Data for Children Collaborative
WITH UNICEF

Uganda

YOUNG PEOPLE ADVISORS

INSPIRE Case Study

OVERVIEW

In 2020, the Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF (DCC) generously funded the End Violence Lab to coordinate a series of regional systematic reviews on INSPIRE strategies to end violence against children called: *Accelerating What Works to End Violence Against Children: A multi-country study.* As part of the post award process the DCC asked the End Violence Lab to read and respond to their Youth Engagement Workbook. It asked a provocative question: How will you meaningful engage young people?

We were INSPIRED!

In response, the EV Lab proposed a series of youth-centred activities to complement the review project supporting a growing trend to deliver meaningful research initiatives *with* children and young people. Notably, systematic reviews are too often completed with little or no inputs from the end-users to ensure that findings make sense. We addressed this working with a male/female team of young people from Brazil, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Colombia and Uganda. We subsequently launched the Young People Advisors (YPA) programme, a co-designed approach to discuss violence prevention, to map our progress addressing such a technically complex topic and to generate case studies with young people from all 5 countries.

PUBLICATION REVIEWED

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). The Good School Toolkit for reducing physical violence from school staff to primary school students: A cluster-randomised controlled trial in Uganda. *The Lancet Global Health*, *3*(7), e378–e386. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00060-1

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INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Exposure to physical violence in childhood is widespread and associated with increased risk of depressive disorders and suicide attempts, poor educational attainment, and increased risk of perpetrating or experiencing intimate partner violence in later relationships. A study assessing *Violence against Children in East Asia and the Pacific*, reported that children experience violence in secret even when adults are fully aware, and often this goes un-reported [1] (UNICEF, 2014). Physical violence can take place in any given setting, namely homes, health centers, playgrounds, schools and in classroom settings. Commonly noted examples of violence include sexual abuse, child battering, child labour, early marriages and many more.

In East Africa, the site of the intervention reviewed here, a study in Tanzania found that more than 50% of men and women reported physical violence from teachers when they were aged 0–18 years in Tanzania, and in Kenya more than 40% of 13–17-year-olds reported being punched, kicked, or whipped by a teacher in the past 12 months; 13–15% had experienced the same from a parent.[2]

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that in 2012 Uganda had the 10th highest rate of homicide for children and adolescents under the age of 19. A 2011 survey on violence against children in schools found that 81% of the children in the schools surveyed in five districts had been beaten in school, and that 8% percent of girls had experienced forced

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[1] UNICEF. (2014). *Violence against Children in East Asia and the Pacific* Accessed from: https://www.scribd.com/document/377794983/Violence-against-Children-East-Asia-and-Pacific-pdf

[2] 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). The Good School Toolkit for reducing physical violence from school staff to primary school students: A cluster-randomised controlled trial in Uganda. *The Lancet Global Health*, *3*(7), e378–e386. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00060-1

sex in school.[3] In Uganda, the Ministry of Education has banned corporal punishment and other forms of physical violence since 1997. Little has been done towards implementing such laws and policies on ending violence against children at schools.

Raising Voices, a Ugandan NGO, developed the Good Schools Toolkit in response to research conducted in 2005. The study found that 60% of schoolchildren reported having experienced physical violence at school on regular basis. The toolkit was conceptualised to help educators and students explore what makes a healthy, vibrant, and positive school, and guide them through a process to create their vision. It deliberately focuses on ideas and activities that do not require dedicated financial resources—just commitment and perseverance to create something extraordinary.

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[3] ANPPCAN Uganda. (2011). Baseline Survey to Assess Violence against Children in Arua, Apac, Kitgum, Mukono and Rakai Districts: Final Report. African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse & Neglect, Uganda Chapter.

METHODS

Using the Good Schools Toolkit, the study under review took place in the Luwero district of Uganda. Luwero was an insurgency site for the National resistance movement and a brutal counter insurgency for the government of Apollo Milton Obote. The war, known as the Luwero War or the "Bush War", left many thousands of civilians dead during the early to mid-1980s. When the war ended, the affected area was renamed to the "Luwero Triangle." Luwero is bordered by Mukono and Wakiso Districts (South), Nakaseke (West), and Nakasongola (North) and Kayunga District in the East. It has a total of 650 primary schools.

