Preventing Violence, Promoting Peace

A Policy Toolkit for Preventing Interpersonal, Collective and Extremist Violence
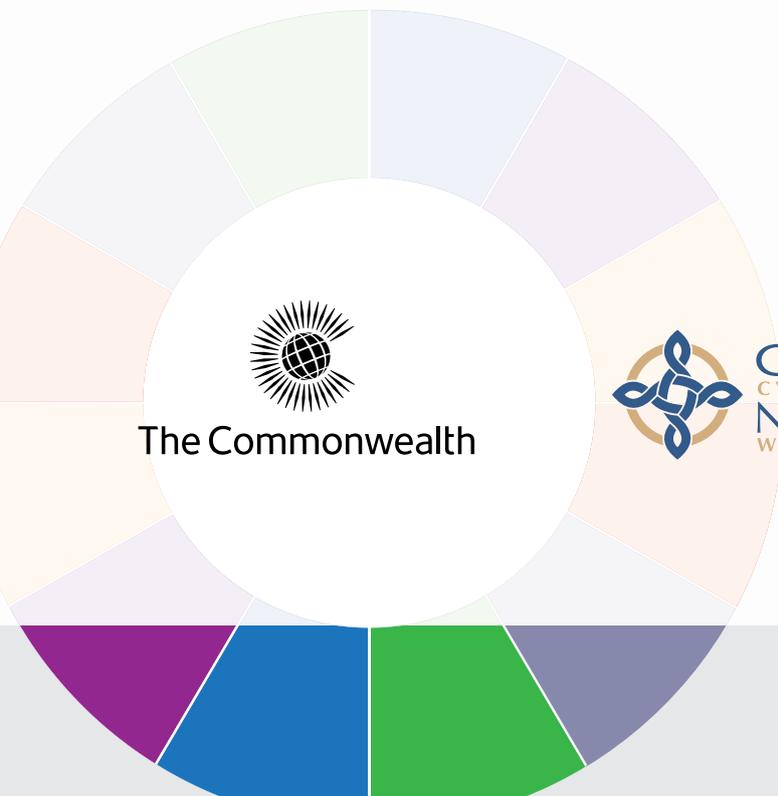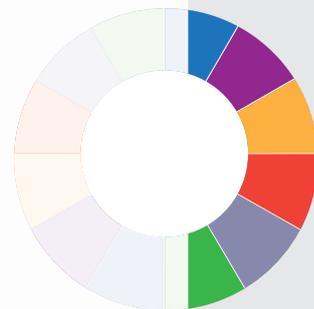
The Commonwealth

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES | Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales
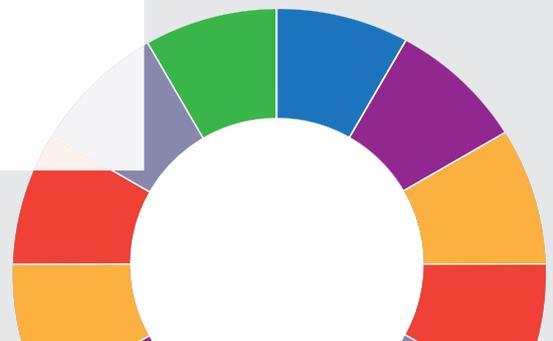
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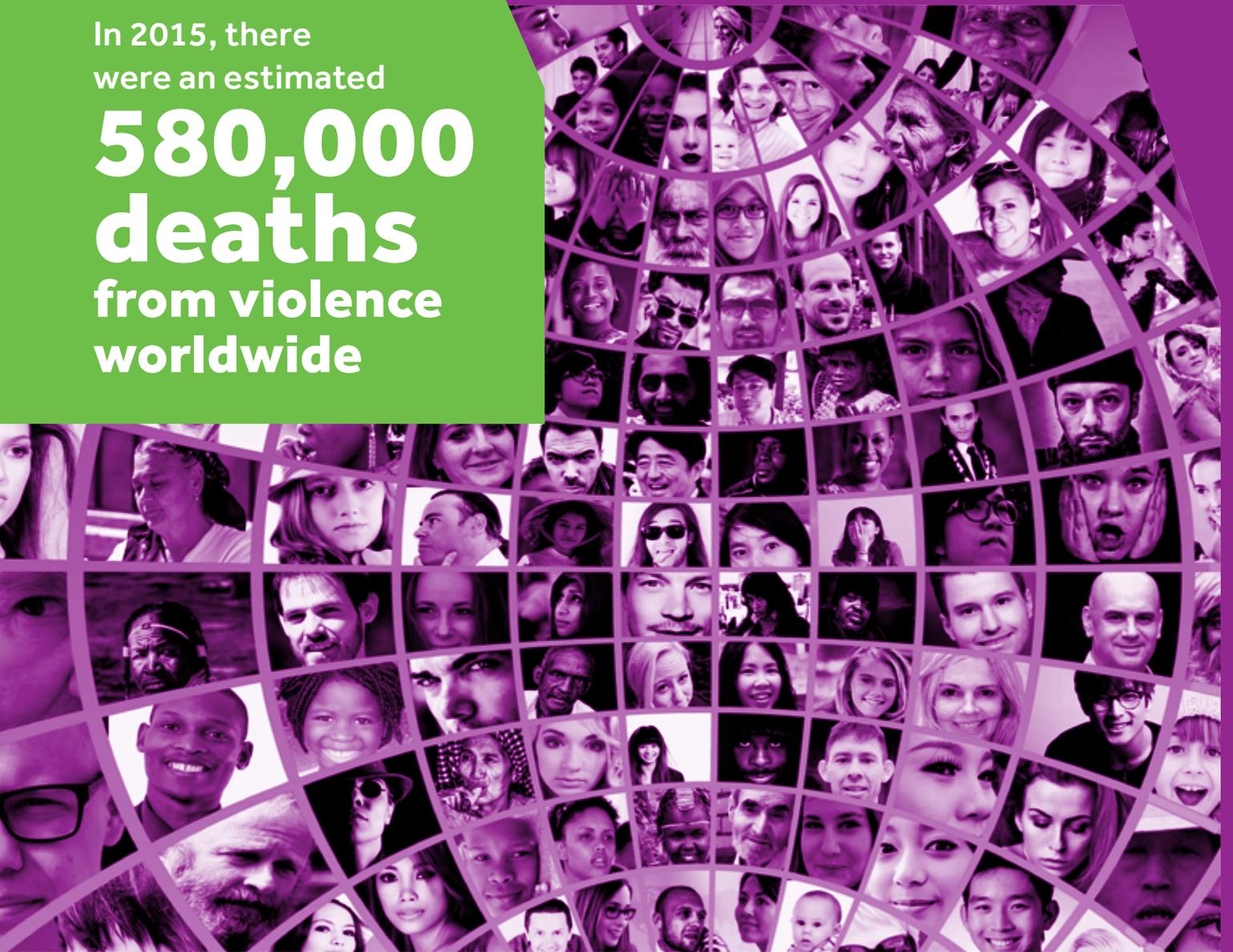
Executive Summary

