



step five

create a healthy
and supportive
environment

activities

monitoring checklist

tools

step five



Introduction

Children's ability to learn and grow is dependent on how their environment responds to some of their basic needs. They need to feel physically and emotionally protected, respected and valued. A *Good School* creates a healthy environment within which children's dignity is protected and they feel safe enough to explore and experiment with ideas and develop to their potential.

A vibrant and a well-maintained school has a physical environment that everyone can feel proud of. This means the school is well maintained, the compound is cared for and the toilets are clean and separated by sex. It also means the classrooms are painted or decorated and there are places for children to play and rest. This does not take a lot of money. It just needs imagination and the commitment to invest energy in your school.

A *Good School* also creates a safe psychological environment that ensures children feel emotionally protected. This means the school protects them from sexual violence, corporal punishment and bullying, and that boys and girls are treated equally. It means that students are given the opportunity to express what is important to them, participate in the decision-making processes at school and discover their self-confidence.

Step Five



Overview of Step Five

- In Step Five, a core group of key stakeholders will continue a learning process that is designed to help you create a healthier learning environment at your school.
- You will establish various mechanisms for students to share their opinions and ideas about their experience.
- Your school will develop specific ways of protecting children from violence.
- You will involve the community in creating a more conducive environment for learning.

Objectives of Step Five

- To examine how the physical and psychological environment of your school influences the way learning happens at your school and to compare it with the ideas proposed in the Toolkit
- To explore how every member of your school, including children, can have a voice in creating a healthy learning environment at your school
- To identify ways in which you can improve the school's learning environment

Reading

- *What is a Good School?* pages 21-29
- *What is a Healthy Learning Environment?* cartoon booklet

Tools

In Step Five you will find the following tools to help you improve your school's learning environment:

- A sample bullying policy
- A sample sexual violence policy
- A Childrens' Referral Directory form
- A sample School Pride Day invitation
- A sample School Pride Day request letter

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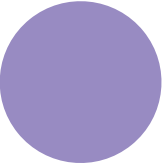
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activities




The activities in Step Five are designed to help you address both the physical and psychological environment of your school. There are suggested activities for recognising and ensuring that the opinions and feelings of students count in your school. There are also suggested activities for creating and enforcing policies on sexual violence and bullying and for identifying various resources in your community that can help children in times of special need. Finally, there are some suggested activities to help you focus on the physical environment of your school.

step five

5.1

Learning Process: Creating a Healthy Learning Environment



The series of training modules on pages 140 in the *Learning* section is designed to help your school think about and act upon ways in which you can improve both the physical and psychological environment of your school. The training will help you tackle practical, real-life issues that the school faces on a daily basis with the aim of developing responses that create healthy learning conditions.

You can use these modules in many different ways. If possible, plan to have a short one or two-day training and go through all the sessions in Section 4 of the *Learning* section. Alternately, you can choose to do them over two weekends or one day per week for a month. Additionally, you can pick and choose the modules you need based on the particular activity you are about to do. This way you can conduct trainings during the week, for a few hours an afternoon.

Recognise Students' Voices

5.2



A child's voice is her or his unique expression of how they see, feel and understand their world. When children are given the opportunity to express what is important to them, they discover their potential. If children's voices are not valued, they withdraw and learn to become passive. The belief that nothing they say or do matters can lead to long-term consequences including generating apathy.

Establishing a healthy psychological environment at your school means fostering children's voices. They need the opportunity to participate in meaningful ways in how their school is run to develop their skills as decision makers, leaders and democratic citizens. Practical mechanisms, such as student councils, student magazines or prefect bodies are some ways of supporting students' voices.

The following activities are suggestions to help you get started in fostering children's voices at your school.

5.2 a

Suggestion Box



Students often have great ideas about how to improve things but no way to express them to the school authority. Likewise, when they notice a problem, they often feel they have no way of reporting it. A suggestion box allows students to write their idea or problem down, knowing that the administration will read it and take action if possible. A suggestion box also allows for anonymity—often students do not want anyone to know their suggestion.

