DISCUSSION PAPER
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Gender Dimensions of Violence Against Children and Adolescents

UNICEF CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME DIVISION

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1. Introduction

Global estimates suggest that more than half (1 billion) of the world's children aged 2–17 experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse during the past year.[1] Addressing violence against children and adolescents is part of UNICEF's core mission to protect the health and well-being of children and adolescents, grounded in gender equality programming priorities articulated in the 2018–2021 Gender Action Plan and the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan, particularly Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation.

As UNICEF prepares a new Child Protection Strategy and Gender Policy to accompany the next organization-wide Strategic Plan, this paper examines how and why UNICEF and international partners should pay greater attention to ***gender dimensions of violence against children and adolescents*** (VAC/A), including drivers of violence and opportunities for more effective violence prevention and response. Greater attention to gender across all violence programming and evidence generation responds to recommendations of evaluations of UNICEF's work on violence,[2] child protection,[3] and Gender Action Plans.[4,5]

This paper also explores the rationale for greater attention to links among different forms of violence across the lifespan, including ways in which violence against adult women, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV) affects children's and adolescents' health, well-being and risk of violence, and the implications of those intersections for UNICEF's violence prevention and response programming.

1.1 Addressing violence as a human rights and development imperative

The international community and UNICEF recognize violence against children and adolescents and violence against women (VAW) as global human rights and public health problems of critical importance. International agreements have called for countries and the United Nations (UN) system to act. For example:

> **Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[6]:** States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse…

Similarly, the 1993 UN **Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women** called on Member States and the UN system to undertake strategies to end violence against women,[7] building on the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).[8] Calls for action have been repeated many times since, including by CEDAW General Recommendation 35, which acknowledged that gender-based violence affects girls as well as women – throughout the life cycle.[9] In 2015, UN Member States agreed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, many of which address violence (or risk factors), including targets and indicators in Goals 5 and 16.[10] UNICEF is committed to helping countries achieve measurable progress towards SDGs.

Select examples of SDG goals, targets and indicators that address VAC/A, VAW and harmful practices

	Goal 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	**Target 16.2** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	**Indicator 16.2.1** Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month **Indicator 16.2.3** Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18
	Goal 5. Gender equality	**Target 5.2** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	**Indicator 5.2.1** Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
		Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations	**Indicator 5.3.1** Percentage of women aged 20–24 who were married or in a union by age 18 **Indicator 5.3.2** Percentage of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone FGM/C

1.2 Gender dimensions of violence against children and adolescents: Applying a feminist lens

UN declarations and agreements have long recognized violence against women and girls as both a ***manifestation*** of gender inequality and a ***mechanism*** by which unequal gender power differences are reinforced, including the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[11] and the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.[7] Similarly, the UN Study on Violence against Children concluded that: "virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and… the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women."[12]

> **UN (1993) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women**[7]
> Recognizing that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men…

Building on decades of work by researchers who have used a 'feminist lens', researchers such as Namy and colleagues provided evidence that: "the patriarchal family structure creates an environment that normalizes many forms of violence, simultaneously infantilizing women and reinforcing their subordination (alongside children)."[13] Restrictive social norms[a] about gender and sexuality also contribute to violence and discrimination against boys, men and individuals with diverse gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and intersex (LGBTQI+) children and adolescents.[14–16] As a result, both researchers and international agreements have called for violence prevention and response efforts to take a ***gender-transformative*** approach, meaning one that addresses the causes of gender-based inequalities and works to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power imbalances.

[a] For the purposes of this paper, social norms are defined as unwritten rules, values and expectations within a community, which are often socially enforced.

A ***gender-transformative*** approach is one that addresses the causes of gender-based inequalities and works to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power imbalances.

This paper acknowledges that gender is just one of many factors that may increase vulnerability to violence against children and adolescents. As noted in UNICEF's Theory of Change (page 11), "vulnerability may be heightened for children living with disabilities, in institutional care and deprived of liberty; those living in extreme poverty, unaccompanied or separated from family; children on the move (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced children); and children living with HIV, facing discrimination for their sexual orientation or gender identity, belonging to marginalized social or ethnic groups, and those living with other social and economic disadvantages."[2] This paper endorses the concept of intersectionality premised on the idea that marginalized individuals often experience overlapping forms of oppression and discrimination, for example, based on gender, race, class, (etc.), that compound vulnerability to violence and cannot be understood in isolation from one another.[17]

1.3 Purpose, scope and structure of the paper

UNICEF has extensive programme guidance for certain forms of violence and harmful practices, including gender-based violence in emergencies, school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), online violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). Nonetheless, gaps remain. Building on evidence-based calls for greater attention to ***intersections*** among different forms of violence across the lifespan,[18] this paper provides the rationale for a ***gender-transformative*** approach to preventing and responding to violence against children and adolescents, focusing on two areas where there are gaps in UNICEF guidance:

a) Intersections between IPV against women, violent discipline of children and other components of children's well-being; and
b) Violence against adolescents, particularly IPV and sexual violence by any perpetrator.

Drawing on available evidence, this paper aims to inform UNICEF's strategic planning, as a basis for future development of detailed operational guidance needed for programme implementation and monitoring. The paper is structured to: i) explore the rationale for greater attention to gender dimensions of violence; ii) highlight frameworks for action that have been developed by international partners and by UNICEF; iii) review evidence about which gender-transformative strategies are effective or at least promising for violence prevention and response; iv) identify ways UNICEF can strengthen gender-transformative violence prevention and response; and v) make recommendations for UNICEF's strategic planning.

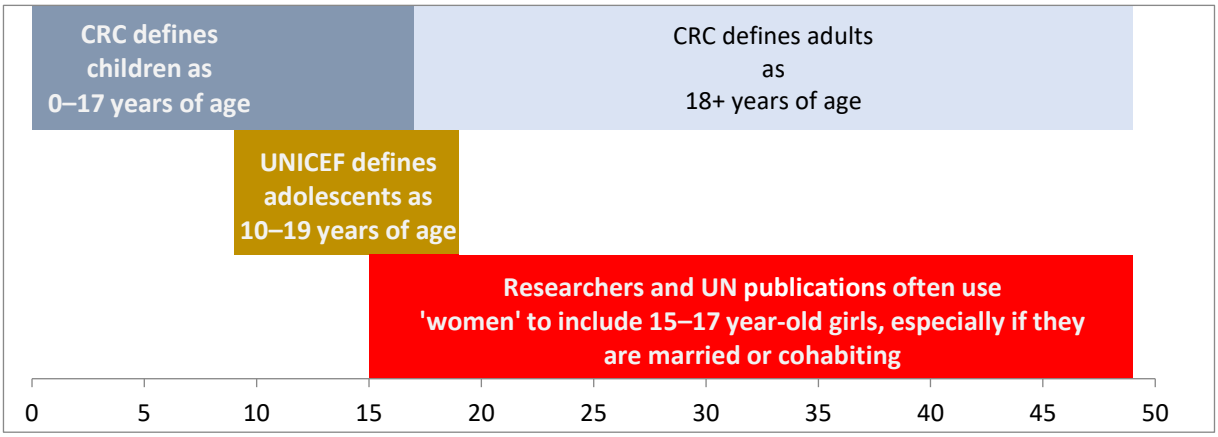
This paper highlights the need for an intersectoral approach to violence and therefore explores issues relevant to ***all*** sectors and areas of UNICEF's work, including child protection, gender-based violence, education, adolescence, social protection, communication for development (C4D), health and others. Due to space limitations and the strength of existing programme guidance on gender-based violence in emergencies, the paper does not address the full range of considerations for humanitarian contexts, although it briefly explores emerging lessons about violence against children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19. The paper does not aim to provide detailed technical guidance but does make general recommendations for future work.

1.4 Definitions of age groups and forms of violence

Age groups

Definitions of 'children', 'girls' and 'boys', 'adolescents', 'women' and 'men' often vary or overlap. Researchers and even UN publications often use the terms 'women' or 'men' to refer to cohorts that include girls and boys aged 15–17, especially when married or cohabiting with a partner.[19] Conversely, UNICEF publications often use 'girls' and 'boys' to refer to adolescents aged 18–19, even though the CRC classifies them as adults. This paper uses CRC and UNICEF definitions of childhood as age 0–17 years, adolescence as age 10-19 years, and adulthood as age 18 years and above (Figure 1).[20]

Figure 1: Overlapping age groups.



Forms of violence

Definitions of violence often overlap, are evolving or are contested within research, policy and programme literatures, not to mention legal codes. Box 1 presents working definitions used in this paper, based on UN human rights instruments when possible. Of particular note, 'gender-based violence' is often used as a synonym for violence against women and girls, including in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.[7] However, 'gender-based violence' can also refer to violence against boys, men and individuals with diverse gender identity perceived to violate norms about masculinity, heterosexuality or gender identity. To reduce ambiguity about age, sex and context, this paper uses more specific terms such as 'violence against children', 'violence against adolescents', 'violence against women' and 'intimate partner violence', etc. whenever possible, except when describing programming that uses 'gender-based violence' as a concept integral to their work.

Box 1: Working definitions of key forms of violence addressed in this paper.

Violence against children: All forms of physical or mental [psychological] violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. (United Nations General Assembly, 1990, *Article 19, Convention on the Rights of the Child*. www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx)

Child maltreatment: Physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence; and neglect of infants, children and adolescents by parents, caregivers and other authority figures, including violent discipline, most often in the home but also in settings such as schools and orphanages. (World Health Organization, 2018, *Inspire Handbook: Action for Implementing the Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children*. www.who.int/publications-detail/inspire-handbook-action-for-implementing-the-seven-strategies-for-ending-violence-against-children)

Violent discipline: Any physical (corporal) punishment and/or psychological aggression (such as shouting, yelling screaming, or calling a child offensive names such as 'dumb' or 'lazy') by a caregiver or authority figure. (United Nations Children's Fund, 2016, *Violent Discipline: Methodology*, https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/violent-discipline/)

Corporal punishment: Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006, *General Comment No. 8, The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading Forms of Punishment*. www.refworld.org/docid/460bc7772.html)

Sexual violence in childhood: All forms of sexual victimization of a girl or a boy under 18 years of age, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation… including forced, pressured, coerced, unwanted or unlawful sexual activity, or attempts to engage in such activity. Sexual activity may include sexual intercourse or other sex acts, contact or non-contact sexual abuse and harassment, as well as sexual exploitation, in person and online. (United Nations Children's Fund, 2018, *INSPIRE Indicator Guidance and Results Framework - Ending Violence Against Children: How to define and measure change.* www.unicef.org/media/66896/file/INSPIRE-IndicatorGuidance-ResultsFramework.pdf)

Violence against women [and girls][b]: Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women [and girls], including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (United Nations General Assembly, 1993, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.* www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx)

Gender-based violence: An umbrella term for any harmful act… perpetrated against a person's will… based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. The term 'gender-based'… underscore[s] the fact that structural, gender-based power inequalities between males and females around the world place females at risk for multiple forms of violence. …includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The term is also used… to describe some forms of sexual violence against males and/or targeted violence against LGBTI populations… when referencing violence related to gender-inequitable norms of masculinity and/or norms of gender identity. (Adapted from: Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015, *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery.* https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf)

Intimate partner violence: Physical, sexual or psychological acts by a current or former intimate partner that result or are likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm. For purposes of the SDG indicator, an intimate partner is generally defined as a husband, cohabiting sexual partner, or long-term, non-cohabiting, sexual partner, though some surveys include other romantic and 'dating' partners. 'Domestic violence' may refer to partner violence but may also encompass child or elder abuse, or abuse by any member of a household. (United Nations Children's Fund, 2018, *INSPIRE Indicator Guidance and Results Framework - Ending Violence Against Children: How to define and measure change.* www.unicef.org/media/66896/file/INSPIRE-IndicatorGuidance-ResultsFramework.pdf)

[b] The 1993 Declaration did not mention girls, but girls should be mentioned when referring to women and girls aged 15 and above, based on CRC definitions.

