USAID's Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV)

Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development

SECTION 3.5. SECTOR-SPECIFIC PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Addressing GBV through Education Programs

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CARE-GBV	Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence
CEFMU	Child, early, and forced marriage and unions
GBV	Gender-based violence
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people, and those of other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
SEL	Social and emotional learning
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

Introduction

This brief describes why USAID's education programs should integrate programming to address gender-based violence (GBV), and details specific strategies for doing so. Program examples are provided to illustrate how the strategies can be incorporated into education programs. Links to tools and resources are provided for additional information.

This brief is part of *Foundational Elements for Gender-based Violence Programming in Development*, which includes core principles, program elements (prevention, risk mitigation, response, enabling environment), and process elements. Ideally, readers will familiarize themselves with these sections of the *Foundational Elements* before reading this brief. At a minimum, readers should be familiar with the following sections before reviewing this brief:

- Section 1.0. Introduction

- Section 2.0. Program Elements: Risk Mitigation

- Section 3.0. Process Elements:

    - Values, Organizational Culture, and Leadership (Program Example: A Framework for Safeguarding Program Participants)

    - Strategic Planning and Design (Gender Analysis and Referral Network Mapping)
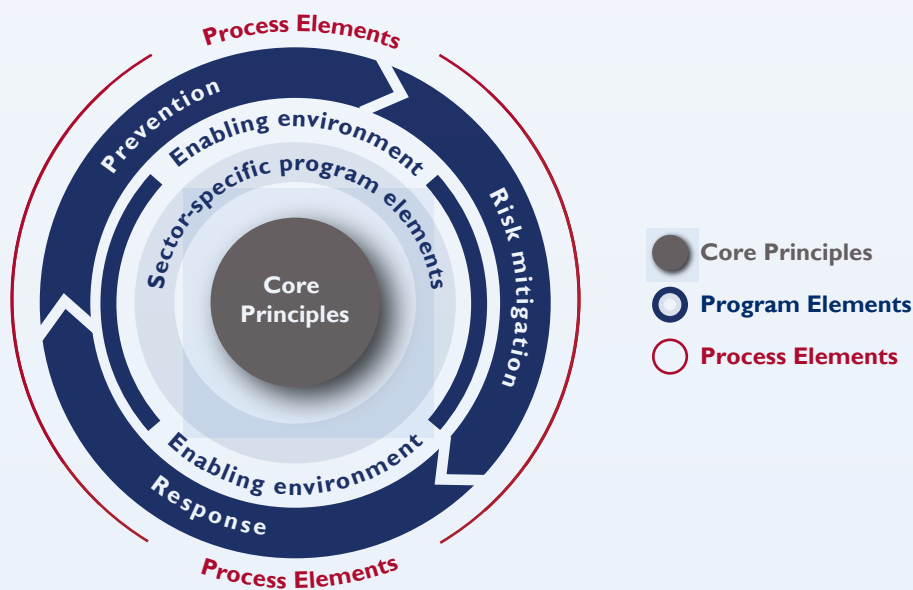
The strategies described in this brief are organized by levels of the socio-ecological model: individual, interpersonal, community, and structural. Effective GBV interventions typically include strategies that address multiple levels of the socio-ecological model.
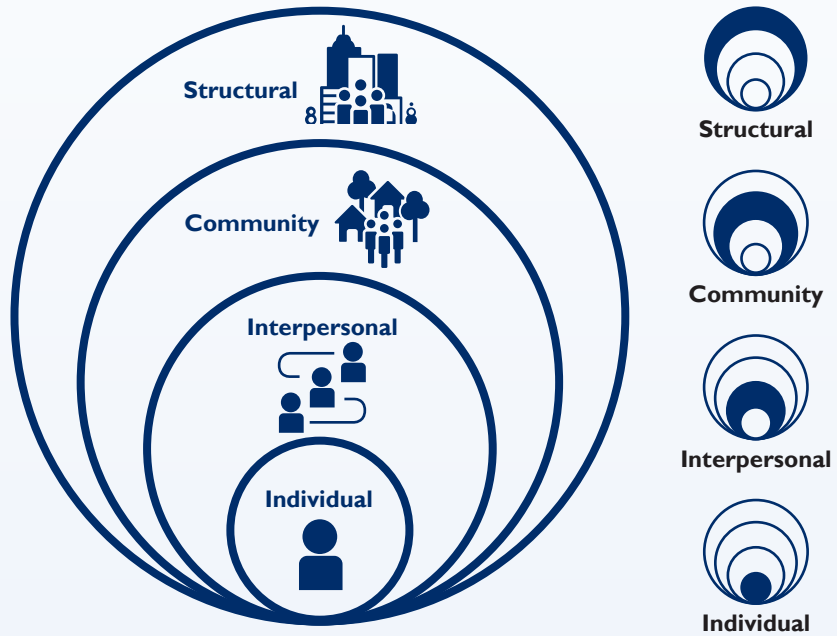
Each strategy is also labeled as prevention, risk mitigation, response, or enabling environment.
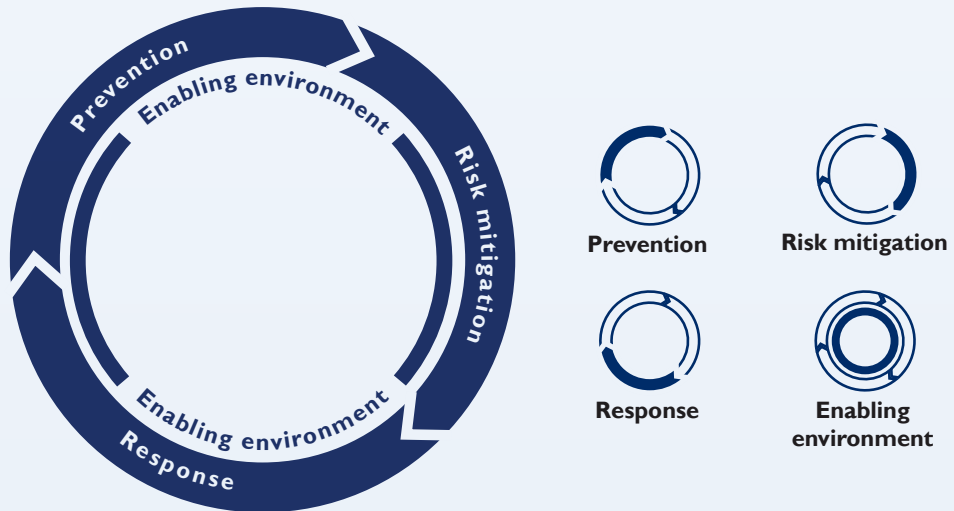
Why Education Programming Should Address GBV

