



A WHITE PAPER

# RESTORATIVE APPROACHES AS A PATHWAY TO GOOD SCHOOLS

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By:



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Coalition for  
Good Schools

## About Enfold Proactive Health Trust

**Enfold Proactive Health Trust** is a non-profit organisation that has been working since 2001 towards addressing sexual violence against children, through personal safety and comprehensive sexuality education, support to survivors of child sexual abuse, restorative processes for children in the juvenile justice system and community, research, policy interventions, and capacity building. Enfold is a member of the Coalition of Good Schools, Asia Hub.

## About the Coalition for Good Schools

The **Coalition for Good Schools** is a global collective of practitioners and organizations from the Global South committed to preventing violence against children in and through schools. It works to promote safe and supportive learning environments by advancing evidence-based practices, encouraging shared learning, and fostering collaboration across regions.

The Asia Hub of the Coalition is coordinated by **Samya Development Resources**, which provides technical and administrative support to strengthen regional efforts. The Asia Hub brings together partners from across the region to co-create knowledge, build capacity, and amplify local voices in global advocacy efforts. Enfold Proactive Health Trust is a member of the Coalition's Asia Hub.

## About the White Paper

This White Paper has been developed by Enfold Proactive Health Trust. It is undertaken in collaboration with Samya and the Coalition for Good Schools, Asia Hub. It seeks to serve as a guide for embedding Restorative Justice in schools in Asia as one approach for addressing violence in schools.

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# GLOSSARY

**Restorative Approaches:** This refers to a framework of strategies and mindset that emphasize building and repairing relationships, resolving conflicts, and promoting a sense of community, empathy, and accountability<sup>1</sup>. Different terms such as “restorative practices, restorative discipline, restorative approaches, restorative measures, and restorative justice practices” are vague<sup>2</sup> and are sometimes used interchangeably. **For the purposes of this paper, the term Restorative Approaches signifies the holistic approach that can enable the creation of a just and equitable learning environment.**

**Restorative Circles:** “Restorative circles are a structured process for bringing together those who have experienced conflict or harm to have honest, respectful dialogue, build understanding, and collectively develop a path forward for healing and accountability.”<sup>3</sup> Restorative Circles are also known as Peacemaking Circles.

**Restorative Justice:** A philosophy and approach that focuses on repairing harm and building positive relationships, often through facilitated dialogue and resolution. It is a process in which those harmed by crime and those responsible for it, if they freely consent, participate actively in the resolution of matters arising from the crime or harm, with the help of a trained and impartial facilitator, to achieve a restorative outcome<sup>4</sup>.

**Proactive and Reactive Measures:** Restorative justice is a reactive measure, consisting of formal or informal responses to crime and other wrongdoing after it occurs. Restorative practices also include proactive measures that entail the use of informal and formal processes that precede wrongdoing, those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing<sup>5</sup>.

1 [Norfolk County Council, International Institute for Restorative Practices \(IIRP\). \(n.d.\). What is Restorative Practices?](#)

2 [Katherine Evans & Dorothy Vaandering, The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education, p.7.](#)

3 [Pranis, K. \(2005\). The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking. Good Books](#)

4 [United Nations Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\), Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters, para 2, ECOSOC Resolution 2002/12, adopted on 24 July 2002. Council of Europe \(2018\). Recommendation CM/Rec \(2018\)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning restorative justice in criminal matters. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 3 October 2018.](#)

5 [International Institute of Restorative Practices, Defining Restorative](#)

# RESTORATIVE APPROACHES AS A PATHWAY TO GOOD SCHOOLS

## A WHITE PAPER

### 1. Context and Problem Statement

Hundreds of millions of children in the world attend school and spend a significant and formative part of their lives in a school environment. Several social, economic, environmental, political, and psychological factors impact children's lives and their access to education. Schools can serve as a safe haven and nurturing ground for children to not only advance their learning but also equip them with the values, skills, and resilience necessary for navigating the world. Goal 4 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,"<sup>6</sup> evinces the significance of education in shaping individuals.

While schools are expected to provide a

safe space for children to learn, grow, and interact with one another, schools can also be a site of violence. The 2017 report by the Know Violence in Childhood initiative estimated that at least 1.5 billion children had experienced inter-personal violence in the preceding years<sup>7</sup>. Violence in schools is concentrated in the Global South due to cultural norms, poor policies, and a lack of accountability mechanisms<sup>8</sup>. It includes classroom bullying by peers and corporal punishment<sup>9</sup> by teachers or persons in authority, and can take the form of physical, psychological, and sexual violence<sup>10</sup>, all of which can adversely affect the child's development, learning, and physical health. In recent times, the violence has also extended to online spaces<sup>11</sup>.

Corporal punishment in educational settings is incompatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, as "...children do not lose their human rights by virtue of

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6 United Nations, *Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development*

7 *Know Violence in Childhood, Ending Violence in Childhood: Global Report 2017 (Know Violence in Childhood 2017)*

8 *Coalition for Good Schools, Prevention of Violence Against Children in and Through Schools in the Global South: Evidence Review (2022)*

9 *Corporal punishment or physical punishment has been defined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in General comment No. 8 (2006): The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading Forms of Punishment (Arts. 19; 28, Para. 2; and 37, inter alia), para 11 "as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involve hitting ("smacking", "slapping", "spanking") children, with the hand or with an implement - a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking, or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding, or forced ingestion (for example, washing children's mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices).*

