



SAFE LEARNING INITIATIVE

Progress Report 2024 (April – December)

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Introduction

This report highlights the progress of the Global Partnership for Education and Safe to Learn Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning (GPE-STL TAI) since its beginning in April 2024. In this first phase, the initiative has supported two pilot countries: Nepal and Sierra Leone.

Violence against children in and around schools is a widespread issue, violating children's rights and negatively impacting their wellbeing and learning. An estimated 246 million girls and boys globally, in all their diversity, experience violence on the way to school, on school grounds, and within classrooms. In 2022, over half of the countries that submitted national commitments to the Transforming Education Summit identified school violence as a key barrier to addressing the learning crisis and transforming education systems. Despite growing recognition of the need to address school violence, there is a significant capacity gap in countries to support effective violence prevention and response within education systems.

The **GPE-STL Safe Learning Technical Assistance Initiative** aims to build capacity of education ministries to prevent and respond to violence in and around schools. It leverages the strengths and expertise of the [Safe to Learn Coalition](#) to accelerate efforts in integrating violence prevention within national education systems so that each child learns in a safe, inclusive, equitable and gender transformative environment. Safe to Learn and its global Secretariat is managed by UNICEF, which also serves as the Grant Agent for this initiative.

The STL-GPE Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning offers countries technical guidance around the following five expected outcomes:

1. Ministries of Education include prevention and response to violence in schools in education sector policies, plans and budgets and are equipped to apply prevention and response strategies.
2. School staff, students, and school management committees are equipped to provide safe, gender transformative, inclusive and enabling learning environments for all children.
3. Ministries of Education apply an evidence-based whole of school approach to address gendered, social, and behavioural drivers of violence.
4. Adequate domestic, donor and private sector resources are allocated to support people, programming, and processes to end violence in, around, and through schools.
5. Ministries of Education are equipped to generate and use evidence on how to effectively end violence in schools.

1. Overview of the number of approved workplans and how many of them are on track

Both Nepal and Sierra Leone have made progress during the reporting period to address key challenges in creating safe, inclusive, and gender-equitable learning environments for children.

Nepal has developed a comprehensive work plan which aims to address multiple determinants affecting safety in schools, particularly for girls by adopting and promoting an integrated cross-sectoral approach. The work plan embraces education, child protection and social and behaviour change approaches and activities and focuses on the federal and the Madhesh and Karnali provinces including on six local governments, with modelling activities in 60 secondary schools. Ultimately,

evidence generated from these activities is expected to inform national strategies within the School Education Sector Plan (SESP) and be replicated nationwide. The work plan aims to strengthen the Girls and Inclusive Education Networks (GIEN) at federal, provincial, and local levels, guided by the newly endorsed GIEN Formation Standard-2024 and GIEN Strategy-2024.

In **Sierra Leone**, the process of drafting the work plan is on-going in collaboration with the School-Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) technical working group, with endorsement anticipated in early 2025. The Local Education Group (LEG) will be updated on the plan in the first quarter of 2025. While the SRGBV technical working group and the Local Education Group have overlapping members, the SRGBV group also includes the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) and the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) alongside the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), ensuring a cross-sectoral approach. UNICEF country office will ensure that progress of the safe learning technical assistance initiative will be presented at the LEG meetings.

	Country	Workplan approval date	Expected closing date	Workplan performance
				January 25
1	Nepal	11 September 2024	31 March 2026	Rating: Highly satisfactory. All major outputs are expected to be fulfilled efficiently.
2	Sierra Leone	Expected Q1 2025	N/A	N/A

2. Summary of activities at global and country levels

2.1 Global-level activities

Design of the initiative – The overall initiative was co-developed by the Safe to Learn in close collaboration with the GPE Secretariat and UNICEF, and in consultation with the STL Country Engagement Task Force (CETF). This collaboration was instrumental in developing the partnership framework and the Technical Assistance Initiative implementation design. The Secretariat established coordination and management structures that defined clear roles and responsibilities, resulting in improved alignment, strengthened accountability, and enhanced collaboration across Safe to Learn. Nepal and Sierra Leone have been invited to join the initiative as pilot countries based on a rigorous selection process, which considered several variables. The Safe to Learn Secretariat, UNICEF and the GPE collaboratively identified nine criteria, and used a combination of them to identify potential countries for the initiative. A country scoring was developed by the Safe to Learn Secretariat, in collaboration with UNICEF regional offices covering seven regions. The Safe to Learn Country Engagement Task Force under coordination of the Safe to Learn Secretariat, conducted a mapping of Safe to Learn members' presence and interventions in countries that have endorsed the STL Call to Action, which was further used to inform the analysis of criteria and the design of the initiative.

Both Nepal and Sierra Leone are signatories to the Safe to Learn [Call to Action](#) and were identified as needing support to translate their strong policy frameworks into scalable models for local government and practices in schools.

Induction Webinar – The initiative began with a kick-off webinar organized by the Safe to Learn Secretariat on April 4, 2024, introducing countries to the initiative's offerings and processes, with the aim of tailoring them to meet the countries' specific demands. The webinar provided a fantastic opportunity to bring together key stakeholders from Nepal, Sierra Leone, and stakeholders at the global level.

Attendees included education and other relevant ministries from the two pilot countries, as well as representatives from education, child protection and social and behaviour change from both UNICEF country offices and UNICEF New York Headquarters, alongside both the GPE and Safe to Learn Secretariats. GPE introduced the Technical Assistance Initiatives, while the Safe to Learn Secretariat provided an overview of the initiative's implementation process, which comprises of six phases: Inception phase for identifying country priorities and needs; development of a country work plan; approval of the work plan; implementation; monitoring, adaptation, and learning; and closing phase. Country level participants shared valuable insights on the current situation, progress, challenges, and upcoming opportunities for safe learning in their countries.

Key **challenges** faced by countries emerged during the webinar.