2. Background

2.1 Rationale for a gender-transformative approach to violence

By global consensus, confirmed in international rights instruments,[7,9,10] a gender analysis is essential for understanding differences in levels, patterns, risk factors and consequences of violence – the first step in designing effective prevention and response strategies. For example:

- **A gender 'aware' (rather than gender 'blind') approach is essential for understanding patterns, perpetrators and contexts of violence.**

An essential step towards a gender-transformative approach is to acknowledge that epidemiological data show clear sex differences in levels, patterns and risk factors of violence against children and adolescents. Globally, men comprise an estimated 80 per cent of homicide victims, but women are six times more likely to be killed by an intimate partner.[21] This sex differential is echoed in studies of homicide against adolescent girls and boys.[22] Women, girls and boys are more likely than adult men to experience violence by individuals with whom they have close personal relationships and financial interdependence.[23] Most research finds that girls experience higher levels of sexual violence than boys.[24,25] Conversely, some but not all studies find higher levels of physical violence against boys than girls; for example, a UNICEF analysis found that in 16 of 33 countries with data, boys experienced higher levels of physically violent discipline by caregivers than girls.[26] Similarly, a global systematic review found that boys reported significantly higher levels of physical abuse than girls in some settings (i.e., Europe) but not others (e.g., the USA or Asia).[27]

- **Gender inequality and violence are mutually reinforcing.**

Research indicates that gender inequality increases women and girls' vulnerability to violence, and that violence is often used to enforce gender inequality.[28] In other words, gender inequality and violence are mutually reinforcing. After examining evidence on violence against women and children in Uganda, Namy and colleagues (2017) concluded that gender inequality should be seen as a 'root cause' of violence against women and girls that must be centrally addressed in prevention programming.[13]

- **Unequal gender norms contribute to violence at individual and societal levels.**

Patriarchal norms that devalue women and girls and reinforce male dominance and aggression are often used to justify violence, blame victims, re-victimize survivors, diminish the importance of women's and girls' autonomy and bodily integrity, and prioritize reputations of perpetrators, families and institutions over the well-being of those who experience abuse.[18] For example, a multi-level analysis of data from 44 countries found that norms condoning wife-beating and male control of female behaviour were among the strongest predictors of physical and sexual IPV against women and girls at the national level.[29] After adjusting for all factors, IPV prevalence could not be predicted by national income (high, middle, low), and gross domestic product became non-significant when gender norms were included in statistical models.

> ***Social norms that reinforce gender inequality are powerful risk factors for violence against children, adolescents and women.***

At the individual level, research indicates that boys and men who espouse unequal gender norms and acceptance of violence against women have a higher likelihood of perpetrating violence against women and children.[30,31] Restrictive social norms about gender identity and sexual orientation also contribute to violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ children, adolescents and adults.[14–16]

- **Structural (including social, legal and economic) gender inequalities increase vulnerability to violence.**

Growing evidence indicates that structural social, legal and economic gender-based inequalities heighten the risk of violence against women and girls, but are often overlooked by studies focused on individuals. The multi-level analysis cited earlier found that one of the strongest correlates of levels of IPV (other than gender norms) was the extent to which implementation of laws disadvantaged women compared with men in terms of access to land, property and other economic resources.[29] This suggests a need to strengthen economic and legal rights of women and girls as a component of violence prevention.

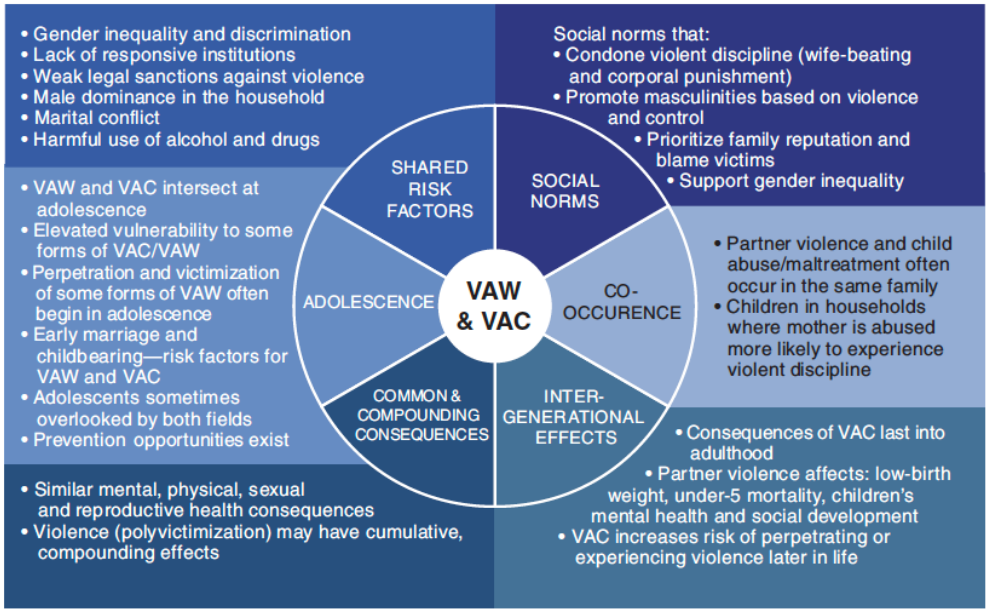
- **Multiple forms of marginalization may compound vulnerability to violence.**

As noted earlier, vulnerability to violence and discrimination based on gender may be compounded by overlapping forms of marginalization, for example, based on ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, immigrant status, etc.[17] For example, researchers from India argue that sexual violence against Dalit and other lower caste girls (and the corresponding failure of the justice sector to hold perpetrators accountable) should be understood as both caste-based and gender-based violence.[32] Similarly, researchers in Canada have documented what they describe as a crisis of rape, murder and missing indigenous women and girls, and the justice sector's failure to respond adequately.[33] Marginalization takes many forms, and the basis of discrimination varies by setting, but multiple, intersecting forms of vulnerability are a common phenomenon in most countries. Gender-transformative programming is more likely to be effective when overlapping forms of oppression are considered together, not addressed in isolation. This is an under-researched area that deserves more attention.

2.2 The need for a life course and intergenerational lens: Intersections between violence against children and violence against women

In 2016, Guedes and colleagues argued that research and programmes addressing violence against women and violence against children have followed parallel but distinct trajectories – leaving important gaps.[18] They called for greater attention to intersections among different forms of violence across the life course, including intersections that are a focus of this paper, namely: co-occurrence of IPV and violence against children in the same household, intergenerational effects and violence against adolescents as a point of intersection and an age group that often falls through the gaps (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Intersections between VAW and VAC (Guedes et al. 2016).[18]



2.2.1 Gendered intersections: Intimate partner violence and violent discipline in the home

Evidence of intersections highlights a need for those working on violence against children and adolescents to pay greater attention to the interconnectedness of different forms of violence across the lifespan and the gender dimensions of violence, including IPV and violent discipline. Reasons include the following:

- **Both violent discipline of children and IPV against women and girls are widespread in all regions.**

In 83 countries with SDG data (mostly from developing regions), nearly 8 in 10 children aged 1–14 years experienced regular ***violent discipline by caregivers in the home***, including verbal aggression (e.g., being yelled at or called names) and physical punishment.[34] In 106 countries, SDG data suggest that 18 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 experienced ***physical and/or sexual IPV*** in the previous 12 months, with prevalence highest (24 per cent) in the least developed countries.[34] Globally, WHO estimates that about 30 per cent of ever-partnered women have experienced lifetime physical and/or sexual IPV.[23] UNICEF estimates that about one in four (176 million) children under the age of five live with a mother who has experienced IPV.[35] In a WHO multi-country study, ever-partnered, adolescent girls aged 15–19 were significantly more likely to report past year IPV than older women (35+ years) in 10 of 15 sites.[36]

- **IPV and violence against children often co-occur in the same household.**

Evidence indicates that children in households affected by IPV are more likely than other children to experience violent discipline by both male and female caregivers.[37,38] Studies document substantial levels of co-occurrence – when IPV against women and violence against children co-occur in the same household – including in Brazil,[39] China,[40] Egypt,[37] Peru[41] and Uganda.[42]

- **Exposure to IPV against women has negative consequences for children's health, development and well-being, whether or not children experience violence directly**.

IPV against women has been associated with lower rates of breastfeeding,[43] inadequate antenatal care,[44] child mortality,[45] malnutrition and stunting,[46] mental health disorders,[47] and aggression towards peers and siblings.[35] IPV has been linked to increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term delivery and low birth weight.[23,48,49] Research from Uganda found that girls and boys who witnessed IPV ***and*** experienced violence directly had about twice the odds of mental health difficulties compared with children who experienced violence but did not witness IPV.[42]

- **Both IPV and violence against children have gendered, intergenerational effects.**

Violent discipline and exposure to IPV in the childhood home both appear to increase the risk of violence in adulthood, either as victims or perpetrators,[50,51] which in turn elevates the risk of violence for the next generation of children, completing what researchers term an ***intergenerational cycle of abuse***.[38,52–55] This intergenerational cycle of abuse has important gender dimensions. A multi-country study in Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico and Rwanda found that men who experienced various forms of violence in childhood, including corporal punishment, were more likely to hold inequitable gender attitudes and perpetrate violence against female intimate partners as adults.[54,55] Similarly, a six-country study from Asia and the Pacific found that among men, all forms of childhood trauma (including harsh parenting, neglect and exposure to IPV) were associated with all forms of IPV perpetration in adulthood; among women, all forms of childhood trauma were associated with a higher risk of experiencing physical and/or sexual IPV in adulthood.[56]

- **IPV and violent discipline have common roots and risk factors, including gender inequality, unequal gender norms and acceptance of violence.**

Population-based surveys from many countries suggest that social norms condoning violence and/or reinforcing patriarchal household power dynamics correlate with a higher risk of both IPV and violence against children, including norms that support wife-beating and norms such as 'A man should have the final word about decisions in his home'.[30,31] Qualitative research from Uganda found evidence that the patriarchal family structure creates an environment that normalizes violence against women and children in the home.[13] Other common risk factors for IPV and violent discipline include family stress, economic deprivation and disruption, harmful use of alcohol, male unemployment, mental health disorders, high levels of violence in the community, disadvantaged neighbourhood characteristics, lack of services for women, children and families, and weak legal sanctions against violence.[18]

- **Acceptance of wife-beating is high among adolescents and adult in many settings and is correlated with acceptance and use of violent discipline.**

Worldwide, more than one in four (around 1.1 billion) caregivers are estimated to believe physical punishment of children is ***necessary*** for childrearing.[35] An analysis of data from 55 countries (representing 40 per cent of the world's population) found that 4 of 10 women agreed that wife-beating was justified under at least one circumstance,[57] as did 4 in 10 adolescent girls from 94 countries and 4 in 10 adolescent boys from 67 countries.[58] An analysis from 25 low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) found that agreement with wife-beating predicted women's endorsement and use of violent discipline of children in the home.[59] This quantitative evidence supports qualitative research that suggests normalizing violence in the home against one group (e.g., women) is linked to normalizing violence against another (e.g., children).[13]

The challenging implications of intergenerational intersections

A number of complex and gendered implications of intersections between violence against women and violence against children in the home pose challenges that should be considered within programming.