The intervention took place from January 2012 to September 2014. The study was a two-arm cluster randomised controlled trial, and was conducted within 42 schools with children between the ages of 11-14 years and in the primary years 5, 6 and 7 of school. Implementation of the intervention was school wide, but data was collected from the primary 5–7 students only, because they were able to respond to questions in survey format. All those who could speak Luganda or English, and who were deemed by interviewers to be able to understand the consent procedures, were eligible.

The Good Schools Toolkit focused on the classroom as the point of violence prevention intervention. The toolkit followed the six steps designed to be implemented in sequence of about 60 activities described in manuals and supporting leaflets and posters to bring schools through a process of behavioural change. The intervention uses the transtheoretical behaviour change model, and involves the application of behaviour change techniques shown to be effective in other fields and in other violence prevention

interventions, including setting a goal, making an action plan, and providing social support.[4] Below is a summary of the six steps to implementing the kit according to Raising Voices.[5]

Good School Toolkit Steps:

Step One: Your Team & Network

- Schools identify key protagonists at school and create their Good School committee to build school-wide support for the process (pre-contemplation)

Step Two: Preparing for Change

- Baseline measurements gather information on each schools' starting point, and school leaders cultivate interest among parents, the community and local education officials (contemplation)

Step Three: Good Teachers & Teaching

- A school-wide reflection on teacher-student relationships provides a renewed sense of teacher roles, increased professional support, and new approaches for positive student engagement (preparing for action)

Step Four: Positive Discipline

- Schools reflect on how violence manifests and establish a new school culture by exploring positive disciplinary methods to create students who believe in themselves (action)

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[4] Prochaska, J. O., & Velicer, W. F. (1997). The tra

nstheoretical model of health behavior change. *American journal of health promotion : AJHP*, *12*(1), 38–48. https://doi.org/10.4278/0890-1171-12.1.38

[5] https://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/downloads/GoodSchool/Good_School_Toolkit/OVERVIEWINTRO.pdf; see pages 10–11.

Step Five: Good Learning Environment

- Schools reflect on what a good learning environment looks like and work with all stakeholders to foster a psychological sense of safety and inclusion *(maintenance of action)*

Step Six: Good Administration & the Future

- Schools ensure that the needed leadership skills and competencies are passed on to administrative leaders to sustain a Good Schools vision and practice.

The toolkit has several objectives: to create a friendly nurturing learning environment for the students and teachers, to implement a more progressive learning methodology, and to strengthen school governance and the development of a collective vision for the school. Specific activities carried out during the intervention included painting murals on school walls, hanging codes of conduct in visible places and issuing cartoon booklets.

The intervention comes with three packages that collectively contain the six steps; this includes the introductory package that introduced the participants to the Good School Toolkit and provided the necessary tools to inform their decision to embark upon the journey to creating a good school. Schools were engaged through a meeting that involved head teachers who had agreed to participate. This was followed by an inception meeting of two hours held by raising voices to staff. Two staff protagonists (teachers) were identified to attend a three day residential workshop to familiarise with the tool kit.

The second package assists educators in preparing a team of community members who are dedicated to joining you on the journey to creating a good school, and explores what it means to be a good teacher. Teacher training was conducted in this phase, and parents of the children were also partly involved in the process.

The third package addresses discipline and helps educators to establish a school culture and disciplinary methods that support positive discipline instead of corporal punishment. It provides steps to think about the future, plan for the way forward, and measure and celebrate your success. The toolkit also included child-friendly and inspiring learning materials such as posters and cartoon booklets. We believe this would simplify learning for the children more so those in the lower classes.

One-to-one support is offered to key staff through telephone calls (monthly) and in person visits to student protagonists (quarterly) which vary depending on need. Student protagonists and staff protagonists work together to carry out action plan. Children were counseled regardless of what they reported, keeping in mind that some violence remained unreported. Review meetings were also conducted to monitor the progress and impact of the intervention.

Children that needed protective services based on what they self-reported were referred for support. Review meetings were also conducted to monitor the progress and impact of the intervention. Children were counselled regardless what they disclosed. The intervention was carried out under the support of 100 qualified and trained staff from Raising Voices Uganda. It involved the students, teachers, and parents, from whom full consent was obtained.

RESULTS

This study focused on physical violence, and revealed that more than 90% of students reported having ever experienced physical violence by a school staff member. Approximately two thirds of those reported experiencing injuries as a result. Moreover, more than half of children experienced physical abuse, and about a quarter of students were injured, by a staff person in the past week.