In **Nepal**:

- the intersectionality of disparities requiring a more holistic approach,¹
- limited knowledge and capacity at local levels to implement policies,
- local governments with the lowest equity scores often lack sufficient human resources,
- weak monitoring mechanisms at local levels, and
- deep-rooted cultural mindsets and social norms delaying results.

In **Sierra Leone**

- limited availability of quality services for School-related Gender Based Violence survivors,
- duplication of interventions,
- weak decentralization of resources and services,
- taboos around gender and sex, and
- weak coordination and monitoring mechanisms.

Global coordination, technical support and oversight of the implementation – At the global level, the Safe to Learn Secretariat has ensured the overall coordination of the initiative, in close collaboration with the GPE Secretariat. This has ensured institutional alignment, general programme coordination, documentation of results and lessons learned, and coordinated communication efforts. Furthermore, technical oversight and quality assurance has supported the country level work. The Safe to Learn Secretariat has coordinated and ensured synergies with the STL Country Engagement Taskforce, updating it on an ongoing basis, including through regular monthly task force meetings at the global level and has drawn on its expertise to leverage coordination in countries where needed.

Safe to Learn has established coordination and management structures with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, resulting in enhanced collaboration among global stakeholders. The STL Secretariat has shared information with UNICEF Country Offices and other partners about STL partners' presence and

¹ The intersectionality of disparity was reiterated during the Inception mission, which recommended adopting a more holistic approach to addressing these disparities, particularly by examining the Complaints Reporting Mechanism from the perspectives of disability, age, and gender. Notably, Nepal has developed an Equity Index—a composite index created by the Ministry of Education with support from GPE, UNICEF, and The World Bank. This index measures disparities in education outcomes across districts based on various variables, enabling the identification of districts with the lowest scores. Resources and targeted interventions can then be allocated where they are most needed. The GPE-Safe to Learn Technical Assistance Initiative utilized this index to identify the target areas for the initiative.

expertise in various countries, helping to enhance collaboration and maximize impact for children. This has been particularly useful during the preparation and follow-up phases of country Inception Missions.

The **Safe to Learn Country Engagement Task Force** (STL CETF) has developed a technical support hub function with clear tasks and deliverables to support countries through the GPE TAI on Safe Learning and other Safe to Learn initiatives. Coordinated by the STL Secretariat, this inter-agency, cross-sectoral task force unites volunteer members from the Safe to Learn global coalition to enhance coordination and synergies among STL partners at the country level. During the reporting period, the CETF has defined concepts and modalities to serve as a **hub for tailored and specific technical support aimed at ending violence in, around, and through schools**. This support is directed at Safe to Learn country and regional teams in STL priority countries. To drive impactful results, this global taskforce is comprised of the CSO Forum to End Violence against Children, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Together for Girls (TfG), United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), UNICEF New York Headquarters Education, Child Protection, and Social and Behaviour Change experts, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Advocacy and Resource Mobilisation

To enhance the visibility of the Technical Assistance Initiative on safe learning, the Safe to Learn Secretariat in collaboration with the Safe to Learn Coalition, organised and participated in key global events and moments. These efforts aimed to increase awareness and position the Technical Assistance Initiative as a critical programme for strengthening capacity of education ministries to effectively implement the Call to Action. Key events and engagements showcasing the Technical Assistance Initiative included the Safe to Learn Donor Roundtable during UNGA78, the Wilton Park Dialogue on Violence Against Children in Schools, the Safe to Learn event at the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Conference, and the Ministerial Conference on Violence Against Children in Bogotá, Colombia.

Beyond these global events, the Secretariat has also actively promoted the Technical Assistance Initiative in bilateral meetings with key stakeholders, including donors and internally within UNICEF, reinforcing its importance as a strategic approach to achieving systemic and sustainable change. These efforts helped to leverage the Technical Assistance Initiative on Safe Learning in conversations with donors, which resulted in enhanced interest and funding for Safe to Learn. As a result, UNICEF and GPE have placed greater emphasis on the role of education in addressing violence in and around schools. In June, the GPE Board confirmed scale up of the Technical Assistance Initiative on safe learning with an additional US\$ 2million. Additionally, at the Violence Against Children Ministerial Conference, UNICEF pledged – across both Child Protection and Education – to support governments in reaching 142 million children with safe and enabling school environments.

Engagements have provided valuable opportunities to showcase the Technical Assistance Initiative 's impact, strengthen partnerships, and advocate for increased investment in building the capacity of education ministries to tackle violence in schools. They also contributed to resource mobilization efforts, securing support and funding to support scaling up of the initiative and ensuring safe learning environments for children worldwide.

Inception missions, support to in-country consultations and identification of country priorities and needs

Both countries received support through inception missions led by the Safe to Learn Secretariat. These missions aimed to support education ministries, UNICEF country offices, and partners in identifying priorities for the initiative.

The mission to **Nepal**, conducted from May 25 to June 5, 2024, involved cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder consultations coordinated by UNICEF Nepal and the UNICEF Field Office in Janakpur. Consultations were held at federal, provincial (Madhesh Province), local government, and school levels with government institutions, development partners, Safe to Learn members, civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders, including teachers, head teachers, child clubs, and students. This participatory process laid the foundation for a strengthened understanding of the possible priorities for the programme and resulted in an in-depth **inception report** which supported the country finalizing the prioritization process. The report which is based on both in-country consultations and a desk review of relevant documents highlights the strategic approach, priorities, and geographic focus of the Technical Assistance Initiative in Nepal, offering suggestions for alignment and linkages to ongoing government-led efforts. The STL Secretariat ensured its dissemination to STL members through the global STL Country Engagement Task Force, to support synergies across STL members in country.

