SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

to support implementation of the whole school minimum standards

Disclaimers

Recommended citation:

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Acronyms

CIFORD	Community Initiative for Rural Development
CoC	Code of Conduct
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSP	Comprehensive School Safety Policy
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
HI	Handicap International
KII	Key Informant Interviews
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MTNDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PESO	Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned (Media Model)
PSAs	Public Service Announcements
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRGBV	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
ToC	Theory of Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Contents

Executive Summary

The "School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy for Sierra Leone" was commissioned by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) with support obtained from the UNICEF to address the pervasive issue of SRGBV, which severely impacts the educational outcomes and well-being of children and students, particularly girls and students with disabilities.

This 5-year strategy (2025-2029) aligns with Sierra Leone's broader Goal 2 of human capital development as outlined in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) for 2024–2030, specifically focusing on creating safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning environments. It also reflects the government's commitment to the global "Safe to Learn Call to Action".

This strategy acknowledges the heightened risks faced by children with disabilities in experiencing SRGBV and incorporates targeted measures to ensure their safety and inclusion. By aligning with the Radical Inclusion Policy and the Persons with Disability Act, the strategy prioritizes accessible infrastructure, inclusive education practices and tailored communication efforts to protect and empower all learners.

This strategy was developed through a comprehensive evaluation of existing literature and a robust participatory process, incorporating formative research, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and extensive desk reviews. In total, 24 KIIs and 21 FGDs were conducted across the districts of Kambia, Kenema and Kono, specifically targeting schools where the SRGBV program was piloted and implemented. These districts were selected to ensure the inclusion of experiences and insights from regions where the program had a direct impact. Interviews were also conducted with agencies based in Freetown to gather additional contextual insights. Various stakeholders were engaged, starting with children and including school heads, teachers, parents, community leaders and authorities. The insights gathered from these consultations ensured that the strategy is evidence-based, contextually relevant and responsive to the specific needs of Sierra Leone's education system and stakeholders.

The SRGBV SBCC strategy is structured around three core objectives:

Objective 1:

Promote Gender Equitable and Non-Violent Behaviours by Raising Awareness and Addressing Harmful Social Norms Perpetuating SRGBV. This will be achieved through coordinated media campaigns, peer education and community dialogues aimed at raising awareness and fostering non-violent behaviours.

Objective 2:

Strengthen Institutional and Community Capacity to Prevent and Respond to SRGBV by establishing accessible reporting systems, creating safe spaces in schools and providing comprehensive training for educators. This objective ensures that SRGBV incidents are addressed promptly and effectively, while also equipping communities and institutions with the resources needed to sustain these efforts.

Objective 3:

Ensure Sustained Commitment to SRGBV Prevention Through Policy Enforcement and Stakeholder Engagement through the enforcement of existing policies and the development of new ones. This objective emphasizes active stakeholder engagement to create an enabling environment for long-term change, ensuring that all efforts towards preventing SRGBV are supported and maintained at both institutional and policy levels.

This structure enhances coherence and clarity, ensuring a comprehensive and strategic approach to addressing SRGBV.

The design and implementation of the SRGBV SBCC strategy are underpinned by several theoretical models and strategic approaches that collectively provide a comprehensive framework for addressing SRGBV in Sierra Leone. These include the Participatory Development Model, which emphasizes community ownership and sustainability; the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM), which considers multiple levels of influence on behaviour from the Individual to societal level; the Behavioural Drivers Model (BDM), which identifies and addresses the underlying drivers of SRGBV; Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which focuses on the role of observational learning, modelling and social reinforcement; the Norms Theory, which aims to shift harmful gender norms that contribute to SRGBV; and the Behavioural Economics, which explores how cognitive biases and environmental factors influence/shape decision-making processes for encouraging the adoption of non-violent behaviours.

The communication plan is an integral component of the SRGBV SBCC strategy, which is designed to support the achievement of the strategy's core objectives. Guided

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by agenda-setting, framing, and priming theories, the communication strategy shapes public discourse and influences perceptions and behaviours related to SRGBV. Through strategic framing, the communication plan presents SRGBV as a critical issue that impacts not only educational outcomes, but also public health and community well-being, thereby mobilizing public- and policy-level actions. In addition, the strategy includes detailed audience segmentation, resulting in the development of audience archetypes to tailor messages and interventions more effectively. This segmentation ensures that communication efforts resonate with specific audience groups, such as students, teachers, parents, community leaders and policymakers.

To create a balanced and impactful media mix, the communication plan utilizes the PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned) model. The media mix includes targeted social media advertisements and sponsored content under paid media. Earned media leverages press coverage, mentions in news outlets and influencer outreach to gain visibility. Shared media includes social media campaigns, which is designed to encourage sharing, retweets, comments and user-generated content, fostering community engagement. Owned media consists of continuous updates through the MBSSE's website, newsletters and official publications. The plan also integrates collaborations and partnerships with key stakeholders to amplify messages across multiple platforms.

The SRGBV SBCC strategy is built on a robust Theory of Change (ToC), which outlines how addressing the root causes of SRGBV, such as harmful social norms, inadequate reporting mechanisms, lack of awareness and weak policy enforcement, will lead to the creation of safe and inclusive educational environments where all students can thrive free from violence. The design of the strategy is meticulously crafted to achieve these outcomes through a series of harmonized and systematically aligned activities, including strengthening policy frameworks and institutional capacity, creating safe and inclusive learning environments, implementing effective prevention and response mechanisms, engaging stakeholders in SRGBV prevention and response, and establishing robust monitoring and accountability systems.

A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is established to systematically assess the progress, efficiency and impact of the SRGBV SBCC strategy. The M&E framework includes key indicators aligned with the strategy's objectives, focusing on tracking changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and social norms related to SRGBV. Data collection methods include surveys, FGDs and media monitoring, with regular reporting and feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous learning, adaptation and correction throughout the implementation process.

The SRGBV SBCC strategy represents a targeted and strategic approach to addressing the behavioural and social drivers of SRGBV in Sierra Leone. As a SBCC strategy, it focuses specifically on influencing attitudes, behaviours and social norms through communication interventions and stakeholder engagement to create safer and more supportive educational environments for all students. This initiative aligns with and supports the objectives outlined in key national frameworks such as the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and Sierra Leone's Transforming Education Summit (TES) Commitment, contributing to a vision where every child can learn and thrive in a violence-free environment.

The SRGBV SBCC strategy represents a targeted and strategic approach to addressing the behavioural and social drivers of SRGBV in Sierra Leone.

Background and Rationale

The Sierra Leone government's Human Capital Development Program outlines a strategic direction for enhancing the well-being of Sierra Leoneans through improved education, inclusive growth and economic resilience. A critical component of this agenda is ensuring safe learning environments, a priority reflected in the Comprehensive School Safety Policy (CSSP) developed by the MBSSE in 2021. This policy sets out guidelines to protect the school-aged population from violence, abuse and harm while fostering a protective educational sector.

Aligned with the global Safe to Learn Call to Action, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has committed to translating benchmarks, minimum standards, policies and commitments for the safe schools into practical applications at both school and community levels. As part of this commitment, a Whole-School Approach to addressing SRGBV was piloted in 18 junior and senior secondary schools across three districts (Kambia, Kenema and Kono) between 2021 and 2022. This approach aims to create safer, more child-friendly, inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environments by engaging various stakeholders, including students, teachers, school support staff, principals, local communities, education authorities and governmental bodies. The Whole School Minimum Standards, covering areas such as school leadership, codes of conduct, child rights, reporting mechanisms, and community and parent engagement, have since been emphasized for broader integration by the MBSSE.
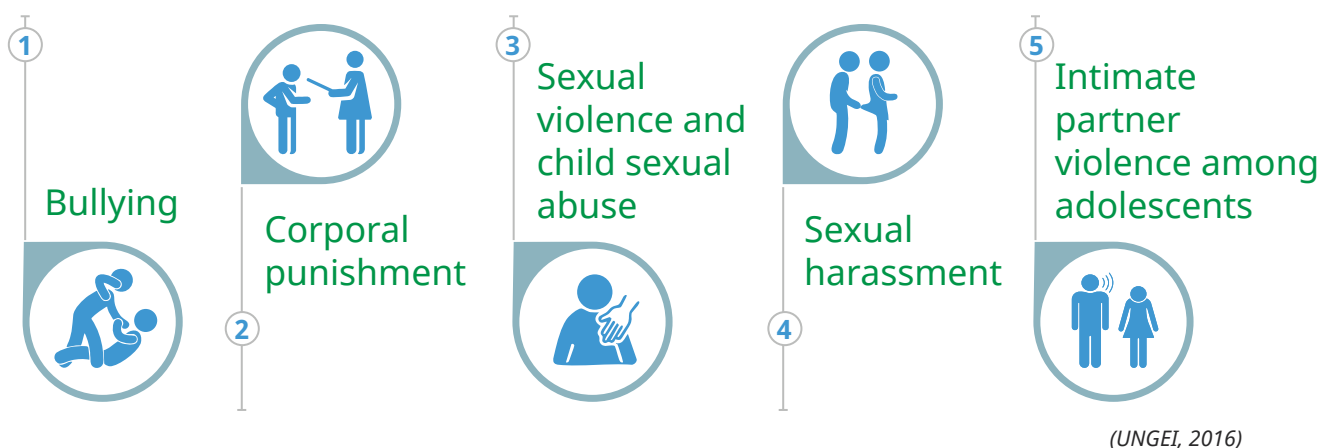
UNICEF has played a key role in supporting the Sierra Leone Government to establish safe, child-friendly, inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environments for children and adolescents. Through initiatives such as the whole-school approach to addressing SRGBV, efforts have focused on teacher training on the code of conduct (CoC), enhanced reporting mechanisms, student leadership and peer engagement, and community and parent involvement. In addition to UNICEF's contributions, other development partners have supported complementary interventions aimed at strengthening reporting systems, promoting gender equity and building institutional capacity to address SRGBV holistically. This SBCC strategy, developed with UNICEF's support, builds on these collective efforts to address SRGBV more effectively.

Understanding school-related gender-based violence

School-related gender-based violence refers to the acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence inflicted on children in and around schools due to stereotypes, roles or norms based on their sex or gender identity. SRGBV is rooted in unequal power dynamics and can manifest in various forms, including bullying, verbal harassment, sexual assault and corporal punishment. According to the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), SRGBV typically occurs in **five major forms**:

it calls for a comprehensive strategy that permeates policies, practices and initiatives throughout the school system. Key elements of the Whole-School Approach Minimum Standards (UNGEI) include:

● School leadership and community engagement to foster a gender-responsive environment
● Developing and enforcing a "Code of Conduct" on SRGBV

1. Bullying
2. Corporal punishment
3. Sexual violence and child sexual abuse
4. Sexual harassment
5. Intimate partner violence among adolescents

(UNGEI, 2016)

This form of violence presents a significant barrier to educational access and is a violation of children's rights to a safe, inclusive learning environment.

The Whole-School Approach to combating SRGBV involves key stakeholders at the school level—including students, teachers, principals, administrators and staff—as well as parents, education authorities and other governmental bodies working together to create a safe, inclusive and rights-based learning environment for all students. This approach recognizes that effectively addressing SRGBV requires more than isolated interventions;

● Building the capacity of teachers and staff through training on gender sensitivity, violence prevention and child protection
● Embedding child rights, participation and gender equality within an inclusive curriculum
● Establishing effective reporting, monitoring and accountability mechanisms
● Ensuring safe and secure physical environments in and around schools
● Parent engagement to influence norms and behaviours that perpetuate violence

Development of the SRGBV SBCC strategy

The development of the SRGBV SBCC strategy was driven by the need to enhance awareness and streamline engagement on SRGBV among key stakeholders, including school teachers, parents, children and communities. The strategy focuses on promoting positive practices and norms, including positive discipline, by consolidating diverse approaches, channels and messaging into a cohesive and unified framework. This ensures that SRGBV-related messages and interventions are consistent, impactful and aligned with broader communication and engagement efforts. Drawing from the Whole-School Approach and insights gained from the pilot SRGBV program in Sierra Leone, the strategy leverages the positive outcomes of past interventions to strengthen SRGBV prevention and response capacity among educational staff, the student community, and parents.

The methodology and approach for the development of this strategy were guided by a rigorous, participatory and evidence-based process. This approach is outlined in three key stages:
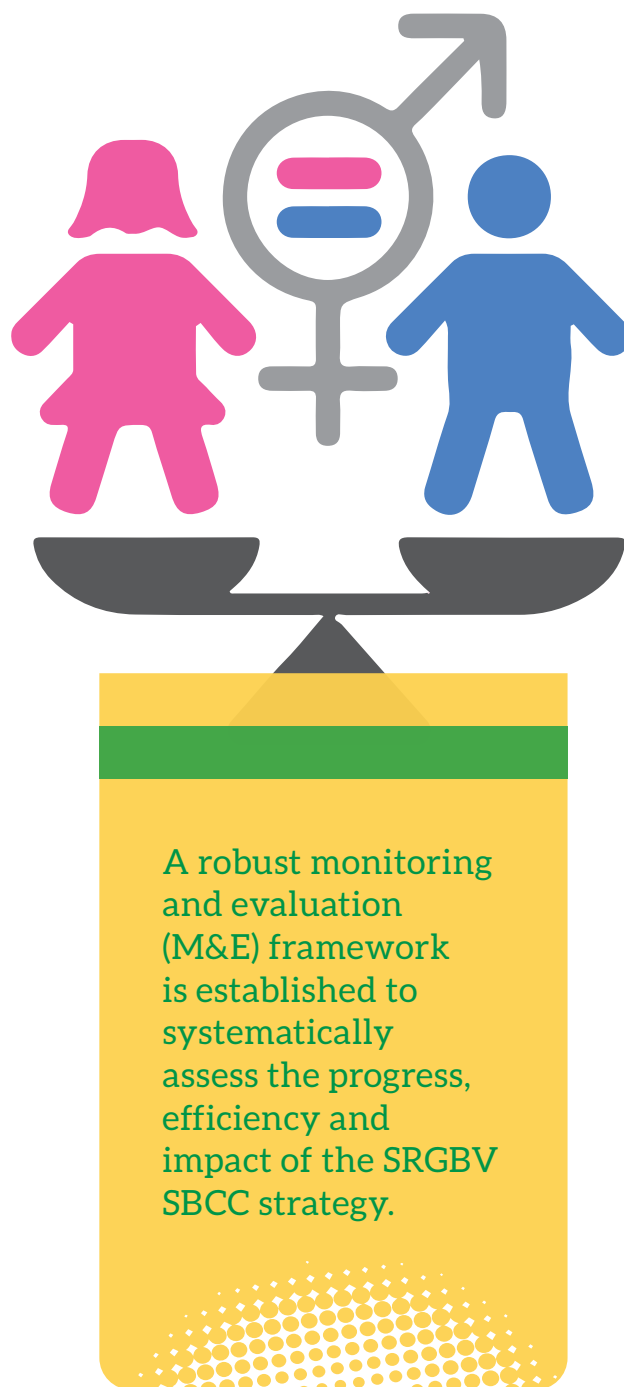
1. Formative research

A comprehensive situation analysis was conducted, which included a desk review of existing literature on SRGBV in Sierra Leone. This review incorporated findings from earlier reports, including those from the pilot implementation of the Whole-School Minimum Standards.

