Youth Violence

Youth Violence is the 4th leading cause of death in young people worldwide.

200,000 die each year.

The Health Sector Role in Prevention and Response
What is youth violence?

Youth violence:

Involves children and young adults aged 10 to 29

Peaks during late adolescence and early adulthood

It takes many forms.

Homicide
Assault
Fighting
Bullying
Emotional abuse
Dating violence

Youth violence affects countries unevenly. In some, rates of youth violence are 100 times higher than in other countries.
Youth violence is widespread.

Worldwide:

4 out of 10 young people were in a physical fight in the last year.

1 out of 4 teenagers were bullied in the last month.

Males are far more likely than females to be killed in youth violence. 83% of victims are male.

Youth Violence has severe consequences.

Some effects of youth violence are visible.

Millions of young people are admitted to hospitals for serious injuries each year as a result of youth violence.

Others are hidden.

1 out of 3 victims of school violence never tell anyone about it.
Youth violence has a **lasting impact.**

- Mental health problems
- Poor performance in school
- Harmful use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol
- Being a victim of violence as an adult — or committing it

**Youth violence harms communities.**

- Fear and anxiety, loss of social cohesion

**It drains economies.**

- Health care costs, legal and judicial costs, lost future earnings, destroyed property
Youth violence is predictable. Risk factors include problems and behaviours such as:

- Struggling in school
- Truancy and destructive behaviour
- Having antisocial peers
- Abusing alcohol and drugs
- Behaviour problems
- Criminal activity

Circumstances like:

- Living in an area with concentrated poverty
- Weak governance and poor rule of law
- Having easy access to alcohol, drugs, and guns

Having parents who are:

- Harsh, inconsistent, or disengaged
- Involved in crime

These factors increase the risk of involvement in youth violence — the more risk factors, the greater the risk.
Youth violence is not inevitable.

We don’t have to wait for it to happen and then act.

We can address the causes and prevent it.

Research has found strategies that work — potentially anywhere in the world.
We can prevent youth violence.

Punishment alone is not the answer — because we're not addressing the root causes.

Interventions at different stages of life can make a difference — and help stop children from becoming violent.

**During early childhood**
- Parenting programmes to help parents build strong relationships with their children
- Early childhood development programmes to help disadvantaged children keep up with their peers

**During adolescence and young adulthood**
- Life and social skills development programmes to help young people build healthy peer relationships
- Schools-based violence prevention programmes to prevent bullying
- Therapeutic interventions to help children and teens manage anger and behaviour problems

**Society-level prevention strategies**
- Policies and programmes to reduce alcohol and drug use
- Reducing access to firearms
- Urban upgrading and deconcentration of poverty
- Community- and problem-oriented policing
The health sector has a **vital role** in preventing and responding to youth violence.

1. Collect data on the impact and costs of youth violence
2. Start programmes to reduce risk factors for youth violence, such as behavioural problems, child maltreatment, and the harmful use of alcohol
3. Include interventions to prevent youth violence within existing early childhood development, education, and health programmes
4. Provide comprehensive health services to survivors, including emergency care
5. Collaborate with other sectors to address youth violence, such as criminal justice, education, and social services

Youth violence is predictable — and preventable. Together, we can save lives and ensure a safer future for young people across the globe.

**WHO Resources:**