



Country Report

Towards Safer Schools for Children: Nepal

Preventing Violence Against Children in
Schools in South and Southeast Asia



Coalition for
Good Schools





About Coalition for Good Schools

The Coalition for Good Schools is a collection of leading Global South practitioners committed to preventing violence against children (VAC) in and through schools across Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Coalition elevates insights and evidence-based interventions in order to provide critical tools, data and best practices for sustainable, local solutions. This ten-country document review series has been initiated by the Asia Hub of the Coalition for Good Schools, coordinated by Samya Development Resources Private Limited (SAMYA).

The Asia Hub commissioned 10 country reports on the state of VAC in and around schools in the broader region, in collaboration with core partners in each context. Each report provides an overview of how violence manifests in educational settings, explores contributing social, cultural and economic factors for VAC in each context, and provides a brief review of the policy landscape, national leadership and strategy for ending violence. While school violence is the primary focus, violence in other physical and online settings is explored. These reports are thus developed for all those working on the issue of VAC, particularly for those who see schools as an ideal entry point for its prevention.

In the absence of systematic data collection on VAC in Asia's schools, these reports highlight data that are indicative of trends and point attention to existing gaps. These 10 reports are developed to stand alone, and are summarised in a scene-setting "Synthesis Report" which can be found on our website at www.coalitionforgoodschools.org.

Acknowledgements

This series of reports, produced by the Asia Hub of the Coalition for Good Schools presents background information, infographics and key resources that aim to foster change and development in both schools' settings and communities in the field of prevention of Violence Against Children across Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. This would not be possible without the diverse inputs of practitioners and researchers throughout each context. The Asia Hub is grateful to the following people for their contributions:

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Country Profile

NEPAL

Population



30.24
Million¹

Languages



Nepali

Leading ethnic groups



16.6%

Chhetri

12.2%

Bahun

7.1%

Magar

6.6%

Tharu

5.8%

Tamang

5%

Newar

4.4%

Muslim

4%

Yadav

2.3%

Rai

2%

Gurung

1.5%

Limbu

21.93%

Others

Age Structure



28.36%

0-14 years

20.93%

15-24 years

45.02%

25-64 years

5.69%²

65 and over

GDP per capita



\$920.00

(2022 Forecast)

Poverty Rate



17.4%³

Literacy rate



59.63%⁴

Key Findings

- ❖ Although Nepal has prohibited corporal punishment of children entirely, almost 80% of children age 1-14 are disciplined violently.
- ❖ Peer violence and bullying remains a serious concern, with half of Nepali students reporting experience of physical or psychological bullying across multiple national surveys.
- ❖ 13% of the boys and 15% of girls reported experiencing some sexual abuse, and 15% of internet-using children have encountered sexual abuse or exploitation online.

¹ <https://thehimalayantimes.com/blogs/poverty-and-childrens-education>

² https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_784225/lang--en/index.htm

³ <https://www.grin.com/document/274904>

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/13261/file/Social>

Overall snapshot of violence against children (VAC) in Nepal

The presence of violence in and around schools, such as physical or psychological abuse, corporal punishment, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, peer bullying, or online violence, can have a lasting impact on a child's mental and physical well-being, impair academic performance and even results in the complete dropout of some students. Among these, school bullying is one of the most pressing issues with significant public concerns (Mishra et al., 2018; Rana, 2008), yet this remains an under-researched area in Nepal.

In Nepal, the number of DALYs⁵ (Disability Adjusted Life Years)—a measure that reflects the total number of years lost due to illness, disability, or premature death—linked to childhood bullying appears to be rising, in line with trends in South Asia and Low SDI (Socio-demographic Index) nations. Bullying of children in Nepal was responsible for 17,324 DALYs in 2017, up from 8,609 DALYs in 1990. Bullying is responsible for roughly 32.69 DALYs per 100,000 from anxiety disorders and 25.27 DALYs per 100,000 from depressive disorders in Nepal (IHME, 2017). Studies show that schools (both public and private) have been affected by some form of bullying (Gaihare et al., 2019)⁶.

This violence extends into online spaces in which children in Nepal are spending more of their time (Dhungana, 2014). According to a study by the Nepal Telecommunications Authority,⁷ 26% of students in Kathmandu reported experiencing cyberbullying. According to a survey by UNICEF, 51% of Nepalese school adolescents were bullied online and they were more likely to report loneliness, anxiety, suicide attempts, school absenteeism and involvement in physical fights. These statistics show that cyberbullying is a prevalent and pressing problem that needs to be addressed urgently. Research conducted by the DQ Institute (DQI), as quoted by local media, reported that more than 50% of the children in the 8-to-12-year age group are exposed to one or more forms of cyber risks. These include cyberbullying, video game addiction, online grooming and online sexual behaviours⁸.