Education access and attainment are protective against many forms of GBV. The number of years of education is positively correlated with higher earnings for girls, better standards of living, increased decision-making power, and lower levels of child marriage (Haugen et al. 2014, Wodon et al. 2018). Girls with only a primary education are twice as likely to marry or enter a union before age 18 as girls with a secondary education or more (UN Women 2012). Individuals with a secondary education are also less accepting of corporal punishment in schools (Together for Girls 2021).

GBV impedes the effectiveness of education programming, costing individuals, families, schools, and communities financial losses and reduced learning. Violence, punitive disciplinary practices, and poor safety lead to absenteeism, lack of concentration, disengagement, behavioral challenges, disrupted studies, poor academic performance, and leaving school early (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019, UNESCO 2020, WHO 2019, UNESCO 2019). Violence is an especially important factor for learners who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people, and those of other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQI+), who are more likely than their peers to drop out of school due to safety concerns (USAID 2021a, OHCHR 2021).

School-Related Gender-Based Violence (USAID 2018, USAID 2016)

USAID's *Education Policy* defines school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) as: "Acts or threats of physical, sexual, or psychological violence or abuse that are based on gendered stereotypes or that target learners on the basis of their sex, sexuality, or gender identities. School-related gender-based violence reinforces gender roles and perpetuates gender inequalities. It includes rape, unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual comments, corporal punishment, bullying, and other forms of non-sexual intimidation or abuse such as verbal harassment or exploitative labor in schools. Unequal power relations between adults and children and males and females[1] contribute to this violence, which can take place in formal and non-formal schools, on school grounds, going to and from school, in school dormitories, in cyberspace, or through cell phone technology. School-related gender-based violence may be perpetrated by educators, learners, or community members. Both girls and boys can be victims, as well as perpetrators."[2]

(USAID 2018, USAID 2016)

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[1] As stated in the 2016 *United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally,* GBV "is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalances." Therefore, a range of power imbalances beyond those based on an adult–child or male–female binary contribute to GBV—for example: citizenship status, marital status, national origin, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, disability, and others.