Sierra Leone benefitted from a joint Safe to Learn-Global Partnership for Education mission from October 10 to 18, 2024. The mission involved cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder consultations in Freetown and Kono District, coordinated by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and its decentralized structures, with support from UNICEF Sierra Leone. Key activities included consultations with partners such as the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Teaching Service Commission (TSC), and with development partners and civil society organizations, including the School-Related Gender-Based Violence technical working group, youth representatives, and UNICEF staff across various sectors. The mission also entailed a workshop with the SRGBV technical working group members and field visits to Kono District for consultations with district-level stakeholders (officials at the district education office, service providers, case workers for SRGBV cases, and Girls' Education Movement (GEM) members) and school-level stakeholders (teachers, mentors, and students). In addition, a working session was held with the three ministries and other key partners to discuss the Safe to Learn technical package and review and finalise the benchmarking progress assessment in Sierra Leone [2019-23](#).

The GPE's Safe Learning Technical Assistance Initiative was officially launched and broadcast through TV in Sierra Leone, as well as on social media during the mission. The communication aimed to provide visibility to the GPE's Safe Learning Technical Assistance Initiative and to raise awareness about violence in schools, particularly school-related gender-based violence. It also contributed to highlight the urgent need to integrate violence prevention and response mechanisms into education systems to foster student well-being and improve education outcomes. The mission provided critical insights into the challenges faced by students, the school community, and other relevant stakeholders at sub-national and national levels, as well as the current state of schools and the many challenges they face. Relevant stakeholders were consulted and involved in discussions to determine the direction of the safe learning technical assistance initiative. The Safe to Learn Secretariat in collaboration with UNICEF Sierra Leone generated an **inception report**, highlighting eight areas needing attention based on findings from desk reviews, stakeholder consultations, and field visits. The report served as the foundation for assisting the country to identify priorities for the initiative.

Safe to Learn Benchmarking Progress Assessment 2019–23

As part of the prioritization and drafting process, Nepal and Sierra Leone, with support from the Safe to Learn Secretariat, finalized and endorsed the Safe to Learn Benchmarking Progress Assessment 2019–23. This assessment details each country's progress in implementing the benchmarks of the STL Call to Action. The government, UNICEF, and key partners endorsed the outcomes in-country. Nepal's benchmarking progress assessment was published on the Safe to Learn website [[HERE](#)], and Sierra Leone's progress assessment is set for publication in the first quarter of 2025.

The Safe to Learn Secretariat completed the benchmarking exercise for all 16 countries that endorsed the Call to Action. Conducted in collaboration with UNICEF Country Offices, governments, and partners, this exercise assesses and documents the 2019–2023 implementation levels of the Call to Action against standard indicators. It provides critical insights into each country's efforts and progress, establishing baselines for tracking progress and ensuring government commitments translate into measurable action. This data supports national dialogue, linking policy with implementation and informing collaborative action within a shared framework. Safe to Learn has published 7 of the 16 benchmarking briefs [[HERE](#)], with more set for release in 2025.

Support to the development and approval of costed work plans

In **Sierra Leone**, discussions are on-going for the work plan formulation. On November 28, 2024, the SRGBV technical working group convened to review the inception report and prioritize key areas for attention. The Safe to Learn Secretariat supported the process remotely and presented the key findings from the report at the meeting. The group recommended focusing on three specific areas: "coordination and monitoring," "information management," and the "link to national child protection systems and community protection mechanisms and structures." Subsequently, in December, key members of the School-Related Gender Based Violence technical working group, including representatives from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Education, Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Teaching Service Commission, and UNICEF, met to discuss activities that could be supported by the Safe Learning Initiative. They agreed that the initiative's technical assistance would prioritize enhancing communication, coordination, and monitoring of safe school interventions. This would be achieved by leveraging existing structures and collaborating with relevant line ministries and civil society organization partners. The goal is to ensure that the central government remains informed about school safety issues, the progress of ongoing initiatives, and the monitoring of related activities. Additionally, the initiative will emphasize building the capacity of community-level stakeholders to effectively report and monitor safety concerns within and around schools. The drafting of the work plan in Sierra Leone is being informed by the results of these discussions, with the School-Related Gender Based Violence technical working group expected to endorse the work plan in the first quarter of 2025.

The Safe to Learn Secretariat has provided extensive support to UNICEF **Nepal** following the mission, assisting the Education, Child Protection, and Social and Behaviour Change programmes in developing a cross-sectoral work plan for the Initiative with in-country partners, as well as their results frameworks. The Nepal work plan has been adopted in-country and shared by the Safe to Learn Secretariat with the GPE Secretariat and is currently being implemented (see country level progress below).

Nepal's comprehensive work plan aims at addressing multiple determinants affecting safety in school, particularly for girls by adopting and promoting an integrated cross-sectoral approach. The work plan embraces education, child protection and social and behaviour change activities. These include

policy-level and capacity-strengthening interventions targeting the federal level and Madhesh, and Karnali provinces and activities in six local governments in Madhesh, and Karnali provinces, with modelling activities in 60 secondary schools. Ultimately, evidence generated from these activities is expected to inform national strategies within the School Education Sector Plan and be replicated nationwide.

The plan contributes to strengthening the Girls and Inclusive Education Networks at federal, provincial, and local levels, guided by the newly endorsed GIEN Formation Standard-2024 and GIEN Strategy-2024. Its main activities include providing technical assistance to schools and local governments for establishing complaint response mechanisms at the school level, orienting Gender Focal Points and Child Clubs in Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) and strengthening complaint response and monitoring mechanisms. The promotion of parental engagement to enhance girls' participation and prevent school violence is also a priority. Additionally, the work plan focuses on building the capacity of local officials for gender-responsive education sector planning and budgeting, as outlined in the local-level education sector planning guidelines 2024. Interventions also include mapping available child protection services, supporting coordination, and building the capacity of child protection service providers and raising community awareness of violence and abuse against children in schools through a social and behaviour change Human-Centred Design approach.