10 *Behind the Numbers, UNESCO, 2019, p.2*

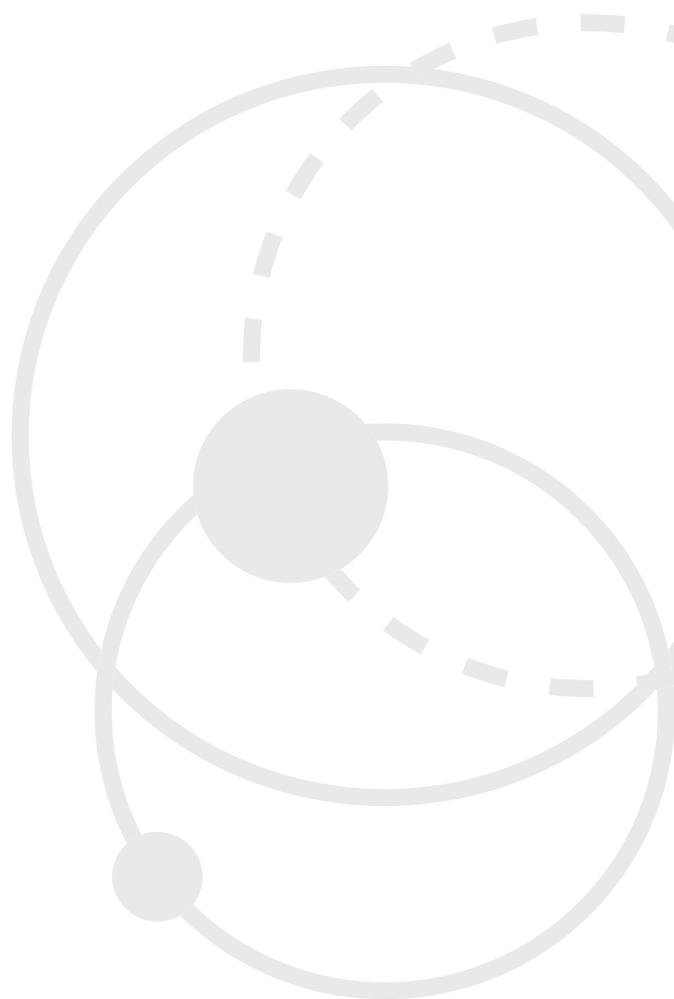
11 *ibid*

passing through the school gates.”<sup>12</sup> However, according to the World Health Organisation, “One in 2 children aged 6–17 years (732 million) live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited.”<sup>13</sup> Further, the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools was found to be higher than 60% in the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia<sup>14</sup>.

In the context of student-student bullying, the UNESCO 2019 study<sup>15</sup> of 96 Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) countries and territories, reported that 16.1% of children were a victim of physical bullying, 11.2% of children had been bullied by way of sexual jokes, comments, and gestures, 8.2% of children experienced cyberbullying via pictures, and 5.5% of children faced bullying by way of being excluded from activities<sup>16</sup>. The data also showed that 32% of all students had experienced some form of bullying by their peers in school. 36% stated that they had been in a physical fight, and 32.4% had been physically attacked at least once by their peers in the year preceding the study.

Notably, abuse of power or imbalance of power renders children, particularly those who are perceived to be ‘different’ in any way, such as children not conforming to gender norms, physical appearance, race, low socio-economic status, nationality, immigration status, or colour, at risk for school violence and bullying. Globally, 15.3% of children reported being bullied because of their body or looks<sup>17</sup>. Among all regions as a part of the GSHS study, bullying based

on a student’s race, nationality, or colour was reported by 10.9% of students, and 4.6% reported bullying based on religion<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, schools with a negative disciplinary climate reported higher bullying than schools where a positive disciplinary climate was created<sup>19</sup>.



12 *Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No.8 (2006), para 07*

13 *World Health Organisation, Corporal punishment and health, 2021*

14 *ibid*

15 *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying, 2019, p. 18*

16 *ibid*<sup>14</sup>

17 *ibid* 28

18 *ibid* 29

19 *ibid* 30

## Harmful Impact of School Violence

- School violence also leads to further bullying, self-harm tendencies, lowered self-esteem, and dating violence<sup>20</sup>.
- Harmful psychological and physiological responses are triggered along with experiences of pain, anger, fear, guilt, and sadness<sup>21</sup>. Children who are beaten believe that they are bad and deserve to be punished that way<sup>22</sup>.
- Students who are bullied are more likely to feel like outsiders in school- 42%<sup>23</sup> tend to fare poorly in school due to the inability to focus on academics<sup>24</sup>. They also experience feeling lonely and suicidal thoughts<sup>25</sup>.
- Corporal punishment affects academic achievement as children fear physical harm, causing children to dislike and even avoid school<sup>26</sup>. It pushes children out of school, decreases academic performance, and occupational success<sup>27</sup>.
- Students who are bullied exhibit higher tendencies for substance abuse as well as an earlier age for first sexual engagement<sup>28</sup>. Children who are bullied were also seen to be more aggressive, exhibiting antisocial behavior, and the continuation of violence by the children into their adulthood<sup>29</sup>.

20 Turanovic, J.J. and Siennick, S.E. (2022) 'The Causes and Consequences of School Violence: A Review', National Institute of Justice [Preprint] p. iii

21 Schwartz A, *When Children Are Beaten, The Aftermath*

22 *ibid*

23 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*, 2019 p. 31

24 OECD (2017), "How much of a problem is bullying at school?", PISA in Focus, No. 74, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 3

25 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*, 2019, p. 33

26 Coalition for Good Schools, *Ending Violence in Childhood: Global Report 2017*, p. 2

27 Schwartz A, *When Children Are Beaten, The Aftermath*

28 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*, 2019 p. 8

29 Schwartz A, *When Children Are Beaten, The Aftermath*

Disciplining approaches in schools have been influenced by the criminal justice system<sup>30</sup>, with a dominant focus on punishment and exclusionary measures such as suspension or expulsion to address student misbehaviour and disciplinary breach<sup>31</sup>. Little focus is placed on social or emotional learning<sup>32</sup>. Studies have revealed that higher suspension rates lead to lower student achievements<sup>33</sup> and the possibility of suspensions can lead to involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems<sup>34</sup>.

It is in this context that there is a need for schools to consider adopting Restorative Approaches that are centred on the dignity of children, strengthening relationships within the school community, and respond to misbehaviour in ways that not only repair the damaged relationships, but also help the whole school move forward together in a safe and enabling way. A simple yet fundamental principle underlies Restorative Approaches, which is that “people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes, when those in position of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.”<sup>35</sup>

## 2. Restorative Approaches in Education

Restorative Approaches in education were inspired by Restorative Justice (RJ) in the criminal justice system to respond to crime, which in turn drew inspiration from indigenous practices- such as Family Group Conferences from the Maori traditions in New Zealand, Sentencing Circles adapted from the aboriginal communities in North Canada, Navajo Peace-making Courts, Panchayat's from the India or even the jirgah<sup>36</sup> from the Pakistani and Afghan culture. Refer to [Annex 2 – Indigenous Practices](#) for more examples.

Restorative Approaches in Education is about “facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environment in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity and worth of all.”<sup>37</sup> Restorative Approaches are being adopted in schools in different countries to proactively foster better relationships within the school community, advance social and emotional learning, respond to student misbehaviour

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30 Amos Clifford, Centre for Restorative Process, *Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles*, San Francisco Unified School District, 1-18, p. 6

31 *ibid*

32 *ibid*

33 Skiba, Russell J., Megan Trachok, Choong-Geun Chung, Timberly Baker, Adam Sheya, and Robin Hughes, “Where Should We Intervene? Contributions of Behavior, Student, and School Characteristics to Suspension and Expulsion,” p. 660 in Daniel J. Losen, ed., *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Research for Policymakers*, New York: Teachers College Press, 2014, pp. 132-146.

34 Daniel J. Losen, ed., *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Research for Policymakers*, New York: Teachers College Press, 2014, pp. 132-146.

35 Wachtel, Ted. *Restorative Practices: Building Relationships and Community in Schools*. International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), 2013.