[2] USAID's definition of GBV as stated in the 2016 *United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally* is not limited to the male–female gender binary. Rather, it is "an umbrella term for any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity" (USAID 2016b).

Parents may also prohibit their daughters or children with disabilities from attending school for fear of sexual violence on school grounds or en route to and from school (Cahill 2019). Child, early, and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) often end girls' education (USAID 2015a).

GBV changes the trajectory of survivors' lives and national development. Poor education outcomes stemming from GBV hinder international sustainable development goals. They contribute to diminished workforce participation, poor health outcomes, and exacerbated and prolonged poverty (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). SRGBV alone affects an estimated 246 million children and youth (UNESCO 2019). It can lead to a yearly cost of almost $17 billion to low- and middle-income countries, more than the $13-billion overseas aid spent on education initiatives (USAID 2015b).

USAID's *Education Policy* stipulates that "learning environments should lead to improved well-being and increased learning outcomes, rather than be places of danger" (USAID 2018). Education programs that are safe, inclusive, and equitable can transform violent, patriarchal, hierarchical, and heteronormative social norms that are associated with GBV. Schools that implement anti-bullying or inclusive policies for gender diversity see reduced harassment, bullying, truancy, and victimization. They also see improved school climate, well-being, and feelings of safety among students (Dominguez-Martinez et al. 2019, USAID 2021b).

USAID's *Beyond Access: Toolkit for Integrating Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response in Education Projects* provides do-no-harm programming considerations (Messner et al. 2015). USAID's *Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs* assists programs in creating equitable access to education in conflict and crisis environments (USAID 2013).

How Education Programming Can Address GBV

Strategy #1: Implement a contextualized whole-school approach

Program elements: prevention, risk mitigation, response

Levels of socio-ecological model: individual, interpersonal, community, structural

Effective strategies to prevent, mitigate harm, or respond to GBV in education must be holistic and address the root causes and drivers of GBV within the school and the community. *Whole-school approaches* employ the socio-ecological model to address the main forms of SRGBV[3] at the individual, family, school and community, and societal levels. These approaches incorporate a full range of actors who play a role in reinforcing or minimizing SRGBV, including learners, educators, parents, school staff and administrators, school psychologists or counselors, religious leaders, media creators, and political actors. Whole-school approaches are student centered, evidence based, and aligned to local and national priorities and education systems. They cover all at-risk groups, address behavior patterns over time, and include minimum standards for creating a safe learning environment (UNGEI 2019).

Whole- school approaches incorporate actors and activities beyond the education sector's regular set of interventions. Therefore, it is important to tailor interventions to the specific manifestations of GBV in each context. A first step is to measure the prevalence, forms, and extent of learners' and educators' experiences of GBV using validated GBV indicators. This can then be used to assess key risk factors and drivers of GBV in the school and community (USAID 2020a). Next, analyze the specific effects of the most prevalent forms of GBV on education-related outcomes, and prioritize strategies

Do No Harm in Education Programming

USAID's *Education Policy* directs education programs to "do no harm" (USAID 2018). Education programs that seek to positively affect GBV outcomes disrupt existing power dynamics and social norms. This can unintentionally jeopardize participants', staffs', or community members' safety and well-being. Educators who report GBV may face backlash from administrators or community members. GBV prevention education may cause distress for already traumatized learners and educators. Learners who have limited power in relation to their abusers, such as children and individuals with marginalized identities, may be at increased risk if they challenge abusive norms or practices (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019).

Risks and opportunities for change are context-dependent. People in communities where gender norms are shifting face different risks than people in communities that maintain rigid patriarchal norms. Care must be taken to ensure that education programs anticipate risks of GBV where schools act as disruptors to patriarchal status quos and put in place support mechanisms to address risks (USAID 2015a).