The research identified critical opportunities for intervention and also highlighted recurring challenges such as engaging parents and communities, resistance to altering entrenched norms and the pivotal role of school leadership and community stakeholders in influencing outcomes. Data collection involved rapid

A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is established to systematically assess the progress, efficiency and impact of the SRGBV SBCC strategy.

formative research and consultations, using structured and semi-structured interviews with school stakeholders and community members. Sampling procedures ensured representation across various demographic and geographic profiles, focusing on schools where SRGBV initiatives were previously piloted.

2. **Consultative workshops**

Building on the formative research, consultative workshops were conducted in the city of Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Port Loko to collaboratively identify solutions and refine strategic interventions. These workshops engaged diverse participant profiles, including school administrators, teachers, parents, students, community leaders and other representatives from education authorities. During these workshops, participants collaboratively built a problem tree to identify the root causes of SRGBV and a solution tree to map out targeted interventions. These activities contributed to the development of the ToC, audience segmentation and strategic approaches for implementation.

3. **Review and validation**

The drafted strategy underwent through several rounds of review and validation to align with the expectations of stakeholders and intended beneficiaries. Validation workshops engaged a broad array of participants, including policymakers, education stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community representatives, to ensure that the strategy was practical and contextually relevant. Feedback from these consultations was integrated into the final document to ensure that the strategy reflects a holistic understanding of SRGBV and is supported by all key stakeholders.

This comprehensive process ensures that the SRGBV SBCC Strategy is rooted in evidence, inclusivity and collaboration, enabling effective prevention and response to SRGBV in Sierra Leone's educational system.

Understanding school-related gender-based violence
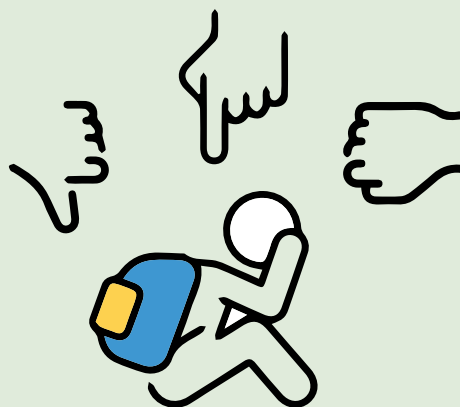
The SRGBV SBCC strategy will be implemented under the leadership of the MBSSE in collaboration with other line ministries and relevant stakeholders. This multi-sectoral approach underscores the importance of inter-ministerial coordination in addressing SRGBV comprehensively and sustainably. The SBCC strategy is designed to align with and reinforce core educational standards, including the Whole-School Minimum Standards, by emphasizing principles of safety, inclusivity and gender sensitivity.

The strategy aims to foster an environment where positive practices and norms are embedded within school systems, strengthening policies, institutional frameworks and community capacities for long-term sustainability across the education sector. Although the MBSSE will lead the implementation, technical support from partners and stakeholders will be sought as needed to ensure effective execution and monitoring of the strategy's objectives.

Situation Analysis

Country context

Sierra Leone, being a West African nation with a population of approximately 8.2 million (World Bank, 2023), is known for its rich natural resources, cultural diversity and resilient population. The country's history has been significantly shaped by a decade-long civil war (1991–2002), which deeply impacted its political, economic and social landscape (Keen, 2005).

In recent years, Sierra Leone has made notable strides towards recovery and development, focusing on improving governance, reducing poverty and rebuilding infrastructure (UNDP, 2022). This progress is supported by a robust legal and policy framework that aimed at protecting children and promoting inclusive education. Key instruments include the Education Act (2004), the Child Rights Act (2007), the Radical Inclusion Policy (2021), the Comprehensive Safe School Policy (CSSP, 2021) and the ESSP 2020–2026. In addition, the National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence serves as a critical mechanism for coordinating responses to violence affecting children and adolescents.

A critical component of Sierra Leone's post-war recovery is the strengthening of its legal and policy frameworks, particularly in education and child protection. The Education Act of 2004, the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act of 2023, the Child Rights Act of 2007 and 2025*, the Persons with Disability Act of 2011 and the Radical Inclusion Policy of 2021, are key legislative instruments that promote inclusive, accessible and safe education for all children. In addition, the CSSP and the National Referral Protocol provide mechanisms for addressing violence in schools and also ensuring child protection through coordinated responses among schools, communities and law enforcement. These policies are integrated within the ESP 2022–2026 (MBSSE, 2020), which outlines the government's roadmap for strengthening the education system, improving access and ensuring safety and inclusivity in schools.

Politically, Sierra Leone operates within a constitutional republic with a multi-party system. Since the end of civil war, Sierra Leone has held several peaceful elections, marking progress in its democratic consolidation (IDEA,

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* The bill was passed in July 2024, yet not have been assented as of July 2025

Economically, Sierra Leone relies heavily on **agriculture,** 🌾 🏚 **mining** and **fisheries.** 🐟

Agriculture uses about 60% of the workforce, contributing significantly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (FAO, 2020).

2021). However, challenges such as corruption, political instability and weak institutions continue to pose risks to sustainable development (Transparency International, 2023).

Economically, Sierra Leone relies heavily on agriculture, mining and fisheries. Agriculture uses about 60% of the workforce, contributing significantly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (FAO, 2020). The mining sector, particularly diamonds, iron ore and gold, is a major source of export revenue (African Development Bank, 2023). However, external shocks, such as the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak, have had severe socio-economic impacts, disrupting sectors like education, especially for girls. During the EVD crisis, many girls faced increased barriers to schooling, such as early marriages, teenage pregnancies and household economic pressures, exacerbating gender disparities in education.

This highlights the importance of addressing such vulnerabilities to safeguard progress and ensure inclusive development, particularly for girls' education and overall gender equity. Despite these resources, the economy remains vulnerable to external shocks, such as fluctuations in global commodity prices, and is heavily dependent on international aid (World Bank, 2022). Efforts to diversify the economy have been slow, hampered by limited infrastructure, low levels of human capital, and the lingering effects of the Ebola outbreak and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (UNICEF, 2021).

The population of Sierra Leone is youthful, with approximately 60% under the age of 25 years (UNFPA, 2022). This demographic trend presents both opportunities and challenges. Although a young population can drive economic growth and innovation, it also puts significant pressure on the education system, healthcare services and job market. High fertility rates and rapid population growth exacerbate these challenges, making government investment in education, healthcare and employment critical (UNICEF, 2020). Key policies such as the Radical Inclusion Policy and CSSP are crucial in ensuring the youth population has access to safe, equitable and inclusive education environments (MBSSE, 2021).

Culturally, Sierra Leone is the home to 16 ethnic groups, with the Mende and Temne being the largest. Traditional customs and practices play a significant role in daily life, influencing social norms, gender roles and community dynamics (Mokuwa et al., 2021). However, some cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage, contribute to gender-based violence and inequality, complicating efforts to promote gender equality and protect human rights (UNFPA, 2020). Through the National Referral Protocol, the government is working to address some of these challenges by providing clear reporting and response mechanisms for gender-based violence, including in schools (GoSL, 2022).

Overview of the SRGBV situation in Sierra Leone

The development of the SRGBV SBCC strategy for Sierra Leone is informed by a comprehensive evidence base, drawing from numerous studies, research, policy and programmatic frameworks. Understanding the drivers of SRGBV requires examining factors such as poverty and entrenched patriarchal gender norms, which contribute to the normalization of various forms of violence against school-going children including sexual, physical, psychological and emotional violence. The situation analysis, supported by robust evidence, identified critical issues grouped into three pivotal themes:

1. SRGBV knowledge, awareness and behaviour change

Despite targeted efforts for strengthening prevention, protection and reporting mechanisms on SRGBV, significant gaps in awareness persist among teachers, parents, school-going children and the wider community. The formative research revealed that many stakeholders remain unaware of key elements such as the Teachers' Code of Conduct and SRGBV prevention strategies. Although there have been positive shifts in knowledge and awareness, their long-term impact or influence on effectively and deeply shifting ingrained behaviours and social norms is still uncertain.

In interviews with community members, teachers admitted that while they had attended training sessions on SRGBV, they often reverted to traditional disciplinary methods due to a lack of understanding about how to implement non-violent alternatives effectively. One head teacher from Kambia confessed: "We know about the Code of Conduct, but sometimes, when things get out of hand, the old ways seem easier." This reflects the challenge of bridging the gap between knowledge and practice. In

"We know about the Code of Conduct, but sometimes, when things get out of hand, the old ways seem easier."

–One head teacher from Kambia confessed

addition, students from both junior and senior secondary schools reported that while they had learned about SRGBV through school campaigns, they still observed high levels of violence, particularly in rural schools where awareness efforts had not been fully penetrated. This highlights the role of students and peer-led activities in increasing awareness and addressing specific obstacles faced by students in implementing such initiatives. It is also important to note that violence is often seen as an accepted behaviour among students, as many are unaware that alternative approaches exist.

Gender-discriminatory norms exacerbate the situation, especially for girls, who are often subjected to harsher discipline and are more vulnerable to harassment and exploitation. Many students come from environments where violent discipline is normalized, which makes SRGBV seem like an extension of familiar patterns encountered daily. As highlighted in KIIs and FGDs, some students expressed that they were unaware

"We only know what we learned from our parents, and that's how we discipline our children."

–One parent stated

of alternative methods to violent discipline, whereas others noted a lack of support for such alternatives. For example, one parent stated, "We only know what we learned from our parents, and that's how we discipline our children." Comprehensive life skills education, coupled with positive parenting programs, is essential to challenge these perceptions and promote sustained behaviour change. Positive parenting programs, as mentioned by a teacher during a KII, provide: "practical skills for parents to discipline without violence." Effective strategies must engage school communities, parents and the wider community, as many parents ithat were interviewed expressed limited understanding of their role in SRGBV prevention. Adopting this holistic approach is crucial for fostering social change and influencing behaviour shifts at multiple levels, particularly in rejecting violent discipline and supporting the alternative practices.

2. Prevalence and normalization of violence in schools

Physical violence

Corporal punishment in schools remains widespread in Sierra Leone despite the legal prohibitions. Cultural norms, particularly in rural areas, still reinforce physical punishment as an acceptable form of discipline. Teachers, parents and religious leaders often regard physical violence as a necessary tool for maintaining order and ensuring academic success. In schools like those in Kambia and Kono, teachers admitted to using the rod, as reflected in the responses of several school authorities. For example, a male teacher in Bumpeh Agricultural Junior Secondary School explained that, before recent sensitization efforts, corporal punishment was used freely to "instil respect and discipline."

"Practical skills for parents to discipline without violence."

–By a teacher during a KII

In some schools, however, the situation is slowly improving. Following training on the Teacher Code of Conduct and awareness programs spearheaded by Leh Wi Lan and the MBSSE, several schools have moved away from the corporal punishment. A teacher in Kenema acknowledged, "There is a great reduction in corporal punishment and even the way the teachers relate among themselves and the pupils. The pupils now relate well with one another." However, the change is not uniform across all schools. In many cases, alternative disciplinary methods such as making students kneel or fetch water have replaced corporal punishment but remained punitive in nature.

The persistence of physical violence reflects broader societal acceptance. In Kambia, for instance, a principal of an Islamic secondary school mentioned that flogging is still commonly used to stimulate the performance of weaker students. As long as corporal punishment remains normalized within communities, it will be challenging to fully eradicate this practice from schools.

"There is a great reduction in corporal punishment and even the way the teachers relate among themselves and the pupils. The pupils now relate well with one another."

–A teacher in Kenema acknowledged

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is one of the most under-reported forms of SRGBV in Sierra Leone. Female students are particularly vulnerable, not only within the school environment, but also on their way to and from school. In Kono, one girl shared how her uncle made advances towards her after school hours, leading to her reluctance to attend classes. Similarly, in Kenema, it was found that girls frequently face harassment by teachers, peers, Okada Riders and even community members on their journey to school. The fear of retaliation, combined with a lack of trust in reporting mechanisms, prevents many from speaking out. In some cases, victims reported of being too scared to approach school authorities, even though school structures exist for this purpose.

Though awareness campaigns have been launched in many schools, sexual violence often continues unchecked. In a Kono junior secondary school, a teacher reported that the introduction of awareness programs had reduced the incidence of sexual violence, but admitted that reporting mechanisms are still underutilized, particularly in rural schools where cultural taboos discourage conversations about sexual violence.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence, including bullying, verbal harassment and discrimination, is widespread yet often goes unnoticed. Students face daily intimidation and threats, which can deeply affect their emotional well-being and academic performance. A teacher in Kono reported that psychological violence, such as name-calling and exclusion, has led to increased absenteeism among vulnerable students, especially girls. Teachers also contribute to this problem by ridiculing students in front of their peers for failing to answer questions correctly or for perceived inadequacies.

One pupil in Kenema shared how her teachers regularly insulted her and others, creating a hostile learning environment: "When we don't get the answers right, they say we are stupid,

"When we don't get the answers right, they say we are stupid, and sometimes they shout at us in front of everyone".