36 *The Jirga (also spelled Jirgah or Jarga) is a traditional tribal assembly or council of elders that plays a central role in decision-making and conflict resolution in Pashtun culture, primarily in Pakistan (especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and parts of Baluchistan) and Afghanistan.*

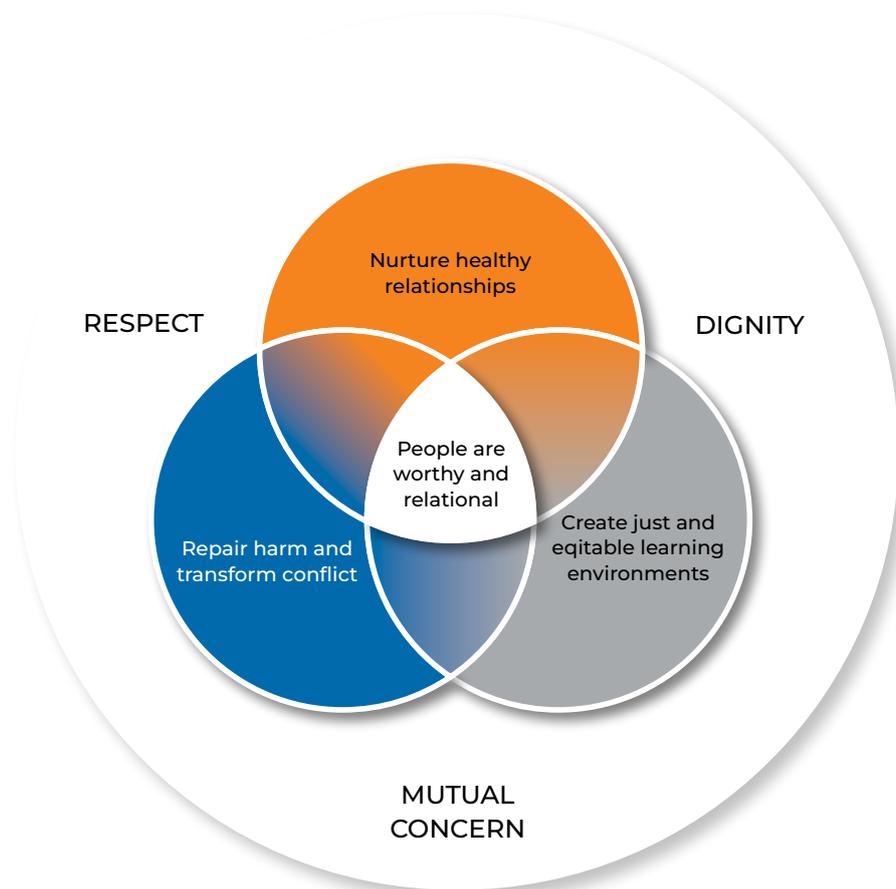
37 Katherine Evans & Dorothy Vandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education - Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools* (2016), p.8.

in non-punitive ways, and enhance the overall school climate and culture<sup>38</sup>. When applied school-wide, they are more effective, allowing issues to be addressed quickly and thoughtfully within a supportive and caring environment<sup>39</sup>.

Within Restorative Justice, crime is viewed as a violation of people and relationships, which create obligations to do right by those whom one has harmed<sup>40</sup>. It entails bringing

together the persons harmed with those who caused harm in order to address the needs that have arisen and to put things right<sup>41</sup>. However, in the context of educational spaces, while initially adopted to respond to conflict and harm, the framing has expanded holistically to create just and equitable school learning environments, nurturing healthy relationships, repairing harm and transforming conflict<sup>42</sup>.

## Restorative Justice in Education



Source: Katherine Evans & Dorothy Vandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education*

38 Schiff, M, *Dignity, Disparity & Desistance: Effective Restorative Justice Strategies to Plug the School-to-Prison Pipeline*. Center for Civil Rights Remedies National Conference. *Closing the School to Research Gap: Research to Remedies Conference*. Washington, DC, 2013

39 Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, *Restorative Justice: A Working Guide for Our Schools*, 7. 2011.

40 Howard Zehr & Ali Gohar, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, p.19.

41 *ibid*

42 Katherine Evans & Dorothy Vaandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education*, - *Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools* (2016) p.6.

Restorative Approaches in schools entails being aware of power imbalances in relationships and addressing them through relationship-building instead of relying on the power of sanctions as a tool of motivation<sup>43</sup>. The relationships that are aimed to be strengthened and repaired include student-teacher relationships, relationships between teachers, relationships among students, and parent-teacher relationships<sup>44</sup>.

It presents an opportunity to work in partnership with children and staff to ensure that expectations related to learning outcomes, behaviour, and discipline are met, instead of a top-down, authoritative, stigmatizing, or punitive approach. It entails balancing control with support, as is demonstrated in the Social Capital Window below, also referred to as the Social Discipline Window<sup>45</sup>.

### Social Capital Window



Source: Jem Muldoon, [The Social Capital Window of Restorative Practices](#)

43 Morrison, Brenda & Vaandering, Dorothy. (2012). *Restorative Justice: Pedagogy, Praxis, and Discipline*. *Journal of School Violence*. 11. 138-155, p. 138

44 Constanze Weber, Leen Vereenoghe, *Reducing Conflicts in School Environments Using Restorative Practices: A Systematic Review*, *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 1 (2020) 100009

45 Wachtel & Costello (2009), *The Restorative Practices Handbook*, International Institute for Restorative Practices, p 50

## Different Approach to Misbehaviour

Under the Restorative Approach, misbehaviour, misconduct, and conflicts are viewed as a **social and emotional learning opportunity for students, as well as for teachers and management**<sup>46</sup>. The focus shifts from the fact that the child got into trouble to what the child learns along the way of making things right<sup>47</sup>. Another shift is seen when schools move away from the retributive model, whereby a person in authority decides the appropriate punishment. A Restorative Approach, instead, requires working together with all affected and involved to understand the impact of the harm and to arrive at a collective resolution with the support of

trained teachers and facilitators. It builds responsibility and empathy, and more importantly, helps restore relationships and seeks to ensure that power is used in ways that are collaborative and transformative, instead of punitive or permissive. There is also a shift in how much the school community is involved in making things right when behavioural infractions occur, whereby the community's well-being is not decided by an expert, but rather by the community itself. Skills learned through engagement with Restorative Approaches go beyond the classroom, and offer a proactive approach to creating a caring, supportive environment for good relationships as well as effective resolution and healing of inter-personal conflict.

