


# SAFE TO LEARN DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

November 2021

 **Safe to Learn**

**unicef**   
for every child

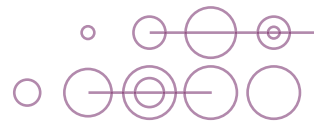
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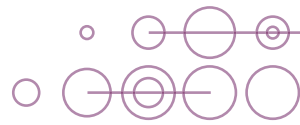
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## Foreword

The diagnostic tool is designed to inform country-level collective dialogue between Safe to Learn partners and national counterparts. This is a joint tool, resulting from a meaningful and expert-based collaboration between all Safe to Learn members under the leadership of UNICEF and with significant contributions from UNESCO, the World Bank, UNGEI and UK FCDO.

To get from setting a priority to delivering impactful and lasting action, we first need to have a solid diagnostic. This is what this joint Safe to Learn diagnostic tool is about. It goes hand in hand with the Safe to Learn Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking tool that altogether provide operational guidelines for change. As a whole, they were designed to support countries to implement the Safe to Learn Call to Action.

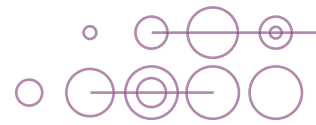
We encourage all countries and partners to make use of this Safe to Learn diagnostic tool to prioritise investments and measure progress for children, so that every girl and every boy, everywhere is truly safe to learn.

Chloë Fèvre  
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## Acknowledgments

This Tool is part of a set of guiding tools developed by the Safe to Learn Coalition. In addition to the diagnostic tool, they include the Safe to Learn [Programmatic Framework](#) and the [Benchmarking Tool](#). It was developed under the technical leadership of UNICEF, in collaboration with Safe to Learn core partners. It was refined and tested by Cambridge Education with the financial support of UK FCDO and piloted in five pioneer countries in 2019-2021.

Numerous individuals and organizations contributed to the development of the diagnostic tool, which drew from intensive and substantive engagement of Safe to Learn partners, particularly UNICEF, UNESCO, UNGEI and UK FCDO.

Stephen Blight (UNICEF) led these efforts with the technical support of Catherine Flagothier (UNICEF/Safe to Learn). Joanna Herat and Christophe Cornu (UNESCO), Chloë Fèvre (World Bank), Martin Niblett (FCDO) provided significant contributions to the development of this tool. Cambridge Education provided overall support and contributed to the piloting of the diagnostic in pioneer countries.







## Background

Over 1 billion children experience physical, sexual or emotional violence at home, in school, on the way to school, or online every year. Violence is a child rights violation which jeopardizes child development, negatively impacts on children's education, health and wellbeing and on children's capacity to learn and thrive. Evidence shows that violence in and around school severely impacts educational outcomes and undermines educational investments. The cost of this violence for society is estimated by the [World Bank](#) at USD11 trillion in lost lifetime earnings.<sup>1</sup>

“Safe to Learn” is a global initiative dedicated to ending violence against children in and through schools. Ending violence in and through schools refers to two aspects of ending violence. First, ending all violence that happens while at school, on and around school grounds, while getting to and from school, and in online activity linked to a student's school life. Second, using school as an entry point to reduce violence in other areas of children's lives.

The *Safe to Learn* initiative addresses diverse forms of violence including:

- Violence perpetrated by teachers and other school staff, including corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual exploitation and abuse, and bullying.
- Violence that takes place between peers in and around schools, such as bullying, and other forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence, including gender-based violence; these forms of violence may also have an online dimension, which may include sexual exploitation and abuse, cyberbullying and digital harassment.
- Violence in a home and family setting; insofar as teachers and other school staff are typically the first point of contact with children outside of their families, they also have a professional duty to identify warning signs and respond where indications of violence or abuse are apparent.
- Violence in the community that has an impact on schools; this includes violence associated with gang culture, and armed violence in non-conflict settings.
- Attacks on schools, understood as any intentional threat or use of force carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious or criminal reasons against students, educators, and education institutions.

As of October 2021, 14 major organizations have joined the Safe to Learn initiative, including civil society, global partnerships, United Nations system members and the Secretary General's Special Representative on Violence Against Children (SRSG-VAC).

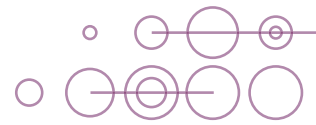
With the view of making schools safe, Safe to Learn members developed their joint programmatic and advocacy objectives in a five-points Call to Action, indicating what needs to happen for children to be safe to learn: 1) Implement policy and legislation; 2) Strengthen prevention and response at the school level; 3) Shift social norms and behaviour change; 4) Invest resources effectively; and 5) Generate and use evidence.