–One pupil in Kenema shared

and sometimes they shout at us in front of everyone". This form of psychological violence is pervasive, but less likely to be reported compared with physical or sexual violence. The long-term effects such as anxiety, depression and disengagement from school often go unaddressed, contributing to high drop-out rates.

In some schools, mentoring and counselling services have been introduced to mitigate the effects of psychological violence. In Kambia, a teacher noted that the establishment of counselling units has led to a "drastic reduction" in bullying and other forms of psychological abuse. However, without more widespread and sustained interventions, psychological violence will continue to undermine the safety and inclusivity of Sierra Leone's schools.

Children with disabilities in Sierra Leone are disproportionately affected by SRGBV due to stigma, inaccessible infrastructure and a lack of inclusive policies at the school level. Despite the government's commitment to inclusive education, many schools lack the necessary resources and capacity to support students with disabilities. These children often face compounded vulnerabilities, including higher risks of bullying, harassment and abuse, both within school premises and on their way to and from school.

SRGBV on the journey to school

SRGBV is no longer confined to the school environment—it has also extended beyond school premises, affecting learners in their broader communities. Many students, particularly girls, are exposed to harassment,

violence, and abuse during their daily commute to and from school. These incidents often involve peers, commercial motorbike (Okada) riders, and other community members. In Kono, for instance, girls have reported being harassed by older men while walking long distances to reach school, frequently through isolated areas. These extended and often unsafe journeys, made necessary by the absence of nearby schools, place students at considerable risk and hinder their right to a safe learning environment.

In Kenema, a female pupil shared her experience of being repeatedly harassed by groups of boys on her way to school. Despite reporting the incidents to her teachers, no measures were taken to ensure her safety or to address the issue effectively.

"The boys wait for us on the way to school. They make comments and try to touch us. We are scared, but there's nothing we can do." This highlights the urgent need for a more comprehensive and multi-sectoral response to SRGBV, one that extends beyond the school environment to ensure students' safety during their daily commute and within their broader communities.

> *"The boys wait for us on the way to school. They make comments and try to touch us. We are scared, but there's nothing we can do."*
>
> **–A female pupil shared**

3. Challenges in reporting and response mechanisms

The research identified significant challenges in the effectiveness of reporting and response mechanisms within schools. Suggestion boxes, which serve as one of the primary channels for students to report incidents anonymously, are often underutilized or viewed with skepticism. Many students have expressed

> *"We don't use the suggestion box because we know nothing will happen. The teachers see the notes, but they don't do anything."*
>
> **–One teacher admitted**

concerns regarding the confidentiality and effectiveness of these systems. For instance, one student in Kono revealed a lack of trust in the suggestion box process, noting that reported issues often receive little to no follow-up, which discourages future reporting: "We don't use the suggestion box because we know nothing will happen. The teachers see the notes, but they don't do anything." This disconnect between the existence of reporting mechanisms and their practical functionality undermines trust and significantly discourages students from reporting incidents of violence. Additionally, the placement of suggestion boxes often compromises confidentiality, as they are sometimes located in visible areas or near individuals who may be involved in the reported incidents. This lack of discretion fosters fear of retaliation or exposure, further deterring students from utilizing these channels.

The research also highlighted the inadequacy of the response mechanisms in place. When reports are made, there is often no follow-up, and in some cases, students who report are labelled as troublemakers, further discouraging the use of these reporting channels. Strengthening these systems will require more reliable, accessible and confidential reporting structures, alongside consistent oversight and accountability.

> *"We have the reporting systems, but without support and training on how to handle reports, nothing changes."*
>
> **–One teacher admitted**

One teacher admitted: "We have the reporting systems, but without support and training on how to handle reports, nothing changes." This shows the need for comprehensive training and resources for school staff, students and other school personnel to ensure that reporting leads to action. Training should encompass clear and standardized reporting protocols, well-defined referral pathways and effective coordination with external services providers, including law enforcement, social services and healthcare providers, to ensure a comprehensive and timely response to Incidents. As noted in a KII, "Teachers and students need to understand not just how to report, but also what happens next and who gets involved." These measures are essential for building trust in the reporting process and ensuring a coordinated response to incidents of violence.

"If the community doesn't support these efforts, nothing will change. We need everyone to stand together to protect our children."

–One mother from Kambia reflected

Community engagement plays a critical role in effectively addressing these challenges. The active involvement of parents, local leaders and other community stakeholders is essential to building trust in reporting systems, raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of SRGBV, and promoting a shared understanding of reporting protocols and available protective measures. Meaningful community participation also helps to ensure that reports of SRGBV are treated with the seriousness they deserve and that appropriate action is taken in response . One mother from Kambia reflected: "If the community doesn't support these efforts, nothing will change. We need everyone to stand together to protect our children."

Communication landscape in Sierra Leone

A clear understanding of the communication landscape is vital for the effective implementation of the SRGBV SBCC strategy. Sierra Leone's media environment is notable diverse, with radio serving as the most widely accessible and influential medium reaching approximately 85% of the population across both urban and rural areas (BBC Media Action, 2017). Community radio stations, in particular play a critical role in Information dissemination, in rural areas where access to other media channels remain limited. Given its extensive reach and ability to inform, educate and shift attitudes and behaviours, radios continue to be a powerful platform for advancing awareness and promoting awareness and promoting positive social norms, positioning it as a cornerstone of the SRGBV communication strategy (UNESCO, 2020).

Television and print media have a relatively limited reach in Sierra Leone's rural areas, largely due to low electrification rates of and limited literacy (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2021). According the most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), only about 25% of rural households had access to electricity (DHS, 2019). Nonetheless, these media platforms remain vital for engaging policymakers, urban audiences and other key influencers (BBC Media Action, 2017).

The emergence of digital media and mobile technology has created new channels s for communication, particularly among the youth.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, are increasingly leveraged for information dissemination, advocacy and engagement, especially within urban areas and among younger demographics.

According to World Bank (2021) approximately 18% of the population uses the internet, with a significant proportion of users concentrated in urban areas and centers and among individuals aged 18–34 years.

Additionally, radio continues to be a key medium for reaching broader audiences, including rural populations. The BBC Media Action survey shows that radio coverage extends to over 70% of the population, with notable engagement from youth and adult listeners. These complementary communication channels are essential for ensuring extensive outreach and engagement.

This section, which outlines the SBCC strategy's proposed multi-channel communication approach, should be repositioned within the the strategy approach or tactics section in the document. It Introduces the use of the PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned) model to guide a strategic a tailored media mix that leverages the unique strengths of each channel. Paid media includes targeted radio programming on widely listened -to community stations, particularly in rural areas, and social media advertising aimed at engaging youth audiences.

Paid media includes targeted radio programming on widely listened-to community stations—particularly in rural areas—and social media advertising aimed at engaging youth audiences.

Earned media focuses on securing news coverage, organizing radio interviews with key stakeholders and mobilizing community advocates to promote the prevention of SRGBV. Shared media utilized platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp partnering with influencers and local groups to amplify messages and foster community dialogue. Owned media encompasses consistent dissemination of Information through MBSSE website, newsletters and printed

Earned media focuses on securing news coverage, organizing radio interviews with key stakeholders and mobilizing community advocates to promote the prevention of SRGBV.

learning materials ensuring that schools and communities have access to relevant resources.

This integrated approach ensures that the strategy effectively engages diverse range of audiences—including policymakers, educators, rural communities and urban youth—while delivering SRGBV prevention messages effectively across multiple platforms. Each media channel will be systematically monitored to evaluate reach and impact, with ongoing adjustments Informed by audience engagement and feedback to enhance effectiveness.

In addition to mass media channels, the strategy emphasizes the importance of interpersonal communication, particularly within community and school settings. This approach implemented through community and intergenerational dialogues, peer education Initiatives and school-based activities, is essential for addressing sensitive issues such as SRGBV, where trust and personal engagement are critical for fostering behaviour change. The active involvement of school mentors, role models and young people will be central to facilitating meaningful dialogue and championing positive social transformation. Furthermore, the strategy recognizes the importance of engaging traditional and religious leaders as influential voices within the community. By leveraging their credibility and social authority, these leaders can play a pivotal role in challenging harmful social norms and promoting positive sustainable behaviours.

Target Audiences and Archetypes

Based on the findings of the formative research and consultative workshops, the following selected targets were identified for the delivery of the strategy:

Primary targets

Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers are key partners in reinforcing SRGBV prevention messages at home. They play a pivotal role in shaping their children's attitudes, values, and behaviors. In many contexts, physical punishment remains widely accepted—both practiced in the home and endorsed in schools. This normalization of violence perpetuates harmful disciplinary practices across settings. By targeting parents, the strategy seeks to shift these beliefs and promote safer, more supportive environments for children both at home and in school. Parents also need support to replace harmful beliefs with positive, non-violent alternatives to discipline.

Community Leaders (Including Traditional and Religious Leaders)

Community leaders wield substantial influence over societal norms and values. Their involvement is critical to shifting attitudes around gender and violence. Positioned as moral authorities, they can play a transformative role by challenging harmful cultural and gender norms and promoting non-violent disciplinary practices. Through their leadership, communities can foster collective commitment to creating safe, inclusive environments and ending violence in schools and beyond.

Students (Victims, Perpetrators, and Witnesses)

Students are central to SRGBV dynamics, whether as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses. As active members of the

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school community, their empowerment is essential for both prevention and response. Encouraging students to recognize, report, and speak out against SRGBV helps build a culture that rejects violence. Segmenting approaches by age, gender, and academic level, students must be equipped with knowledge, peer support structures, and safe reporting mechanisms to contribute meaningfully to school safety.

Teachers and School Leadership (Including Principals, Staff, and Administrators)

Teachers and school leaders play a dual role in SRGBV contexts—as potential perpetrators and as essential allies in prevention. Some

As active members of the school community, their empowerment is essential for both prevention and response.

teachers, influenced by entrenched norms, may engage in harmful behaviors such as corporal punishment or transactional sex. However, with proper training and support, teachers can serve as powerful agents of change, promoting positive behaviors, addressing incidents, and safeguarding students.

School leadership and administrative staff are equally vital. Their responsibilities include enforcing policies, upholding accountability, and ensuring effective prevention and response mechanisms. Their active engagement is critical to creating non-violent, inclusive

school environments. Tailored training should address their legal and ethical responsibilities, with an emphasis on shifting mindsets around the acceptability of physical punishment.

Policymakers

Policymakers play a key role in establishing and maintaining the legal and institutional framework needed to address SRGBV. Their responsibilities include developing, enforcing, and supporting policies that ensure accountability and sustain prevention efforts across all levels of the education system.

Boys and men are critical stakeholders in efforts to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). Their meaningful engagement in dialogue and programming is essential to challenging and transforming harmful social norms and behaviors. No cultural or social norm can justify acts such as rape, sexual assault, sexual penetration, or harassment—practices that are unequivocal violations of legal and ethical standards. The strategy must address the culture of impunity that allows such acts to persist.

Effective interventions must not only raise awareness and promote behavior change but also address accountability. Holding perpetrators accountable is fundamental to creating safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.

To tailor messaging and interventions effectively, archetypes have been developed for each target audience. These archetypes are based on research findings generated during the development of this strategy.

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Students

Name : **Mariatu**
Age : 14
Role : JSS student
Location : Lokomasama, Rural Sierra Leone

" Sometimes, I see teachers harass my friends, but I don't know if anyone will believe me if I speak out. "

Stage in the behaviour change ladder: Contemplation

Goals

Stay safe, avoid conflict with authority figures, focus on school without the fear of violence or harassment

Influencers

- Trusted Teachers
- First responders/Health workers
- Peers/friends/older students
- Parents
- Religious leaders

Best way to reach me

- School assemblies or school-based workshops
- School clubs
- Churches/mosques
- Radio programs
- Social media
- Posters in schools and public places

Mariatu represents a bigger population who:

- are vulnerable to SRGBV, but unsure of how to report or confront it
- are often fearful of reporting incidents due to lack of trust in the system
- are deeply affected by the normalization of violence in schools
- seek safety and a supportive environment where their concerns are taken seriously
- want to succeed academically, but feel hindered by the threats of SRGBV
- are influenced by their peers, teachers and community leaders

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[1.] Names and photographs are used only for illustrative purposes. It does not suggest or imply the specific situation of anyone.

