



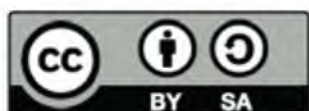
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Connect with Respect: Preventing gender-based violence in schools

Implementation research on the Connect with Respect programme for the prevention and management of school-related gender-based violence in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia

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Acronyms

AI	Artificial intelligence
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil society organization
CwR	Connect with Respect
DEBS	District education board secretaries
DHS	Demographic and health survey
EGVS	End Gender Violence in Schools
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
KII	Key informant interview
LSE	Life Skills Education
LSHE	Life Skills and Health Education
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
O³	Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future
PPS	Probability proportional to size
PTA	Parent-teacher association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
ToT	Training-of-trainers
UCL	University College London
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VACS	Violence Against Children and Youth Survey
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa

Executive Summary

Background

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), a profound violation of children's rights, reflects entrenched inequitable beliefs and attitudes. To combat this, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and partners published global guidance in 2016 to support countries in recognizing, preventing, and addressing SRGBV through holistic, school-centred approaches.

Building on global collaboration with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and other stakeholders, UNESCO developed the Connect with Respect (CwR) classroom programme initially for Asia-Pacific teachers to address SRGBV and cultivate respectful relationships among learners.

Adapted for Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), the CwR programme, which seeks to both prevent SRGBV and foster respectful, gender-equitable learning environments, was then piloted in Eswatini, Tanzania, and Zambia (2019-2020). The analysis of the pilot showed improved peer relationships and enhanced learner awareness and skills in help-seeking, with its success leading ministries of education in Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia along with additional countries to integrate core aspects of the programme into existing sexuality education frameworks. Adapting delivery methods to meet local contexts and educational needs effectively, the programme is now implemented in 11 ESA countries,¹ including Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia.

Study purpose and scope

The purpose of this study was to understand how the CwR programme is implemented in different countries and different contexts by examining the specific cases of Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. Findings from the study were then used to inform recommendations to enhance delivery, effectiveness, and sustainability of the CwR programme across all implementation countries.

Methodology

The study used qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data from 96 schools and 1,152 learners across the three countries. A ceded sample of 12 learners per school was selected from grades 5-7 in upper primary, grades 8-9 in junior secondary, and grade 10-12 in upper secondary. Quantitative data was collected through a learner survey and key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders involved at both policy and implementation levels of the CwR programme, while qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) with learners and KIIs with stakeholders involved at both policy and implementation levels of the CwR programme. The qualitative and quantitative data was then triangulated to cross-validate insights and enhance the robustness of the findings in this report.

Limitations

Limitations included unexpected data collection challenges that led to a revised sample size and a 90% response rate. Zambia had a larger sample than Malawi and Tanzania, potentially resulting in more comprehensive data. Additionally, the subjective nature of perceptions, translation issues, and the programme's inconsistent branding across schools may have influenced participant responses. Considering that the study captured participant's perceptions of the programme on their particular school environment and personal or learners' outcomes attributable to the programme, this presented the risk of bias in reporting or identifying the impact based on various factors, such as respondents' understanding and assertiveness or participation in programme activities. This suggests that the programme's impact may be subjective and dependent on how it is referenced within schools.

¹ Botswana, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Findings

Findings indicate varied understanding and implementation of the CwR programme in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. Despite these variations, respondents commonly understand that CwR is a tool for addressing SRGBV and promoting respectful relationships in the school environment. Although embedded within existing school curricula/subjects, and therefore not always explicitly recognized as CwR, learners generally recalled key messages around gender-based violence (GBV) and gender equality. Results further show that CwR-trained teachers had a better understanding of CwR and were more likely to deliver CwR in a manner that is consistent with the programme's design compared to those teachers who were peer-oriented or trained. It was thus concluded that varying understanding affected the depth, consistency of implementation, and impact of CwR, particularly in addressing sensitive issues such as sexual harassment, bullying, and GBV.

Delivery of CwR is contextually adapted at school level in all three countries, with teachers delivering lessons in ways they believe conveys the lesson to learners better and enhances both male and female learners' participation. For instance, the study found that through classroom delivery, teachers encouraged critical reflection on societal norms that perpetuate gender inequalities among learners. The study further established that using methods such as assemblies, sports, drama, gender-sensitive group discussions and special sessions with role models or personal examples enabled learners to understand the emotional and social impact of their actions.

The study revealed that, despite delivery varying from one school to another, across all three countries urban schools leveraged more interactive extracurricular activities such as debates, clubs, special sessions, and learner councils, whereas rural schools often depended on classroom delivery and community involvement. This variation is influenced by exposure to other sources of information that enhance lesson delivery as well as accessibility of the school. For example, some teachers in rural areas stated that limited access (due to lack of internet access) to digital platforms such as YouTube limited their creativity, observing that watching videos on these platforms enhances understanding of topics that may not be fully understood from the teachers' guide.

The study also identified some innovative practices on the delivery of CwR to learners. In Malawi, for instance, some rural schools utilized informal local setups by involving chiefs and women groups to deliver and reinforce CwR beyond the school environment, while in Tanzania and Zambia, learner (student) councils were established to allow learners to participate in school governance, including prevention of SRGBV, leading to increased peer-to-peer education on GBV and better teacher-learner relationships.

On the other hand, difficulty regarding implementation fidelity emerged as a common theme in all three countries, thereby affecting actual delivery in schools, despite the programme's adaptation and integration into the school curricula representing a major step toward sustainability. This is due to a range of systemic, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers, such as large classes in the case of Zambia and rural schools in Tanzania; limited resources, especially teacher guides; high teacher turnover and knowledge gaps in situations where trained teachers do not orient other teachers; insufficient teacher training; cultural resistance by some teachers, parents, and learners; and weak monitoring and accountability systems at school level.

In addition, in terms of policy alignment and integration into national curricula, findings suggest that CwR may not be fully recognized as a standalone concept. Rather, it is perceived as cross-cutting, aligned with existing curricula relating to SRGBV, such as Life Skills and Health Education (LSHE) in Zambia, Life Skills Education (LSE) and Social Studies in Malawi, and social science-related subjects like Civic Education and Religious Education in all three countries. While this alignment has created an enabling environment for the implementation of CwR and possible alignment with existing frameworks and curricula, results suggest that countries are still at different levels of implementation and alignment with the national curricula. In Malawi, for example, an ongoing curriculum review has led to UNESCO recommending a more holistic coverage of topics related to violence prevention, including cyberbullying, consent, privacy, and body integrity. Similarly, efforts are underway in Tanzania and Zambia to ensure full integration and alignment with related subjects, such as LSHE.



Nevertheless, at the outcome level, the study demonstrated that CwR is contributing to positive knowledge, behavioural, and attitudinal shifts within school environments and among learners and teachers. For example, schools have established mechanisms for addressing SRGBV, and learners noted that there is improvement in teacher-learner interpersonal relationships, emphasizing that there is now mutual respect. However, findings also revealed that even though some schools have formal mechanisms for reporting SRGBV, these systems are underutilized by learners due to lack of trust in the systems.

Moreover, although the concept of CwR was reported to have been integrated in broader national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems through other programmes like the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) programme in Tanzania and the LSHE curriculum in Zambia, teachers and some key informants indicated challenges such as weak, inconsistent, or non-existent formal monitoring and accountability mechanisms at school level. For instance, some teachers described using informal verbal updates instead of standardized reporting methods. Since a lack of formal accountability creates an environment likely to compromise implementation fidelity of CwR, routine monitoring and accountability in educational programmes is essential, particularly for helping schools and ministries of education identify gaps and make informed decisions in a timely manner.

Policy and practical recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of CwR, the following recommendations are proposed. They are categorized into policy-level actions that guide systemic change and practical-level actions that support school and community implementation. Each is organized under key thematic areas.

Policy recommendations

These are systemic, structural, or high-level actions requiring national or institutional decisions and resources.

Curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Institutionalize teacher capacity-building: Embed CwR in pre- and in-service training, with regular refreshers to counteract staff turnover as well as keep teachers regularly updated.
- National curricula integration: Continue engaging ministries of education to formally integrate CwR topics (including consent and cyberbullying) in forthcoming curriculum reviews. This must also include training of curriculum developers to ensure they understand the importance of CwR and support its comprehensive consideration in the broader national curriculum and subsequently the delivery and monitoring tools.

Enabling environment (policies/laws)

- Lobby government for local financing: Engage relevant government ministries in all three countries to allocate domestic resources towards the integration and expanded implementation of the CwR programme.

Partnerships and participation

- Strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration: Foster coordinated engagement across education, health, and social welfare sectors as well as communities to pool resources, enhance implementation, and tackle the root causes of SRGBV.

Evidence and data

- Formalize M&E for CwR: Although CwR is not a standalone initiative, it is imperative that its monitoring is effectively nested in existing M&E systems. This formalization must also consider the adaptive nature of CwR implementation at school level. Therefore, M&E indicators must be curated in a way that focuses on capturing implementation fidelity in terms of content and content delivery and be communicated down to all levels of the educational system. Teachers and subnational-level supervisors should be made aware of the indicators, tools, and reporting processes, as well as qualitative monitoring methods, such as learners' participation in decision-making. Additionally, support should be provided to facilitate effective monitoring practices.

Practical recommendations

These are school-level, operational, or implementation-focused actions that can be taken at the programme or local level:

Curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Address the material gaps: Ensure all schools (especially rural) receive adequate teaching and learning materials and sufficient time for interactive learning sessions. This can be achieved by working with different partners that can support additional printing and distribution of materials and by engaging with the school administrators to ensure integration into school curricula, including through the timetable for school activities, which is likely to improve consistent implementation.
- Translate learner handbooks into local languages: Promote inclusivity and comprehension by translating CwR materials into commonly spoken local languages to ensure effective communication and enhance participation from learners.

Introduction

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) encompasses physical, sexual, and psychological violence in and around schools, rooted in power imbalances, unequal access to resources, and harmful gender norms.

Despite growing global awareness, SRGBV remains a critical issue in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), prompting governments and education partners to implement programmes like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) Connect with Respect (CwR), which was originally developed for the Asia-Pacific region. Adapted for the ESA region, the CwR programme, which seeks to both prevent SRGBV and foster respectful, gender-equitable learning environments, was first piloted in Eswatini, Tanzania, and Zambia (2019-2020), and has now been rolled out in an additional eight countries². However, its execution varies across countries, with limited evidence on effective implementation, monitoring, and sustainability strategies. As such, this research was undertaken to investigate implementation fidelity, assessing whether CwR is delivered as intended while adapting to different contexts, by examining the specific cases of Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia between July 2024 and March 2025.

This report presents the findings from the study and provides policy and practice recommendations based on these to enhance CwR implementation.

Regional context: SRGBV in Eastern and Southern Africa

SRGBV is a significant problem in ESA, with 28% of girls and 21% of boys having experienced sexual violence at school in the region, and about 56% of children and young people in Southern Africa and 38% in Eastern Africa having experienced some form of physical violence in school (Global School-based Learner Health Survey, 2020; UNICEF,

2019). These statistics demonstrate that SRGBV remains a pervasive issue, impacting educational outcomes among affected learners in school.

To make schools safe for all learners, ESA countries have implemented various measures to address SRGBV, including developing national policies and guidelines and integrated gender-responsive education practices (UNGEI, 2019). For example, countries like Zambia and South Africa have introduced life skills programmes and teacher codes of conduct to promote safe learning environments and challenge harmful gender norms (UNICEF, 2021; Zambia Ministry of Education, 2019).

Further, global and regional initiatives such as the whole school approach involve all members of the school community in preventing SRGBV, setting minimum standards for safe school environments, training staff, and creating monitoring mechanisms to ensure progress (UNGEI, 2019). The CwR initiative is another significant effort focusing on training teachers to deliver interactive lessons to promote positive gender norms, respectful relationships, and non-violent conflict resolution (UNESCO, 2019).

At regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been instrumental in shaping responses through the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which commits member states to adopt legislation and implement programmes to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) in schools. This includes training for teachers, establishing safe reporting mechanisms, and integrating gender-sensitive curricula (SADC, 2009). The SADC Gender-Based Violence Strategy and Framework of Action (2018-2030) further strengthens this commitment by aligning national responses with global frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Zambia, the End Gender Violence in Schools (EGVS) initiative, launched with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education, implemented a comprehensive scoping study to assess SRGBV and guide a coordinated

² Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

policy and programming response. This included mapping legislation, engaging community stakeholders, and training educators to recognize and address GBV in schools (Heslop et al., 2017).

South Africa has introduced several national programmes, including the National School Safety Framework, a Department of Basic Education initiative designed to address all forms of school violence, with a significant focus on gender-based issues. The framework promotes the creation of school safety committees, the implementation of codes of conduct, and partnerships with civil society to support vulnerable learners (Mutasingwa & Mwaipopo, 2022).

Similarly, civil society organizations (CSOs) such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Gender Links have worked across countries like Lesotho, Malawi, and Namibia to implement school-based interventions, including gender clubs, community dialogues, and capacity building for educators and school management. FAWE's "Tuseme" (Let's Speak Out) programme, for instance, empowers girls through public speaking and advocacy to raise awareness of SRGBV and build peer support systems (FAWE, 2011).

Country context

Prevalence of SRGBV in Malawi

SRGBV remains a widespread and complex issue in Malawi's education system, with numerous studies highlighting its prevalence and impact. Forms of SRGBV include sexual harassment, corporal punishment, bullying, and emotional abuse (Parkes et al., 2016; Samati, 2021). Mwale & Malongo (2019) reported that 66% of secondary school learners in Rumphi District experienced SRGBV, with girls disproportionately affected by sexual harassment from both peers and educators. National data from the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (2016) showed that 42% of girls aged 15-19 have experienced sexual violence, with schools identified as key sites (National Statistical Office and ICF International, 2017). More recent findings from UNESCO (2023) indicate that 10% of school-aged girls report experiencing sexual violence specifically in schools, and one in five girls encounter sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) before the age of 18 (Maida & Khembo, 2021).

Physical and emotional violence are also prevalent, with over 50% of children reporting such experiences, especially verbal and physical punishment for boys and sexual and emotional abuse for girls (UNICEF, 2020). A multi-country study by Lee & Rudolf (2022) found that 70% of Malawian learners experienced at least one incident of SRGBV, with Chikwawa District showing the highest rates due to harmful gender norms and poor school governance. The consequences of SRGBV are severe: Psaki et al. (2017) linked SRGBV to higher absenteeism, school dropout, and lower academic performance among girls. Root causes include patriarchal social norms, weak enforcement of protection laws, and poor teacher training (UNESCO, 2014; Badri, 2014; Samati, 2021). While Malawi has implemented several responses – such as the National Education Sector Plan (MoEST, 2020), Safe Schools Programme, and CwR initiative – challenges remain. Banda (2023) notes that weak enforcement, limited teacher capacity, and stigma against reporting continue to hinder progress, underlining the need for sustained, system-wide action.

To address SRGBV, Malawi has implemented various mitigation measures, including policy reforms, community engagement, and school-based interventions. The government, in collaboration with international organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO, and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), has introduced frameworks to combat SRGBV. Some notable strides include the development of the National Education Sector Plan (MoEST, 2020), which includes gender-sensitive reporting frameworks and policies to ensure safe learning environments; coordinating with international organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNGEI who support national efforts through technical aid and funding; the implementation of the CwR initiative and integration of its content into Life Skills and Health Education (LSHE) (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2021); and the implementation of the Safe Schools Programme, which focuses on community-based approaches, involving parents, religious leaders, and traditional authorities to address deep-seated cultural norms (Academia.edu, 2008).

Despite these efforts, enforcement remains weak. Banda (2023) found that school staff often lack capacity and support to follow through on SRGBV protocols, and victims face social stigma or retaliation for reporting incidents.



Prevalence of SRGBV in Tanzania

In Tanzania, SRGBV is a major public health issue, involving physical, sexual, and psychological violence rooted in gender norms and power imbalances. Perpetrators include teachers, peers, and school staff. Over 25% of learners' report experiencing sexual violence, while 46.3% face corporal punishment, and 58.3% witness bullying (UNESCO, 2022). Further, Mutasingwa and Mwaipopo (2022) found that a significant proportion of female learners face verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and corporal punishment, which is often normalized in school environments. These findings are supported by Tanzania's National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (2017-2022), which identified schools as a high-risk environment for multiple forms of GBV. Another recent study by Massawe, Nyangas, and Joshua (2024) in Ilemela Municipality documented that teachers and male learners are the primary perpetrators of SRGBV. Harmful beliefs, such as linking GBV to revealing clothes or drunkenness, perpetuate violence in schools (UNESCO, 2022). A study by Kimaro and Biswalo (2024) found that one in three Tanzanian girls faces sexual assault before age 18, and physical violence persists despite legal bans. Moreover, cultural beliefs, fear of retaliation, and weak reporting mechanisms prevent many victims from reporting abuse (HakiElimu, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Confidentiality concerns also discourage help-seeking behaviour, as victims fear their reports will be disclosed, leading to further victimization (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Inaction by authorities further discourages reporting (UNESCO, 2016). SRGBV contributes to increased school dropout rates, particularly among girls, due to fear, stigma, and lack of support, leading to early pregnancies and forced marriages (Human Rights Watch, 2017; UNESCO, 2016).

Tanzania has made efforts to address SRGBV through policy reforms and education strategies. The implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Development and integration of gender-sensitive curricula mark important progress. Programmes such as the CwR initiative have piloted violence-prevention education and capacity-building for teachers. However, enforcement remains weak. Cultural taboos surrounding sexuality, inadequate training for educators, and the absence of comprehensive data systems limit the impact of these interventions (Leach et al., 2013). Other measures to combat SRGBV include strengthened policies like the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (2017-2022) and teacher training programmes like CwR, which help educators address SRGBV and promote gender-sensitive teaching (UNESCO, 2020). Albeit not at a national scale, schools have integrated SRGBV awareness



into the curriculum, and community involvement aims to challenge harmful norms (Plan International, 2019). Confidential reporting systems and counselling services have also been introduced to encourage learners to report SRGBV incidents without fear (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The CwR initiative has shown positive results, with over 80% of learners reporting improved relationships and increased willingness to seek help for SRGBV (UNESCO, 2021; Cahill et al., 2023).

Prevalence of SRGBV in Zambia

SRGBV is a pressing issue in Zambia, significantly impacting learners' safety, well-being, and academic performance. Studies indicate that both teachers and peers perpetrate various forms of violence, including sexual harassment, physical abuse, and psychological harm (Parkes et al., 2017). A 2011 survey by the Population Council among learners aged 14-18 in Lusaka and Chongwe found that 24% had experienced inappropriate touching, while 26.7% reported sexual exposure. Additionally, 54% of girls aged 12-22 surveyed by Cornell Law School and Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) had experienced sexual violence, with 84% knowing of such incidents in their schools. Alarming, over half of the respondents reported awareness of teachers engaging in sexual relationships with learners.

Further research highlights that nearly 60% of female learners have faced violence in or around school settings, with verbal abuse and unwanted sexual attention among the most common forms

(Heslop et al., 2017). A 2014-2015 Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) revealed that almost 70% of learners, particularly girls, experience GBV, with 26% of females aged 18-24 having faced sexual violence before turning 18, often within school settings (Ministry of Youth and Child Development, 2014). Additionally, physical violence by teachers remains a widespread issue, affecting 38% of girls and 62% of boys, making schools one of the most common settings for child violence (UNICEF, 2014). GBV leads to increased absenteeism and dropout rates, as well as long-term psychological trauma for affected learners (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Structural and social factors, including entrenched gender norms, insufficient teacher training, and weak policy enforcement, perpetuate SRGBV in Zambia (Leach et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2017). In response, Zambia has introduced various policies, such as the Re-entry Policy for adolescent mothers and the LSHE curriculum, which incorporates gender equality and human rights into school programmes (Ministry of General Education, 2016). Other initiatives, including the Teaching Profession Code of Ethics, the 2022-2026 Education Strategy, and the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage, seek to foster safer school environments (Teaching Council of Zambia, 2016). The EGVS initiative has also informed national policies on teacher training, reporting mechanisms, and school safety frameworks.

Despite these efforts, significant gaps persist, with many SRGBV cases going unreported due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and mistrust in school authorities (MYSCD et al., 2018; Parkes et al., 2016). For example, the VACS found that only 12% of girls who faced sexual violence sought professional help, often due to fear and institutional failures (UNICEF, 2014). In addition, many schools, especially in rural areas, lack trained counsellors or child protection officers, while legal enforcement remains weak. Cultural resistance to addressing SRGBV further hinders the implementation of programmes like LSHE (Zulu et al., 2019). However, promising interventions, such as the CwR programme, have increased awareness, improved bystander behaviour, and encouraged reporting (UNESCO, 2021; Cahill et al., 2023). While progress is evident, sustained investment in gender-responsive education and stronger policy enforcement is necessary to eliminate SRGBV in Zambia.