2.2 Country level activities (see also annex 2)

Nepal has started implementing its work plan. Governance mechanisms have been enhanced across all three tiers of government to support safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning environments. The Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) strategy was endorsed and disseminated to 108 provincial and local government officials and GIEN members, resulting in costed implementation plans in six targeted municipalities. Federal and provincial female parliamentarian networks successfully advocated for a 15-point gender equality agenda, which the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) adopted. Building on the updated local-level education plan development framework 2024, evidence-based planning tools and capacity-building sessions equipped 180 officials and key stakeholders to develop inclusive local education plans.

In six municipalities, sixty schools have enhanced their institutional capacity, with 209 staff members (90 females) trained on complaint response mechanisms and gender equality principle. These schools are actively implementing functional CRMs to ensure a violence-free and child-friendly learning environment. As a result, 95 schools are addressing violence through complaint boxes and CRM committees, supported by an online monitoring tool to identify issues needing further action. A total of 1,060 complaints were received, with 122 escalated to the municipalities. To strengthen follow-up action and local government accountability, referral pathways for child protection and gender-based violence are being established, and case managers have been mobilized to improve responses in targeted municipalities. Coordination with local governments and civil society organizations through joint planning meetings, capacity-building initiatives, and regular monitoring has strengthened implementation, ensuring schools and local governments are collectively accountable for child safety and inclusive practices.

Child-centered social and behavioural change initiatives are being piloted to drive change in schools and communities. Child club members are oriented on gender-based violence and equipped to lead peer awareness campaigns and participate in complaint committees at the school level, promoting school accountability and inclusive decision-making involving young people. Partnerships with local

organizations have facilitated community awareness efforts, and evidence-based content is being developed to challenge harmful gender norms. These initiatives aim to address key challenges, such as reluctance to report violence, while ensuring sustained progress through continuous support and stakeholder collaboration.

3. Reporting on Global Results Framework

For a narrative reporting to further unpack the below results, see Nepal country report in Annex 2.

GOAL: Country capacity to prevent and respond to violence in and around schools is built, so that every child learns in a safe, inclusive, equitable and gender transforming environment.					
Indicators	Indicator definition	Progress (31 Dec 2024)	Means of Verification	Frequency	Responsible
Outcome 1: MoEs include prevention and response to violence in schools in education sector policies, plans and budgets and are equipped to apply strategies for prevention and response to violence in, around, and through schools					
Education sector policies, strategies and plans in participating countries address all forms of violence against children in schools	Number and percentage of education sector policies/ strategies/plans in participating countries that address all forms of violence against children in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Nepal 8 GIEN implementation plans at the provincial and local levels adopted the GIEN national framework - In Nepal 2 local-level School Education Sector Plans (SESPs) have allocated budgets that are GESI responsive (Simta RM, Narayan M Karnali) - In Nepal 6 local governments in Nepal established the Gender and Inclusive Education Network in their municipalities - In Nepal 46 female elected representatives and government officials are actively involved in GIEN activities. 	Review of education policies, budgets and plans	TBD	MoE
Relevant Ministerial staff's understanding of the accountability, roles, and responsibilities of the MoE to ensure	MoE has a national child protection policy for schools and the roles and responsibilities of the MoE as outlined in the national child protection policy for schools and as part of the wider national	In Nepal 122 (41 females) GIEN members trained and reporting enhanced capacity to implement, coordinate, and advocate for laws	-ESP or Strategy/ GPE Country Compact -National legislation on child protection; National policy framework on child protection; National	TBD	MoE

safe schools and as part of the national child protection policy framework	child protection policy framework	and policies on girls' education, gender equity, and social inclusion	Strategic Plan on violence against children; National Gender and/or Education Policy; National Vulnerable Children Policy; National health policy; National child protection policy for schools		
Outcome 2: School staff, students, and school management committees are equipped to provide safe, gender transformative, inclusive, and enabling learning environments for all children					
MoEs capacity to ensure the implementation of national guidelines detailing the process by which all schools respond to child protection concerns	<p>In place. There are national guidelines that provide guidance to districts and schools on how to establish safe and confidential reporting and response mechanisms for violence; and there is an MoE focal point to support implementation of these guidelines.</p> <p>Partially in place. There are national guidelines that provide guidance to districts and schools on how to establish safe and confidential reporting and response mechanisms for violence, but there is no MoE focal point to support implementation.</p> <p>Not in place. There are no national guidelines that provide guidance to districts and schools on reporting and response mechanisms for violence and there is no MoE focal point.</p>	-60 schools in Nepal were equipped with functional complaint response mechanisms, gender focal points, and school online reporting system - In Nepal 88,5% of complaints addressed from those received through the complaint response mechanism in school	Ministry of Education Strategy/Guidelines on violence against children in schools	TBD	MoE
MoE staff trained on gender transformative education and social and emotional learning (ideally as part of national pre-service and in-service training for school staff)	Number and percentage of MoE staff trained on gender transformative education and/or social and emotional learning disaggregated by gender and level (national, sub-national, local)		Training reports, training certificates	TBD	MoE
Outcome 3. MoEs apply an evidence-based whole school approach to address gendered, social, and behavioural drivers of violence against children					
MoE awareness of the criticality of a whole school approach to end violence in and through schools as demonstrated by the incorporation of a 'whole school' approach to end violence in school	Number and type of education-sector strategies, planning documents, and programs that incorporate a 'whole school' approach to end violence in school – including ESP/country compact, education strategy, humanitarian Education Sector	-In Nepal 192 (93 girls) children and adolescents improved their leadership skills by participating in and contributing to CRM related activities	ESP/country compact, national education strategy, cluster/Refugee Education Working Group strategy, Refugee Response Plan, Humanitarian Response Plan	TBD	MoE