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[3] Bullying, including physical and verbal (or psychological) violence; corporal punishment; sexual violence and child sexual abuse; sexual harassment; and intimate partner violence.

that will lead to the greatest positive outcomes for learners in a particular context. Programs can maximize impact by linking to community-based providers and projects in other sectors, such as health (see Section 3.5. Sector-Specific Program Elements: Addressing GBV through Global Health Programs) or technology. USAID's *School-Related Gender-Based Violence Measurement Toolkit* offers practical guidance and resources for assessing SRGBV at the individual, family, school, and community levels (USAID 2020a).

The *Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education Preparedness, Response, and Recovery* provides guidance on addressing GBV as a barrier to learning environments that are secure, safe, and supportive of the emotional well-being of learners, educators, and staff (Domain 2, Standard 2). They provide guidance on community involvement in risk reduction, monitoring, and response. Specific recommendations include developing codes of conduct, increasing the number of women in the learning environment, and creating safe reporting, response, and referral systems (INEE 2012).

Minimum Standards for a Whole-School Approach

1. School leadership and community engagement: Ensure that parents, educators, and principals, as well as community organizations and service providers, such as the police, are supported to prevent and respond to GBV.

2. Code of conduct: Develop codes that take a zero-tolerance approach and promote safe and positive school environments.

3. Teachers and educational staff support: Build capacity among school staff to effectively prevent SRGBV and understand how to identify or respond to it should it occur.

4. Child rights, participation, and gender equality: Adapt curricula to reflect child rights practices and ensure that student leadership is shared out among girls and boys.[4]

5. Reporting, monitoring, and accountability: Create reporting pathways that include support systems and accountability mechanisms.

6. Incidence response: Put in place response mechanisms that include referral pathways.

7. Safe and secure physical environments in and around schools: Create sanitary, safe, and secure school facilities, and ensure children come to and from school safely.

8. Parent engagement: Involve parents in keeping children safe at school and at home.

(UNGEI 2019)

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[4] USAID is committed to development that is inclusive and respectful of people's multiple identities and that uplifts marginalized groups (USAID 2022a). Care should be taken to consider and uplift individuals who do not identify within conventional binaries, such as LGBTQI+ learners and educators.

Strategy #2: Equip educators with the skills and resources to teach nonviolently

Program elements:
prevention, risk mitigation, response

Levels of socio-ecological model:
individual, interpersonal

Educators and school administrators are affected by GBV in the school, home, and community, and may be victims, witnesses, or perpetrators of abuse. Before facilitating GBV prevention or response, educators need to internalize new norms, cultivate new skills, and build confidence using new teaching methods. Training should provide time for educators to reflect on their own experiences and norms before being expected to assist learners. Educators should receive training on pedagogies associated with reductions in violence perpetration and victimization, especially collaborative and participatory pedagogies, social and emotional learning, and nonviolent discipline. All staff and volunteers in contact with learners should receive clear direction regarding all forms of GBV and training on the use of alternative, positive, and nonviolent discipline (Parkes et al. 2016, Global Initiative 2019, Cahill 2019).

Strategy #3: Provide targeted GBV prevention programming

Program elements:
prevention

Levels of socio-ecological model:
interpersonal

Quality GBV prevention programming can reduce rates of GBV and shift harmful social and gender norms (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). Providing school-based programs for learners at risk of experiencing or perpetrating GBV and collaborating with other sectors to provide community-based parenting programs designed to minimize risk factors of GBV is recommended (Parkes et al. 2016).

GBV prevention programs should be participatory and attuned to the local context. Adjust language, scenarios, and stories so that programs are relatable, considerate of intersectional vulnerabilities, and target the most relevant forms of violence and associated social norms (Cahill 2019). Programs are most effective if they are longer and more intensive and when they provide opportunities for learners to critically self-reflect and practice new norms and skills. They should also integrate feminist, rights-based approaches, collaborative and participatory learning strategies, and comprehensive sexuality education (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019, Cahill 2019, Sperling and Winthrop 2016).