## Three Shifts Towards Restorative Schools and Classrooms

| From...   | To...  |
|---|--|
| Efforts to suppress misbehavior based on the view that misbehavior is evidence of failing students or classrooms. | Recognizing and using the inherent value of misbehavior as an opportunity for social and emotional learning. |
| Authority-driven disciplinary actions that focus only on the identified misbehaving students.                     | Restorative circles that bring together everyone who is most immediately affected by the incident.           |
| Punishment and exclusion is used to control misbehavior and motivate positive behavior changes.                   | Dialogue leading to understanding and action to set things right and repair and restore relationships.       |

Source: Amos Clifford, Centre for Restorative Process, Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles, San Francisco Unified School District,

46 Amos Clifford, Centre for Restorative Process, Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles, San Francisco Unified School District, p. 6

47 *ibid*

## Restorative Approaches as a Whole School Approach

“Creating the space to explore and understand shared values in the classroom foster[s] a [school culture] more conducive to establishing deepening relationships among members of the school community.”<sup>48</sup>

While schools may initially adopt a Restorative Approach to address conflict and disciplinary breaches, evidence demonstrates that a **whole-school approach** is the most effective<sup>49</sup>. The whole-school approach focuses on multiple aspects of a school’s operational culture, such as establishing common values, promoting a sense of belonging, building trusting relationships, and reducing the number of students in crisis<sup>50</sup>. It reduces the need for punitive disciplinary measures, as both behavioural and inter-personal issues are capable of being resolved quickly and effectively<sup>51</sup>. A whole-school approach in the context of Restorative Approaches involves all members of the school ecosystem and combines both **proactive measures** to build

relationships and develop community, and **responsive measures** to repair harm and restore relationships after harm. Proactive approaches attempt to prevent harm, and responsive measures attempt to address harm after a conflict has taken place<sup>52</sup>.

48 Morrison, B. E., & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative Justice: Pedagogy, Praxis, and Discipline. *Journal of School Violence*, 11(2), 138–155.

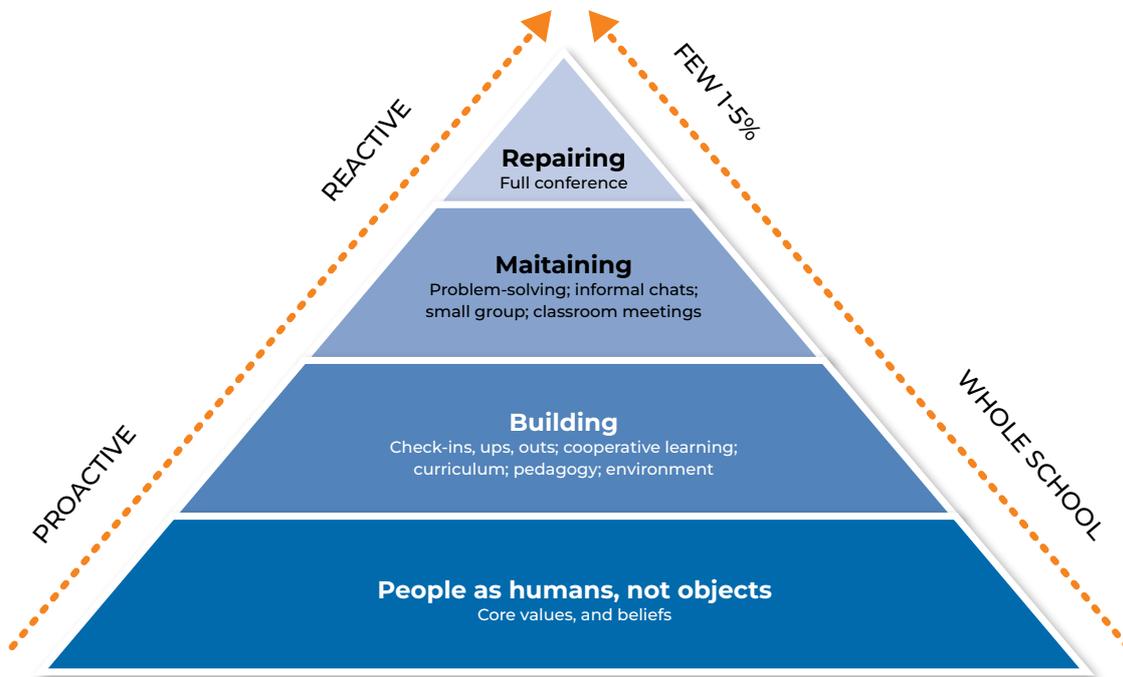
49 Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., Persson, H., Fronius, T., & Petrosino, A. (2015). Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools: Summary Findings from Interviews with Experts. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Kane, J., Lloyd, G., McCluskey, G., Maguire, R., Riddell, S., Stead, J., et al. (2009). Generating an inclusive ethos? Exploring the impact of restorative practices in Scottish schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(3), 231–251; Morrison, B. E., & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative justice: Pedagogy, praxis, and discipline. *Journal of School Violence*, p. 4; *International Institute for Restorative Practices, Whole School Change Program Overview*, 5, 1–8

50 Kidde, J., & Alfred, R. (2011). *Restorative Justice: A Working Guide for Our Schools*. Alameda, CA: Alameda County School Health Services.

51 Kidde, J., & Alfred, R. (2011). *Restorative Justice: A Working Guide for Our Schools*. Alameda, CA: Alameda County School Health Services; Tyler, T. R. (2006). Restorative Justice and Procedural Justice: Dealing with Rule Breaking. *Journal of Social Issues*, 62(2), 307–326.

52 Wachtel, T. (2013). *Defining restorative*, International Institute of Restorative Practices.

## RJ Relationship Triangle



Source: [Restorative Relationships](#)

While **proactive measures** are seen to build community, **responsive measures** focus on repairing harm, restoring relationships in the event of a conflict, and addressing wrongdoing. The proactive measures focus on building one's emotional intelligence as a means to reduce rule-breaking tendencies of children and does so with the facilitation of Restorative or Peacemaking Circles<sup>53</sup>. **Peacemaking or Restorative Circles** facilitate value-based dialogue that enable the expression of feelings and needs, build community, address harm, support the process of accountability for harm done and repair relationships- a process commonly used in schools implementing Restorative

Approaches. According to Kay Pranis, '[t]he Circle is a carefully constructed, intentional dialogue space. The Circle welcomes difficult emotions and difficult realities, while maintaining a sense of positive possibilities'<sup>54</sup>.

The responsive approach focuses on bringing together those who have been harmed or affected by the incident to decide collaboratively how to repair the said harm. The responsive approach may also take an additional preventive step to foster conversation on what could be done differently in a future conflict, should it arise<sup>55</sup>. In the manner that proactive approaches use Circles, responsive approaches use

53 Constanze Weber, Leen Vereenoghe, *Reducing Conflicts in School Environments Using Restorative Practices: A Systematic Review*, *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 1 (2020) 100009, p. 01

54 Carolyn Boyes – Watson & Kay Pranis, *Circle Forward, Building a Restorative School Community*, Living Justice Press, Institute for Restorative Initiatives, 2015

55 Costello, B., Wachtel, J., & Wachtel, T. (2009). *The restorative practices handbook: For teachers, disciplinarians and administrators*. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: International Institute for Restorative Practices; Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2015). *The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline*. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 26(4), 325–353

restorative meetings and conferences<sup>56</sup>, as well as Harm Circles.