Place a box in an easy to reach location and be sure to check it on a regular basis. Most importantly, take the students' suggestions seriously. When you take action based on a suggestion or an idea, be sure to let the school know. Announce it at assembly or in classes that the new action is being taken because of a student's suggestion. This helps students feel empowered and lets them know that their opinions are valued.

5.2 b

Idea Board



Another way of enabling students to share their opinions and thoughts is through an idea board. This can be a notice board or simply a space on the wall in the classroom where students can write their ideas. You can provide small scraps of paper that students can write on and stick to the wall. Or, use a designated area on the blackboard and allow students to write on it with chalk.

The idea board is different from the suggestion box in that it creates momentum for discussion. Other students see what is posted and share thoughts with their classmates. They also get inspired to bring up ideas of their own. As with the suggestion box, be sure that the administration checks the board on a regular basis and that the ideas are taken seriously.

Art and Music

5.2 c

In addition to seeking out ways for students to share their ideas and opinions, it is equally important to allow them opportunities for self-expression. Art and music are natural ways to do this. Allow time for students to make crafts, create poems and songs, to dance and drum, or to draw and write. You can also seek creative ways to use art and music in your everyday classes. For example, help students learn to add through the number of times you beat a drum, or have students write and perform a song about an event in history.



Essay, Debate and Drama

5.2 d

In Step Two, activities were suggested for school-wide reflection about a *Good School*, including essay contests, drama and debates. These are by no means restricted to a one-time only use. You can continue using these activities in individual classes to encourage student participation and creativity. English, math, science, social studies—all these classes can lend themselves to an assignment that uses drama, debate or essay contests. Refer back to Step Two for more ideas—there is no limit on what students' imaginations can come up with!



5.2 e Student Magazine or Newsletter



If your school has the resources, encourage students to start their own magazine in which they report what's going on, publish poems, stories or opinion pieces. It could be part of an assignment for English class or a student-led activity. You could print a limited number of copies and post them on the notice board if you do not have the resources to print enough copies for school-wide circulation.

5.2 f Student Council



Elect a student council that represents students' views to the school management. They could take the initiative and gather views on current issues and advocate for them to be addressed. For example: a proposed parent's day, teacher absenteeism, state of sanitary facilities, etc. Initially the Students' Committee could serve this function, but eventually it could be an independent mechanism for students to express their priorities.

Address Student Safety

5.3

Sexual violence is very common in our school system. Some students are coerced or forced into sex by teachers in exchange for school fees or better marks. Others face sexual harassment and teasing about their physical development from classmates. A *Good School* has zero-tolerance for this type of behaviour and has mechanisms in place that protect its students from such victimisation.

Write Sexual Violence and Bullying Policies

5.3 a

A *Good School* has policies and mechanisms that protect children from abusive behaviours, such as bullying and sexual violence, particularly against girls. These measures send a clear signal to students that the school values them and will not tolerate abuse of its members.

Your school should have very clear policies to protect children against sexual violence and bullying—policies that are known by all members of the school community and are seen to be enforced.

Before writing these policies, it is a good idea to review the trainings on pages 53-57 and 62-72 in the *Learning* section, which focus specifically on sexual violence and bullying. You may even wish to re-conduct the sessions for those who will be drafting your policies so that everyone has a very clear understanding of the issues.

You may wish to write the first draft of the policy with your committees and then circulate the draft policy to other stakeholders for comments. However you choose to do it, be sure to get input from students, as they are most affected by these abuses.

Write two different policies, one for sexual violence and one for bullying. When you write your policies, keep them short and to the point. We suggest that you include the following:

- a definition of the issue being addressed (e.g. bullying is...)
- the school's stance on the issue
- appropriate measures for students or others to report the issue
- appropriate responses of teachers and the administration to address incidences of the issue
- disciplinary action/consequences to be taken against perpetrators
- confidentiality protection for the person making a complaint

The written policies do not have to be long documents. A simple one to two-page concise statement that is understandable by everyone will serve the purpose well. Refer to the sample policies on pages 30-31 for guidance on what to include.

After you have written your policies and officially adopted them, be sure to inform the entire school community about them. Announce the policies in each class and during a school-wide assembly. Read and explain the policies to students and encourage questions. You may even wish to modify the training sessions on sexual violence and bullying and conduct them in your classrooms to help students have a deeper understanding of the issues.