In 2020 the Safe to Learn initiative, under the leadership of UNICEF and with UK FCDO's support developed a Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool, to support countries and partners in translating the Call to Action into practical actions. The [Safe to Learn Global Programmatic Framework and](#)

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<sup>1</sup>Wodon, Q., C. Fèvre, C. Male, A. Nayihouba, and H. Nguyen. 2021. Ending Violence in Schools: An Investment Case. Washington, DC: World Bank and Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.





**Benchmarking Tool: from Call to Action to Programme Responses** translates the Call to Action into a set of benchmarks which countries need to meet to achieve change under each area of the Call to Action.

Based on the benchmarking tool, this diagnostic tool was then developed, to measure the quality of national efforts to prevent and respond to violence in and around schools against each benchmark, at national, decentralized and school level.

This diagnostic tool should be read in conjunction with the Safe to Learn Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool, which provides background and resources linked to each benchmark.





## Introduction

This diagnostic tool is designed to inform country-level collective dialogue amongst Safe to Learn partners and with national counterparts. Its overall objective is to support children's right to education and to protection from violence. It aims to measure the quality of national efforts to prevent and respond to violence in and around schools against benchmarks. The Benchmarks are aligned with the Safe to Learn Call to Action, and were developed in relation to international child rights frameworks, United Nations tools and minimum standards, and good practices from the field of child safeguarding.

Each Benchmark is assessed by checkpoints at Subnational/District and school level, using nuanced measures that will be finalized with research tools. Implementation of this diagnostic tool would require, in stage 1, a focus on national level laws, policies, systems and processes, beginning with desk review of legal framework and policy environment along with interviews with Ministry of Education (MOE) officials. The second stage would consist of the field review, involving selection of relevant subnational units, representative districts and schools. Administrative structures vary from country to country, and the tool will need to be adapted to reflect accountabilities at various levels of the system at subnational level: e.g. States, provinces, municipalities, districts.

The tool is based upon similar frameworks that have already seen practical use, including tools developed by UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Women, UNGEI, WHO and Keeping Children Safe.<sup>2</sup>

It is aligned with relevant Sustainable Development Goals:

**Target 4.5:** *By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations*

**Target 4.7:** *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development*

**Target 4.a:** *Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.*

**Target 5.2:** *Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.*

**Target 16.2:** *End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.*

Five countries have conducted Safe to Learn Diagnostics up to now. The diagnostic exercises entailed documents review, as well as stakeholder interviews at the national, district and school-level.

The interview guides used by the countries - including [student interview guide](#), [teacher interview guide](#), [head teacher interview guide](#), [district officer interview guide](#), [Ministry of Education interview guide](#) - are available on this [website](#). These are examples to be reviewed, adapted and contextualized by every country that wants to undertake a Safe to Learn diagnostic before implementing them in-country.

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<sup>2</sup>Mainly the six-country mapping from Child Protection in Educational Settings (UNICEF Bangkok, 2012), the SRGBV Standard Indicators from UNICEF Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and Global Guidance on School Related Gender Based Violence (UNESCO/UN Women, 2016). It incorporates the framework and indicators from the minimum standards of A Whole School Approach to Prevent School-Related Gender-Based Violence (UNGEI, 2018); Preventing schools-based violence: a practical handbook (WHO, 2019) and Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them (Keeping Children Safe, 2014).





# Safe to Learn Diagnostic Tool

## Call to Action 1: Implement laws and policies



National, regional and local governments develop and enforce laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and around schools, including online

Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/District	School
1.1	The national government includes prevention of violence in around schools as a specific <i>strategy</i> in education sector policies, plans <i>and budgets</i> .	Prevention of violence in and around schools is identified as a specific strategy in the national education sector policy or plan. <sup>3</sup>	The District authorities support the implementation of the national (or sub-national) plan or policy in schools.	School implements violence prevention activities in conformity with national or subnational objectives.
1.2	There is explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, and policies are in place to support positive discipline and classroom management. <sup>4</sup>	Laws or policies that prohibit corporal punishment include clear guidance on implementation, with a process for non-compliance.	District oversees implementation of law and details compliance measures.	School implements law or has an independent policy and there are repercussions for non-compliance.
		Teacher training on positive discipline and classroom management is included in pre- and in-service training.	District ensures that teachers receive thorough training in techniques of classroom management.	Teachers have received training on positive discipline and classroom management in the last three years.
1.3	The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education in response and referral to incidents of violence are clearly set out in the multi-sectoral national child protection policy framework.	A national policy framework, strategy or other system that outlines the role of the Ministry of Education as part of the national child protection system alongside other formal actors (Health, Social Welfare, Justice, Police). <sup>5</sup>	There is district-level coordination of national policy framework and support for implementation in schools.	School follows national and/or district policy and coordinates with local authorities and other duty bearers.
		The Ministry of Education has established a national child protection/safeguarding policy with the requirement that all sub-national authorities and schools under their purview develop their own localized policies. <sup>6</sup>	The district authorities support the establishment of localized and coordinated school child protection policies, and has identified one focal point with overseeing and responding to concerns.	School follows national policy or independently has established child safeguarding policies and procedures.
1.4	The country has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and in situations of armed conflict is implementing the <i>Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict</i> . <sup>7</sup>	The <i>Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict</i> have been brought into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate.	The Guidelines are widely disseminated by District authorities so that all parties engaged in conflict are aware of and able to abide by them.	School level plans in place to reduce risk of attacks, to respond quickly to risks, and to have a clear plan for safe school re-opening after attacks happen.