Introduction

The Commonwealth Charter includes the principle that **international peace and security**, sustainable economic growth and development, and the rule of law are essential to improving the lives of all people in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth adopted **a Peace Building Commonwealth** as its theme for 2017. To support this theme, *Preventing Violence, Promoting Peace – A policy tool kit for addressing interpersonal, collective and extremist violence* brings together evidence on the prevention of all types of violence including interpersonal violence (child maltreatment, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, elder abuse and youth violence), collective violence (including war and gang violence) and violent extremism[1]. It focuses largely on how to prevent individuals and groups from developing violent behaviours rather than the costly process of dealing with violence and its consequences. This summary of the full report includes key findings and references to relevant sections in the main document.

Globally, violence is estimated to cost 13.3 per cent of global productivity equivalent to US$13.6 trillion per year. This percentage of the combined productivity of the Commonwealth would represent around US$1.4 trillion per year. As well as the costs of violence related to injury and long-term disability, those exposed to violence in early life have more difficulties engaging in education and experience reduced employment and economic activity[a]. They are more vulnerable to poor mental health, and alcohol and drug abuse, and are at greater risk of developing physical health problems at younger ages, including cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Consequently, violence increases pressures on health, social and judicial systems, creating sometimes unmanageable demands on scarce resources[b].

Like many other public health problems, **violence is infectious**. Children exposed to violence in the home are more likely to grow up to be perpetrators or victims of violence themselves[c]. This pernicious cycle can result

violence is infectious

in families and communities suffering violence for generations. However, it is not the only cycle that must be broken for violence to be eradicated. Poverty and inequalities contribute to marginalisation, desperation and feelings of injustice, which increase risks of violence. In turn, such violence results in poorer investment, education and economic development, and further exacerbation of poverty and inequality[a]. Violence is a disincentive for investment in nations and regions, a reason why skilled labour leaves or cannot be recruited, and a corrosive force that erodes community and family cohesion. Equally, in many parts of the world, war and organised conflict drive the movement of people and create unstable environments, weak institutional structures, traumatised individuals and poor rule of law. Such factors increase risks of long periods of violence and abuse emerging in the aftermath of conflict. Individuals born into migrant and minority populations can feel part of neither the culture of previous generations nor that of the broader local population. Isolation and identity issues leave individuals vulnerable to radicalisation and violent extremism (RVE). Violent extremism can devastate whole economies and communities, creating anger, fear and suspicion for years after the act[d], and consequently such acts create further isolation of minority populations.

This document summarises evidence on breaking these cycles of violence. **Violence is preventable** and recent decades have generated substantive evidence describing both the risk factors that push people into violent life courses and a range of policies, programmes and practices that prevent such violence from developing. Further, the pervasive damage from violence means that **the savings from investing in evidence-based violence prevention are substantive**. Reduced costs to those dealing with the overt and hidden impacts of violence on

violence is preventable

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1   The document does not include self-directed violence such as suicide and self-harm.
References to the Full Report: a, Section 3; b, Section 3.4; c, Section 4.2; d, Section 3.5.

health, criminal justice, education and economic systems mean evidence-based programmes can return multiple dollars in savings for every one invested[e]. While a range of detailed documents already address interpersonal violence, collective violence or violent extremism individually, few have examined the three together to explore commonalities in risks and potential preventative solutions. This document identifies strong links between causes of different types of violence at the macro socio-economic level (e.g. poverty and inequalities) that can interact with experiences in homes, schools and other institutional settings to create breeding grounds for violence. It also exposes emerging challenges common to all forms of violence, including new technologies that join communities globally but also disseminate propaganda, help organise acts of terror and create new opportunities for interpersonal violence (e.g. online bullying, sexual exploitation).

The public health approach, adopted here, focuses on understanding factors that increase risk of, or resilience (resistance) to, involvement in violence and identifies evidence-based interventions that reduce risk while increasing resilience. This approach is well established for interpersonal violence although less so for collective and extremist violence. Risk, resilience and effective interventions are considered at the level of the individual (biological factors and personal history), relationships (the nature and quality of their interactions with others), communities (settings in which these relationships occur) and societies (where laws and cultural norms often operate). Increasingly, however, individuals, communities and nations across the world have become interconnected and interdependent[f]. Consequently, a global level is used here to examine issues affecting violence such as migration, international conflict, climate and trade[g]. The nations of the Commonwealth are well placed to tackle violence at all levels from individual to global.

preventing violence is an issue across the life course

Finally, violence is addressed here as a **life course issue**. Childhood experiences of violence affect the behavioural, health, economic and other social outcomes of adults[f]. Transitions between life stages, such as adolescence, are also challenges for violence prevention when identity development and the management of interpersonal relationships can increase or inhibit tendencies for violence. Positive relationships are a source of resilience, diverting vulnerable individuals from an otherwise violent life course. However exploitative relationships can see the same vulnerable individuals directed towards involvement in violence[h].

References to the Full Report: e, Appendices; f, Section 1.4 ; g, Section 4.1; h, Section 4.2.4.

The extent of the problem

Violence is a major public health concern that impacts on the lives of billions of men, women and children across the globe, contributing to death, disease and disability. In 2015, there were an estimated 580,000 deaths from violence worldwide, with a disproportionate burden among men and young adults. Over two thirds of these deaths were the result of interpersonal violence. However, while global deaths through interpersonal violence are decreasing, those due to collective violence have increased (Figure ES1). Despite this, in 2015 more lives were lost to violence in large countries such as Brazil and India, which were not experiencing conflict, than in war-torn countries such as Syria[i].

