**Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices**

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Applying Whole School Approach Minimum Standards to prevent school related gender based violence

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

☑ Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools

☐ Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

☐ Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

☐ Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation

☐ Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

   FAWE Zimbabwe
   UNICEF Sierra Leone

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

   A Whole School minimum standards to prevent school related gender based violence, building the capacity of teachers, students, parents, district education officials and community leaders to identify and address acts of violence and to question harmful gender and social norms that condone the use of violence.

6. What makes it a best practice? *

   The UNGEI minimum standards are guided by a human rights approach and builds on evidence of good practice from the education sector, and ending violence against women and children. It is intentional about challenging deeply rooted structural inequalities around gender, power, and other factors of marginalization that give rise to violence both in and outside schools and learning environments. The whole school minimum standard pilots gained political support at the highest levels in both countries through inclusion in education plans and policies. This outcome was a result of advocacy and also the fact the SRGBV is a major barrier to quality education in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone. The pilot fostered partnership across ministry of education, civil society, the UN and donors and also cross-sectorally between relevant ministries like social welfare and gender. Students at primary and secondary level were part of the visioning workshops, contributing to the design of the pilot from the outset. National education coalitions in both countries were actively engaged along with other INGOs working on similar issues. Evidence was generated on implementing a whole school approach through the formal education system, and in close partnership with ministries of education. The minimum standards provide a framework for ministries of education to embed violence prevention work throughout the education system and improve accountability on school related violence and gender equality. The estimated return on investment in terms of policy impact and a pathway for change went beyond the financial and human resources. The minimum standards if embedded in routine functioning of schools, and at sub-national and national levels can be sustained with very little financial resources, after the initial investment in training and systems. The minimum standards can be scaled when there is sufficient buy in and commitment at different levels of the education system to prevent violence and promote gender equality.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)
   This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the

   i) Which population was affected?
   ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
   iii)   Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

   Globally, girls, boys, and LGBTQIA+ children experience and perpetuate different forms of violence. Girls experience sexual violence and psychological forms of bullying at higher rates, while boys experience corporl punishment and physical fighting. School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is increasingly recognized as a barrier to quality education and learning, particularly for girls and young women and LGBTQI+ children. According to the most recent global estimates, approximately 20 to 37 per cent of 11- to 17-year-olds experienced some form of emotional, physical and sexual violence in and around school in the previous year. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated incidences of domestic and intimate partner violence against women and girls, posing a greater risk of SRGBV as schools reopen. Data on the nature and scope of violence in and around schools, particularly the gendered norms and drivers of violence, is limited. Data collected through large scale surveys do not sufficiently capture all forms of violence in schools, nor do they necessarily apply a gender analysis, and responses in and around school are not systematically tracked. A critical factor in the lack of data are inappropriate and non-existent reporting and response mechanisms, that are safe, gender sensitive and child friendly. Contextually relevant evidence of effective whole school interventions is also limited in low- and middle-income settings. Applying a comprehensive Whole School Approach is widely recognized as good practice in working holistically to promote student health and wellbeing and echoes evidence from other school-based health and violence prevention initiatives. Whole school approaches present an opportunity to address all forms and drivers of violence and to shift harmful gender and power dynamics. The Whole School Minimum Standards comprise of 8 domains and promotes strategies that builds on the interconnectedness of schools, communities and families to improve the school environment for students, staff and community members. The success of the minimum standards is dependent on actions at the school level, and also on how well they are linked to national and sub-national policies and integrated with ongoing systems of planning, monitoring and budgets at provincial and district education departments.
   The theory of change is that over the implementation period, an intentional focus on gender transformative strategies contribute to changes in attitudes and behaviours and shifts in practices related to the use and tolerance of violence. Over the long term, with enough schools and districts adopting the minimum standards, there would be a reduction in incidence of SRGBV. In the short term, an increase in reporting of incidents of violence in and around schools may occur as a result of more awareness, better reporting systems and shifts in attitudes among students, teachers and school administrators. This process is non-linear and implementation is accompanied by action research and adaptive management to enable course correction.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)
Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:
i) What are the main activities carried out?
ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?
*