Although Nepal has prohibited corporal punishment of children entirely, almost 80% of children age 1-14 are disciplined violently.⁹ More than half of children between the ages of one and two experience physical punishment as part of their discipline showing that violence starts very early for many children and how most are abused by adults who are supposed to be looking after them. The latest cluster survey (MICS, 2019), in collaboration with UNICEF, indicates that overall, 82% of children aged 1-14 years had experienced at least one form of physical punishment and psychological aggression by caregivers in the last month preceding the survey¹⁰.

VAC is a pervasive problem, though there have been relatively few studies done on such a delicate and vital area of social concern. Even though several organisations have recently raised this problem, there is still more work to be done.

⁵ In five South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan), a total of 7 68,238 Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) were attributable to childhood bullying in 2017. See Neupane, T., Pandey, A. R., Bista, B., & Chalise, B. (2020). Correlates of bullying victimisation among school adolescents in Nepal: Findings from 2015 Global School-Based Student Health Survey Nepal. *PLoS one*, 15(8), e0237406. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237406>

⁶ <https://www.scielo.br/j/ep/a/YpF57nS6p8JDNCVmf5Rwp6y/?format=pdf&lang=en>

⁷ The Electronic Transactions Act 2063. 2008. Available: <http://www.tepc.gov.np/uploads/files/12the-electronic-transaction-act55.pdf>

⁸ <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2018/03/02/cyberbullies-top-risk-for-children>

⁹ Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Nepal. Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/16191/file/Nepal>

Prevalence of different forms of VAC

1. Corporal punishment

Despite the paucity of surveys on violence at school, testimonies from students, parents and instructors, together with instances publicised in the media, imply that corporal punishment is a widespread issue in Nepali education. According to a UNICEF report from 2018, 14% of Nepali children between 1-14 years old were subjected to severe physical punishment, accounting for nearly 80% of the country's child abuse cases. According to the survey, a significant proportion of youngsters experience violence at the hands of individuals tasked with their care. Children often drop out of school out of fear of their teachers.¹¹ Even government reports reveal that a significant number of children face punishment and bullying in both public and private schools.

A report by the Education Review Office (2018) which surveyed 46,266 grade eight students in 1,950 public and private schools from 26 districts found that 16% of schools still follow corporal punishment and teachers from 18% of schools used inappropriate language in classrooms. The study further said that the performance of students who underwent such kinds of punishment was poorer than their classmates. Even the Kathmandu Post has published several reports in recent years about physical humiliation and abuse. The consequences of these forms of discipline are wide-ranging and long-term in nature, including learning disabilities, behavioural disorders and depression. In some instances, the physical harm inflicted on children has led to death.

According to UNICEF, 70% of children in Nepal also reported having experienced psychological violence in their homes, 50% of children had been punished physically and 14% of children have experienced severe physical punishment from a caregiver¹². 63% of children received some form of physical punishment, even though just 23% of mothers and other carers thought it was essential to discipline children physically. As per the MICS and UNICEF data (2019), age-related trends imply that children between the ages of 1 and 9 face more violent discipline, but as they get older, it tends to reduce - although it is unclear from evidence whether this violence is replaced by other forms as children navigate adolescence.

2. Peer violence and bullying

School bullying is a significant public health concern in Nepal. A nationwide survey shows a high prevalence of bullying victimisation among adolescent students in Nepal (Pandey et al., 2019). A meta-analysis study on bullying pointed out various risk factors of bullying such as socio-demographic characteristics (like age, sex, ethnicity and religion), family characteristics (like socio-economic status, parental characteristics and family disharmony), school characteristics and media (Vikneshwaran et al., 2018). There has been a high prevalence of bullying reported in several studies. For example, Mishra et al. (2018) found 58.0% prevalence, while a nationwide survey showed 50.7% and a survey of Mental Health Status by WHO (2017) showed 51% bullying victimisation in Nepal. Another study revealed that the prevalence of verbal bullying was 75.8%, relational bullying was 57.7%, physical bullying was 23.2% and cyberbullying was 23.2% (Shrestha et al., 2022). All this suggests that violence and bullying within schools remain widely pervasive.