Behaviour map for Mariatu

Categories	Details
Knowledge/ awareness	Have basic understanding of what SRGBV is, but unsure how to report it or if it's safe to do so Know that violence in schools is harmful, but isn't clear on the reporting process
Attitudes/beliefs	Believe that reporting could lead to retaliation or being ostracized by peers or teachers May think that speaking out will not change anything
Social norms	Expected to remain silent when witnessing violence or harassment. Peers and school staff may discourage reporting, and remaining silent is often normalized
Current behaviours	Does not report SRGBV incidents to formal authorities (e.g., teachers or reporting mechanisms), but may share experiences with close friends
Barriers	Fear of retaliation, lack of trust in reporting systems, peer pressure to stay silent, belief that reporting won't lead to positive outcomes
Enabling factors	Trusted teachers, peer groups, youth-focused NGOs providing safe spaces Awareness of confidential reporting mechanisms would encourage action
Opportunities	Confidential reporting platforms, peer-led school dialogues, youth engagement programs focusing on empowerment and awareness, supportive parents/family
Barriers beyond perception	A school culture that doesn't promote or ensure the confidentiality of reporting, social stigma and lack of consequences for perpetrators

Archetype: **Teacher**

Name : **Mr. Kamara**
Role : Teacher
Location : Urban school
Education : Tertiary education

> " If I don't discipline the students, they won't respect me or listen in class. "

Stage in the behaviour change ladder: Pre-contemplation

Goals

Maintain authority in the classroom, be seen as a responsible teacher, ensure that students behave and perform well academically

Influencers

- Senior teachers
- School administration
- Education ministry
- Local traditions/traditional authorities

Best way to reach me

- Workshops on non-violent discipline methods/teacher training programs
- Printed materials/SMS alerts/radio shows
- Community dialogues
- Direct engagement through educational NGOs

Mr. Kamara represents a bigger population who:

- are teachers in rural areas where corporal punishment and other forms of SRGBV are normalized as disciplinary measures
- engage in corporal punishment and see it as part of their role in disciplining students; they don't yet see the harm or the need to change behaviour
- need practical tools and training to handle SRGBV incidents effectively
- need more support from the community and policymakers to drive change

Behaviour map for Mr. Kamara

Categories	Details
Knowledge/ awareness	Limited understanding of the harm caused by corporal punishment. Believes that it is an effective way to control students
Attitudes/beliefs	Sees corporal punishment as a necessary tool for maintaining discipline. Believes that students benefit from it as it instils respect and order
Social norms	Corporal punishment is widely accepted by both teachers and students. Some students may even support it as they believe that it curbs misbehaviour among their peers
Current behaviours	Regularly uses corporal punishment to discipline stu-dents
Barriers	Strong belief in the effectiveness of physical punishment, lack of exposure to non-violent disciplinary methods, reinforcement from peers who share similar views
Enabling factors	Access to teacher training programs on non-violent discipline, support from school administration to shift towards non-violent methods
Opportunities	Teacher recognition programs for adopting non-violent discipline, community dialogues that challenge traditional notions of discipline, school policies supporting positive discipline
Barriers beyond perception	Systemic issues such as lack of institutional support for non-violent methods, pressure from school administrators to maintain discipline by any means necessary

Archetype: **Parents**

Name : **Fatmata**
Role : Mother
Location : Suburban community
Education : Secondary education

" I always thought discipline meant hitting, but now I'm wondering if there's another way to guide my children. "

Stage in the behaviour change ladder: Contemplation

Goals

Raise respectful and well-behaved children, support their education, protect them from harm

Influencers

- Religious leaders
- Community health workers
- Other mothers in the community

Best way to reach me

- Community meetings and radio
- Churches or mosques
- Religious gatherings
- PTA meetings
- Parenting programmes

Fatmata represents a bigger population who:

- are deeply concerned about their children's safety and well-being in school
- want to be more involved in school activities, but feel disconnected or powerless
- are influenced by religious leaders, community health workers and local customs
- represent parents who are grappling with the transition from traditional disciplinary methods to non-violent parenting
- are eager to support SRGBV prevention efforts, but require guidance on how to contribute effectively

Behaviour map for Fatmata

Categories	Details
Knowledge/ awareness	Knows that physical punishment is common, but is unaware of the emotional harm it causes or alternative, non-violent discipline methods
Attitudes/beliefs	Believes that physical punishment is necessary for instilling respect and discipline in children
Social norms	Physical punishment is normalized within the community, and parents are expected to discipline their children in this way. It's seen as a sign of responsible parenting
Current behaviours	Uses physical punishment at home and supports its use in schools as long as it does not result in serious injury (as reflected in the research—accepted as long as there's no blood)
Barriers	Deeply ingrained cultural norms, belief that non-violent discipline won't be effective, lack of community conver-sations about alternative methods
Enabling factors	Exposure to non-violent parenting through community radio programs, positive discipline examples in religious or school settings, peer pressure from other parents who shift norms
Opportunities	Parent workshops on non-violent discipline, radio programs with religious leaders advocating for non-violent parenting, community campaigns
Barriers beyond perception	Community pressure to maintain traditional forms of discipline, lack of institutional support in schools to engage parents on positive discipline, limited access to alternative discipline resources

Archetype: **Community Leaders**

Name	:	**Chief Amadu**
Role	:	Town Chief
Location	:	Rural community
Education	:	Arabic school/informal education
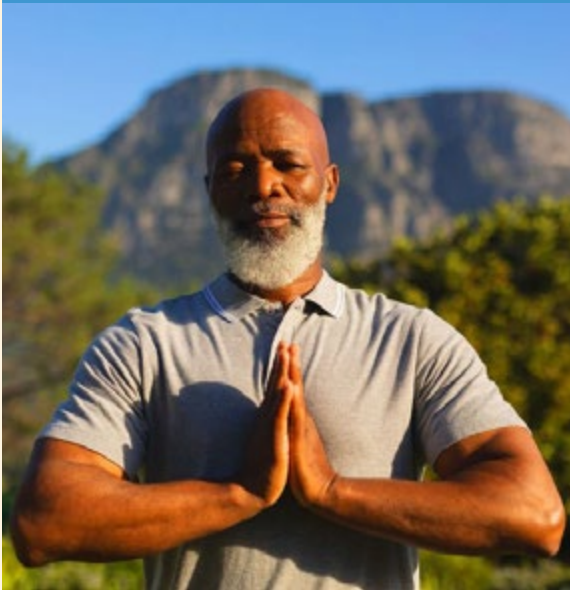
" We've always handled these issues in our own way. Outsiders don't need to interfere. "

Goals

Maintain social harmony, uphold traditional norms, protect his community's reputation

Influencers

- Religious leaders
- Local government
- NGO workers

Best way to reach me

- Community gatherings
- Local radio
- Direct engagement

Chief Amadu represents a bigger population who:

- sees SRGBV as an internal matter that should be handled within families or the community, without external interference
- are key influencers who can mobilize the community against SRGBV
- are influenced by local government and NGOs
- wield significant influence over social norms in rural communities and may resist external interventions
- seek to create a safer, more inclusive community, but face challenges due to entrenched social norms for which they serve as local custodians

Stage in the behaviour change ladder: Pre-contemplation

Behaviour map for Chief Amadu

	Categories	Details
	Knowledge/ awareness	Limited awareness of SRGBV, views it as a private is-sue. Believes that problems within schools should be handled internally without external involvement
	Attitudes/beliefs	Believes that traditional methods of handling disputes and maintaining social harmony are more effective than modern interventions
	Social norms	Expected to maintain traditional leadership roles and uphold community values, including support for corporal punishment and internal resolution of issues such as SRGBV
	Current behaviours	Avoids external involvement in school-related matters and SRGBV prevention. Rarely engages in public discussions on gender-based violence or school violence
	Barriers	Resistance to outside influence, fear of losing authority, belief that modern interventions threaten traditional practices
	Enabling factors	Engagement with NGOs or government programs that respect traditional roles whereas promoting new practices, peer pressure from other leaders who support SRGBV prevention
	Opportunities	Community-wide dialogues facilitated by respected leaders, joint programs that integrate traditional conflict resolution with modern SRGBV prevention approaches
	Barriers beyond perception	Fear of losing respect or authority if they endorse external methods of SRGBV prevention, peer pressure from other traditional leaders who resist change

Archetype: **School Heads**

Name	:	**Mrs. Sesay**
Role	:	Head of School
Location	:	Urban secondary school
Education	:	University

> " I know there are problems, but we don't have the training or the tools to deal with these issues properly. "

Goals

Ensure her school is safe, improve the school's reputation, reduce incidents of violence among staff and students

Influencers

- Ministry of Education
- School Board
- Fellow Principals
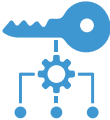
Best way to reach me

- Direct engagement with MBSSE
- Targeted trainings
- Leadership workshops
- Meetings

Mrs. Sesay represents a bigger population who:

- are aware of SRGBV but need institutional support to create safer school environments
- are aware of SRGBV and understands the need to act but lacks the resources and support to implement effective changes in her school
- require ongoing communication and engagement to enforce policies

Stage in the behaviour change ladder: Preparation

Behaviour map for Mrs. Sesay

Categories	Details
Knowledge/ awareness	Aware of SRGBV issues in her school, but lacks the knowledge of how to effectively implement reporting and prevention systems
Attitudes/beliefs	Believes that while SRGBV is a serious issue, it's difficult to manage without adequate training or resources, and that cultural attitudes, including tendencies to blame girls for SRGBV, further complicate prevention and response efforts
Social norms	Expected by the school board and staff to ensure discipline and safety, but without strong guidance or policy enforcement mechanisms, there's little accountability
Current behaviours	Attempts to address SRGBV issues, but lacks follow-through due to limited institutional support
Barriers	Lack of resources, limited support from the Ministry of Education, fear of backlash from staff
Enabling factors	Potential support from NGOs, Ministry of Education initiatives, training programs for school leadership
Opportunities	Leadership development workshops, policy guidance and resources from the Ministry of Education, collaboration with NGOs to create safer school environments
Barriers beyond perception	Structural limitations in the education system, lack of follow-up or accountability for school leaders, insufficient funding for SRGBV prevention and response programs

Archetype: **Policymakers**

Name	:	**Hon. Conteh**
Role	:	Member of Parliamentary Education Committee
Location	:	National Level
Education	:	University

"

We have policies in place, but enforcement is a challenge, and we need stronger collaboration with schools and communities.

"

Goals

To enforce policies that protect children

Influencers

- Teachers
- Peers
- Parents
- Religious leaders
- Fellow Parliamentarians

Best way to reach me

- Policy briefs
- Media reports
- Meetings
- Through constituents

Hon. Conteh represents a bigger population who:

- represents policymakers who are committed to developing policies that protect children but struggle with enforcement
- recognizes the importance of SRGBV prevention, but needs more data and evidence to drive decisions
- influenced by senior government officials and international agencies, but lacks practical local strategies for policy implementation
- requires ongoing engagement with educators, parents and community members to ensure policies are effectively enforced
- are interested in aligning national policies with global standards, but need practical strategies for local adaptation.

Behaviour map for Hon. Conteh

Categories	Details
Knowledge/ awareness	Aware of SRGBV policies and their importance but recognizes the gap in enforcement. Acknowledges that data and evidence on SRGBV prevention are crucial for driving policy decisions
Attitudes/beliefs	Believes that SRGBV is a significant issue that requires policy attention but struggles with the practical implementation and enforcement of these policies across the schools
Social norms	Expected to act as a leader and protector of children's rights but constrained by limited resources and bureaucratic processes. The norm in government is slow adap-tation to policy enforcement
Current behaviours	Focuses on policy discussions at a high level but faces challenges in ensuring implementation at the community and school levels. Limited direct engagement with schools and communities
Barriers	Bureaucratic delays, lack of collaboration with local stakeholders, insufficient data to drive policy enforcement, limited interaction with school authorities
Enabling factors	Access to policy briefs, media reports and evidence from schools; peer pressure from other policymakers who prioritize SRGBV prevention; support from senior government officials
Opportunities	Strengthened collaboration with schools, NGOs and community leaders to better enforce SRGBV policies; evidence-based data to guide policy enforcement; alignment of national policies with global standards
Barriers beyond perception	Lack of infrastructure for monitoring and enforcing SRGBV policies; limited resources to implement policy changes; reliance on outdated data and insufficient collaboration between policy and practice

Positioning of desired behaviour across targets

Target audience	Promoted behaviour	Competing behaviour	Benefit derived from competing behaviour	Recommended new behaviour	Benefit derived from new behaviour	Positioning of new behaviour
Mariatu, Student	Reporting incidents of SRGBV to trusted school authorities or confidential systems	Sharing incidents with only close friends, avoiding formal reports due to fear of retaliation	Avoiding negative attention or perceived backlash from peers or teachers	Reporting incidents of SRGBV using confidential channels	Ensuring personal safety and contributing to a safer school environment	Reporting ensures your safety and that of your peers, and it will be handled with confidentiality and care
Mr. Kamara, Teacher	Adopting non-violent methods of discipline and encourages a violence-free school environment	Continue to using corporal punishment as a way to maintain authority in the classroom	Perceived immediate control over students, maintaining classroom order	Using positive discipline techniques to manage student behaviour and promote respect	Building a respectful classroom environment and long-term trust with students, while enhancing learning outcomes	Non-violent discipline shows leadership and creates a respectful environment that improves student learning
Fatmata, Parent	Embracing non-violent discipline at home and actively participating in school activities related to SRGBV prevention	Supporting physical punishment as an acceptable form of discipline both at home and in school	Belief that physical punishment instils discipline and respect in children	Advocating for non-violent parenting and engaging with schools on SRGBV prevention	Protecting your child's emotional and physical well-being and ensuring they succeed in a safe school environment	Non-violent parenting fosters respectful, successful children and strengthens your bond with them
Chief Amadu, Community Leader	Leading efforts to challenge harmful social norms in the community and promoting SRGBV prevention in schools	Deferring to traditional norms that permit certain forms of violence or discourage external interference in family matters	Preserving traditional authority and social cohesion within the community	Championing community-wide SRGBV prevention efforts and challenging harmful norms	Creating a safer, more inclusive community while retaining respect as a cultural leader	Leading SRGBV prevention makes you a protector of the community's future, maintaining respect while promoting safety
Mrs. Sesay, Head of School	Implementing effective SRGBV reporting mechanisms and supporting teacher training on non-violent discipline	Fails to follow up on SRGBV cases due to lack of training or fear of staff resistance	Avoiding confrontation with staff, while maintaining the status quo	Supporting staff and students in preventing SRGBV, promoting a safer and more positive school culture	Creating a trusted, supportive school environment where students can feel safe and staff are held accountable	Leading a safe, violence-free school enhances your reputation as an effective and trusted educational leader
Hon. Conteh, Policymaker	Ensuring strong enforcement of SRGBV policies and advocating for community engagement in policy enforcement	Creating policies but struggling with enforcement due to limited resources or collaboration	Meeting policy targets without the complexity of implementation or monitoring	Strengthening enforcement mechanisms for SRGBV policies and engaging with schools and communities	Achieving meaningful and measurable changes in SRGBV prevention, aligning with national and global goals	Effective policy enforcement demonstrates leadership and commitment to the safety of future generations

Implications for the SRGBV SBCC strategy

The situation analysis reveals deep-rooted challenges that are both systemic and cultural. The persistence of SRGBV undermines the country's progress in education, despite significant government investment, and remains a major barrier to creating a safe and conducive learning environment.

Addressing SRGBV requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that includes robust communication efforts, active community engagement, strategic policy advocacy, accessible support systems, strengthened institutional frameworks and sustained investment in education and social services. The SRGBV SBCC strategy is positioned as part of this broader effort to address SRGBV. It aims to influence attitudes, behaviours and social norms through strategic communication approaches and tools, while engaging key stakeholders at all levels. By aligning with other initiatives, the strategy ensures a coordinated and effective response to SRGBV, addressing specific needs and challenges through targeted messaging and actions aimed at fostering a culture of safety, gender equality and respect in schools and communities.