**Figure ES1. Global deaths from interpersonal and collective violence, 2005 and 2015**
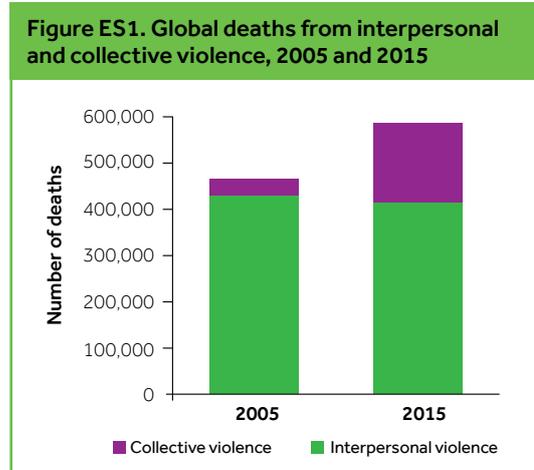
Source: GBD, 2016a http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31012-1/fulltext

Child maltreatment includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect. Children who suffer one form of maltreatment often also experience other forms, and worldwide half of all children have been affected by some form of violence in the past year. Almost 95,000 children (aged 0–19 years) die from violence and abuse each year, with 80–90 per cent from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)[j].

95,000
children die from violence and abuse each year

Violence against women and girls is strongly related to issues of gender inequality, which represents a human rights violation, and affects all ages, income and education levels. Globally, one in five girls have been sexually abused during their childhood[j]; over 200 million girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM); and over a third (35.6 per cent) of women aged 15 years and over have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence from a partner or sexual violence from a non-partner. In Commonwealth countries with available data, the proportion of women having experienced any physical violence at least once ranges from 69 per cent in Fiji to less than 20 per cent in Malta (Figure ES2)[k].

35.6%
of women have experienced physical violence and/or sexual from a partner or sexual violence from a non-partner

Figure ES2. Percentage of women[a] in certain Commonwealth countries experiencing physical violence at least once in their lifetime, latest available data

[a]Age groups differ across countries   Source: UN, 2015a, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads.html.

References to the Full Report: i, Section 2; j, Section 2.1; k, Section 2.2.

Elder abuse is less well quantified than other forms of violence yet presents a major threat to health, wellbeing and justice. Available data suggests that 15.7 per cent of older people worldwide suffered some form of abuse in the past year – amounting to an estimated 141 million victims. Without effective prevention, elder abuse is likely to represent an increasing aspect of violence as the proportion of older individuals in the global population escalates[l].

Figure ES3. Percentage of 13–15 year olds in Commonwealth countries who report being bullied in the last 30 days, latest data available
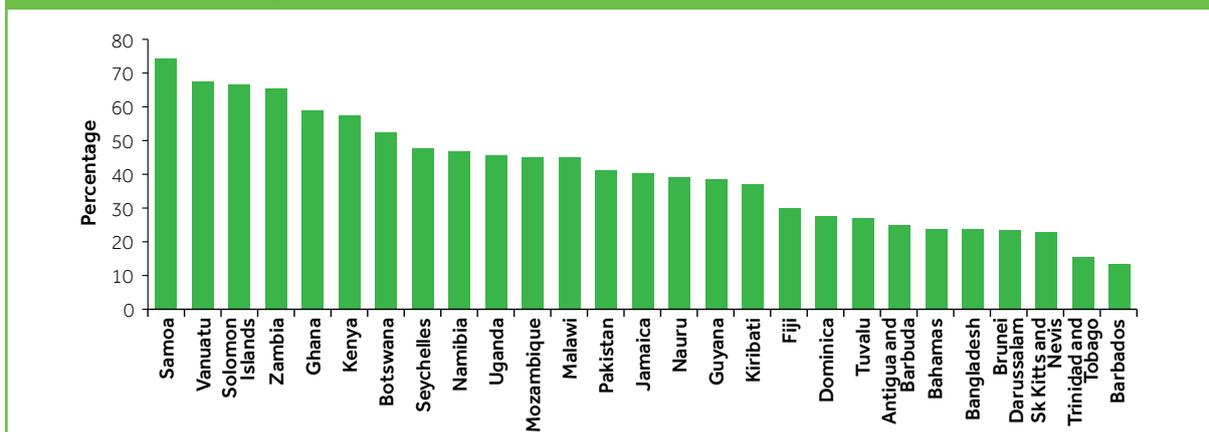
Source: Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS; WHO 2015a), http://www.who.int/chp/gshs/en

4 in 10
children and young people report being bullied in the last 30 days

Young people are disproportionately affected by violence, with an estimated 200,000 violent deaths a year among those aged 10–29 years worldwide. Peer-to-peer physical violence (i.e. fighting) affects half of all boys and up to a quarter of girls worldwide, and approximately 4 in every 10 children and young people report bullying victimisation in the last 30 days (Figure ES3). Gangs typically consist of adolescent boys and young men. They are increasingly seen across the world, with some now operating on an international basis. Between 2 and 10 million people are thought to be involved in gangs worldwide. New social media technologies provide an additional platform for bullying, with an estimated one in five young people affected by cyberbullying (i.e. conducted online) in South Africa[m].

Terrorism is estimated to have caused almost 30,000 deaths worldwide in 2015. Recent years have seen high-profile attacks in high-income countries (HICs), although terrorism remains largely concentrated in only a small number of countries (e.g. Iraq, Nigeria, Syria). Figure ES4 compares the impact of terrorism on selected Commonwealth countries.

Over recent decades, Islamic fundamentalism has accounted for an increasing number of deaths from violent extremism, and as many as 30,000 foreign fighters may have travelled to Iraq and Syria between 2011 and 2015. However, the impact of violent extremism is likely to be much more pervasive than these numbers might suggest, with an international survey from a mix of HICs and LMICs suggesting that an average of one in four people have been victimised or know someone who has been victimised by violent extremism[n].