3. Sexual violence and harassment

According to the NGO Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), most cases of CSA go unreported due to social stigmatisation and inaction of law enforcement agencies. Save the Children Norway, along with CWIN, in 2002, surveyed to assess the prevalence of sexual abuse among children in Nepal. Interviewing 6,000 school and out-of-school children across the country, they found that 13% of the boys and 15% of girls reported experiencing some sexual abuse ranging from rape to sexually

¹¹ CVICT. Discipline with dignity. <http://www.cvict.org.np/disc.html>¹². Published 2008. Assessed February 24, 2010

¹² <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/press-releases/eight-out-10-children-nepal-experience-violent-discipline-unicef>

related verbal abuse. Several children reported abuse by teachers in school. Another study by two Nepalese psychiatrists' points to sexual abuse as prevalent amongst all ethnic groups, for the most part affecting boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 15 years. It also states that perpetrators are frequently family members, relatives, neighbours and teachers. One study even found rates of sexual abuse in children to be as high as 33.5 to 45% (Basnet et al., 2020). The media monitoring task force of Save the Children Norway revealed 147 news items in 1999 alone regarding child sexual abuse: 73 were cases of rape of girl children, 20 of which were perpetrated by family members perpetrated (Save the Children, 2003).

4. Cyberbullying and online violence

While the field of public health research on cyberbullying is expanding, there are not many studies conducted on the frequency of cyberbullying or its causes, particularly among teenagers in Nepal. A research report conducted by the DQ Institute¹³, a digital think tank published its report in 2018, found that 58% children aged 8 to 12 years had been exposed to one or more cyber-risks, such as cyberbullying, online grooming and online sexual behaviours while using online platforms¹⁴.

Drivers of VAC

1. Normative factors

The causes of bullying in Nepal cannot be attributed to any standalone reason, as social and cultural aspects quite profoundly affect behaviour. Similarly, economic conditions can have a substantial influence on shaping behaviour (Gaihre et al., 2019). According to data from MICS and UNICEF (2019), mothers/caretakers from more affluent households (13%) and those with higher levels of education (8%) are less likely than those with no education (30%) and from the poorest households (32%) to think that physical punishment is required for raising a child. It was also found that violence in homes often varied from rural to urban areas, with the levels of violence being slightly higher in rural areas. Culturally, in Nepal, corporal punishment is often considered necessary for children's upbringing to facilitate learning and to instill discipline in the children.

2. Sexuality

According to research conducted in Nepal by Save the Children (2023), LGBTQIA+ children experience discrimination, harassment and bullying at school and at home, resulting in isolation and poor mental health. Children may thus lose out on an education due to being dissuaded from leaving the house. A national study conducted by UNDP in 2014 found that 16% of LGBTQIA+ people experience verbal harassment in schools in Nepal. Moreover, some transgender students were denied exam access because of problems with their identity cards and uniforms, which presented severe obstacles to their educational progress (UNDP, 2014).

A 2016 UNESCO report exploring responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity found that in Nepal, 16% of LGBTQIA+ students had experienced some form of verbal harassment while at school¹⁵. Cyberstalking, revenge porn, online shaming and trolling are the most prevalent types of online harassment and cyberbullying in Nepal.

¹³ The report focuses on the current state of online child safety and digital citizenship, based on a multi-nation study which included 38,000 children aged between eight and 12 years from 29 countries including Nepal, the USA, the UK, Australia, China, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore and Mexico.

¹⁴ <https://www.dqinstitute.org/country-nepal/>

¹⁵ http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/Being_LGBT_in_Asia_Nepal_Country_Report.pdf

3. Poverty

In Nepal, poverty has a severe impact on children's education. For children from poverty-stricken areas or families, accessing education can be particularly difficult. Children may be forced to find a job to help earn an income for their families and discontinue school, or even if they do go to school, their learning may often suffer¹⁶. For example, according to the ILO, Nepal had an estimated 1.1 million children aged between 5-17 years who were engaged in child labour, predominantly in agricultural work, in 2015¹⁷.

4. Conflict

From 1996 to 2006, the Maoist party in Nepal waged an armed conflict against the Nepali state, which had a significant impact on the education sector. Students faced threats from the Revolutionary Party and government security personnel. The rebels tried to force schools to apply "Janwadi Sikchhava," the Maoist curriculum and stood against the government system¹⁸. Teachers and students also faced consequences for providing food or shelter to the rebels. The conflict put the education system under tremendous pressure, which has had a significant negative impact on children going to school.