in key education-sector strategies, programs or planning documents	Planning documents (if applicable to the context)				
Number of MoE staff, including staff at MoE Planning Department, trained on social and gender norms and social and behaviour change approaches (either online or in person)	Number and percentage of MoE staff trained on social and gender norms and social and behaviour change approaches during project period, disaggregated by department, sex and type of training		Training reports; training certificates	TBD	MoE
Outcome 4: Adequate domestic, donor and private sector resources are allocated to support people, programming, and processes to end violence in, around, and through schools					
The MoE ensures budget allocation for violence prevention and response in schools at national level	Not in place. Education system budget does not include costed strategies for violence prevention and response In place. Educational system budget includes costed strategies for violence prevention and response		Education system budget	TBD	MoE
Outcome 5: MoE and partners generate and use evidence on how to effectively end violence in, around and through schools					
Increased awareness, knowledge and understanding within the ministry of education and main MoE partners about strengths and bottlenecks in the national education sector that hamper effective violence prevention in, around and through schools	In place. STL diagnostics or benchmarking exercises have been undertaken in country and findings informed national dialogue between MoE and key stakeholders. Partially in place. STL diagnostics or benchmarking exercises have been undertaken in country, but findings were not disseminated nor discussed. Not in place. STL diagnostics or benchmarking exercises have not been undertaken in country.		STL Diagnostic or benchmarking report	TBD	MoE
Increased awareness of MoE on the criticality of SBC to address violence in school, as demonstrated by an increased incorporation in education sector documents of research findings on the social and behavioural drivers of violence i	Number and percentage of education sector documents at national level (i.e. education sector plan, country compact, education strategy, humanitarian Education Sector Planning documents) that are informed by or request the use of social and behavioural evidence.		ESP/country compact, national education strategy, cluster/Refugee Education Working Group strategy, Refugee Response Plan, Humanitarian Response Plan	TBD	MoE

4. Successes and Challenges

4.1 Successes

- In **Sierra Leone** the establishment of a robust School-related Gender-based Violence technical working group, supported by UNICEF, worked as an enabler for success for involvement of key stakeholders in various planning phases for GPE-STL Safe Learning Technical Assistance Initiative. It facilitated a high level of collaboration among government counterparts and civil society organizations, contributing significantly to the success of the STL-GPE joint mission.
- In **Sierra Leone** the work planning process of the initiative was co-created by key relevant stakeholders. The consultative and planning stages of the work plan were entirely cross-sectoral, engaging essential line ministries from various sectors, representatives from different UNICEF divisions—namely Education, Child Protection, and Social Behaviour Change—along with civil society organizations. Youth representatives and students were also fully consulted to ensure their views are reflected in the programmes.
- In **Nepal** successes include strengthened coordination among federal, provincial, and local governments through the Gender and Inclusive Education Network, fostering alignment of education strategies and operational guidelines.
- In **Nepal** checklists and audit tools are now in place to ensure local-level education plans and policies are Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) -responsive.
- Formation of multiparty female parliamentarians' networks advocating for girls' education inclusivity and violence-free teaching-learning was also a success in **Nepal**.
- The online complaint monitoring system is now set up and ready to be piloted in **Nepal**.
- In **Nepal** child club members were empowered to promote child rights, safety, and the Complaints Response Mechanism system within their schools.

4.2 Challenges

- In **Nepal** selecting the right partner in Karnali with expertise on local issues and a proven track record for social and behaviour change activities proved to be a challenge at the onset. However, UNICEF now has partners on board with work plans ready for implementation.
- A practical challenge seen in most schools **in Nepal** is the reluctance of students to report complaints when the committees are headed by male teachers. Students generally prefer to share their concerns with female teachers or peers. These insights are being taken into consideration while nominating members to these committees.
- Misalignment between local, provincial, and federal understanding of inclusive education and gender issues **in Nepal** has delayed the endorsement of necessary policies and guidelines. Continuous follow-up and quality assurance of policies will remain a priority.

- The work planning process in **Sierra Leone** experienced delays due to the postponement of the STL-GPE joint inception mission caused by a potential security risk.
- In some consultations in **Sierra Leone**, the number of attendees exceeded the number of individuals originally invited. This resulted in challenges to facilitating "open two-way conversations" and effective focus group discussions.

5. Lessons learned and adaptations to date

- **Social and behavioural insights** – In **Nepal** the social and behavioural insights collected from the communities and local governments have informed the design of all SBC sessions. These insights led to the decision to include both parents and teachers in the sensitization sessions, as key influencers and decision-makers in the students' lives. The first session will conclude with a commitment and action points to uplift children's safety in their daily lives. Partners will then use these action points to provide follow-up support, when needed.
- **Continuous support and follow up** – Providing continuous support and follow-up is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention and the best utilization of resources and materials. Sustaining active participation from all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and local government officials, demands ongoing motivation and capacity-building efforts. The programme **in Nepal** has incorporated follow-up support at regular intervals, including face-to-face and remote support from UNICEF and implementing partners.
- **Importance of joint GPE- STL in-country mission** – The mission to Sierra Leone was acknowledged as essential and timely. It served as a significant eye-opener for participants, highlighting the urgent need to address violence in, around, and through schools. The visit was instrumental in stimulating effectiveness and providing valuable insights. The mission underscored the critical nature of the program and its potential to drive meaningful change in the educational landscape of Sierra Leone.
- **Team Dynamics** – In **Sierra Leone** the team's dynamic and collaborative approach (UNICEF Sierra Leone-GoSL-STL- GPE) were essential factors for the success of the mission. This positive atmosphere was crucial in allowing a thorough understanding of on-the-ground conditions, enabling the collection of insights that will directly support the project's implementation by partners in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the mission served as a valuable opportunity for ministry leadership to enhance relationships and strengthen collaboration across sectors.
- **Stakeholders Engagement** – In **Sierra Leone** relevant stakeholders, especially SRGBV technical working group members, were not only consulted but fully involved in various stages of the decision-making process to determine the priority areas for safe learning technical assistance initiative. The approach empowered stakeholders and strengthened collaboration and ownership.
- **Children and Youth Involvement** – It is important to follow the principal of "nothing for us without us" when designing a programme, especially for children and youth. In **Sierra Leone**, children and youth were consulted to share their experiences around school safety and recommendations on how the technical assistance initiative can address their negative experiences and reinforce

positive experiences. Youth were also invited to participate in the workshop for prioritization of activities and their voices were heard and reflected in the work planning process.