Figure ES4. Global Terrorism Index score[a], 2016, for Commonwealth countries
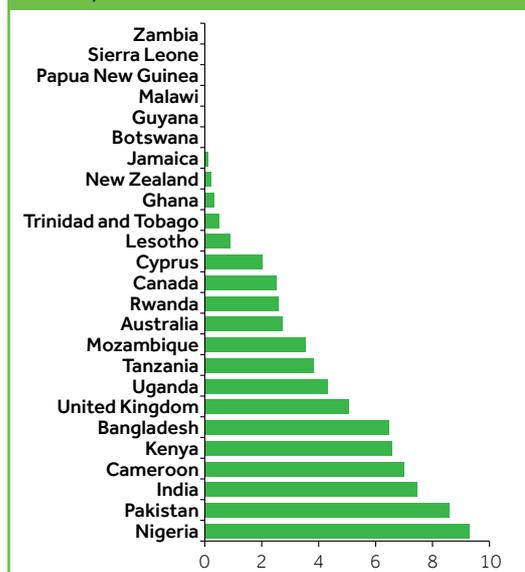
[a]Higher scores = greater impact of terrorism.
Source: Global Terrorism Index (IEP 2016a)
http://economicsandpeace.org/

References to the Full Report: l, Section 2.3; m, Section 2.4; n, Section 2.5.

Understanding the impact of violence

Acute impacts of violence (i.e. in the immediate aftermath of victimisation) include significant physical injury, disability and death. Globally, interpersonal and collective violence are estimated to have caused around 580,000 deaths and more than 33 million years of healthy life[2] lost in 2015[o]. From a life course perspective, violence and other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can impair social and emotional development, limit individuals' life opportunities and result in early death (Figure ES5). Individuals exposed to ACEs can develop poor mental health, including depression, anxiety and suicide ideation, and are at increased risk of adopting health-harming behaviours including smoking, sexual risk-taking and alcohol and drug misuse, often as a means of coping and self-medication. As adults, they are at increased risk of involvement in further violence and of developing diseases such as cancer and heart disease[p]. Consequently, violence places a major burden on health services in treating both its immediate and long-term consequences[q]. Across the life course, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) relating to conflict and other types of violence is also linked to subsequent violence victimisation and perpetration.

The consequences of violence extend beyond victims, affecting those who witness violence in their communities, and contributing to feelings of fear and instability, marginalisation and fractionalisation. Communities also feel the effects of violence through its impact on public resources and services. As well as health services, these include social welfare, and legal and other justice costs. Collective violence, such as war, can have lasting impacts for generations through institutional and social fragility, and affect trade, tourism and the attraction and retention of skilled workers. The global economic impact of terrorism alone in 2015 was estimated to be US$89.6 billion. Violence, in all its forms, represents a major barrier to sustainable development, prosperity and efforts to tackle global inequities[b]. Thus, prevention of violence is a critical factor in delivery of many of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[r].

Figure ES5. Adverse childhood experiences: impacts across the life course

Death

Life Course

Birth

Early Death

Non Communicable Disease, Disability, Social Problems, Low Productivity

Health Harming Behaviours and Crime

Social, Emotional and Learning Problems

Disrupted Nervous, Hormonal and Immune Development

ACEs Adverse Childhood Experiences
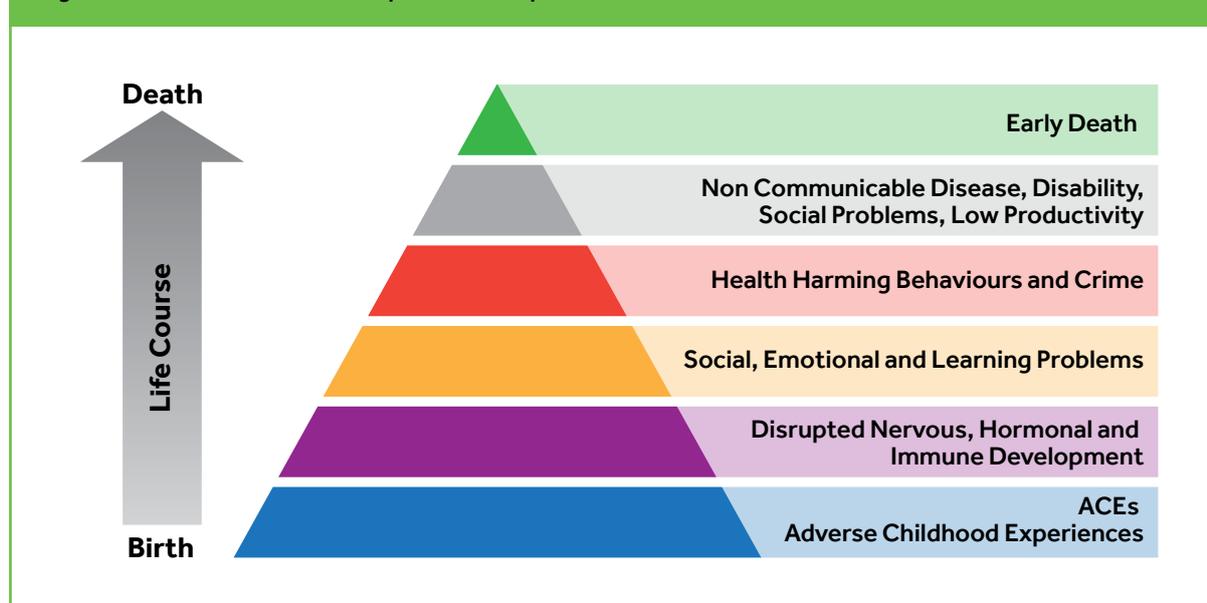
Source: adapted from Felitti, see https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html

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2   Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), incorporating years of life lost due to premature mortality and years lived with disability (non-fatal health loss).

References to the Full Report: o, Introduction; p, Section 3.2; q, Section 3.3; r, Box 1.2.