Prevention and Response to VAC

The Nepalese government has taken many essential measures to improve response to VAC through police intervention and legal action. To counter the problems of VAC in schools, The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) has established a school-based reporting mechanism called "Suggestion box" to promote reporting cases of various forms of violence experienced by the students, including corporal punishment by teachers and bullying by peers. As per the Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) Guidelines 2073 (according to the Nepali Calendar) by the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, all secondary schools countrywide should appoint one female teacher as gender focal person and compulsorily establish a suggestion box in schools.

UNICEF and the UNITE Youth Network have also implemented interventions to address sexual harassment at the school and community level using 277 peer educators to educate boys and men on how to make schools safer for all children, and developed village-level networks with links to relevant referral and response services.

Article 39 on child rights in the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has strict provisions banning all forms of abuse and VAC, from family to community levels. It states that "no child shall be subjected to physical, mental or any other form of torture at home, school or other place and situation whatsoever." The Sixth Amendment to the Education Rules 2002 (according to the Roman Calendar) in 2011 added a code of conduct for the teachers specifying that the teachers should not commit physical or mental torture on students. Most recently, in August 2018, the Bill to Amend and Codify Laws Relating to Children, which will supersede the Children's Act of 1992, was registered in the parliament specifying that "physical or mental punishment or undignified behaviour at home, school or any other place in the name of protection, education or discipline shall be regarded as 'VAC.'

A further commitment was made at the 2024 Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, which aims to enhance systematic data collection by expanding the operation of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) and conducting regular surveys on violence against children across sectors.

¹⁶ <https://thehimalayantimes.com/blogs/poverty-and-childrens-education>

¹⁷ https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_784225/lang--en/index.htm

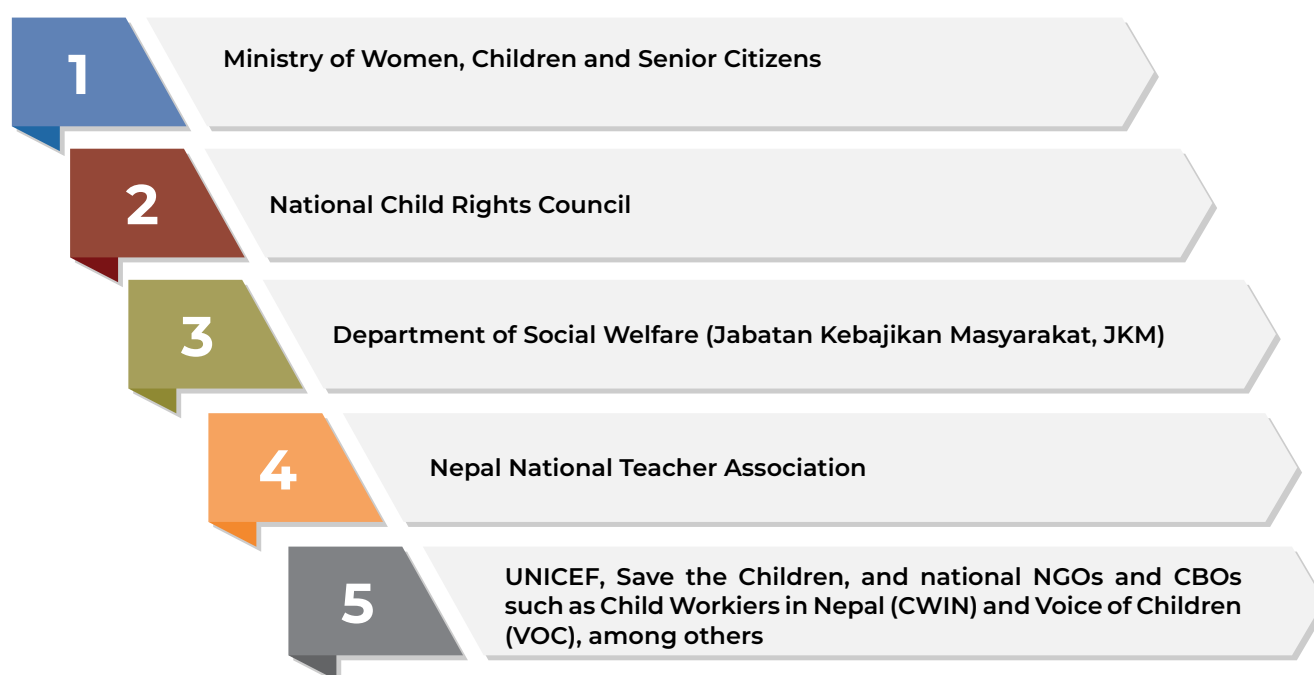
¹⁸ <https://www.grin.com/document/274904>

