

Adapting for Impact at Scale

Lessons for streamlining

Raising Voices' Good School Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

Violence against children violates children's rights and impedes access to and participation in education. Schools – where children spend a significant proportion of their time – can play an active role in preventing violence against children. Together with students, teachers, administration, parents and community members, schools can strengthen their practices and governance structures to systemically create positive and safe learning environments for children.

The Good School Toolkit (GST), a whole-school approach, has been effective in reducing violence against children by transforming the operational culture of schools. The full **GST includes over 60 different activities**, and while many schools have appreciated implementing the full program, some have found it too time intensive. To inform the design of a streamlined version called GST Agile, Raising Voices partnered with IDinsight to determine which components of the GST are most critical to reducing violence against children. The streamlined version will be more intuitive to implement and easier to scale, while ensuring fidelity to core components.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Since it was developed in 2007–08, the GST has been implemented in **more than 1,000 public and private schools in 28 districts** in rural and urban Uganda. A randomized controlled trial found that the GST led to a **42% reduction in risk** of physical violence by school staff, promoted student voice and agency, and increased students' sense of belonging.

The program involves a six-step school-led process implemented over 18 months, guided by the Toolkit. The program promotes positive discipline, safe learning environments, improves student voice and agency and strengthens school policies on violence. Examples of activities include establishing committees of teachers, students, and parents; a student court; a suggestion box; workshops on violence against children and positive discipline; and school-wide open meetings. As a holistic process, the GST's overall approach is more important than any single activity.

STUDY METHODS

Refinement of GST's Theory of Change based on previous research and experience. This helped identify pathways of change to explore further.

A process assessment through interviews and focus group discussions with students, teachers, and parents in nine selected schools that have implemented the GST for several years. While overall feedback was sought, specific feedback relating to a subset of activities was synthesized through thematic analysis.

INSPIRE STRATEGIES

Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children ([click to read more](#))



Education and Life Skills



Norms and values



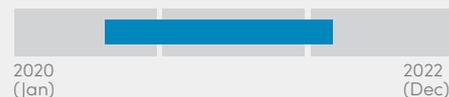
Safe Environments



Parent and caregiver support

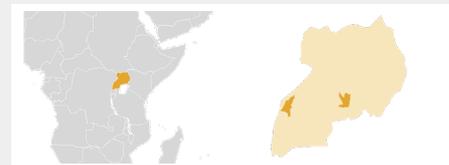
TIMEFRAME

August 2020– February 2022



LOCATION

Luwero and Kabarole Districts, Uganda



WHO IS THE GST FOR?

All school stakeholders: students, teachers, administrators, parents, community members

PUBLICATIONS

Naker, Dipak. (2019). Preventing violence against children at schools in resource-poor environments: Operational culture as an overarching entry point. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. 47. 10.1016/j.avb.2019.04.004

Devries, K. M., Knight, L., Allen, E., Parkes, J., Kyegombe, N., & Naker, D. (2017). Does the Good Schools Toolkit Reduce Physical, Sexual and Emotional Violence, and Injuries, in Girls and Boys equally? A Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial. *Prevention Science*, 8(7), 839–53.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Participants see the holistic GST model as effective. Nearly all study participants attribute positive changes in the school and surrounding communities to the GST, appreciate its holistic nature, report positive changes in teacher–student and student–student relationships within one year, and observe increased feelings of connectedness to the school with sustained implementation. While many consider the step-based approach to be useful, others prefer picking and choosing activities.

Meaningful change requires school-based protagonists. At least two teachers, referred to as ‘protagonists’ in the GST, must be trained in and committed to implementing the Toolkit if it is to be sustainable and effective. Training both female and male teachers maximizes sustainability and the engagement of both girls and boys, while frequent teacher transfers can threaten impact.

Impactful elements enhance student voice, positive discipline, and increased awareness. Student voice, feedback, and participation improve teacher–student and student–student relationships and increase a sense of belonging. Suggestion boxes, student courts, student committees and open meetings, for example, provide diverse opportunities for boys and girls to share concerns and resolve conflicts. Positive discipline helps to create a safe environment and freer communication in schools, while workshops and policies increase awareness and knowledge about violence against children.

Ongoing barriers limit participation. Stakeholders consider parent and community engagement to be impactful and important, but report only moderate success because of barriers such as transport and lack of incentives. Students need ongoing orientation from trained teachers in order to, for example, run student courts and understand zero-tolerance policies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GST AGILE



Maintain a whole-school approach. Involving multiple stakeholders and components that address the operational culture of the school are core aspects of the GST and promote inclusiveness.



Strengthen an intersectional lens. GST Agile should build on study findings to ensure that girls and boys of all ages and abilities are included. For example, girls find suggestion boxes particularly useful, boys prefer sharing feedback directly with teachers, and younger students and those with poor literacy skills find the suggestion box challenging.



Ensure commitment of the school administration. This is essential if schools are to sustain implementation, fidelity to violence against children prevention policies, and support to the teacher and student protagonists who lead program implementation.



Explore innovations for effective community outreach. Parent committees have not proved sufficient on their own to connect schools to the surrounding community and require closer linkages from administration.



Further streamline the Toolkit. Address challenges of time and capacity by simplifying activities and integrating them into school curricula where possible.

PARTNERS

| Role | Organization |
|---------------|----------------|
| Researchers | IDinsight |
| Practitioners | Raising Voices |

Devries, K. M., Knight, L., Child, J. C., Mirembe, A., Nakuti, J., Jones, R., Sturgess, J., Allen, E., Kyegombe, N., Parkes, J., Walakira, E., Elbourne, D., Watts, C. & Naker, D. (2015, July). The Good School Toolkit for reducing physical violence from school staff to primary school students: a cluster-randomised controlled trial in Uganda. *Lancet Global Health*, 3(7), e378–86.

Knight, L., Allen, E., Mirembe, A., Nakuti, J., Namy, S., Child, J. C., Sturgess, J., Kyegombe, N., Walakira, E. J., Elbourne, D., Naker, D. & Devries, K. M. (2018, 9 May). Implementation of the Good School Toolkit in Uganda: A quantitative process evaluation of a successful violence prevention program. *BMC Public Health*, 18(608).

Kyegombe, N., Namakula, S., Mulindwa, J., Lwanyaga, J., Naker, D., Namy, S., Nakuti, J., Parkes, J., Knight, L., Walakira, E., Devries, K.M. (2017, May). How did the Good School Toolkit reduce the risk of past week physical violence from teachers to students? Qualitative findings on pathways of change in schools in Luwero, Uganda. *Social Sciences & Medicine*, 180, 10–19.

Merrill, K. G., Knight, L., Namy, S., Allen, E., Naker, D., & Devries, K. M. (2018, October). Effects of a violence prevention intervention in schools and surrounding communities: Secondary analysis of a cluster randomised-controlled trial in Uganda. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 84, 182–95.

CONTACT

Devin Faris

Violence Against Children Prevention Director
Raising Voices

devin@raisingvoices.org

<https://raisingvoices.org/children/the-good-school-toolkit/>

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