We also suggest that you send copies of the policies home to parents. If this is not possible, you can read the policies to them during a parent's day meeting and encourage questions and discussion about the policies.

Create a Childrens' Referral Directory

5.3 b

Sometimes situations arise that are beyond the experience or expertise of your school staff members. A student may be misbehaving because of violence at home or another complicated reason. Sometimes, you may need to find someone outside of the school or home environment who can support the child.

A *Good School* is connected to and part of the community in which it operates. Thus learning about services offered for children in your community and creating a referral directory that contains all the contact information about such services is a valuable tool in your effort to help students have a safer educational experience. A referral directory is a list of the people, institutions and services in your community that are concerned about children. It includes the contact information, address and details of services offered. Such resources might include:

- Religious institutions
- Social workers
- Probation officers
- Child Protection Units within the police department
- Local, national and international NGOs operating in your area
- Rape crisis centres or counsellors
- Health workers
- VCT counsellors or HIV/AIDS experts
- Community volunteers
- Local Council Leaders

Follow these few steps to set up your referral directory:

Call a meeting with your Community, Teachers' and Students' Committee members. Brainstorm a list of all the available services in the community for children. Remember that they can be professional services, such as government probation officers, or they can be informal contacts, such as a local person

who may have received training or who is particularly aware and sensitive about children's issues.

Keep in mind that even if the community does not have any formal services, there may be an informal system of support for children through social networks. List some names of individuals that children might rely on for support or advice (e.g. a priest or a mufti).

After the group brainstorm, assign one person to ensure the information is collected and summarised in a way that is useful to everyone. You could divide the list up among committee members or assign it as a task to a few members to visit each service provider and collect the necessary details for the referral list, including name, location, telephone number, name of contact person, hours of operation, types of services offered, etc. Use the Children's Referral Directory Form on page 33 to guide you.

During the visit, explain your involvement in the *Good School* project and that you are interested in identifying resources and creating relationships to help children in your school who may be experiencing problems. After talking to the appropriate person, try to determine the quality of the services they are likely to offer. Try to be sure they are sympathetic to children and open to working with you. If not, do not include them on your referral list. If you appreciate what they are doing, ask if you can include them on the referral list for your school. As you are contacting different organisations, ask if they know of similar services in their area and get details.

After visiting everyone on your list, complete the Children's Referral Directory Form (see page 33). Post it in your staff room and provide copies to people who will use it, such as your school counsellor, head teacher, Student Court, etc.

Use the list carefully and as a last resort—when the school cannot handle the issue. Make sure you update it periodically to ensure that the information on it is accurate and current.

NOTE: After meeting people in your community who are concerned about children's issues, you may wish to bring them together for a short training or an informal meeting to talk about how you can all work together. Be sure to invite the members on your referral directory to any school events you have and consider selecting some to serve as guest speakers to help your students learn about their work.


Improve the Physical Environment 5.4



The physical condition of a school has a significant impact on how children feel and learn. It expresses the standards that the administration holds important and what value it places on the dignity of the members of that environment. Everyone wants to feel proud of how their school looks and to feel safe and comfortable while they are at school.

Improving the physical environment of a school is often one of the highest priorities of stakeholders. But often, people feel overwhelmed by how much needs to be done and the lack of resources to address problems. However, there are many things that any school can do to improve its environment with the resources that are available. If you focus on your assets and take the time to identify the resources you do have, you can reclaim your dignity instead of remaining dependent on external resources. If you stay positive and get creative, you can make a significant difference on how your school looks, and in turn, how all the teachers and students feel. The following activities will help you assess what needs to be done and how you can do it.

5.4 a Survey the Physical Compound



The first step to improving your physical environment is by taking a survey to see which areas need improvement. Use the survey form on page 34 to review the various components of your school.

