Global Research and Technology Development
Funded by UK Government

WhatWorks
TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

# School-Based Interventions to Reduce Violence Against Adolescent Girls

Schools offer a scalable platform to promote positive gender norms and reduce violence. The global evidence base tells us which school-based interventions are most successful, and exactly what components make them effective.

## Key Takeaways

- Effective school-based programmes incorporate social and emotional learning into activities with girls and boys to build healthy relationships and resilience.
- The whole-of-school approach (interventions that view the school as part of an ecosystem, and engage multiple stakeholders at different levels within the school in a range of activities) is a promising way to shift harmful norms and reduce violence against adolescents.
- Teachers, when well trained and supported, offer a scalable way to deliver programmes that prevent violence against adolescent girls.
- Research has identified effective school-based programmes, although a few have been adapted to other contexts, none have been evaluated at scale beyond their original context.

## Spotlighting Programmes that Work

Exemplars of evidence-based programmes are emerging that effectively reduce violence against adolescent girls. These include whole-of-school approaches, play-based approaches, bystander interventions, comprehensive sexuality education, and often combine multiple approaches within one programme.

### An Effective Whole-Of-School Approach

**The Good Schools Toolkit (GST)** in Uganda works with stakeholders across the entire school ecosystem (the administration, teachers, students, and parents) to build non-violent conflict resolution skills in young adolescents, address gender norms, enhance social and emotional learning, power dynamics between students and teachers, to ensure a safe learning environment.

GST is delivered over 18 months and significantly reduced both peer on peer emotional and physical violence and violence perpetrated by school staff, with girls and boys benefitting equally. GST has been implemented in 1,000 primary schools with children (11-14 years) and 500 Secondary school students aged 14-20 years.

### Reducing Violence Through Play

**Right to Play (RTP)** trains coaches in Pakistani secondary schools to deliver 120 sessions of over two years, building kids' social and emotional skills through structured play. An initial evaluation demonstrated significant impact on gender attitudes and peer violence, and greater effects were reported by girls:

**Reduced Peer Victimisation**
**Girls: 58.5% VS Boys: 33.3%**
**Improvement in Gender Attitudes**
**Girls: 18% VS Boys: 14%**

RTP is currently being adapted to include sexual and reproductive health as well as being delivered by trained teachers and scaled up across a province in Pakistan.

### Centering Norms and Values

Challenging harmful gender norms helps to prevent and reduce violence against girls. **Taaron Ki Toli (TKT)**, evaluated in an Indian State among middle school (grade 7 and 8) students, changes gender attitudes, and behaviours that sustain gender inequalities. TKT incorporates a gender lens into curricula and trains teachers and school leaders to deliver the curriculum. TKN demonstrates an increase in gender equitable attitudes among both girls and boys, sustained over 2 years. The intervention has been scale-up across five Indian states reaching over 600,000 adolescent girls and boys and has been adapted to a digital platform for online learning.

## What Makes a School-Based Programme Effective?

- Includes multiple components
- Participatory approaches that meaningfully engage young people
- Allows for critical thinking to build positive gender attitudes and non-violent behavior
- A gender transformative approach that challenges harmful norms
- Longer duration (more than 12 weeks)

## The State of the Evidence

The past decade has seen an increase in evaluations of school-based programmes to prevent violence against adolescent girls, and effective models are emerging. However, the evidence base remains uneven and more research is needed:

- Most evaluations are still conducted in HIC, but much of this evaluation is of violence response programming rather than primary prevention that addresses root causes of violence. The most exciting evaluations of primary prevention programmes in schools are emerging from LMICs.
- Bystander interventions and digital approaches are promising, but they have mainly been evaluated in HICs. Where appropriate this approach should be integrated and evaluated in LMICs.
- The vast majority of evaluations in LMICs come from Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by South Asia, reflecting context-specific patterns of violence, and differences in the way the research fields have evolved regionally. More evaluation of school-based programming is needed in the Middle East and North Africa, West and Central Asia, and Latin America.
- Despite several interventions showing promise, understanding the mechanisms that bring about change are lacking. This will allow us to decide how these interventions might work across different contexts, and whether they can or should be scaled-up.

## What This Means:

Violence against adolescent girls is a human rights violation with long-term negative knock-on effects for families, communities, and economies. Schools are a catalytic platform for scaling evidence-based programming that reduces violence against adolescent girls. There is an urgent need to adapt and scale effective programmes through schools, but this requires **bold investment from donors,** and partnerships with local, regional and national governments and local practitioners.

## What is What Works?

The What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale Initiative is a seven-year programme funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). What Works scales up effective violence prevention interventions, pilots innovative approaches, and conducts rigorous evaluations to build the global knowledge base.

→ **Learn more: ww2preventvawg.org**



*Reducing violence through play: students in the Right to Play programme in Pakistan.*

***Authored by: Shanaaz Mathews, Chelsea Ullman, and Flávia Dutra***