Introduction to Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women
The information in this presentation is largely based on *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2010 – which is available in English, French and Spanish.
Presentation

To provide an overview of intimate partner and sexual violence against women with an emphasis on primary prevention.

To introduce an evidence-based public health and life-course approach to intimate partner and sexual violence prevention.
Introduction to Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence
Intimate partner violence and sexual violence: The Seriousness and Extent of the Problem

They are serious and widespread problems worldwide.

They profoundly damage the physical, sexual, reproductive, emotional, mental, and social well-being of individuals and families.

They affect a large proportion of the population.

The overwhelming burden of intimate partner violence and sexual violence is borne by women and children at the hands of men.
Immediate and Long-Term Health Consequences of Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

The harm that intimate partner and sexual violence causes can last a lifetime and span generations, with serious adverse effects on:

<table>
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<th>Health and wellbeing, including:</th>
<th>Parenting Skills</th>
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<td>• Physical injury</td>
<td>• Children’s behaviour</td>
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<td>• Unwanted pregnancy</td>
<td>• Education</td>
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<td>• Abortion</td>
<td>• Employment</td>
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<td>• Gynaecological complications</td>
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<td>• Sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS)</td>
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<td>• Post-traumatic stress disorder</td>
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<td>• Depression</td>
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Evidence-Based Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Prevention – An Emerging Field

Evidence-based prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence is an emerging field still in its early days.

Currently only one prevention strategy has evidence supporting its effectiveness.

Despite this, evidence is emerging indicating the effectiveness of a number of other strategies.
Reasons for the Current Lack of Evidence-Based Prevention Approaches

The current lack of evidence-based prevention approaches is largely due to the:

- Limited funding and research resources in the field, so evidence-base is still at an early stage
- The multiplicity of risk factors for such forms of violence
- Some separation of research and intervention/advocacy
- Limited attention to evaluation and replication without much analysis or reflection on the theoretical underpinnings
The Existing Response to Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

Many countries have:

- Passed laws to criminalize intimate partner and sexual violence
- Increasingly provided legal, health, and social services to abused women

However, there have been remarkably few efforts to prevent intimate partner or sexual violence from occurring in the first place.
The Importance of Primary Prevention in Addressing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence **before** it occurs is crucial in order to reduce:

- The burden of suffering
- The long-term human, economic, and public health costs of such violence
Justification for the Primary Prevention of Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

The four main justifications for a shift to primary prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence are:

1. The high prevalence of intimate partner and sexual violence
2. The immediate and lifelong consequences
3. Effective and promising prevention programmes are available
4. Primary prevention is likely to be cheaper and more effective in the long run
An Evidence-Based Public Health and Life-Course Approach to Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Prevention
The Need for Greater Attention to Primary Prevention of Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence
Different Approaches and Perspectives to Understand Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

Need to include different approaches and perspectives to understand intimate partner and sexual violence, such as the:

- Gender equality perspective
- Human rights approach
- Criminal justice approach
- Public health approach
Classification of Prevention Strategies

The principal approach adopted by this course is the public health approach.

From a public health perspective, prevention strategies can be classified into three types:

1. **Primary prevention** – approaches that aim to prevent violence before it occurs

2. **Secondary prevention** – approaches that focus on the more immediate responses to violence (reduce recurrence and consequences)

3. **Tertiary prevention** – approaches that focus on long-term care in the wake of violence (reduce disability and promote rehabilitation/recovery)
A public health approach emphasizes the primary prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence.

This approach has been relatively neglected in the field, with most resources directed towards secondary or tertiary prevention.

However, important to acknowledge both are needed and both have a role to play.
Characteristics of the Public Health Approach

The public health approach is:

- Population-based
- Interdisciplinary
- Multisectoral
- Gender-responsive
The Public Health Approach – Based on the Ecological Model

The ecological model considers violence the outcome of multiple risk factors and causes, interacting at four levels:

- **Individual**
- **Relationship**
- **Community**
- **Societal**

In the public health approach, the ecological model is used to:

- Understand and organize the risk factors and causes of behaviour
- Guide the development of prevention programmes
The Ecological Model

An Evidence-Based Scientific Approach

The public health approach is an evidence-based scientific approach.

Evidence-based prevention is the selection, design, and implementation of prevention programmes based on findings of what works to reduce the frequency of intimate partner and sexual violence.
1. Define & describe
   What is the Problem?

2. Identify risk
   What are the risk factors and causes?

3. Develop and evaluate interventions
   What works & for whom?

4. Scaling up and cost-effectiveness
   Implement on large scale & cost

The Four Steps of the Public Health Approach

Systematic, evidence-based approach with 4 steps:
Evidence and the Four Steps of the Public Health Approach

• Step 1: Estimate the magnitude and distribution of intimate partner and sexual violence:
  ➔ population-based epidemiological studies.

• Step 2: Identify risk and protective factors and causes:
  ➔ evidence from cross-sectional, case-control, and longitudinal studies.

• Step 3: Evaluate the effectiveness of prevention programmes.
  ➔ evidence, including systematic reviews, from experimental or high quality quasi-experimental research designs.

• Step 4: Determine the costs and cost-effectiveness of implementation
  ➔ techniques from health economics.
Systematic Reviews

Systematic reviews are:

• An important source of evidence for all four steps of the public health approach – especially for step 3

• Literature reviews that apply strategies to limit bias of all relevant studies on a specific topic (Chalmers et al. 1994)

• A form of secondary research – a method to accumulate findings of primary research
The Main Aims of Systematic Reviews

• Provide an authoritative overview of current evidence
• Establish what works or clear up uncertainty
• Identify gaps in existing research and plan new research agendas
• Make the knowledge base on a particular subject more accessible
• Inform practice and policy

The findings of these reviews are disseminated to decision-makers who can then develop programmes that work effectively.
Information That Systematic Reviews Can Provide

- Treatment effectiveness, “what works”
- Accuracy of screening and diagnostic tests
- Exploring risk and protective factors
- Questions about prevalence
- Questions about meanings, perceptions, and processes of treatments, as well as how treatments were implemented
- Gauging the empirical support for theories
- Synthesizing models and theories
- Methodological questions
- Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses
A Life-Course Perspective

Important to view the causes, consequences and prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence within a life-course perspective.

A life-course perspective is based upon understanding how influences early in life can act as risk factors for health-related behaviours or health problems at later stages (Davey Smith, 2000).
The Life-Course Stages

For the purpose of understanding and preventing intimate partner and sexual violence, the life course is divided into:

- Infancy, childhood, and early adolescence (0–14 years)
- Adolescence and young adulthood (15–25 years)
- Adulthood (26 years and over)
- All ages

Each of these life stages represents a special phase in the development of risk and a unique opportunity to target developmentally specific risk factors.
Activity: Categorizing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Prevention Activities and Programmes

In small groups, identify intimate partner and sexual violence prevention activities and programmes that you are aware of and put them into the following categories of prevention:

• Primary
• Secondary
• Tertiary