Strategy #4: Implement social and emotional learning (SEL)

Program elements:
prevention

Levels of socio-ecological model:
interpersonal

USAID's *Education Policy* names SEL as an evidence-based practice to help learners heal from violence and succeed at school (USAID 2018). SEL can reduce cyberbullying, homophobic teasing, sexual harassment (Espelage et al. 2015), and other forms of GBV (Norman et al. 2019). For learners in crisis and conflict contexts, SEL can decrease the use of violence and increase resilience (USAID 2020b). SEL programs help learners build emotional competence, self-reflection, self-regulation, nonviolent communication, empathy, and positive coping strategies (Cahill 2019, USAID 2020b, USAID 2022). SEL programs may not be sufficient for individuals experiencing heightened adversity due to conflict, discrimination, or violence. They should, therefore, include referrals to mental health and psychosocial support, as well as violence intervention services (USAID 2022b) (See Section 4.0. Process Elements: Strategic Planning and Design).

Strategy #5: Provide trauma- and gender-informed referral services

Program elements:
risk mitigation, response

Levels of socio-ecological model:
individual, community

Ensure that all survivors who report GBV are connected to trusted, age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and trauma-sensitive services in schools and communities. Rates of GBV, particularly sexual violence, are higher during crisis and conflict (UNGEI 2020), including the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women 2021). Provide coping techniques and psychosocial support, and ensure that mental health professionals are prepared to receive reports of abuse and help learners recover and reintegrate into school. Develop or improve gender-sensitive case-management systems (Save the Children 2021). Create referral mechanisms and partnerships with child protection and organizations by and for people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, women, and survivors (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). Where needed services are beyond the scope of the education sector's portfolio, link with other sectors, such as health, gender, and democracy, human rights, and governance.

Strategy #6: Engage schools and communities in awareness raising and building support for GBV initiatives

Program elements:
prevention, risk mitigation, enabling environment

Levels of socio-ecological model:
community

Individuals and organizations working to address GBV may face backlash or marginalization for threatening existing norms and power dynamics. It is important to establish protection mechanisms for at-risk learners, educators, and community members before activities begin. These protection mechanisms are particularly important in countries without laws protecting LGBTQI+ people from violence and discrimination (Cahill 2019).

Before conducting awareness-raising activities or anti-GBV campaigns, conduct a gender analysis to assess existing cultural norms, points of social conflict, and existing resources for survivors and marginalized groups within schools and the community. It is essential to train national and local media on how news coverage and "edutainment" programs can support the education system in GBV prevention and response efforts (Parkes et al. 2016). It is also important to promote awareness of GBV laws, policies, and reporting procedures among learners; parents; educators; information communication technology providers; medical, welfare, and judicial services; educators' unions; educator training institutions; and district-level leadership (Parkes et al. 2016, UNGEI 2020).

Strategy #7: Facilitate multi-sector and multi-actor collaboration and coordination

Program elements:
prevention, risk mitigation, enabling environment

Levels of socio-ecological model:
community

(See Section 4.0. Process Elements: Coordination and Collaboration)

Linkages to services, social norms-change activities, and accountability measures within and beyond schools are critical, because awareness raising alone is insufficient to effect change. Educators who are changing teaching methods or curricula, or implementing other GBV prevention or response efforts, may face isolation, burnout, and backlash. Connect educators to other stakeholders involved in addressing GBV (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019), such as government officials and human rights activists. Create opportunities for individuals to share practices, support each other in challenges, and build a critical mass of support for implementing new practices and changing norms. Support stakeholder working groups in developing action plans and joint monitoring and accountability activities (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). Throughout, uplift the leadership of women's rights and other local groups working on GBV and human rights.

Strategy #8: Create inclusive institutions

Program elements:
prevention, enabling environment

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

The promotion of equity and inclusion is a key principle of USAID's *Education Policy* (USAID 2018). Creating operational cultures where all school community members feel a sense of belonging, respect, agency, and investment is an important component of violence prevention (Raising Voices 2017). Policies that allow learners to self-designate the name and gender on their school records are a best practice for reducing discrimination against transgender and non-binary learners (Lanham et al. 2019). It is important to train policymakers, educators, and staff to use correct pronouns and culturally relevant terminology that is inclusive of transgender and non-binary learners. Avoid policies and practices based on a gender binary, such as binary-defined dress codes and group participation (USAID 2021a, Lanham et al. 2019). Additionally, respect how learners with disabilities prefer to self-identify (USAID 2021d) and involve learners with disabilities in making decisions about their education (Hayes et al. 2018).