- **Pathways by which IPV affects children are complex, gendered and often contested.**

Some researchers theorize that poor child outcomes result from abused mothers' reduced maternal functioning or harsh parenting, due to stress, anxiety or depression.[60,61] Other studies find no significant relationship,[62] produce mixed findings[63] or even conclude that caring maternal relationships are an important protective factor for children living in households affected by partner violence.[64] Some argue that existing research has produced a biased and incomplete understanding of pathways by systematically failing to consider the effects of harsh parenting on children by fathers who abuse their partners.[18,62] Moreover, other evidence suggests that men's controlling behaviour of abused women contributes to poor child outcomes by undermining their mothers' economic security, financial independence, social support and access to health care.[65,66] Links between patriarchal gender norms and both violence against women and children may also play a role, as noted below.

- **Women living with IPV often face difficult decisions about how to protect children, especially when separating from an abusive partner.**

Research suggests that women living in situations of intimate partner violence often face difficult dilemmas about how to protect children's safety. Abusive partners often threaten to harm or take away children.[67,68] In fact, threatening to separate women from their children has been recognized as an important component of spousal abuse in the 'Power and control wheel'[c] conceptual model for more than 35 years.[69] Concern for children is a reason why many women in abusive relationships stay and a reason why many others leave.[70,71] Conflicts over children often escalate when women attempt to leave a violent male partner – known as a time of heightened risk for both women and children.[72] Research from the United States found that more than one in five homicides of children aged 2–14 were related to IPV, often triggered by conflicts over divorce and child custody.[73]

- **Gendered biases about mothers and fathers affect the way researchers, policymakers, programmes and legal systems approach IPV against women with children.**

Because IPV against women has serious, negative consequences for children,[35] some researchers[52,74] and legal systems[18] have categorized exposure to IPV as a form of child maltreatment. Such definitions risk labelling (and in some settings prosecuting) women who experience IPV as 'child abusers', based solely on their 'failure to protect' children from witnessing violence committed against them (women) by male partners. These policies sometimes produce serious adverse consequences for both women and children, including incarcerating women and/or separating children from non-offending parents.[18] A related, but distinct pattern is to hold women responsible for violence committed by men against ***both*** women and children in the home when women themselves are being abused.[75]

Critics argue that these policies reflect a gendered bias that holds mothers 'solely' responsible for the health, safety and well-being of children, while failing to acknowledge fathers'

[c] <www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>

responsibilities or hold male perpetrators accountable for violence.[76] Policymakers often assume that women can easily leave an abusive partner, when in fact, barriers to divorce and separation are often high, especially in low-resource settings. Such assumptions also ignore the well-documented pattern of many abusive partners to isolate women from family and friends and/or prevent them from studying, working or having access to money or property – making separation even more difficult.[77] As noted earlier, IPV survivors often have to make difficult assessments about whether staying or leaving is more likely to keep their children safe. Separating from an abusive partner can actually heighten danger for both women and children, at least in the short run.[78] Again, as noted earlier, studies from some settings (e.g., the United States) have found that a substantial portion of child homicides occur when mothers try to separate from abusive partners.[73]

These are complex issues that require further discussion; however, a number of points seem clear. Living in a household affected by IPV is detrimental to children's well-being whether or not children witness violence directly. However, children's services should not reinforce norms that reflexively blame women for male violence or assume that women always have resources to leave an abusive relationship.[77] On the other hand, experiencing IPV does not preclude the possibility that a woman ***also*** abuses or neglects her children. Both women and men can mistreat children, although data on patterns and levels are incomplete. Child protection services need to recognize that both parents have responsibility for children's safety and well-being, and this should be informed by an evidence-based, gender-responsive understanding of the dynamics of IPV against women.

2.2.2. A life course lens: Gendered dimensions of violence against adolescent girls and boys

Understanding violence against adolescents requires a life course and gender analysis. Adolescents often experience forms of violence common among younger children (e.g. violent discipline, sexual abuse and exploitation) as well as violence common in adulthood (e.g. IPV). Violence against adolescent girls belongs within the traditional domains of both violence against children and violence against women, but in practice, it is often overlooked by those working on both issues.[18] For example, while SDG indicator 16.2.1 was designed to monitor violent discipline against children aged 1-17, almost all available data are limited to children <15 years old, leaving an important gap in knowledge for adolescents aged 15-17.[79] Similarly, most national IPV estimates are limited to women and girls who are ***already married or cohabiting***, excluding violence within informal romantic partnerships common among adolescents. As a result, most IPV research does not capture the full range of sexual abuse that adolescents experience, including violence by informal partners, attempted (not just completed) forced sex, non-physical sexual coercion, and cyber abuse (i.e. by text or online). Studies specifically designed to study violence in adolescent partnerships tend to be highly diverse and difficult to compare across sites,[80] although the Violence against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) programme is working to change that.

What a gendered analysis reveals about intimate partner and sexual violence against adolescents

Evidence suggests that, among adolescents, there are important, gendered differences in patterns, prevalence, consequences and help-seeking for IPV and sexual violence – differences that require attention lest prevention programmes and services default to designs

suitable for the needs of girls but not boys (or vice versa) or overlook the existence and needs of LGBTQI+ adolescents.

- **Adolescent girls almost always report higher levels of sexual abuse than boys.**

Most (although not all) studies find higher rates of sexual violence against adolescent girls than adolescent boys,[25,81] as did 12 of 14 national VACS surveys,[24] with greater gender differentials for penetrative abuse.[82] Worldwide, an estimated 1 in 20 (13 million) adolescent girls aged 15–19 years have experienced lifetime forced sex (i.e., rape), including 9 million in the past year.[83] Levels of other forms of sexual abuse are likely to be even higher. A UNICEF analysis concluded that girls become particularly vulnerable to sexual violence after puberty; in 20 countries with comparable data, nearly 9 in 10 adolescent girls who reported forced sex said it first occurred in adolescence rather than earlier in childhood.[35]

- **Data on sexual violence against adolescents are fragmented, with gendered gaps.**

As noted earlier, a growing number of countries have VACS data on sexual violence gathered among adolescents using a similar instrument. Globally, however, comparable data on sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents remain limited by lack of consensus about definitions and heterogeneity of research methods.[80,84] Most SDG estimates of child sexual abuse are limited to forced intercourse, while surveys such as VACS include a wide range of acts. Research from South Africa found that reported levels of abuse varied widely by data collection method (e.g., face-to-face vs. self-administered questionnaires) and location (e.g., home vs. school) especially among males, highlighting problems with cross-survey comparability.[85] Globally, more data are available for girls than boys. For example, as of September 2020, only 11 of 58 countries had SDG estimates for sexual violence in childhood against boys.[86] A UNICEF review noted that, data on sexual abuse and exploitation of boys remain severely limited, plagued by: "underreporting, definitional ambiguities and inconsistencies, misconceptions, . . . social stigma and, simply, a lack of research."[14] That report noted that most studies on sexual abuse and exploitation of boys come from select regions (Europe, North America and Southeast Asia), and called for expanding research on boys as "a critical step in ensuring that all children's rights can be protected."

- **Adolescent girls face greater risks of IPV than adolescent boys.**

Girls face a higher risk of IPV violence than boys, in part because they are more likely than boys to marry or cohabit as adolescents and/or before age 18.[87] Despite global progress, a 2020 UNICEF analysis estimated that one in five women aged 20–24 married before age 18.[83] In comparison, an analysis of data from 89 (primarily low- and middle-income) countries estimated that the proportion for men was 1 in 21.[87] Norms justifying wife-beating are widely accepted by adolescents and adults.[58] In 62 countries with comparable data, prevalence of past year IPV among ever-partnered girls aged 15–19 ranged from 2 per cent in Ukraine to more than 50 per cent in Namibia and Equatorial Guinea, with regional estimates in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia as high as one in five.[83]

- **Rates and patterns of adolescent homicide vary widely by sex.**

UNICEF estimates that globally, homicide rates are four times higher among adolescent boys than girls.[35] The World Health Organization (WHO) found higher rates of homicides among adolescent boys than girls in every region, with the highest differential (more than seven times) in Latin America and the Caribbean,[88] likely due to male vulnerability to (and engagement in) gang violence and organized crime in that part of the world.[89] On the other hand, adolescent girls are more likely than boys to be killed by an intimate partner and more likely to be raped before they are killed; for example, a study from South Africa found that

while homicide rates were more than three times higher among adolescent males than females, girls were more likely than boys to be raped before they were killed (38.1 per cent vs. 1.3 per cent) and more likely to be killed by an intimate partner (22.6 per cent vs. 1.5 per cent).[22] In some regions, adolescent girls are sometimes killed in the name of 'family honour' when they are perceived to violate rigid gender roles, highlighting another gendered pattern of violence across the life course.[90]

- **Girls face reproductive health consequences from sexual violence that boys do not.**

In addition to sexual health consequences experienced by both boys and girls (e.g., STIs, including HIV), girls experience a number of consequences from sexual violence that boys do not, including gynaecological conditions, unplanned pregnancy, miscarriage, unsafe abortion and birth complications.[91] Sexual abuse and exploitation of girls can result in early pregnancy, leading to disrupted schooling and/or pressure to marry as children, known to have lifelong consequences, including diminished opportunities for education and work.[92] As noted earlier, in some settings, sexual violence can place girls at risk of being killed by family members for so called reasons of 'honour'.[90]

- **Adolescent boys and girls face gendered barriers to help-seeking.**

Help-seeking for sexual violence is low for both girls and boys; by some estimates only 1–2 per cent of victims try to access asssitance.[25,35] Barriers to care are often gendered. Adolescent girls often turn to health services designed for adult women, unequipped for their needs.[93] Widely held gender norms often blame girls for sexual violence they experience, posing barriers to help-seeking or even disclosure. On the other hand, boys often confront a lack of services for male victims, lack of awareness that boys can be victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, failure of communities and service providers to recognize that sexual abuse of boys causes harm, and a fear of having their masculinity questioned.[14,94] As a result, evidence suggests boys may be even less likely than girls to seek help or receive services.[25]

- **LGBTQI+ youth face a heighted risk of violence, including sexual exploitation.**

Researchers[16] and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights[15] have documented high levels of violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity worldwide. In many countries, the situation is exacerbated by legal frameworks that fail to protect LGBTQI+ children and adolescents from violence or increase the risk of harassment and violence by criminalizing same-sex relationships.[15,95,96] A UNICEF report noted evidence that LGBTQI+ individuals are often rejected by their families and forced into homelessness, placing them at even greater risk of various types of violence, including sexual exploitation.[14]

3. International partnerships and frameworks for gender transformation and violence prevention

UNICEF participates in many partnerships within the UN system to address gender dimensions of violence and harmful practices, including the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls. UNICEF is a lead partner in Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) efforts to address gender-based violence and scale up protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian responses. UNICEF works with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and UNESCO to lead the Global working group to end school-related gender-based violence. UNICEF partners with UNFPA on programmes to address harmful practices, including the Global Programme to End Child Marriage and the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation. Beyond the UN system, UNICEF participates in international partnerships to translate evidence about effective (or at least promising) violence prevention and response into action, including the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, Together for Girls and INSPIRE. These partnerships have built a consensus around frameworks for action that can support UNICEF's gender-transformative violence programming, as described below.