Overview

The CwR programme is an educational tool designed to help teachers prevent GBV and promote respectful relationships in schools.

Targeting lower and upper secondary school learners, CwR equips learners with critical thinking, social, and communication skills through interactive activities such as pair work, case studies, and role-playing (UNESCO, 2020). The programme fosters a deeper understanding of gender norms, challenges harmful stereotypes, and promotes pro-social attitudes by reinforcing that gender inequity and violence are unjust (UNICEF, 2021). It includes the following core components to create safer, more inclusive learning environments:

- Teacher training to equip educators with strategies to promote gender equality, non-violent communication, and conflict resolution.
- Curriculum integration to ensure GBV awareness is embedded into national education systems (UNESCO, 2020).
- Establishment of reporting and response mechanisms for SRGBV cases, providing confidential channels for learners to report incidents and ensuring swift action (UNICEF, 2021).
- Enhanced provision of psychosocial support services in schools such as counselling to assist learners who have experienced GBV, helping them recover from trauma and continue their education (UNICEF, 2021).
- Community and parental engagement, which involves parents, religious leaders, and local communities in addressing SRGBV and fostering positive behavioural change (UNICEF, 2021). By promoting respectful relationships and challenging harmful gender norms, the programme aims to reduce SRGBV, improve gender relations, and enhance learners' overall educational and social well-being across the ESA region (UNESCO, 2020).

Implementation framework

The implementation of the CwR programme was designed as a comprehensive, school-wide approach involving teachers, learners, school leaders, education authorities, parents, and communities, tailored to each country's context. The CwR tool consists of two parts: guidance for educators; and a structured classroom programme aimed at promoting respectful, non-violent relationships and addressing SRGBV. The classroom programme includes seven topics delivered through various subjects, such as literacy, life skills, and civic education, using interactive activities that build knowledge, shape positive attitudes, and develop learners' skills to respond to violence. Activities can be integrated gradually or delivered intensively, with extension tasks that promote literacy and community engagement, ensuring lasting impact and sustained learning, (UNESCO, 2021)

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the CwR programme is designed to assess its impact on teachers' confidence, programme delivery fidelity, and learners' knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and help-seeking related to GBV (UNESCO, 2022). The process of M&E is conducted before, during, and after implementation. M&E identifies key factors influencing programme success using various assessment tools, including the training exit survey for teachers' immediate feedback, the teacher monitoring and feedback survey for tracking implementation challenges, and the Teacher Interview Guide for qualitative insights. For learners, pre- and post-implementation surveys measure changes in knowledge and attitudes over time, while focus group discussions (FGDs) provide deeper insights into learners' experiences and perspectives (Ibid). These tools ensure a structured evaluation approach, guiding programme improvements and enhancing its effectiveness in preventing SRGBV.



Purpose of implementation research

The primary purpose of this research was to understand how the CwR programme is being implemented in different countries and contexts, identify key challenges and emerging best practices, and provide recommendations to strengthen its effectiveness and sustainability. Specifically, the research sought to:

1. Explore how the CwR programme is implemented in schools.
2. Identify challenges, emerging practices, and lessons learned.
3. Describe the extent and manner of the CwR programme's integration into the school system. In this study, integration means ensuring that the values, lessons, and preventive approaches of CwR are or become a regular, sustainable, and measurable part of a school's everyday educational and cultural environment.
4. Provide actionable recommendations for improving programme design, delivery, monitoring, and long-term sustainability.

Research methodology

Research design and strategy

The research utilized a cross-sectional study design, collecting data from a definite population at one point in time. The study used qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data from 96 schools and 1,152 learners across three countries: Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. Quantitative data was collected through a learner’s survey, while qualitative data was collected through FGDs with learners and key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders involved at both policy and implementation levels of the CwR programme. The qualitative and quantitative data was then triangulated to cross-validate insights and enhance the findings.

Sampling strategy

Quantitative sampling

A sampling frame of 435 schools implementing CwR was segmented by province (region), rural/urban location, name of school, and, in some cases, the number of teachers trained to implement CwR. From this, a suggested sample size of 10% of the target schools in all three countries was randomly selected, resulting in a total sample size of 105 schools. A ceded sample of 12 learners per school was also selected. Learners were selected from the eligible grades, namely: Grade 5-7 in upper primary, Grade 8-9 in junior secondary, and Grade 10 -12 in upper secondary. In total, 1,260 learners were therefore sampled for the study. However, given some experiences on the ground, the sample was subsequently revised to 96 schools and 1,152 learners (section 4.2.3 highlights some limitations leading to the sample revision). Table 1 shows the initial sample size of schools per country versus actual sample.

Table 1. Initial vs. actual sample size

Country	Malawi	Tanzania	Zambia
Initial calculated sample	9	16	80
Actual sample	8 (1 school was unreachable)	9	77 (1 declined, programme was discontinued in 2 and teachers were transferred)

Since there was a proportion indicator measuring CwR at school level, a general sampling technique was applied with enough power to measure such outcome indicators as knowledge, attitudes, intention to seek help and reduction in negative bystander behaviour from children and young people in school and/or learners (refer to annex 2 for specific sample calculation).

To distribute the 105 schools across the three countries, a probability proportional to size (PPS) process was adopted. The PPS is a self-weighting sampling allocation technique that takes into

account the proportion size of the population of schools in the three countries. There were 31, 66, and 331 schools in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia implementing the CwR respectively; thus translating into 7%, 15%, and 76% in terms of proportions for the respective countries.

To select the actual schools surveyed, a systematic sampling technique was applied in each country. Systematic sampling is a probability sampling method in which researchers select members of the population at a regular interval (or kth) determined in advance. In this case, the population was

represented by the number of schools sampled and implementing the CwR in the three countries. For instance, in Malawi, the 31 schools implementing the CwR were listed using unique non-repeating identifiers, and upon calculating the kth interval, nine were selected. The same was applied for Tanzania and Zambia. In all three countries, the process included selecting schools by urban and rural area to ensure data was representative. However, there was flexibility during actual data collection influenced by experiences in the field. In Malawi, data was collected at the peak of the rainy season, resulting in some sampled schools being inaccessible. This necessitated that such schools be replaced using convenient sampling. In Zambia, 27 out of 80 sampled schools were replaced using purposive sampling because they had not yet started implementation at the time of data collection. In Tanzania, the sample was reduced by half to fast-track data collection in the face of national exams and local elections. Although the data collection period was revised at a later stage, the revised sample was maintained.

To select the 12 learners for the survey, a purposive approach was used. School authorities were asked to help identify learners from different backgrounds, including those with disability, to form part of the sample to make certain only learners who have learnt CwR topics were included in the sample. This was key to ensuring that the study collected relevant data to understand the variations in programme implementation and identify successes, challenges, and lessons learnt, among other things.

Qualitative sampling

KIs focused on teachers, national and subnational Ministry of Education (MoE) staff, and learners from targeted grades, with subjects integrating CwR. In Zambia, 20% of the overall schools included in this study were selected for KIs targeting teachers. Choosing 20% of the 80 schools offered a practical and effective approach to gather diverse, in-depth insights while keeping the process manageable, resource-efficient, and time-sensitive (Guest et al, 2006). Similarly, the flexible, context-sensitive approaches outlined by Patton (2002) and Creswell (2007) support the rationale for selecting a 20% sample for KIs. In addition, four staff at district level and two at national level were purposively targeted for KIs. Conversely, given the smaller size of sampled schools in Malawi and Tanzania, KIs

targeted all schools in the study. Table 3 shows the distribution of teachers and head teachers interviewed.

Characteristics of respondents

The subsequent sections provide distribution of respondents based on country, province, and district as well as demographic characteristics

Geographical location

Zambia had the highest number of respondents, accounting for 82%, followed by Tanzania with 8.9% and Malawi with 8.5%. The variation in percentage of respondents was influenced by the differing school sample sizes (77 schools in Zambia, nine in Tanzania, and eight in Malawi).

Demographic characteristics

The sample contained a larger proportion of female respondents in Zambia (57.2%) and Tanzania (56.3%), whereas Malawi had an equal sample representation between females and males. Across all countries, most respondents were adolescents. In Malawi, the vast majority were aged 15-19 (92.4%), while only 3.3% were aged 10-14 and 4.3% aged 20 years and above. In Zambia, respondents aged 15-19 were likewise the majority, but to a lesser extent (53.6%). Those aged 10-14 also made up a significant portion (45.2%). In Tanzania on the other hand, the majority of respondents were aged 10-14 (72%), with those aged 15-19 making up just 25.1%.

These figures correlate with education level, with the largest group of respondents in Malawi being in Grade 10-12 (Form 3-4) at 58.6%, followed by Grade 8-9 (Form 1-2) at 41.3%, suggesting that data collection here focused on upper secondary learners. Conversely, in Tanzania, the majority of respondents were in Grade 4-7 (74.9%), followed by those in Grade 8-9 (16.7%), suggesting that data was collected primarily among primary and junior secondary learners. In Zambia, the split was a bit more even, with 37.4% being in Grade 10-12, followed by 33.3% in Grade 4-7.

Only a small number of respondents represented learners with disabilities in the three countries (9.4% in Tanzania, 7.7% in Zambia, and just 2.2% in Malawi).

The demographic characteristics of respondents are captured in Table 2, while Table 3 shows the distribution of key informants. No head teacher was interviewed in Zambia as none were trained in CwR.

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents

	Malawi		Tanzania		Zambia	
	N (92)	%	N (96)	%	N (884)	%
Age						
10-14	3.0	3.3	69.0	72.0	400.0	45.2
15-19	85.0	92.4	24.1	25.1	474.0	53.6
20 years and above	4.0	4.3	3.1	3.1	10.0	1.1
Sex						
Female	46.0	50.0	54.0	56.3	506.0	57.2
Male	46.0	50.0	42.0	43.8	378.0	42.8
Current grade						
Grade 4-7	-	-	72.0	74.9	294.0	33.3
Grade 8-9	38.0	41.3	16.0	16.7	259.0	29.3
Grade 10-12	54.0	58.6	8.0	8.3	331.0	37.4
Disability status						
No	90.0	97.8	87.0	90.6	816.0	92.3
Yes	2.0	2.2	9.0	9.4	68.0	7.7

Table 3. Distribution of key informants

Characteristic	Malawi	Tanzania	Zambia
Trained/oriented teachers	8	9	18
Head teacher	8	5	0
National and subnational staff	1	1	5

Data collection and analysis

Quantitative data was collected using tablets and smartphones, with real-time uploads to Epicollect, an online platform that enabled continuous monitoring and feedback during data collection. Data was collected in English in Zambia and

Malawi, and in Swahili in Tanzania. For Tanzania, English data tools were first translated to Swahili and translated back to English at the end of data collection. All raw data was downloaded as CSV files for cleaning and analysis. Quantitative data was disaggregated and analysed using Excel spreadsheets and Stata version 14.2, producing graphs, tables, and charts. This data-driven

approach allowed for a robust understanding of CwR's effectiveness in promoting respectful relationships and reducing SRGBV.

Qualitative data was transcribed in Excel and analysed using the thematic analysis approach. Transcripts in Word formats were also included in the analysis. Qualitative analysis used a dual approach, combining manual and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven analysis. AI-based analysis was relevant to detect hidden patterns and maintain consistency in qualitative data interpretation, while manual analysis ensured contextual understanding, cultural relevance, and nuanced interpretation. This integration strengthened findings through cross-validation, reducing biases, enhancing analytical depth, and ensuring a more comprehensive, scalable, and credible interpretation of qualitative data. Finally, qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated to cross-validate insights and enhance the robustness of the findings in the final report.

Limitations

Four main limitations with potential effect on the interpretation and scalability of results have been noted below.

- 1. Unexpected challenges during data collection led to a revision in the sample size and a 90% response rate:** In Malawi, heavy rains made some schools inaccessible, necessitating replacements where possible. In Zambia, some initially sampled schools had only recently received training and were yet to begin implementation, requiring re-engagement with the MoE to verify and replace schools. Despite this verification process, some schools could not participate due to factors such as the only grade benefiting from the programme having recently graduated, the programme having not yet been introduced to new grades, or the trained teacher being transferred or moved into an administrative role with limited learner interaction. To meet project timelines, Tanzania's sample size was halved, ensuring a balanced representation of primary and secondary and rural and urban schools, while adapting to external delays.
- 2. Varied sample sizes and variations in sampling procedures during data collection across countries:** Zambia had a relatively larger sample than Malawi and Tanzania. This imbalance may

have influenced the findings by providing richer and more varied insights from Zambia, while the smaller samples in the other countries could result in less comprehensive data. Consequently, this affects the comparability of results, making it challenging to draw equally strong conclusions across all three countries and potentially underrepresenting key experiences in Malawi and Tanzania. Additionally, the variations in sampling procedures informed by realities on the ground during data collection may have influenced results, rather than reflecting true population differences, thus affecting comparability of results across the three countries.

- 3. Translation:** Translation challenges may have affected data accuracy and comparability, particularly in Tanzania, where tools were translated into Swahili and back to English after data collection. This process may have introduced loss of meaning, inconsistencies in terminology, and misinterpretation of key concepts. Additionally, linguistic and cultural nuances could have led participants to interpret translated questions differently, potentially introducing bias. In Zambia and Malawi, real-time translations were provided by interviewers if respondents struggled with English comprehension. However, this approach carried the risk of researcher bias since translations may have reflected personal interpretations, inadvertently influencing how questions were understood and, consequently, shaping participants' responses.
- 4. Interpretation of the programme's impact by respondents:** Data captured participant's perceptions of the programme within school environments and personal or learners' outcomes attributable to the programme. This presents the risk of bias in reporting or identifying impact by respondents based on various factors, including respondent's understanding and assertiveness or participation in programme activities. Additionally, the programme is not always widely recognized by its official name, as it is embedded within broader curricula. Learners often did not explicitly recognize the term CwR, but recalled learning about GBV and gender equality. This suggests that the programme's impact may be subjective and dependent on how it is referenced by different schools.

Emerging findings

Several themes emerged from the analysis, including integration methods, gender dynamics, implementation challenges, stakeholder engagement, sustainability, monitoring, positive outcomes, awareness versus understanding, and cultural influences. Each theme is discussed in relation to the study's objectives.

Stakeholder understanding and perceptions of CwR

Stakeholder understanding and perception of CwR are crucial because they influence implementation fidelity and overall programme effectiveness. Results suggest a generally consistent perception of the CwR programme among implementing teachers and learners across the three countries. Teachers and learners, for example, understood and articulated the programme's purpose in line with its goals, as demonstrated by these observations by a teacher and learner in Malawi and Tanzania, respectively:

"We discuss CwR concepts like respect and empathy during life skills lessons to help learners understand the importance of respecting peers, regardless of gender." (KII, Malawi)

"It teaches us about respecting adults and peers, understanding gender-based violence, educating us about child pregnancy prevention and promoting good relationships between children and adults." (FGD, Tanzania)

However, certain stakeholders lacked full clarity on what the programme really was, especially those who were not directly trained or oriented by peers. This was highlighted by a teacher in Zambia by admitting as follows:

"What does CwR stand for? ... Oh I was on leave, my colleague attended the training." (KII, Zambia)

Although teachers generally demonstrated awareness of SRGBV by forms and consequences, translating this theoretical knowledge to classroom practice proved challenging. Learners noted inconsistencies between what teachers taught and how they behaved:

"Teachers use bad language when they talk to us sometimes." (FDG, Zambia)

While the programme was not recognized by the name "Connect with Respect" at first instance, especially in Zambia, participants, particularly learners, understood and perceived it as a programme aimed at promoting a safer and more respectful school environment by addressing such issues as child abuse; human rights; gender equality; discipline and behaviour management; interpersonal relationships; GBV, sexual harassment, physical violence, and bullying; and respect, fair treatment, and discrimination in schools and communities. For instance, in Tanzania, stakeholders viewed the programme as promoting respect, rights awareness, and GBV prevention, while in Zambia, learners recognized it as a means to foster positive relationships and address issues such as bullying, abuse, and inequality.

CwR programme design versus actual implementation

The study found that implementation of CwR is or was adapted to suit each school's context. In addition, teachers modified delivery methods to better engage learners and promote gender inclusion. Some methods were based on classroom delivery through carrier subjects such as Life Skills Education (LSE) in Malawi, LSHE in Tanzania, and Civic Education, Religious Education, and Social Studies in Zambia. Other methods included delivery through class presentations, group discussions, role-playing, storytelling, and debates. Teachers

also used innovative practices such as integrating CwR in school assemblies, using school clubs, soccer, special sessions, and gender sensitive group discussions facilitated by either female or male teachers, depending on the gender of the target group.

Extent of CwR integration into education curricula

In Zambia, CwR is moderately integrated into subjects such as Civic Education, Religious Education, and Social Studies. It is also applied during extracurricular activities. Teachers often refer to the CwR guide for supplemental content in lesson planning. One had this to say:

"CwR is not standalone, it is part of the syllabus and education curriculum. Teachers integrate CwR principles in their lesson plans while referencing CwR materials for additional information." (KII, Zambia)

Some respondents noted that CwR's principles already exist in school policies and curricula, positioning it more as a reinforcement tool than a new programme, for example:

"...This is already in our programmes and policies... the gap was in implementation... that is where CwR comes in, training more teachers and printing materials to make it easier to teach and address SRGBV." (KII, Zambia)

Based on these observations, it is evident that trained teachers could be encouraged to use the CwR guide as reference material for classroom lesson plans so as to enrich content and delivery. In Malawi, integration occurs through LSE lessons, school clubs, and community-based activities. In addition, chiefs, religious leaders, and parents are often engaged, thereby enhancing community acceptance. In Tanzania, moderate integration is also demonstrated. CwR topics are embedded in formal subjects such as LSHE, and also delivered through extracurricular activities, including school or class debates, special sessions with guest presenters who are subject matter experts, and learner councils, among others. Teachers

particularly appreciate the integration of CwR within governance frameworks (like the learner councils), promoting a participatory culture and pupil empowerment. However, integration efforts face barriers such as large class sizes, limited teacher training, and lack of monitoring systems. The following excerpts attest to this:

"The chiefs, religious leaders, even the parents are involved. The head teacher selects facilitators, and sometimes we teach them during club activities about gender-based violence." (KII, Malawi)

"We incorporate CwR lessons into daily classroom interactions and structured discussions during extracurricular activities. Establishing learner councils also provides learners a platform to address issues related to gender equality and GBV." (KII, Tanzania)

Variations in delivery

Delivery of CwR varies across schools and countries, but follows a similar structure. Typically, training begins with a training-of-trainers (ToT), followed by school-level training for selected teachers who then deliver lessons through a mix of classroom and extracurricular activities. In some schools, trained CwR teachers retrain other teachers and together deliver CwR lessons. In many schools across all three countries, delivery combines classroom integration with extracurricular approaches, which fosters participation and critical thinking, such as school assemblies, school campaigns, and sports. However, classroom delivery remains the primary approach. As noted, lessons are incorporated in other subjects, thus ensuring consistent classroom-based delivery. Teachers emphasize that these interactive methods were more effective in smaller group settings than in large class sizes. As some shared:

"Group discussions have proven most effective because they allow learners to express themselves freely and learn from each other." (KII, Tanzania)

"The most effective method has been incorporating CwR into clubs and using interactive sessions such as drama and discussions to engage students." (KII, Zambia)

Promising practices

A distinguishing feature in Tanzania and Zambia is the reliance on 'student councils' to enhance learners' participation and reinforce respectful relationships and gender equality. In Malawi, some schools leverage community engagement more explicitly, incorporating local leaders, parents, and religious figures to reinforce CwR lessons.

Encouraging schools to integrate the CwR programme into school subjects and education curricula emerges as a crucial strategy for delivery in all three countries. Curriculum integration ensures consistency, sustainability, and broader coverage of CwR topics, reinforcing key messages related to respectful relationships, human rights, gender equality, and violence prevention within everyday learning. As most respondents from the three countries emphasized, embedding CwR in core subjects like Civic Education, Life Skills, Social Studies, and Religious Education allows continuous reinforcement of critical themes beyond isolated extracurricular activities. However, it also requires that all teachers are trained and equipped with skills to deliver this content. With the current gaps in CwR teacher training (where only two to four teachers are trained per school in some cases), and with peer-trained teachers not fully understanding CwR concepts, implementation fidelity of the programme could be compromised and therefore at risk.

