Part III – Findings

As a result, child protection services were more commonly reported by high-income countries (80%) than low-income countries. However, in both instances, these services were more commonly reported by high-income countries (80%) than low-income countries (33%).

Although child protection services are present in many countries, these services are often dispersed, fragmented and poorly resourced, and may in fact have a detrimental impact on the protection of child victims of violence (14). As a result, even when such services are available, child victims and their families may fail to use them and a lack of information about existing services, the fear of seeing confidentiality broken, and concerns about reprisals can further undermine the quality of child protection services (14).

Child protection services are the most widely available of all services

Child protection services were the most widely reported of all services (69%), followed by medico-legal services for victims of sexual violence (see Figure 17). About eight out of every 10 countries in the Region of the Americas and in the Eastern Mediterranean and European Regions reported having systems in place to identify and investigate potential cases of child maltreatment. This was also the case for three quarters of countries in the South-East Asia Region. Other types of screening and referral services (for example, through maternal and child health programmes) to identify and support potential victims of child maltreatment were also reported by 59% of countries. However, in both instances, these services were more commonly reported by high-income countries (80%) than low-income countries (33%).

Two thirds of countries indicated that they do not have adult protective services in place to assist vulnerable older adults

Of all the services included in the survey, adult protective services were the least reported by countries. Only one third of countries indicated that they have adult protective services in place to investigate potential cases of elder abuse and assist vulnerable older adults. The lack of adult protective services, particularly in contrast to child protection services, was consistent across all regions (see Figure 18). Countries further along in efforts to protect and support older adults include these services as part of their national policy (29, 98). The United States, for example, has a fully developed system for reporting and treating cases of elder abuse. Services are designed to provide elder abuse victims with a coordinated, interdisciplinary system of social and health services which enable them to continue living independently at home and to protect them against further abuse.

With a rapidly ageing population, the need to strengthen the system of adult protection is important. By 2030, older adults are projected to comprise 13% of the world population – one in eight people will be aged 65 years or older (99). While low- and middle-income countries will experience the most rapid growth in ageing, with increases of up to 140%, high-income countries are expected to experience increases averaging 51% (99).