3.1 The socio-ecological framework

The socio-ecological framework, a central concept within both violence prevention[97] and gender-transformative programming,[98] posits that long-term, sustainable social change requires action at all levels of society – including changes within national plans, legal and policy frameworks, systems and institutions, communities, households, interpersonal relationships, and individual girls, boys, women and men. The socio-ecological framework harmonizes with the eight elements of a Protective Environment Framework for children from UNICEF's 2008 Child Protection Strategy[99]: 1. Governmental commitment to fulfilling protection rights (including appropriate policies and budgets); 2. Legislation and enforcement; 3. Attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and practices; 4. Open discussion, including the engagement of media and civil society; 5. Children's life skills, knowledge and participation; 6. Capacity of those in contact with the child; 7. Basic and targeted services; 8. Monitoring and oversight.

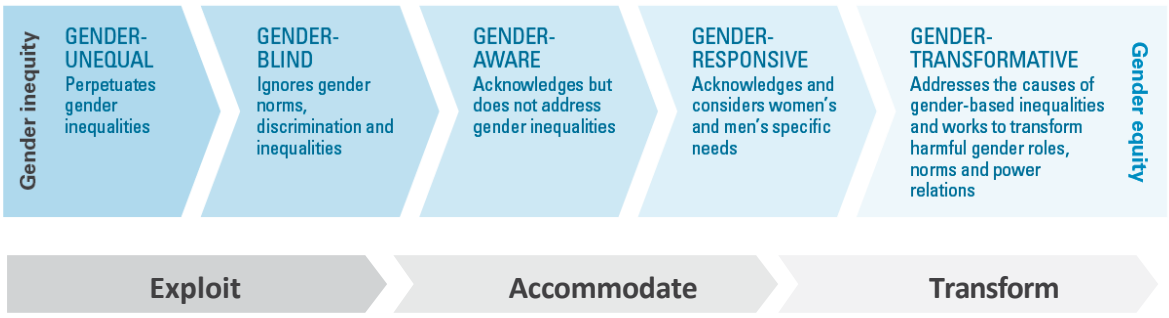
3.2 A gender continuum of programming approaches

As articulated in lessons learned from UNICEF's work on child marriage, gender-transformative approaches fall at one end of a continuum of programming approaches to gender equality (Figure 3).[98] Such approaches aspire to tackle root causes of inequality and reshape unequal power relations. They include:
a) Critically examining inequalities, power imbalances, norms and dynamics based on gender, with attention to intersections with race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.
b) Strengthening norms that support gender equality and inclusive, enabling environments
c) Promoting the relative position of girls, women and marginalized groups
d) Transforming underlying social structures, policies and norms that perpetuate and legitimize gender inequalities.

Generally, these approaches aim to move beyond self-improvement of individual girls and women towards redressing power imbalances within social structures, policies and norms that reinforce inequalities based on gender, race, ethnicity, etc. Such efforts often require

participation and leadership by local actors at community levels. As noted at the beginning of this paper, evidence and human rights instruments call for programming that is at least gender-responsive, but at best gender-transformative, to increase effectiveness, protect human rights and ensure sustained progress towards long-term gender equality goals.

Figure 3. The gender continuum.



Source: UNICEF (2019) Technical note on gender-transformative approaches in the global programme to end child marriage phase ii: a summary for practitioners.[98]

3.3 Frameworks for violence prevention: INSPIRE and RESPECT

International partnerships have created technical packages designed to translate evidence into more effective violence prevention and response. Created by a partnership of 10 agencies including UNICEF, INSPIRE aims to end violence against children and adolescents; it includes an original framework,[100] a Handbook for implementation[84] and an Indicator Guidance and Results Framework.[80] Similarly, a group of UN agencies and other international partners developed 'RESPECT Women: Preventing violence against women',[101] building on a previous 2015 UN Women Framework.[102]

Both packages have seven 'core' strategies and additional strategies, called 'cross-cutting' in INSPIRE and 'guiding principles' or components of 'an enabling environment' in RESPECT (Box 2). Notably, both sets of strategies have similarities to the eight elements of a Protective Environment Framework for children from UNICEF's 2008 Child Protection Strategy.[99]

The two packages have some differences. INSPIRE focuses on violence against children and adolescents, whereas RESPECT focuses on violence against women. RESPECT places greater emphasis on women's empowerment, calls for investing in women's organizations and more consistently emphasizes the concept of gender equality rather than gender equity, which appears frequently in INSPIRE. INSPIRE (especially the Handbook) places a greater emphasis on empowering adolescents, especially girls, as well as on child and adolescent participation.

> ***Both INSPIRE and RESPECT recognize the importance of gender equality for violence prevention and highlight intersections between VAC/A and VAW.***

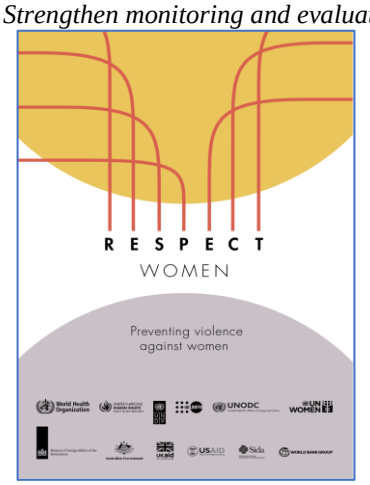
Box 2: INSPIRE and RESPECT

INSPIRE: Ending violence against children

Implementation and enforcement of laws
Norms and values
Safe environments
Parent and caregiver support
Income and economic strengthening[a]
Response and support services
Education and life skills
Multisectoral collaboration[b]
Monitoring and evaluation[b]

RESPECT: Preventing violence against women

Relationship skills strengthened
Empowerment of women
Services ensured
Poverty reduced
Environments made safe
Child and adolescent abuse prevented
Transformed attitudes, beliefs, and norms
Facilitate enforcement of laws and policies[c]
Coordination and partnerships across sectors[d]
Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems[d]



a. This strategy includes a strong focus on strengthening gender equality and preventing IPV within the household, even though that is not reflected in the name. b. 'Cross-cutting strategy.' c. Component of 'an enabling environment'. d. 'Guiding principle for effective programming.'

Nonetheless, the two frameworks have striking commonalities. As illustrated in Box 2, when both 'core' and additional strategies are considered, almost all INSPIRE and RESPECT strategies overlap. Both affirm the need to reduce gender inequality and transform gender norms and power imbalances as core strategies, integral to violence prevention. INSPIRE acknowledges that reducing violence against adult women is key to preventing violence against children, and RESPECT acknowledges the converse. Even the programmes they profile as effective (or promising) overlap. Both highlight programmes designed to transform gender norms and reduce violence against women (SASA!, IMAGE microfinance and Stepping Stones); and both include 'whole school' programmes for adolescents and younger children.

3.4 UNICEF's global Theory of Change

In 2017, the UNICEF Child Protection team led a participatory process to develop a global Theory of Change for preventing and responding to violence against children and adolescents.[2] Released alongside the INSPIRE Handbook and Indicator Guidance and Results Framework, the Theory of Change was designed to harmonize with work of international partners, while focusing on priorities and competitive advantages of UNICEF. Similar to INSPIRE and RESPECT, the UNICEF Theory of Change affirms the importance of reducing gender inequality as a cross-cutting principle of effective violence prevention (and response) and calls for attention to intersections among different forms of violence across the lifespan, a rights-based approach and the needs of adolescents.

Based on input from UNICEF country offices, regional offices and headquarters staff, the UNICEF Theory of Change was designed to prioritize intended results and strategies at the ***national level***, to encourage ***whole system*** and ***whole institutional*** reform efforts (rather than narrow, vertical projects), and to emphasize measurable change at all levels of the ecological framework – from legal frameworks systems and institutions in each sector, to communities, households and individual girls, boys, adolescents, women and men (Annexes A and B).

4. What we know about gender-transformative violence programming

4.1 State of the evidence

Global evidence about effective, or at least promising strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children, adolescents and women is growing rapidly. One important conclusion emerging from the evidence is that ***violence against children and adolescents and violence against women are preventable***.[84]

Recent systematic reviews have examined the effectiveness of strategies relevant for this paper, including interventions to improve parenting among IPV survivors,[103] parenting interventions to prevent violence against children,[104] cash transfer programmes to decrease IPV,[105] and programmes for boys and men to prevent sexual, dating and IPV.[106] The knowledge base has also benefited from a number of ***global research initiatives*** working to synthesize what is known about effective (or at least promising) violence prevention and response, with attention to gender, including Know Violence in Childhood,[107] Together for Girls,[24] What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls,[108] the Sexual Violence Research Initiative and The Prevention Collaborative (Annex C).

