Violence against Women

The Health Sector Responds

1 in 3 women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her life.
Violence against women takes many forms, including:

- Intimate partner violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence
- Honour killings
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced and early marriages
- Trafficking

The most common type of violence experienced by women is intimate partner violence.
Violence against women is widespread.

It occurs in all countries of the world ...
...but prevalence varies from country to country.

Prevalence also varies within countries.

Studies from different countries show that the percentage of women 15 to 49 years old who've experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime ranges from 15% to 71%.

This variation shows that violence against women is preventable.
Violence against women has serious health consequences.

Costs of intimate partner and sexual violence for countries are very high. They include the provision of health, social, and legal services and costs of lost earnings.
Violence against women affects the whole family.

Children exposed to intimate partner violence in the home are more likely to:

- Be abused themselves
- Not receive healthcare
- Have behavioural, emotional, and schooling problems

As adolescents, they are more likely to:

- Use alcohol and drugs in harmful ways
- Smoke
- Have unsafe sex

Adults who grew up with violence in the home are more likely to perpetrate or experience intimate partner violence.
Violence against women is *preventable*.

Violence against women is **rooted in gender inequality**.

Programs to reduce intimate partner violence need to address risk factors at multiple levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>History of violence in childhood</td>
<td>Parenting programmes to prevent child maltreatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Male control over women</td>
<td>Programmes targeting men and boys to <em>promote</em> gender equitable attitudes and behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Unequal gender norms that condone violence against women</td>
<td>Programmes promoting equitable gender norms through media, community mobilization, schools, and religious institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>Male partner's harmful use of alcohol</td>
<td>Reducing availability and access to alcohol</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Women's lack of access to education and employment</td>
<td>Laws, policies, and programmes that promote women's access to employment and microcredit, girls' access to education, and that ban or prohibit violence against women</td>
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</table>
Everyone has a role to play in addressing violence against women.

To prevent and respond to violence against women, multiple sectors of society must work together.

The health sector plays a key role in preventing and responding to violence against women.
Stop violence against women.
A role for the health sector:

- **Provide**
  comprehensive health services for survivors

- **Collect data**
  about prevalence, risk factors, and health consequences

- **Inform policies**
  to address violence against women

- **Prevent violence**
  by fostering and informing prevention programmes

- **Advocate**
  for the recognition of violence against women as a public health problem

**Web Resources**
- [http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/)

**WHO Resources**