



## Is the **Good School** Toolkit effective at preventing physical violence against children at school?

### What is the Good School Toolkit?

The Good School Toolkit (Toolkit) contains a set of ideas and activities that help educators and students explore what makes a good school, and guides them through the process of creating one. The Toolkit takes about 18 months to implement and does not require specific expertise or resources from the school.

- The Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda has adopted the component of the Toolkit that helps schools prevent corporal punishment and create positive discipline.
- The Toolkit is already being used in 600 schools in Uganda.
- The Toolkit was developed in consultation with teachers and children attending Ugandan schools over a period of 6 years.

### Does it work? The Good School Study

To answer this question, we partnered with The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Makerere University and Luwero District Education Department. We used the most reliable and scientifically rigorous method available—a randomised controlled trial (RCT)—to assess whether the *Toolkit is effective at reducing physical violence from teachers against students* ([www.thelancet.com/lancetgh](http://www.thelancet.com/lancetgh)). We collaborated with 42 primary schools in Luwero district for the study (21 implementing the Toolkit and 21 'control schools,' i.e., comparable nearby schools with no intervention). The research involved:

- **A baseline (June 2012) and a follow-up (June 2014) survey.** Each time we interviewed over 3500 children and nearly 600 teachers and other school staff.



- **Educational Assessments and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ)** to monitor learning outcomes and students' and teachers' mental health.
- **Economic analysis** involved a costing study to determine the cost effectiveness of this intervention (forthcoming toward end of 2015).
- **Process evaluation** to learn about the process of implementation, where it can be streamlined and what part of the intervention might be driving the outcome observed (forthcoming toward end of 2015).
- **Referral system** was developed and implemented to support children reporting violence during the study.

## What did we find?

After 18 months of implementation, we found that:

- In intervention schools, the Toolkit reduced the risk of **physical violence** by teachers and school staff against children by **42%** (in the space of 18 months).
- In intervention schools, 50% fewer **teachers (compared to control) report using physical violence** against students.
- The Toolkit promoted students' identification with their school, as well as their sense of safety and belonging at school.

To our knowledge, this is the first study of its kind. No other intervention has been shown to have this large of an effect on reducing violence through such a rigorous evaluation method.

We did not observe any differences in the educational test scores or in mental health as measured through Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. However, 18 months may be too early for these effects to emerge, and plan to do a follow up study in a year's time.

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How did Toolkit bring about such a large effect?

We believe that this was possible through three interdependent pathways:

- a) **Shifting the nature of relationships teachers form with students.** When teachers have an alternative to using violence, and support from their entire school, they are likely to form more empathic relationships with students. They may focus on longer term goals rather than just compliance to commands given by teachers. They will rely on positive discipline and embrace a progressive outlook toward what a school ought to be. We noted that teachers reported feeling more satisfaction in their role at school after participating in the Toolkit.

*The Good School Toolkit as the name suggests, it is a good program which has really helped us. It has changed the mode of dealing with learners. Previously people could think that caning was the main way of disciplining children, but of late, people are realizing other ways.* **Teacher, Wobulenzi Parents School**

- b) **Creating opportunities for students to participate.** When there is more opportunity to participate, students will explore and invest more in their school. When students are not afraid to ask questions and feel that their views and opinions matter, the entire learning experience changes. In this environment, students will invest more in their school and therefore there will be fewer disciplinary issues and potential for violence.

- c) **Promoting a more transparent and accountable school administration.** When the school administration is stimulated to imagine a bigger role for themselves as leaders, the head teacher and support staff take more responsibility for what happens at their school. They establish standards of behavior, declare policies and hold everyone accountable.

It is the coming together of all three of these pathways, plus the belief that change is possible, that helps a school change its operational culture and create a *Good School*.

## What does this mean?

- All head teachers, teachers and students at schools in Uganda should consider using the Good School Toolkit.
- We encourage Ministry of Education and Sports to adopt the Good School Toolkit as a matter of policy for every school in Uganda.
- We encourage teachers to take a closer look at how the Good School Toolkit can help them.