Risk factors for violence

There are many commonalities between the social, political and economic factors that drive different forms of violence. **Poverty, economic decline and unequal income distribution** increase the likelihood of interpersonal violence and collective conflict, which in turn further exacerbate poverty and limit investment and development[s]. **Inequalities** are divisive and create barriers, feelings of injustice and distrust between people and communities. Where there is a scarcity of resources, competition can fuel conflict. Equally, when certain individuals or groups are denied access to economic, political or other opportunities, this can contribute to emotional vulnerability, dissatisfaction and the exploration of other (potentially violent) avenues to address inequality.

As climate change, conflict and economic failures drive the **movement of people**, densely populated areas, especially in LMICs, are experiencing greater risks of interpersonal violence and wider conflict. Internally displaced people and refugees can experience vulnerability to violence through problems of integration, acculturation (attempting to adapt to a new culture) and disconnection from kin and social support networks. At the same time increased global connectivity allows individuals to compare their own assets and opportunities with those across the globe, and to witness atrocities affecting groups to which they relate. Such factors can strengthen certain group identities, generate grievances and segregation, and facilitate conflict[t].

Judicial or political corruption can result in the direct and instrumental use of violence, violations of human rights (e.g. torture or imprisonment) or an increase in violence through illegal trade of drugs and arms, and trafficking in people and modern slavery[u]. **Cultural norms** that support gender inequality, for instance, underpin violence against women as well as harms such as FGM and child marriage[j]. Violence against women in the home may also be a factor in developing violent tendencies in children who witness such abuse[v]. Experiencing **adversity during childhood**, such as abuse or neglect in the home or being exposed to or displaced by war, can affect

> childhood adversity increases the risk of involvement in violence in later life

a child's developing brain and dramatically increase risks of involvement in violence in later life[w]. In regions or communities challenged by pervasive violence, large cohorts of children have grown up never knowing peace and stability, witnessing the scars of conflict (e.g. landmines amputees) and sometimes encouraged to hate those their communities consider responsible. For many, being a victim may become accepted as normal and violence may be considered a suitable way of resolving conflict.

The role that social and familial influences play in violence trajectories does not end with childhood. During adolescence, as parental monitoring typically decreases, individuals navigate **challenges of personal and social identity** development. Here, **association with delinquent peers** is a prominent risk factor for violence. Some adolescents may be required to manage complex multiple identities and resolve conflicts between the values of different groups (e.g. national or ethnic) to which they belong. Groups with clear ideals that offer certainty in an uncertain world may be appealing and the norms for, and levels of violence in, such groups can determine members' likelihood of future violence. Equally however, without strong positive peer, familial or community connections, **social isolation** is also a risk factor for violence and is linked with a disregard for societal rules and attraction to extreme and violent ideologies.

Not all those who suffer adversity develop a propensity for violence or a range of other health and social problems linked with childhood trauma. Children who are able to draw on protective relationships or experiences can develop resilience and coping skills that allow them to overcome hardship and turn toxic stress induced by violence into tolerable stress[w]. A strong, positive relationship with at least one trusted adult is thought to be one of the most important resilience-building factors, along with belief in one's ability to succeed (self-efficacy), emotional self-regulation skills and links to positive cultural traditions.

References to the Full Report: s, Section 4.1.1; t, Section 4.2.3; u, Box 2; v, Section 4.2.1; w, Section 4.2.2.

What works to prevent violence

A range of effective interventions are available for working with individuals and families. However, such approaches often rely on policy developments that provide the critical legal frameworks, criminal justice support, equity of access to health and education systems and other wider macro-level facilitators of peace. Efforts to change the political, social or economic landscape are likely to have an impact on all forms of violence. Here, while individual programmes and practices are discussed in relation to different violence types, cross-cutting themes in violence prevention are summarised in Box ES1. *More detail of prevention policies, programmes and practices are provided in Section 5 of the full report.*

Box ES1. Cross-cutting themes for preventing all types of violence	
Poverty and inequality	Poverty and inequalities increase the likelihood of violence. Implementing effective prevention programmes also relies on broad social, political and economic structures being in place and accessible in order to facilitate implementation.
Conflict and post-conflict settings	Institutional and social fragility following conflict increases the risk of violence in resident or subsequently migrant populations. Which prevention programmes can be adapted to, and work best in, conflict-affected settings requires urgent study.
Legal reform	Legislation with public and professional support is central to reducing inequalities and creating a legal and political landscape that can support violence prevention.
Gender and the role of women in prevention	Persistent and widespread gender inequalities increase women's and girls' risk of victimisation. Addressing women's active involvement in the perpetration of violence is an important but neglected part of prevention.
Training professionals	Suitably trained frontline professionals are required to support prevention, identify those at risk and act as advocates for organisational, policy and legislative change.
Challenging norms and developing narratives	Social and cultural norms that contribute to inequalities, marginalisation and fractionalisation increase violence. Replacing narratives that support violence with ones that centre on tolerance and human rights appears central to addressing violence, including extremism.
Understanding and interpreting the media	Advances in technology and communication have brought with them new threats to peace. Children and adults require skills to be critical consumers of modern technologies and appropriate protection from their abuse.
Parents, mentors, peers and role models	Parents can create safe and stable environments for children that support the development of resilience. Positive role models, including from peers and others in communities, are key to violence prevention at all ages.
Social and emotional skills development	Life and social skills help individuals deal with life choices and build positive relationships. Critical thinking skills help people understand different views on society, religion and politics, which is key to preventing violence.
Community-based multi-sectoral and sustainable strategies	Multi-sectoral contributions from health, education, criminal justice, social, housing, and community and voluntary sectors is important in prevention, allowing community and policy-level changes based on sustained resources and long-term political support.

Addressing macro-social determinants

good governance
is essential

Addressing poverty and inequalities requires a political environment characterised by accountable and incorrupt governments that can achieve a sound understanding of the nature and causes of disparity and discrimination between population groups. Good governance is essential not only for preventing violence, but for managing its consequences and impacts. However, achieving this in some countries may require considerable reform to make decision-making accountable and provide fair representation to all groups in society. The provision of access to basic facilities and material resources for all communities is instrumental in reducing poverty and relies on public investment and fairer forms of public financing, such as progressive taxation[x]. Other strategies and fiscal policy measures to encourage and support growth include support for development and nutrition in early childhood; universal healthcare provision; investment in rural infrastructure; investment in education and training; and the provision of productive employment opportunities for those who are most deprived or marginalised. Providing poor families with basic incomes (conditional cash transfers) can also directly reduce poverty, enable access to resources to serve basic needs (e.g. health and education) and protect against economic shocks[x]. Empowering women in order to tackle gender inequalities is a critical element in reducing violence against women and requires development and full implementation of legislation to prevent gender discrimination. Policies and programmes should ensure access to education for girls and increase the skill sets and economic participation of women, while investment in sexual and reproductive health should ensure universal coverage. Comprehensive legislation can provide the foundation for violence prevention but requires accompanying interventions to change cultural and behaviour norms[y].

