

Connecting Systems and Communities on Safe Learning

Nepal Case Study

Group photo following a Child Club orientation on the effective use of CRM in schools in Lumbini Province, Nepal.

Safe to Learn is a coalition of partners working to ensure that every child can learn safely, no matter how or where they learn. The coalition's work focuses on prevention and response to violence in education, guided by the Safe to Learn Call to Action, which focuses on five evidence-based priority areas:

- Implementing policy and legislation
- Strengthening prevention, risk mitigation, and response in education systems and at schools
- Shifting social and gender norms and promoting behaviour change
- Investing resources effectively
- Generation and use of evidence

The Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning, a partnership between the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Safe to Learn, aims to build country capacity to integrate violence prevention and response mechanisms within national education systems and create safe learning environments for girls and boys, in all their diversity. The Government of Nepal, in partnership with UNICEF, has been implementing the initiative since 2024.

Violence remains a widespread reality for many children in Nepal. Despite a legal ban on corporal punishment in Nepal, 8 in 10 children aged 1-14, experience violent discipline at home, schools, and other facilities. According to a national survey, more than half of students aged 13-15 reported having been bullied and nearly 40 per cent reported being involved in a physical fight at least once.

The country has taken important steps to strengthen prevention and response to violence against children through both policy and practice, including school-based reporting mechanisms and clear legal prohibitions of all forms of violence across home, school, and community settings, including in key frameworks such as Article 39 of the Constitution (2015), the Education Rules (2011 Amendment), and the 2018 Bill to Amend and Codify Laws Relating to Children. However, gaps in implementation persist, and harmful social norms continue to limit their effectiveness in practice.

In January 2019, Nepal endorsed the Safe to Learn Call to Action, demonstrating strong political commitment to address these challenges. This was followed by a diagnostic exercise, undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and UNICEF, to assess progress against the Call to Action and identify gaps and priorities for further action.

In 2024, a Safe to Learn benchmarking assessment tracked the subsequent progress, underscoring advances in reinforcing legal, policy, and system-level responses to violence in and around schools. The assessment also identified persistent gaps – providing an actionable pathway for government and partners to further promote safe and inclusive learning environments nationwide. As a result, Nepal prioritized action against three areas of the Safe to Learn Call to Action, with the support of the Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning.

RESULTS

Implementing Policy and Legislative Frameworks (Safe to Learn Call to Action Area 1)

The Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning helped re-establish an inter-party group of women parliamentarians at the federal level, working together to address education policy gaps as well as root causes for violence against children in and around schools. This group works closely with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to promote gender equality, disability, and social inclusion in education. Their efforts have led to concrete action at subnational level, including the mobilization of US$2 million in Karnali, as well as additional allocations from local governments to strengthen safe and inclusive education.

In addition, the initiative supported the establishment of over 153 Girls' Education and Inclusive Education Networks (GIEN) across the country. GIENs are multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together girls, youth, and community representatives to advocate for inclusive and equitable education for marginalized groups, including girls and children with disabilities, across all levels of the education system. To date, 275 GIENs have supported integration of violence prevention and response in education across the country, including addressing school-related gender-based violence, at local, provincial, and federal levels.

A total of 353 out of 753 municipalities across the country have endorsed gender-responsive and inclusive local education plans developed through consultative processes. UNICEF's support has been instrumental, covering 153 targeted local governments, including six municipalities supported by the Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning.

Together, these efforts highlight how alignment across all levels of the system can improve implementation and support more effective delivery of safe and inclusive education.

Strengthening prevention, risk mitigation, and response in education systems and at schools: (Safe to Learn Call to Action Area 2)

To enhance school-level capacity to create safe learning environments for children, the Technical Assistance Initiative supported training of 209 head teachers and gender focal teachers (90 females) on Complaint Response Mechanisms (CRM). With the initiative's support, 60 schools in six targeted municipalities have functional CRMs with trained personnel. Under a government mandate, CRMs have been expanded to more than 25,000 community schools across Nepal, fostering safe and protective learning environments in schools.