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Theoretical Models and Strategic Approaches

The design and implementation of the SRGBV SBCC strategy are grounded in a range of theoretical models and strategic approaches, collectively providing a comprehensive framework for addressing SRGBV in Sierra Leone. These models not only guide the understanding of the underlying drivers of SRGBV but also inform the design of interventions that are evidence-based, culturally appropriate and effective in achieving sustainable change.

Socio-ecological model

The Socio-Ecological Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multiple levels of influence on individual behaviour, encompassing individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors. This model has been instrumental in shaping the design and the planned implementation of the SRGBV SBCC strategy Recognizing that SRGBV is is driven by factors at multiple levels, the strategy adopts a multi-tiered approach to interventions.

At the individual level, the strategy focuses on empowering students with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and report SRGBV. At the interpersonal level, it seeks to strengthen relationships among students, teachers and parents, fostering supportive environments that actively discourage violence. At the community level, the strategy engages leaders and members to challenge harmful norms and promote positive behaviours. At the societal level, the strategy includes advocacy efforts designed to influence policy reforms and ensure the effective enforcement of laws protecting students from violence.

The SEM is particularly well-suited to addressing complex social issues such as SRGBV because it considers the interplay between different levels of influence. This makes it a valuable framework for designing multifaceted interventions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McLeroy et al., 1988).

Behavioural drivers model

The BDM adds another layer of depth to the strategy by providing a structured approach to analysing the underlying drivers of behaviour, including social, psychological and environmental factors. In the context of SRGBV, the BDM helps to identify key drivers or factors that influence behaviours at multiple levels, allowing for a more targeted and strategic response to violence in the schools. These factors are structured around three domains: (1) structural drivers, (2) social and community norms and (3) psychological and cognitive factors.

1. **Structural Drivers** include the broader social, economic and policy contexts that influence behaviour, such as poverty, education infrastructure, legal and policy frameworks, enforcement of policies, accessibility and quality of education services. The strategy recognizes that these structural drivers must be addressed to create an enabling environment that supports behavioural change. By identifying which structural issues contribute most to SRGBV, the SBCC strategy can prioritize areas for systemic intervention and advocacy, such as improved policy enforcement and better educational resources.

2. **Social and Community Norms—**including societal expectations, cultural values, traditions, group identities and peer influence—play a significant role in the perpetuation of SRGBV. By analysing norms and values that influence behaviour, the strategy can prioritize efforts that aim to reshape these perceptions and foster a culture of gender equality and safety.

3. **Psychological and Cognitive Factors** encompass individual-level drivers such as knowledge, awareness, individual attitudes, beliefs, skills, self-efficacy, risk perception and motivations. The SBCC strategy includes educational campaigns and capacity-building initiatives, which are designed to address the most prevalent cognitive barriers and motivators, prioritizing interventions that focus on shifting attitudes and increasing skills that counteract SRGBV.

By integrating the BDM, the SRGBV SBCC strategy ensures that it goes beyond surface-level interventions to tackle underlying drivers of SRGBV, prioritizing areas of action directed at the most influential drivers. This approach enhances the likelihood of achieving sustainable and long-term impact (UNICEF, 2019).

Social cognitive theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is also a key component of the SRGBV SBCC strategy. SCT focuses on the role of observational learning, imitation and modelling in the behaviour change. This theory was particularly influential in the design phase of the strategy, where it was used to identify and promote positive role models within schools and communities. These role models demonstrate non-violent behaviours and respectful interactions, serving – whether teachers, students or community leaders – as examples for others to follow. During the implementation phase, the strategy will not only leverage media campaigns and community activities to showcase these role models, but also integrate SCT principles into school-based interventions, such as peer mentoring, teacher training and classroom/side curriculum activities. These activities will encourage students, teachers and parents to model positive behaviours, ensuring that the strategy encompasses a holistic approach to school-based interventions beyond media and community activities. The effectiveness of

SCT in promoting behaviour change through social influences and reinforcement is well-documented, making it a suitable framework for addressing SRGBV, where behaviour is often shaped by social norms and peer pressure (Bandura, 1986).

Norms theory

The Norms Theory is another critical framework, which was integrated into the SRGBV SBCC strategy. This theory is particularly relevant in addressing the deeply ingrained gender norms and stereotypes that perpetuate SRGBV. The formative research highlighted how these norms justify and sustain harmful behaviours, making it essential to target them directly. The SRGBV SBCC strategy includes specific interventions, which aimed at shifting these social norms, such as community dialogues, media campaigns and the promotion of alternative, non-violent norms through positive role models. By focusing on changing the underlying norms that support SRGBV, this strategy aims to create a cultural shift that will reduce the incidence of violence in schools. The application of the Norms Theory in this context is supported by research showing that changing social norms can lead to significant behaviour change, especially when interventions are community-led and culturally sensitive (Cislaghi & Heise, 2018).

Process of behaviour change model

The process of Behaviour Change Model is a key framework, which is used to guide the SRGBV SBCC strategy. This model outlines the stages through which individuals and groups progress as they shift from awareness to sustained behaviour change. It is particularly relevant in the context of SRGBV because it allows the strategy to target audiences at different stages of change, ensuring that interventions are tailored to their current level of readiness and that support is provided throughout the change process.

The process of Behaviour Change Model includes five primary stages: (1) Pre-contemplation, (2) Contemplation, (3) Preparation, (4) Action and (5) Maintenance (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). It also accounts for Relapse, recognizing that individuals may revert to old behaviours during the change process and require additional support to re-engage with positive behaviours.

In the SRGBV SBCC strategy, this model is used thus:

- **Pre-contemplation:** Raise awareness among students, teachers, parents and community members who may not recognize SRGBV as a significant issue. Mass media campaigns, community dialogues and school-based interventions will help in shifting people from unawareness to awareness of SRGBV's impacts.

- **Contemplation:** At this stage, individuals may begin to ask questions about harmful practices such as corporal punishment or bullying but they are unsure how to change them. This strategy provides information on alternative, non-violent approaches to discipline and reporting mechanisms to encourage action.

- **Preparation:** When individuals or groups are ready to take action but require more knowledge or resources, the strategy offers practical tools, such as providing training sessions on non-violent discipline for teachers or arranging workshops for parents on positive parenting. Support systems are also provided to help those preparing to report SRGBV incidents.

- **Action:** This stage involves actively engaging in new behaviours, such as students reporting incidents of violence or teachers adopting non-violent classroom management techniques. The strategy reinforces these behaviours through recognition programs, support networks and ongoing community engagement.

- **Maintenance:** Once new behaviours have been adopted, they must be sustained over time. The strategy focuses on long-term support mechanisms, such as peer mentoring, institutionalized reporting systems and continuous capacity-building to ensure that positive behaviours become ingrained in everyday practices.

By applying the process of Behaviour Change Model, the SRGBV SBCC strategy ensures that interventions are not "one-size-fits-all" but are responsive to the varying levels of readiness for change among the target audiences. This model also highlights the importance of long-term reinforcement, recognizing that behaviour change is a continuous process that requires sustained effort and support.

The use of this model in behaviour change interventions is well-supported by academic research, demonstrating its effectiveness in addressing complex social issues, particularly those related to public health and education (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). By structuring interventions according to the stages of change, the SRGBV SBCC strategy increases the likelihood of achieving lasting, impactful results in reducing SRGBV in schools.

Participatory development approach

- **Strategic Communication:** Agenda Setting, Framing and Priming Strategic communication is integral to the implementation of the SRGBV SBCC strategy by shaping public perceptions and driving policy support. Through agenda setting, framing and priming, this approach ensures that SRGBV is prioritized in public discourse, enhancing awareness and encouraging community action plans.

- **Agenda Setting:** This theory suggests that the media doesn't tell people what to think but rather what to think about. By prioritizing SRGBV in media coverage and public discourse, the strategy seeks to place SRGBV at the forefront of national concerns, thereby mobilizing public and policy-level action. Media campaigns will be strategically designed to ensure that SRGBV remains a key issue on the public and policy agenda, influencing how the issue is perceived and prioritized by both public and decision-makers (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

- **Framing:** How SRGBV is presented to the public—how the issue is framed—can significantly influence perceptions and behaviours. The strategy will utilize framing techniques to present SRGBV in a way that emphasizes its impact on educational outcomes, public health and community well-being. By framing SRGBV as a critical issue that affects broader societal goals, the strategy aims to shift and align public attitudes and garner broader support for comprehensive interventions (Entman, 1993).

- **Priming:** It involves the process by which media messages shape the standards by which people evaluate issues and policies. Through repeated exposure to SRGBV-related messages, the strategy aims to prime the audience to view SRGBV as a critical and urgent issue, thereby increasing the likelihood of behaviour change and policy support. The use of consistent and targeted messaging across multiple platforms will reinforce the importance of addressing SRGBV, making it a salient issue in the public consciousness (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

These communication strategies are designed to create a cohesive and impactful narrative around SRGBV, ensuring that the issue receives the attention it deserves and that the public is motivated to support and participate in the interventions aimed at ending SRGBV. The strategy will also integrate participatory development principles, ensuring that the active engagement and participation of the most affected communities in the design and implementation of interventions foster ownership and relevance.

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Capacity building

Capacity building is another essential strategic approach embedded in the SRGBV SBCC strategy. The strategy recognizes the Importance of enhancing the capacity of teachers, principals, school heads, school administrators, counsellors, students, parents, religious and community leaders, by equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively prevent and respond to SRGBV. .

Training sessions on non-violent disciplinary methods, gender-responsive and transformative teaching practices, and the establishment of peer support networks will be conducted as part of the strategy's implementation process. Capacity building is a key component of sustainable development, as it has been shown to improve the Impact and effectiveness of interventions. By empowering local actors to take ownership of both challenges and solutions, capacity building ensures that interventions can be sustained beyond the life of the project (UNDP, 2009).

Advocacy and policy influence

Advocacy and policy influence are central elements of the SRGBV SBCC strategy, with a primary focus on creating an enabling environment for its success. The strategy was designed with a strong advocacy component, aligning its goals with national and international frameworks to ensure that advocacy efforts are strategic and focused on achieving key policy changes and mobilizing resources. During implementation, ongoing advocacy efforts will include lobbying for the enforcement of existing SRGBV laws, supporting the development of new policies and building alliances with civil society organizations.

Advocacy is a powerful tool for driving systemic change, particularly when aimed at influencing policy and mobilizing resources. By aligning the SRGBV strategy with broader policy frameworks, advocacy efforts can help ensure that SRGBV remains a priority on the national agenda (Shiffman & Smith, 2007).

Comprehensive SRGBV SBCC Strategy

Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment in Sierra Leone, where all students can thrive free from violence, is critical for the country's long-term development. This section outlines the issue of SRGBV in Sierra Leone, the strategic approach adopted to address it, and the specific interventions designed to create sustainable behaviour change. Through a structured, evidence-based approach, the strategy aims to transform school environments into secure, supportive spaces that support learning and growth for every child.

Problem statement

School-Related Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone is a pervasive issue that significantly undermines the educational prospects and well-being of students, particularly girls and children with disability. SRGBV includes sexual, physical, psychological and emotional violence that occurs within and around school settings. These acts of violence are driven by entrenched social and gender norms, power imbalances and socio-economic challenges, inequities and systemic challenges. Despite ongoing efforts to address SRGBV, the problem persists due to lack of awareness, inadequate policy enforcement, insufficient reporting mechanisms, limited support systems, and the persistence of cultural and social norms that normalize violence. With the absence of a coordinated and comprehensive response, SRGBV will continue to pose a significant barrier to achieving the Global Safe to Learn Benchmarks, hindering the goal of ensuring that every child has access to a safe,supportive and gender-equal learning environment.

Theory of change

If...

- Key stakeholders, including educational staff, teachers, students, parents and community leaders, receive targeted information and education on SRGBV;
- Social and gender norms, stereotypes and attitudes that condone SRGBV are actively challenged through community engagement, media and educational programs;
- Schools and communities establish and promote accessible, trusted and confidential reporting systems;

- Education authorities and schools co-ordinate effectively and establish links with support services;
- Policies and institutional frameworks are strengthened to effectively support, enforce and sustain SRGBV prevention measures.

Then

- Students, parents, teachers and community members will develop a deeper understanding of SRGBV and non-violent behaviours;
- Non-violent behaviours, along with gender-equitable norms and attitudes, will become more visible and promoted within schools, families and communities;
- Students will have more access to and confidence in using confidential and effective reporting mechanisms, encouraging them to report incidents;

- Schools will have stronger foundations and support for implementing these initiatives.

AND

- There will be a shift towards non-violent and gender-equitable behaviours, with a rejection of violence and impunity;
- SRGBV incidents will be more frequently reported and addressed;
- Victims who report will gain access to comprehensive support services within both schools and communities;
- Authorities and communities will be actively mobilized to support SRGBV prevention and response.

As a result, a safe, inclusive and gender-equitable learning environment will be created, allowing all students—especially girls—to learn and thrive free from violence.