<sup>3</sup>See 'Guidelines for education sector plan preparation' (UNESCO, GPE 2015) or 'Guidelines for developing gender-responsive education sector plans', (GPE, UNGEI, UNICEF, 2017) <sup>4</sup>See *Teaching without violence: prohibiting corporal punishment* (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2019) <sup>5</sup>These set out the mandated roles and responsibilities of state actors in the national child protection system. See section 2.1, UNESCO/UNWOMEN 2016 for a discussion of child protection systems

<sup>6</sup>See UNICEF 2012; Keeping Children Safe 2014. <sup>7</sup>The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries the opportunity to express support for protecting education from attack during times of armed conflict; the importance of the continuation of education during war; and the implementation of concrete measures to deter the military use of schools. See more details: [protectingeducation.org/safeschoolsdeclaration](http://protectingeducation.org/safeschoolsdeclaration)





## Call to action 2: Strengthen prevention and response at school level

School staff, students and management committees provide safe and gender-sensitive learning environments for children

Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/District	School
2.1	Key violence prevention strategies are embedded in curriculum-based activities for children. <sup>8</sup>	National curriculum includes age-appropriate approaches that (i) develop life skills, (ii) teach children about violence and safe behavior, (iii) challenge social and cultural norms and promote equal relationships.	District supervises and assures information and curriculum is implemented in schools.	Schools deliver formal school syllabi that includes life skills, safe behavior, and equal relationships.
2.2	Child safeguarding principles and procedures are in place in schools, inclusive of codes of conduct, and safe recruitment standards. <sup>9</sup>	National guidelines detail process by which all schools respond to child protection concerns, including referral to services. The Ministry of Education has a focal point.	District has step-by-step procedures for schools to follow and has identified one focal point with overseeing and responding to concerns.	System for responding to child protection concerns is in place following district or central guidelines, or school if no policy. School has focal point with responsibility for responding to protection incidents.
		National guidelines clearly outline norms and standards of ethical behavior to be included in Teacher Codes of Conduct.	Codes of conduct required for all staff including District and Schools. District/sub-national authorities ensure compliance of Codes of Conduct in schools.	School has Code of Conduct that is publicly posted and requires all teachers to understand and comply; Ramifications for violations are proscribed and enforced; Requires written signatures by all staff; includes Codes of behavior for students.
		The establishment of safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for students is mandated for all schools. There is a working, accessible national reporting mechanism such as a national child helpline.	District supports schools in implementation of reporting mechanism and ensure availability of support mechanisms. It has its own mechanism for response when reports are elevated.	Students are aware of and use reporting mechanism to report experiences of violence. It is linked to support services and includes there is a monitoring system for reporting and accountability.
		National pre- and in-service training for school staff includes their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.	District authorities ensure that teachers receive pre- or in-service training on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations.	All schools staff receive pre- or in-service training on their obligations on child safeguarding, including reporting and response obligations. Staff are adequately trained to prevent revictimization of children and are knowledgeable about the referral pathway in place in the locality.

<sup>8</sup>Section 3, WHO 2019, Schools-based Violence Prevention: A Practical Handbook. This links to Benchmark 3.2 and 5.3 <sup>9</sup>See UNICEF 2012; Keeping Children Safe 2014; UNGEI 2108. This links to benchmark 1.3 above.





Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/District	School
		There are national policies that regulate hiring of new teachers and staff and their transfer to ensure suitability for working with children.	Districts implement the policy requiring background checks when recruiting or transferring teachers.	School follows or has individualized methods to vet staff to ensure their suitability for working with children; it requests new hires or districts to report previous convictions or reasons for transfer.
2.3	Each school has at least one focal point who is capacitated to provide front-line mental health/psychosocial support to children experiencing violence.	Ministry of Education has a training program or special curriculum for school counselors that includes children's mental health and well-being; and has arrangement or referral procedures when a child or his/her family needs specialized services.	District has support mechanism for school counselors and refers to specialized services to assist schools when necessary.	School counselor is in the school and is capacitated to provide front-line mental health/psychosocial support to students; and has identified a referral source for range of specialized services (mental health, medical, family services...).
2.4	The physical environment in and around schools is safe and designed with the well-being of children in mind. <sup>10</sup>	There are established national standards for school buildings and grounds that address student safety.	The District authorities are aware of national standards and monitor improvements to schools' physical environment.	School design reflect national guidelines. The community, students and staff have mapped unsafe areas and have identified solutions for these areas. Sanitary facilities are safe and secure, classroom architecture and design is gender-responsive, and students move freely to and from school.