In the first column, list the positive features of that component. For example, if you are looking at your classrooms, a positive feature might be the well-maintained blackboards. In the next column, list all the areas that need improvement. For example, the walls need to be plastered, the room looks plain and could use colour or posters. In the next column, list any resources you can think of that might help you to tackle the items you want to fix in that area. These might include a few cans of paint, money in the budget to buy plaster, some cement to fix the floor, etc. In the final column, list skills and qualities that might help you in the area you are trying to improve. For example, you might have an artist in the community who is willing to donate time to paint a mural; a teacher might also have some carpentry skills; a board member might be very good at negotiating and bargaining for materials. Don't forget students can also be major resources.

As you are working on this task, be sure to ask students and other stakeholders to help you in the process. You might be surprised by the ideas they think up. Everyone at your school can also be encouraged to donate their time and labour to improve the environment, collectively.

Once you have identified areas that need improvement and the various assets you have, it is time to think about what you can actually do. Go through your survey form and identify items that can be addressed, even in small ways. Perhaps you can't finish the entire project, but you can do a part of it, which will help improve your environment. Following are a few ideas that can help get you started.

Things you can do without money:

Clean

Keeping your compound clean is very important to keeping your environment beautiful. Here are some ideas:

- **Manage rubbish.** Be sure to pick up rubbish every day from the compound and make rubbish bins or piles so that all rubbish is in the same place and

burned or disposed of properly. Remember, for the safety of your students and staff, don't burn plastic trash.

- **Consider composting trash that is natural.** Extra food stuffs, such as peels from potatoes or bananas or rotten fruits or vegetables can be disposed of in a designated place. When it is mixed with the soil and left to decompose, it becomes a very good fertilizer for your school garden (or any other green area in the community).
- **Consider recycling.** Set up containers or areas where you can collect items like plastic bags, water bottles or other reusable items. You can either create ways to reuse the items in school or locate a local organisation that collects recyclable materials.
- **Sweep and organise classrooms every day.** This means keeping books in order and in one place in the classroom, straightening up and cleaning desks, sweeping the floors and walls, cleaning dusters and blackboards and throwing rubbish in its proper place. You can hold contests for the smartest class on a weekly, monthly or per term basis.
- **Clean the latrines.** In many schools, students are afraid to go to the toilets and often improvise by going to the field to avoid using them. If you can't afford to cement or paint them, there are still many things you can do to make them clean and safe. Clean them every day. If possible, provide covers for the latrine holes. These can be made with scraps of wood or iron sheets. Covering the toilets keeps flies from spreading germs and keeps bats from entering the dark places inside. Make sure there are separate toilets for boys and girls and that there are doors, curtains or other ways to maintain privacy.
- **Facilitate sanitation.** If you are unable to provide sanitary items for girls who are menstruating, be sure to at least provide a private place where they can have access to soap and water that is near the latrines.
- **Provide water for washing hands and drinking.**

Decorate

There are many ways to help decorate your school. Here are some ideas:

- **Display students' work on the walls.** This can be artwork, drawings or class assignments that are especially well done. Hanging up students' work signals to them that they are special and important.
- **Create colourful posters for the classroom to display classroom rules, school mottos or standards.**

- Use naturally found materials (wood, banana bark, etc.) to make decorations for your classroom.
- Paint or draw murals on visible walls.
- Make banners out of scraps of material or burlap sacks and hang them in your classroom.

Fix up the compound

Keeping the area surrounding the school attractive and safe provides a positive impression to newcomers and a feeling of security and comfort to school members. You can do this by:

- Planting trees, flowers and grass
- Cultivating a garden
- Upholding your standards by posting small signposts or posters with relevant school messages, such as 'no littering', 'respect the environment', etc.
- Provide designated places for children to play and rest. This can involve clearing an area of the compound for a pitch or cleaning up space under trees so students have a place out of the sun to relax.

Secure

Many stakeholders are concerned about the security of their school and feel overwhelmed when they think about the costs of fencing the compound, however there are alternatives, such as:

- Creating a live fence by planting thorny bushes around the perimeter of your school to prevent people from entering or leaving. If you have a little money, fence only the most troublesome parts to prevent theft, vandalism and trespassing.
- Identify the high-risk areas, where students may be vulnerable to sexual violence, bullying or places where they might be tempted to make poor choices. These are often hidden places, areas with poor light or out of sight from the classrooms or offices, behind bushes or in other secluded areas. Identify ways to make these places safer, perhaps by trimming bushes, blocking access, or increasing patrols by the guard or a teacher.