The pilot activities were carried out to test whether and how the whole school minimum standards can be operationalized in schools, and at the district level in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone. At the outset, a series of Visioning Workshops were held bringing together teachers, school heads, ancillary school staff, members of school development committees and students. The purpose of the workshops was to identify entry points and identify practical actions to strengthen each of the eight domains. The following interventions were implemented to fill the gaps identified during the Visioning Workshops: (1) gender training, follow up and action planning with school leaders, district education officials and principals to activate existing systems of reporting and accountability; (2) training of teachers on gender concepts, identifying acts of violence, and activate reporting and response; gender responsive pedagogy and use of positive discipline; (2) empower students and young women to recognize violence and speak up through the TUSEME17 ("Let us speak out" in Kiswahili) curricula (in Zimbabwe) and student clubs and student councils; (3) improve awareness of national laws and policies regarding gender-based violence, codes of conduct and use of corporal punishment; and (4) establish or strengthen school codes of conduct with gender-responsive content that refers explicitly to acts of sexual violence and gender-based discrimination (5) advocacy and information sharing at national level through education coalitions and sector working groups. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL): In Zimbabwe, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Approach used a gender transformative lens to examine the effectiveness of the whole school approach domains and minimum standards. The MEL Approach intentionally focused on examining gender norms and drivers of SRGBV from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, school support staff, community members and government education authorities. While more traditional programme evaluation approaches may attempt to capture the impact of an intervention on direct participants only, this approach included measuring effects on stakeholders (e.g., other school staff and students not directly involved in FAWEZI's training) and the wider community. In Sierra Leone, ODI developed an adaptive learning approach. This involved interviewing staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders; recording how project implementation was proceeding; and constructively questioning project assumptions and ways of working to act as a prompt for reflection. It also involved observation of the implementation of project activities. Through this regular engagement with implementing partner staff and the wider project stakeholders the action research team gathered evidence about (1) the problem of SRGBV and potential entry points and opportunities for supporting the implementation of minimum standards in the schools and communities where partners are working and (2) the progress of partner projects and learning about the effectiveness of partners' strategies. The pilot activities were carried out to two countries during different time frames. In Zimbabwe from October 2018- December 2020, activities were implemented in 10 schools (five primary and five secondary) across two districts. In Sierra Leone from October 2020 – January 2022 in 30 schools in three districts. Zimbabwe: Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter, Miske Witt and Associates as technical partner, ECOZI (Educational civil society working group), Ministry of Primary and Secondary School Education

and the Learner Welfare services department. Sierra Leone: UNICEF Sierra Leone, Ministry of Basic and Secondary School Education and the Gender unit, Department of Social Welfare Implementing partners CIFORD and HI, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) as research partner. US $510,000 in Zimbabwe US $470,000 in SL.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)
To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:
i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

The pilots showed promising results in shifting gender attitudes and beliefs, despite several challenges in implementation, including Covid-19. The interventions indeed shifted perceptions among stakeholders, especially girls/women, and saw teachers become committed to gender equality and to fostering a learner-centred environment. Girls were afforded greater involvement and leadership roles in student councils. The formation of student clubs helped improve awareness (especially among girls at secondary school level) of different forms of violence, particularly inappropriate touching and sexual harassment. Parents became engaged through the school development committees in prevention activities, contributing to a feeling that the school community had the potential to address violence. However, silence and stigma associated with gender-based violence persisted, as did perceptions that violence against children is 'normal.' Reporting systems were established, and students and teachers became aware of the systems, but fear of retribution and perceptions about personal safety and confidentiality deterred students from reporting incidences. Schools adopted codes of conduct, but these did not address all forms of violence and did not adopt a zero- tolerance stance. The pilot results made it clear that more work is needed to break the silence around gender- based violence in education. Continued efforts are required to support teachers, school heads and district education officers to implement codes of conduct, establish reporting and referral mechanisms and monitor school violence. Additionally, changing social norms requires long-term investments and the active engagement of key stakeholders at all levels. At the policy level, results from the pilot in Zimbabwe were included in the Education Sector Analysis and the Sector Plan in 2020. The MoE became a signatory to the Safe to Learn Call to Action. In Sierra Leone, the UNGEI Whole School Minimum Standards were endorsed by Minister Sengeh as a framework for action on preventing SRGBV in the education system. A baseline and endline assessment was carried out in Zimbabwe. In Sierra Leone an assessment was carried out at the outset of the assessment and continuous monitoring took place through the duration of the programme.
The findings from both countries showed:
• promising results on shifts in gender attitudes and beliefs. Beliefs about rigid gender roles for women shifted to be more equitable among both men/boys and women/girls.
• Reporting mechanisms were established, and school staff documented increased reporting and referral of cases at both the school and community levels. At school, cases were often reported to mentors/guidance and counselling teachers and channelled to the school administrators. However, fear of retribution and victim blaming among students, especially girls remained barriers, mainly because of intrinsic social and gender norms and conditioning.
• Learners had a broader understanding of different forms of violence and what zero tolerance meant and were more comfortable talking about experiences of sexual harassment and abuse.
• Student clubs promoted greater equality between girls and boys, with more equal representation in leadership positions
• Teachers and educational staff exhibited positive and gender-responsive behaviours, attributed to training on SRGBV and gender-responsive teaching and learning.
• District education authorities became engaged and improved accountability towards SRGBV, like activating referral mechanisms and networks with local organizations.