- **Using the right coordination group for decision-making** – Any programme designs must be approved by relevant authorities and technical bodies. A decision to use the School-Related Gender-Based Violence technical working group for approval and endorsement of GPE’s safe learning technical assistance initiative was made in **Sierra Leone**, as the School-related Gender-Based Violence technical working group consists of relevant government authorities and partners.

6. Budget expenditures (and the balance remaining on expenditures)

Table 2. Programmable Funds Utilized per UNICEF Office as of 31 December 2024 (in USD)

UNICEF Office	Actual expenditure	Commitments	Projected Expenditures	Total Project Budget* Allocation
HQ Programme Division	178,989	2,600	98,991	280,580
Nepal ²	14,899	105,895	206,207	327,000
Sierra Leone	-	15,505	311,495	327,000
Total	193,888	124,000	616,683	934,580

*This figure does not include the corresponding 7% indirect support costs.

Annex I: Links

- [Nepal progress towards implementing the Safe to Learn Call to Action \(2019-23\) - STL benchmarking assessment](#)
- [Sierra Leone progress towards implementing the Safe to Learn Call to Action \(2019-23\) - STL benchmarking assessment](#)
- [Local TV broadcast](#) of the official launch of the Initiative in Sierra Leone in October 2024
- [UNICEF Sierra Leone Facebook](#) post on the official launch of the Initiative in Sierra Leone
- [UNICEF Sierra Leone Instagram](#) post on the official launch of the Initiative in Sierra Leone
- [UNICEF Sierra Leone X](#) post on the official launch of the Initiative in Sierra Leone
- [UNICEF Nepal](#) [Uniting for girls’ and inclusive education in... | Facebook](#)
- [UNICEF Nepal](#) [Wonderful to see women parliament members in... | Facebook](#)

² Many of the activities reported in this document in Nepal, such as the establishment of complaint boxes, align with those in another ongoing program funded by the EU. This strategic alignment has enabled UNICEF Nepal to effectively leverage additional funding sources, thereby maximizing resource utilization to meet the targets and supporting the scale-up of the initiative through local governments being supported by UNICEF and other development partners. Activities requiring substantial budgets, particularly those focused on training and community engagement, are scheduled to take place in 2025.

Annex 2: Country-specific report- Nepal

Reporting Period: June 2024 to Dec 2024

1. Programme Strategy

Safe to Learn activities in Nepal look to address multiple determinants affecting safety for girls by deploying an integrated cross-sectoral approach covering education, child protection and social behaviour change as outlined below.

Education

Considering the fundamental right to education in a safe and protective environment, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) endorsed the Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) Procedure in 2018. Under these guidelines, schools must establish a complaint box on their premises, ensuring it is easily accessible to students. Schools must also form a CRM committee to systematically address complaints and appoint gender focal points to facilitate the process.

The School Education Sector Plan (SESP 2022/23–2032/33) identifies a cross-sectoral outcome where "children of all backgrounds learn in educational settings where protection and violence prevention are embedded in policies, systems, and curriculum, and where children experiencing violence or exclusion in and around schools are supported to access services." The plan prioritizes key interventions such as appointing child safeguard focal points, implementing a code of conduct, establishing CRMs, and developing protection referral processes within schools. The planned activities align with these national priorities.

In Nepal, the key education activities include providing technical assistance to schools and local governments for establishing complaint response mechanisms at the school level, orienting Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Child Clubs in Complaint Response Mechanism activities and strengthening complaint response and monitoring mechanisms. Promoting parental engagement is also a priority to enhance girls' participation and prevent school violence. Additionally, these activities aim to strengthen the Girls and Inclusive Education Networks (GIEN) at federal, provincial, and local levels, guided by the newly endorsed GIEN Formation Standard-2024 and GIEN Strategy-2024. The programme also focuses on building the capacity of local officials for gender-responsive education sector planning and budgeting, as outlined in the local-level education sector planning guidelines 2024 endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology.

Child Protection

Child Protection interventions focus on mapping available services at the municipality level and conducting regular coordination meetings between protection service providers, municipality officials, and schools; building the capacity of child protection service providers on gender-responsive child-sensitive protection services, and mobilizing child protection case managers to support children referred from school for essential linkage with services outside school as per need such as psychosocial support, health services.

Social Behaviour Change

Similarly, the Social Behaviour Change (SBC) component focuses on conducting sensitization sessions to increase community awareness of their responsibility and accountability regarding violence and abuse against children in schools utilizing the journey-to-service map tool.

The school will be the key entry point for initiating the activities. UNICEF's Education, Child Protection, and SBC teams will collaborate in a coordinated effort to develop capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives and policy actions, create evidence, and scale up the demonstrative model in collaboration with respective local governments.