Strategy #9: Audit curricula and learning materials for gender inclusiveness and nonviolence

Program elements:
prevention, enabling environment

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

Integrate GBV prevention into all courses by ensuring that teaching materials use gender-equitable, representative, and nonviolent language, illustrations, and gender roles (USAID 2015c). Curricula can challenge norms that underlie GBV, such as the expectation that girls are passive and boys are aggressive. They can normalize more expansive and non-hierarchical versions of femininity, masculinity, and nonbinary identities. They can also help learners and educators identify the costs of adhering to harmful norms (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). Working with ministries of education can ensure that gender-transformative materials will be integrated into formal curricula and implemented at strategic entry points (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019).

Strategy #10: Institute and enforce educators' and administrators' codes of conduct

Program elements:
risk mitigation

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

Work with educators' unions and other stakeholders to revise and promote codes of conduct (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). Codes of conduct should have clear guidelines pertaining to all forms of GBV against learners and staff (Gordon et al. 2019). State clearly that there is zero tolerance for corporal punishment, bullying, or harassment based on sexual orientation or identity, or sex in exchange for grades or other favors. Codes of conduct should also provide positive directives, such as the expectation that all actors within education systems use positive discipline (Together for Girls 2021). It is also vital to hold violators accountable. Employment should be conditional on adherence to codes of conduct, and specify that administrators and head educators are responsible for violation of codes of conduct and enforcing consequences for misconduct (Global Initiative 2019).

Strategy #11: Establish safe learning environments and transit to and from school

Program elements:
risk mitigation

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

Learning environments should be physically and psychologically safe. It is important to involve a wide range of stakeholders in analyzing school culture, and give learners and educators ownership of the change process (Raising Voices 2017). It is also important to conduct conflict analyses and ensure that education programs do not exacerbate existing inter-group tensions or place learners or educators at heightened risk of attack (Save the Children 2021). Use USAID's *Rapid Education and Risk Analysis Toolkit* to increase access to education for learners in crisis- or conflict-affected contexts (RERA 2021).

Always assume that survivors are present in all groups of educators and learners. Where culturally and contextually appropriate, promote spaces for LGBTQI+ learners, girls, learners with disabilities, and others with marginalized identities. In these spaces, learners can share their experiences, engage in peer-to-peer support, and receive psychosocial health services (Save the Children 2021). Interventions such as girls' and boys' clubs can build psychosocial support networks and transmit messages in support of gender-transformative, nonhierarchical, and nonviolent social norms (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019).

Identify safe and unsafe areas, such as corridors, sports facilities, bathrooms, and outlying areas. Ensure that water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities are safe and accessible for girls, trans and nonbinary learners, and learners with disabilities. Develop a system for monitoring spaces where bullying and other forms of violence could occur (USAID 2021a). Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including stalking, bullying, sexual harassment, defamation, hate speech, and exploitation (Hinston et al. 2018), has increased as education has transitioned online due to the COVID-19 pandemic (USAID 2021c). Consequently, USAID's *Gender and COVID-19 Guidance* directs education programs to devise specific GBV prevention and mitigation plans for online learning environments (Kellum et al. 2021, USAID 2021e).

Safety risks to learners traveling to and from school, such as gang activity, sexual violence, and inter-group conflict, should be identified and addressed. Tailor interventions to learners who are the most affected. Girls and learners with disabilities have increased risk of experiencing violence while traveling to and from school. If learners have auditory or visual disabilities, they may also have difficulty identifying who harmed them (Hayes et al. 2018). Families sometimes hesitate to send their children to school due to fears that they will experience sexual violence en route (Hayes et al. 2018, Sperling and Winthrop 2016). In Pakistan, interventions designed to address these concerns, such as locating schools close to girls' homes, building boundary walls around schools, and providing free door-to-door transportation, increased girls' enrollment (Gordon et al. 2019).