Budget and policy

Nepal has made some progress in protecting children against violence in schools. However, there are considerable issues related to the prevention of VAC that need to be addressed. For example, the UN Committee on Human Rights and Child Rights suggested that the existing draft of Children's Law did not provide a comprehensive, integrated, rights-based approach, nor did it adequately define terms or mandates for protecting children, 2016. There is also a significant overlap among the various ongoing sectoral national plans. They do not have adequate details, indicators, targets and timelines for effective implementation.

The National Social Protection budget for 2019 -2020 was 13.7% of the national budget. All children have the right to social security under Nepal's Constitution, including additional assurances provided by the Children's Act of 2018 and in the 2024 Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, the Government of Nepal committed to amending the Children's Act 2018 to address violence against children (VAC), including emerging forms of child sexual exploitation, expanding protections for victims of online violence. UNICEF (2021) found that extending the Child Grant to children up to 17 is financially possible. A 1% reduction in family poverty would allow households to pay for improved education, food and healthcare. This extension would be an essential step towards a more egalitarian future and a forward-thinking strategy for Nepal.

Institutional Mapping of the country to deal with VAC



While this study provides a scene-setting review of the available evidence at the national level, more research is required to gain a more comprehensive picture of the prevalence of child abuse in Nepal, particularly studies involving children from different regions and those attending private, military and other non-public educational institutions.¹⁹ Subsequent research efforts should concentrate on determining the causes of the elevated incidence of violence and its consequences.

¹⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/13261/file/Social>

Suggestions on the Way Forward

As the understanding of safety in educational environments continues to evolve, there is increasing recognition of schools as spaces where non-violent and just societies can be co-created. The findings presented here aim to inform a growing network of national and regional practitioners, policymakers, civil society groups, researchers and funders committed to preventing all forms of violence within Nepal's schools.

While the Coalition for Good Schools encourages stakeholders to review the full recommendations outlined in the regional synthesis report, insights from the Asia Hub highlight key areas for action:

- **Education delivery system as an entry-point:** *The education system offers a strategic avenue for the prevention of violence against children. Effective multi-sectoral government action at the national level is crucial for catalysing these interventions.*
- **Children's experience and agency:** *Prioritising children's lived experiences within schools and fostering their agency should be central in education policies and interventions.*
- **Whole-school approach:** *Implementing a comprehensive, whole-school strategy that nurtures a positive school culture and upholds the inherent dignity of every child can produce long-term outcomes. Meaningful engagement with teachers, school staff, and the local community is essential for the success of such initiatives.*
- **Knowledge generation and dissemination:** *Ongoing documentation, sharing, and expansion of knowledge and evidence is vital for deepening understanding of effective interventions, strengthening local efforts and supporting scale through the education sector.*

There are proven solutions to end violence, and with collective effort, violence can be prevented within our lifetime. For instance, Voice of Children (VOC) Nepal focuses on preventing sexual abuse, providing skills for children to navigate school environments safely. Kidpower Nepal teaches practical, empowering skills for safety, confidence, and self-protection through violence prevention, boundary-setting and personal safety programming tailored for schools and communities. CWIN-Nepal advocates for children's rights, addresses child exploitation and trafficking, and urges increased government accountability, and works with provincial authorities and the curriculum development centre on sexual abuse prevention. These efforts reflect a robust and expanding civil society dedicated to VAC prevention in Nepal.

Effective foundational interventions should incorporate several core elements:

- **Recognising schools' role in nurturing and developing children's potential.**
- **Promoting justice, equality, and empathy as foundational school values.**
- **Affirming children's rights and agency within the educational context.**
- **Supporting progressive pedagogies that encourage positive change.**
- **Honouring the dignity of every child, irrespective of gender, sexuality, race, caste, creed, or other categorisations.**

Prevention programmes must also adopt an intersectional perspective that acknowledges the overlapping and reinforcing characteristics that shape children's unique experiences of violence. This approach recognises that certain groups of children may face increased risks and that the severity and frequency of violence can vary considerably.

While sometimes sites of violence, schools also hold significant potential as primary sites for learning and implementing strategies to prevent it. School-based initiatives can thus yield multiple positive outcomes, serving as catalysts for broader change.

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