Part VI – At a glance
Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect of children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Key facts:
- Nearly one in four adults reports having been physically abused as a child; 36% say they were emotionally abused as a child.
- 20% of women and 5–10% of men report having been sexually abused as children.
- Maltreatment can cause changes in the brain that increase the risk of behavioural, physical and mental health problems in adulthood.
- Being a victim of child maltreatment can increase the risk that a person will become a victim and/or perpetrator of other forms of violence in adolescence and adulthood.

Findings from the survey
The majority of countries report having adopted national action plans to address child maltreatment. Many countries report that prevention programmes for child maltreatment are being implemented. However, only a minority of countries report implementing these measures at scale.

Prevention approaches
There are a number of evidence-based programmes designed to help strengthen early relationships and interactions between children and their caregivers, promote healthy development and prevent child maltreatment.

Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys
Proportion of countries that reported implementing a particular strategy

**Home visiting**

Home visiting programmes involve visits by nurses to parents and infants in their homes to provide support, education, and information. Some home visiting programmes can substantially reduce child maltreatment and associated outcomes such as injuries.

- **None** (not implemented at all)
- **Limited** (implemented once or a few times)
- **Larger scale** (e.g. across many schools or communities or has reached 30% or more of the target population)

**Parenting education**

Parenting education programmes aim to improve child-rearing skills, increase knowledge of child development and encourage positive child management strategies. Parenting education programmes show great promise in preventing child maltreatment and promoting positive parenting and child behaviour.

**Child sexual abuse avoidance training**

Child sexual abuse prevention programmes teach children about body ownership, the difference between good and bad touch, how to say “no” and how to disclose abuse to a trusted adult. They can increase children’s knowledge of what to do if they encounter a potentially abusive situation.
Youth violence is violence occurring between people aged 10–29 years. It often occurs among youth who are not relatives and who may not know each other, and generally takes place outside of the home. It includes harmful behaviours that may start early and continue into adulthood. Some violent acts — such as assault — can lead to serious injury or death. Others, such as bullying, slapping or hitting may result more in emotional than physical harm.

**Key facts:**

- Worldwide an estimated 200,000 homicides occur each year among youth aged 10–29 years, accounting for 43% of all homicides annually.
- In over 80% of deaths due to youth violence the victim is a male.
- For each young person killed, many more sustain injuries requiring hospital treatment.
- Beyond deaths and injuries, youth violence can lead to mental health problems and increased health risk behaviours, such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, and unsafe sex.
- Perpetrators and victims of youth violence often have a long history of involvement in violence, and many were victims of child maltreatment.

**Findings from the survey**

While more than half of surveyed countries report having adopted national action plans to address youth violence, only a quarter of countries report having national surveys to measure the magnitude and consequences of youth violence, and identify its risk factors.

**Prevention approaches**

A variety of approaches have been developed to reduce violent behaviour among young people. The most common approaches help children and adolescents manage anger, resolve conflict and develop the necessary social skills to solve problems.

**Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys**

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Preschool enrichment

Preschool enrichment programmes introduce young children to the skills necessary for success in school, thereby increasing the likelihood of future academic success. Preschool enrichment programmes can reduce arrests for violence among those aged 20–24 years by up to 40%.

Life skills training

Life skills training programmes are designed to help older children and adolescents manage anger, resolve conflict and develop the necessary social skills to solve problems. Life skills training programmes can reduce adolescent violence by up to 29%.

Mentoring

Mentoring programmes match a young person at high risk of antisocial behaviour or growing up in a single-parent family with a caring older person from outside the family. Mentoring can reduce illicit drug initiation, truancy and other risk factors for youth violence.

Bullying prevention

Bullying prevention programmes can involve anger management, social skills and assertiveness training for children involved in bullying; teaching peers active listening and problem solving skills to help those involved; and whole-school approaches such as developing an anti-bullying policy.
Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. It can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples, and does not require sexual intimacy. Intimate partner violence is often hidden and only a small percentage of victims seek help from formal victim assistance providers.

**Key facts:**
- Intimate partner violence against women is an important risk factor for HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and other reproductive health problems.
- Women exposed to intimate partner violence are almost twice as likely to have an alcohol use disorder, two times more likely to experience depression and have an increased risk for suicide attempts compared to women who have not been exposed to partner violence.
- Intimate partner violence can negatively affect children in households where it occurs.

**Findings from the survey**
A majority of countries report having conducted national surveys on intimate partner violence and two thirds report having national action plans to address it. Far fewer report implementing school- and community-based programmes to change attitudes and behaviour directly.

**Prevention approaches**
Promoting gender equity, creating a climate of non-tolerance for violence and starting prevention efforts at a young age are some of the key strategies for preventing intimate partner violence.

**Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys**

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Dating violence prevention in schools

Dating violence prevention programmes in schools aim to develop healthy relationship skills and reduce attitudes that are accepting of violence. Evaluations of these programmes in mostly high-income countries show positive changes in knowledge and attitudes toward relationship violence and reductions in abusive behaviours.

Microfinance and gender equity training

Microfinance combined with gender equity training focuses on women living in poor communities and is designed to economically empower them and address gender norms, cultural beliefs and communication. It is one of the few strategies with documented evidence showing reductions in partner violence.

Social and cultural norm-change

Social and cultural norm-change strategies aim to modify social expectations, such as the norm that men have the right to control women, which make women vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual violence by men. Rigorous evaluations of social and cultural norm-change strategies are still needed to assess their impact; however, they remain an important strategy to inform and create cultural shifts in what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and in promoting norms supportive of healthy, non-violent, and gender equitable relationships.
Sexual violence is defined as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work.

**Key facts:**
- Sexual violence against women and girls can lead to unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, gynaecological problems and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
- Women who have experienced non-partner sexual violence are 2.3 times more likely to have alcohol use disorders and 2.6 times more likely to have depression or anxiety than women who have not.
- Boys and men also suffer sexual violence, although this remains poorly documented.

**Findings from the survey**
Over half of countries report conducting national surveys on sexual violence and some two-thirds of countries report adopting national action plans to address it. While over half of countries report implementing campaigns to change social and cultural norms, only a third report implementing school-based programmes addressing gender norms and attitudes at a larger scale.

**Prevention approaches**
Addressing the root causes of violence against women — starting prevention efforts at a young age, changing social norms accepting of sexual violence against women and implementing strategies to promote gender equity — are some of the key strategies for preventing sexual violence.

**Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys**

- National action plans: 35 Yes, 65 No
- National surveys: 48 Yes, 52 No
School and college programmes

School- and college-based programmes are designed to raise awareness, address gender norms, bystander behaviours, and knowledge and attitudes about rape and sexual assault. Few programmes have been rigorously evaluated, suggesting a critical gap to fill.

Physical environment changes

Physical environment changes include improving formal and informal surveillance, better lighting of public areas and interventions to encourage the use of public spaces. While promising, more research is needed to evaluate their specific effects on sexual violence.

Social and cultural norm-change

Social and cultural norm-change programmes aim to modify norms of male sexual entitlement, and can reduce attitudes and beliefs that are supportive of sexual violence. Rigorous evaluations of social and cultural norm-change strategies are still needed to assess their impact; however, they remain an important strategy to inform and create cultural shifts in what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
At a glance

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person. Elder abuse includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect and serious loss of dignity and respect.

Key facts:
- National surveys conducted in predominantly high-income countries find wide variation in rates of abuse in the preceding 12 months among adults aged over 60 years, ranging from 0.8% in Spain and 2.6% in the United Kingdom to upwards of 18% in Israel, 23.8% in Austria and 32% in Belgium.
- Elder abuse can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences, including depression and anxiety.
- Elder abuse is predicted to increase as many countries are experiencing rapidly ageing populations.

Findings from the survey

Although public and professional information campaigns to raise awareness about elder abuse are reported in many countries, elder abuse is one of the least-investigated types of violence in national surveys, and one of the least addressed in national action plans.

Prevention approaches

Strategies to prevent elder abuse include efforts to raise professional awareness and train practitioners; inform the public about how to identify the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and where help can be obtained, and improving policies and practices in residential care facilities for elderly people. There is, however, very little research on the effectiveness of any such programmes in preventing elder abuse, and this is a critical gap to fill.

Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys

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Professional awareness campaigns

Professional awareness campaigns aim to improve professionals’ ability to identify and deal effectively with suspected elder abuse cases. While they can increase such knowledge, their effectiveness depends on the strategies in place to deal with a suspected case once identified.

Public information campaigns

Public information campaigns aim to increase public awareness about elder abuse, promote positive attitudes towards older people, and encourage the respectful, dignified treatment of older people. They may help to raise the visibility of elder abuse and change social norms that are supportive of elder abuse.

Caregiver support

Caregiver support programmes provide services to relieve the burden of caregiving, by, for instance, providing help with housekeeping and meal preparation, respite care, support groups and day care. They can reduce the caregiver burden, stress and depression, all of which are risk factors for elder abuse.

Residential care policies

Residential care policies aim to improve standards of care in nursing and other residential care homes for elderly people by implementing procedures within the homes that reduce the likelihood of elder abuse. They can help to establish uniform licencing requirements and professional operating standards that lower the risk of elder abuse.