Sub-national variations in delivery: Emerging (innovative) practices

At school level, findings show that although the primary delivery model for most schools in all three countries is classroom based, other methods such as extracurricular school activities, debates, storytelling, drama, demonstrations, learner presentations, clubs, and sports are used, as already

observed. Some schools have also integrated CwR activities in school timetables, and incorporated CwR talks fortnightly during school assemblies. As a teacher in Zambia states:

"It is integrated in subjects and we do assembly sensitizations fortnightly. We also take advantage of sports gatherings because we have many children attending sports." (KII, Zambia)

Promising practices

Adapting delivery to gender-sensitive approaches yields better results for both boys and girls, unlike where lessons are delivered in mixed groups. For example, in Zambia and Malawi, it was reported that girls were often shy to participate on topics on sexual health if the discussions were held in mixed groups. Teachers therefore applied gender-sensitive approaches, such as separating the male and female learners. In this way, they found that learners are able to share with the guidance and counselling teachers and the girls are comfortable talking to the female teachers.

"When we discuss issues like menstrual hygiene in our group, I feel free to ask questions and share my challenges. It's easier to talk when boys are not around." (FGD, Malawi)

The study reveals a pattern of more diverse delivery in urban (peri-urban in the case of Malawi) than in rural areas. It was observed that urban schools use a variety of creative methods, while rural schools mostly use traditional classroom delivery methods, with some teachers incorporating presentations from learners and class exercises to enhance participation. In Zambia, most urban schools use interactive approaches such as debates, sports, group discussions, role-plays, targeted campaigns, external stakeholders' involvement (field experts like nurses, police officers, and the drug enforcement commission, among others),

gender-sensitive group meetings/discussions, and established clubs as channels of delivery. The following excerpt attests:

"We sometimes have debates and discussions about these topics, which makes them more interesting." (FGD, Zambia)

In contrast, rural schools rely heavily on informal methods such as assemblies, classroom talks, and storytelling. At one school in the Southern province of Zambia, learners highlighted simpler approaches and identified challenges such as language barriers and limited educational resources, remarking:

"We learn in classes and assembly." (FGD, Zambia)

"We barely understand what they are teaching because it is in English," and, "we do not have enough materials to read." (FGD, Zambia)

In Malawi, delivery varies significantly between schools located in trading centres (peri-urban areas) and deep grassroots or remote rural schools. While trading schools incorporated the use of teaching aids in the form of printed materials, visual aids, and structured activities to ignite higher engagement and participation from learners, schools in remote or rural areas relied on verbal instructions in class to deliver content. Other schools in Malawi have leveraged community leaders and chiefs to champion community acceptance of CwR, recognizing that socio-cultural resistance to certain topics contributed to inconsistent delivery. Additionally, school authorities engage parents and community groups to reinforce CwR principles beyond the school environment. For instance, parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings are used as forums to educate parents on CwR principles, encouraging them to reinforce these values at home.

In Tanzania, schools in urban areas integrate interactive and participatory teaching methods into their delivery models, emphasizing learner discussions, debates, role-playing exercises, storytelling, and real-life scenario analyses. Teachers frequently utilize supplementary (from other sources, not CwR) visual aids and collaborative activities to enhance understanding

and engagement among learners. One teacher emphasized the effectiveness of interactive methods, stating:

"Group discussions have proven most effective because they allow learners to express themselves freely and learn from each other." (KII, Tanzania)

Additionally, some schools have strengthened the involvement of external stakeholders such as law enforcement officers, gender desk officers, and social welfare representatives, who frequently visit schools to discuss real-world experiences related to GBV and child protection. A teacher described the importance of involving external speakers, noting:

"Our school has partnered with law enforcement – police officers and the gender desk – to visit and educate learners about their rights." (KII, Tanzania)

Promising practices

What stands out for Tanzania is that some urban schools have gone further to ensure that CwR lessons are incorporated in school extracurricular timetables, providing consistent delivery in clubs and special sessions. These schools (like in Zambia) also enhance their approach by inviting external experts to speak to learners, providing valuable firsthand experiences and deeper insights into relevant topics. Learners appreciate this model, highlighting its effectiveness in improving their understanding through direct interactions with knowledgeable professionals. One learner had this to say:

"One day, a doctor and a police officer came to teach us about violence and its impact. They had real-life examples that helped us understand better." (FGD, Tanzania)



However, despite these advantages for urban schools, tight academic schedules often limit the depth of discussions on CwR topics. As a secondary school teacher in Tanzania points out:

"We only have one hour per month for CwR, which makes it difficult to cover all the topics." (KII, Tanzania)

On the other hand, and as observed already, rural schools mostly rely on classroom delivery. A teacher from a rural school explained that they have tried to integrate special sessions to expose learners to role models or experts, but distance and difficulties of transport and communication have rendered such initiatives unsuccessful:

"Our school is very remote so we lack proper network connection or updated materials. If we invite an expert, they have to sleep over because of the distance. This means added expenses for the school." (KII, Tanzania)

Urban-rural delivery variations across all three countries are driven by disparities in resources, access to training, media exposure, community support, and cultural norms, all of which shape how the CwR programme is implemented and received. For instance, in Malawi, trading schools near urban centres benefit from non-governmental organization (NGO) and community support, better infrastructure, and more frequent training opportunities, enabling innovative and engaging approaches that foster critical thinking. In contrast, rural schools struggle with limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and inconsistent teacher training, significantly hindering programme implementation. Against this backdrop, several schools have nonetheless developed promising strategies, and the following case studies highlight these unique and emerging practices.

Case studies

Zambia

Lotus Secondary School runs a school campaign called "Stop Drug Abuse" where all staff and learners wear a "Stop Drug Abuse" t-shirt to raise awareness on drug and substance abuse, highlighting consequences on health and well-being for learners, such as teenage pregnancies, disrespect and abusive behaviour, and poor education outcomes.

"... wearing the t-shirt is very important so that we are reminded of the dangers of drug abuse." (FGD, Zambia)

Upon realizing that many boys lacked male positive role models, the Guidance and Counselling teacher at Perseverance School in Ndola worked with the school administration to start a boys' only club called 'Coaching Boys into Men'. The club facilitated learning and mentorship for boys. Mentors and role models were invited from churches, and institutions.

"Our madam (referring to their teacher) created the club 'coaching boys into men' and invited people every Friday to come and have discussions with us and learn through sports. We used to play soccer with the people who would come to coach us. I enjoyed it because we talked about things that are happening." (FGD, Zambia)

Malawi

Mwanza Secondary School has implemented a club that facilitates peer-to-peer learning. Learner peer leaders have taken the lead in facilitating CwR sessions, ensuring that the programme is sustained, even when trained teachers are not available.

"We have a club where we discuss these issues. It's easier to talk among ourselves." (FGD, Malawi)

Tanzania

Bigwa Sisters Secondary School has established a Gender Desk to handle GBV cases, mirroring police gender desks in the community.

St. Gasper School has a CwR slogan, "Connect with Respect – connect", that precedes a greeting to remind learners, teachers, and other staff of their individual and collective responsibility to create a safe learning environment. The greeting is associated with a specific symbol.

Expected versus actual delivery of CwR

While implementation of CwR gives flexibility for contextual adaptations, it is important that key tenets of the programme are maintained. Table 4 provides a summary of CwR expected delivery versus the current practices.

Table 4. Expected delivery vs. practice

Focus	Expected	Actual practice
Integration	CwR integrated into regular subjects (curriculum) rather than delivered as a standalone programme. Teachers incorporate CwR principles and activities into subjects and extracurricular school activities.	While there is integration into existing subjects and extracurricular school activities, delivery is inconsistent, especially in rural areas and where trained teachers have transferred. Integration in national curricula is not yet comprehensive in all three countries. In Zambia, CwR is incorporated in LSHE, and now incorporated in teacher training in colleges. In Malawi, efforts to integrate it compressively in the national curriculum are underway, however, CwR is actively integrated in the LSE curriculum, with efforts to integrate comprehensively underway. Tanzania has structured curriculum integration but faces challenges with consistency due to large class sizes.
Delivery methods	Use of diverse and interactive methods (clubs, assemblies, debates, role-playing, special sessions) to complement curricula integration and enhance learner engagement.	Delivery methods for CwR vary significantly. Rural schools across all countries rely on informal approaches like assemblies and classroom discussions due to limited resources. In contrast, some urban schools use more innovative methods, including clubs, peer learning, role model sessions, and gender-sensitive strategies like separate discussions for boys and girls to encourage participation.
Teacher training and capacity	Comprehensive professional learning for teachers to build knowledge, awareness, and skills in promoting gender equality and violence prevention using interactive teaching methods.	Teacher training varies in duration across countries. In Zambia, selected teachers are trained for a maximum of four days, in Tanzania, for a maximum of five days, and in Malawi, training ranges from three to four days. Initiatives to extend the reach of CwR training is available in Zambia and Tanzania. In Zambia, CwR will be taught as part of teacher training in colleges to ensure all teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills on SRGBV. In Tanzania, an online self-taught programme is in place. High teacher turnover leads to knowledge gaps and inconsistent delivery. Some schools rely on informal peer-to-peer training for new teachers, often resulting in limited understanding and confidence in delivering CwR topics.

Focus	Expected	Actual practice
Community engagement	Involvement of parents, PTAs, community leaders, and local stakeholders to reinforce CwR principles beyond the school environment.	Community engagement varies considerably. Some schools, particularly in Malawi, have successfully involved chiefs and parent groups to increase programme acceptance since cultural resistance to certain topics is a challenge in many areas.
Safe spaces and reporting mechanisms	Establishment of confidential channels for learners to report SRGBV incidents.	Safe spaces exist but are underutilized. Learners often lack confidence in reporting mechanisms due to perceived ineffectiveness or lack of confidentiality. Most schools lack clearly outlined frameworks or guidelines to address reported SRGBV cases systematically. Enhanced efforts are required in providing clearer, accessible reporting channels and awareness-building among learners.
Learner participation and empowerment	Meaningful learner participation, leadership, and governance roles to enhance empowerment and ownership of CwR principles.	Distinct participation by boys and girls exists. Gender-sensitive approaches have been seen to promote more participation.
Resource availability	Adequate provision of learning and support materials to facilitate consistent delivery and learner engagement.	Resource availability remains a significant barrier across countries. Rural schools particularly highlight insufficient educational materials, limiting effective implementation. Urban schools experience relatively better resourcing but still identify gaps in materials such as teaching guides, visual aids, and educational reading resources. Addressing these resource gaps is critical for effective programme delivery.
Leadership and governance/commitment from school leadership	Strong school leadership to actively support, promote, and facilitate consistent CwR programme implementation and integration.	Leadership support for CwR varies across countries. Zambia shows mixed commitment. Some schools support integration, while others resist this due to limited understanding and competing priorities. Malawi's leadership support depends on community involvement, while Tanzania emphasizes learner-led clubs and peer mentoring. Zambia is beginning to use learner councils, but Malawi lacks structured pupil governance. Strengthening learner participation structures in both Zambia and Malawi is needed to ensure consistent and safe implementation.

Focus	Expected	Actual practice
Sustainability	Long-term strategies and structures to ensure continued programme implementation, institutionalization, and impact beyond initial interventions.	Sustainability efforts are uneven across countries. In Zambia, the lack of structured monitoring and accountability undermines long-term sustainability. Tanzania has institutionalized some CwR elements into curricular and extracurricular structures, promoting sustainability, yet faces challenges related to resources and training. Malawi's community-based approach enhances local ownership and sustainability potential, though formal curricula integration and structured monitoring are still required for lasting effectiveness.
Monitoring and accountability	Structured M&E tools to assess implementation fidelity and programme impact.	Monitoring systems are often weak or inconsistent. In Zambia, while CwR is integrated into national monitoring frameworks, school-level accountability is limited. Many schools lack standardized reporting methods, relying on informal verbal updates.

The findings highlighted in Table 4 require consistent implementation, better resource allocation, and stronger support systems to align current practices with the expected delivery of the CwR programme across the region. These findings underscore critical implications for implementation fidelity, which is simply defined as “the extent to which the CwR programme is delivered as designed, while adapting to contextual realities”. Four key dimensions emerge from these results:

1. Adaptation vs. standardization in delivery:

The study reveals a variation between contextual adaptation and programme integrity amid several challenges. While urban schools leveraged structured extracurricular activities (debates, drama) to align with CwR's interactive pedagogy, rural schools relied on informal and classroom integration, often diluting core components like peer-led discussions or gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms. This divergence highlights the need to balance flexibility with safeguards for essential elements of the programme. For example, Zambia's integration of CwR into the LSHE curriculum preserved fidelity by aligning with national standards, whereas rural Tanzanian schools' reliance on sporadic assemblies risked superficial engagement.

2. Systemic barriers to consistent delivery:

Teacher turnover and resource inequities directly erode fidelity. In addition, while some teachers (about 1,000 in Zambia, 152 in Malawi, and 14,342 in Tanzania) have been trained with the hope that they in turn orient other teachers, key informants and learners reported losing trained teachers due to transfers and promotions, among other reasons, thereby leaving untrained staff to reinterpret CwR principles informally and consequently often omitting sensitive topics such as sexual harassment. Furthermore, barriers or challenges such as lack of teaching aids and other materials and large class sizes (in the case of Zambia and remote rural schools in Malawi) leave teachers to rely on verbal instructions and fewer activities, a departure from the programme's intention on participatory learning. These systemic gaps create a fidelity “implementation cliff”, where under-resourced schools struggle to maintain baseline adherence.

3. Cultural mediation of programme outcomes:

Fidelity is commonly mediated by socio-cultural norms. In Tanzania, for instance, some teachers said they avoided discussions on gender equality due to parental backlash, while in Zambia, some teachers avoided topics classified as sensitive because they did not deem them cultural. Some schools went further

to reframe CwR as “discipline training” to align with community values that prioritize discipline and moral conduct. Although this may seem adaptive to ensure CwR implementation is achieved, it compromises fidelity by shifting the programme’s core emphasis away from intended transformative goals. Instead of challenging harmful gender norms, promoting respectful and equal relationships, and addressing SRGBV, the content may be reduced to general behavioural management. This dilution of content and intent undermines the programme’s impact and risks reinforcing, rather than disrupting, existing inequalities, highlighting the complexity involved in balancing cultural adaptation with maintaining programme fidelity. However, Malawi’s collaboration with traditional leaders demonstrates that fidelity can coexist with cultural relevance if such adaptations preserve core objectives.

4. Monitoring and accountability gaps:

The absence of standardized monitoring and school-level accountability across the three countries fostered inconsistent delivery, consequently deviating from the original plan. For example, in Zambia, teachers expressed concern that no one is holding them accountable and they may have stopped emphasizing CwR principles during their class sessions. This discrepancy underscores the need for cascaded accountability frameworks that track both quantitative adherence (such as lesson frequency) and qualitative depth (such as learner participation in decision-making).

Enablers and barriers to teacher-led adaptation of CwR delivery

Factors influencing teacher-led adaptation of CwR delivery

Common characteristics were observed in teachers who went above and beyond to implement CwR topics and principles. These included:

Understanding purpose of CwR and its potential impact: Teachers who recognized the broader social value of CwR, particularly in addressing GBV and promoting respectful, safer school environments

were more likely to deliver the programme to as many learners as possible, and in ways that ensured learners remembered the lessons, despite limited support from school administration or a lack of resources. Their belief in the programme’s purpose served as a strong internal motivator. In Zambia especially, some teachers were driven by the understanding that CwR addresses wider societal challenges beyond the classroom. They also had a clear grasp of the programme’s objectives and appreciated how it helped them tackle everyday school issues, reflecting realities learners face at home and in communities, as some shared:

“The impact of the programme is so much. This is a very nice programme which is helping us... not just in school, even in our homes... a programme which touches everyone.” (KII, Zambia)

“It’s working... we’re teaching them about gender-based violence because this is something they see every day, but they have to know what to do.” (KII Zambia)

Empathy and personal commitment to learners’ welfare: It was also noted that teachers who, during interviews, were empathetic and committed to learners’ welfare, found ways of making CwR meaningful and impactful, with some arguing that it was their responsibility to ensure learners had skills needed to protect themselves, as demonstrated below:

“From the time I got the training, I felt it was up to me entirely. That’s why I had to form the club after my training... we meet there, have our discussions, play games; it’s like a safe space for them.” (KII, Zambia)

“I was trying to look at who can manage this responsibility depending on how sympathetic they are once the learners have brought some issues to them.” (KII, Malawi)

“I think the whole point is to drive them closer to us so that they are able to share their experiences... I hosted a lot of learners in my office coming for guidance.” (KII, Zambia)

Intrinsic motivation and passionate commitment:

Teachers who were passionate about their job, including their role in shaping learners' characters, had positive attitudes and dwelt less on the challenges they faced, instead proactively seeking solutions to enable delivery of CwR. In Malawi, for example, some head teachers noted that they selected teachers who had genuine interest and commitment to the well-being of learners, even in the absence of incentives to go for the CwR training. This intrinsic passion ignites innovation around adapting the CwR delivery within specific context and available resources. This deliberate selection process fuelled motivation and a sense of responsibility, as the following suggests:

"At our school, in the first place, we focused on people who have interest... people who can take the challenge without any dangling carrot." (KII, Malawi)

"Facilitators are selected based on their experience in handling learner welfare, counselling, and gender-related education... Teachers specializing in life skills, civic and moral education, and health-related subjects are often chosen." (KII, Tanzania)

Active engagement and participation of learners:

Demand for information from learners motivated teachers to research more and come up with more engaging ways to deliver CwR. This was noted mostly in Tanzanian and Zambian schools. For example, at one school in Tanzania, learners and teachers established a 'gender desk', mimicking the national gender desk to expose learners to the real world situation or scenario. Meanwhile in Zambia, they came up with a Stop Drug and Substance Abuse campaign.

Barriers to teacher-led adaptation of the CwR and implementation fidelity

The pattern in the data made it possible to deduce aspects that may have been barriers to teacher-led adaptations for CwR. These included:

Cultural influence/teachers' personal biases:

This study has highlighted how culture has had an influence on schools (teachers), swaying some to adapt CwR to culturally suitable delivery models in their communities. For example, in Zambia, some teachers were uncomfortable discussing certain topics such as prevention of teenage pregnancies using contraception or condoms because this conflicted with their beliefs on when someone should begin to have sex. Therefore, they instead focused on abstinence.

Teachers' negative attitudes towards new ideas:

A key informant from Zambia noted that some teachers were resistant to change and had a negative attitude towards innovation. This is exacerbated in situations where the school administration is less interested in supervising, holding teachers accountable, and facilitating an enabling environment for innovation and change. In addition, it was observed that teachers who had negative perceptions of CwR also lacked motivation to creatively adapt the delivery of its content.

Teacher resistance and training gaps: One of the most notable limitations across all three countries is the lack of support from teachers who did not receive formal CwR training. In Tanzania, some head teachers reported that untrained teachers refused to incorporate CwR concepts in their lessons, despite being peer oriented, because they felt excluded from the training. In Malawi, teachers felt that the days allocated to CwR training were not enough to fully equip them with the necessary skills, leading to inconsistencies in programme delivery. As such, they suggested ongoing mentorship as a way to ensure continuous improvement for the benefit of programme delivery. In Zambia, trained teachers faced resistance from colleagues who had not attended training, creating gaps in programme continuity and scale-up at the school level.

Lack of knowledge and awareness of CwR by school administrators:

It was observed that in schools where the school administration lacked understanding of the CwR programme, trained teachers were not provided a platform or an environment conducive to integrate CwR principles in school activities. Teachers thus used their discretion to identify opportunities to deliver CwR within their 40 minutes of regular lesson delivery.

Enablers and barriers to CwR implementation fidelity

Enabling factors for implementation fidelity

The enablers for CwR implementation fidelity are anchored on three pillars, namely, structural, contextual responsiveness, and stakeholder ownership. It is therefore imperative to consider fidelity not as a binary metric, but as a dynamic continuum shaped by these three key interdependent factors.

Structural enablers

Clear integration into existing curricula and activities: Integration of CwR into existing school curricula or subjects and extracurricular school activities is a significant enabler, ensuring consistent exposure and reinforcement of core principles. However, this must be supported by availability of teaching materials and teachers' competency to incorporate CwR in lesson plans and delivery.

