



EDUCATION AND LIFE SKILLS STRATEGY

Practical application of the INSPIRE framework for effective prevention of violence against children

SUMMARY

Schools lay a strong foundation for equipping children to develop intellectually and emotionally to be able to protect themselves and gain skills to thrive as adults. This reader provides guidelines on how nonprofits can effectively leverage schools to implement the education and life skills strategy to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Keywords: INSPIRE, school related gender based violence (SRGBV), safe environments, life skills, safe schools, protective behaviour

An overview of the INSPIRE education and life skills strategy

The education and life skills strategy recognizes that enrolling and retaining children in school is crucial for preventing violence against them by reducing risk factors. By giving children knowledge in safe school environments, their emotional growth is enhanced, they gain social skills and learn acceptable societal behaviour and their confidence grows to be able to question and oppose negative influences.

Schooling, especially for girls, enables them to avoid early marriages, unintended pregnancy, HIV and reduces sexual violence incidences that can be triggered by being home alone with male adults or in markets, wells and other places where they can be taken advantage of. For boys, schooling reduces time spent being idle and engaging in youth violence.

Other benefits of education include school educators as first line responders to violence as children often disclose to them and these educators can then refer the children to the most appropriate response and referral services.

However, schools can also be fertile ground for school related gender based violence such as intimate partner violence, sex for grades, sexual and physical assault perpetrated by teachers and students, and where schools are in remote locations, girls are at risk of kidnap and sexual violence. The success of the education and life skills strategy, therefore, depends heavily on equally creating safe environments.

Life skills focus on encouraging positive behaviour for effective social engagements and may include self-control, problem solving, conflict resolution, and critical thinking.

Box 1: Success factors for an effective education and life skills strategy

- Integration in district and national policy and training curricula
- Holistic focus on the 'whole school' which focuses on changing attitudes and culture between school authorities and students and allowing children to take an active role in activities
- Initiates discussions about gender relations, identity, and norms
- School engagement of governing boards, teachers, staff, on values and belief systems about violence in schools
- Training teachers and staff in positive discipline and providing first line response to violence
- Parental involvement in school activities to increase attachment and child attendance

Interventions for the Education and Life Skills Strategy



Increasing participation in school

Economic support to parents to be able to educate girls and buy school basics

Improve school environments including making them gender sensitive

Create safe routes to schools



Safe and Enabling School Environment

Strengthening relationships between students, teachers, and administrators

Lighting, visibility and Landscaping within and outside the school

Safe, separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls



Life and social skills training

Recognition of potential threats of sexual violence

Teaching kids about body ownership, touches, recognizing abusive situations, reporting and referrals

Strengthening protective behaviour focusing on self-defense, consent, communication



Evidence-based winning programmes

IMpower: The program works through schools and clubs to empower girls and boys challenge harmful gender norms by teaching them protective skills they can use to defend themselves during incidents of sexual violence. The 12 hours curriculum integrates role playing, self-defense training and communication skills and has reached 180,000 girls and boys in Kenya and Malawi.

Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social programmes (P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood): Targeting secondary school students, the programme prepares youth for positive development contributions and proactive approaches to prevent bullying, delinquency and drug abuse among youth. It has been implemented in 330 schools in China and Singapore.

The Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools programme: The programme raises awareness about physical and verbal violence in the community. In schools, the process focuses on awareness-raising, developing protective networks, multi-stakeholder collaboration and encouraging help-seeking behaviour. The goal is to prevent bullying by creating safe environments. The programme is widely used in Croatia primary schools and has expanded to Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia.

Good School Toolkit: Created by Raising Voices in Uganda, this programme focuses on creating a positive environment by guiding educators and students to envision what a good school looks like and suggest pathways to the realization of the good school. The programme focuses on four entry points to change school culture: teacher-student relationships, peer-to-peer relationships, student and teacher to school relationships, and parent and community to school governance relationships. It has been implemented in 750 schools in Uganda and is being adapted for Lesotho and Mongolia.

Further reading

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