School Pride Day

5.4 b



Once a term or once a year, hold a School Pride Day. This is a special day when the entire community can come together to participate in cleaning up the compound, organising the rooms, decorating or any other task that will enhance your school's environment.

If you have resources, use them on this day to paint, create murals, even plant flowers and grass. Involve as many community members as you can. You can use or adapt the sample invitation letter on page 36. You can also ask people to donate any resources they might have. For example, a garden project might have a few extra trees, and a hardware store might be willing to donate a can of paint. Refer to the sample request letter on page 37 as a way to ask your community members for donations.

It's a good idea to assign a teacher and student to be in charge of the day and to organise the donations and set up the program. Decide which activities can be accomplished with the resources you have. Think positive! Instead of focusing on the big things that require a lot of money that you don't have, focus on the things that you do have and that you can accomplish. For example, perhaps you will be able to plant some trees, paint a mural and dig a rubbish pit. When everyone arrives, assign different people to different duties. The idea is to bring the community together to feel invested in and proud of the school.

When you are setting your program, you can reserve time for cleaning and for celebrating. You can have students perform dramas, dances and music and even display their school work in an attractive way. Give a few short speeches to thank everyone and inspire them to stay involved. You can serve food or snacks by asking people to donate some small foods or the time to prepare and cook.





monitoring checklist

step five

Activity 5.1: Learning Process: Creating a Healthy Learning Environment

Plan for and conduct trainings

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Activity 5.2: Recognise Students' Voices

Institute a suggestion box

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Create an idea board

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Use art, music, debate, drama

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Start a student magazine or newspaper

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Form a student council

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Activity 5.3: Address Student Safety

Write a sexual violence policy

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Write a bullying policy

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Introduce sexual violence and bullying policies

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Meet with committees to brainstorm Children's Referral Directory

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Create Children's Referral Directory and post/copy

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Activity 5.4: Improve the Physical Environment

Survey the physical compound

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Implement ideas for improving the school environment

Date completed: _____

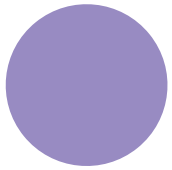
Comments: _____

Hold a School Pride Day

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____





tools

5.3 a

Sample Bullying Policy

Introduction

Bullying occurs when a student is repeatedly targeted for negative treatment by other students or a teacher and when those actions are done specifically to harm or intimidate the student. Actions may include physical harm, such as beating or forcing a student to do painful things against their will. They may include emotional harm, such as threatening, intimidating, teasing, or excluding the student from a group. They may also include economic harm, such as stealing money, possessions or school work, or psychological harm, such as forcing the student to do acts that s/he doesn't want to do, such as cheating, lying or stealing. The bullying is often persistent and often gets worse over time.

- a. Our school does not tolerate bullying.
- b. Any person who has experienced such acts while on school property or has witnessed such acts being performed on others should report such misconduct to the head teacher directly or to another teacher who will report it to the head teacher.
- c. The head teacher will take all reports seriously and will investigate promptly and to the fullest extent possible.
- d. Any person who wishes to report an incident of bullying is promised confidentiality.
- e. If the incident requires that others be informed about it, that decision will be made with the reporter's knowledge.
- f. Students who are found guilty of bullying will face strict disciplinary measures as per the school Code of Conduct.



Sexual violence towards children is any act or interaction in which a person exploits the child's sexuality for his or her own gratification. It may involve force or coercion but can also involve manipulation. The violence may involve unwanted sexual comments or advances or an attempt to obtain a sexual favour. Such acts include, but are not limited to, teasing, touching or kissing without consent, rape, attempted rape, unwanted sexual advances, including demanding sex in return for favours.

Our school is committed to providing a safe and healthy place for students to learn and teachers to work. As such, sexual violence, harassment and other sexual misconduct is prohibited by students, teachers, staff members, board members and any other person visiting the school. As a result:

- a. Any form of sexual relationship between a teacher and a student is forbidden.
- b. Teachers are forbidden from asking students for personal favours that are not related to their duties as a teacher.
- c. Teachers are forbidden from promising or accepting any favours in return for better marks.
- d. All stakeholders, including students, have a duty to report sexual violence to a teacher or the head teacher.
- e. Adults have the additional responsibility to be vigilant in protecting children from sexual violence.