Programmes and practices

Child maltreatment

Child maltreatment programmes often focus on improving parent–child relationships and parenting skills. Trained professionals can work with parents individually in home settings, or through group-based programmes in

parenting programmes have been seen to reduce child maltreatment across cultures and countries

the community. These types of programmes are among the most extensively evaluated approaches for child maltreatment prevention, and evidence suggests they are effective at addressing some of the key parental (e.g. maternal health and wellbeing) and child (e.g. conduct disorders) risk factors for abuse and neglect. Economic evaluations of such programmes have identified returns in savings of several times the costs of programme implementation[z]. Evidence of direct reductions in violence against children is more limited and largely drawn from HICs. However, there is increasingly good evidence of the utility of parenting programmes for reducing child maltreatment across cultures and countries. Further promising approaches include training for health and other professionals to identify and respond appropriately to at-risk children and families, and safety education programmes for children focusing on the prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation[z]. *Further details of prevention programmes for child maltreatment are available in Table 5.1 of the full report.*

References to the Full Report: x, Section 5.1.1; y, Section 5.1.3; z, Section 5.2.1.

Gender-based violence

Approaches to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) work across all stages of the life course to raise awareness, address gender inequalities and empower women and girls. Programmes often target gender norms and stereotypes among young people through school-based programmes that develop relationship skills, engage with men and boys to address issues of male power and control, or work collaboratively with whole communities to challenge attitudes towards women and tackle employment, economic and other structural issues that facilitate discrimination[z]. Many programmes are effective at changing perceptions and beliefs, although direct change in violent behaviour (e.g. intimate partner and sexual violence) is less well evidenced, particularly over the longer term. Micro-finance approaches aim to increase the economic and social power of women[ai]. With sustained funding and community engagement such programmes have a positive impact on both attitudes and actual behaviours, and have been implemented across a range of LMICs. Strong associations between GBV and conflict highlight the need for effective interventions to prevent sexual and intimate partner violence both during and following collective violence (e.g. war). There are few rigorous evaluations of GBV prevention in conflict settings. However, economic empowerment approaches, when used in combination with conflict management and communication skills programmes, appear promising. *Further details of prevention programmes for GBV are available in Table 5.2 of the full report.*

Elder abuse

Tackling risk factors such as stress and social isolation faced by both older persons and their carers is typically the focus of programmes to prevent elder abuse. Caregiver support programmes may improve carers' quality of life. However, programmes have not yet demonstrated improvements in wellbeing for elders receiving care. Evidence on preventing elder abuse is less well developed than for other forms of interpersonal violence. Public information campaigns and school-based intergenerational programmes (that aim to create understanding and empathy between generations) are being used to challenge stereotypes and social norms. However, research is required on their effectiveness and on whether or not any positive attitudinal changes result in long-term reductions in violence against older persons[bi]. *Further details of prevention programmes for elder abuse are available in Table 5.3 of the full report.*

Youth and gang violence

Evidence from both LMICs and HICs suggest that life course approaches working with parents, families and young children to support child development (e.g. preschool enrichment programmes) can improve early conduct problems – a key risk factor for both youth violence and gang involvement in later life[z]. Programmes that develop

> providing positive alternatives for young people is important in tackling gang violence

social and emotional skills among older children address several other risk factors, such as mental health and educational outcomes, as well as encouraging healthy life choices and healthy peer and sexual relationships. Programmes are often delivered in schools and therefore rely on individuals having access to good-quality educational settings. Programmes in such settings may fail to engage those at risk of gang involvement or other isolating activities, and other programmes are needed to target such individuals. Community-based interventions that allow information sharing and partnership working between young people, their families, schools, community organisations and public services, and involve multiple stakeholders in their design and delivery, have shown positive impacts in reducing violence, substance use and criminal activity[ci]. Important components of those that tackle gang violence are the provision of positive alternative options for young people, such as training for meaningful employment to counter the rewards that gangs offer. Some evidence is also emerging for the positive role of mentors in youth and gang violence prevention[di]. *Further details of prevention programmes for youth and gang violence are available in Tables 5.4 and 5.5 of the full report.*

References to the Full Report: ai, Section 5.2.2; bi, Section 5.2.3; ci, Section 5.2.4; di, Section 5.2.5.

Radicalisation and violent extremism (RVE)

> education has an important part to play in prevention

Much of the evidence for the primary prevention of RVE is in an early developmental stage. However, community-based approaches with collaboration between government, community organisations, education, health and social care, police and the media appear instrumental in the prevention of RVE[ei]. Misuse of formal and informal education is a tool for extremists, and education has an important part to play in prevention. Education settings can be used to discuss issues such as citizenship, history, religion, beliefs and gender equality, encouraging young people to develop critical thinking and empathy, and fostering understanding of global human rights challenges and respect for diversity. Some approaches focus specifically on the role of women and girls as sources of influence within families and communities, supporting them to recognise radicalisation and build resilience to extremist ideals while ensuring they are not personally placed in danger. Further, the active participation in, or support for, violent extremism by females is an important but largely unaddressed aspect of prevention. Approaches that deliver alternative or counter-narratives, and those that work with religious leaders, are both receiving much attention. Although evidence is still limited, counter-narratives, supported by individuals who have credibility with those who are isolated or otherwise vulnerable, appear important in achieving attitudinal change. Finally, personal drivers for radical behaviour are more likely to result in extremist violence under certain political, economic and social conditions. Therefore, approaches that tackle the global inequities which foster marginalisation and fractionalisation should help address perceptions of violence as a legitimate response[fi]. *Further details of prevention programmes for RVE are available in Table 5.6 of the full report.*