Structured extracurricular scheduling: In Tanzania, for example, structured scheduling of extracurricular activities, including regular clubs and sessions with external experts, was identified as an effective model that supports consistent delivery as well as being a notable enabler.

Teacher training: Teachers who received structured and in-depth training demonstrated stronger confidence, clarity, and consistency in delivering the programme. They noted that training equipped them with the necessary skills to address sensitive topics, adapt lessons appropriately, and integrate CwR into existing subjects. In contrast, inadequate or once off peer-to-peer orientations were noted to lead to inconsistent application of the programme and diluted content delivery. Results show that peer-to-peer orientations resulted in a superficial understanding of CwR concepts, thereby negatively impacting consistent programme implementation. A teacher from Tanzania noted that:

"Training four teachers per school is insufficient; orientations result in diluted or misunderstood information, leading to inconsistent implementation." (KII, Tanzania)

This shows that ongoing, quality training is foundational to ensuring fidelity. When teachers are well-prepared, they are more likely to implement the programme as intended.

Understanding of CwR content: Teachers who clearly understood the objectives and core components of CwR were more effective in integrating the same in lessons and extracurricular activities, as demonstrated by results and their comprehensive responses during interviews. Findings revealed that in situations where understanding of CwR was limited, teachers often misrepresented or watered down the content, while strong conceptual understanding enabled more faithful delivery of even sensitive and complex issues, such as GBV and respectful relationships. As one teacher in Malawi states:

"We now understand how to link CwR to topics in life skills. This helps make the lessons more meaningful and grounded in real life." (KII, Malawi)

Where teachers lacked a strong grasp of the programme's intent, they either avoided key topics or reduced CwR to general life advice or discipline, risking loss of its transformative gender equity focus.

Positive perceptions of CwR: Teacher attitudes towards the programme significantly influenced whether they embraced or resisted implementation. Positive perceptions, where CwR is seen as relevant, impactful, and aligned with broader educational or moral goals, were strong motivators for teachers to deliver content effectively. Respondents had this say:

"We believe CwR is changing the way learners interact. There is less teasing and more cooperation, especially among boys and girls." (KII, Zambia)

"This programme is important because it helps address issues we usually ignore, like harassment, name-calling, and unequal treatment." (KII, Malawi)

In contrast, scepticism, especially in schools where CwR was seen as non-examinable or externally imposed, reduced motivation and prioritization, with potential for sporadic or low-quality implementation.

Resource allocation: Availability of teaching materials (teacher guides) was repeatedly cited as crucial to consistent implementation of CwR. Insufficient materials, including teaching guides and visual aids, emerged as a notable barrier. In one school in Zambia, learners explicitly identified resource shortages as a case, and remarked as follows:

"We have enough time to learn about CwR but do not have enough materials to read." (FGD, Zambia)

Conversely, in schools where materials and resources were consistently available, teachers reported higher confidence and fidelity in delivering CwR lessons effectively.

Integrated monitoring and accountability mechanisms: Structured monitoring and school-level accountability mechanisms emerged as essential structural enablers. Schools with defined reporting systems, clear indicators, and consistent follow-ups by either the school administration or a designated MoE staff member, such as was the case in mission schools in Tanzania, showed stronger fidelity. However, the majority of schools across all three countries lacked clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including tools and indicators to assess their own progress and areas of continuous improvements at school level. A teacher in Malawi emphasized this:

"We have no clear indicators or structured monitoring tools, making it difficult to evaluate how effectively we implement the programme." (KII, Malawi)

In Zambia, one respondent pointed out that since the CwR is not standalone, there is no separate monitoring for it. They further noted that the

expected practice is for district education board secretaries (DEBS) to incorporate the monitoring of how teachers were incorporating CwR in their monitoring of other programmes in schools, such as school assessments and technical supervision visits, among others. Another respondent noted that a downside to this whole process was unavailability of any specific tools or indicators. It is also not a mandatory requirement for reporting or assessment. Conversely, in Tanzania, some urban schools with structured extracurricular timetables included regular club meetings and external expert sessions, with promising informal but consistent accountability mechanisms emerging, with the potential to positively influence programme delivery.

School Leadership/management support: School leadership support emerged as a critical structural enabler influencing fidelity. Active administrative support enabled successful integration, resource allocation, and monitoring processes. For example, supportive leadership in some Tanzanian schools proactively facilitated regular programme scheduling, demonstrating how effective leadership significantly boosts fidelity. Conversely, lack of leadership support consistently undermined fidelity, as illustrated below:

"We updated our school rules to emphasize respect in classrooms and hostels. Teachers and student leaders now ensure adherence to these rules." (KII, Malawi)

"Our school has incorporated related programmes, such as inviting visitors like police officers and gender desk officers, who come to talk to the children and teach them about important topics." (KII, Tanzania)

"The administration does not support the CwR programme adequately, arguing it is non-examinable and consumes valuable classroom time." (KII, Zambia)

"Honestly no one is following up on whether we have integrated the topics or not so there is a possibility that as teachers we may not even be teaching these topics." (KII, Zambia)

Contextual responsiveness as an enabler

Cultural adaptation: Carefully balancing strict adherence to CwR components with responsiveness to local contexts seemed to facilitate implementation fidelity. Some schools have found that adapting to cultural contexts enhances local relevance and acceptance. For example, a school in Zambia that assigned boys' mentors through the 'Coaching Boys into Men' club demonstrates that it is possible to target adaptations that uphold core CwR principles while explicitly addressing local concerns about male engagement in preventing GBV. In Malawi, some schools are collaborating with parents and community groups to tackle issues related to child marriages and teenage pregnancies. These culturally informed adaptations show that fidelity does not necessarily mean rigid compliance; rather, it involves maintaining essential programme components and objectives while flexibly addressing the realities of the local context.

Teachers' personal bias and beliefs: Teachers operate within specific cultural, social, and school contexts that shape their personal values, comfort levels, and interpretations of programme content. These contextual factors influence how teachers perceive CwR and how far they feel they can go to deliver certain CwR topics (such as gender norms, power imbalances, prevention of teenage pregnancies, and sexual harassment). As observed already, in settings where community norms are conservative or resistant to gender discussions, teachers resorted to reframing or watering down CwR content, even if they understand it. For instance, some respondents noted that they were uncomfortable to deliver certain topics they considered culturally inappropriate. Some teachers had this to say:

"As a school, we know what suits our learners. We don't just teach everything; we select topics and lessons according to what will fit the situation we are facing because our interest is to change the behaviour of our learners." (KII, Zambia)

"The CwR training provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own values regarding gender and violence. However, changing negative attitudes and ensuring that teachers do not reinforce gender stereotypes takes time." (KII, Malawi)

"At first, I thought it was up to us to put condoms in school toilets and have pills for girls, that would be difficult because for one, we are not experts. Secondly, we can't put condoms in schools, it's like we are legalizing wrong behaviour, and there are also small children using these toilets. (KII, Zambia)

This shows that even when training is provided, teachers' perceptions are shaped by cultural context, and they may adjust delivery accordingly. Therefore, continuous engagement with teachers on challenging their own beliefs and biases is necessary if fidelity is to be maintained. Conversely, in Tanzania, teachers observed that they sometimes alter delivery, not because of their biases or beliefs, but rather because learners are uncomfortable with some topics. This was demonstrated through the following sentiments:

"Some learners find it difficult to discuss sensitive topics, particularly in mixed-gender groups. There is also a need for continued training for teachers who were not part of the initial workshops." (KII, Tanzania)

"In the training we learned a lot of topics but the topic I teach is diseases because most of my topics interact with science... so I always teach sexually transmitted diseases." (KII, Tanzania)

"To overcome these challenges... gender desk mentors should train us on the first day... they explain directly the aim of the programme and make the objectives more understandable." (KII, Tanzania)

The preceding quotes from Tanzania suggest deeper issues with significant impact on implementation fidelity of CwR. In navigating classroom dynamics and cultural sensitivities, teachers may choose to avoid or downplay certain CwR topics, particularly those related to sexuality, GBV, and menstrual health. This is more prominent when teaching mixed-gender groups. This is often done to preserve classroom harmony or avoid potential discomfort among learners. In one case, a teacher chose to focus on sexually transmitted diseases within the science curriculum, likely because it felt more culturally neutral and within their comfort zone, while avoiding broader topics related to gender and power dynamics. This demonstrates that some teachers may not feel adequately prepared or supported to teach more culturally sensitive content, and therefore avoid it unless they receive targeted training and orientation.

Stakeholder ownership

Learner engagement and empowerment:

Meaningful learner participation through structured governance and peer-led activities significantly enhances ownership and fidelity. The establishment of learner councils in Zambian schools provided clear examples where active learner involvement fostered deeper engagement with CwR principles. One respondent observed as follows:

“Establishing learner councils provides learners with a platform to actively engage in discussions related to gender equality and violence, as they pertain to school governance.” (KII, Zambia)

Similarly, Tanzanian schools with peer-led clubs noted increased learner enthusiasm, engagement, and commitment to the programme's core messages.

Community and traditional leader involvement:

Active community participation was identified as critical for sustained fidelity. In Malawi, strong involvement of traditional authorities, religious leaders, and parents bolstered local legitimacy of the programme, ensuring its sustainability beyond the school gates. As one teacher explained:

“The chiefs, religious leaders, even parents are involved. This has fostered community support for the programme and its objectives.” (KII, Malawi)

Such stakeholder ownership creates an enabling environment that supports continuous and authentic implementation of CwR.

Barriers (challenges) affecting implementation fidelity

Findings of this study suggest that implementation fidelity has proven difficult due to a range of systemic, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers. While the programme's adaptation and integration into the school curricula presents a major step towards sustainability, actual delivery in schools has been marked by uneven application due to varied teacher capacity and shifting local dynamics. In the same way, while the programme's goal of promoting respectful relationships and GBV in schools is broadly embraced, its rollout has encountered several challenges, outlined below.

Inadequate training and limited refresher support:

Teachers who received the formal CwR training reported that the number of days for this training was inadequate for the amount of content provided. In addition, there is a general lack of ongoing mentorship and professional development. Many teachers reported that after their initial training, there have been no refresher sessions or support mechanisms to deepen their understanding or help them navigate complex topics such as contraceptive education and gender equality. This lack of continuous support has led to variability in programme implementation across and within schools.

Teacher turnover and knowledge transfer gaps:

One significant challenge undermining fidelity of the CwR programme is attrition, due mainly to frequent transfers of trained teachers. In all three countries, schools that initially had well-trained CwR implementers were left without much choice when trained teachers moved to different schools or into administrative positions. Although some schools attempt to bridge this gap by orienting new staff informally, these efforts are often insufficient. Teachers who did not attend the official training lack understanding of CwR's core principles and interactive pedagogy. Consequently, they often

fall back on conventional teaching methods, omitting essential components, including sexual harassment or respectful relationships. As a result, implementation becomes fragmented, and many learners are denied access to a consistent or meaningful CwR experience. While some teachers have made efforts to orient peers, knowledge transfer is not systematic. Staff turnover and the phasing out of Grades 8 and 9 in some schools in Zambia threaten continuity, particularly if trained teachers get transferred without backfilling their roles.

Challenges with integrating CwR into the school curriculum:

Although the programme encourages integration into core subjects like Social Studies, Religious Education, and Integrated Science, the actual implementation varies. CwR topics that are not already part of the school curriculum are not often integrated. It must be emphasized that in all three countries, integration of CwR into the school curriculum is yet to be comprehensive. As such, teachers and schools are encouraged to self-integrate topics into carrier subjects, as already mentioned, and as illustrated below:

"Classroom teaching also is up to the teacher's ability to integrate those topics not in the syllabus – they can choose not to. So we need to find other ways that can work better." (KII, Zambia)

"The programme is integrated in a large percentage, but due to the tight timetable, its implementation is limited. We continue working to fit it properly into the school schedule." (KII, Tanzania)

"Some participants mistakenly believed that the CwR programme was meant to be a standalone activity in schools with financial support from UNESCO. However, the MoE clarified that schools are encouraged to integrate the CwR programme into existing subjects and school activities using available in-school resources." (KII, Malawi)

Lack of resources and teaching materials: The shortage of teaching guides is a widespread issue affecting implementation fidelity. It was

established that only one or two teacher's guides are provided per school, leading to challenges in lesson preparation and standardization. In Zambia, it was noted that a single teacher guide was shared among as many as 12 teachers, which meant some had no access to the material in time for lesson preparation. While the programme encourages participatory learning methods, such as storytelling, debates, and role-plays, many schools do not have access to posters or illustrative materials necessary for these activities. In Malawi and rural Tanzania, where classrooms are often overcrowded and lack visual aids and interactive space, the problem is further compounded and compromises quality engagement with learners. The result of this situation is a watered-down version of the CwR curriculum, which subsequently relies on rote learning rather than experiential or reflective learning. Excerpts below attest:

"We were given one handbook for the entire school. I mostly rely on memory or notes." (KII, Zambia)

"When we were trained, they gave us the handbook each... but my colleague is on leave, so I am alone." (KII, Tanzania)

"We have many learners here, but the materials we received are very few." (KII, Malawi)

Learners also highlighted challenges in accessing CwR materials, as well as difficulties understanding lessons or materials presented in English. They recommended inclusion of more visual and reading materials such as posters, videos, magazines, and pamphlets in both English and local languages. Additionally, the findings show that schools in rural areas in Malawi had limited access to digital tools that could enhance understanding and improve the delivery of CwR. Teachers noted that restricted access to digital resources, such as YouTube videos, hindered their ability to enhance lesson delivery, as online materials provide alternative teaching methods and clarify content that may not be fully understood from the CwR manual. In contrast, teachers in urban or peri-urban areas were sometimes able to access videos and digital resources, making their lessons more interactive. However, in remote rural areas, the lack of electricity, projectors, or internet access forced

teachers to rely on verbal instructions, which often failed to fully capture learners' attention and resulted in learners finding CwR lessons less relatable and harder to follow. To ensure effective programme delivery, there is a need to ensure schools implementing CwR activities are adequately supported and equipped with relevant resources.

Time constraints, limited administrative support, and high workload: The challenge of integrating CwR into school curricula is further exacerbated by time constraints, competing priorities, lack of assessment mechanisms, or because teachers feel CwR is unnecessary duplication of existing syllabi and content, thus increasing the inconsistencies in delivery within and across schools. The excerpt below illustrates this:

"I personally don't integrate in my lesson plans... most of the topics are already covered especially in Social Studies. You know we only have 40 minutes per subject, so I personally go for the school syllabus." (KII, Zambia)

Some schools in Tanzania cited lack of support from the school administration as the primary reason of not integrating CwR into school timetables, as one teacher explained:

"We do our best to incorporate the programme, sometimes integrating it into regular subject lessons, which helps learners better understand the content. We also organize CwR presentations during midterm breaks to address this challenge." (KII, Tanzania)

In Zambia, teachers stated that they faced challenges attempting to balance their workload due to the increased class sizes resulting from the free education policy. This left them with little time for extra planning or integrating CwR topics into lesson plans. The following illustrates this case:

"The challenge is limited time. I have over 40 books to mark, and three classes to teach – should I spend time reading the CwR guidebook or should I focus on making my pending work?" (KII, Zambia)

"It depends on if a teacher has time. But if you are on duty on an assembly day, you will make sure you prepare and come and sensitize." (KII, Zambia)

Inconsistent delivery approaches across and within schools: Schools have adopted different delivery models, ranging from subject integration and assemblies to clubs and sensitization sessions during sports events, among others. While diversity in approach is commendable, the lack of a uniform structure makes it hard to measure the programme's overall impact or ensure that all learners are reached.

CwR programme not fully accepted and supported by all teachers: In some instances, teachers implementing CwR in Zambia seemed not to have fully accepted the programme. By implication, this means that such teachers hardly support the programme and, ultimately, do not commit fully to effective delivery in their respective schools. To express their lack of support for the programme, some teachers stated the following:

"I think maybe we can teach the learners some skills or something... maybe teach them how to sew, how to make a pad, teach them something else... it should not just be gender-based violence. We need to, I think, come up with initiatives to keep them focused." (KII, Zambia)

"... at the end of the day, I am assessed based on how many learners have passed my subject, not how many don't fight in school anymore. I am not saying it is not important to have these safe environments, but it's about prioritizing what is more important." (KII, Zambia)

Lack of confidence to deliver CwR content by some teachers: The findings also indicate that some teachers often felt ill equipped to handle sensitive cases of SRGBV, either because they lacked the training or because the school lacked a clear framework for addressing these issues. As one teacher from Malawi says:

"When a learner reports a case, we try to counsel them, but there is no formal system to escalate the issue if needed." (KII, Malawi)

Teachers personal biases and work attitude: According to some key informants, some teachers are influenced by their cultural and other beliefs, while negative attitudes towards work and resistance to change affects their ability to deliver CwR appropriately or deliver it at all, as demonstrated in the excerpt below:

"The CwR training provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own values regarding gender and violence. However, changing negative attitudes and ensuring that teachers do not reinforce gender stereotypes takes time. Continued engagement with teachers is necessary, the training was short to achieve this." (KII, Zambia)

School leadership support gaps: As previously mentioned, the role of school leadership in championing or neglecting CwR cannot be overstated. In schools where principals and administrators were either unaware of the programme's full scope or did not prioritize it among competing demands, teachers relied on their discretion to incorporate CwR lessons either in class or other extracurricular activities. This leadership vacuum meant that teachers generally lacked the institutional backing necessary to fully implement CwR. With little or no support from school administration, opportunities to integrate CwR into school-wide events, extracurricular activities, or reporting systems is often impaired.

Accessibility and isolation of rural schools: Some schools are in remote settings and gravely isolated, resulting in limited access and infrastructure. Seasonal challenges due to rains, for instance, are also a factor. Schools in these settings are often excluded from refresher trainings, visits by NGOs, or exposure to model practices from other regions. In Tanzania, for example, teachers described the logistical and financial burden associated with inviting guest speakers or professionals to support CwR sessions, noting that the school would be expected to pay for transport and overnight accommodation. Without external reinforcement or access to current materials, these schools often fall into sporadic implementation, relying on verbal

lectures and skipping experiential components of the curriculum. This presents a significant barrier to programme fidelity.

Class size: In Zambia and rural Malawi, large class sizes emerged as a barrier to effective delivery of CwR because it limited interactive or participatory learning.

Weak monitoring and reporting systems: A major systemic weakness undermining the fidelity of CwR delivery is the absence of strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms at the school level, with no structured monitoring or feedback systems for the CwR programme. Teachers highlighted the absence of reporting channels, performance indicators, or accountability mechanisms, pointing out that this has led to instances where schools assume the content is being taught without verifying actual implementation:

"There is no accountability for integrating CwR topics. I can choose to integrate or not. So in my view we mostly deliver those topics that are also part of the subjects we teach. New topics may easily be left out." (KII, Zambia)

"There is no formal reporting mechanism." (KII, Malawi)

"We don't report anywhere. I just do what I can with the learners." (KII, Tanzania)

In Zambia, some staff at the subnational level noted that they try to incorporate monitoring in other joint school visits. However, they were of the view it was not easy and not always done because of the lack of tools to do so. This lack of oversight leads to a loss of enthusiasm among teachers and, in some instances, complete omission of CwR-related content in classroom instruction. Teachers openly acknowledged that without anyone reviewing their lesson plans or observing their teaching, they did not feel compelled to integrate CwR topics. This void of accountability not only disrupts consistency, but allows trained teachers to abandon the programme altogether without much consequence. Notwithstanding the complexity of monitoring such a programme with varying implementation approaches, adaptable tools such as teacher's checklists could circumvent this challenge to a larger degree.