Strategy #12: Support alternative and re-entry programs

Program elements:
prevention, risk mitigation, response

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

Children may have no access to school or be forced to drop out due to negative cultural norms, violence in school or the community, poverty, conflict, displacement, or emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Families may cope with these hardships by sending their children to join armed groups or enter into early marriage (Save the Children 2021). Options such as safe re-entry, catch-up, remedial, accelerated, or alternative learning programs should be provided. These options are particularly critical for pregnant girls, young mothers, young wives, former combatants, LGBTQI+ learners, and learners with disabilities (Save the Children 2021, Education Cannot Wait 2020).

Strategy #13: Establish confidential, independent, and accessible reporting procedures and mechanisms

Program elements:
response

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

Studies from Nigeria and Tanzania show that girls are more likely to report SRGBV if schools have established reporting and accountability mechanisms (Unterhalter and Heslop 2012). Coordinate with multiple ministries, such as the ministry of education or gender, to create national reporting mechanisms and standards. Reporting mechanisms can include school-based focal points, suggestion boxes, child-friendly telephone-based helplines, confidential counseling, and online reporting methods (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). Reporting procedures should be accessible to people with disabilities and to all people who experience, witness, or suspect GBV. They should be survivor centered and child focused, and consider the safety concerns of those most at risk (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019, USAID 2021a).

Throughout all steps in the reporting and documentation process, protect confidentiality and the right to privacy, particularly for LGBTQI+ learners and educators. Ensure that officials do not disclose survivors' or others' gender identities or sexual orientations without their permission, even to the individual's family (USAID 2021a). Consider unintended consequences of collecting survivor information and asking survivors to describe experiences of violence or discrimination.

Inform educators, learners, and community members of steps they can take if they experience, witness, suspect, or become aware of incidents of GBV (USAID 2021a). Training should cover the reporting process, confidentiality considerations, what follow-up to expect from officials, do-no-harm considerations, and the services available for those who experience GBV. Plan for backlash from educators, administrators, learners, parents, and community members when violence is disclosed or consequences are administered.

Strategy #14: Support, enforce, and monitor laws and policies that address GBV

Program elements:
prevention, response, risk mitigation, enabling environment

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

SRGBV, particularly corporal punishment, is the lowest in countries with laws making it illegal in educational settings (UNESCO 2019). Be sure to support laws and policies that prohibit GBV, including GBV that occurs online (USAID 2020c). Create accountability mechanisms that administer consequences to perpetrators and reparations to victims, and ensure that enforcement mechanisms exist and have sufficient resources. Evidence suggests that district-level actors are critical to policy enactment (Parkes et al. 2016). Track implementation of GBV laws and policies at the national, provincial, and local levels. Document incidents of SRGBV on- and offline. Monitor response from implicated institutions, such as consequences administered to perpetrators, services provided to survivors, and changes to policies or practices (UNESCO-UNICEF 2019). For example, ensure that educators who are fired for committing GBV offenses are not able to find work in other schools (Parkes et al. 2016).

Policies across sectors can create an enabling environment for gender equality and nonviolence in education (Gordon et al. 2019). For example, post-conflict reconstruction regulations should ensure that any facilities that are rebuilt or replaced mitigate the risks of GBV (INEE 2010). To minimize inter-departmental conflicts, provide sufficient funding and clear guidance to prioritize GBV initiatives (Parks et al. 2016).

Strategy #15: Audit laws and policies for equity and inclusion

Program elements:
risk mitigation, enabling environment

Levels of socio-ecological model:
structural

Access to high-quality, safe, and relevant education for learners who are the most marginalized and at risk is one of four priority areas highlighted in USAID's *Education Policy* (USAID 2018). Ensure education laws and policies do not exclude learners, especially those affected by crisis or conflict. For example, remove policies that prevent refugees, girls, trans or nonbinary learners, learners with disabilities, or over-age learners from enrolling in formal education (Boisvert and Weisenhorn 2020). Make sure laws and policies are inclusive of all forms and sites of GBV, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence (USAID 2020c). Assess potential unintended consequences of criminalization, particularly for the most marginalized (Parkes et al. 2016). Amend or replace laws that include provisions criminalizing LGBTQI+ people (USAID 2021a). Work with democracy, human rights, and governance sector to ensure that the application of laws at the local level is not used to reinforce social inequalities (Parkes et al. 2016).