Assumptions

Social and **gender norms** that perpetuate SRGBV can be shifted through sustained, targeted communication efforts

Schools and communities can effectively implement SRGBV prevention and response mechanisms if equipped with the right resources (financial and human), **training/ capacities** and support

Policy enforcement and engagement of **key stakeholders** will ensure accountability and sustainability of SRGBV interventions

Students, teachers, staff and parents have the capacity to acquire and apply new knowledge and **skills** that effectively address SRGBV by providing alternatives to violent discipline, promoting gender equality and supporting SRGBV prevention

Problem tree

	On Students	On Schools	On Community
EFFECTS	Decreased academic performance	Unsafe and non-conducive learning environment	Perpetration of violence and discrimination
	Mental health issues (e.g., anxiety and depression)	Damage to school reputation and community trust	Reduced community cohesion and support for schools
	Increased absenteeism and drop-out rates		
	Physical Violence	**Sexual Violence**	**Psychological Violence**
IMMEDIATE CAUSES	Use of corporal punishment by teachers	Lack of awareness and education on sexual harassment	Verbal abuse by teachers and peers
	Physical fights among school children	Inadequate reporting mechanism	Stigmatization and discrimination
			Bullying among students
	Teacher Behaviour and Practices	**Reporting Mechanisms**	**Community and Parental Engagement**
UNDERLYING CAUSES	Lack of training on alternative discipline methods	Limited accessibility of reporting tools (e.g., suggestion boxes) and mechanism for effective functioning of tools	Insufficient parental involvement in SRGBV prevention
	Inadequate implementation of the Teacher Code of Conduct	Lack of trust in the effectiveness and confidentiality of reporting	Lack of community sensitization on the impacts of SRGBV
	School Safety structures		
	Inadequate support structures such as mentors and counsels		
	Poor monitoring and evaluation of existing safely mechanisms		
	Cultural Norms and Attitudes	**Institutional Weaknesses**	**Socio-Economic Factors**
ROOT CAUSES	Acceptance of violence as a disciplinary measure	Weak enforcement of policies related to SRGBV	Poverty and economic stressors leading to increased violence
	Gender stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs	Limited resources for training and support mechanisms	Lack of funding for comprehensive SRGBV programs
		Unawareness of alternative discipline measures by teachers	

Pathways Strategy and Assumptions

The ToC outlines several key pathways through which the SRGBV SBCC strategy will lead to the desired long-term impact. These pathways are based on critical assumptions that must hold for the strategy to be successful. Table 1 given below summarizes the assumptions and the corresponding pathways for each objective:

Table 1: The assumptions and the corresponding pathways

Change Path-way	Strategy	Assumption
Increase awareness and knowledge of SRGBV, impact and non-violent behaviours	Increase awareness and understanding about SRGBV, its impact and non-violent behaviours among students, teachers, educational staff, parents and communities through educational and awareness campaigns in schools, communities and media, school-based workshops and training, community outreach. This also include deeper investment in the development and promotion of practical skills for non-violent behaviours, positive discipline and gender equitable and sensitive practices for students, teachers and parents through training programmes (Code of Conducts, positive discipline programmes, life skills frameworks, etc.), peer-education/mentorships, parental workshop programme (positive parenting)	
1. Challenging Social and Gender Norms	Challenge and transform entrenched social and gender norms that normalize violence in schools, families and communities through social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) interventions. Role model campaigns, peer education and community dialogues will engage stakeholders in schools, leaders and influencers with students, educational staff, parents and community to speak up and in a reflective dialogue about SRGBV, positive attitudes and alternative behaviours, gender-equitable norms to influence a cultural shift towards non-violence and gender equality. The strategy will also strengthen linkages between schools and the broader community, ensuring that school-based initiatives are reinforced by community-level interventions. Parents, traditional leaders and local influencers will be engaged to support ongoing discussions on gender norms and violence, creating an ecosystem where schools and communities work together to challenge harmful behaviours.	Shifting deep-rooted norms requires long-term engagement with communities, particularly through culturally appropriate messaging and consistent collaboration between schools and local community leaders.
2. Strengthening Reporting and Response Mechanisms	Schools will support establishment of accessible, confidential and effective reporting systems, and support services. Students, parents and teachers will be engaged in designing the reporting systems, trained on reporting protocols and the use these mechanisms. Strengthening referral pathways to authorities, including the Child Welfare Committees, Family Support Unit (FSU) and through the 116 hotline, will ensure incidents are handled promptly and sensitively.	Trust in reporting systems will increase when stakeholders see that reports lead to meaningful action, and confidentiality is guaranteed.
3. Building Institutional and Community Capacity	Provide training for teachers, school administrators and community leaders on gender-sensitive teaching practices, non-violent discipline, and SRGBV prevention and response. Strengthen partnerships between schools, communities and local authorities to ensure a coordinated response.	Capacity-building efforts will enhance the ability of stakeholders to recognize, prevent, and respond to SRGBV, leading to safer school environments.
4. Ensuring Policy Enforcement and Stakeholder Engagement	Advocate for the strict enforcement of SRGBV-related policies at both the national and school levels. Engage stakeholders—including government officials, civil society, and school management—to foster long-term commitment to addressing SRGBV.	When stakeholders are engaged and policies are actively enforced, schools will be held accountable, leading to more consistent implementation of SRGBV prevention measures.
5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)	Develop a robust MEL framework to track progress, assess the impact of SRGBV interventions, and ensure that the strategy remains responsive to emerging challenges. Continuous feedback loops will enable real-time adjustments.	A strong MEL framework will ensure evidence-based decision-making, allowing for the adaptation of strategies to ensure long-term success.

Expected Outcomes

Short-term

Increased awareness of SRGBV, its impact and non-violent behaviours among students, teachers and communities;

Greater motivation and engagement in SRGBV prevention of students, educational staff, parents and communities;

Improved knowledge and skills for applying non-violent behaviours, positive discipline and gender-sensitive practices among students, teachers and parents;

Improved trust and access to effective reporting mechanisms;

Enhanced capacity and resources of school personnel to address SRGBV.

Medium-term

Greater effective detection, reporting and support of SRGBV cases/greater use of reporting and referral systems;

Improved enforcement of SRGBV policies, leading to safer and more inclusive school environments;

Shift in socio-cultural norms that reduce the acceptance of violence and promote gender-equality;

Increased adoption and confidence in applying of non-violent behaviours and positive discipline tools;

Shift of social and cultural norms with reduction in acceptance of violence.

Long-term

A measurable reduction in SRGBV incidents;

A sustained engagement and cultural shift towards gender equality and non-violence, with schools, communities and institutions committed to protecting students from SRGBV and ensuring safe, supportive educational environments.

Goal

The goal of this strategy is to foster a safe, inclusive and gender-equitable learning environment where all learners—especially girls—can thrive free from violence. This will be achieved by raising awareness about SRGBV, addressing harmful social norms, enhancing self-efficacy in practicing non-violent behaviours and mobilizing communities, institutions and stakeholders to prevent and respond to SRGBV effectively and sustainably.

Objective 1
Promote Gender Equitable and Non-Violent Behaviours by Raising Awareness and Addressing Harmful Social Norms Perpetuating SRGBV

Through awareness and addressing harmful social norms, this objective aims to shift attitudes and behaviours among learners, teachers, parents and communities towards gender equality and non-violence.

Tactic 1: Carry Out Nationwide Media Campaigns

Activity 1: Launch a nationwide multimedia campaign using radio, television and digital platforms to challenge social and gender norms that perpetuate SRGBV. The campaigns will use real-life stories and culturally relevant messages to raise awareness about gender-based violence and promote non-violent behaviours.

Activity 2: Collaborate with local community radio stations to deliver interactive programs that allow students, parents and community members to engage in discussions about SRGBV, gender norms, and the importance of creating safe, inclusive schools. These programs will be tailored to reach both rural and urban audiences.

Activity 3: Develop and broadcast media campaigns featuring children with disabilities to normalize their presence in schools and challenge harmful stereotypes.

Tactic 2: Strengthen Peer Education Programs

Activity 1: Train students to become peer educators and SRGBV ambassadors, equipping them with adequate skills in storytelling, role-playing and conflict resolution to lead discussions and workshops on gender equality and respectful relationships.

Activity 2: Establish peer-mentorship programs where ambassadors actively engage students to promote non-violence and identify practical solutions to SRGBV.

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Tactic 3: Conduct School-Based Awareness Campaigns

Activity 1: Conduct school-based activities, such as debates, art competitions and skits, involving teachers, students and parents to address SRGBV and promote gender equality.

Activity 2: Display visual materials (e.g. posters and banners) in schools and public spaces promoting key messages of non-violence and inclusivity.

Objective 2
Strengthen Institutional and Community Capacity to Prevent and Respond to SRGBV

This objective aims to build the capacity of students, schools, teachers, parents and communities to effectively prevent and respond to SRGBV incidents. Strengthening institutional and community capacity ensures that schools have the tools, resources and structures in place to create safe and inclusive learning environments.

Tactic 1: Strengthen Capacity of School Personnel

Activity 1: Conduct training for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel (e.g. cleaners and security staff) on the Teacher Code of Conduct, reporting and referral mechanisms as well as gender-sensitive teaching practices and non-violent disciplinary methods. This will include practical guidance on how to prevent and respond to SRGBV incidents, as well as understanding the Teacher Code of Conduct.

Activity 2: Develop a training manual for schools, outlining best practices for handling SRGBV cases and creating a non-violent, supportive school environment.

Tactic 2: Establish Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments

Activity 1: Conduct safety audits in schools to assess both physical and psychosocial environments, involving students, teachers, parents and community members in the process. These audits will identify risks related to SRGBV, serving for developing the targeted SBCC interventions through development of action plans to improve school safety, including infrastructure improvements/design and enhanced supervision. Safety audits can be implemented by MBSSE and its partners with engagement of school community.

Activity 2: Conduct accessibility audits in schools to identify and address physical and communication barriers for children with disabilities.

Activity 3: Develop and distribute accessible materials (e.g., braille, large print and audio formats) for awareness campaigns.

Activity 4: Engage students and school personnel in the creation/design and operation of safe spaces within schools, where students can confidentially report SRGBV incidents and receive support from trained staff, including counsellors, and peer mentors. Organize regular feedback sessions to ensure safe space meet evolving needs.

Tactic 3: Implement Community-Based Monitoring and Engagement

Activity 1: Establish community-based monitoring systems that involve parents, local leaders and community organizations in overseeing the safety of schools. These systems will encourage community members to actively engage in ensuring schools are safe and that SRGBV incidents are addressed promptly.

Activity 2: Organize parent and community workshops to raise awareness about SRGBV, the importance of creating safe schools, and the role parents and community leaders can play in prevention and response.

Objective 3

Ensure Sustained Commitment to SRGBV Prevention Through Policy Enforcement and Stakeholder Engagement

To create lasting change, the SRGBV SBCC strategy will advocate for the enforcement of existing SRGBV policies, the development of new policies where necessary and sustained engagement with key stakeholders. This will ensure that SRGBV prevention and response efforts are integrated into broader institutional frameworks and that all actors remain committed to the cause.

Tactic 1: Enforce Policy

Activity 1: Government agencies, including MBSSE and Ministry of Gender, to work together with civil society organizations, and international partners for the strict enforcement of SRGBV-related policies at both national and school levels

Activity 2: Organize high-level stakeholder meetings and forums to discuss policy gaps, propose reforms and ensure that SRGBV policies are aligned with global standards, such as the "Safe to Learn" framework.

Tactic 2: Strengthen Reporting and Referral Systems

Activity 1: Develop and implement clear, accessible and confidential reporting systems within schools, ensuring that students are aware of how to report SRGBV incidents and that teachers and administrators are trained to respond appropriately. Provide a digital reporting platform or hotline that students can utilize to report SRGBV incidents. This activity will align with national efforts to improve reporting mechanisms, ensuring consistency with existing national guidelines and protocols.

Activity 2: Collaborate with child protection, healthcare and social services to ensure that SRGBV survivors have access to medical, shelter, police, legal aid, financial and psychosocial support. Establish linkages between referral pathways that connect schools with local service providers and authorities, such as the Family Support Unit (FSU) and One Stop Centres. This will ensure that SRGBV cases are handled sensitively and in accordance with legal and national frameworks, contributing to the strengthening of existing referral systems.

Tactic 3: Engage Stakeholder for Sustainability

Activity 1: Engage a broad range of stakeholders—including teachers, students, parents, local leaders, government officials and NGOs—in ongoing dialogues about SRGBV prevention and response. These dialogues will be used to build collective ownership of the issue and ensure sustained commitment to implementing the SRGBV SBCC strategy.

Activity 2: Support student-led initiatives, such as SRGBV prevention clubs, where students take on leadership roles in raising awareness and promoting non-violence in their schools.

Activity 3: Engage and partner with traditional and community leaders and influencers to model non-violent and gender-equitable behaviours and speak up and stand against SRGBV for leading dialogue in community.

Activity 4: Partner with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to co-design interventions that are inclusive and reflective of the lived experiences of children with disabilities.

Communication Plan

The communication plan is an integral part of the SRGBV SBCC strategy that is designed to support the achievement of the strategic objectives. By aligning communication objectives with program objectives, this plan ensures that all communication efforts are purposeful, targeted and effective in driving behaviour change and stakeholder engagement.

Communication objectives aligned with SBCC strategy objectives

The communication objectives are directly linked to the strategic objectives of the SRGBV SBCC strategy. Each communication objective supports the achievement of specific program objectives, ensuring that all messaging and outreach activities are aligned with the broader goals of the strategy.

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Strategy Objective – 1

Promote Gender Equality and Non-Violence by Raising Awareness and Addressing Harmful Social Norms Perpetuating SRGBV

Communication Objective 1	*Increase awareness and understanding of SRGBV (causes, impact and signs, policies), child rights and laws prohibiting violence*
Strategies/ tactics	» Awareness campaigns in and out of school, including media campaigns, edutainment interventions, etc. » IEC and audio-visual materials » Trainings and school-based workshops » Community outreach and engagement activities, including integration of participatory methods to ensure community ownership
Target	By 2029, 90% of students, teachers, educational staff and parents in targeted communities will have increased awareness of SRGBV, its causes, consequences and legislation. The target is aligned with the national communication objectives and **should** be further refined and discussed with MBSSE to ensure feasibility and alignment with national education priorities
How to measure	Pre- and post-campaign surveys, FGDs and ongoing community feedback will be collected annually to track changes in awareness and understanding
Communication Objective 2	Promote and reinforce positive non-violent and gender-equitable norms and practices within school communities
	» Positive parenting training/workshop » Teacher training on code of conduct and non-violent methods » Peer-mentoring programmes » School clubs » School and community dialogue
Target	By (2029)
How to measure	Conduct surveys and focus groups every 2 years to track shifts in perceptions of gender norms and SRGBV acceptability

Strategy Objective – 2

Strengthen Institutional and Community Capacity to Prevent and Respond to SRGBV

Communication Objective	*Promote access to trusted, confidential and effective reporting mechanisms for SRGBV*
Objective	90% of students, parents and schools' staff in targeted schools are aware of and are confident that they can access trusted, confidential and effective reporting mechanisms for SRGBV
How to measure	Track the number of SRGBV reports filed, monitor reporting system usage and collect feedback from students and parents annually

Strategy Objective – 3

Ensure Sustained Commitment to SRGBV Prevention Through Policy Enforcement and Stakeholder Engagement

Communication Objective	Foster Stakeholder Engagement on SRGBV Prevention
Objective	Increase engagement of community leaders, teachers and policymakers in SRGBV prevention measures by 20% in the first 3 years, with a target of 50% engagement within 6 years.
	By 2029, 60% of national, district and local education authorities have dedicated resources for SRGBV prevention and response and implement
	By 2029, 60% of schools report implementation of SRGBV, as tracked through policy enforcement records and budget reports
How to measure	Track the number of community leaders, teachers and policymakers trained, assess their involvement in policy enforcement, and gather feedback from local communities annually

- *Students:* Segmented by age, gender and academic levels.
- *Teachers:* Focused on implementing SRGBV prevention strategies and fostering an environment free from violence, including challenging norms around physical punishment and discipline.
- *Parents and Caregivers:* Reinforcing SRGBV messages at home and actively participating in shifting mindsets regarding physical punishment, discipline and non-violent approaches to child rearing.
- *School Principals and Administrators:* Should receive specialized training as school leaders and be included as primary targets for SRGBV prevention and response strategies.
- *Community Leaders:* Influential figures who can lead SRGBV initiatives and work to shift local cultural norms.
- *Policymakers:* Responsible for policy development, enforcement and creating an enabling environment for SRGBV prevention.