Cultural and social barriers: Findings suggest existence of potential tensions between the CwR programme content and cultural norms, especially in rural areas and locations that are culturally conservative, presenting a challenge for effective programme implementation and community acceptance. In all three countries, teachers described instances where parents or community members expressed strong opposition to certain topics, fearing these have the capacity to undermine their traditional values or promote undesirable behaviours. The following attests:

"Discussing gender equality with parents in our village sometimes leads to opposition as they believe it conflicts with their traditions." (KII, Malawi)

"The community still holds onto traditional gender roles, and this affects how learners engage with the programme." (KII, Tanzania)

"Some topics were very well received, like respectful relationship, GBV. But some parents, of course, had concerns, especially on comprehensive sexuality education. They feel these topics may not be appropriate, especially for children in primary (school), like the Grade 5s." (KII, Zambia)

In response, as already observed, some teachers diluted or avoided these discussions entirely to the extent of framing CwR as a programme focused on discipline and respect. While this reframing may improve short-term acceptance, it strips the programme of its most transformative elements, limiting its ability to challenge harmful gender norms and reduce SRGBV. While no major efforts were being made to address these barriers at the time of the study, some schools in Malawi and Zambia had engaged chiefs, women's groups, and parents to increase acceptance. For example:

"The learners need the involvement of parents or guardians and they have to know what we are teaching their children. So we wanted to create that rapport between us and the parents so they reinforce what we are teaching the learners in school." (KII, Zambia)



"The village chiefs, landlords, and community members are actively involved, reporting learner issues and ensuring their safety." (KII, Malawi)

School and individual levels outcomes of CwR

The CwR activities aim to increase learners' knowledge and positive attitudes and build awareness and skills related to respectful, equitable relationships and non-violence. They also assist learners to develop skills to respond appropriately when they see others perpetrating GBV (UNESCO 2022). This study collected information on some of the indicators under the programme to gauge and establish effects or outcomes of learners' exposure to it. This was critical for the purpose of establishing if implementation, although differentiated by innovation (delivery model), and to some extent delivered based on conditions and circumstances prevailing in the three countries, would in effect, still yield expected results based on the programme's contents. The CwR intended outcomes are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. CwR outcomes

Category	Outcome
Knowledge outcomes	Learners and teachers understand SRGBV, respectful relationships, consent, and rights.
Attitudinal outcomes	Reduced acceptance of violence, increased empathy, positive views on gender equality.
Behavioural outcomes	Learners show respectful behaviour, reduce bullying or violence, and report SRGBV incidents.
School climate outcomes	Improved teacher-learner relationships, safer school environments, and better peer interactions.
Reporting and support systems outcomes	More learners report abuse and use guidance and counselling services.
Empowerment outcomes	Girls and boys feel confident to speak up, set boundaries, or seek help.

School level outcomes: Knowledge, attitudes, and practices

According to teachers and learners that participated in this study, the CwR programme has contributed to meaningful shifts in school environments across the three countries. One of the reported outcomes at school level is a cultural shift in how learners and teachers communicate and interact with each other. Learners reported that respectful communication is more common, with a decline in harsh discipline and verbal abuse, as observed by the learners below:

"Even our teachers talk to us differently now – they use better language and they listen." (FGD, Zambia)

"Teachers now respect pupils, and that helps us respect them back." (FGD, Tanzania)

"I learned to talk respectfully, especially when someone is different or has a disability." (FGD, Malawi)

Another notable outcome established by learners during the FGDs was the reduction of bullying and sexual harassment in the school environment.

Many learners reported that bullying, especially of girls, has significantly declined. Equally, harassment, inappropriate touching, and verbal abuse are being called out more often by both teachers and fellow learners, as attested below:

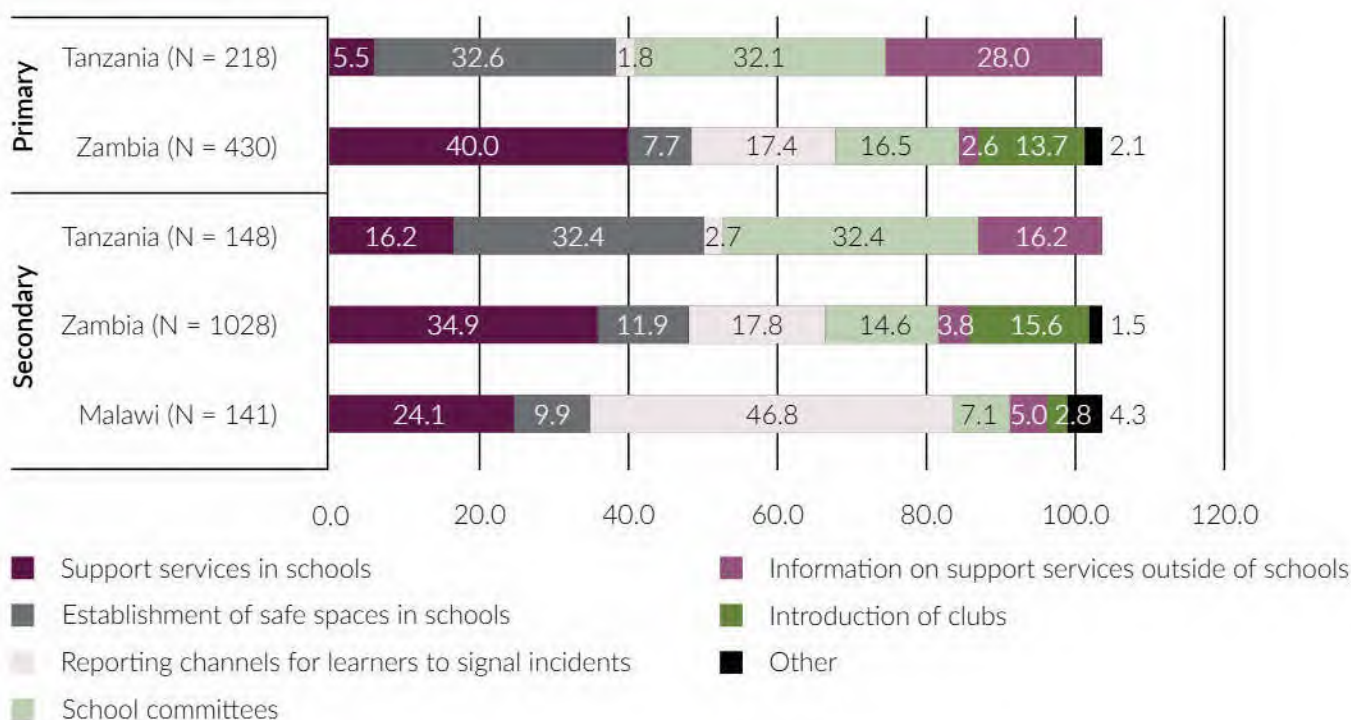
"Before, boys would beat girls at the back of the class – now that has stopped." (FGD, Zambia)

"Some of the boys now protect the girls from harassment instead of joining in." (FGD, Malawi)

Most schools have also established various mechanisms for addressing SRGBV, as depicted in Figure 1, which shows that in Zambia, the most common way schools address SRGBV is through offering support services in the school such as counsellors³ or social workers at both primary and secondary schools. In Malawian secondary schools, reporting channels have been established for pupils to use. Tanzanian schools (both primary and secondary) have established safe spaces, school committees, and school clubs, with provision of information on support services outside of school.

³ In most cases, these are teachers with in-service training in Guidance and Counselling. They are part of the school staffing structure on government payroll.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of how schools address violence disaggregated by education level



Individual level outcomes: Knowledge, attitudes, and practices

During the FGDs, learners identified that CwR has enhanced their knowledge, shaped positive attitudes, and promoted respectful practices. Many learners across all three countries reported gaining a deeper understanding of GBV and their rights, with statements like:

"I now know my rights because of the same topics." (FGD, Malawi)

"It teaches us how to respect others in the community." (FGD, Tanzania)

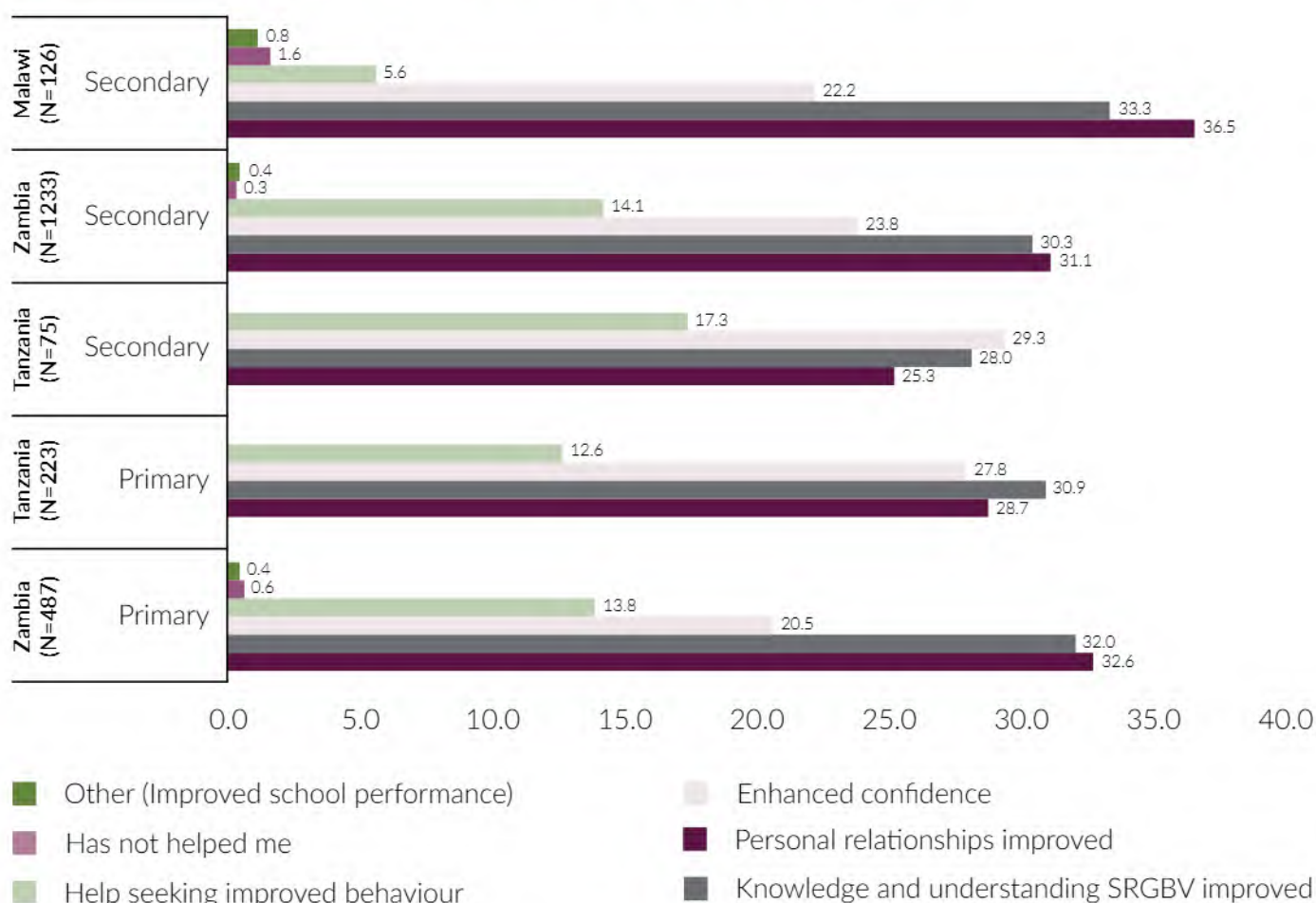
Learners also described improved interpersonal relationships, better communication, and the ability to manage conflict peacefully. In addition, the programme has boosted learners' confidence, with several reporting that they can now speak up, protect themselves non-violently, and stand up for others. These outcomes indicate that CwR is equipping learners with essential life skills that contribute to safer, more inclusive school environments, and beyond.

Similarly, in the survey, learners were asked to state how they have been helped by CwR exposure in terms of "knowledge and understanding of SRGBV", "interpersonal relationships", "help seeking behaviour", and "whether their confidence had been enhanced." As seen in Figure 2, secondary school learners, especially from Malawi and Zambia, reported that CwR has helped them to improve interpersonal relationships and increase their understanding of SRGBV. CwR has also improved their confidence. Notably, less than 2% of the learners in secondary school in Malawi and Zambia felt the programme had no effect. This observed impact in secondary school learners is similar to the reports among primary school learners, particularly in Zambia. Of significance, however, is that both secondary and primary school learners reported that CwR had little impact on their help-seeking behaviour. These results correlate with those from the FGDs, where learners reported lack of trust and confidence in reporting systems, causing some learners to shun their use, as noted in the following statements:

"Sometimes, we do not feel safe to talk about our problems in class because there is no one to listen to us without judgment." (FGD, Tanzania)

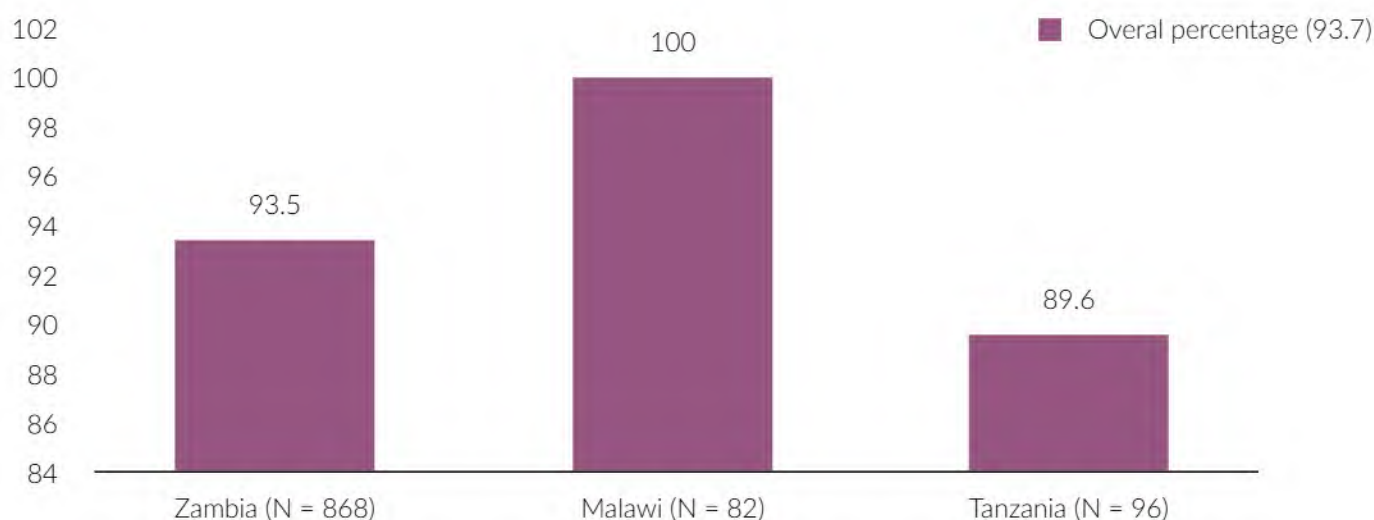
"When we report, they don't do anything about it. So we just stop reporting." (FGD, Zambia)

Figure 2. Percent distribution of selected outcomes of the CwR by education level



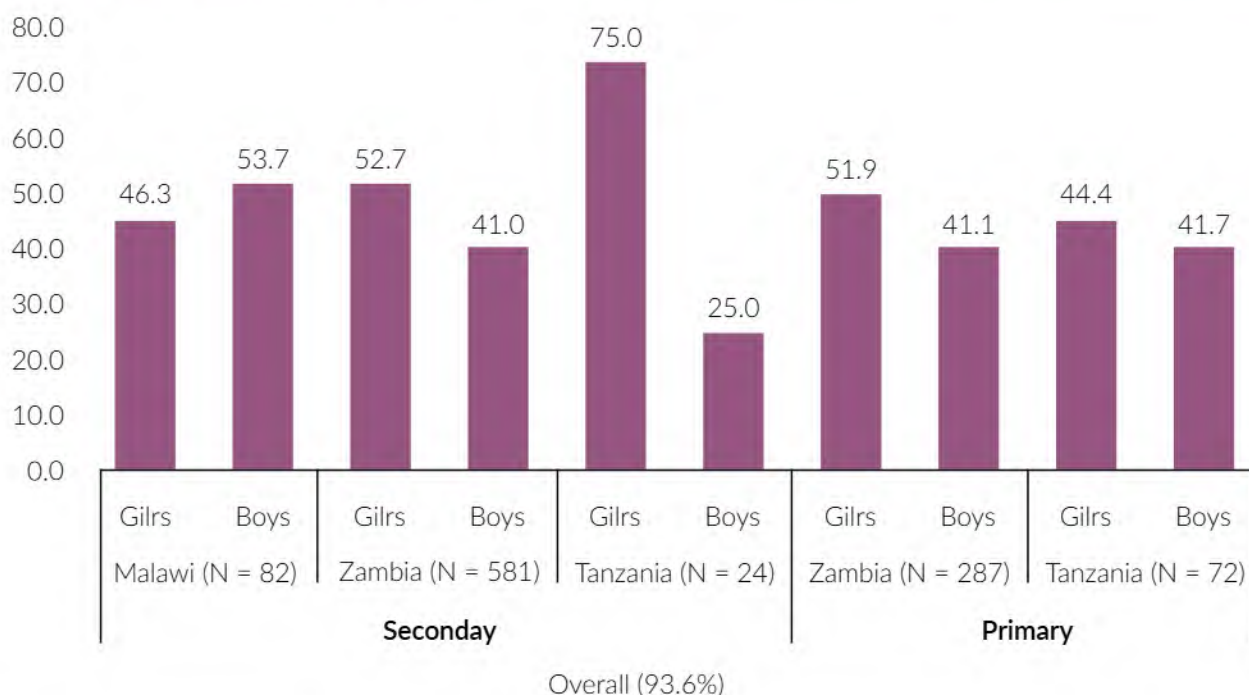
The study found that CwR has contributed to learners' attitudes toward SRGBV, particularly in challenging the acceptability of violence in relationships. For instance, unlike national trends from demographic and health surveys (DHS) that reveal a notable proportion of adults in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia justify wife-beating, nearly all learners participating in the study rejected such beliefs, as revealed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of learners who disagreed with the statement "it is acceptable for a boy to hit his girlfriend"



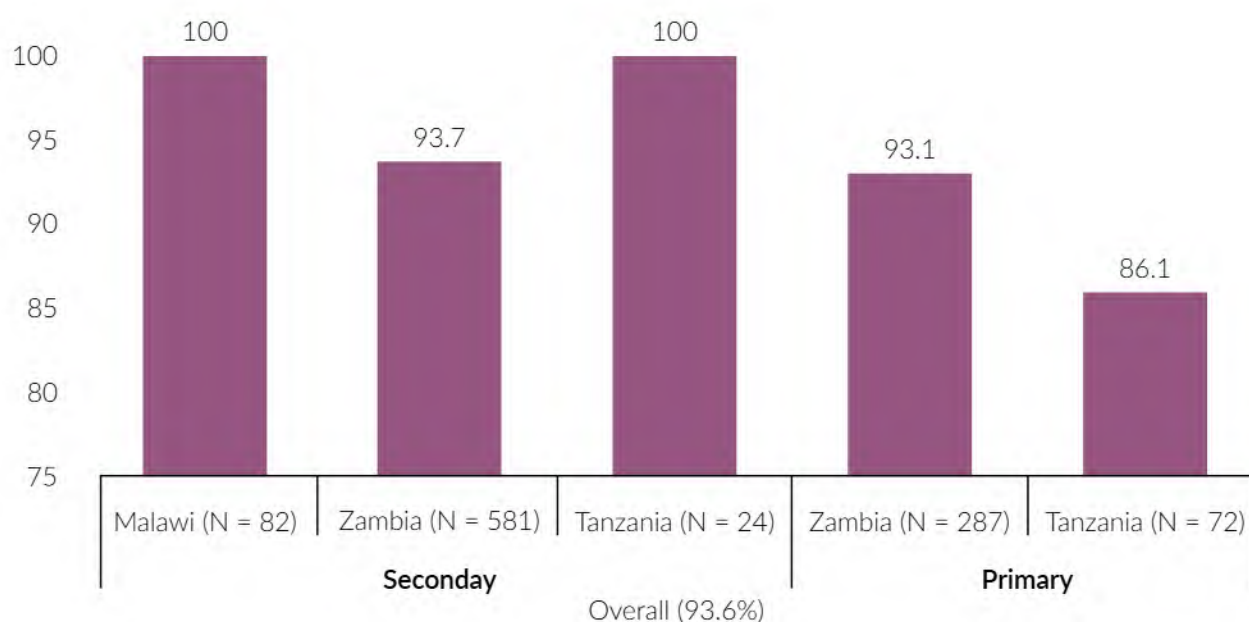
Although gender differences were minimal, boys in Tanzania at secondary level showed slightly more tolerance (25%), as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Percent of distribution of learners who disagreed with the statement “it is acceptable for a boy to hit his girlfriend” by sex and education level



Importantly, Figure 5 reveals that learners in secondary schools were more likely to reject violence compared to those in primary schools, highlighting the programme's positive influence as learners' progress through their education. However, both girls and boys at an earlier age in all three countries do not subscribe to violence against girls.