Any person who has experienced such acts while on school property is encouraged to report such misconduct to the head teacher, who will take all reports seriously and in confidence and will investigate promptly and to the fullest extent possible.

Teachers or students who are alleged to commit any act of sexual violence will receive notice of the allegations against them and will have a fair hearing in front of the disciplinary committee. Prompt and appropriate disciplinary action, including due process protections for the persons alleged to have perpetrated the offence, will be followed.

Our school has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence. Any person who is found guilty of sexual violence will be dismissed from the school. Legal and

criminal action shall be taken if deemed necessary and offending teachers shall be reported to the Ministry of Education and Sports without exception.

If it is within your power, you may also want to include the following provision in your policy:

Individuals who have previously been convicted of sexual assault or rape are not permitted to teach at our school. Before the employment of any teacher, we will review a teacher's records for incidents of sexual abuse, including inquiring with prior employers.

Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of any student who has reported any act of sexual violence. In addition, while the investigation is ongoing, the student shall be placed in a classroom separate from the accused. Appropriate measures shall also be taken to ensure that any victim/survivor of sexual violence is given medical and psychological care as needed.

Organisation:	Contact person:
Location/Address:	Phone No:
Services Offered:	Comments:

Organisation:	Contact person:
Location/Address:	Phone No:
Services Offered:	Comments:

Organisation:	Contact person:
Location/Address:	Phone No:
Services Offered:	Comments:

Organisation:	Contact person:
Location/Address:	Phone No:
Services Offered:	Comments:

Organisation:	Contact person:
Location/Address:	Phone No:
Services Offered:	Comments:

5.4 a

Physical Survey Form

Area	Positive Features	Improvement Needed	Potential Resources	Skills and Qualities
Classrooms (Inside)				
Classrooms (Outside)				
School building (roof, gutters, etc)				
Toilets				
Security				
Compound (In general)				
Compound (Pitch)				

Area	Positive Features	Improvement Needed	Potential Resources	Skills and Qualities
Decoration				
Offices				
Teachers' quarters				
Staff room				
Eating areas				
Sick bay				
Rubbish				
General cleanliness				
Other				

5.4 b Sample School Pride Day Invitation

School Pride Day Invitation

_____ School

invites you to our

SCHOOL PRIDE DAY

on

Please join us for a day of work, fun and celebration! The entire school community will join together to help clean and decorate our school. In addition, there will be entertainment by the students and exhibits of their school work!

Join us! After all, it's your school, too!

School Pride Day Sample Request Letter

5.4 b



Dear: _____,

Greetings from _____ School!
We hope this letter finds you well.

We are writing today to tell you about an exciting event. As you know, our school is working very hard to create a better learning environment for children and to be a place the entire community can be proud of.

As such, on _____ we are holding a School Pride Day. This is a day where everyone in the school community is coming together to help clean up our school, decorate it and celebrate how smart it is.

We are asking if anyone in the community has any resources that they can donate to help us improve our compound. We are looking for any materials, such as paint, nails, iron sheets, sand, cement, flowers, grass, trees—anything at all that might be used to help make our school more beautiful. Even small contributions would be most appreciated.

Additionally, if you don't have any resources, perhaps you have a special skill or talent that you can donate for the day. Please let us know if you can donate a day of labour to paint or construct or make bricks. Perhaps you are an artist or a craftsman who can help decorate the school. Please inform us of your special talents!

Please contact _____ at the school to arrange for your donation. The number is _____.

We thank you so much for helping to make _____
School a *Good School!* After all, it's your school, too!

Very sincerely yours,

Head Teacher

Overview of Step Five

- In Step Five, a core group of key stakeholders will continue a learning process that is designed to help you create a healthier learning environment at your school.
- You will establish various mechanisms for students to share their opinions and ideas about their experience.
- Your school will develop specific ways of protecting children from violence.
- You will involve the community in creating a more conducive environment for learning.



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