Presentation 1. Introduction to an Evidence-Based Public Health and Life-Course Approach to Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women
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 (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002):

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

3. **Tertiary prevention** – approaches that focus on long-term care in the wake of violence
The Public Health Approach's Emphasis on Primary Prevention

A public health approach emphasizes the primary prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence.

Until recently, this approach has been relatively neglected in the field, with most resources directed towards secondary or tertiary prevention.
Characteristics of the Public Health Approach

The public health approach is:

• Population-based
• Interdisciplinary
• Multisectoral
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**
  • **Community**
• **Relationship**
  • **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

It is critical to emphasize that 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.
Violence and Injury Prevention Short Course

1. Define & describe: What is the Problem?

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

3. Develop and evaluate interventions: What works and 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
  ➔ techniques from health economics.
Definitions: Risk Factors and Protective Factors

A **risk factor** refers to characteristics, events, or experiences shown to precede an undesirable outcome and associated with an **increase** in the likelihood of that outcome.

A **protective factor** is an influence that modifies, improves or alters a person’s response to some environmental hazard associated with an undesirable outcome. It is a characteristic that **reduces** the likelihood of negative outcomes.
The Importance of Reducing Risk Factors

To prevent intimate partner and sexual violence, it is crucial to understand the circumstances and the risk and protective factors that influence its occurrence.

Risk factors increase the likelihood of someone becoming a victim and/or perpetrator of intimate partner and sexual violence.

Reducing risk factors should be a focus of prevention efforts and programme monitoring and evaluation efforts.
The Importance of Increasing Protective Factors

Protective factors reduce the risk of becoming a victim and/or perpetrator of intimate partner and sexual violence.

Protective factors should be fostered – including through structural and other interventions for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.
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

This course views 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