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of learners who disagreed with the statement “it is acceptable for a boy to hit his girlfriend” disaggregated by education level across the countries





Other important indicators examined in this study are the frequency of threatening violence between boys and girls and whether learners report violence when they witness it. While the data shows that threats of violence do occur, they are not widespread or constant, as shown in Figures 6 and 7. Despite these findings suggesting that learners have improved knowledge on SRGBV and positive attitudes, these have not yet translated into acceptable practices in reality, since, while not rampant, SRGBV remains present and therefore requires continued attention. The fact that both boys and girls engage in threatening behaviour, albeit at different levels, underlines the need for holistic, gender-inclusive violence prevention strategies in schools.

In terms of reporting violence, Figure 8 reveals that more than half of the learners at secondary level indicate they always report physical violence when they witness or experience it. However, at the primary level, this varied significantly, suggesting a need for deeper investigation into cultural or programmatic barriers, particularly in Tanzania. In addition, Figure 9 shows that girls were more likely than boys to report violence at both primary and secondary levels. This gender gap highlights the importance of targeted efforts to encourage boys to report violence and seek help. When all learners, regardless of gender, feel empowered to report violence incidents, it fosters a safer school environment, thus deterring potential perpetrators and ensuring victims receive the support they need.

Figure 6. Percent distribution of learners saying 'Never', 'Some of the time', and 'Always' to the statement "Boys threaten girls and call them names in school always" by education level

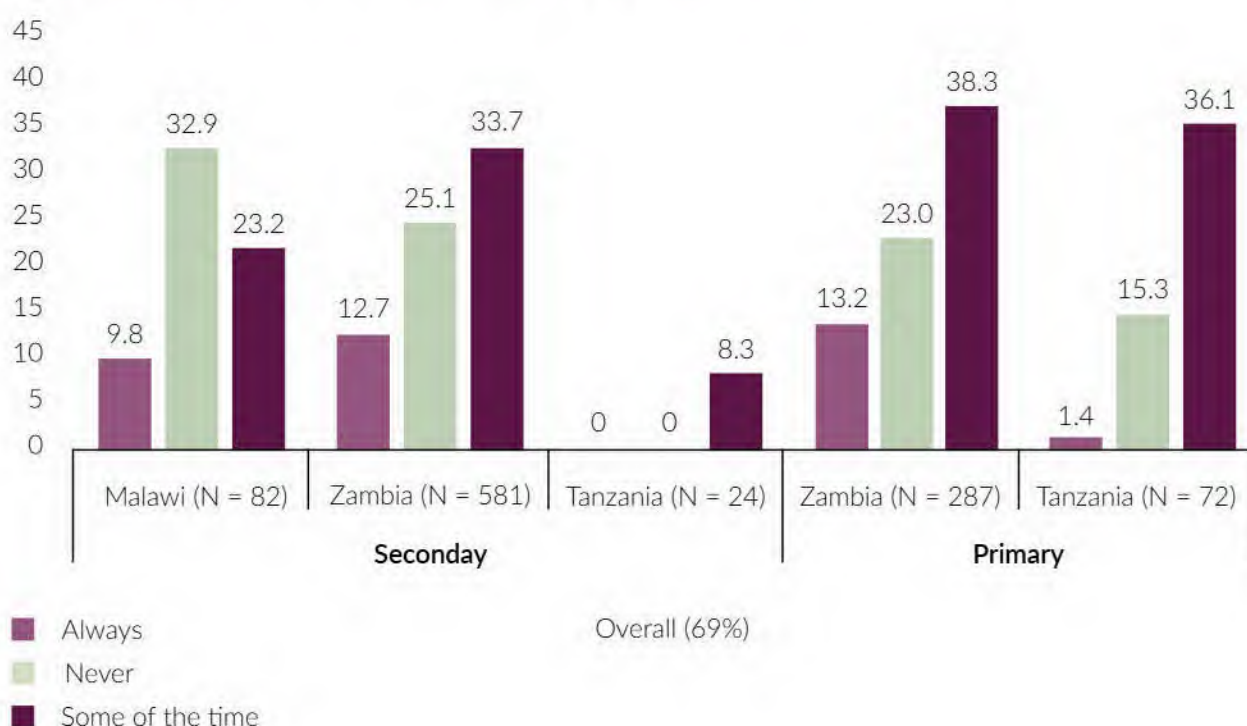


Figure 7. Percent distribution of learners saying 'Never', 'Some of the time', and 'Always' to the statement "Girls threaten boys and call them names in school always" by education level

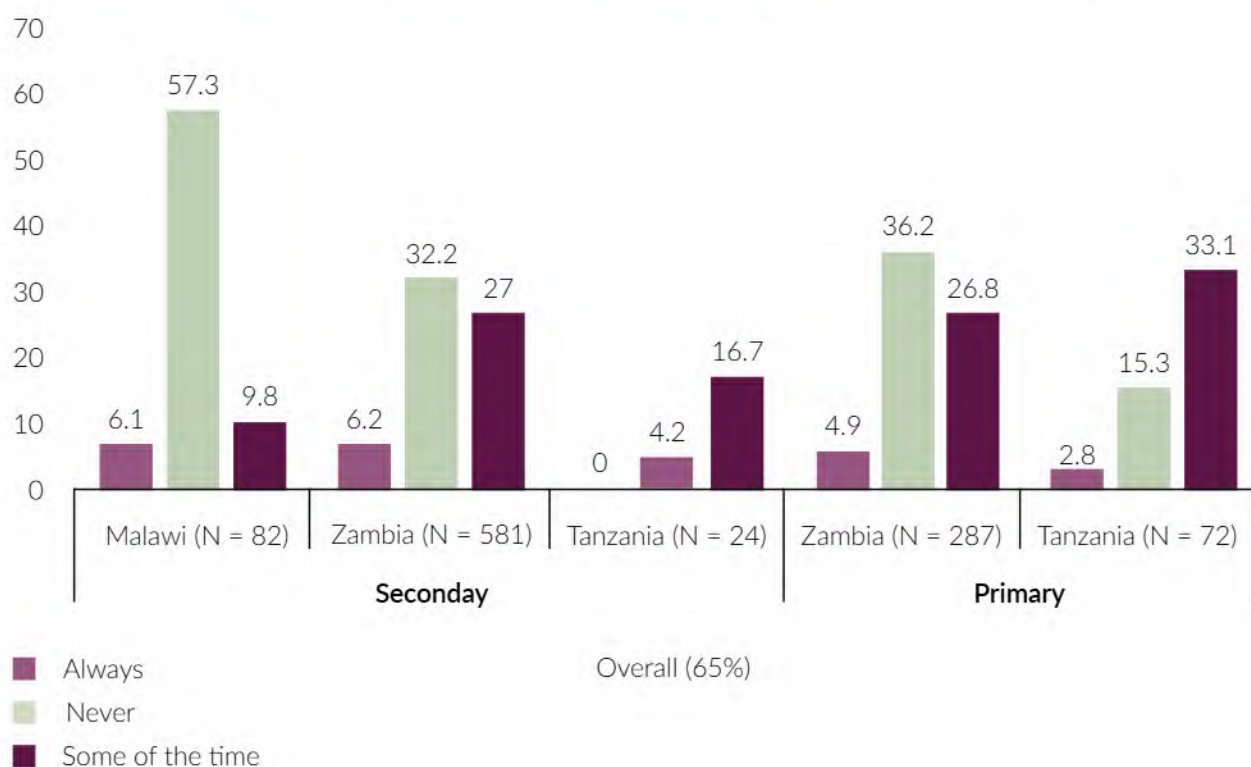


Figure 8. Percent distribution of learners that indicated 'Always' to the statement "Boys/girls report incidents of physical violence when experienced or witnessed" by education level

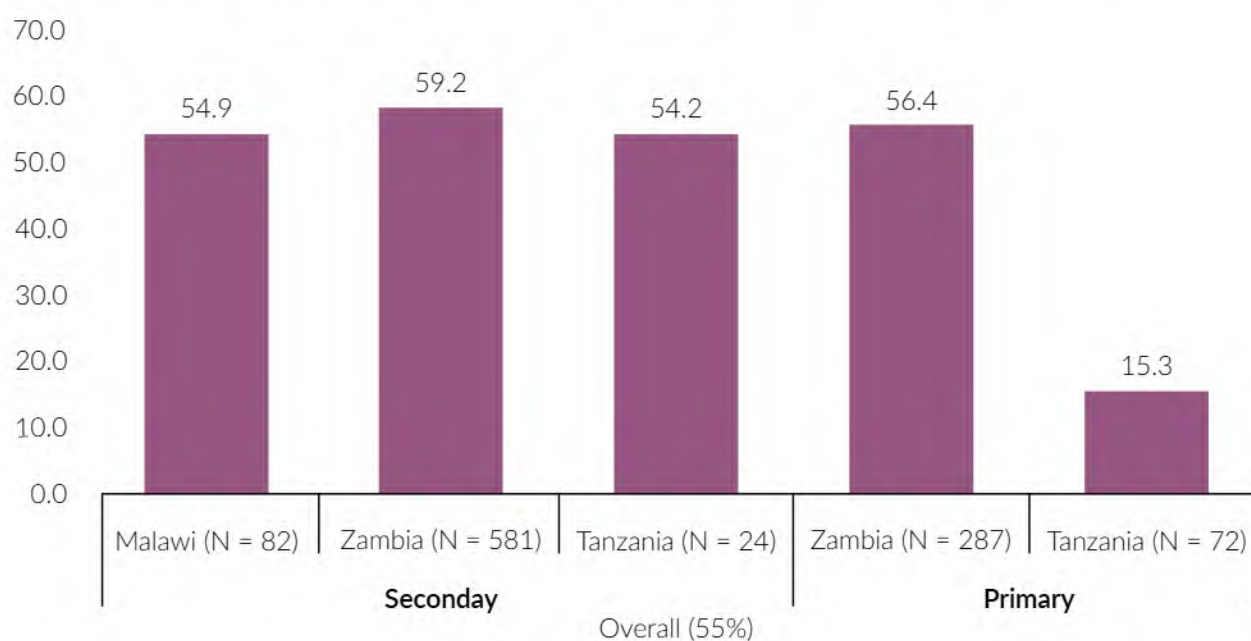
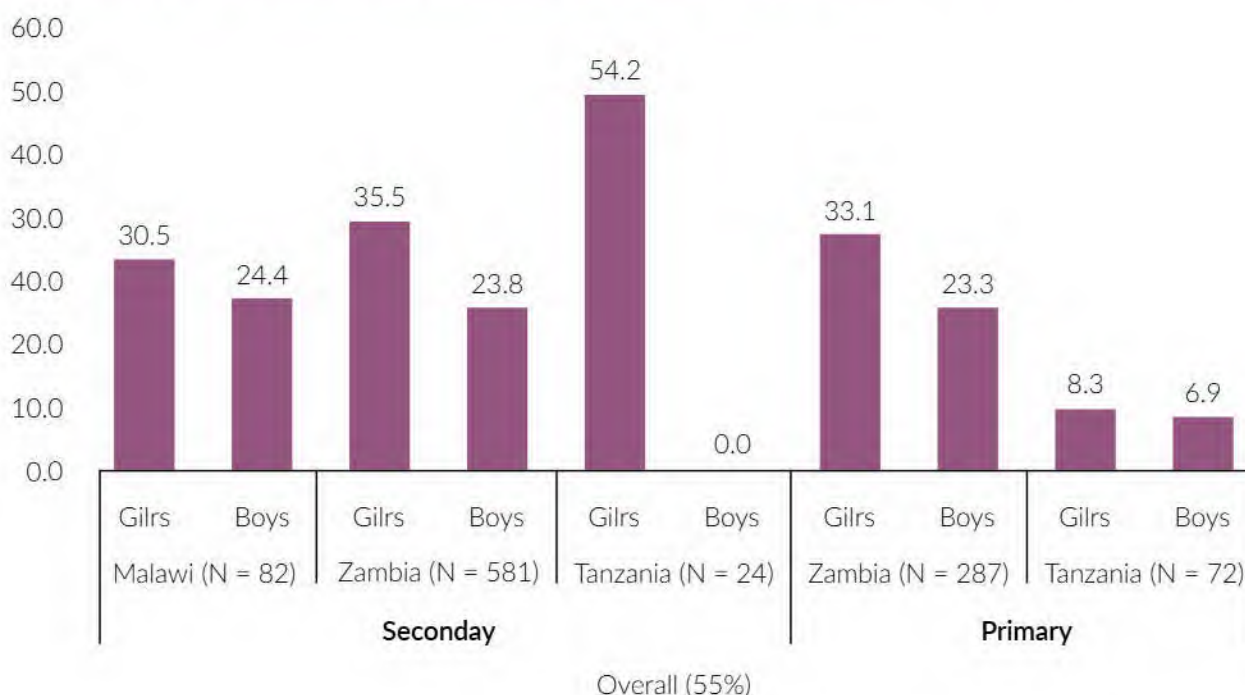


Figure 9. Percent distribution of learners that indicated 'Always' to the statement "Boys/girls report incidents of physical violence when experienced or witnessed" by sex and education level



This section has illustrated that the CwR programme has positively influenced learners by improving their relationships, knowledge of SRGBV, confidence, and help-seeking behaviour, regardless of how it was delivered. However, some of these outcomes may also have been shaped by other initiatives or learners' exposure to external campaigns, such as human rights and child protection clubs in Zambia and the Tuseme programme in Tanzania. Therefore, future studies – particularly evaluations – should account for these influences in order to better isolate CwR's specific impact.

Monitoring and sustainability of the programme

Programme monitoring and accountability
Monitoring and accountability of the CwR programme varies across the three countries, with notable gaps at school level despite national-level efforts. In Zambia, for example, while CwR is integrated into the LSHE curriculum and reportedly embedded in the National Management Information System, school-level monitoring is inconsistent and often informal. Similarly, some key informants at subnational level noted that they

review lesson plans for CwR content and document observations and improvement recommendations in teacher assessment forms when they visit schools, but these visits are sporadic. In addition, these informants highlighted weak accountability systems and a lack of clear guidance on tools or what should be monitored. Some stated as follows:

"CwR is not standalone, and that is how we treat its monitoring... we touch on every programme in that school, and advise where we see a gap, but I must say, there is need to nurture a tool for monitoring CwR, not necessarily developing another tool but just nurturing what is there to include CwR components." (KII, Zambia)

"We want to monitor not only how the CwR topics are implemented but their overall wide impact, but we have many challenges. For example, how can we monitor without guidance on monitoring tools?" (KII, Zambia)

"There was no one monitoring the integration of CwR. There is no accountability system in place at the school level or beyond." (KII, Zambia)

In practice, monitoring tends to rely on the interest of individual staff or verbal updates, rather than structured tools or reporting systems. In Malawi, the programme similarly lacks routine school-level monitoring, and teachers and subnational actors remain largely unaware of what should be monitored or reported, as observed by this teacher:

“Honestly no one is following up on whether we have integrated the topics or not, so there is a possibility that as teachers we may not even be teaching these topics.” (KII, Malawi)

In contrast, Tanzania presents a more coordinated monitoring structure. CwR is delivered under UNESCO’s broader Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) programme and monitored through an established national system through a well-coordinated reporting process, whereby UNESCO works closely with the school coordinator who submits routine reports on specific indicators, which UNESCO then reports to the MoE. While this practice is promising, this approach still faces challenges in aligning national reporting with classroom-level realities and ensuring routine feedback to implementers. Further, the study found that this elaborate monitoring system is unknown to teachers, especially in public schools, who indicated that there is no clearly defined monitoring and accountability system.

These findings suggest that the lack of oversight may potentially have led to inconsistent implementation of the programme across different schools. It is therefore compelling to recommend the strengthening of existing systems to ensure national level indicators are cascaded to all levels, with teachers and subnational level coordinators made aware of the indicators, tools, and reporting process. At school level, establishing functional programme (operational) monitoring systems will require bringing on board school administrators, who are critical in not only enforcing accountability, but also the sustainability of the systems.

Across all three countries, the integration of CwR into existing subjects, rather than treating it as a standalone programme, complicates fidelity tracking and impact attribution. Effective monitoring in this context requires adapted tools such as revised lesson observation checklists, teacher reflection forms, and curriculum-mapping templates to capture how CwR principles are embedded in

teaching. Strengthening school-level monitoring will require increased involvement of school administrators, clearer communication of indicators, and stronger collaboration between partners and the MoE at all levels to ensure data is used for learning and continuous improvement.

Sustainability practices

Countries under study in this research have demonstrated sustainability practices at different levels, some of which are recognized in this report as long-term, while others hold a promise for improving sustainability, and therefore worth considering for further strengthening.

Long-term sustainability

Teacher capacity building: Teachers were selected and trained on CwR principles and how to deliver it in all three countries. The training days varied from country to country, ranging from three to five days. The number of trained teachers per school, although small, allows for sustained implementation, more so if these teachers periodically receive refresher training or mentorships, and are sufficiently supported to orient other teachers in the school. Some teachers are, however, not orienting peers after training. It is imperative that as a sustainability measure, trained teachers are also made to account for peer-to-peer capacity building. This can be achieved by incorporating in-house training indicators on CwR in the existing tools. For example, in Zambia, teachers report on professional development, where they indicate what training they have received, from where, and by whom.

Integration into existing subjects: In all three countries, there is a clear understanding that CwR must not be delivered as a standalone programme. As such, teachers are encouraged to deliver it through carrier subjects, which fosters sustainability. In addition to successes recorded in integrating CwR in the LSHE curricula across the countries, there is a need for robust and consistent integration in delivery subjects, rather than leaving subject integration to teachers, especially in instances where certain CwR topics are not part of the subject’s syllabus already, such as in the case of Malawi and Zambia. Some schools in Malawi have ensured that the CwR principles are part of their school rules, while some schools in Tanzania

have incorporated them in school timetables. In Tanzania, CwR has been integrated into the broader government-led Safe Schools Framework/ initiative to address SRGBV, where it contributes directly to enhancing safety and security through the establishment of school safety and security desks. Although only established in some schools, these desks play a crucial role in institutionalizing child protection and gender-responsive practices within schools. This integration has embedded the programme into the existing curriculum and activities, thereby ensuring sustainability, as highlighted below:

“...what we encourage our teachers is that they should find time to integrate CwR topics in what we call the carrier subjects.” (KII, Zambia)

“Trained teachers are encouraged to integrate ‘Connect with Respect’ approaches and activities into existing school subjects such as LSE as well as school activities such as extracurricular clubs and morning assemblies.” (KII, Malawi)

It should be noted, however, that while embedding or encouraging teachers to embed CwR into subjects promotes sustainability in theory, in practice, the programme lacks institutional anchoring. In both Malawi and Zambia, schools reported that implementation ceased when trained teachers were transferred or reassigned, exposing a critical gap in systemic ownership. Furthermore, without clear accountability mechanisms or regular monitoring, CwR delivery becomes inconsistent and dependent on personal initiative. As a result, despite integration into subjects, school rules, or timetables, it risks fading out over time, especially in the absence of refresher trainings, leadership involvement, and institutional support structures to reinforce implementation regardless of staff changes. This undermines the long-term sustainability that the integration model aims to achieve.

Integration of CwR into national education systems and curricula: Efforts have been made to ensure CwR is integrated into national curricula and that it is perceived as a cross-cutting aspect in education, supplementing other curricula such as LSE in Malawi and Tanzania and LSHE in Zambia.

In Tanzania and Zambia, attempts have been made to integrate CwR in teacher professional training curricula, offering a more sustainable approach to CwR training. While this holistic approach ensures that CwR is sustained over time, it does need to be bolstered by ministries of education continuing to build a culture of prioritizing implementation of CwR activities in teachers as a means to achieving positive learning outcomes. Where CwR is not fully integrated in the curriculum, teachers tend to not include it in their lessons, citing limited time, limited reference resources, and high workloads due to high teacher-pupil ratios as limiting factors for the quality and consistent delivery of CwR. As one key informant explained:

“Some teachers are resistant to change. They will always find an excuse for not doing what they are supposed to do, but over time, it becomes normal and they stop complaining. The principles of CwR are in the curricula and so, they (teachers) will align too”. (KII, Zambia)

Strong alignment with key education and national policies: CwR principles are strongly aligned with policies and strategies in all three countries, positioning the CwR tool as critical for actualizing their governments' aspirations. However, although this strong alignment works to CwR's sustainability advantage, there is still a need to continuously engage with relevant authorities in these countries to bridge the gap between policy and practice, shifting the dependency on partners for operational costs, as this jeopardizes sustainability in the long term.