The evidence base has important limitations, however.[109] Most systematic reviews note the dearth of high-quality evaluations from LMIC, the heterogeneity of interventions and weaknesses in evaluation designs.[105,110–113] There are also knowledge gaps about how to measure the impact of social and behaviour change communication interventions focused on gender, violence and harmful practices.[114] While some studies make an explicit commitment to a 'feminist lens',[13] examine how to transform gender power imbalances as a core focus[111] or at least an important dimension,[115] others mention gender only in passing.[104] Similar diversity is noted in the extent to which they examine other inequalities (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.). Evidence also reflects a publication bias common across many fields in favour of evidence from certain settings, notably English-speaking countries.[116]

Another limitation is the disproportionate number of evaluations of strategies targeting low levels of the ecological framework, such as individual-level change.[111] This may reflect an over-reliance on randomized controlled trials (RCTs) as the 'gold standard' for evidence generation.[117] RCTs are a powerful tool for evaluating change among units that can be randomized, for example, individuals, schools[118,119] and villages.[120,121] Unfortunately, RCTs are not usually appropriate or feasible for evaluating long-term change across high levels of the ecological framework (e.g., national action, policy reform, multisectoral collaboration, whole system strengthening) or multiple levels at once – precisely the strategies that many,[84,122] including UNICEF[2,99] argue are essential for long-term, sustainable change. The resulting distortion of the evidence has been noted by those working on VAC/A,[122–124] VAW[117] and gender norm transformation.[111]

Policy reforms, whole system strengthening and community or nationwide initiatives are often best evaluated through quasi-experimental studies that use ecological methods to compare outcomes in regions over time with time-series data or panel studies (a type of longitudinal study design), with statistical analyses eliminating confounders, and – when possible – comparison groups.[125] Mixed method and participatory designs that consider perspectives of children, adolescents, young people and survivors are also important elements. As Goodman and colleagues argue: "Identifying more appropriate and meaningful

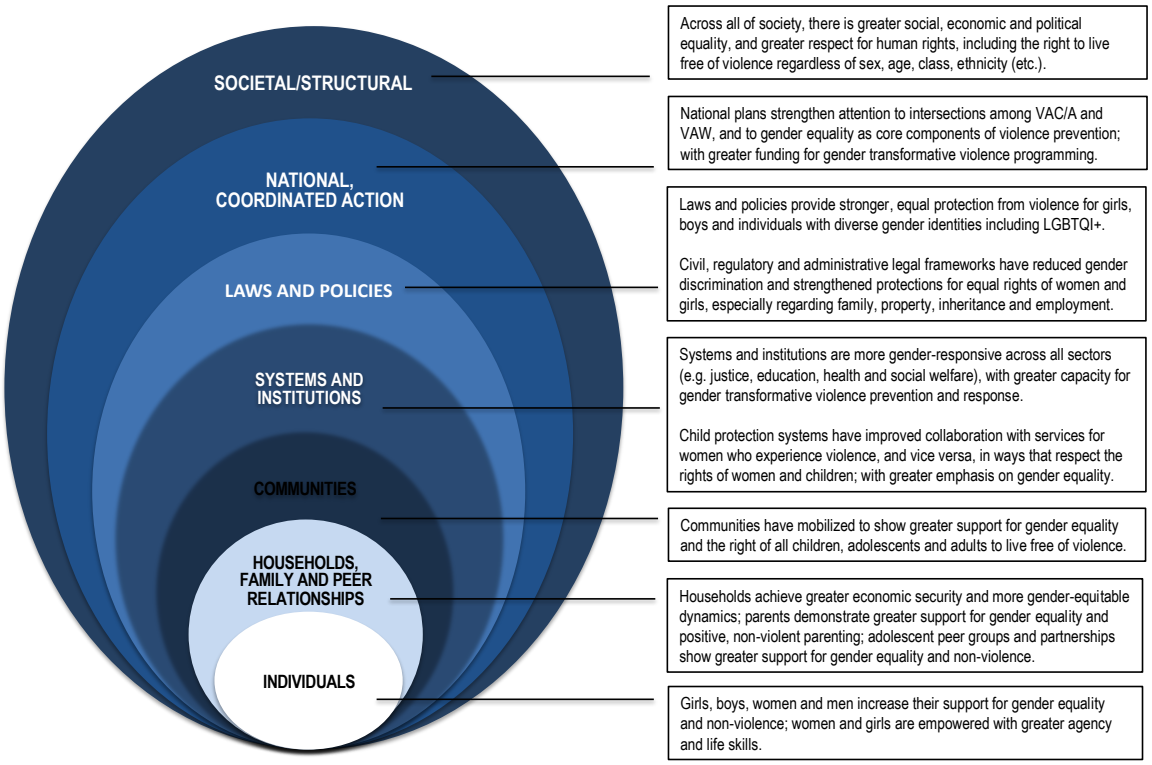
alternatives to the RCT is not simply an academic exercise; it is essential for building an evidence base… valid and reliable enough to improve the lives of victims and survivors".[117]

> ***Ecological, time-series evaluation designs are an underdeveloped area of research both in violence prevention and in research on gender equality, posing barriers to evidence-based policymaking.***

4.2 How UNICEF can strengthen gender-transformative violence programming: Considerations for strategic planning

With the intent of informing UNICEF's strategic planning, this section briefly reviews what is known about effective (or at least promising) gender-transformative violence prevention and response, and opportunities for improvement. The section is organized by level of the socio-ecological framework and aligned with UNICEF's Theory of Change.[98] Each subsection describes the importance of that area of work, gaps in gender-transformative programming, what UNICEF is already doing and opportunities for improvement. These strategies are designed to achieve the types of outcomes illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Gender-transformative outcomes across the socio-ecological framework.



4.2.1 National, coordinated, multisectoral action

In keeping with CRC and CEDAW obligations, bolstered by recommendations of the UN study on violence against children, the UN General Assembly has called on Member States to "develop a multifaceted and systematic framework… integrated into national planning processes, to respond to violence against children" (page 13, paragraph 52).[126] Strengthening

regional, national, multisectoral coordinated action is a key component of virtually all comprehensive approaches to violence prevention and response.[2,84,101] When adequately funded, national plans of action for violence prevention and response have built political commitment, encouraged multisectoral collaboration, and increased resources for violence prevention and response in the fields of both VAC/A[127] and VAW.[128] National action plans can focus specifically on violence against children and adolescents, or integrate attention to violence against children, adolescents and women in a single plan.[122] UNICEF has a long history of helping governments develop national plans of action to address violence (as documented in Tanzania[122,127]) and harmful practices such as child marriage. Following the 2008 Child Protection Strategy, UNICEF country offices helped many governments map legislation, capacities and resources to mobilize national country-specific child protection strategies.[3]

While national actions (including plans) that address violence against children and adolescents usually acknowledge gender inequality, they often give inadequate attention to gender, intersections among different forms of violence, and the needs of adolescents (especially girls).[129] Examples of ways that UNICEF and governments could ***strengthen attention to gender within national actions and planning mechanism*** include:

- Involve national and local women's, youth and children's organizations in planning processes for addressing violence against children, adolescents and women.
- Include strategies for achieving gender equality targets under SDG Goal 5.2, such as reducing gender discrimination within civil legal codes.
- Ensure that plans for violence prevention and response include strategies for changing social norms (at all levels of society) that support gender inequality, discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation or gender identify, and/or condone violence.
- Encourage governments to include gender mainstreaming benchmarks in their plans for violence prevention and response, as UNICEF has done within its own programming.[5]
- Ensure that national actions and plans on VAC/A and/or VAW address the age- and sex-specific needs of girls and boys from early childhood through adolescence.
- Build networks that encourage collaboration between organizations working on child protection and organizations working on women's rights and violence against women (discussed in further detail later).
- Encourage the wider community of practice and donors to shift away from short-term, project-based funding towards significant investments in long-term violence prevention and gender-transformation efforts.

4.2.2 Building the evidence base and research for action

Building the evidence base can increase awareness of the magnitude and consequences of violence, identify ways to improve programmes and policies, build political will, ensure that policies and programmes are evidence-informed, prevent unintended harm, and improve programming through monitoring and evaluation.[2,84,101,130] Understanding gender dimensions and overlapping forms of vulnerability are a critical component of evidence-informed violence programming.

UNICEF is a global leader in generating knowledge about violence against girls, boys and adolescents. Through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) programme, UNICEF Global databases, Office of Research-Innocenti, and research across almost all areas of work, UNICEF generates evidence on the epidemiology of violence, effective programming, links

between gender and violence, and the safety and ethics of research among children and adolescents. UNICEF is the lead agency for SDG indicators 16.2.1 and 16.2.3, participates in many international research partnerships and led the development of INSPIRE indicators.[80] At the national level, UNICEF country offices help governments fill national and subnational knowledge gaps on violence and gender-responsive programming.[130]

There are a host of evidence gaps that UNICEF could help to fill related to gender inequality and the specific forms of violence addressed in this paper (Box 3).[109] UNICEF could also strengthen the capacity of country offices to carry out gender analyses within programming.[131] Ideally, building the evidence base on VAC/A should be accompanied by efforts to strengthen national and local research and evaluation capacity, including participation by women's and youth organizations. Meanwhile, UNICEF should ensure that all of its own (and supported) research on violence against children, adolescents and women aligns with international scientific and ethical guidelines (www.unicef-irc.org/research/ethical-research-and-children/), ideally in coordination with UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

Box 3: Examples of evidence gaps related to gender and violence

Gender dimensions of intersections between IPV and violent discipline:

- What are levels, correlates and risk factors of IPV against women and violent discipline of children in the same household (data ***not*** currently available from most MICS or DHS surveys)? How do these vary according to whether violent discipline is carried out by mothers/women versus fathers/men?
- What are gendered pathways between violence against girls and boys in childhood and IPV later in life (both as victims and perpetrators)?
- How does the social, legal and economic status of women intersect with violence in the home (IPV against women and violence against children)?
- What strategies are effective at preventing and mitigating both IPV and violence against children in the home in LMIC (including in humanitarian contexts)?

Gender dimensions of violence against adolescents:

- What do we know about levels and types of violence experienced by adolescent girls and boys within informal romantic partnerships (i.e., before cohabitation)?
- What strategies are effective for promoting non-violent, gender-equitable, empowered relationships in adolescence in LMIC (including in humanitarian settings)?
- How can researchers improve operational definitions and the safety, ethics and scientific quality of data collection on sexual violence against children and adolescents, including girls and boys and LGBTQI+ individuals, bearing in mind possible gender differences in disclosure and experiences?

Strengths and gaps in child protection systems:

- To what degree have child protection systems mainstreamed attention to gender inequality and discrimination (both institutional and among the population of children and adolescents) in each country? What are the key opportunities for reform?
- How well do child protection systems meet the needs of adolescents (including girls, boys and individuals with diverse gender identity/expression, including LGBTQI+) who experience violence?
- How well do child protection systems address the needs of children living in households affected by IPV, and how can they improve coordination with services for adult women who experience violence?

And finally, what do we know about how to improve gender-transformative violence programming in all these areas?

4.2.3 Legal and policy frameworks

Strong legal and policy frameworks (e.g., criminal and civil legislation, family codes, administrative laws, policies, regulations and codes of conduct) are an essential component of a protective environment for children and adolescents.[2,99] Nonetheless, an analysis of SDG data from 53 countries found that more than one-quarter had gaps in legal protections for violence against women and girls.[34] The 2020 'Out of the Shadows' index noted that in almost half (27) of 60 countries studied, child rape legislation failed to include legal protection for boys.[132] And in many countries, civil and criminal legal codes either lacked protection for LGBTQI+ individuals and/or put them at greater risk of harassment and

violence through discriminatory laws, including those criminalizing consensual same-sex relationships.[15,95,96]

In many low- and middle-income countries, women and girls have unequal rights to marriage, divorce, child custody, property division and inheritance.[11] By 2018, in 53 countries with SDG data, almost one-third had legal and policy frameworks that discriminated against women and girls; one-quarter to one-fifth had discriminatory policies related to employment, economic benefits, and marriage or family law.[34] As discussed earlier, gender discriminatory ***civil legislation*** and policies can increase vulnerability of women and girls to violence.[29]

UNICEF works extensively with governments to strengthen laws and policies related to violence against children and adolescents, and to address harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM. UNICEF facilitates consultations within UN Member States to prepare reports for the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and advocates for reform and enforcement of laws related to violence and harmful practices. The recent evaluation of UNICEF's child protection strategy suggests that UNICEF's legal and policy advocacy already incorporates attention to gender,[3] but gaps remain.