Overall, the intervention outcomes were positive with a large reduction in physical violence from school staff, as reported by primary school students in Luwero District, Uganda. The application of the toolkit also improved students' feelings of wellbeing and safety at school, suggesting that the intervention is effective in changing the school environment. Results of the study reveal that the intervention produced no evidence of changes in test scores, possibly due to the short time frame of intervention. Besides being effective for both sexes, there was weak evidence that the intervention had a stronger effect in male students. Students in intervention schools reported lower levels of past term violence (31.0%) unlike those in the control schools (48.7% violence in past week results). Likewise, staff in the intervention group also reported using less violence in the past week than those in the control group. However, the use of violence lingers as an issue: at follow-up, 434 of 3820 children were referred because they disclosed severe violence in the survey (239 [12·6%] in the control group, 195 [10·2%] in the intervention group.

REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Targeting schools is smart as schools are indeed a source of violence. We offer some reflections and recommendations based on our own experiences of growing up as young people in Uganda.

Clearly, this intervention is helpful in reducing violence in schools and has encouraging results. The intervention's focus on schoolchildren and school staff is excellent. However, we believe involving other stakeholders, such as the policy makers, even as observers to the process, would also be beneficial.

Mostof the schools involved in the project, like schools across Uganda, face large structural challenges related to poverty. For example, large class sizes, poor physical infrastructure, and a lack of teaching resources are all common. Although results show that students felt safer in intervention schools, it might be that improving the atmosphere at school is necessary but not sufficient to improve longer-term outcomes. At the institutional level, schools must be encouraged (and funded) to construct new classroom blocks, employ more teachers and reduce the likeliness of physical forms of violence. We believe that long-term change must be focused in the school and beyond.

We also suggest as part of the intervention that schools be encouraged to build in early preventive measures by adding violence prevention to the teacher-training curriculum. Teachers should learn about effects of physical violence on children, how to prevent it, and alternative disciplining methods in the early stages of their learning careers. This would, over a longer period, make the intervention more sustainable, building a better teacher workforce prepared to enforce violence prevention strategies before violence happens.

More specifically, we suggest more awareness-raising activities aside from those mentioned in the toolkit, such as posters pasted on school notice boards advocating against violence. We believe developing live dramas, and clear and simple audio- visual resources, adapted for young audiences, addressing violence prevention would also be useful. Such efforts would provide a better idea on what violence means, how to prevent it, and would demonstrate where and how to disclose.

A clearer indication of referral pathways could have been an important addition to this intervention. It was good that all children were empowered on awareness of physical violence through other activities, but we suggest that part of these activities also include knowing their rights as well as where and how to report these cases. Schools should have suggestion boxes (these were not part of the intervention) where children can place any issues at hand, these allowing for continuous reporting of concerns as they present daily. At end of every week, these could be reviewed, and a way forward discussed. Doing this is likely to make children to feel as though they are part of the process of what goes on in the school as well as ensuring that their voices are heard.

These recommendations are important because we have known many children, and peers, who have had experiences with physical violence, and yet did not know how or where to report. Perpetrators are less likely to risk being caught if children are empowered with reporting. For example, it would be useful to have posters on the walls that have the contact information and address of where, how and who to report grievances to. Again, knowledge like this will enable children to have a direct involvement in this intervention, making it more sustainable. Additionally, the intervention could include the process reporting as part of the training session for the student protagonist roles in the study.

Finally, there is need for regular monitoring and evaluating of this intervention. It would be important to test if it can be adapted and applied to children of lower ages (younger than

11-14 years). Likewise, testing the intervention in urban school settings would be important since it was only carried out in rural schools in the Luwero district. Ideally, children and young people would be included in the research, evaluation and monitoring processes. This could be done by organising training to understand how monitoring and evaluation is done, allowing them to share their own perspectives, and ultimately, designing child-friendly reporting tools perhaps using imagery and simple clear language. It could also be done through allocating specific roles and responsibilities to the children and young people who form part of the monitoring and evaluation of this intervention.
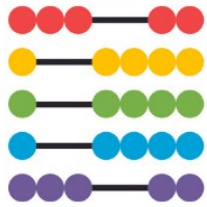
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