Promising sustainability practices

Several innovative practices that promise enhanced sustainability of CwR have been observed, including:

Integration of CwR into the exams: In Zambia, UNESCO has worked with the Examination Council of Zambia to incorporate some CwR topics into national exams. This is a critical step that holds much promise, since all schools will then be brought on board to ensure sustained delivery. As one key informant points out:

"We have supported the Examination Council of Zambia to integrate topics in the national examinations. It's important to understand there is no subject called CwR, the tool, as we call it, supplements the existing curriculum." (KII, Zambia)

Integration into teacher professional training:

In Zambia, with support from UNESCO, the MoE has incorporated CwR training in teacher training colleges. When fully scaled up, this will address the significant challenge of insufficient teachers to deliver CwR or teacher transfer challenges as every teacher, irrespective of their areas of specialization, will be equipped with skills and knowledge relevant to achieving CwR objectives, ultimately improving inclusive access to education and improved outcomes for all learners. Tanzania has also developed an online self-taught programme for teachers to gain CwR skills and knowledge. According to key informants, this development is an attempt to improve programme sustainability by providing more teachers with access to training at no cost to the government and more access to CwR materials, thereby addressing the challenge of limited access to resources, among other advantages. However, as the Tanzanian approach is digital and self-taught, there is also a need to raise awareness among teachers on the availability of such a web portal. In addition, there need to be mechanisms in place such as making the online training compulsory and ensuring rural schools with internet challenges are not left behind.

Creation of learner (student) councils: Once scaled up, this has the potential to sustain not only CwR implementation, but CwR outcomes, given that these councils enhance accountability for CwR principles to be applied in schools and foster peer-to-peer learning among learners. However, without proper training and materials to use, these platforms can easily become conduits of misinformation and perpetuate more harm.

Stakeholder involvement: In Malawi, it was noted that the involvement of parents and chiefs yielded more sustained impacts of the CwR principles in schools, with this engagement fostering reinforcement and support for school actions. In Zambia, schools collaborate with local clinics, police, and NGOs to reinforce lessons and provide additional support, legitimizing the importance for the programme for the learners and the parents and encouraging sustainability.

While these sustainability mechanisms exist, there are significant weaknesses that threaten the long-term viability of these efforts. Firstly, lack of sustained funding, particularly for expanding teacher training, mentorship, retraining, and routine monitoring, as well as insufficient resources to aid implementation means that many schools struggle to continue implementing CwR activities effectively. The study results reveal that all three countries depend on external support to train teachers and access necessary materials. Without external support, materials and training for teachers and learners are scarce. Secondly, teacher turnover and limited training opportunities lead to knowledge gaps, making it difficult to maintain consistency in programme delivery. Thirdly, the cultural tension on some CwR topics and principles, prompting resistance from parents and some learners, further weakens sustainability, since such norms may likely hinder full acceptance of the programme's goals. Finally, while school-based initiatives are in place, there is limited institutionalization at school level. This is especially apparent in Tanzania and Zambia, where only a few sampled schools demonstrated incorporation of the principles of CwR into school rules and established mechanisms like the Gender Desk at St Maria in Tanzania, for example, where learners access information and report GBV cases. This limited institutionalization at school level poses a significant threat to the sustainability of the CwR programme. In order to foster true sustainability, there must be system-wide integration (not just curricular), including procedural and cultural integration, to ensure CwR is part of the school's identity and not an add-on led by a few individuals, organizations, or interested entities.

Policy and strategic alignment

Countries are moving towards ensuring that learning environments are conducive to optimize learners' experiences and learning outcomes. CwR aligns strongly with educational policies and strategies in all three countries with the aim of creating more equitable, inclusive, and safe learning environments, irrespective of geographical location of schools. The following are examples of such policies and strategies:

In Malawi, the **National Girls' Education Strategy** (2014-2018), which was updated in 2022, promotes girls' education by addressing barriers that prevent girls from accessing and completing



education and includes measures to enhance community awareness, provide scholarships, build safe school environments, and implement child protection mechanisms (Ministry of Education, 2022). Similarly, the country's **guidelines for managing SRGBV** aim to mitigate and prevent SRGBV and create a conducive learning environment, while providing guidance on how SRGBV should be managed in education settings.

In Tanzania, the CwR aligns with the **Education Circular No. 2 of 2021**, which signals the government's commitment to readmitting children and young people in school. In addition, in February 2022, the MoE released a **Readmission Policy** for children and young people who had left primary or secondary schools to ensure they could return and complete their education (Ngaza, B., and Mwila, P. M., 2022). CwR also aligns strongly with the current **Education Policy**, which focuses on enhancing the policy guidelines on school safety and security, the national school health policy guidelines, and safer school policy, as well as the national investment agenda on adolescents' health and well-being. In addition, CwR in Tanzania is integrated as a component of UNESCO's **O³ programme**, which aims to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for adolescents and young people.

In Zambia, the **Education Act of 2011** emphasizes establishing a learners' code of conduct that protects the interests of the learner and any involved party (teachers). The Act prohibits corporal punishment, promotes protection of learners, teachers, and all staff from GBV, and indicates that schools must offer guidance and counselling services to all learners. All these provisions aim to ensure the creation of a disciplined and purposeful school environment that improves and maintains the quality of learning, while safeguarding both the learners and the teachers and auxiliary staff who come into contact with learners. In addition, the **MoE's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan** includes strategies aimed at combating SGBV by strengthening child protection policies and ensuring safety for all learners in all educational institutions. The plan also aims to sensitize schools on child protection policies to prevent abuse and violence against learners. It includes promotion of gender equality in education, ensuring that both boys and girls have access to safe and inclusive learning environments (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2022).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary of key findings

The CwR programme offers a unique opportunity to tackle SRGBV in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. As a holistic and preventative educational approach, CwR empowers learners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster respectful relationships, gender equality, and non-violent conflict resolution. By integrating gender-responsive education into school curricula and wider policy, the programme challenges harmful gender norms, equips learners to recognize and report GBV, and promotes inclusivity in learning environments. Through teacher training, learner engagement, and community participation, CwR is driving positive behavioural and attitudinal shifts among both learners and educators.

However, despite the notable progress made, the programme still faces significant challenges that threaten its long-term success and scalability. One of the primary obstacles is cultural resistance, as deeply entrenched gender norms and traditional beliefs often conflict with the programme's objectives. In many rural and conservative communities, discussions on gender equality, SRGBV prevention, and girls' empowerment are met with scepticism or outright opposition. Without continuous community engagement, sensitization, and stakeholder involvement, the programme risks being misunderstood, resisted, or even dismissed altogether.

Additionally, inconsistencies in programme delivery pose a major hurdle to achieving standardized, high-quality implementation. Frequent teacher transfers, limited access to teaching materials, and inadequate follow-up training result in disruptions in learning and weakened programme effectiveness. Many schools lack the financial and human resources necessary to sustain CwR activities consistently, leading to uneven implementation across different regions. To counter this, institutionalizing continuous teacher training for both in- and pre-service teachers and embedding CwR within national education policies is essential for ensuring programme continuity and long-term impact.

Furthermore, cultural adaptation and engagement with local stakeholders are essential for reducing resistance and fostering community-driven ownership of the programme. In many communities, deep-rooted gender norms and socio-cultural beliefs influence attitudes towards GBV and gender equality. To ensure successful alignment, integration, and acceptance, schools must consider collaborating with parents, religious leaders, traditional chiefs, and local organizations. Engaging key community figures in discussions around SRGBV prevention helps bridge generational divides, dispel misconceptions about gender equality, and create a shared commitment to fostering safe and respectful learning environments. Similarly, despite the CwR training providing an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own values on gender and violence, and considering that changing values is a lengthy process, teacher training should also interrogate and place more emphasis on values clarification and how best to handle issues of gender and violence.

To maximize the impact of CwR and ensure its long-term sustainability, a multi-stakeholder approach is crucial. Governments, education ministries, school administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders, NGOs, and international organizations need to collaborate to address the root causes of GBV in schools. This includes tackling socio-cultural barriers, strengthening SRGBV reporting mechanisms, promoting gender-sensitive school policies, and fostering a culture of zero tolerance for violence and discrimination. Schools cannot operate in isolation; instead, they must be supported by communities and national institutions to create safe, inclusive, and gender-equitable learning environments. Additionally, countries can benefit from and leverage multi-sectoral collaborations involving ministries, institutions, and communities by coming up with contextualized interventions and solutions.

CwR intends to build knowledge of available reporting mechanisms and services, thereby creating demand for them. However, the study has revealed that while some schools have formal mechanisms of reporting cases, mostly through designated members of staff, in none of the three countries are reporting and monitoring systems

well cascaded to the schools. This results in monitoring and accountability of delivery an ad hoc event, suggesting a need to strengthen such mechanisms and popularize them at school level so that both learners and teachers are aware of existing channels and processes.

Without scaling up implementation efforts, expanding teacher training programmes, and institutionalizing best practices, the hard-earned gains of CwR could be lost. Accordingly, it is imperative to embrace innovation and drive policy reforms to ensure every child, regardless of gender, can learn in a safe, inclusive, and respectful school environment. The future of gender-responsive education in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia depends on immediate, sustained, and collaborative efforts to make SRGBV-free schools a reality for all.

Policy and practice recommendations

Effective CwR implementation relies not only on compliance with predefined components, but also on supportive institutional structures, culturally-sensitive adaptations, and rooted stakeholder engagement. Strengthening structural enablers such as continuous teacher training, robust resource allocation, integrated monitoring systems, and proactive leadership are fundamental. Without addressing these dimensions, even well-designed adaptations risk compromising the programme's transformative potential. Future implementation must prioritize fidelity-sensitive scaling, where contextual adjustments are systematically evaluated against baseline standards to ensure equitable impact. Specifically, the following recommendations, based on insights from participants and the research team's analytical review, are provided. The recommendations are organized into policy and practical levels, with each level further grouped under five thematic areas: (1) Curriculum, teaching and learning; (2) Enabling environment (policies/laws); (3) Partnerships and participation; (4) School climate, including incident reporting and response; and (5) Evidence and data.

Policy level recommendations

These are systemic, structural, or high-level actions requiring national or institutional decisions and resources.

Curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Institutionalize teacher capacity-building: Embed CwR in pre- and in-service training, with regular refreshers to counteract staff turnover as well as keep teachers regularly updated. While progress has been made so far in Tanzania and Zambia with the incorporation of CwR in teacher professional development, there is a need to formalize and scale these initiatives at national level.
- Advocate for inclusion of CwR topics in national exams to incentivise compliance: If examinable, it is hoped that teachers will be compelled to teach all relevant topics, while learners will also be compelled to internalize lessons that subsequently translate to behaviour change.
- National curricula integration: Continue engaging ministries of education to formally integrate CwR topics (including consent and cyberbullying) in forthcoming curriculum reviews. This must also include training of curriculum developers to ensure they understand the importance of CwR and support its comprehensive consideration in the broader national curriculum and subsequently the delivery and monitoring tools.

Enabling environment (policies/laws)

- Lobby government for local financing: Engage relevant government ministries in all three countries to allocate domestic resources towards the integration and expanded implementation of the CwR programme. Dedicated funding within education sector plans is required for CwR materials, training, and monitoring.

Partnerships and participation

- Strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration: Foster coordinated engagement across education, health, and social welfare sectors as well as communities to pool resources, enhance implementation, and tackle the root causes of SRGBV.
- In the absence of a national budget, ministries of education in the three counties should explore leveraging partnerships with NGOs and international agencies to subsidize costs, especially for rural schools.



School climate, including incident reporting and response

- Promote inter-ministerial coordination, particularly among ministries of education, gender, social welfare, and health, as well as coordination with relevant NGOs and law enforcement agencies to support integrated responses to SRGBV.
- Align school-level implementation with community-based violence prevention strategies to strengthen system-wide consistency and support of responsive measures.
- Engage with the MoE to lobby for institutionalization of school counsellors where this does not already exist. In Zambia, for instance, while it is a statutory requirement to have a Guidance and Counselling teacher in the school, it remains unclear if this teacher is a formally trained counsellor with a practicing license to guarantee that they are able to professionally offer psychosocial counselling to SRGBV-affected learners. What is clear, however, is that these teachers do refer complex cases externally to relevant institutions, such as health facilities or the police Victim Support Units.

- Lobby for strengthened enforcement of zero-tolerance policies for SRGBV and mandate reporting mechanisms in schools. While several policies do exist, such as the Zambia Education Act and various teachers' and learners' codes of conduct, enforcement gaps persist.

Evidence and data

- Formalize M&E for CwR: Notwithstanding that CwR is not a standalone initiative, it is imperative that its monitoring is effectively nested in existing M&E systems, particularly of the mediums through which CwR is currently implemented in all three countries. This formalization must also consider the adaptive nature of CwR implementation at school level. Therefore, M&E indicators must be curated in a way that focuses on capturing implementation fidelity in terms of content and content delivery.

Practical level recommendations

These are school-level, operational, or implementation-focused actions that can be taken at the programme or local level:

Curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Address the material gaps: Ensure all schools (especially rural) receive adequate teaching and learning materials and sufficient time for interactive learning sessions. This can be achieved by working with different partners that can support additional printing and distribution of materials and by engaging with the school administrators to ensure integration into school curricula, including through the timetable for school activities, which is likely to improve consistent implementation.
- Translate learner handbooks into local languages: Promote inclusivity and comprehension by translating CwR materials into commonly spoken local languages. This action will ensure effective communication and enhance participation from learners. For example, some learners noted that they do not understand CwR lessons because they are delivered in English.
- Build the capacity of curriculum developers, reviewers, and trainers: The study has shown that standalone implementation of the CwR programme is neither realistic nor sustainable in formal education settings. Since integrating CwR into the curriculum and policy implementation framework is perhaps the strongest feasible way to ensure its sustainable implementation, capacity-building for curriculum developers, reviewers, and implementers on integrating CwR components is recommended.
- Strengthen teacher capacity by providing continuous training for both in- and pre-service teachers: Organize training workshops for teachers through peer-to-peer and mentorship models and include refresher courses from time to time. This will ensure that educators remain well-equipped to deliver CwR effectively, although the frequent transfer and high turnover of trained teachers poses a significant challenge, often leaving schools without adequately trained personnel to continue the programme. Nevertheless, the trainings may include trauma-informed pedagogical approaches when teaching about GBV, how to deal with potential disclosures, how to take care of their own well-being, and the role of teachers (for example, what is expected of them and what they should not do as well as channels for referrals of complex issues – given teachers already have substantial demands placed on them, it is important to be very clear about what their role is, and what is beyond their role and competencies).
- While awaiting the scale-up of institutionalized CwR in pre- and in-service teacher training, work with the MoE to establish peer-learning networks and resources hubs for teachers to bridge knowledge gaps and easily access resources. The online platform in Tanzania is an example that could be extended to other countries. Additionally, this could be strengthened by creating a feedback loop and raising teacher awareness on courses and materials available to them through such a platform. Such a knowledge-sharing and collaboration platform, where schools can exchange best practices, research insights, and implementation strategies, should be pursued vigorously to enhance CwR delivery.
- Motivate schools through certification and awards to inculcate behaviour change towards delivering CwR. For instance, during world and national commemoration days, teachers can be recognized for their innovation and resourcefulness. Similarly, schools can receive certification for creating safe spaces or leading in championing gender equality in schools based on implementation of best practices.

Evidence and data

- Strengthen monitoring and accountability at school level: Introduce simple fidelity checklists and learner-led feedback tailored to local implementation complexity while maintaining fidelity aspects. For example, the lesson plan assessment may include questions like "What CwR-related topic has the teacher included in the lesson plan?" This must be coupled with strengthening reporting and data use to, firstly, track progress, and, secondly, ensure routine improvements in schools by introducing or incorporating school-level fidelity checklists co-developed with teachers to be used to track adherence for core components of CwR.
- Where learner councils exist, train them to assess peer engagement and report gaps in implementation.



School climate, including incidence reporting and response

- Motivate schools to enforce zero-tolerance SRGBV policies as enshrined in their country-specific teacher and pupil codes of conducts or relevant government regulation.
- Support schools to strengthen and build trust for learners to confidently use available reporting mechanisms.
- Consider scaling up innovative and sustainable approaches such as learner councils. This has the potential to enhance delivery models, especially with appropriate capacity building and support to make sure learners share accurate information with their peers, know their role, and do not put themselves or others at risk.

Partnerships and participation

- Work with the MoE to support schools with skills in partnership building in order for them to effectively engage and collaborate with local partners like surrounding health facilities, traditional and church leaders, law enforcement agencies, and local NGOs.

- Schools must be encouraged to organize community workshops to align CwR principles with local values and to enhance community acceptance of CwR. There is a need to create or strengthen synergies between the CwR programme and community-based violence prevention initiatives to maximize impact. This can include exploring ways to work with parents/caregivers and enhance linkages between similar programmes implemented by other partners. This will require stronger coordination among different departments, especially the relevant ministries of education and gender, where possible.

Future research direction

Further qualitative research exploring how digital tools (such as Tanzania's online teacher training) can bridge rural-urban divides while preserving CwR programme integrity should be considered. By centring fidelity as a dynamic, participatory process, CwR can evolve into a sustainable driver of gender justice in education.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Table 1: CwR topics

Part 1: Understanding gender and gender equality	
Topic 1: Gender and equality	Activity 1: What is gender? Activity 2: Unpacking gender norms Activity 3: Messages about males and females in the media and literature Activity 4: Challenging negative gender norms Activity 5: Challenging myths Activity 6: Local leaders
Topic 2: Gender equality and positive role-models	Activity 1: Positive role models Activity 2: Fairness, equality, and human rights Activity 3: Human rights and gender equality in everyday moments Activity 4: Positive and negative uses of power Activity 5: Differences and discrimination
Part 2: Raising awareness about GBV	
Topic 3: Awareness of GBV	Activity 1: What is violence? Activity 2: What is GBV? Activity 3: Effects of GBV on males and females Activity 4: Negative health impacts of gender norms
Topic 4: A focus on school-related gender-based violence	Activity 1: School mapping of GBV Activity 2: Positive rules for the safe learning space Activity 3: Empathy, imagination and hidden emotions Activity 4: Making an apology
Part 3: Developing skills for respectful relationships	
Topic 5: Communication skills for respectful relationships	Activity 1: What good friends do Activity 2: Respectful relationships between males and females Activity 3: Introducing assertiveness Activity 4: Using emotions statements in respectful relationships
Topic 6: Skills for people who witness violence	Activity 1: Effects on the witness Activity 2: Building support strategies Activity 3: I want to do something to help! Activity 4: Active listening for peer support
Topic 7: Help-seeking and peer support skills	Activity 1: When and if to seek help Activity 2: Where to go for help Activity 3: Overcoming resistance to help seeking Activity 4: Messages of support



Annex 2: Sample calculation process(formula)

Specifically, the following parameters guided the sample size calculation:

Confidence Level - 95%

Margin of Error - 5%

School Population Proportion - 10%

School Population Size - 435

These parameters yielded a sample size of 105. The sample size formula has the following details:

$$n = [z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2] / [1 + (z^2 * p * (1 - p) / (e^2 * N))]$$

Where: $z = 1.96$ for a confidence level of 95%, p = proportion (expressed as a decimal), N = population size, e = margin of error.

$$z = 1.96, p = 0.1, N = 435, e = 0.05$$

$$n = [1.962 * 0.1 * (1 - 0.1) / 0.052] / [1 + (1.962 * 0.1 * (1 - 0.1) / (0.052 * 435))]$$

$$n = 138.2976 / 1.3179 = 104.936$$

$$n \approx 105$$

Annex 3: Data collection tools

Focus group discussion guide for learners

Introduction

My name is (Name of the facilitator) and my colleague(s) are (note takers/team lead). We appreciate that you made yourself available to participate in this discussion. We are a team from HELSH General Consulting operating on behalf of UNESCO. We are contracted to conduct a research on how the Connect with Respect (CwR) programme is delivered, what are the main, and emerging practices in how it is delivered. (Refresh the children and young people on what the CwR is. The CwR is a school programme where you learn about having healthy relationships with your friends, teachers and other people around you. You learn about different topics like fairness between boys and Girls because you are all equal, how solve problems without fighting, understanding and controlling your feelings, how to be nice, kind, honest and respectful to each other, stopping being hurtful and learning how to stop it in a safe way or ask for help. You also learn about helping others when you see something wrong, like bullying or fighting (confirm if the participants can relate to these topics by asking them if they are familiar with the topics and in which grades they were taught). Your participation will help us learn about the different ways the programme is being delivered, how much you know about it, and how much you take part in the programme. We also want to understand what has been difficult and what has worked very well for you in the CwR programme. The idea is that the understanding will help shape a well improved, effective and sustainable CwR programme for future children and young people in school. Participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions or withdraw from the conversation at any time without any consequences. Please also feel free to reach out to me after the discussion if you wish to discuss anything related to the topic discussed. However, I may not promise to withdraw any information you may have shared when the study starts as the discussion will be done in a group setup. Any information you are happy to share will be anonymous in the report or other materials produced as part of this research. If you are happy to proceed and participate in this discussion, please sign the consent/assent forms.

