



PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AT SCHOOL: A  
SYSTEMIC RESPONSE TO AN ENTRENCHED PROBLEM

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*Raising Voices*

# Determined Response

- In Uganda, corporal punishment at school has been prohibited since 1997
- Alternatives policy adopted in 2012
- VAC prevention policy adopted in 2015
- Investment in primary education has been prioritized within national education expenditure
- Considerable openness and willingness to find solutions within the MoESTS.

# And yet, an old problem persists...

Evidence from diverse parts of the country suggests:

- High rates of violence against children at school.
- Our study found that more than 90% of children report ever experiencing violence at school and more than half the children had experienced physical violence at school last week.



Despite the will, why does VAC in schools persist?

# Context: Conceptual

- Adults have a narrow (and different) conception of VAC compared to children
- Adults distinguish between 'legitimate' (discipline) and non-legitimate (mistreatment)
- Many adults believe that controlled usage is good, beneficial and their duty as a good parent or teacher.

# Context: Socio-economic

- Schools under-resourced
- Classrooms crowded
- Teachers under-trained and demoralised
- Children acculturated to have low expectations



# Negative Feedback Loop

Conceptual Priming + Socio-economic context  
= Negative feedback loop

Schools rely heavily on VAC to control and contain children

- Corporal punishment becomes preferred way of 'disciplining' children
- Children have limited opportunity to develop their cognitive and social skills
- Children's experience of and identification with school curtailed or diminished and therefore many drop-out.
- Children emerging with poor learning outcomes and possibly negative mental health outcomes
- Teachers disengaged from students
- Parents feel demoralized and betrayed

# Malfunctioning System

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VAC becomes entrenched and normalized as part of schools/education and has a profound long term consequences for children, their families and their communities.

**Complex problems need systemic solutions**



Reconceptualizing ways forward



- a) Reformulate the challenge as creation of good schools and not prevention of VAC.
- b) Broaden conception of VAC
  - Expand conception of VAC beyond physical violence: aspirations, psychological, identity, participation, opportunity for self definition.
- c) Systemic/holistic responses
  - Begin with the child's experience of school and move out in concentric circles of influence to address the entire 'ecosystem' that sustains the problem.
- d) Build interventions that foster synergy: 'join the dots'

# Reconceptualizing ways forward (continued)

- e) Develop practical methodologies for holistic interventions.
  - Usable in resource poor environment
  - Endorsable by local officials/Ministry of Education
  - Implementable by teachers and students at school-level
  - Meaningful participation for all stakeholders including parents
  - Scalable

# Reframing in Action: Good School Toolkit

## Good School Toolkit

- Systems level approach addressing operational culture of school: 3 entry points (relationships, governance, participation)
- 6 step practical process
- Implemented by teachers and students
- Supported by parents
- Endorsed and monitored by local officials
- Used in 600 schools in Uganda







A Good School has an accountability...

A Good School has a...

A Good School...

What is a Good School? School that has...

Want to create a Good School? Let the Good School Toolkit guide you through the process.

1. Start

2. Talk

3. Become a member

4. Assemble

5. Develop

6. Involve

What is a Good School? A COMPANION FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