Reducing the availability of alcohol, drugs and weapons

Alcohol is a major contributor to all types of interpersonal violence. Approaches that aim to manage the availability and promotion of alcohol and otherwise reduce its harmful use are important considerations in violence prevention. Evidence-based strategies include regulation of alcohol outlet density and alcohol marketing; enhancing enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors or those who are already intoxicated; and increasing alcohol taxes or otherwise ensuring alcohol is not sold at prices that contribute to harmful consumption[ai]. International illegal trade in drugs, and structures to support and enforce dealing and retain market share locally, are a substantial source of violence. Legitimate law enforcement is often a part of drug-related violence, and activities to control illegal demand are likely to be important components of reducing drug-related violence[gi]. Controlling access to weapons and other lethal means is also a critical factor in violence prevention. As armed violence takes different forms in different countries or geographical, social or political contexts, effective methods to prevent it also vary. However, comprehensive strategies that address both supply and demand are most effective and may include policy reforms, enforcement activities, and awareness-raising and behaviour change initiatives[hi].

> strategies that address supply and demand are most effective

References to the Full Report: ei, Section 5.3; fi, Section 5.1; gi, Box 5.6; hi, Boxes 5.4 and 5.5.

Emerging threats to peace

While a growing body of research provides evidence-based solutions to violence, with changes in global politics and new technologies, new threats emerge. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) now connect and inform individuals, regardless of their location, about events in real time, including violent atrocities worldwide.

ICTs expose the inequalities that mean billions live in poverty while a relative minority enjoy affluence. They enable violence-promoting propaganda to be distributed to millions of individuals at all ages without control by parents (in the case of children) or state regulation, and allow new forms of violence to be undertaken (e.g. online bullying, sexual exploitation) with anonymity and impunity. For those seeking violence, they inform individuals about how it can be undertaken and facilitate its co-ordination. Finding the correct balance between protecting the freedoms ICTs offer to individuals and the need for the state or parents to regulate such freedoms is a challenge for violence prevention globally. No less of a challenge is the balance of freedoms for global corporations[ii]. Their impact on violence will depend on whether their actions reduce or increase inequalities, protect or decimate environments and help build or erode the health, education and community-based assets that individuals require for peace and prosperity.

References to the Full Report: ii, Section 6.

Recommendations

The following actions are recommended to support more effective, efficient and sustainable approaches to violence prevention (see also Section 6 of the full report; section numbers below refer to the full report):

| **1** | Develop a collaborative Commonwealth plan to tackle all forms of violence from a public health perspective |

- A Commonwealth plan should advocate violence prevention as an international priority, call upon international organisations to address violence, support development of national action plans with a broad public health focus (especially in LMICs where violence is most prevalent), disseminate best practice, and tackle types of violence and underlying risk factors that cross national borders (e.g. climate change, conflict, migration, international investment, violent extremism). Section 4.1

- At an international level, violence prevention should be integrated with other international activity to tackle corruption, gender inequality and poverty as well as improve health, economic development and education. Section 5.1

| **2** | Ensure each country has a cross-government national action plan that adopts a public health approach and focuses on violence prevention from the earliest stage of life and across the life course |

- National action plans to tackle violence should incorporate evidence-based activities to prevent individuals from developing violent tendencies from the beginning of life and across the whole life course. Section 5.2

- Taking a public health population approach, plans should encapsulate the cost of violence to organisations and individuals, and benefits of violence prevention across all government sectors. Section 1.4

- Plans should reflect relevant international agreements, appraise and adapt legislation and adopt evidence-based policies and practices. Box 1.1

- Plans should be underpinned by data and other intelligence that informs the plans and allows monitoring of their impacts.

- A health system that fully participates in violence prevention should be seen as a core feature of universal health coverage (UHC). Health ministers should call upon Heads of Government for the support and resources required for health systems to engage in a multi-sectoral violence prevention plan.

- Collective action by the Commonwealth (see above) can help facilitate the development of such plans by sharing best practice between member countries and providing guidance on their content (see Recommendation 1).

3 Develop resilience and positive identities in young people through health, educational and other youth services; focusing especially on those where disadvantage, violence or other experiences may have left them vulnerable to violent life courses

- Health, social and educational programmes are required to ensure that children, and especially those at risk of abuse, neglect and isolation, have access to a trusted adult, positive peer support and strong cultural grounding. These facets help build resilience to adopting violent behaviours and build better emotional control. Section 4.2.1

- Vulnerable children and adolescents who have suffered trauma, feel culturally isolated or have not developed a sense of personal identity require protection from exploitation by adults and peers, who may recruit or radicalise them to violent causes. Section 4.2.4 Protecting children and youths from such exploitation and ensuring support from appropriate adults and peers is likely to be effective at addressing all types of violence including violent extremism, gender based violence, youth and gang violence, and child maltreatment.

4 Address the role of gender in violence and promote gender equality as a critical part of preventing violence, including eliminating FGM

- Gender inequality contributes not only to intimate partner and sexual violence against girls and women but also to children developing violent tendencies and poor health, education and economic prospects. Section 4.1.2 Tackling gender inequalities should be a priority for violence prevention.

- Actions to achieve gender equality should include access for girls to essential services including health and education, and ultimately increased economic empowerment, political participation and influence for women. Section 5.1.2

- Legislative change and cultural developments to transform norms and behaviour must protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, and address both the direct protection of women from violence and indirect equity in income and ownership of property. Unaddressed, these problems shackle women into abusive relationships.

- Legislation, enforcement and cultural development activities should aim to eliminate FGM.

- A critical global focus on protecting females from violence should be balanced with preventing violence among young males, who are at greatest risk of suffering violent injury and becoming involved in youth violence, gang violence and violent extremism. Actions to reduce violence in young men will also reduce violence against women and girls. Section 5.2.2

- The range of interventions employed to tackle GBV should recognise that men and boys can be victims as well as perpetrators.

- Policy and practice should not see women as simply passive; tackling their active roles in gang violence and violent extremism is an important developmental area.