Objective: To gather insights on the delivery, challenges, integration, and opportunities for improvement of the CwR programme in schools.

Understanding CwR

1. What is CwR/CwR programme in your understanding?
2. Why do you think CwR was introduced in your school?
3. What do you think CwR is trying to achieve? (probe if they think it has been achieved)
4. What activities do you do in the CwR programme? (ask them to describe some of these activities e.g. how it is done).
5. When and how often do you engage in CwR programme activities?
6. What do you like the most about the CwR programme? (probe on why they enjoy it)?
7. Is there anything in the CwR programme you don't enjoy? Why not?
8. Would you recommend CwR to your friends? Why?

Delivery and emerging practices

1. How is CwR taught to the learners? (Probe: Who teaches CwR?)
2. What CwR topics do you remember? Probe: which topics do you like/which topics don't you like. (Let the learners explain why/why not)
3. How do teachers deliver the CwR (By this we mean; is it in class or outside; is it during lessons or after lessons); is it done with different grades or same grades; is it for all - boys and girls together or separate?

4. (If CwR is compulsory for the target grades) Are there boys and girls that avoid the lessons? Why do you think some of the boys and girls shun the lessons?
5. After the CwR lessons, are there any follow-up activities? Can you give examples?
6. What do you like the most about the way the CwR programme is being delivered in your school? Why and why not?
7. What do you least like the way CwR programme is being delivered in your school? Why and why not?
8. What do you find confusing or difficult to understand in the way the CwR programme is taught? Why? (probe if it is because of the way the topic is delivered or if the topic is difficult)
9. How has CwR helped you as boys/girls/ Probe: In what way? (Let the learners share their stories)
10. What specific activities, practices or topics do you find useful and interesting as boys/girls? (Probe on why the boys/girls find those useful and interesting)
11. How do CwR activities fit with your other school activities or subjects? Does it feel like part of your regular learning?

Challenges

1. What challenges have you faced as boys/girls during your involvement in the CwR programme? (probe: Teacher attitude, language barrier, insufficient time, irregular delivery, lack of reference materials) (If there are any challenges) what should be done to address these challenges?
2. Are there gaps in the way CwR is delivered? (probe: help seeking channels)
3. Do you think the CwR conflicts with what you consider acceptable or desirable in this society; (explain more if yes and/or no – for girls/boys/some age groups)

Programme impact

1. What lessons have you gained from the CwR programme that you consider important as boys/girls?
2. How has the programme changed how you think about treating boys and girls equally and being kind to your teachers, friends, and family
3. Has the programme impacted your thoughts or behaviors, particularly on respect for boys/girls and gender equality?
4. Since the Connect with Respect programme started, have you noticed anything different in how boys and girls get along at school and how teachers treat learners? Can you tell a story about what things were like before and how they are now?
5. Could you describe any changes in your behavior since participating in this programme? For instance, do you feel more confident to seek help, speak up when you see bullying or harassment, or stand up for peers who might be facing violence?

Improving the programme

1. When you think seriously about the CwR programme in your school, what parts of the programme would you choose to change to improve the programme?
2. What would you add to the CwR programme to make it more engaging or more useful for boys/girls?
3. Do you have anything else to add?
4. Thank you so much for your time and insights.

KII guide with teachers

Introduction

My name is (Name of the facilitator) and my colleague(s) are (note takers/team lead). We appreciate that you made yourself available to participate in this discussion. We are a team from HELSH General Consulting operating on behalf of UNESCO. We are contracted to conduct an implementation study to understand

how the Connect with Respect (CwR) programme is delivered. what are the main, and emerging practices in how it is delivered? Your participation will help us understand of the challenges and barriers, emerging practices (different deliver approaches/models), the extent of your knowledge and participation in the programme. challenges and achievements of the CwR programme. The idea is that the understanding will help shape a well improved, effective and sustainable CwR programme for future children and young people in school. Participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions or withdraw from the conversation at any time without any consequences. However, I may not promise to withdraw any information you may have shared when the study starts as the discussion will be done in a group setup. If you are happy to proceed and participate in this discussion, please sign the consent/assent forms.

Section 1: Programme delivery

1. Could you describe for me the CwR programme and who is responsible for its implementation in your school? (probe what support the implementers get e.g., training materials, mentorship) Probe: What is the selection process for the facilitators? (Probe on the requirements).
2. What kind of training did you/the facilitators receive and how? Probe: What specific skills or knowledge did the training emphasize? Do you receive ongoing mentorship or professional development support/ how often are you re-trained (if at all you are)?
3. How is the CwR programme structured and delivered in your school; have some changes been made to the programme you have been trained on, which ones and why? Probe on whether some topics are excluded, new topics and new activities have been added and why, delivery approach/model.
4. What changes has the school/ministry of education made to the content and delivery of the CwR and why? (Probe: Could give some examples of how the programme has been changed to suit your local context, how is the new content or approach better?)
5. How do you report on CwR implementation (probe reporting channels, tools and performance/ monitoring indicators, feedback after reporting)?
6. How is the CwR programme integrated into the school system? (Probe if the activities are integrated into the curriculum or extracurricular activities?)
7. Are there any specific approaches or strategies used to increase engagement at the start, middle, or end of the programme. Probe:
8. In your experience, what has been the most effective method/approach in delivering the CwR programme content to the learners? Can you share examples of where this method was particularly successful?
9. How do you ensure sustainability of the programme in your school? (probe if there is deliberate knowledge and skills transfer to teachers not initially trained)
10. How would you describe the learners' engagement and participation in the programme?
11. Do these differences persist over time, or are they situational? and are there specific activities that appeal more to boys or girls?
12. Are there any differences in engagement/participation between boys and girls in the programme? Probe: Why do you think that is so?

Section 2: Challenges, emerging practices, and lessons learned

1. What have you noticed as gaps affecting the delivery of CwR? Probe: What can be done to address these gaps?
2. What challenges have you faced in the implementation of the CwR programme? Probe on programme delivery barriers at school, district or country level.
3. Have there been any innovative practices or strategies that have emerged to address the challenges? If yes, probe on the effective practices
4. What are the best practices learned from the CwR programme that may shape future programming?

Section 3: Integration into the school system

1. Is the programme integrated into subjects like life skills or other non-academic activities? How is time allocated for CwR in the school timetable?
2. How is the CwR incorporated in the general school curriculum? Probe: in what subjects are CwR topics integrated? Probe if it is considered a mandatory extra-curriculum programmes –school club
3. How supportive have school administrators been of the CwR programme? Are there specific resources or accommodations provided by the administration? If so, what are they?
4. Do non-trained teachers contribute in indirect ways, such as classroom management during CwR activities? If yes, probe on the kind of support being provided.
5. In your opinion, will the programme continue beyond the project's lifetime? If yes or no, probe on the reasons. What factors are most critical for ensuring long-term continuity?
6. What actions are being taken to ensure the continuity of the CwR programme in school?
7. Are there any stakeholders involved in the CwR programme? Probe to understand local, district or national stakeholders' involvement.
8. What roles do stakeholders play to help sustain the CwR programme beyond the project's lifetime?

Section 4: Recommendations

1. Are there successes that the CwR programme registered? Could you highlight specific examples of how the programme impacted learners?
2. What needs to be done to improve CwR programme delivery? Probe on resources or tools that would improve the effectiveness of the programme.
3. Are there mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the CwR programme at school level?
4. Does the programme have mechanisms for feedback on the CwR programme from learners, teachers and other stakeholders? If yes, probe on the mechanisms and how they operate.
5. What improvements can you recommend for the sustainability of CwR programme successes?
6. Do you have anything to add that is relevant to our topic of discussion that we could have not covered?

Thank you so much for your time and insights.

Interview guide for the Ministry of Education (national and district/zonal levels) and UNESCO country Staff KII guide

Introduction

My name is (Name of the facilitator) and my colleague(s) are (note takers/team lead). We appreciate that you made yourself available to participate in this discussion. We are a team from HELSH General Consulting operating on behalf of UNESCO. We are contracted to conduct an implementation study to understand the differences in implementation of the CwR programme in the different schools (Urban and Rural) and across Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia. We also want to understand from your perspective factors leading to the variations in implementation across schools in your country, what the key challenges are and if there are any emerging (innovative practices) in the delivery of the CwR. Your participation will help to understand and gather valuable insights to provide actionable recommendations to strengthen the design, delivery, monitoring, and sustainability of the CwR programme. Your participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions or withdraw from the conversation at any time without any consequences. However, I may not promise to withdraw any information you may have shared when the study starts as the discussion will be done in a group setup. If you are happy to proceed and participate in this discussion, please sign the consent forms.

Section 1: General understanding of the CwR programme

1. Can you describe your role and involvement in the CwR programme? (Probe: Duration of involvement, specific responsibilities).
2. How would you describe the overall objectives of the CwR programme as implemented in your country? (Probe: Perception of programme goals, alignment with national education priorities).
3. Who is responsible for its implementation and monitoring of the CwR in schools? (probe what support the implementers get e.g., training materials, mentorship; who do implementers report to, are there reporting tools and monitoring indicators)
4. What is the selection process for the facilitators? (Probe on the requirements).
5. What kind of training did you/the facilitators receive and how?
5. Do you provide ongoing or professional development support to the facilitators?

Section 2: Delivery of the CwR programme

1. How is the CwR programme delivered in urban versus rural schools in your country? (Probe: Variations in teaching methods, resources used, and engagement with learners).
2. What are the main differences in the delivery of the CwR programme between your country and the other two countries (Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania)? (Probe: Contextual factors, curriculum adaptation, language of instruction).
3. What has necessitated these differences in programme delivery? (Probe: Policy directives, resource availability, cultural or community-specific factors).

Section 3: Challenges, emerging practices, and lessons learned

1. What are the primary challenges faced in the implementation of the CwR programme? (Probe: Financial constraints, time constraints, teacher workload, teacher training or preparedness to teach some topics, community resistance, logistical issues).
2. Can you share any emerging practices that have been successful in delivering the CwR programme? (Probe: Innovative teaching approaches, community engagement strategies).
3. What lessons have been learned so far from implementing the CwR programme? (Probe: Insights for future programming, reflections on past mistakes or successes).
4. What have been the main facilitators and barriers to the delivery of the CwR programme in your context? (Probe: Examples of support mechanisms, barriers related to policy, curriculum integration, infrastructure, or stakeholder engagement).

Section 4: Integration into the school system

1. To what extent has the CwR programme been integrated into the existing school system? (Probe: Integration into the curriculum, alignment with national education policies, teacher involvement).
2. How is the CwR programme monitored and evaluated within schools? (Probe: Indicators used, feedback mechanisms, role of school administrators).
3. What changes have you observed in schools or communities as a result of the CwR programme? (Probe: Changes in learner behaviour, learning outcomes, or community involvement).

Section 5: Recommendations for improvement

1. What recommendations would you provide to strengthen the design, delivery, monitoring, and sustainability of the CwR programme? (Probe: Suggestions for policy changes, capacity-building initiatives, funding strategies).
2. How can the programme be better adapted to address the unique needs of both urban and rural schools? (Probe: Targeted interventions, resource allocation strategies).

Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?
- Do you have any specific documents or reports that you believe would provide additional insights into the delivery and outcomes of the CwR programme?

Thank you so much for your time and insights.

Questionnaire for learners

HELSH General Consulting



Implementation research on the Connect with Respect programme for the prevention and management of school-related gender-based violence in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia

The questions in this survey are designed for the adolescent learners in schools aged 12-15 in grades 8-12.

Guidance for introducing yourself and the purpose of the interview:

- My name is and I am representing HELSH General Consulting and in the process of data collection in the selected districts.
- The school has been selected from all the secondary schools in the district because you are implementing Connect with Respect (CwR). The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on how the CwR programme is delivered in the schools; identify the challenges, emerging practices, and lessons learned in the delivery of the CwR programme, including the barriers.
- The survey is voluntary and the information that you give will be confidential. The information will be used to prepare a report and strengthen the design, delivery, monitoring, and sustainability of the CwR programme.
- The report will not include any specific names. There will be no way to identify that you gave this information.
- Could you please spare some time (around 30 minutes) for the interview?
- Consent given ☐ Consent not given ☐

SECTION A: IDENTIFICATION PARTICULARS

A.1. Province name:	
A.2. District name:	
A.4. Region	1. Rural ☐ 2. Urban ☐
A.5. Name of school	
A.8 do you identify as having a disability	1. Yes ☐ 2. No ☐
A.9. Date of interview:	Date MM / DD/ YYYY [____/____/____]
A10. Name of enumerator:	

SECTION B: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

(I am now going to ask you questions about you)

Respondents (BIO DATA) adolescents aged 12-15		✓
1	Respondents gender 1. Female 2. Male	
2	Age of respondent: 1. 12 years 2. 13 years 3. 14 years 4. 15 years 5. 16 years 6. 17 years 7. 18 years 8. 19 years	
3.	Grade of the respondent" 1. Grade 8 2. Grade 9 3. Grade 10 4. Grade 11 5. Grade 12	
4	Who do you live with? 1. Mother 2. Father 3. Mother and father 4. Grandmother 5. Grandfather 6. Grandmother and Grandfather 7. Any other, please specify.....	
6	What language do you most often use at home	
7	How do you travel to school? 1. Walk 2. Bus 3. Taxi 4. Other, please specify.....	
8	If you walk, do you walk alone or with a friend or accompanied by an adult? 1. Alone 2. With a friend 3. Other 4. Don't know/No response	
Head of Household (Socio-economic Status)		✓
9	Is the head of the household working? 1. Yes 2. No	

10	What does the head of the household do? 1. Working for a company 2. Business 3. Farming 4. Other, please specify..... 5. Don't know 6 No response	
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SECTION C: Approaches to delivering Connect with Respect (CwR)

11	Do you learn CwR in school? 1. Yes 2. No	
12	At which grade did you receive lessons on CwR? 1. Grade 8 2. Grade 9 3. Grade 10 4. Grade 11 5. Grade 12 6. Don't know 7. No response	
13	Do you know what CwR is trying to achieve? 1. Yes 1. No 3. Don't know 4. No response	
14	In order of your preference, what 3 of the listed topics do you like the most in CwR? [indicate 1,2,3 in the brackets provided, in order of priority] 1. Topic 1: Gender and Gender Equality 2. Topic 2: Gender equality and positive role models 3. Topic 3: Awareness of gender-based violence 4. Topic 4: A focus on school-related gender-based violence 5. Topic 5: Communication skills for respectful relationships 6. Topic 6: Skills for people who witness violence 7. Topic 7: Help-seeking and peer support skills 98. Don't know 99 No response	
13	Why do you like the topics mentioned above? 	
14	In order of your dissatisfaction, which 3 of the listed 7 topics do you like the least in CwR? [indicate 1,2,3 in the brackets provided, in order of priority] 1. Topic 1: Gender and Gender Equality 2. Topic 2: Gender equality and positive role models 3. Topic 3: Awareness of gender-based violence 4. Topic 4: A focus on school-related gender-based violence 5. Topic 5: Communication skills for respectful relationships 6. Topic 6: Skills for people who witness violence 7. Topic 7: Help-seeking and peer support skills 8. Don't know 9. No response	

15	Why don't you like the topics mentioned above?	
16	How has the CwR helped you? 1. Improved my knowledge and understanding SRGBV prevention and management because I have learnt about different forms of violence, and my rights to be safe and protected. 2. Improved my personal relationships with my peers, teachers, family and other people because I have learnt how to communicate and relate with respect. 3. Improved my confidence. I can now speak up, protect myself in non-violent ways and stand up for others when I witness any bullying or harassment among others. 4. I can easily ask for help or refer peers to help because I have been taught how and where to seek help from 5. The programme has not helped me	

SECTION D: School Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)

20.	Is there violence specifically targeted at girls in the school? 1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know 4. No response	
21.	What form of violence is targeted towards the girls/boys in school? [Multiple answers] 1. Bullying 2. Physical fighting 3. Sexual harassment 4. Sexual acts in exchange for good grades or for the paying of school fees 5. Seduction or sexual harassment of learners by a teacher 6. Other, please specify..... 7. Don't know 8. No response	
22.	By order of most prevalent, which form of violence mostly affects the girls in your school? [Multiple Responses-Indicated 1,2,3,4...in the brackets provided to show rank/order] 1. Bullying 2. Physical fighting 3. Sexual harassment 4. Sexual acts in exchange for good grades or for the paying of school fees 5. Seduction or sexual harassment of learners by a teacher 6. Other (specify) 7. Don't know 8. No response	
	By order of most prevalent, which form of violence mostly affects the boys in your school? [Multiple Responses-Indicated 1,2,3,4...in the brackets provided to show rank/order] 1. Bullying 2. Physical fighting 3. Sexual harassment 4. Sexual acts in exchange for good grades or for the paying of school fees 5. Seduction or sexual harassment of learners by a teacher 6. Other (specify) 7. Don't know 8. No response	
23.	Explain how the violence mentioned above, affect the girls/boys?	

24.	How does the school address violence that is targeted at the learners? [Multiple answers] 1. Establishment safe spaces in schools 2. Introduction of clubs 3. School committees 4. Reporting channels for learners to signal incidents (e.g. boxes, information on phone hotlines/helplines, adult focal point in the school 5. Support services in schools (e.g. counsellor, social worker) 6. Information on support services outside of schools (health facilities, psychosocial support, social workers, child protection volunteers....) 7. Any other, please specify..... 8. Don't now 9. No response	
25.	Which of the following channels of reporting violence or seeking help are most used by boys and girls in your school [select 3 in the order of most to least used] 1. Safe spaces in schools 2. Clubs 3. School committees 4. Reporting channels for learners to signal incidents (e.g. boxes, information on phone hotlines/helplines, adult focal point in the school 5. Support services in schools (e.g. counsellor, social worker) 6. Information on support services outside of schools (health facilities, psychosocial support, social workers, child protection volunteers....) 7. Any other, please specify..... 8. Don't know 9. No response	[] [] [] []
26.	Do you find these reporting channels helpful? (refer to the list in Q25) 1. Yes 2. No 3. Somewhat helpful	

SECTION E: School Climate

28.	Learners treat each other with respect 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
29.	Learners get along with each other. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
30.	Teachers treat girls and boys equally. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	

31.	Teachers threaten to hurt learners. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
32.	School officials take action when learners hurt other learners 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
33.	Girls feel safe when traveling to school. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
34.	Boys feel safe when traveling to school 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
35.	Learners from different religious and ethnic backgrounds get along with each other. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
36.	Teachers or school officials listen and take action when boys/girls report violence. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
37.	Boys/girls are punished too much for little things. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 98. Don't know 99 No response	

38.	Bullying is a problem at school 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
39.	Physical violence is a problem 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
40.	Girls threaten other girls and call them names in yours school. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
41.	Boys threaten other boys and call them names in your school. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
42.	Boys are afraid to go to school for fear of punishment, harassment and bullying by teachers. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
43.	Girls are afraid to go to school for fear of punishment, harassment and bullying by teachers. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
44.	Boys/girls report incident(s) of sexual harassment or sexual violence. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	

45.	When needed, assistance and psychological counselling are provided to boys/girls. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
46.	Boys/girls report incident(s) of physical violence when they experience it or witness it. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
47.	Boys/girls are punished unfairly. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	

SECTION F: Gender Attitudes

47.	Girls are smarter than boys. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
48.	It is more important for boys than girls to perform well in school. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
49.	Boys are smarter than girls. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
50.	Girls should continue in school, even if they get pregnant 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	

51	Boys are better at mathematics and science than girls. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
52	It is better for girls to be quiet and shy. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
53	It is acceptable for boys to cry. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
54	It is acceptable for boys and men to make sexual comments to girls at school or when the girls are walking to school. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
55	It is acceptable for a boy to hit his girlfriend. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	
56	Boys are better at mathematics and science than girls. 1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Some of the time 4. Always 5. Don't know 6. No response	

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE, THANK YOU.



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