Positioning of desired behaviour across targets

The concept of positioning desired behaviour across targets in the context of SRGBV prevention requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond simple knowledge transfer. To design effective behavioural change interventions, we must consider multiple factors, including knowledge and awareness, attitudes and beliefs, social norms, and existing behaviours and practices. These factors interact in complex ways and must be understood in a holistic manner to identify the most impactful and sustainable interventions.Firstly, it is essential to distinguish between knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Knowledge and awareness refer to what individuals' understanding of SRGBV—its causes, effects and legal implications. However, awareness alone does not necessarily lead to behaviour change. Attitudes and beliefs, shaped by cultural, social and personal factors, play a crucial role in influencing how people respond to SRGBV. For example, if someone person believes that physical punishment is an acceptable form of discipline, this attitude may affect their willingness to intervene in or report incidents of SRGBV.

Social norms—both expected and non-expected behaviours—are central to how SRGBV is perpetuated or challenged. These norms, which are often deeply embedded in cultural practices, defines what is considered acceptable behaviour within specific context. When discussing about SRGBV, it is crucial to identify the expected behaviours (e.g., how students are expected to act in a classroom or how teachers should address cases of violence) and non-expected behaviours (e.g., behaviours that go against established norms, such as reporting an incident of SRGBV). Additionally, these norms must be contextualized—different schools, communities or regions may have varying expectations of what is acceptable. In some areas, silence may be a norm due to fear, shame or a lack of trust in reporting systems. The current behaviours and practices of students, teachers, parents and the community must also be carefully examined. For example, when we refer to "remaining silent," we need to clarify whether this means not reporting SRGBV to anyone at all, or simply not reporting to specific channels such as school authorities, peers or family members. By breaking down what "not reporting" means in practice, we can identify gaps in existing reporting mechanisms and address them more specifically.

In addition, barriers to reporting and intervention should be examined. These could include individual barriers, such as fear of retaliation or lack of trust in authorities, as well as structural barriers, such as insufficient training for teachers, inadequate reporting systems, or cultural norms that discourage disclosure. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach, including community education, strengthening legal frameworks and ensuring safe and confidential reporting channels.

Enabling factors and opportunities must also be considered. These include positive social influences that can encourage reporting, such as peer support networks or the presence of role models. By identifying these enabling factors, interventions can focus

By understanding and addressing these factors—knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, social norms, barriers, enabling factors and opportunities—we can design a more targeted, effective strategy for behaviour change.

on amplifying them to support desired behaviours. In addition, opportunities for intervention might include the integration of SRGBV education into school curricula or creating peer-led initiatives that promote gender equality and non-violence.

By understanding and addressing these factors—knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, social norms, barriers, enabling factors and opportunities—we can design a more targeted, effective strategy for behaviour change. The desired behaviour for SRGBV prevention should be specific and measurable, ensuring that interventions are impactful and lead to sustainable change. A nuanced, context-specific approach is critical to addressing SRGBV at the systemic level and shifting harmful behaviours across various target groups, including students, teachers, parents and the broader community.

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Key Messages

Core Message

"Creating a safe, inclusive and supportive educational environment is essential for the well-being and future success of all students in Sierra Leone. We all must work together to end School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)."

Key message themes and audience-specific messaging framework

Key messages have been developed to address the specific concerns, behaviours and priorities of various target audience groups. These messages are strategically aligned with the overarching objectives of the SBCC strategy and designed to foster awareness, challenge harmful social norms, and ensure accountability across different community segments.

Each audience is presented with tailored messages that are specific to their role, context and stage in the behaviour change process. These messages are organized around four core themes:

- Building awareness of SRGBV, child rights and laws prohibiting violence
- Promoting safety and reporting mechanisms in schools
- Challenging social and gender norms and attitudes condoning violence and promoting non-violence and gender-equitable behaviours
- Ensuring accountability and supporting policy enforcement

Message Theme 1:
Building Awareness of SRGBV, Child Rights, Laws, and Code of Conduct

The first message theme focuses on building comprehensive awareness regarding SRGBV, child rights and the laws that prohibit violence in schools. This theme is foundational to the SRGBV prevention strategy, as it aims to ensure that all stakeholders—including students, teachers, school staff, parents and community members—understand the definitions, implications and consequences of SRGBV. In addition, awareness of children's rights and relevant legal frameworks, such as national laws protecting children from abuse, is essential in fostering an environment where SRGBV is not tolerated.

The theme also emphasizes educating individuals about the existing Code of Conduct for students and staff, which outlines acceptable behaviour and sets clear expectations regarding how to prevent and respond to incidents of violence. By linking SRGBV awareness to legal rights and responsibilities, this message helps in creating a culture of accountability within the school system. The ultimate goal is to empower all members of the school community with the knowledge necessary to prevent SRGBV, protect students' rights and promote a safe and respectful learning environment for all.

Message Theme 1:
Promoting Safety and Reporting in Schools

This theme emphasizes the importance of creating a safe school environment where all students feel empowered to report incidents of SRGBV. The key focus is placed on ensuring that confidential reporting mechanisms are trusted and accessible to all students and school staff.

Message Theme Target: Ensure that students, teachers and community members are informed about existing reporting mechanisms and the importance of fostering a safe learning environment.

Students: *"Your safety is a priority. If you witness or experience violence, speak up—confidential support is available."*

- **Content:** Story frames (bullying, sexual harassment and SRGBV) illustrate real-life examples of SRGBV incidents andw encourage students to report incidents to school authorities.
- **Dissemination:** School assemblies, classroom sessions, TikTok challenges (#SafeSchoolsSL), and social media campaigns on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Teachers: *"Your role in reporting and preventing violence is vital. Ensure that your students feel safe to come forward."*

- **Content:** Teacher Code of Conduct story frames highlight teacher's responsibilities and non-violent discipline.
- **Dissemination:** Teacher training sessions and professional development programs.

Community Leaders: *"A safe community starts with supporting students to speak out against violence in schools—be the example."*

- **Content:** Community leaders can use these videos during discussions at community meetings to raise awareness of violence reporting mechanisms.
- **Dissemination:** Community screenings and radio programs in rural areas.

Audience-Specific Messages

Students	*"Your safety is a priority. If you witness or experience violence, speak up—confidential support is available."*
	"By reporting violence, you help create a safer space for yourself and your classmates."
Teachers	*Your role in reporting and preventing violence is vital. Ensure that your students feel safe to come forward."*
	"Take action to stop SRGBV—your school is a safer place when everyone is protected from harm."
Heads of schools/ administrators	*"Implement strong reporting systems to protect students from SRGBV and build trust in your school's leadership."*
	"Your leadership ensures that students and staff feel supported and safe when reporting incidents of violence."
Parents	*"Your child's safety at school depends on open communication and reporting. Encourage your child to speak up if they face violence."*
	"Together, we can create schools where violence is not tolerated—stay engaged with your child's school."
Community leaders	*"A safe community starts with supporting students to speak out against violence in schools—be the example."*
	"Support confidential reporting systems in schools to protect children from violence."
Policymakers	*"Strong reporting systems protect children from violence. Ensure that schools have the resources to support students in reporting SRGBV."*

Message Theme 2:
Challenging Harmful Norms and Promoting Non-Violence

This theme addresses the deeply rooted social norms that perpetuate violence and inequality in schools and communities. The goal is to shift attitudes and behaviours towards non-violence, respect and equality in both school and home environments.

Message Theme Target: Shift social and cultural norms that perpetuate SRGBV through strategic communication and role models.

Students: *"Violence isn't normal—challenge the norms that allow it. Speak out against bullying, harassment and abuse."*

- **Content:** Bullying story frames and posters focus on shifting the mindset of students to reject bullying and SRGBV.

- **Dissemination:** Social media campaigns (TikTok challenges, Instagram and WhatsApp), classroom discussions and school assemblies.

Teachers: *"Discipline doesn't have to be violent—use positive, respectful methods to manage your classroom."*

- **Content:** Corporal punishment story frames educate teachers on the impact of violence and non-violent classroom management techniques.

- **Dissemination:** Teacher workshops and peer mentoring programs.

Parents: *"Physical punishment isn't the only way to discipline your child—learn how non-violent parenting can help your child succeed."*

- **Content:** Posters and social story frames emphasize the negative consequences of physical punishment and promote non-violent parenting.
- **Dissemination:** Community meetings, parent-teacher association (PTA) gatherings.

Audience-Specific Messages

Students	*"Violence isn't normal—challenge the norms that allow it. Speak out against bullying, harassment and abuse."*
	"You can lead by example in shifting school norms towards non-violence."
Teachers	*"Discipline doesn't have to be violent—use positive, respectful methods to manage your classroom."*
	"Take action to stop SRGBV—your school is a safer place when everyone is protected from harm."
Parents	*"Physical punishment isn't the only way to discipline your child—learn how non-violent parenting can help your child succeed."*
	"A respectful, non-violent home helps your child feel safe and confident at school."
Community leaders	*"Challenge harmful norms in your community—be the voice that advocates for safety and respect for children."*
	"Promote non-violence and positive discipline to protect the future of your community's children."
Policymakers	*"Strengthen policies that promote non-violence and challenge harmful norms. National leadership is key to fostering change."*

Message Theme 3:
Ensuring Accountability and Supporting Policy Enforcement

This theme focuses on the need for strong enforcement of SRGBV policies and the accountability of all stakeholders, from school leaders to community members, in creating and maintaining safe, violence-free environments.

Message Theme Target: Reinforce the importance of accountability and the enforcement of policies at all levels, from schools to communities.

Heads of Schools/Administrators: *"Enforce policies that protect students from violence—ensure SRGBV prevention is a priority in your school."*

- **Content:** Posters on the Teacher Code of Conduct reinforce the role of school leadership in policy enforcement.
- **Dissemination:** Posters are displayed in schools and shared via newsletters to administrators.

Policy Makers: *"Strong policies protect students, but strong enforcement ensures real change."*

- **Content:** Public figures and influencers (musicians and athletes) can promote SRGBV messages and support policy enforcement on media platforms.
- **Dissemination:** Press releases, media appearances by policymakers and public service announcements (PSAs) on national TV and radio.

Audience-Specific Messages

Students	*"You have the right to learn in a safe, violence-free environment. Speak out and hold those who hurt others accountable."*
Teachers	*"Be accountable to your students—ensure that school policies against violence are upheld."*
	"Your classroom is a safe space for learning. Uphold the policies that protect your students from SRGBV."
Heads of schools/ administrators	*"Enforce policies that protect students from violence—ensure SRGBV prevention is a priority in your school."*
	"A safe, well-disciplined school is a reflection of strong leadership and accountability."
Parents	*"Your involvement is key to keeping your child safe. Work with the school to make sure they follow up on violence prevention and response."*
Community leaders	*"Lead by example. Strong enforcement of violence prevention policies in schools ensures the future safety and well-being of your community."*
Policymakers	*"Strong policies protect students, but strong enforcement ensures real change. Strengthen your commitment to SRGBV prevention."*
	"Ensure that policies protecting students from SRGBV are implemented effectively—your leadership can change lives."

Media mix and communication channels

The PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned) model will serve as the framework for disseminating the SRGBV messages through various channels. The produced content, including posters and video clips, aligns with each category:

- **Paid Media:** This includes advertisements through television, radio and online platforms, such as social media ads and sponsored content. These paid media channels will ensure wide coverage and allow targeting of specific demographics, including students, teachers, parents and community members.

- **Earned Media:** Media coverage obtained through press releases, media interviews and feature stories about SRGBV prevention will be utilized. This earned media will enhance credibility and provide organic outreach.

- **Shared Media:** Platforms such as social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and community forums will be used to share SRGBV awareness materials, including posters and video clips. These platforms will be shared by schools, community leaders and activists to reach a wider audience.

- **Owned Media:** Materials such as school newsletters, websites and local publications, including posters and video clips, will be distributed to directly engage schools and community members. These owned channels will ensure that information about SRGBV is continuously available and easily accessible.

Dissemination strategy

The dissemination strategy will combine traditional and digital channels to ensure wide and targeted distribution of the SRGBV messages. Key methods include:

- **School and Community Distribution:** Posters and video clips will be displayed in schools, community centres and other public places. Teachers and community leaders will be trained to distribute and discuss these materials during meetings and workshops.
- **Digital and Social Media Campaigns:** Video clips and infographics will be shared on various social media platforms to reach both urban and rural areas. Social media influencers and advocates will help in amplifying the message.
- **Public Events and Campaigns:** The campaign will include public events, radio and TV broadcasts where the messages will be discussed, and the materials will be shared to increase visibility and engagement.
- **School-Based Interventions:** Schools will serve as a central point for distributing posters and engaging students in the campaign. Teachers will incorporate the SRGBV message in their curriculum, while video clips will be shown during school assemblies to educate and raise awareness.

1. Paid Media

- *Social Media Advertising:* Use targeted ads with the produced videos and posters across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok to raise awareness about SRGBV reporting mechanisms.
- *Sponsored Content:* Collaborate with influencers and media outlets to feature content, such as the Teacher Code of Conduct and anti-bullying messages, amplifying their reach.