• Parents and community organizations became involved with school prevention activities. There was stronger networking and coordination among local institutions with responsibility for SRGBV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues – the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW).

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)
To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:
i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

School Visioning Workshops facilitated by local experts and African gender activists led to collective ownership and a shared understanding of gender violence in the context: the Visioning Workshops and all subsequent workshops with teachers, school heads and ancillary staff and students were critical to school leadership taking ownership of the process, rather than it being one more administrative ask.
• School level dialogues enabled school heads to identify existing levers and human resources to operationalize the minimum standards, without creating new processes: School heads, teachers and administrative staff at district education offices identified existing policy documents, processes and structures aligned with the minimum standards. Most schools identified existing mechanisms for reporting, such as disciplinary committees and guidance and counselling teachers who could serve as resources to strengthen domains around reporting, monitoring, accountability and incident response.
• Awareness of laws and policies governing violence against children, women and girls improved monitoring and accountability among district education officers and school heads: District education officers established guidelines for monitoring, which placed the responsibility to report and respond to incidents upon the school heads.

The silence and stigma associated with gender-based violence persisted as did perceptions that violence against children is 'normal.' Despite the establishment of reporting systems and learners' and teachers' awareness of them, fear of retribution and perceptions about safety and confidentiality deterred students. Both girls and boys believed that if they reported an incident, they would be asked what they did to instigate it and girls, in particular, feared retribution. While codes of conduct were developed, these did not address all forms of violence and none took a zero-tolerance stance. More work needs to be done on breaking the silence around gender-based violence in education and ensuring that teachers, school heads and district education officers are supported to strengthen and implement codes of conduct, monitoring school violence and reporting mechanisms.
The findings from the pilot emphasize that several social, cultural, and economic factors in schools and communities give rise to gender-based violence in and around schools. Whole School Approaches are effective and a holistic way to curb school-related gender- based violence, and they can be complex to implement for education ministries without support from civil society and donors. The pilots demonstrated how the minimum standards could be embedded within the routine functioning of schools, even in low resourced settings.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice". What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

The whole school minimum standards are guided by a human rights approach and builds on evidence of good practice from the education sector, and ending violence against women and children. It is intentional about challenging deeply rooted structural inequalities around gender, power, and other factors of marginalization that give rise to violence both in and outside schools and learning environments. The whole school minimum standard pilots gained political support at the highest levels in both countries through inclusion in education plans and policies. This outcome was a result of advocacy and also the fact the SRGBV is a major barrier to quality education in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone. Evidence was generated on implementing a whole school approach through the formal education system, and in close partnership with ministries of education. The minimum standards provide a framework for ministries of education to embed violence prevention work throughout the education system and improve accountability on school related violence and gender equality. The minimum standards can be scaled when there is sufficient buy in and commitment at different levels of the education system to prevent violence and promote gender equality.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the "best practice" for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

• UNGEI, UNICEF and Safe to Learn (2021). SRGBV_policy_note_FINAL Aug2021.pdf (ungei.org)
• UNGEI (July 2020). Strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence as schools reopen
• UNESCO (2019). Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying.
• United Nations (2020). Policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women.
• UNESCO (2019). Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying.
• UNGEI (2019). Brief 1: Applying a whole school approach to prevent school-related gender-based violence.
• UNGEI (2018). A Whole School Approach to Prevent School Related Gender-Based Violence: Minimum Standards and Monitoring Framework
• UNICEF (2016). A Rigorous Review of Global Research Evidence on Policy and Practice on School-Related Gender-Based Violence.