

Preventing Violence against Children: Prioritizing Pathways in Bogotá

Momentum is gathering for prevention of violence against children (VAC). We have begun to define the size and the nature of the problem (1). We have calculated the cost of not addressing the problem (2). We have identified evidence-informed, effective, and promising interventions (3). We have summarized knowledge and brought together strategic leaders to address how to move the work of preventing VAC forward (4) culminating in the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children in Bogotá, Colombia in November 2024. It is our collective hope that the gathering in Bogotá will build the bridge from deliberations to larger scale actions. We know that such efforts have to be led by and addressed at systems implemented and funded by governments (5). As we foster this conversation, the Coalition for Good Schools offers five overarching ideas that we believe should inform these conversations:

1 Systemic intervention through the education sector. People's lives are profoundly influenced by the power-systems that surround them. For children, the education system has the most sustained influence on their life outcomes. Therefore, it is of strategic importance that we invest resources in addressing how the education sector can prevent violence against children.

2 Whole-school approaches. All targeted interventions to prevent VAC in and through schools should be built on a foundational, whole-school intervention. The foundational intervention should address the operational culture of schools by promoting just and equitable norms and practice. It should engage multiple layers of the school, beginning with the administration and reaching all the way to learners, including teachers, parents, and community members. The intervention should be a process based on an evidence-informed methodology and should have sufficient flexibility for local adaptation and innovations.

3 Led by frontline protagonists. The VAC prevention interventions at schools may be introduced by governments but must be implemented and led by local protagonists such as teachers, learners and community members. It should create space for collective exploration of values and group based learning. It should enlist diverse leaders and create space for voices of often overlooked children such as girls, or children with a disability.

4 Funded and planned for through education budget. The key activities should be funded and be accountable through the national education plan. The intervention should be financed, and line budgeted in school level funding, and require formal accountability and established standards.

5 Accountability. How stakeholders experiences school is important, not only to the individual, but to their entire community as well. Tracking progress and adopting a learning posture by establishing incisive benchmarks, and setting targets against such indicators, will enhance the rate of progress and yield better learning outcomes.

Schools are repositories of our highest aspirations. They are engines for generating possibilities. They can also be places for solutions. Violence against children in schools deprives the entire community of this potential. The time for action at scale is now.



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Notes

- 1) Beginning with UN Secretary Generals' Study on violence against children (<https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/content/un-study-violence-against-children>), to Know Violence in Childhood's comprehensive synthesis of the state of the field (<https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Know-Violence-Global-Report-2017.pdf>) we have assembled significant analyses of the problem. This Brief summarizes the state of the knowledge (<https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/violence-in-schools.pdf>).
- 2) The comprehensive analysis led by the World Bank and the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children paints a sobering picture, including the startling conclusion that the global economy will lose more than 11 trillion US dollars in life-time income as a result of violence against children in and around schools. (<https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ending-Violence-in-Schools-An-Investment-Case.pdf>).
- 3) See the INSPIRE package that summarizes key strategies and examples of evidence informed interventions that embody such approaches (<https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WHO-INSPIRE-Framework-2016.pdf>). See also our 2021 Evidence Review: Prevention of Violence against Children in and through Schools in the Global South. (<https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Coalition-for-Good-Schools-Evidence-Review-R6.pdf>) for examples of evidence informed interventions that are successful or showing promise in their early stages.
- 4) See also deliberations at Wilton Park in 2024 <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/reports/addressing-violence-in-and-through-education/>.
- 5) See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/content/pathfinding-countries> and also the UN General Assemblies resolution A/RES/73/155 (<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/448/29/pdf/n1844829.pdf>) that calls upon States to take all necessary action to protect children's rights including prevention of all forms of violence against them. See also the crisp articulation of this case at <https://www.justsystems.org/>.



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