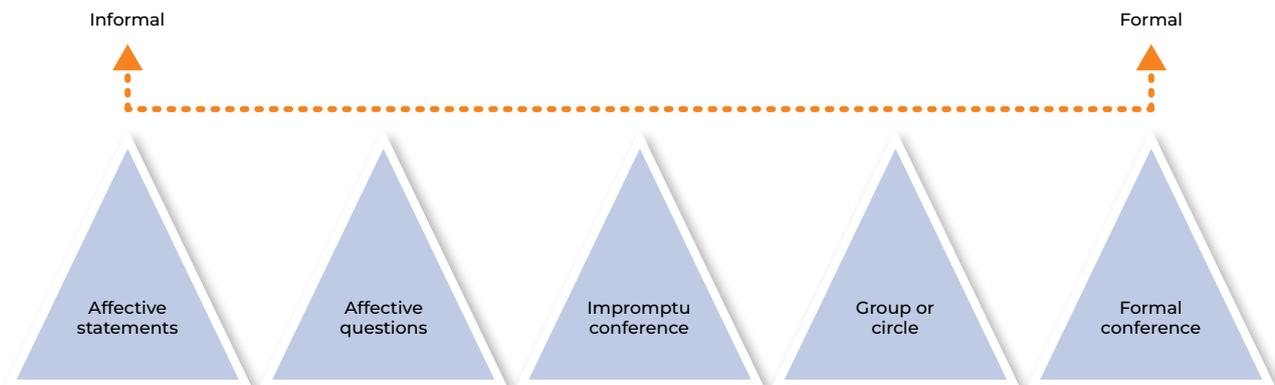
“*The Circle brought the class closer, and it helped many people to solve their problems, understand their mistakes, become a group and stand with each other.*”

- Student of Class 7 in Innisfree House School, Bengaluru, India<sup>57</sup>

These essential elements aid in building a restorative school climate and strengthen children’s educational competencies<sup>58</sup>.

Ted Wachtel<sup>59</sup> describes a continuum of conflict resolution and community-building strategies employed in schools, group homes and treatment programs for delinquent and

at-risk youth, wherein practices range from informal exchanges between individuals, prompted by affective statements and questions, to more formal practices such as problem-solving groups, Circles, Restorative Justice conferences and Family Group Conferences.



56 Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2015). *The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline*. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 26(4), 325–353; Hendry, R. (2009). *Building and restoring respectful relationships in schools: A guide to using restorative practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

57 *Enfold Proactive Health Trust, Life Skills Through Restorative Circles, 2020, p. 8*

58 *International Institute for Restorative Practices, Whole School Change Program Overview, 5, 1-8*

59 Wachtel, T. (2024). *Expanding restorative: A sequel to defining restorative (2013)*. First Presented at the 12th Conference of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, Tallinn, Estonia. *Building a New Reality Foundation: Pipersville, PA.*

Common approaches taken by schools include a focus on improving accountability, the safety of the community, and the development of competency<sup>60</sup>; reducing racial and ethnic disparities in disciplinary approaches<sup>61</sup>; reversing the negative effects that zero-tolerance policies have on students<sup>62</sup>; and reducing how much the police interact with students on disciplinary issues in schools<sup>63</sup>.

### 3. Evidence on the impact of Restorative Approaches from the USA, UK, and Australia

Evidence on the impact of Restorative Approaches in schools is predominantly from the Global North. When schools in the USA, the UK, Australia, and Hong Kong, conducted proactive circles, it was seen that the likelihood of students breaking rules was reduced, as through these Circles, community-building approaches were the focus that built the students' emotional intelligence<sup>64</sup>. Developing students' social-emotional skills, not only strengthens

social and human capital but also fosters community within the school, which in turn leads to the development of trust, empathy, and respect for all within the school community- students, teachers, and parents<sup>65</sup>.

#### United States of America

1. Self-reported experiences of 2271 students with Restorative Approaches showed an improvement in the school climate in 13 middle schools in USA<sup>66</sup>, and connectedness within the school with an improvement of peer attachment and social skills as well as a reduction in cyberbullying. The study compared the levels of bullying between schools that implemented Restorative Approaches and schools that did not and a significant reduction in bullying was evidenced by the self-reported experiences of children<sup>67</sup>.
2. Another survey<sup>68</sup> evidenced that with the implementation of community-building Circles, a positive shift was seen in the listening culture between diverse groups in the school. Regarding the relationships teachers have

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60 Ashley, J., & Burke, K. (2009). *Implementing restorative justice: A guide for schools*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

61 Rumberger, R. W., & Losen, D. J. (2016). *The high cost of harsh discipline and its disparate impact*. Los Angeles, CA: The Center for Civil Rights; University of California, Los Angeles.

62 *ibid*

63 Petrosino, A., Guckenburg, S., & Fronius, T. (2012). "Policing Schools" Strategies: A Review of the Evaluation Evidence. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*; Vol 8 No 17 (2012).

64 Constanze Weber, Leen Vereenooghe, *Reducing Conflicts in School Environments Using Restorative Practices: A Systematic Review*, *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 1 (2020) 100009

65 Morrison, B. E., & Vaandering, D. (2012). *Restorative Justice: Pedagogy, Praxis, and Discipline*. *Journal of School Violence*, 11(2), 138–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2011.653322>

66 Acosta, J., Chinman, M., Ebener, P., Malone, P. S., Phillips, A., & Wilks, A. (2019). *Evaluation of a whole-school change intervention: Findings from a two-year cluster-randomized trial of the restorative practices intervention*. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(5), 876–890.

67 *ibid*

68 Brown, M. A. (2017). *Being heard: How a listening culture supports the implementation of schoolwide restorative practices*, *Restor. Justice*, 5(1), 53–69.

with students, it was found that the relationship had great improvements<sup>69</sup> as well as being respectful<sup>70</sup>.

3. Student perspectives on their relationship with teachers showed that teachers who implemented Restorative Approaches more frequently were perceived to be more respectful than those teachers who did not implement it as frequently<sup>71</sup>. Students also reported that peer attachments and social skills with other students improved<sup>72</sup> and instances of students hurting each other decreased<sup>73</sup>.

## United Kingdom

1. Schools in the UK that had implemented a “Learning Together Intervention”<sup>74</sup> to train all staff on both proactive and reactive Restorative Approaches, reported a reduction in bullying compared to schools that had not<sup>75</sup>. Additionally, the difference in incidents of bullying between the schools remained significant

even after 36 months of the study<sup>76</sup>. Further, they reported improved quality of life as well as improved psychological well-being, and reduced tendencies toward substance use<sup>77</sup>.

2. A UK-based study to determine whether Restorative Approaches had any impact on the level of school engagement by the students, found that schools using the proactive model reported an increase in school engagement by the students and improved attendance rates<sup>78</sup>.