5 Ensure that essential laws to prevent violence are in place, fully enforced and supported by efforts to promote accompanying cultural change

- Discrimination and regressive legislation that contributes to inequality and in turn promotes violence $_{Section\ 4.1.3}$ should be replaced with mechanisms that support a state's ability to respect human rights, dispense justice, offer security and promote dignity for all.

- Legislative and cultural reform should tackle issues including all forms of child maltreatment (including child marriage), domestic violence, all forms of rape outside and within marriage, access to weapons, elder abuse and practices such as FGM (see Recommendation 4).

- Implementation should ensure that laws protect all groups including children, women, minority groups and marginalised communities, and that legislation is fully and transparently enforced.
  Section 5.1.3

- In some regions, basic measures including registration of all children at birth are essential first steps for all individuals to acquire legal rights and access to justice.

6 Support national and international action to tackle poverty and inequalities at all levels, from local to global

- Poverty and inequalities contribute to marginalisation, desperation and feelings of injustice and resentment, which increase risks of violence. In turn, such violence results in poorer investment, education and economic development, and further exacerbation of poverty and inequality. $_{Section\ 4.1}$ National and international actions known to effectively reduce poverty and inequalities should be more widely implemented. $_{Section\ 5.1}$

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals $_{see\ Box\ 1.2}$ aim to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, and identify enhanced development co-operation and provision of adequate and predictable means for developing countries to implement programmes and policies as key elements.

- National social protection systems should provide basic securities, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable, and international capacity should be supported to mitigate impacts of conflict, economic, climate and other disasters.

- Economic growth should reduce inequalities, protect individual, cultural and environmental assets available in communities, and develop their utility through education and health improvement.

7 Eradicate human trafficking and modern slavery, and tackle illegal trades in drugs and other contraband

- International and national action plans should be properly implemented to tackle organisations and activities that supply illegal goods or support human trafficking, and to address corruption that allows such trades to operate across national boundaries and avoid judicial action.

- Enforced measures to control illegal trade in drugs and other contraband, as well as people trafficking and slavery, are required to reduce direct violence (e.g. when people are trafficked and forced into slavery), and the violence from criminal activity associated with such illegal trades.

- In parallel, mechanisms (see above) to tackle poverty and inequalities, and provide access to education, should address demand at individual and community levels. For human trafficking and modern slavery, addressing gender inequities is also an important element in reducing both demand and supply.

8 Control the availability, marketing and sale of alcohol to help reduce multiple types of violence

- Properly regulated alcohol production, marketing and distribution is required to help reduce risks of child maltreatment, GBV, elder abuse and youth violence. Box 5.4/Section 5.2.4 Such regulation requires policy development independent of those who benefit financially from the promotion and sale of alcohol.

- Health ministries are well placed to expose the huge multi-sectoral costs to health, social, criminal justice and economic sectors from poorly regulated alcohol.

- Legislation should be in place and enforced to ensure that sales of alcohol to children are prohibited; the promotion of alcohol and the density of alcohol outlets are regulated; sale of alcohol to inebriated individuals is illegal; and pricing of alcohol does not encourage excessive drinking.

- Social settings, especially in nightlife, need to be managed through an integrated approach that incorporates judicial, health, local authority and other stakeholders. Section 5.2.4

- A diverse range of social settings, including ones not based around alcohol sales, may be important in developing community cohesion between drinking and non-drinking communities.

9 Ensure all children have the best chances of beginning life on a violence free course with maternal and child health services including support for parenting and healthy early child development

- Peace in the home is critical to developing non-violent, healthy, educated and economically active individuals. Section 4.2 Maternal and child health policies and practices should support the development of parenting skills and provide essential resources for their implementation. Such actions should reduce child maltreatment and, subsequently, youth violence, sexual and intimate partner violence, and potentially even violent extremism. Section 5.2.1

- Distribution of such support should target greatest need (e.g. those living in poverty). Need is likely to be especially high for children in conflict zones and in refugee populations.

10 Ensure life skills development in younger children are core programmes in educational and social services

- Programmes to develop children's life skills should be supported to build resilience and reduce behavioural problems and violence in childhood and later life. Investment in such programmes should recognise that they also help progression into education and employability. _{Section 4.2.5}

- Nations should work to support their SDG commitment to ensure that all girls and boys have access to good-quality early-childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. _{Box 1.2}

- Life skills development support is required to develop essential skills in children to discern and cope with propaganda and antisocial materials accessible online _{Sections 5.2.4 and 5.3} and may be important in the prevention of radicalisation.

- Preschool enrichment and later social and emotional development programmes should be provided to develop age-appropriate life skills starting with early perception skills, motor skills and confidence, and moving through decision-making, analytical skills, empathy, co-operation and healthy relationships.

11 Implement actions to address a legacy of violence in conflict settings, and in displaced refugee and migrant populations

- Conflict increases risks of multiple types of interpersonal violence (intimate partner violence, sexual violence, youth violence and child maltreatment) for many years. Effective methods of primary prevention of interpersonal violence should be assessed in and adapted to post-conflict and other high-violence settings, as well as for people displaced from them. _{Section 5.4}

- Individuals leaving, or even connected with, conflict settings may have lowered resilience to involvement in violence (including violent extremism). They require credible support from trusted individuals that recognises the potential impact of trauma from violence exposure, facilitates integration and cohesion in fragmented social groups, and encourages identity development which is not sympathetic to violence.

12 Implement training and professional development on violence prevention and trauma informed care in health, educational and related sectors and facilitate key professionals adopting an advocacy role for violence prevention

- The training and continuing development of health professionals as well as those in educational, social and judicial services should develop a trauma-informed work force that understands the lifelong harms of violence on health, education and employment, and how prevention, resilience and trauma-informed services can reduce these harms.

- Programmes should be implemented to allow screening by professionals in health, educational and other settings that identify those at risk of violence and provide interventions for both potential perpetrators and victims. _{Section 5.2.1}

- Health professionals should utilise their position as credible witnesses of the devastating impacts of all types of violence on individuals, families, and health and social systems to advocate for investment in and action on violence prevention.

- Ensuring that violence prevention and trauma-informed care are essential features in establishing UHC is important for reducing violence and developing sustainable health services.

> Peace in the home is critical to developing non-violent, healthy, educated and economically active individuals

Acknowledgements

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