

## ***Prevention / Child Safety: Maltreatment Occurrence/Recurrence***

School-based interventions can reduce use of violence by teachers against students. Results need to be interpreted with caution due to multiple studies with high risk of bias. Inconsistent results for gender-based violence and peer violence among adolescents.

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| <b>Evidence status</b> | <b>High risk of bias</b> | Weak strength evidence to reduce violence by teachers against students. Inconsistent findings for gender-based violence and peer violence. |
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### **The summary in brief**

There are various types of school-based interventions to prevent child maltreatment. This synthesis features three categories: 1) programmes focused on preventing the use of violence as punishment by teachers within schools, particularly in settings where it is widely prevalent; 2) programmes for younger children delivered in the classroom to prepare them to recognise, avoid, and report instances of sexual abuse; and 3) prevention programmes for older children (middle school and high school) focused on interpersonal violence, dating violence, and bystander action. This category includes lessons for children aimed at preventing victimization and discouraging children from perpetrating offenses against others.

This cell includes studies that report on reductions in children reporting violence against them.

Training teachers seem to succeed in reducing violence against children. Results need to be considered with caution due to the high risk of bias in many studies.

Studies from the latter two categories are from US programmes. Results are inconsistent on reducing actual abusive incidents across studies.

There are many evaluations of school-based programmes in the EGM but very few studies report on actual incidence of child maltreatment. The majority report on intermediate outcomes such as knowledge, awareness, and attitudes.

### **Contents of the cell**

The cell has four protocols (*Wangamati 2022, Knight 2020, Scharpf 2021, Masath 2020*) and 19 studies (*Devries 2015, Devries 2017, Devries 2018, Edwards 2019, Edwards 2021, Knight 2018, Merrill 2018, Nkuba 2018, Taylor 2010, Kolko 1987, Kolko 1989, Baker-Henningham 2019, Baker-Henningham 2021, Fabbri 2021, Hecker 2021, Jewkes 2019, and Ssenyonga 2022*).

Six studies are from the US; five papers are from the evaluation of the Good School Toolkit in Uganda, and three studies used the *Interaction Competencies with Children (ICC)* approach for teachers and institutional caregivers in Tanzania and Uganda. Jamaica (two studies), Tanzania (a refugee camp), South

Africa, and Pakistan are the sites of the remaining studies. All protocols are from studies happening in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **The interventions**

All the interventions are school based. There are three main themes to the types of interventions in this cell.

1. Reducing violence by teachers: All studies from Africa (except one from South Africa) and the two from Jamaica focussed on this aim. The core approach to achieving this was through planned training programmes for teachers. Training took place over multiple sessions away from the classroom (or at least students) and aimed at changing attitudes regarding violence as punishment and providing teachers with alternate methods of disciplining students. Participating teachers taught in preschool, primary, and secondary schools. Some interventions only include the training programme but in others, such as the *Good School Toolkit*, a whole school approach is used, involving students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and caregivers. Typically, in these whole school approaches, children are empowered to lead programme coordination and planning (with the support of the implementers).
2. Gender-based violence prevention and peer violence prevention: These programmes include a specific focus on addressing sexual violence against girls and violence by peers. The participants in these interventions are middle schoolers and high schoolers, the age when children are transitioning into adulthood. One programme from South Africa called *Skhokho* (Jewkes 2019), much like the *Good School Toolkit*, uses a holistic approach involving the entire school to prevent gender-based violence. Another example is a programme that teaches self-defence against sexual assault to American Indian girls living on a reservation (Edwards 2021). A third programme, *Bringing in the Bystander – High School Curriculum*, aims to empower adolescents to say something when witnessing interpersonal violence among their peers. Another programme from Pakistan (Karmaliani 2020) uses a structured play-based life skills programme to reduce peer violence among 6<sup>th</sup> graders. A coach leads programme activities, which are followed by reflective discussions in the group.
3. School-based education for young children: *Red Flag/Green Flag* (Kolko 1987, Kolko 1989) involves teaching young children about inappropriate touching and what they can do if someone does that to them. This is the most common form of child abuse prevention programme implemented globally. An evaluation of *Early Head Start* in the US (Green 2020), which is an early childhood prevention programme available until age three to low-income families, found that the benefits to parents and families (by reducing stress and conflict) contribute to reduced abuse and neglect for many years in the child's life.

### **Who delivers the intervention?**

The *Good School Toolkit (GST)* developed by a Ugandan non-profit, Raising Voices – actively engages students, teachers, and school staff in various intervention activities. The *ICC* workshop is delivered by a psychologist. *The Red Flag/Green Flag programme* was chosen for use by an organization that develops community services for local school-age children. *Bringing in the Bystander* was originally developed by university researchers and has since been widely adopted in colleges, universities, and the military. *BITB-HSC (Edwards 2019)* is an adapted version for high-schoolers that is typically delivered by one person who identifies as a man and one as a woman. Other curricula are taught by experienced professionals from a local sexual assault centre, in most cases, or by regular classroom teachers.

### **Have the interventions been implemented at scale?**

Most studies are small enough for researchers to test out various curricula. The *Good School Toolkit* is promoted by the NGO Raising Voices, which has implemented it in primary schools in one district and is planning to implement it in secondary schools in Uganda. It is also being adapted for Tanzania. The scale has been limited to date. *ICC*, which has different versions for teachers (*ICC-T*) and does not seem to have been widely implemented. It has been tested in institutional care (orphanages) and in primary schools albeit in small samples. The *Red Flag/Green Flag People* programme is common in the US, though the two studies were carried out in a small sample of schools. *BITB* has been implemented widely in colleges, universities, and the military but it is not clear whether this specific adaptation, *BITB-HSC*, has been implemented at scale. *Early Head Start* is a well-established programme in the US available to low-income families throughout the country.

