Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

Violence against children (VAC) impacts millions of children globally each year: three quarters of young children are regularly subjected to violent discipline by caregivers; 15 million girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime; one quarter of children live with a mother who is a victim of intimate partner violence; one third of students experience bullying; and an adolescent is killed by an act of violence every seven minutes.¹ A 2012 UNICEF review of available prevalence data in the region found that physical, emotional and sexual violence against children is also common in all countries in East Asia and the Pacific²: three in every four children experience violent discipline; 11-22 per cent of girls and 3-16.5 per cent of boys experience sexual violence; 12 per cent of boys and 32 per cent of girls have witnessed violence between their parents; and 18-41.6 per cent of children have experienced emotional violence.

Violence has immediate and life-long consequences for children, society and national development. All forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse against girls and boys may have serious negative, short- and long-term physical, mental and health consequences, constraining their ability to reach their full potential and, consequently, undermining investments in education, health and early childhood development. Adults who experienced violence as children are more likely to be perpetrators of VAC themselves, creating a new generation of victims. VAC erodes the productive capacity of future generations and places a long term burden on health and social services. Due to its public health consequences, VAC is estimated to cost the region 2 per cent of GDP every year (which equated to US$206 billion USD in 2012).³


Driving results for children

UNICEF promotes a multi-sectoral approach to ending VAC to achieve key Sustainable Development Goals 5.2, 5.3, 16.1 and 16.2, which not only recognizes the critical role of social services, justice and health sectors in preventing and responding to VAC, but also the importance of involving the education sector and actors engaged in HIV/AIDS, social policy/social protection, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as faith-based groups, community-based organizations, the private sector and media in prevention initiatives. The multi-sectoral agenda needs to address all settings where violence occurs: the home; the community; in and around schools; in institutions; and online. Sufficient political will is required to ensure that the implementation of this approach is coordinated at a high-level, explicitly budgeted for and accompanied by robust monitoring and evaluation.

In order to more effectively prevent and respond to all forms of VAC, UNICEF focuses on strengthening child protection systems, and as a key part of these efforts, strengthening the social service workforce. UNICEF also invests in generating evidence on prevalence, consequences and ‘what works’, behaviour and social norms change, access to justice (result area 2.6), enhancing parent and caregiver support (result area 1.3), equipping children and adolescents with life skills, and strengthening public financing for child protection. These efforts must take into consideration the gendered nature of violence, and the specific needs and risks for vulnerable groups, e.g. children with disabilities, migrant children and children without parental care.

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**
- Support the development of a well-functioning, well-planned, trained, supported and resourced social services workforce.
- Strengthen the case management system across key sectors (social services, justice and health) to handle cases of VAC and ensure children can access support services.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**
- Support research, mapping, surveillance and monitoring of the prevalence, incidence, drivers and circumstances of violence.
- Strengthen administrative data systems on VAC, including information management systems for child protection and promote disaggregation of data by age, gender and disability.
- Assess the effectiveness of child protection systems strengthening programmes.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of prevention programmes in reducing violence and addressing the risk factors associated with violence.

**Partnerships and alliances**
- Collaborate with global and regional partnerships and alliances, including the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and INSPIRE Working Group, international and regional bodies (e.g. the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence Against Children, ASEAN), and UN agencies to promote a multi-sectoral approach and high level political buy in for ending VAC.
- Engage and work with religious leaders and groups, civil society, community based groups, the media, and ICT sector on ending VAC, with a focus on social norms change.
- Collaborate with global and regional alliances on social work/social service workforce strengthening.
- Partner with actors engaged in Violence against Women/Gender (including UN Women and UNFPA) on joint prevention and response initiatives to tackle violence against women and girls.

**Governance, policy and budgets**
- Develop multi-sectoral actions for preventing and responding to VAC, coordinated by national and local mechanisms.
- Revise national legislation to ensure that VAC is explicitly and unequivocally prohibited in all settings, without exception.
- Strengthen the legal framework to ensure it provides an overarching framework for the system of prevention and response of violence, including clear mandates, responsibilities and operating procedures for duty bearers, interagency coordination mechanisms, and pathways for justice.
- Ensure that laws, policies and strategies are in place to govern the operation and strengthening of the social service workforce.
- Assess, track and advocate for increased budgetary allocation for VAC.

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4 SDG 5.2: “Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls”; 5.3: “Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation”; 16.1: “Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”; 16.2: “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children.”