting mechanisms in schools. The success was observed in more girls demonstrating 'higher awareness' of child protection and abuse at midline than baseline (77% vs 50%). Caregivers felt more concerned about girls' safety on way to school and at school at midline than they did at baseline. Over time, there was a decline in the number of corporal punishment cases being reported within the project.

<sup>18</sup> These costs are estimated by isolating the direct and indirect budget lines that reflected SRGBV activities (as described above) and dividing by the direct beneficiaries covered by the activities, and annualised.

<sup>19</sup> Office of the SRSG on Violence against Children (2013). Towards a World Free from Violence: Global Survey on Violence against Children. New York: Office of the SRSG on Violence against Children.

<sup>20</sup> This intervention was implemented during GEC 1. Currency converted (2021) – actual costs are US\$15 per pupil or US\$96 per case of violence averted. Greco G, Knight L, Ssekadde W, et al. (2018). Economic evaluation of the Good School Toolkit: an intervention for reducing violence in primary schools in Uganda. *BMJ Glob Health* 2018;3: e000526.



## Recommendations for the design and implementation of SRGBV work

This section synthesises findings from this Learning Brief and offers guidance on how practitioners can support the elimination of SRGBV from both a systems and school-level perspective. Guiding questions, which can form the basis of a situational analysis, structure the following sections that offer practical tips for those aiming to implement SRGBV interventions either as the main focus of a programme, or as a complement to activities aiming to improve learning outcomes. The sections will also highlight considerations and implications for scaling.

In summary, national policies on SRGBV, on their own, will not eliminate SRGBV. Careful work at the school and community level is needed to change attitudes and behaviours around violence. However, a national policy outlining laws and repercussions, as well as robust reporting and response mechanisms, can at least demonstrate that the government has a commitment to creating safer school environments and responding to violence. Thus, top-down and bottom-up work are both imperative, and programmes/projects working in the same country should coordinate efforts to optimise the breadth and depth of support, so that significant reductions in SRGBV can become a reality.

### Guiding questions to determine how to support the elimination of SRGBV at the system level:

#### **1. Is there is a national policy on SRGBV and if so, what is its level of detail regarding: a) reporting mechanisms; b) referral pathways; c) survivor-centred response; and d) system actor roles and responsibilities around these?**

Often national policies on SRGBV exist, but these may not be detailed, and they may not have accompanying implementation frameworks that provide explicit instructions for district, school or community stakeholders. Programmes can support Ministries of Education and other key stakeholders to develop or revise an SRGBV policy (if needed) and develop a detailed implementation framework that covers reporting, referral, response and roles/responsibilities.<sup>21</sup> Implications for scaling is dependent on the degree of dissemination and implementation of this policy (see *point 2 below*).

#### **2. To what degree is the national SRGBV policy disseminated and implemented?**

A robust, detailed SRGBV policy is not helpful if it is stuck on a shelf (or on a website that system actors do not access). In many lower to middle-income countries, hard copies are necessary. Programmes can support the development, printing and distribution of summaries of the SRGBV policy (to minimise printing costs) and sensitisation/follow up with all stakeholders who have a role or responsibility in its implementation. The degree of scaling may be limited to a programme's geographical scope. However, synergising and coordinating with other projects can support the dissemination and implementation of the policy in other parts of the country.

#### **3. To what degree do reporting systems, referral pathways and survivor-centred response mechanisms function at the district level?**

In many contexts, SRGBV structures exist. However, assumptions should not be made that they are functional. Programmes should map out existing structures/committees, visit them to discern the degree to which they function (do they hold meetings? does someone lead them? do they take action?), and then help to address gaps. Consistent capacity building, case conferencing and follow-up may be necessary to improve functionality. To facilitate scaling and sustainability, try to build a peer-mentorship system that would support stakeholders to capacity build/follow up with counterparts in a neighbouring community or district. This will also support adaptation of the policy to specific contexts.

#### **4. To what degree does pre or in-service teacher training explicitly aim to prevent and respond to SRGBV?**

Most national teacher training curricula do not have an explicit focus on eliminating corporal punishment and other types of teacher-perpetrated abuse, particularly through prompting teachers' critical self-reflection on violence and gender norms, and/or providing them with practical classroom management and positive discipline methods. Programmes working on pre or in-service training curricula should add these features in order to enhance other pedagogies.

**“Careful work at the school and community level is needed to change attitudes and behaviours around violence”**

<sup>21</sup> This should include an emphasis on national laws the SRGBV policy is based on and consequences for perpetrators.

**Guiding questions to determine how to address SRGBV at the school/community level:**

**1.** To what degree do accessible reporting systems, referral pathways and survivor-centred response mechanisms exist and/or function at the school and community-level? In contexts where a national SRGBV policy is weak or does not exist, and school-level systems are non-existent, projects may opt to create reporting/response systems from scratch. However, it is important to include relevant ministry, district actors and government protection officers in order to build capacity and influence. New school-level systems could form the basis for revision to or development of a national SRGBV policy (see *point 1*). If school reporting/response systems do exist, discern the degree to which they function, and then help to address gaps (see *'Factors for success'* section). To facilitate scaling and sustainability, try to build a peer-mentorship system that supports stakeholders to build capacity and follow up with counterparts in a neighbouring community or district.

**2.** To what degree are headteachers, staff, students (particularly girls), parents, school management committees and community members aware of the national policy on SRGBV and related reporting/response systems? If a policy exists but stakeholders are unaware of it, projects can support the development, printing and distribution of summaries of the SRGBV policy (as noted in *point 2*). If a project has supported the development of a school-level reporting/response system as well (*point 5*), it should ensure these are also well understood by stakeholders.

**3.** To what degree are potential perpetrators of sexual violence – such as teachers<sup>22</sup>, family members, men and boys in the community – aware of what constitutes sexual violence, the laws surrounding it and the repercussions? Awareness of laws and repercussions around transactional sex, rape, sexual harassment, early/forced marriage and female genital mutilation is helpful, but it may not be enough on its own and needs to be part of a comprehensive approach. As noted previously, careful analysis and targeting of potential perpetrators should be conducted in order to determine how best to engage them in a positive, constructive way and avoid backlash or stigmatising groups of people. To facilitate scaling and sustainability, try to build a peer-mentorship system and explore ways to amplify the perspectives of 'positive deviants' to neighbouring communities, such as parents who have decided not to endorse early marriage or FGM.

**4.** To what degree are teachers aware of and using classroom management and/or positive discipline methods to avoid using physical and psychological punishments? As discussed in *point 4*, most national teacher training curricula do not have an explicit focus on eliminating corporal punishment. Projects aiming to implement SRGBV training at the school level should include relevant ministry actors, government protection officers, pre-service teacher training colleges and district officers responsible for in-service training in order to build linkages/capacity and influence the scaling and replication of training.

**“To facilitate scaling and sustainability, try to build a peer-mentorship system that supports stakeholders to build capacity and follow up with counterparts in a neighbouring community or district.”**



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<sup>22</sup>As discussed in the introduction, GEC projects have qualitative evidence of inappropriate relationships between teachers and girls, and have noted a high prevalence of sexual abuse perpetrated by male pupils and male teachers.

Girls'  
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