Key strategic approaches and coordination

- Strengthen existing School Education Sector Plan strategies to support nationwide system strengthening by modelling effective solutions to strengthen CRMs, referral mechanisms and Social Behavioural Change.
- Assess the capacities and needs of schools, local governments, and child protection service providers and develop joint action plans to address identified gaps.
- Provide targeted capacity-building packages and resources to gender focal points, complaint response committees, Child clubs, and local government officials to establish functional CRM systems with organized referral pathways in schools.
- Integrate, share, and orient Complaint Response Mechanism committees/gender focal points (during capacity building training in schools) on available child protection services at local levels and ways to refer cases.
- Disseminate existing policies, procedures, manuals, toolkits, and guidelines to duty bearers and stakeholders for effective implementation of Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) responsive education plans.
- Engage community members, social influencers, and policymakers to advocate for parental engagement to enhance girls' participation and prevent violence in schools to promote a safe learning environment.
- Social and Behaviour Change will employ a Human-Centred Design approach, utilizing the journey-to-service map tool. This process will engage students and community members in discussions about opportunities, barriers, and practical insights related to addressing or minimizing existing violence against children in schools. Examining six domains of the journey to service aims to understand the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers. The sensitization sessions will provide a platform to share experiences on existing mechanisms, including complaint hearings and responses from school management and parents. Finally, the key opportunities, barriers, and actionable points will be shared with education, child protection, and respective stakeholders.
- Referral pathway between education (CRM) at school level and child protection services at local government level will be established and strengthened.

Geographic focus

The policy-level and capacity-strengthening interventions are focused on the federal and the Madhesh and Karnali provinces and are targeted at six local governments. The modeling activities are implemented in 60 secondary schools across these six selected local governments. Over the long term it is hoped that evidence generated from modelling of proposed solutions in these locations will be used to inform national level strategies within the SESP and in turn be replicated nation-wide.

2.Overall achievements

This bi-annual report highlights the progress made in the last six months in creating safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning environments through system reforms, capacity-building, and social behaviour change.

Governance mechanisms to support safe, inclusive and gender-responsive learning environments have been strengthened across all three tiers of government in Nepal, with the Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) strategy endorsed and disseminated to 108 provincial and local government officials and GIEN members, leading to costed, implementation plans in six of the targeted municipalities. Federal and provincial female parliamentarian networks have successfully advocated for a 15-point gender equality agenda to be adopted by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST). Building on the updated local-level education plan development framework 2024, endorsed by MoEST, evidence-based planning tools and capacity-building sessions have equipped 180 officials and key stakeholders to develop inclusive local education plans.

In 6 municipalities, sixty schools enhanced their institutional capacity, with 209 staff members (90 of whom are female) trained on complaint response mechanisms (CRMs) and gender equality principles. These teachers are now actively implementing functional CRMs to ensure violence-free and child-friendly learning environment at school. As a result, 95 schools are actively addressing violence through complaint boxes and CRM committees, supported by an online monitoring tool for identifying issues that need further action. A total of 1060 complaints were received out of which 122 were escalated further to the municipalities. To strengthen follow-up action and local government accountability, referral pathways for child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) are being established, and case managers have been mobilized to improve responses in targeted municipalities. Coordination with local governments and civil society organizations through joint planning meetings, capacity building initiatives and regular monitoring has strengthened implementation, ensuring schools and local governments are collectively accountable for child safety and inclusive practices.

Child-centred social and behavioural change initiatives are being piloted to drive change in schools and communities. Child club members are oriented on gender-based violence and are equipped to lead peer awareness campaigns and participate in complaint committees at school level, promoting school accountability and inclusive decision-making involving young people. Partnerships with local organizations have facilitated community awareness efforts, and evidence-informed content is being developed to challenge harmful gender norms. These initiatives will address key challenges, such as reluctance to report violence, while ensuring sustained progress through continuous support and stakeholder collaboration.

Overview of key outputs and summary of results based on the results framework

Outcome 1: Education ministries (MoEs) include prevention and response to violence in schools in education sector policies, plans and budgets and are equipped to apply strategies for prevention and response to violence in, around, and through schools.

Output 1.1: MoEs advocate for the enforcement of or development of legislation that prohibits violence, including corporal punishment, in schools and put in place to support positive discipline and classroom management.

- The Girls and Inclusive Education Network Strategy and Operational Guidelines, that were developed by Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) with technical support from UNICEF in early 2024, were disseminated to 108 (30% female) provincial and local

level GIEN members in early January. The members also reviewed and provided feedback on the GEDSI Checklist and Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Audit tools that municipalities are expected to use while developing local-level education plans.

- Network members were also oriented on their roles and responsibilities in creating awareness about Gender-Based Violence and child safety-related issues in their communities. UNICEF and its partners will now work closely with the network members to ensure local education plans being developed in 150 local government directly supported by UNICEF are GEDSI responsive so that schools are more accountable to safety issues for children.
- Following the GIEN operational standards, local-level networks have been established in the targeted six municipalities with diverse stakeholders, including representatives from health, education, social policy, school committees, and marginalized groups. To date, three of these local governments have developed costed action plans for the current fiscal year. Draft GIEN operational guidelines have been developed by all six local levels, ensuring better organization and coordination, with formal endorsement in progress.
- An inter-party network of female parliamentarians has been established at the federal level. This network will seek to address education policy gaps, tackle grassroots-level challenges, and work closely with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to promote gender equality, disability, and social inclusion in education. The network recently submitted a 15-point agenda to the Minister of Education, Science, and Technology, Hon. Bidhya Bhattarai, who committed to support its implementation. Similar provincial networks have been established in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces, to ensure collaboration between the three tiers of government.

Output 1.2: MoEs develop evidence-based policies and plans for addressing violence in, around, and through schools at national, sub-national education systems and school level

- Technical support is provided to local officials to develop evidence-based, gender-responsive education plans. A GEDSI audit and checklist related to local-level education planning have been finalized and shared among government officials and Development Partners. Additionally, 180 stakeholders (19% female), including elected representatives and officials, have been oriented on the education planning framework to strengthen their capacity in six targeted local governments. Simta Rural Municipality and Narayan Municipality in Karnali province have developed a local education plan that is close to being endorsed by the municipal executive.
- The GEDSI audit tool and checklist are now a part of the national calibration toolkit used to inform the local education sector plans in all 753 local governments across the country.

Output 1.3: Roles and responsibilities of the MoE in prevention, response, and referral of incidents of violence are clearly set out in multisectoral national child protection policy frameworks.