A digital CRM monitoring system piloted across 30 local governments strengthened oversight of reporting mechanisms. In 2025, the system recorded over 5,260 complaints, with 47 per cent of these children protection-related, and approximately 85 per cent of cases were addressed, demonstrating improved local accountability and follow-up of child protection concerns.

Referral mechanisms were also strengthened with local governments to ensure that more sensitive cases were referred by schools to relevant local government services. The collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has focused on integrating a digital CRM monitoring system into the Integrated Educational Management Information System (IEMIS) platform, strengthening accountability and case management capacity.

The Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning also helped establish the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+) across 42 municipalities (including six municipalities supported by the Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning), 18 child helplines (1,098) and three National Centres for Children at Risk, among other service providers. This has improved how cases are recorded and followed up, while also strengthening coordination across sectors, including with education.

Shifting social and gender norms and promoting behaviour change (Safe to Learn Call to Action Area 3)

The Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning supported interactive workshops for students, parents, and caregivers, as well as teachers, to better understand the social and behavioural drivers of violence in schools, particularly related to gender and social norms. Around 5,000 students across 19 schools participated in these workshops. Recommended actions from these workshops were later integrated into school improvement plans.

Child Clubs play an active role in raising awareness on safe reporting practices and supporting peer engagement on child protection issues. Sixty schools targeted through the initiative have included students in their complaint response committees, strengthening accountability and ensuring children's participation in decision-making processes related to school safety. In addition, over 1,000 child club members (483 girls) from 50 municipalities received leadership training and contributed to CRM-related activities at school.

LESSONS LEARNT

Shifting social norms and strengthening policies and systems go hand in hand.

A key lesson learned is the importance of a comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to violence in and around schools. Efforts that focus only on policy reform or only on community engagement are insufficient on their own. Sustainable progress requires simultaneous action across levels — empowering children, engaging parents, and communities to address harmful social and gender norms, strengthening school-level systems such as reporting and response mechanisms, and ensuring alignment with subnational planning and national policy frameworks.

Local capacity and community networks are key to both translating and shaping policies.

Strengthening the skills and leadership of community-level stakeholders — including schools, local governments, and grassroots networks, such as local GIENs — enables more context-responsive approaches that reflect the lived realities of children and communities. At the same time, these actors play a significant role in informing and shaping national and subnational policies by bringing evidence and insights from the ground to decision-making bodies, such as the inter-party parliamentarians.

Integrated, cross-sectoral approaches strengthen prevention and response.

Integrated action across sectors, particularly between education, child protection, and social and behaviour change actors, is key to addressing violence against children. This requires coordinated responses that reflect the complex and interconnected nature of risks children face, both in schools and in their communities. In Nepal, collaboration across these sectors has enabled more comprehensive responses — linking prevention, reporting mechanisms, and support services, and addressing issues in a more holistic way. This approach strengthens referral pathways, improves

coordination among actors, and ensures that children receive more consistent and effective support across systems.

LOOKING FORWARD

Building on progress to date, Nepal will continue to work with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and local governments to strengthen implementation of national policies on preventing and responding to school-related violence, integrating them into priority actions at federal, provincial, and local levels.

Aligned with Safe to Learn Call to Action Area 1, Nepal will also continue to advocate for strengthened accountability mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of GESI-responsive school education sector plans at the local level.

Across all areas, UNICEF will continue to support government coordination across partners and sectors.

In February 2026, representatives from the governments of Nepal and Sierra Leone joined a virtual Learning Exchange, organized by GPE, Safe to Learn, and UNICEF. Insights from the exchange will inform Phase 2 of the Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning, which will be implemented in Sri Lanka and Honduras, with a learning exchange and capacity-building component reaching up to 10 countries in South Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean regions.

> “My goal is to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has access to quality education. The Girls’ Education and Inclusive Education Networks (GIEN) serve as a platform for involving families, communities, and local governments in promoting inclusive education initiatives. Working together with different organizations is crucial for sustainable impact.”
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> - **Jayamala Kumari Chaudhary, Deputy Mayor**, Chandrapur Municipality in Rautahat District, Madhesh province.

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