Opportunities to strengthen gender-transformational work in legal and policy reform may include helping Member States:

- Meet obligations under the CEDAW, including removing gender discrimination from civil legal codes related to marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance, workplaces, citizenship, etc.
- Achieve legal and policy targets delineated under SDG Goal 5 (Box 4), including:
  - End sex discrimination within legal frameworks (Target 5.1)
  - Give women equal rights to economic resources and property (Target 5.A)
  - Adopt laws and policies that promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (Target 5.C).
- Strengthen legal protection for harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM.
- Ensure that legal frameworks provide all children and adolescents – including boys, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals – equal protection from sexual violence and exploitation, and do not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation gender expression or sex characteristics.
- Reform legal codes and other policies that put LGBTQI+ youth at risk of violence and harassment, including those that criminalize consensual same-sex relationships.
- Help countries strengthen policy and legal responses to emerging forms of sexual violence against children and adolescents, including production, possession and distribution of electronic child sexual abuse material.[133]

Box 4: Examples of SDG indicators monitoring legal and policy gender discrimination

5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex

5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15–49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education

5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control

5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

4.2.4 Strengthening capacities of whole systems and institutions

Evidence from virtually all sectors – including justice, social welfare, health and education – suggests that long-term, sustainable improvements in violence prevention and response require changes across ***whole systems*** and ***whole institutions***.[84,134] Similarly, the 2018–2021 Gender Action Plan called for UNICEF to help ***local and national systems*** become more gender-responsive.[135] Systems strengthening has been a core focus of UNICEF's work since the 2008 Child Protection Strategy.[99] The 2018 evaluation of UNICEF's child protection work noted that: "Investments in capacity-building (including workforce strengthening) made the biggest difference across the entire set of 24 countries, suggesting that this intervention is worthwhile in a wide range of contexts" (page 81).[3]

Gender-responsive policies, reforms, training (etc.) – one component of systems strengthening – are particularly important for preparing systems and institutions to address violence. Institutions characterized by gender discrimination in hiring and management, impunity for sexual harassment, misogyny, homophobia and failure to respect the dignity of all individuals are not only unprepared to protect the rights of girls, boys and women, but also risk doing harm when interacting with those who have experienced abuse.[136] Recognizing that mainstreaming attention to gender throughout institutions is challenging,[4] UNICEF could expand support for gender mainstreaming as part of country-level cooperation.

A full discussion of how to strengthen the capacity of systems in all sectors to prevent and respond to violence in ways that are gender-transformative or at least gender-responsive, is beyond the scope of this paper; however, some examples from UNICEF's work include:

Justice: As part of systems strengthening in Nepal, UNICEF trained 350 law enforcement and justice officials to apply gender and child-friendly approaches to case management, victim assistance and witness protection, and documented an almost 50 per cent increase in reported cases of rape, child marriage and domestic violence between 2018 and 2019, suggesting reduced barriers to reporting.[131]

Education: UNICEF and partners have worked to address gender inequality and violence across whole education systems and institutions in many countries.[131] UNICEF (along with UNGEI and UNESCO) lead the Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence, which works to raise awareness and make schools safer, more gender-sensitive and more inclusive. In 2019, 49 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had mechanisms to prevent and respond to SRGBV, a barrier to children's education.[131] UNICEF

(along with UNGEI and UNESCO) lead the Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence, which works to raise awareness and make schools safer, more gender-sensitive and more inclusive. Together, they have developed a set of minimum standards and monitoring framework that provides a road map for this work (see Box 5).

Box 5: A whole school approach to prevent school-related gender-based violence

The Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence and UNGEI produced this framework, after identifying a need for greater gender-awareness in addressing school violence and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 target of "safe, inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environments."[137] The framework is meant to guide policymakers and practitioners in designing school violence prevention and response programmes. The prevention model is based on eight evidence-based standards and is accompanied by a monitoring approach with a set of proposed indicators at school, district and national levels. The goal is to promote strategies that improve prevention, response, data collection and accountability around incidents of SRGBV at the school, district and national levels.

Gender-based violence in emergencies: In addition to supporting health, social work and justice sector services for children and adolescents who have experienced violence (including an estimated 2.7 million in 2019[5]), UNICEF works to strengthen child protection systems in emergencies and integrate gender-based violence risk mitigation across UNICEF clusters and sectors in line with IASC GBV guidelines.

Box 6: New challenges for gender equality and violence prevention and response: COVID-19

Systems strengthening faces new challenges due to COVID-19.[138] Following the onset of the pandemic, sharp increases in violence against women and children were predicted[139]and reported[140] in settings around the world, exacerbated by home confinement, social isolation and financial stress and strains on fragile institutions.[141] As the pandemic intensified in March 2020, service providers warned of a 'perfect storm', manifesting in increased calls to helplines, online support services and police reports.[142] Meanwhile, emerging research by UN agencies suggests that COVID-19 has the potential to undermine gains in gender equality in areas such as poverty, employment, health, division of household labour, and violence against women and girls.[143] UNICEF and other agencies are only beginning to understand how to address violence against women and violence against children in the context of the pandemic.[139,144] A full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of what is feasible in this paper, given that evidence and lessons learned are evolving rapidly; however, a selection of UNICEF resources available at the time this paper was written include the following:

Gender-Responsive Social Protection during COVID-19: A Technical note
Interagency guidance on GBV risk mitigation during COVID-19
COVID-19: Protecting children from violence, abuse and neglect in the home.
Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic (V.2)
Remote data collection on violence against women during COVID-19: A conversation with experts on ethics, measurement and research priorities (Part 1)
Remote data collection on violence against children during COVID-19: A conversation with experts on research priorities, measurement and ethics (Part 2)

A full examination of ***how UNICEF can strengthen gender-responsive and transformative approaches*** to violence across whole systems and institutions in each sector is beyond the scope of this paper; however, a few example of opportunities include:

1. Continue to make systems strengthening a priority, given evidence that this is key to long-term, sustainable progress towards gender-responsive institutions, violence prevention and strong child protection systems.
2. Ensure collaboration and partnerships with governments, UN agencies and other partners given intersections among different forms of violence across the lifespan.
3. Carry out comprehensive mapping of whole systems and institutions that includes attention to gender and violence, both within each sector and across the child protection system as a whole, as described in UNICEF's Child Protection Resource Pack.
4. Move away from short-term, vertical projects on specific issues and seek ways to help countries finance long-term, whole system reforms.
5. Invest in innovative ways to measure complex, sustainable, system-wide changes; do not just count numbers of children reached with services or numbers of individuals trained.
6. Integrate greater attention to gender mainstreaming as a key component of preparing whole institutions to address violence against children and adolescents.
7. Help countries mitigate the challenges that COVID-19 is likely to pose for gender-responsive systems strengthening, with rising levels of violence and budgets under strain.
8. Promote opportunities for individuals, institutions and whole systems to critically examine harmful gender norms that normalize violence.
9. While all sectors are important, UNICEF has a particularly important role to play in helping reform whole education systems to provide safe learning environments and empower children and adolescents to build a world free of violence and gender inequality. UNGEI's minimum standards and monitoring framework (Box 5) are an important resource in that effort.

4.2.5 Services for girls, boys and women who experience violence

Expanding services for girls, boys and women who experience violence is a subset of systems strengthening and a core strategy of UNICEF, the VAC/A theory of change, INSPIRE and RESPECT. Three gender-related gaps merit attention in this area, described below.

Services for gender-based violence in and outside of humanitarian settings
UNICEF has led many global efforts to strengthen gender-based violence services in humanitarian settings, including developing IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, the GBV Coordination Handbook, the Interagency Guidelines on GBV Case Management, Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Violence, and helping to develop the Inter-agency minimum standards for gender-based violence in emergencies programming. Outside humanitarian settings, UNICEF's role in supporting services for adult women who experience violence is less clear, as this work falls under the mandate of other UN agencies such as UN Women, UNFPA and WHO. Even when providing services for adolescent victims, UNICEF should be cautious about what a recent evaluation noted was a tendency for donors to create "single, parallel… CP service delivery channels" that circumvent government-led CP [child protection] systems.[3]

One way UNICEF could expand work on violence against women while staying clearly within its institutional mandate would be to help maternal health care and nutrition services integrate greater attention to the implications of IPV, given evidence that this is an important risk factor for the physical and mental health of mothers and children. Evidence about what

strategies are most effective in LMIC is still limited, but a number of strategies have been identified as promising.[145]

Recommendations for strengthening this area of work include:

1. Invest in helping maternal and newborn health services respond to IPV against pregnant women and new mothers, given evidence that it is a risk factor for physical and mental health of mothers and their children.
2. Strengthen UNICEF's attention to violence prevention and response within health programming and health services for children and adolescents (who often fall through the gaps). This applies to health services generally, and to sexual and reproductive health and mental health services in particular. Key elements include preparing service providers to recognize links between a) VAC/A and child and adolescent health (both physical and mental health); and b) understanding implications of IPV for children's health and well-being.
3. Launch an internal process to define UNICEF's role in supporting services and collaborating with partners on programming for adult women who experience violence outside humanitarian settings.

Collaboration between child protection and services for women who experience IPV

Researchers have noted that in many countries there is a need for better collaboration between child protection and services for women who experience IPV, sensitive to concerns of women's advocates that child protection systems sometimes put women's rights and safety at unnecessary risk by failing to understand the dynamics of violence in the home, by assuming women can easily leave an abusive situation, and/or by blaming women for their inability to prevent or control the abusive behaviour of men.[18,76,146] In particular, researchers describe risks associated with:

- Mandatory reporting policies for IPV that discourage women from seeking help
- Service providers who do not take adequate steps (such as confidentiality) to protect women (and children) from violent retaliation by abusive partners
- Unnecessary separation of children from non-abusive parents.

A UNICEF report from the Pacific observed that services for adult women survivors of IPV are often geared toward ***short-term*** assistance and helping women ***leave*** abusive relationships, while child protection often emphasizes ***family preservation*** and long-term follow-up.[147] That report suggests several **recommendations for building constructive collaboration between child protection systems and services for women survivors of violence, including:**

1. Professionals who care for children should be prepared (i.e., trained, equipped, institutionally supported and willing) to respond appropriately to cases of IPV against mothers, including provision of non-judgemental first-line support using the 'LIVES' approach[d] and referral services, as recommended by WHO.[148]
2. Conversely, professionals who provide services to women and adolescents girls should be prepared to understand the needs of children whose mothers experience IPV. This includes laws about reporting, how to refer to and interact with child protection authorities, and how to help survivors and their children access services, including parenting support.

[d] LIVES stands for Listen, Inquire about needs and concerns, Validate, Enhance safety and Support.

3. Child protection systems should provide clear guidance, training and support to professionals so they can respond appropriately to children at risk of harm in situations of family violence and be prepared to intervene in ways that minimize separation of children from non-abusing parents. In some settings there is a need to reform discriminatory policies that prosecute survivors for 'failing to protect' their children from witnessing violence that they (survivors) experience while failing to hold perpetrators of said violence accountable.
4. Increase investment and develop evidence-based guidance for practical and effective ways forward, tailored to each country or local setting.