## Australia

1. Some schools in Australia had implemented the Responsible Citizenship Program grounded in restorative principles designed for early intervention in primary schools to equip all who are part of the school community with the necessary skills to develop one’s emotional intelligence. Before the implementation of the program, 33% felt

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69 Augustine, C. H., Engberg, J., Grimm, G. E., Lee, E., Wang, E. L., Christianson, K., et al. (2018). *Can restorative practices improve school climate and curb suspensions? An evaluation of the impact of restorative practices in a mid-sized urban school district*. RAND Corporation.

70 Rainbolt, S., Fowler, E. S., & Mansfield, K. C. (2019). High school teachers’ perceptions of restorative discipline practices. *NASSP Bulletin*, 103(2), 158–182.

71 Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2015). The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 26(4), 325–353.

72 Acosta, J., Chinman, M., Ebener, P., Malone, P. S., Phillips, A., & Wilks, A. (2019). Evaluation of a whole-school change intervention: Findings from a two-year cluster-randomized trial of the restorative practices intervention. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(5), 876–890.

73 Wong, D. S., Cheng, C. H., Ngan, R. M., & Ma, S. K. (2011). Program effectiveness of a restorative whole-school approach for tackling school bullying in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 55(6), 846–862.

74 Bonell, C., Allen, E., Warren, E., McGowan, J., Bevilacqua, L., Jamal, F., et al. (2018). *Effects of the learning together intervention on bullying and aggression in English secondary schools (INCLUSIVE): A cluster randomised controlled trial*. *The Lancet*, 392(10163), 2452–2464, p. 2452

75 *ibid* 2457

76 *ibid* 2464

77 Bonell, C., Allen, E., Warren, E., McGowan, J., Bevilacqua, L., Jamal, F., et al. (2018). *Effects of the learning together intervention on bullying and aggression in English secondary schools (INCLUSIVE): A cluster randomised controlled trial*. *The Lancet*, 392(10163), 2452–2464, p. 2455

78 Norris H. *The impact of restorative approaches on well-being: An evaluation of happiness and engagement in schools*. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*. 2018; p. 1.

rejected following wrongdoing, and this reduced to 20% since the program<sup>79</sup>.

## 4. Examples of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Asia

### Hong Kong

While the majority of the evidence about the effectiveness of Restorative Approaches is from the Global North and particularly Western contexts, the effectiveness of a Restorative Whole-school Approach (RWsA) in reducing bullying was examined in a quasi-experimental design in a school in Hong Kong<sup>80</sup>, where research<sup>81</sup> explored protective factors like emotional stability and peer acceptance<sup>82</sup>. Instead of prosecution or criminal measures for a surge in bullying after a widely publicized 2003 case of peer violence<sup>83</sup>, Hong Kong adopted a Restorative Whole-school Approach (RWsA) inspired by Norwegian<sup>84</sup> and UK models<sup>85</sup>, focusing on harm repair and positive school culture, through policies and Restorative Circles involving all stakeholders<sup>86</sup>. RWsA emphasized training, social skills, and

emotional control. Program effectiveness of whole-school approach for tackling bullying in Hong Kong primary schools. *Educational Research Journal*. 25. 103-124. Post-implementation, 49.9% of prior bullies reduced their behavior, while bullying rose 51% in non-RWsA schools<sup>87</sup>.

Efforts have been initiated in schools across Asia more recently, and while interventions may not have reached scale or been rigorously evaluated, they offer insightful narratives of the experience thus far. Select interventions are highlighted below.

### India

Enfold Proactive Health Trust has worked with three private schools in Bengaluru, India, striving to embed a restorative culture within the school environment since 2019. A brief overview of the interventions is as follows:

#### 1. Innisfree House School, Bengaluru:

This school embraced the Restorative Approach in 2019 after Enfold facilitated a five-day training program, handholding teachers and providing feedback after observing three Circles they each

79 Morrison, B. (2002). *Bullying and victimization in schools: A restorative justice approach*, *Trends & issues in crime and crim. Justice*, 219, p. 5

80 Wong, Dennis & Cheng, Christopher & Ngan, Raymond & Ma, Stephen. (2011). *Program Effectiveness of a Restorative Whole-School Approach for Tackling School Bullying in Hong Kong*. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*. 55. 846-62. 10.1177/0306624X10374638.

81 Wong, D. S. W. (2004a). *School bullying and responding tactics: A life education approach*. Hong Kong, China: Arcadia; Wong, D. S. W., & Lo, T. W. (2002). *School bullying in secondary schools: Teachers' perceptions and tackling strategies*. *Educational Research Journal*, 17, 251-272

82 *ibid*

83 Wong, Dennis & Cheng, C.H.K. & Ma, S.K. (2010). *Program effectiveness of whole-school approach for tackling bullying in Hong Kong primary schools*. *Educational Research Journal*. 25. 103-124.

84 Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell

85 Smith P. K., & Sharp S. (Eds). (1994). *School bullying: Insights and perspectives*. London, UK: Routledge.

86 Suckling, A., & Temple, C. (2002). *Bullying: A whole-school approach*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley.

87 Wong, Dennis & Cheng, C.H.K. & Ma, S.K. (2010). *Program effectiveness of whole-school approach for tackling bullying in Hong Kong primary schools*. *Educational Research Journal*. 25. 103-124.

facilitated, as well as another one-day refresher session. Students reported that through Restorative Circles, they felt more heard and were able to understand that others also have problems<sup>88</sup>. Among the 450 students who participated in the feedback, 77% felt heard and respected during the Circles and 67% stated that Circles helped them understand and navigate their emotions better including how to deal with anger, overcome fear, manage disappointments, be more sensitive, confident, and strong<sup>89</sup>.

**2. Saandeepani Academy for Excellence, Bengaluru:** Between 2022 and 2024, Restorative Circles were facilitated in the middle and high school divisions at Saandeepaani Academy for Excellence after training and hand holding facilitated by Enfold. The teachers report that it has led to noticeable improvements in student resilience and self-regulation, particularly in peer interactions across school settings. Students have actively sought Circles to resolve conflicts, reflecting increased emotional awareness and agency. The Circles have also strengthened relationships among peers and between students and teachers by fostering respectful dialogue. Improvements in social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies—especially emotional vocabulary—have been observed. Additionally, Circles have proven effective in addressing classroom issues early, equipping students with constructive conflict-resolution skills. Teachers are increasingly using Circles as a practical tool to navigate classroom challenges with empathy and shared responsibility. Teachers also report that trained faculty, supported by comprehensive training and regular

feedback, have developed strong Circle-keeping skills with emotional sensitivity. Saandeepani's collaborative culture enables teachers to support one another, especially when addressing sensitive topics. Regularly scheduled Circles have normalised open dialogue, fostered trust, and created safe classroom environments. A consistent commitment to inclusivity, along with ground rules that respect diverse perspectives, has helped ensure all participants feel seen, heard, and valued.

