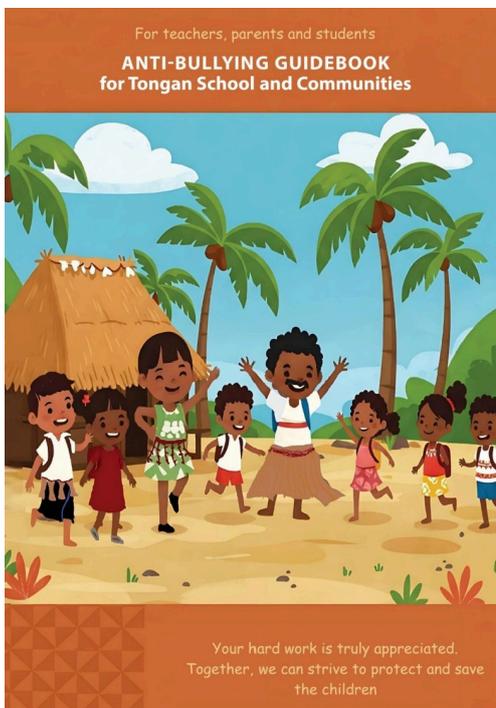




Save the Children

## Changing the culture of bullying

### Anti-bullying guidelines supporting positive school-based practices to foster respect and stronger educational outcomes in Tongatapu, Vava'u, Ha'apai and Eua.



Over the three decades as Principal of Tonga Side School, Andrea Filise Taufu has witnessed many challenges, but one issue has stood out sharply in recent times: bullying.

With over 1,300 students and only 46 staff, the school is a bustling environment where small problems can grow quickly, "Comparing the situation of bullying this year to what it was before, this is the worst," she explains.

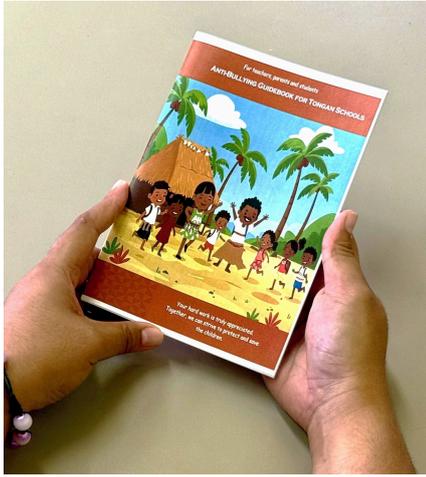
**"Complaints from parents have risen, and for many children, the classroom feels less like a safe space and more like a battlefield."**

Principal Andrea believes the causes of bullying are multi-layered. "Most of the students that are engaging in bullying are not just from broken homes but also from very busy homes," she shares.

"Many parents are absent due to work, leaving their children in the care of grandparents or relatives", she adds.

Some parents acknowledge this gap, but some refuse to believe their children behave this way. "They think I am wrong", says Principal Andrea, describing difficult conversations where parents insisted their children behaved differently at home than at school. Yet teachers' records and repeated incidents tell a different story.

Peer pressure intensifies these issues, and for some the root causes lie closer to home, "There are teachers who are shouting at the children, hitting and scaring them as well". For Principal Andrea, changing the culture of discipline in both homes and schools is the first step towards breaking the cycle.



Holding the anti-bullying guide, Principal Andrea has a renewed hope of seeing significant changes. “By looking at this guide, I am expecting something good to happen in the future of the Tonga Side School. This will be a guide and resource for teachers on how to deal with bullying, to avoid bullying and how best to help the children.”

Whilst hopeful, Principal Andrea knows that changing the culture of bullying is not without its challenges, “Social media and mobile phones are shaping how students interact, often in ways that encourage bullying”. But she believes the guidebook can help teachers adapt and respond.

Like other teachers across Tonga, Principal Andrea wants schools where every child feels safe, where discipline is rooted in care and bullying no longer defines the culture of learning. With this new anti-bullying guide, she believes they finally have a chance to get there, “I think this book will be a very good resource for teachers. If we use it wisely, there will be a big change in our culture and a happy one in the future.”

The anti-bullying guidebooks are an initiative of Save the Children Australia’s Tonga Program, under its Future-Ready Children in Tonga project, funded by the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). Activities include assisting teachers and parents to alleviate bullying in all forms including verbal, physical, emotional and digital (online).

In 2023, Save the Children commissioned a study on ‘Child Protection in the Education Sector in Tonga’ that identified bullying as one of the main child protection issues. Out of the 28 groups included in the study, 19 indicated they felt unsafe at school. Eight groups identified bullying as a particular source of concern.

The anti-bullying guidebook will support teachers, parents and students strengthen positive behaviour practices and respond more effectively to harm, offering real hope for a future where every Tongan child feels protected and valued.



Tonga Side School Principal Andrea Taufa/Ena Kiutau Save the Children



Save the Children

Supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



**Find out more:**

Maa’imoa Mafile’o

Tonga Program and Partnership Manager

Save the Children

maaimoa.mafileo@savethechildren.org.au

**savethechildren.org.au**