

INCREASING ACCESS TO AND DEMAND FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) PREVENTION AND RESPONSE SERVICES IN COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Children in Malawi experience unacceptably high rates of violence, often occurring in and around schools (VAC, 2014). Violence has negative impacts on education, health, and emotional well-being and is related to risk-taking behaviors in adolescence and adulthood. In Malawi, only 60% of children tell someone about their experience of abuse, and less than 10% receive professional services (NPA-GBV, 2014-2020). Interventions to reduce school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) tend to focus on prevention, while sustainable and effective response mechanisms remain a gap.

WHAT IS SRGBV?

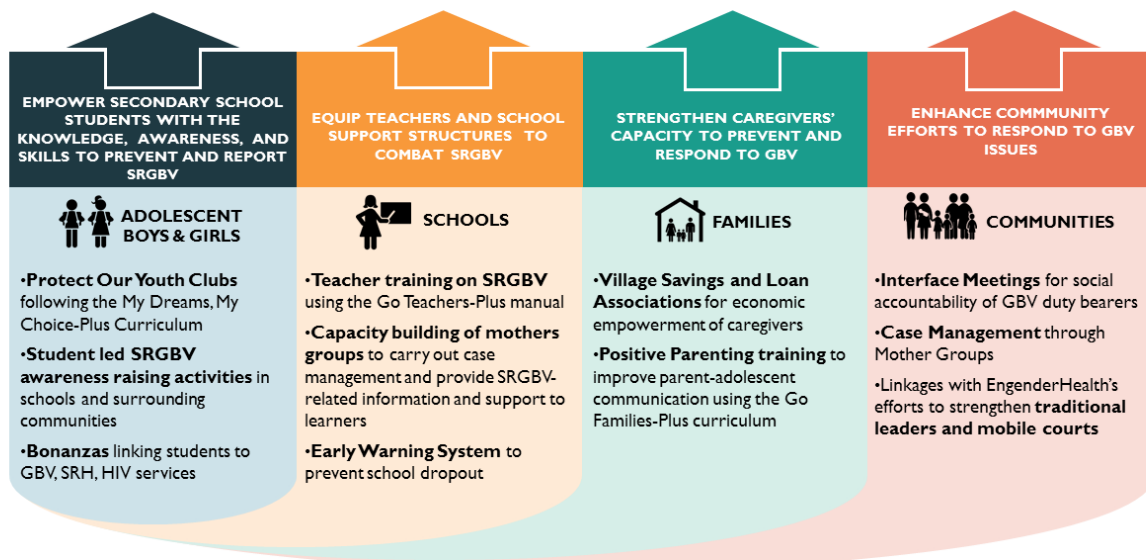
School-related gender based violence (SRGBV) is defined by UNGEI and UNESCO as acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics.

The Bantwana Initiative of World Education Inc. (WEI/Bantwana) is implementing a comprehensive program to reduce SRGBV, funded by the US Department of State/Global Women’s Initiatives and led by EngenderHealth. This program include ‘bonanzas’ – an innovation designed to improve response mechanisms and facilitate linkages to services.

OUR RESPONSE

Bonanzas are one-stop-shop events that provide on-the-spot linkages to medical, legal, and counselling support for survivors. Bonanzas bring together local GBV service providers who hold informational sessions, as well as conduct individual consultations and on the spot service provision. Additionally, Mother groups trained in case management, GBV response, and psychosocial support are linked with bonanza service providers to ensure continuous referrals to services post-bonanza.

Outcome: Strengthened school-related gender-based violence prevention and response mechanisms



Aim: 1) Promote positive shifts in underlying norms that perpetuate SRGBV 2) Reduce instances of SRGBV

ROLL OUT & ACHIEVEMENTS

Over two school terms, WEI/Bantwana supported 43 rural community day secondary schools and Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Kasungu and Mzimba districts with bonanzas. The bonanzas at school and district levels enabled 3,249 students to directly access health (1,677 students), justice (965 students), and welfare services (607 students). Mother groups, trained in case management, opened case files to ensure follow up and support for children to access services.



“ It is usually very difficult [for learners] to have the vigor of visiting the services at the facilities due to the number of misconceptions. At their age and being unmarried, it would be questionable to most of the members of the community for them to have been found accessing services. Even their parents could not understand, but now that it [services] start from the schools, parents will easily understand and tolerate it. They [the learners] now know where to access justice, health and other social services. They now know where to go when they encounter abuse. The bonanzas have played a crucial role in their lives.

- Mercy Kishombe, Officer of the Court

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are crucial in ensuring a holistic response mechanism to SRGBV:

- Bonanzas are a catalyst for actively forging working relationships between school authorities and service providers to build a foundation for reporting incidences of violence in schools. They allow the students to know where and what support they should receive and to be able to demand services outlined by the service provider in their mandate.
- Messages disseminated directly by service providers and through onsite consultations enforce the importance of preventing and responding to violence, as well as create a platform for seeking healthcare, justice, and psychosocial support amongst students and community members at large.
- The involvement of mother groups ensures that children requiring further assistance are helped, through case management, to navigate the referral system until case closure.

