



EVIDENCE REVIEW: SUMMARY

Prevention of violence against children in and through schools in the Global South



Coalition *for*
Good Schools

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Violence against children (VAC) is a significant public health problem. It is estimated that more than a billion children experience violence every year¹ and a significant proportion of that is experienced at schools in the Global South.² The *Coalition for Good Schools* commissioned a systematic scoping review that aimed at analyzing the nature of interventions currently underway in the Global South for preventing violence against children and what we can learn from them.

Scoping Review Method:

- The exercise yielded 84,708 unique records resulting in 356 relevant abstracts on preventing VAC in and through schools in the Global South. From these abstracts 89 peer reviewed and published articles were included in the study.
- Further outreach through networks and online searches yielded 62 relevant program reports (grey literature).
- The review therefore analyzed 151 publications about 93 distinct interventions in the Global South.

Frame of analysis:

The authors drew on the INSPIRE framework³ to analyze the school based interventions into five thematic areas:

- Building life-skills and knowledge
- Building safe environment
- Addressing harmful gender norms
- Providing psycho-social support
- Promoting a whole school approach.

Through this analysis, the study classified **20** programs as successful, **29** as promising, **30** as emerging and **14** as ineffective.

Summary of Mathews S, Achyut P, October L & Makola L. (2021). Evidence Review: Prevention of violence against children through schools in the Global South. Raising Voices, Uganda and University of Cape Town, South Africa

Key Findings

Recognizing that violence prevention in and through schools is still an emerging practice, the following should be seen as evolving conclusions, each of which were identified as key characteristics of successful interventions:

- 1. Multicomponent and integrated interventions.** Effective programs engaged multiple stakeholders such as school staff, parents, learners, community-based organizations, leaders and community members in the planning, implementation and/or participation in a program.⁴ School-wide interventions aimed at developing capacity of school based protagonists and invested in structural changes such as development of policy and operational guidelines. The approach aimed at generating synergy and sustainability.
- 2. Expansive school environment.** Analysis suggested that interventions that addressed values, policies and practice that target the whole-school environment were more effective in reducing violence. Interventions that helped the school develop and enforce policies to address bullying, promoted open communication and created a favorable school climate⁵ and tended to be more effective at reducing violence. Programs that engaged victims and perpetrators as well as bystanders reinforced important protective behaviors.⁶ A whole-school approach that encompasses concerns of the entire school – including governance, policy environment, parental concerns as well as student well being – is critical to effect the desired change.
- 3. Group based learning.** Several studies found that group based interventions can help the school create opportunities for developing shared values and a collective sense of acceptable operational culture. Interventions addressing inequitable gender norms in such a manner can successfully catalyze young people's attitudes toward gender roles, safer sex behavior, and healthier relationships through the creation of a shared culture.^{7,8} Furthermore, peer-led interventions can create opportunities to promote learners' leadership, 'voice' and agency and, therefore, promote resilience⁹ as well as collective ownership of the school's culture.
- 4. Leadership opportunity for school staff and learners.** Successful programs found that teachers can be trained through relatively short interventions to enhance the school environment and to provide psychosocial support that empower teachers to improve learners' behavior.^{10,11,12} Such investments and opportunity for staff and learners to exercise leadership are critical components of a successful intervention.

5. Different types of violence require different strategies.

Targeted interventions may be needed to address specific manifestations of violence and aimed at specific subpopulations of the school. For example, programs on intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention that were mainly targeted at older adolescents have shown to be more successful in reducing reports of IPV among young men than young women, a different effect based on gender of participants.¹³ Furthermore, establishing and cultivating a positive parent-adolescent relationship during early childhood has numerous advantages and goes a long way in helping to protect vulnerable children and adolescents in the online environment.¹⁴

6. Iterative attitude toward intervention development.

The development of successful interventions should be seen as an iterative and learning process with an investment in careful monitoring and documentation. Implementation researchers have started to systematically examine the degree to which the core components of a successful program can be maintained while allowing for local adaptation, to accommodate what may be needed to facilitate the effective implementation and sustainment of an intervention at a system, policy, or organizational level.¹⁵ Therefore, attention should be given not just to “what” is being implemented (intervention components) but “how” an intervention is implemented (implementation process). This involves identifying the core elements of programs, the process of implementation, fidelity to the program, and the dose of the program, all of which make a difference in program efficacy.



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