Services for adolescent girls and boys who experience sexual violence

As noted earlier, adolescent help-seeking for sexual violence is low, and barriers to care are gendered. Victims may need services from multiple sectors, but the health sector plays a particularly critical role. International organizations have developed substantial guidance in recent years to strengthen health systems' and providers' capacity to respond to violence against children and adolescents.[94,149] However, this remains an area that needs attention, as noted in a regional analysis of health system capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean.[150]

UNICEF could strengthen gender-responsive services for adolescents by:
Helping all sectors strengthen their service responses to violence against all adolescents in ways that are gender- and age-appropriate. There is a particular need to ensure that health services conform with WHO clinical guidelines for responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused[94] and the WHO Global plan of action to strengthen health system responses to violence against women, girls and children.[149] There is also a need to ensure that child protection systems collaborate with services for adult survivors to ensure that ***adolescent girls and boys*** receive services appropriate for their age and are not lost within the gaps between adult and child-centred services. Strengthening the capacity of and supporting the health and well-being of health-care providers to offer a first-line response is a key component of such efforts.[151]

Finally, it should be noted that SDG target 3.7 calls on Member States to provide universal access (which includes adolescents) to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes. Attention to gender and violence within these services is particularly important. While adolescent health services fall under the mandate of other UN agencies as well, UNICEF has an important role to play in helping bridge the gaps between services for children and adolescents.

4.2.6 Community mobilization and social norms change

UNICEF is a global leader in Communication for Development (C4D), including consolidating what is known about best practice and effective programming to shift social norms related to violence and gender,[152] testing innovations, and developing resources for planning, implementing and evaluating C4D strategies for gender-transformative violence initiatives.[153] Changing social norms was integral to UNICEF's violence programming approach in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the UNICEF VAC/A Theory of Change, both as a stand-alone outcome and a cross-cutting strategy. UNICEF's work on ending child marriage and FGM has produced a wealth of knowledge about gender-transformative work among communities, with social norms change integrated into multi-layered approaches

across the ecological framework.[98] For example, UNICEF is implementing community-based social change efforts and other strategies in 13 countries as part of the inter-agency Spotlight initiative, which is making targeted, large-scale investments to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.[131]

The UNICEF-led Communities Care Programme is an evidence-based primary prevention and response programme designed to support communities in humanitarian settings (Somalia and South Sudan) to create healthier, safer and more peaceful environments. The programme aims to increase the quality and coordination of response services for women and girls and to transform harmful social norms that uphold violence into norms that promote dignity, equity and non-violence. Strategies focus on mobilizing community-based response services across diverse sectors, and catalysing community-led prevention actions focused on social norms.[154]

Recent reviews on evidence about changing social norms in the context of violence prevention highlight the need to move beyond individuals to address structural inequalities.[152] A 2020 systematic review of programmes targeting gender inequality and restrictive gender norms noted that: "programmes most frequently focused on improving the individual power of the beneficiaries, rather than working on broader systems of inequality."[111] Meanwhile, that same review noted that the programmes showing the greatest potential were those that ***transcended individual change strategies, included multiple stakeholders, implemented diversified strategies, and fostered critical awareness and participation across the community.***[111]

Examples of ways to strengthen gender-transformative work in this area include:

1. Ensure that community mobilization and social norms programming reflect up-to-date lessons learned about effective gender transformation and violence prevention.
2. Prioritize initiatives working at multiple levels of the ecological framework and across multiple sectors, targeting institutions and power structures that shape and maintain gender norms.
3. Increase coordination/integration among social change initiatives focusing on gender transformation, violence against children and adolescents and violence against women.

4.2.7 Economic empowerment of women and girls

Economic empowerment of women and girls, originally designed to reduce poverty and gender inequality, has gained attention for potential to prevent violence. Researchers have explored potential for microfinance to reduce IPV[155–157] and for cash transfers to households with children or adolescents to reduce IPV, violent discipline and/or violence against adolescent girls.[158] Economic empowerment of women and girls alone does not always reduce violence, however; and in some cases has been found to provoke a violent backlash.[105,155–158] Researchers have, therefore, called for combining economic empowerment with gender-transformative strategies.[108]

UNICEF has worked extensively on economic strengthening and social protection, both for poverty reduction and as a violence prevention strategy.[107] Some initiatives have integrated gender-responsive or gender-transformative strategies. For example, UNICEF partnered with governments and researchers to test strategies integrating girls' empowerment into economic strengthening programmes, while monitoring outcomes related to violence, such as the cash-plus programme of The Transfer Project (Box 7).[159] Meanwhile, UNICEF Office of

Research-Innocenti has launched the Gender-Responsive and Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme 2018–2023, examining the potential of gender-responsive and age-sensitive social protection systems to enhance gender equality outcomes across the life course.

Box 7: When cash alone is not enough: The Transfer Project

UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti is a lead partner in The Transfer Project, a multi-country research initiative to build the evidence base on cash-transfer programmes. The project is a collaborative network between UNICEF, FAO, University of North Carolina, national governments and local research partners. In recent years, the project has gathered evidence on the effects of 'cash-plus' programmes that combine cash transfers with other empowerment programmes. For example, a 'cash-plus' programme in Tanzania aims to reduce violence and improve safe transitions to adulthood among adolescent girls by combining cash transfers with life skills training, sexual and reproductive health education, HIV treatment, peer support groups and mentoring.[159]

Examples of opportunities to strengthen gender-responsive and gender-transformative social protection and economic empowerment programmes:

- Increase investment in programmes that combine gender-transformative strategies within social protection and economic empowerment programmes.
- Continue building the evidence base on integrating attention to gender and violence within social protection programming.
- Build partnerships across different sectors that include women's organizations and even the private sector to improve gender equality and family-friendly workplaces.
- Ensure that social protection initiatives designed to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 integrate attention to VAW and VAC/A within programme designs and evaluations.

4.2.8 Gender-responsive caregiver support

Improving the quality of parent–child relationships and promoting positive (rather than violent) discipline is an important emerging area of prevention, through strategies such as home visits for new parents, community-based parenting support programmes for mothers and fathers, and multi-level strategies that include behaviour change communication.[2,160,161] Evidence about effective programming in this area is growing,[104,162] but is still limited, as is the number of parenting programmes that explicitly address violence, much less gender transformation.[115] Many questions remain about how to support adult and adolescent mothers who are parenting children in the context of IPV, particularly in low-resource settings, although researchers have begun exploring this question.[61,103] IPV against adolescent girls who have begun childbearing is an area that often falls between the gaps in the fields of child protection and violence against women, but lies within UNICEF's mandate, given the agency's commitment to protecting the health and rights of children and adolescents.[163]

Opportunities for UNICEF to contribute to this area of work include:

Staying abreast of evolving evidence and helping turn research into action at the country level as lessons emerge about how caregiver support programmes can strengthen attention to: a) gender transformation; b) gender socialization of children; c) IPV prevention and response; and d) ways to meet the needs of adolescent parents and women who are parenting in the context of IPV.

4.2.9 Gender-transformative programming for adolescents

Knowledge about effective gender-transformative programming among adolescent girls and boys is still limited, particularly from LMIC, highlighting a need for more rigorous research.[110,111] A 2020 systematic review of what works to prevent violence against women and girls assessed programmes aimed at individual norms and behaviour change and concluded that school-based interventions to prevent dating or sexual violence showed evidence of effectiveness when well designed and executed; working with men and boys (alone) produced conflicting evidence; and brief 'bystander' interventions had no effect.[108] Many programmes have integrated gender-transformative programming for girls into other strategies (e.g., cash-transfer programmes), with emerging evidence of effectiveness, as noted earlier.[159]

Strengthening individual knowledge, skills, economic and educational opportunities appears to empower girls and women and contribute to greater gender equality in society.[57] However, a long-standing feminist critique of violence prevention targeted at individual girls or women (alone) argues that such approaches (explicitly or unwittingly) place the "onus for prevention on potential victims, possibly obscuring the responsibility of perpetrators."[164] This is not only philosophically problematic, but likely to be ineffective.[165]

One area in which UNICEF could play an important role is to partner with UNESCO in efforts to develop, evaluate, scale up and promote age-appropriate, gender-transformative comprehensive sexuality education programmes. A UNESCO report that reviewed the evidence behind such programmes argued that well-designed programmes can:[133]

> …empower [young people] to make informed decisions about their sexuality and relationships freely and responsibly…. and develop respect for human rights, gender equality and diversity, and, attitudes and skills that contribute to safe, healthy, positive relationships. (page 3) …A lack of high-quality, age- and developmentally-appropriate sexuality and relationship education may leave children and young people vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation." (page 18)

As noted throughout this paper, systematic reviews of the evidence suggest that programmes aiming to change harmful gender norms seem to work best when they address multiple levels of the ecological framework, including not only individuals, but also multiple stakeholder groups, whole systems and the broader structural contexts of inequality.[111,152,166] As noted earlier, UNGEI's work on SRGBV is premised on evidence that reforming whole education systems has the potential to empower children and adolescents to build a world with greater freedom from violence and gender inequality.[167]

Opportunities for UNICEF to strengthen this area of work include:
a) Monitoring emerging lessons learned from the peer-reviewed evidence and helping countries integrate best practices in gender-transformative work as they emerge.
b) Integrating individual change interventions into strategies targeting other levels of the ecological framework, in keeping with lessons learned from UNICEF's work on multi-level work to end harmful practices such as child marriage.
c) Partnering with UNESCO and UNGEI on school-based violence prevention programmes and comprehensive sexuality education.

5. Recommendations for UNICEF's strategic planning

UNICEF should approach gender equality and violence as rights issues that are inextricably linked, as are intersections between violence against children and violence against women.

Global evidence generation

As a global leader in evidence generation, UNICEF can strengthen the gender-responsive knowledge base on violence prevention by using a gender analysis to:
a) Improve methodological tools for researching sexual violence against girls and boys.
b) Increase the geographic coverage, quality and comparability of data on violence against adolescents (including sexual violence, sexual exploitation, violence within adolescent partnerships, as well as cultural and economic drivers).
c) Explore intersections and co-occurrence between IPV and violent discipline.
d) Invest in implementation research and systematic reviews of gender-transformative violence programming in LMIC (accessible in multiple languages).
e) Strengthen capacities for ethical, safe, participatory and methodologically sound research and data collection on violence against girls and boys at the global and the national level.
f) Strengthen the evidence base on effective or at least promising strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents.