### **What do the interventions cost?**

A separate study by Greco et al<sup>1</sup> found GST to be cost-effective. Implementing GST over 18 months in 21 schools cost close to \$400,000. Monitoring and evaluation add another \$50,000 to the costs. The annual cost to run GST was approximately \$7,500 per school and \$15 per student. It costs close to \$250 to prevent a case of violence and approximately \$100 in annual implementation costs (excluding the initial implementation costs) for every prevented case.

Other programmes: While detailed cost information is not explicitly provided, programmes like *Red Flag/Green Flag People* or *BITB-HSC* are considered low-cost since they are incorporated within the regular school schedule and are of short duration.

### **How are the programmes meant to work? The theory of change**

Most of the programmes are theory-informed, drawing from multiple behavioural theories rather than entirely depending on one specific behavioural change theory.

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<sup>1</sup> Greco G, Knight L, Ssekadde W, et al Economic evaluation of the Good School Toolkit: an intervention for reducing violence in primary schools in Uganda. *BMJ Global Health* 2018;3:e000526.

### Do the interventions work in reducing child maltreatment occurrence and recurrence?

- **To prevent violence by teachers in schools:** Multiple studies reported a reduced risk of experiencing violence for children (GST and ICC-T). In most studies, teachers self-reported a reduced use of violence as punishment. However, in a few studies, this was not corroborated by children reporting less violence from teachers.
- **To prevent child abuse:** In the evaluation of the *Red Flag/Green Flag People* programme, in one study, the proportion of children who said they were touched inappropriately by an adult went from about 19% before the programme to about 11% immediately after the programme and approximately 6% six months later. The respective proportions for the control group were approximately 6%, 0%, and 7%. Importantly, the number of children in this study is very small which makes the reported effect sizes more pronounced than they probably are. In the other study, no significant differences were seen between groups in abusive encounters with adults immediately after the intervention. However, six months later, the intervention group children reported more abusive encounters than the control group, who reported none. It is hard to figure out whether the programme is effective given these results.
- **To prevent children from becoming victims and perpetrators of violence:** There are mixed results across studies. In some studies, there is a statistically significant decrease in victimization of various types, of violence especially sexual violence and intimate partner violence but in others, there is no statistical significance.

### Are the results generalisable?

The corporal punishment prevention studies mostly come from Uganda and Tanzania are implemented on a small scale. School-based education programmes such as Red Flag/Green Flag are widely generalisable to other settings. Inconsistent findings for other outcomes limit generalizability.

### How reliable is the evidence?

The studies are a mix of different quality in terms of risk of bias.

### *Risk of Bias for Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs)*

| Study (Author and year) | Overall risk of bias | Randomised process | Deviations from intended interventions | Missing outcome data | Measurement of the outcome | Selection of the reported result |
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| <b><i>Baker-Henningham 2019</i></b> | Low risk of bias  | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      |
| <b><i>Baker-Henningham 2021</i></b> | Low risk of bias  | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      |
| <b><i>Devries 2015</i></b>          | High risk of bias | Low risk      | Some concerns | Low risk      | High risk     | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Devries 2017</i></b>          | High risk of bias | Low risk      | Some concerns | Low risk      | High risk     | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Devries 2018</i></b>          | High risk of bias | Low risk      | Some concerns | Low risk      | High risk     | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Edwards 2019</i></b>          | High risk of bias | Some concerns | Some concerns | High risk     | High risk     | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Fabbri 2021</i></b>           | Low risk of bias  | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      |
| <b><i>Green 2020</i></b>            | Some concerns     | Some concerns | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      |
| <b><i>Hecker 2021</i></b>           | Some concerns     | Some concerns | Low risk      | Some concerns | Some concerns | Low risk      |
| <b><i>Jewkes 2019</i></b>           | Some concerns     | Some concerns | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Karmaliani 2020</i></b>       | Low risk of bias  | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      | Low risk      |
| <b><i>Knight 2018</i></b>           | High risk of bias | Low risk      | Some concerns | Low risk      | High risk     | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Merrill 2018</i></b>          | High risk of bias | Low risk      | Some concerns | Some concerns | High risk     | Some concerns |

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| <b><i>Nkuba</i></b><br><b><i>2018</i></b>     | High risk of bias | Some concerns | High risk     | High risk     | Some concerns | Some concerns |
| <b><i>Ssenyonga</i></b><br><b><i>2022</i></b> | High risk of bias | Some concerns | Low risk      | Some concerns | Low risk      | High risk     |
| <b><i>Taylor 2010</i></b>                     | High risk of bias | Low risk      | Some concerns | High risk     | High risk     | Some concerns |

***Risk of Bias for Quasi-Experimental Designs (QEDs)***

| <b>Study (Author and year)</b>              | <b>Overall risk of bias</b> | <b>Confounding</b> | <b>Selection bias</b> | <b>Bias in intervention classification</b> | <b>Deviation from intended intervention</b> | <b>Missing outcome data</b> | <b>Measurement of the outcome</b> | <b>Selection of the reported result</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b><i>Kolko</i></b><br><b><i>1987</i></b>   | Low risk of bias            | Low                | Low                   | Low  | Low   | Low                         | Low                               | Low                                     |
| <b><i>Kolko</i></b><br><b><i>1989</i></b>   | Low risk of bias            | Low                | Low                   | Low  | Low   | Low                         | Low                               | Low                                     |
| <b><i>Edwards</i></b><br><b><i>2021</i></b> | Some concerns               | Low                | Low                   | Low  | Low   | Moderate                    | Moderate                          | Low                                     |