Program Examples

Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA)

LARA is a 6-year (2015–2021), USAID-funded early education and GBV intervention. It was managed and implemented by RTI International in partnership with the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports in 3,500 schools across 38 districts in Uganda (USAID 2020a). LARA aimed to improve early grade reading outcomes and primary grade retention. It enhanced the capacity of the education system to implement SRGBV-related policies, provided positive learning environments, and strengthened community commitment to and capacity for SRGBV prevention and response.

The Journeys Program component of LARA used three complementary strategies to improve student retention and address SRGBV. It employed three age-appropriate handbooks to engage learners, educators, and community members in individual and collective social and emotional exploration and dialogue to address GBV. Village child case-management committees aimed to shift social norms regarding child abuse by streamlining and modelling positive case management. Mass media campaigns de-normalized corporal punishment and offered alternatives (USAID 2020d).

LARA improved retention for more than 1.7 million learners. Participating learners improved reading proficiency compared to learners in control groups. Students' and educators' social and emotional skills also improved. The intervention decreased the use of corporal punishment and led to more than 20,000 cases of violence being reported, tracked, and followed by 2,505 new village case-management committees (USAID et al. 2020).

LARA demonstrates the effectiveness of contextualizing programs, fostering social and emotional learning, building participants' individual and collective agency, transforming norms, and allowing for adaptation. Learnings from LARA highlight the need to assess change agents' commitment, respond quickly and in depth to reports of abuse, provide appropriate time and resources for changes in target behaviors to be sustained, enhance existing response systems, and integrate prevention activities across structures (USAID 2020d).

Zero Tolerance Project

The Zero Tolerance Project is a 3-year collaboration between USAID and UNICEF implemented in 200 schools in four districts in Nepal (USAID et al. n.d.). It aims to reduce the prevalence of SRGBV and promote equitable learning outcomes for girls and boys. The Zero Tolerance Project raises awareness of GBV at the school and community levels, implements "suggestion box" reporting mechanisms, and strengthens linkages with community service providers (CAMRIS 2018).

A midterm review of the project indicated positive outcomes stemming from suggestion boxes and awareness-raising activities. Learners and educators were able to clearly define GBV, articulate appropriate educator–educator relationships, report incidents of violence or abuse, and plan action in response to some forms of GBV. Relationships between educators and learners improved, corporal punishment decreased, and educators' consistency increased. The Zero Tolerance Project operated in a context that was highly affected by natural disasters and poor governance. Nevertheless, the project was able to build momentum for GBV action within schools and begin to improve government and policy engagement (CAMRIS 2018).

Challenges were related to sustainability of school-based activities, inadequate links with community and government, community-level social and gender norms, and limited referral mechanisms and coordination. It was unclear how skills, motivation, and financing would be maintained after the project's end date. The government did not put into place mechanisms to monitor implementation of key, government-mandated components of the project. There was difficulty creating linkages and referral mechanisms between schools, parents, political party representatives, and government. Parent and community engagement in the project was insufficient to increase GBV awareness or action beyond the school. Awareness-raising components of the project also overlooked structural and root causes of GBV (CAMRIS 2018).

- Widen and deepen definitions of GBV so that learners will reflect on and bring forth violence and discrimination they face in the home and community, and not only on school grounds.

- Advocate for effective government implementation and monitoring of program components at federal and local levels.

- Ensure that head educators are adequately trained and evaluated on their performance within the project.

- Involve a wide range of stakeholders in strengthening referral systems.

- Provide service contact information directly to learners.

- Design regular work with parents and communities to address identity-based discrimination.

Tools and Resources

Cahill H and K Romei. 2019. *Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Schools in East and Southern Africa: From Consultation to Capacity Building*. p.35. Melbourne, Australia: Youth Research Centre, The University of Melbourne. https://education.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/3090922/ESA-Reserach-Report-2019.pdf.

GLSEN. 2019. *Safe Space Kit*. New York, NY: GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/activity/glsen-safe-space-kit-solidarity-lgbtq-youth#:~:text=Safe%20Space%20Kit%20ORDER%20A%20SAFE%20SPACE%20KIT,bias%20and%20advocate%20for%20changes%20in%20your%20school.

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The goal of the Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV) activity is to strengthen USAID's collective prevention and response, or "collective action" in gender-based violence (GBV) development programming across USAID. For more information about CARE-GBV, click here.

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