Support for country offices and governments

a) UNICEF should continue prioritizing a systems approach to child protection, gender transformation and violence by helping countries integrate attention to these issues across all systems and institutions, including the health sector.

b) At the country level, UNICEF has the potential to advocate for more attention to civil rights, legal equality, and social and economic empowerment of women and girls, as essential to long-term prevention of violence against girls and boys. While many gender equality targets under Goal 5 focus on adults, evidence suggests that progress in these areas will require addressing roots of violence against girls and boys, including adolescents.

c) UNICEF can help countries bridge gaps between the fields of VAC/A and VAW by:

- Helping child protection systems understand the dynamics of IPV and collaborate with services for women; helping services for women understand and respond to the needs of children living in household affected by IPV.
- Ensuring that legal and child protection systems protect the rights and well-being of children and do not unnecessarily separate children from non-abusing parents or undermine the rights of women.
- Increasing investment in strategies to prevent violence against women and girls that fall within UNICEF's core mandate, such as gender-responsive caregiver support, parenting programmes and social norms change programmes, including among adolescents.
- Strengthening capacity of maternal health services to respond to IPV against women and girls who are pregnant or new mothers.
- Strengthening capacity of mental health services to recognize links between violence and mental health, and to provide high-quality, gender-responsive, compassionate care to children and adolescents who experience abuse.
- Advocating for ongoing mentoring, care and support for front-line staff working with victims of violence, to minimize impacts of vicarious trauma and burnout.

d) Increase investment in multisectoral programming that aims for long-term, sustainable changes in gender norms, gender power imbalances and violence prevention at multiple levels of the ecological framework. UNICEF has a particularly important role to play in the area of education, including partnering with UNGEI on whole-school violence prevention initiatives and partnering with UNESCO on comprehensive sexuality education.

e) Develop better methods for measuring long-term change across whole systems and institutions to monitor progress and build donor support for long-term systems change.

Finally, UNICEF may need to clarify its role in supporting services for adult women who experience violence outside of humanitarian settings. Nonetheless, there is a clear need to increase adolescents' access to services for violence, improve coordination across services that cater to children and adult survivors, and strengthen health systems' and providers' capacity to care for all child and adolescent victims of violence.

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Annex A. Priority actions from UNICEF's 2017 Theory of Change

The following was taken from UNICEF's 2017 Theory of change, which provided a detailed rationale for each strategy.[2] (J justice; H health; SW social welfare; E education)

Cross-cutting actions

- Review and strengthen risk-informed policies and programmes across all results areas so child protection strategies continue seamlessly across humanitarian and development cycles, including in situations of armed conflict, forced displacement and other emergency situations.
- Integrate attention to armed conflict and other emergencies into violence-related policies and programmes.
- Implement C4D approaches to encourage social norm change related to violence against children across all sectors and levels of society.

National, multisectoral, coordinated action

- Build and disseminate the evidence base on violence against children and adolescents (research, mapping, surveillance and monitoring).
- Implement 'research to action' strategies to raise awareness and mobilize action.
- Develop multisectoral, multi-stakeholder planning mechanisms (e.g. task forces, coalitions), with child/adolescent participation.
- Develop, adopt, cost, fund, implement and monitor coordinated, multisectoral national plans to address violence against girls and boys, including adolescents, with results frameworks and accountability mechanisms.
- Develop public expenditure tracking mechanisms.
- Develop action plans under the MRM where applicable (e.g. in situations of armed conflict).

Legal and policy frameworks

- Review laws and policies for compliance/accord with international norms related to violence and discrimination (e.g. CRC, CEDAW and UN Model Strategies).
- Advocate for legal and policy reform and implementation (J)
- Reform laws and policies (including criminal, civil and administrative codes, policies and regulations) with child and adolescent participation, including those that address (J):
  - » Violent discipline (home and school), child sexual abuse and exploitation, and access to weapons
  - » Protection of children and adolescents from violence and discrimination more generally
  - » Gender inequality and discrimination
  - » Access to child-friendly justice.
- Develop campaigns to raise awareness of and support for violence-related laws and rights.

Prevention, reporting mechanisms and response services within each sector

- Adopt 'systems approaches' for whole system and whole institutional capacity building, including:
  - » Review, revise and implement stronger normative frameworks (e.g. policies, protocols, codes of conduct, plans of action, etc.) relevant to violence against children and adolescents, in accord with international norms.
  - » Carry out comprehensive mapping of whole sector/system/institution-wide resources and gaps, both within each sector and across the child protection system as a whole.
  - » Invest in administrative data collection systems that track cases of child abuse and neglect; monitor institutional and professional practices; and document sector-specific expenditures.
  - » Invest in institutional resources (e.g. infrastructure, data systems, equipment, supplies, referral networks, etc.) based on comprehensive needs assessments in each sector.
  - » Invest in workforce preparedness to address violence against children and adolescents, including training, sensitizing, hiring and retaining more and better qualified duty-bearers, professionals and paraprofessionals.
  - » Build referral networks and enhance multisectoral collaboration and community outreach.
  - » Integrate attention to the implications of violence across all policies and programming.
  - » Invest in reporting systems, case detection, responses, referrals, monitoring, care and support.
  - » Invest in dedicated, evidence-based violence prevention initiatives in each sector.

Justice sector prevention and response (J)

- Implement system-wide reforms to provide access to child-friendly justice and enhanced support for child victims, in accord with international norms.

Social welfare prevention and response (SW)

- Invest in the social welfare and child protection workforce.
- Invest in case management services and information systems.

Health sector prevention and response (H)

- Use a systems approach to improve the health service response to violence against children and adolescents.
- Align protocols and practice with international clinical guidelines on child sexual abuse and child maltreatment.
- Invest in enhanced post-rape care for girls and boys.
- Integrate attention to violence within public health programming for children and adolescents.

Education prevention and response (E)

- Adopt whole-school violence initiatives.
- Integrate attention to violence in and around schools into education policies and programmes.
- Protect children from violence in schools in situations of armed conflict.

Humanitarian/emergency programming (H/E)

- Implement gender-based violence in emergencies programming.
- Implement family reunification strategies in emergencies.

Society/communities

- Adopt C4D strategies to change social norms about gender, violence and discrimination. (J, H, SW, E)
- Mobilize communities and community-based organizations to prevent and respond to violence and discrimination against girls and boys, including adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable. (H, SW, E)

Households/families

- Implement social care and support programmes for households that integrate attention to gender equality, violence against children and violence against women. (SW)
- Implement cash transfer programmes, especially those that address girls' empowerment and safe transitions to adulthood for girls and boys. (SW)

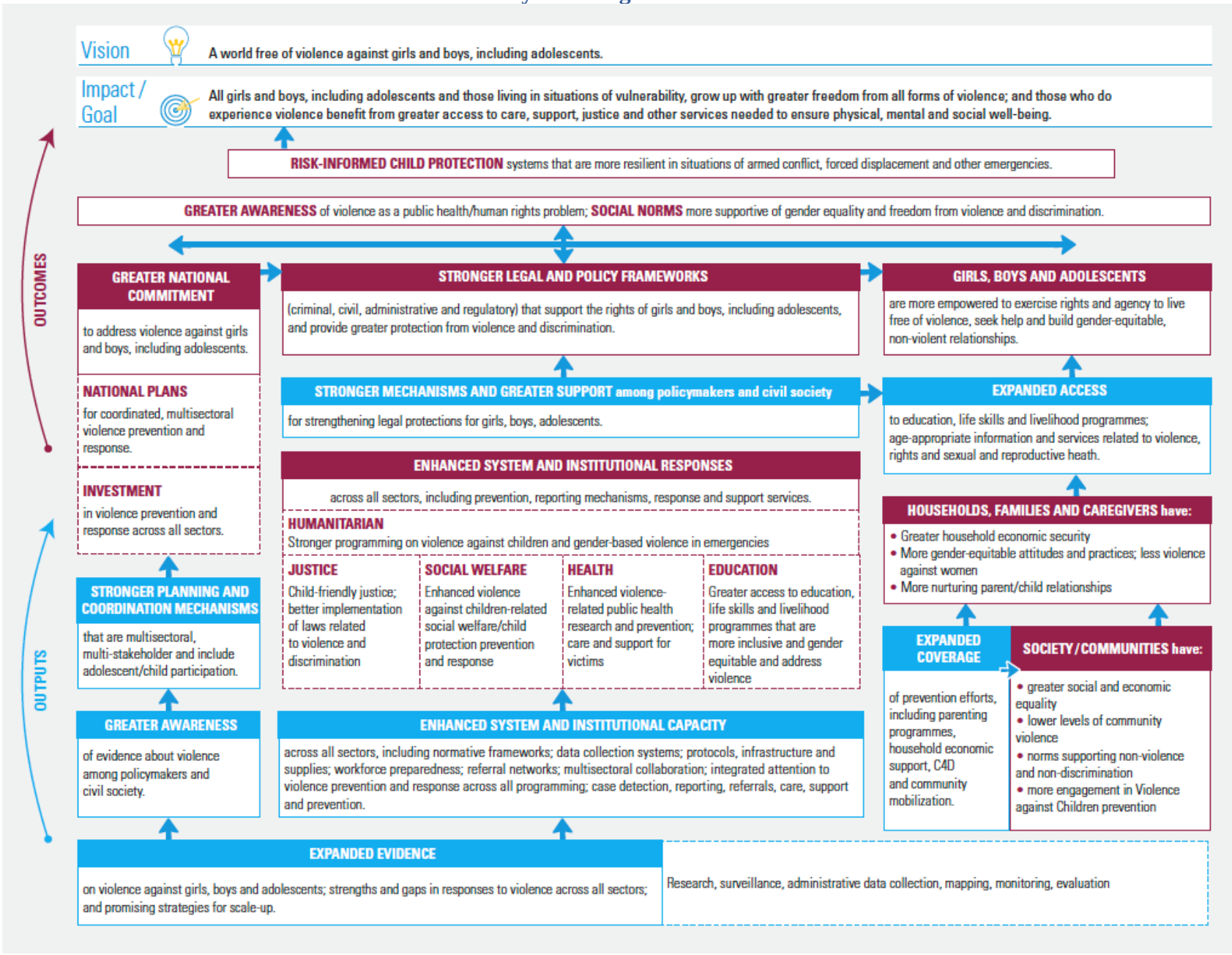
Mothers, fathers and caregivers

- Develop positive parenting programmes for mothers, fathers and caregivers across the child life cycle, reinforced by C4D strategies. (SW, H, E)
- Provide parent and caregiver support services (e.g. home visits) for vulnerable families. (H, SW)

Girls, boys and adolescents

- Implement life skills and livelihood programmes that integrate attention to rights, gender norms, healthy relationships and violence. (H, E)
- Adopt school-based violence prevention programmes. (E)
- Implement adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and prevention programmes. (H)
- Adopt C4D strategies to raise awareness and change norms among adolescents.

Annex B. Results chain from UNICEF's 2017 Theory of Change Adolescents



Annex C. Global research initiatives working to synthesize what is known about effective (or at least promising) violence prevention and response

Know Violence Against Children	A global learning initiative that examined causes, consequences, and evidence-based strategies to prevent childhood violence, including intersections between violence against children and violence against women; findings are available from peer reviewed articles and a global report: ***Ending Violence in Childhood: Overview. Global Report 2017.***
Together for Girls	A global partnership of governments, UN entities (including UNICEF) and private sector organizations working on violence against children and adolescents, with priority focus on sexual violence against girls. They build the knowledge base through national surveys and publications such as: ***What works to prevent sexual violence against children.***
What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls	A global programme working to expand evidence on violence against women and girls in low- and middle-income countries. They aim to synthesize what is known about effective interventions, test innovations and mobilize effective global responses. In 2020, they published: ***A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls***.
Sexual Violence Research Initiative	The world's largest research network on VAW and VAC/A provides a space to connect, share research, influence policies and improve lives of those who have experienced violence. SVRI funds research, builds research capacity and promotes partnerships. Their website (www.svri.org) provides a large body of programming guidance.

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