**3. American School Mumbai (ASB):** The Restorative Practices Action Team (RPAT), at ASB received extensive training on Proactive Circles facilitated by Enfold at Bengaluru. RPAT then invited Enfold to ASB in Mumbai to conduct training and experiential Proactive Circles with approximately 220 participants including faculty and staff in August 2024, which helped lay a strong foundation for integrating Restorative Approaches within the school community. Building on this, ASB partnered with Akoben to conduct another three-day training (including one full-day foundational training for all ASB staff, and additional in-depth training for selected "Champions," including the leadership team, counselors, and chosen instructional and non-instructional staff), as Akoben's extensive experience working with international schools globally aligned with the diverse needs of ASB's international community. These Champions play a key role in sustaining and expanding Restorative Practices at ASB, focusing on Proactive Circles, Responsive Circles, affective statements, fair processes, and Restorative language in their interactions with students, staff, and parents.

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88 *Enfold Proactive Health Trust, Life Skills Through Restorative Circles, 2020, p. 12*

89 *ibid*

**4. Arpan Foundation India<sup>90</sup>:** At Arpan, the approach to addressing Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is comprehensive, combining prevention, healing, and Restorative Approaches that emphasise empathy, dialogue, and accountability over punishment. Since 2022, structured Restorative Circles have been used in cases of sexual misbehaviour, bullying, and peer pressure, creating safe spaces for children to reflect, listen, and repair harm. Over 100 circles have engaged

61 children across 6 schools and 1 institution, fostering mutual respect and emotional growth. Children showed increased empathy, accountability, and self-awareness, while those harmed developed coping strategies and confidence. Parallel work with parents and teachers promoted dialogue-based responses, contributing to safer, more compassionate environments where every child feels heard, supported, and empowered to thrive.

### Restorative Approaches in Residential Care facilities for children in India - lessons for schools

Enfold's Restorative Approaches team also works in Child-Care Institutions (CCI)<sup>91</sup> residential facilities for children who need care and protection by the state under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, facilitating Restorative Circles for children and staff. Children who had participated in these Circles have reported having benefitted from the experience, explaining that - "We are treated like equals, no one is big or small - everyone has a place to speak", "If we are not talking to each other also, in the Circle I know they will listen to me. If there is any problem, I know that I will get my solution."

Restorative Approaches have been seen to improve behaviour by improving relationships, have acted as an effective pedagogy for generating social-emotional skills and created emphasis on dialogue and empathy over retribution and 'quick fixes'. Restorative Approaches are effective in promoting community building and a child-friendly, safe, and positive culture within CCIs, by building the capacity to effectively respect, promote, protect, and fulfil the right to safety and dignity of the children. It also equips the community (consisting of children and staff residing/working in the CCI) with the tools to address conflict when it arises.

90 *Arpan Foundation, India*

91 *Enfold, Proactive Health Trust, Handbook for Facilitation of Restorative Practices in Child Care Institutions, 2021*

Overall, several benefits were reported following the use of Restorative Justice/ Restorative Practices in Child Care Institutions across the world. Some of these are mentioned below:

1. Children were reported to have a greater sense of accountability and responsibility, and positive behavioural changes<sup>92</sup>.
2. Participants in such processes also felt respected and heard<sup>93</sup>.
3. Positive socio-emotional skills such as anger management, being able to identify emotions, etc., were reported<sup>94</sup>.
4. Empathy and positive relationship building also increased<sup>95</sup>.
5. Persons harmed felt a sense of acknowledgement<sup>96</sup>.
6. Children in conflict with the law felt that they had a greater sense of participation in the justice process<sup>97</sup>.

Conflict resolution skills were also built, thus reducing levels of violence and bullying in CCIs<sup>98</sup>.

## Nepal

The Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice<sup>99</sup> (NFRJ) reports the use of Restorative Justice processes in schools to build community between students and staff and improve safety and learning productivity in the school environment. The schools that have bought into a Restorative school environment provide a space for students to express themselves in a healthy and productive way.

The school practices these values through Care Circles, along with students, teachers, administrators, and the principals of the school<sup>100</sup>. It has also helped develop Restorative Justice guidelines for schools and helped schools adapt them.

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92 *United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. 2011. Promoting Restorative Justice for Children. United Nations Publications.*

93 *ibid*

94 *B. Littlechild, Conflict resolution, restorative justice approaches and bullying in young people's residential units. Children & Society, 25(1) 2011, pp.47-58.*

95 *ibid*

96 *ibid*

97 *ibid*

98 *ibid*

99 *Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice for Schools, Restorative Justice in Schools*

100 *ibid*

## Pakistan

A study<sup>101</sup> was conducted on the Restorative Justice program implemented for schools in the Swat District of Pakistan for all students in the 4th and 5th grade of these results after just four months of the program implementation revealed significant results regarding the decrease in the occurrence and intensity of misconduct, and increase in psychological capital such as hope, efficacy, optimism, and resilience among students. Another study conducted in secondary schools in Lahore district reveals notable positive shifts in school climate after the implementation of Restorative Approaches<sup>102</sup>. It noted an increase in positivity, support, and inclusivity in the school environment, which in turn promoted teacher well-being, as well as increased job satisfaction and effective implementation of Restorative Approaches.

“now looked upon as an ethos and culture of the school, focusing mainly on building positive relationships.” The likelihood of being suspended is unfortunately skewed towards minority students<sup>106</sup>.

## Singapore

In Singapore, Restorative Approaches in schools was piloted in 2005 at Ping Yi Secondary School, as an additional tool for behavioural management<sup>103</sup>, stemming from the belief that “punitive discipline and Restorative Approaches are not mutually exclusive.”<sup>104</sup> While it was seen as an additional tool to discipline at the time of its inception in 2005, Chan and Ismail<sup>105</sup> state that it is

101 Maaz Ud Din, Worakamol Wisetsri, Faisal Khan, Jutharat Pinthapataya: *Restorative Justice and its impact on Primary Schools Students of Swat, KP-Pakistan: In Psychological Perspective- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 17(9). ISSN 1567-214x

102 Kausar, F. N., Ghaffar, Z., & Jan, S. (2023). “*Relationship between Restorative Practices and School Climate at Secondary Level District Lahore.*” *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 2855–2873.