2. Earned Media

- *Press Releases and Media Relations:* Featuring human interest stories from the produced social story frames in national media outlets, focusing on success stories from schools and communities addressing SRGBV.
- *Media Partnerships:* Collaborate with key radio and television stations to air story frames about corporal punishment, bullying and sexual harassment.

3. Shared Media

- *Social Media Campaigns:* Encourage students, teachers and community leaders to share content through social media platforms using hashtags such as #SafeSchoolsSL. Videos, infographics and stories about SRGBV prevention will be promoted.
- *TikTok Challenges:* Use TikTok challenges to encourage student participation, such as role playing how they would report SRGBV or promote non-violence. Encourage students to create their content based on the bullying and corporal punishment frames.

4. Owned Media

- *Website and Blog:* The MBSSE's website will feature all SRGBV-related materials (videos, posters and success stories) ensuring that they are accessible to all stakeholders.
- *Newsletters:* Monthly newsletters to stakeholders will highlight the produced content, providing continuous engagement on SRGBV prevention.

As an example of how the PESO model works in practice, a social media ad (Paid) promoting a school safety workshop leads to earned media coverage in local newspapers or community radio (Earned). This coverage is then shared widely by students, teachers and parents on social media (Shared), and the event is documented on the Ministry's website (Owned).

Role model/influencer approach

To further amplify the reach of the SRGBV messages, a role model/influencer approach will be utilized. Ambassadors, including public figures, teachers and community leaders, will champion positive behaviours and promote SRGBV messages among their peers and followers. This can be promoted through:

- *Social Media Campaigns:* Ambassadors will share their personal experiences related to SRGBV and call for action using the produced content.
- *Public Appearances:* Public figures will engage in school and community events, reinforcing messages about non-violence and reporting mechanisms.

Implementation timeline

To ensure sustained engagement and effectiveness, the following phases will guide the rollout of the produced content.

Phase 1
(Awareness and Engagement)

- In Phase 1 of the SRGBV SBCC strategy, the focus will extend beyond just public media campaigns, integrating in-school interventions and utilizing existing platforms and groups within schools, parents and the wider community. This comprehensive approach ensures that the strategy reaches a diverse audience, incorporating multiple communication channels and addressing critical needs for both awareness and action.
- *In-School Interventions:* To foster understanding and ownership of SRGBV prevention within schools, we will work closely with teachers, school administrators and student leadership groups. Workshops, training sessions and interactive sessions will be conducted to engage students, teachers and school staff in the awareness process. This includes in-school activities, such as role-playing, peer education and the use of posters and video clips shown during school assemblies. The goal is to ensure that students are not only aware of SRGBV but also feel empowered to act, using the support structures within the school to report incidents and seek help.
- *Incorporating Parent-Community Structures:* Parents and community leaders will be engaged through meetings, workshops and collaborative activities that emphasize the importance of a supportive home and community environment for the prevention of SRGBV. We will also use existing community platforms, such as local radio shows, parent-teacher associations and community gatherings, to disseminate key messages about non-violence, reporting mechanisms and child rights. These platforms will enable the strategy to reach beyond school walls, ensuring that parents are fully aware of the resources and support mechanisms available to them.
- *Student Mechanisms:* Special attention will be given to creating safe spaces within schools for students to share their experiences, ask questions and receive guidance on SRGBV. These safe spaces will also serve as reporting mechanisms where students can confidentially report incidents. Student-led groups, such as peer educators or student councils, will be trained to support the initiative, fostering a peer-driven approach to SRGBV prevention and creating a culture of mutual respect.
- *Advocacy for Resource Allocation:* A key element of this phase will be advocating for the allocation of sufficient resources to support these initiatives. The strategy will work with educational authorities and policymakers to ensure

that adequate funding is available for training, materials and the establishment of reporting systems. Advocacy efforts will emphasize the importance of integrating SRGBV prevention into school curricula, securing the necessary resources for training teachers, and ensuring the availability of support services for victims.

- By integrating these elements, Phase 1 will ensure a comprehensive, school-based community-cantered approach to raising awareness and engaging all stakeholders in SRGBV prevention. This approach will create a foundation for the long-term sustainability and success of the SRGBV SBCC strategy.

Phase 2
(Behaviour Change and Capacity Building)

In Phase 2, the focus will be expanded beyond just teacher training on the Teacher Code of Conduct to ensure a more comprehensive approach to behaviour change that aligns with the core areas of the SRGBV SBCC strategy. While the Teacher Code of Conduct and anti-corporal punishment messages are essential, relying solely on this intervention is limiting. Therefore, additional emphasis is required for further actions to be carried out.

Phase 3
(Sustaining Impact)

Use public figures and influencers to maintain engagement through social media, radio, television and TikTok, reinforcing key SRGBV messages and policy enforcement.

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan outlines the specific activities that will be undertaken to achieve both communication and program objectives of the SRGBV SBCC strategy. This comprehensive roadmap includes timelines, resources, partnerships and responsibilities, ensuring a coordinated and effective rollout of the strategy.

Implementation process

The SRGBV SBCC strategy will be implemented through a phased approach, addressing the program objectives alongside the communication objectives. This ensures a holistic approach that integrates awareness, behaviour change, capacity building and policy enforcement efforts. Each phase will involve collaboration with key partners, allocating necessary resources and continuous monitoring to ensure progress towards the strategic goals.

Presented below is Table 2 capturing the tactics, key activities, timelines, resources, partnerships and stakeholder responsibilities associated with each objective of the SRGBV SBCC strategy.

Table 2: Implementation plan of the SRGBV SBCC strategy

Objective	Tactic	Key Activity	Timeline					Resources Needed	Key Partnerships	Responsible Stakeholders
			2025	2026	2027	2028	2029			
Objective 1 Promote Gender Equitable and Non-Violent behaviours by Raising Awareness and Addressing Harmful Social Norms Perpetuating SRGBV	Launch media campaigns such as "Is Never OK" campaign	Develop and launch mass media campaigns to address social norms that condone violence and specific SRGBV issues such as bullying, violence, etc.						Media production, ad placements, campaign management tools	UNICEF, Local Media Outlets, Ministry of Information	MBSSE, UNICEF
	Community and school dialogues	Organize and facilitate dialogues in schools and communities							Community leaders, FSU, NGOs such as ActionAid	School heads, community leaders, local NGOs
	Integrate SBCC messaging into school curriculum	Develop school-based curriculum materials that integrate SRGBV SBCC messaging						Curriculum development team, instructional materials	MBSSE, Ministry of Gender, Curriculum Development Unit	MBSSE, School Administrators, Teachers
Objective 2 Strengthen Institutional and Community Capacity to Prevent and Respond to SRGBV	Build capacity for teachers and school staff	Train teachers and school staff, provide support materials, reminders and peer-mentorship, etc on SRGBV prevention and gender-sensitive practices; continue with periodic refresher trainings						Training manuals, expert facilitators, venues	Teacher's union, Teaching Service Commission, Ministry of Gender, Plan International	MBSSE, TSC, SLTU, School Heads

Strategy	Activity	Description	Resources	Partners	Responsible
	Develop and promote reporting mechanisms	Establishing confidential reporting systems for SRGBV is important, but SBCC focuses on promoting awareness, educating users and involving stakeholders in co-designing and effectively utilizing these systems. The goal is to build trust, encourage reporting, and improve understanding and participation, rather than just creating the systems	IT infrastructure, hotline services, awareness campaigns	FSU, Ministry of Gender, tech partners, UNICEF, Irish Aid	MBSSE, School Administrators, FSU
	Engage parents and communities in SRGBV prevention	Hold workshops and community dialogues with parents and community members	Workshop facilitators, communication materials, venues	PTAs, CBOs, Plan International, ActionAid	MBSSE, Community Leaders, PTAs
Objective 3 Ensure Sustained Commitment to SRGBV Prevention Through Policy Enforcement and Stakeholder Engagement	Strengthen policy advocacy and enforcement	Advocate for the enforcement of SRGBV-related policies at the national and school levels	Policy briefs, advocacy materials, stakeholder meetings	Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Social Welfare, UNICEF, Irish Aid	MBSSE, Ministry of Gender, National Government
	Conduct stakeholder engagement forums	Organize national and regional forums to engage stakeholders in policy discussions	Venues, communication materials, facilitators	UNICEF, Irish Aid, ActionAid, Oxfam	MBSSE, Ministry of Gender, School Leaders
	Establish MEL framework	Develop a robust MEL framework to assess SRGBV interventions.	Monitoring tools, data collection systems, MEL experts	UNICEF, Ministry of Education, Irish Aid, Plan International	MBSSE, MEL consultants, Policy Makers, NGOs

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The monitoring and evaluation framework is a critical component of the SRGBV SBCC strategy, which is designed to systematically assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the strategy's implementation. This section outlines the approach to tracking progress, evaluating outcomes and ensuring that the strategy achieves its intended goals.

Monitoring and evaluation objectives

The following objectives guide the M&E framework:

- *Monitor Progress:* Continuously track the implementation of activities to ensure alignment with the planned objectives and timelines.
- *Evaluate Impact:* Assess the effectiveness of the strategy in achieving desired outcomes, including changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, which are related to SRGBV.
- *Support Decision-Making:* Provide data-driven insights for timely adjustments to the strategy, ensuring responsiveness to emerging needs and challenges.
- *Ensure Accountability:* Transparently report progress and outcomes to stakeholders, including funders, partners and target communities.

Key indicators

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework includes indicators to assess progress at both the outcome level (derived from objectives) and output level (derived from specific tactics). It also outlines the means of verification and the frequency of data collection for each indicator. Targets will be established following the baseline assessment conducted in the initial stage of implementation.

Outcome			
Output (Derived from objective)	**Indicator**	**Means of verification**	**Data collection frequency**
Outcome 1: Gender equitable and non-violent behaviours are promoted by raising awareness and addressing harmful social norms perpetuating SRGBV	% of students, teachers, education personal, parents and communities who believe that they play a central role in protecting, preventing and responding to SRGBV	Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders	Every 2 years
Outcome 2: Institutional and community capacity to prevent and respond to SRGBV is strengthened.	% of schools that meet at least 3 out of 4 criteria for a functional SRGBV prevention and response mechanism (trained focal person, reporting protocol, referral pathway, awareness activities)	SQAO officer monitoring report	Annually
Outcome 3: Sustained commitment to SRGBV prevention is ensured through policy enforcement and stakeholder engagement	Number of national and district education plans or strategies that include budgeted SRGBV prevention and response actions	Review of National and district education strategic plans and policy	Annually

Output			
Output (Derived from tactic)	**Indicator**	**Means of verification**	**Data collection frequency**
Output 1.1: Nationwide media campaigns on SRGBV are carried out	% of individuals who recall at least one SRGBV prevention messages from at least one channel	KAP survey	Annually
Output 1.2: Peer education programmes on SRGBV are implemented	% of target schools that have implemented at least one peer-led SRGBV awareness session in the last academic term	School activity reorts/ school monitoring visits	Annually
Output 1.3: School-based awareness campaigns on SRGBV are conducted	% of target schools that conducted school-wide SRGBV awareness campaigns involving students and staff in the past academic year	School activity reorts	Annually
Output 2.1: School personnel are trained to build capacity for SRGBV prevention and response	% of trained educators who demonstrate knowledge and application of non-violent, gender-responsive classroom practices	Pre/post training assessments; teacher self-assessment tools	Annually
Output 2.2: Safe and inclusive learning environments are established	% of schools with designated and student-accessible safe spaces compliant with national guidelines	School infrastructure assessments; interviews with students	Annually
Output 2.3: Community-based monitoring and engagement mechanisms for SRGBV are operational	% of students who report confidence in using school-based confidential reporting mechanisms	Student surveys; focus group discussions (FGDs)	Annually
Output 2.2: Safe and inclusive learning environments are established	% of schools with designated and student-accessible safe spaces compliant with national guidelines	School infrastructure assessments; interviews with students	Annually
Output 2.3: Community-based monitoring and engagement mechanisms for SRGBV are operational	% of students who report confidence in using school-based confidential reporting mechanisms	Student surveys; focus group discussions (FGDs)	Annually
Output 3.1: SRGBV-related policies are enforced at national and school levels	Number of multi-stakeholder policy dialogue events conducted to review, align, or advocate for SRGBV-related policies with national and international standards	Event reports; meeting minutes	Annually
Output 3.2: Reporting and referral systems for SRGBV are strengthened	Number of SRGBV cases referred from schools to appropriate services through formal reporting and referral protocols	Case management logs; GBVIMS+	Annually
Output 3.3: Stakeholder engagement mechanisms for sustained SRGBV prevention are established and maintained	Number of community-based SRGBV prevention initiatives led or co-led by stakeholders (e.g., student clubs, OPDs, religious leaders) conducted in the reporting period	SRGBV coordination hub	Binanulaly

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection method	Description
Surveys	» Regularly administered to students, teachers, parents and community leaders to measure changes in awareness, attitudes and behaviours » Aligned with indicators such as knowledge of SRGBV prevention and confidence in reporting mechanisms
Focus group discussions	» Conducted with key stakeholders to gain qualitative insights into the effectiveness of interventions and identify areas for improvement
School records and reporting mechanisms	» Analyse data on SRGBV incidents reported, actions taken and school compliance with policies
Media monitoring	» Track reach, engagement and sentiment of media campaigns through digital analytics, audience surveys and content analysis
Training evaluations	» Assess pre- and post-training knowledge and skills of educators, school personnel and community leaders

Data analysis

Collected data will be analysed to identify trends, measure progress against the indicators and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the strategy. The analysis will focus on understanding the impact of specific activities, identifying successful approaches and highlighting areas where adjustments may be needed.

Reporting and feedback

Regular reporting

- **Annual Reports:** A comprehensive periodic evaluation of the strategy, including detailed analysis of all key indicators, success stories and lessons learned.

Stakeholder feedbacks

Regular feedback loops will be established with all stakeholders, including students, educators, parents, community leaders and policymakers. This feedback will be used to refine the strategy and ensure that it remains relevant and effective in achieving its goals.

Learning and Adaptation: The M&E framework is designed to be adaptive, with findings from the M&E activities used to inform ongoing strategy development. This ensures that the SRGBV SBCC strategy remains responsive to changing circumstances and continues to effectively address the needs of the communities it serves.