<sup>10</sup>UNGEI 2018 Domain 7; WHO 2019 Section 6.





## Call to Action 3: Shift social norms and behavior change

Parents, teachers, children, local government and community leaders recognize the devastating impact of violence in schools and take action to promote positive social norms to ensure schools are safe spaces for learning.

Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/District	School
3.1	There is wide dissemination and engagement with stakeholders to build knowledge and appreciation of child rights and laws prohibiting violence.	National government and policy support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage stakeholders on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the national level.	Districts support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage schools, community members/ leaders on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the district level.	Schools support the implementation of activities to disseminate information and engage students, teachers, parents and community members on child rights and laws prohibiting violence at the school level.
3.2	Specific, evidence-informed interventions are researched and implemented, addressing social norms that drive key forms of violence and/or helping children manage risks. <sup>11</sup>	National policy supports the development and implementation of evidence-informed initiatives <sup>12</sup> that address broad social norms that drive key forms of violence (e.g. bullying, digital safety, sexual abuse and exploitation, youth and gang violence).	Districts support the implementation and monitoring of initiatives in schools/ communities that address social norms that drive key forms of violence.	Schools support the implementation and monitoring of initiatives in the school and surrounding community that address social norms that drive key forms of violence.
3.3	Young people, parents, teachers and community members in and around schools are engaged and active on the topic of school violence.	Ministry of Education supports national, contextualized communication initiatives to raise awareness on violence in schools.	District level strategy for implementation of media, arts, or other awareness raising activities.	Extra-curricular or community-based arts, drama, print documents, or other activities that promote awareness at the school and for parents and families.

<sup>11</sup>WHO 2019 Section 3

<sup>12</sup>INSPIRE (2016) offers strategies to draw from





## Call to Action 4: Invest resources effectively

Increased and better use of investments targeted at ending violence at schools.

Item	Benchmark	National	Sub-national/District	School
4.1	Domestic resources that have been allocated to <i>support interventions and capacity building activities to prevent and respond</i> to violence in schools.	Educational system budget includes costed strategies for violence prevention and response, adequate resourcing and reflections in budgets.	District receives and allocates resources for violence prevention and response.	School receives earmarked budget for violence prevention and response.
4.2	<i>Development partners</i> provide resources targeting <i>national or subnational level</i> to end violence in schools, investing in effective approaches.	Development partners provide targeted funds, technical assistance, and programmes through implementing partners for prevention and response to violence in schools.	District coordinates monitors and reports on use of targeted resources.	School access targeted resources for prevention and response to violence.
4.3	There is private sector engagement in the provision of financial and non-financial resources including technical support, expertise and advocacy towards ending violence in schools.	Private philanthropy, foundations, CSR, social impact investors, etc., provide targeted funds, technical assistance and programmes through implementing partners for prevention and response to violence in schools.	District coordinates monitors and reports on use of targeted resources.	Schools access targeted resources for prevention and response to violence.





## Call to action 5: Generate and use evidence

Countries and the international community generate and use evidence on how to effectively end violence in schools.

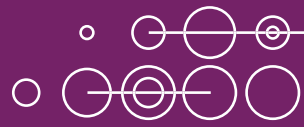
Item	Standard	Central	Sub-national/District	School
5.1	Information and reporting of incidents allow for disaggregated baseline information and monitoring of trends and that reflect needs and gaps in the system. <sup>13</sup>	Central information system that records incidents and monitors trends, fed by District or local authorities.	District has record keeping of incidents occurring in schools.	Maintenance of confidential records about protection related incidents in the school.
5.2	There is regular data collection on prevalence and forms of violence in schools <i>using methods that follow high ethical standards</i> . <sup>14</sup>	National Statistics Office and Ministry of Education monitor data on prevalence and forms of violence through regular participation in international school-based survey programmes (every 3-5 years).	District support implementation of school-based survey programmes.	Comprehensive questions on prevalence and forms of violence are included in regular school-based survey programmes.
5.3	Decisions on replication and scale-up of violence prevention initiatives are based on evaluations of trailed models and approaches. <sup>15</sup>	National Governments conduct robust monitoring and evaluations of violence prevention initiatives in order to inform replication and scale-up.	Districts support implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.	School support implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities for violence prevention initiatives to inform replication and scale-up.

<sup>13</sup>UNESCO-UNWOMEN 2019 Global Guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence, Section 2.6

<sup>14</sup>Such as through the relevant modules of the Global Schools-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS)

<sup>15</sup>See WHO 2019 Section 9







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