103 Chan Weng Onn Martin and Tan Kok Ping Annie, *Sustaining Our Restorative Journey: A Singapore Perspective, Paper presented at the 15th International Institute for Restorative Practices World Conference: “Building A Worldwide Restorative Practices Learning Network”*. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA, August 1-3, 2012

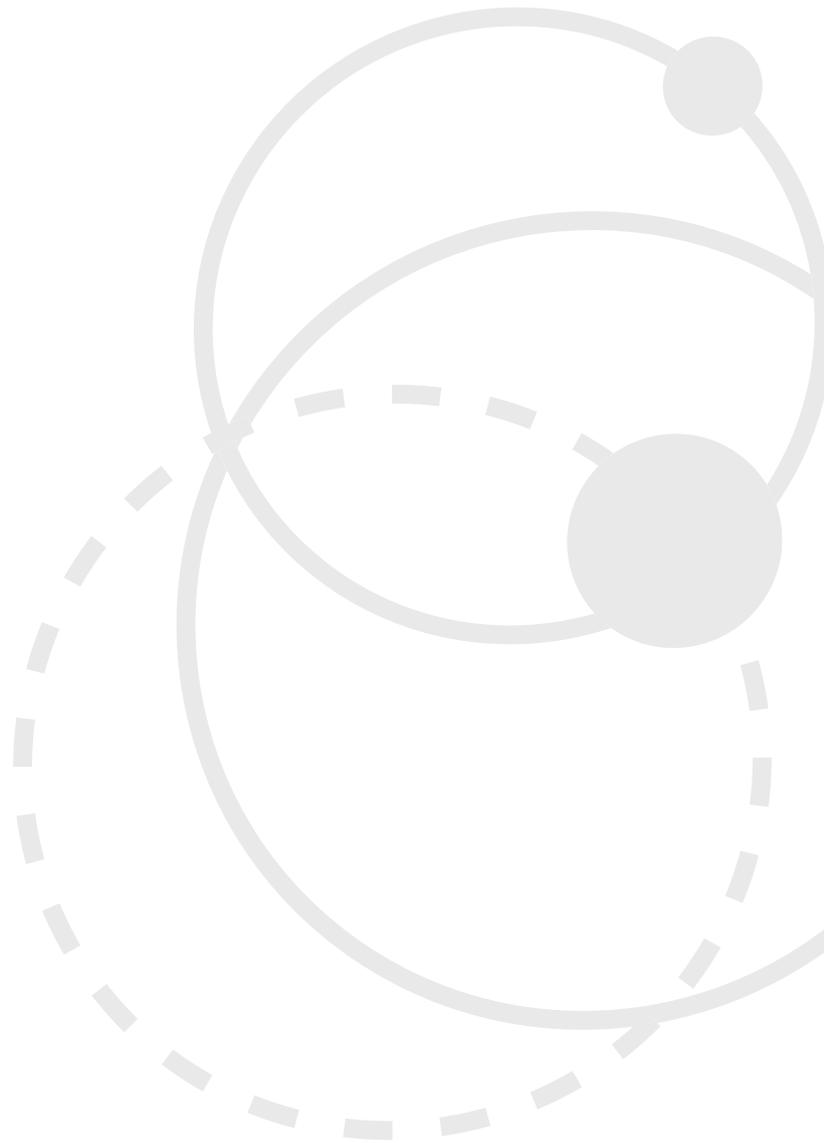
104 Ms Yan Hui Tan & Ms Lynn Koh, *Transforming School Culture in an Asian Context through Restorative Practices*, 26 Oct 2015.

105 Chan, Weng Onn Martin and Ismail, Yusoff. (2007). *Towards A Restorative School: A Singapore Perspective. Paper presented at the 10th International Institute for Restorative Practices World Conference. Budapest, Hungary, November 7-9, 2007.*

106 Noltemeyer, A. L., Marie, R., Mcloughlin, C., & Vanderwood, M. (2015). *Relationship Between School Suspension and Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis. School Psychology Review*, 44(2), 224–240.

# CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates the potential and opportunities of an incremental use of Restorative Approaches in school settings all the way to the adoption of a holistic restorative approach that combines both proactive and responsive mechanisms. While its implementation and impact measurement are at a nascent stage in the countries in the Global South, the transformative potential of restorative approach and practices in education deserves consideration. Concerted efforts must be made to enhance awareness, build capacities, and pilot interventions to embrace Restorative Approaches. Investing in comprehensive training, evidence-building, facilitating international exchanges, and actively involving parents and families are critical steps toward embedding restorative principles as a fundamental part of school culture. By prioritizing these actions, especially in countries of the Global South, we can accelerate the adoption of holistic, culturally relevant restorative approaches that promote equity, safety, and resilience within educational communities where every child can thrive.



# ANNEXURE 1

## List of Video of Examples\* of Integration of Restorative Approaches in Schools:

1. A Restorative Approach to Discipline (USA)
2. Belinda Hopkins - Implementation of Restorative Practices in Catalan schools(Spain)
3. Circle for Change - Restorative Practice (USA)
4. Conflict Resolution - Restorative Circle (USA)
5. Creating A Restorative School at Hart Middle School (USA)
6. Practicing Restorative Circles at Saandeevani Academy for Excellence (India)
7. Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect (USA)
8. Restorative circles give students the space to reflect and problem-solve (USA)
9. Restorative circles give students the space to reflect and problem-solve (USA)
10. Restorative Justice - Circle (USA)
11. Restorative Justice at Oakland's Fremont High (USA)
12. Restorative practice in schools (UK)
13. Restorative Problem Circle in Schools (Ireland)
14. Schools resolve conflicts by getting kids to talk things out (USA)
15. The "Why" of Restorative Practices in Spokane Public Schools (USA)
16. Teacher-Student Restorative Justice Circle (USA)
17. Glimpses into Restorative Practices initiated by Enfold at Innisfree House School, Bengaluru

\* While most of these videos are from the Global North, this is not to imply that Restorative Approaches are not being implemented in the Global South.

# ANNEXURE 2

## Indigenous Practices

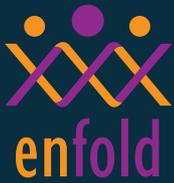
### New Zealand

Among New Zealand's two primary ethnic groups, "Pakeha" (Anglo-European Descent), and the Maori (indigenous people), the latter saw a need to change the ways of the criminal justice system, thus, exploring other methods of resolutions. Māori youths saw large numbers of placements in foster homes as a result of increased dependence on imprisonment to address crimes, substance abuse and alcohol. In 1969, 29% of the inmates in prisons were Maori, and in 1991, this number increased to 50%. The Maori were instrumental in the passing of the "Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act, 1989. This Act laid the foundation for Family Group Counselling (FGC)- a system that enabled the diversion of children and young persons from the criminal justice system and instead kept them within their families and communities. FGC now stands as a pillar of Restorative Justice and has evolved and been adapted by countries in North America, East and South East Asia, Oceania, and the Island Pacific.

### Canadian First Nations and Restorative Justice

#### Yukon Territory, Canada/Kake, Alaska

In 1993, Harold Gatensby, Tl'ingit, and Barry Stuart, Judge of the Yukon Territorial Court, were instrumental in bringing in "circle sentencing" processes incorporating the method of Tl'ingit Circle practices. Gatensby and Stuart are widely credited for the development of Peacemaking Circles in Kake's "Healing Heart Council." The process was also called RJ "hybrid, where judges facilitate circle conferences in informal settings outside the courtrooms. The system allows for community leaders to "keep circles", organise support groups, and assist judges in facilitating circles as the role of the community and culture is vital to this practice, with the deep-rooted belief that community leaders better understand the context of the individuals and the culture than that of any visiting judge in the area.



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