- Policies and provisions on gender, inclusiveness, and violence, along with the roles and responsibilities of duty-bearers, have been disseminated at federal, provincial, and local levels. Federal GIEN networks have been activated, and an action plan has been developed to support the implementation of gender, inclusiveness, and violence-free priorities under the School Education Sector Plan (SESP 2022/23–2031/32).
- Orientation on their roles and responsibilities, including GIEN, Gender-Based Violence, and the Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) has enhanced the capacity of federal, provincial, and local GIEN network members. This includes 41 members (11 females) from Karnali and Madhesh

Provinces and 81 (30 females) from Siraha Municipality, Narayan Municipality, and Simta Rural Municipality.

Outcome 2: School staff, students, and school management committees are equipped to provide safe, gender transformative, inclusive, and enabling learning environments for all children

Output 2.1: Schools have the institutional capacity and support from the MoE to adhere to and implement laws and policies for violence prevention and response at school level.

- To enhance school-level capacity in creating safe learning environments for children, particularly those from marginalized communities, 209 (90 females) head teachers and gender focal teachers were oriented on the complaint response mechanisms, GEDSI principles in education, and the role of CRM committees. At the end of the session, participants developed action plans which included key actions like the installation of complaint boxes in schools, forming CRM committees, designating Gender Focal Persons (GFPs), and conducting orientation sessions for students to promote a safe and inclusive school environment. Partners will now provide follow-up support to schools helping them to implement their plans.
- An online monitoring tool has been developed and forwarded to all schools within these six municipalities. To date, 95 schools have used the tool to report complaints received through the CRM. Issues that weren't resolved through the school management have been highlighted as priorities in the reporting forms, allowing municipalities to address them through referral pathways and case managers.

Output 2.2: MoEs initiate the implementation of safe, anonymous, and child-friendly referral pathways that follow high ethical standards.

- Over the last few months, UNICEF has focused on building partnerships, developing detailed activity plans, and participating in coordination meetings with local partners and government entities to ensure all stakeholders understand the initiatives linkages with strengthen the implementation of national SESP strategies and priorities and thus own the entire process.
- Two Case Managers/Social Workers are trained and mobilized in Narayan Municipality and Simta Rural Municipality in Karnali Province.
- A formal coordination meeting was held with officials from the Women and Children's Section, Education Section, Social Development Section, and implementing partners of to share the mission, goals, objectives, key interventions, and outcomes of the programme. Roles and responsibilities were mapped out and workplans were agreed.
- The needs assessment report of the complaint response mechanism done in 10 schools from Narayan Municipality highlighted that although complaint boxes were established and complaint hearing committees were set up, members weren't aware of the referral pathways and the available services for escalating any GBV cases. The programme aims to address this in the coming months.
- The following months will focus on developing the Child Protection and GBV service referral pathways in the target municipalities and rollout of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) for documentation of the case management process.

Outcome 3: MoEs apply an evidence-based whole school approach to address gendered, social, and behavioural drivers of violence against children.

Output 3.1: School-based interventions are informed by evidence and promote social and behavioural change, including in social and gender norms that drive violence.

- During the reporting period, 192 child club members (93 girls) from nine schools across Madhesh and Karnali Provinces were oriented on issues related to GBV in schools, the importance and use of the complaint boxes, and their responsibilities in advocating for child rights, and child safety. The child club members will now lead awareness sessions in their respective schools to promote schools as safe and inclusive spaces for learning.
- All 60 target schools have now started to include two members from the child club in the complaint response committee. This has ensured accountability from the members and has also ensured children have a role in the decision-making process.

Output 3.2: MoEs involve relevant stakeholders to strengthen knowledge of child rights and laws prohibiting violence.

- Two partnerships have been established in Madhesh and Karnali province with local civil society organizations to liaise and collaborate with municipalities and local communities to create awareness of GBV issues.
- In collaboration with on-the-ground SBC experts, localized content is being developed to sensitize communities and build awareness of child safety and protection. Implementation is expected to commence within the next few months.

3.Successes and Challenges

Key Successes

- Checklists and audit tools are now in place to ensure local-level education plans and policies are GEDSI-responsive.
- Strengthened coordination among federal, provincial, and local governments through GIEN, fostering alignment of education strategies and operational guidelines.
- Formation of multiparty female parliamentarians' networks advocating for girls' education inclusivity and violence-free teaching-learning.
- Empowered child club members to promote child rights, safety, and the Complaint Response Mechanism system within their schools.
- The online complaint monitoring system is now set up and ready to be piloted.

Key Challenges

- Selecting the right partner in Karnali with expertise on local issues and a proven track record for social and behaviour change activities proved to be a challenge at the onset. However, UNICEF now has partners on board with work plans ready for implementation.
- A practical challenge seen in most schools is the reluctance of students to report complaints when the committees are headed by male teachers. Students generally prefer to share their concerns with female teachers or peers. These insights are being taken into consideration while nominating members to these committees.
- Misalignment between local, provincial, and federal understanding of inclusive education and gender issues has delayed the endorsement of necessary policies and guidelines. Continuous follow-up and quality assurance of policies will remain a priority for UNICEF and its partners.

4. Lessons Learned and Adaptations

- The social and behavioural insights that the teams have collected from the communities and local governments have informed the design of all SBC sessions. These insights led to the decision to include both parents and teachers in the sensitization sessions, as key influencers and decision-makers in the student's lives. The first session will conclude with a commitment and action points to uplift children's safety in their daily lives. Partners will then use these action points to provide follow-up support, when needed.
- Providing continuous support and follow-up is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention and the best utilization of resources and materials. Sustaining active participation from all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and local government officials, demands ongoing motivation and capacity-building efforts. The programme has incorporated follow-up support at regular intervals, including face-to-face and remote support from UNICEF and implementing partners.

