



PAHO

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19: What can be done?

There are never excuses for violence

**Physical,
Sexual
Emotional
Economic
violence
by intimate
partners**

*sexual violence
and coercion by
any perpetrator*

What is gender- based violence (GBV)?

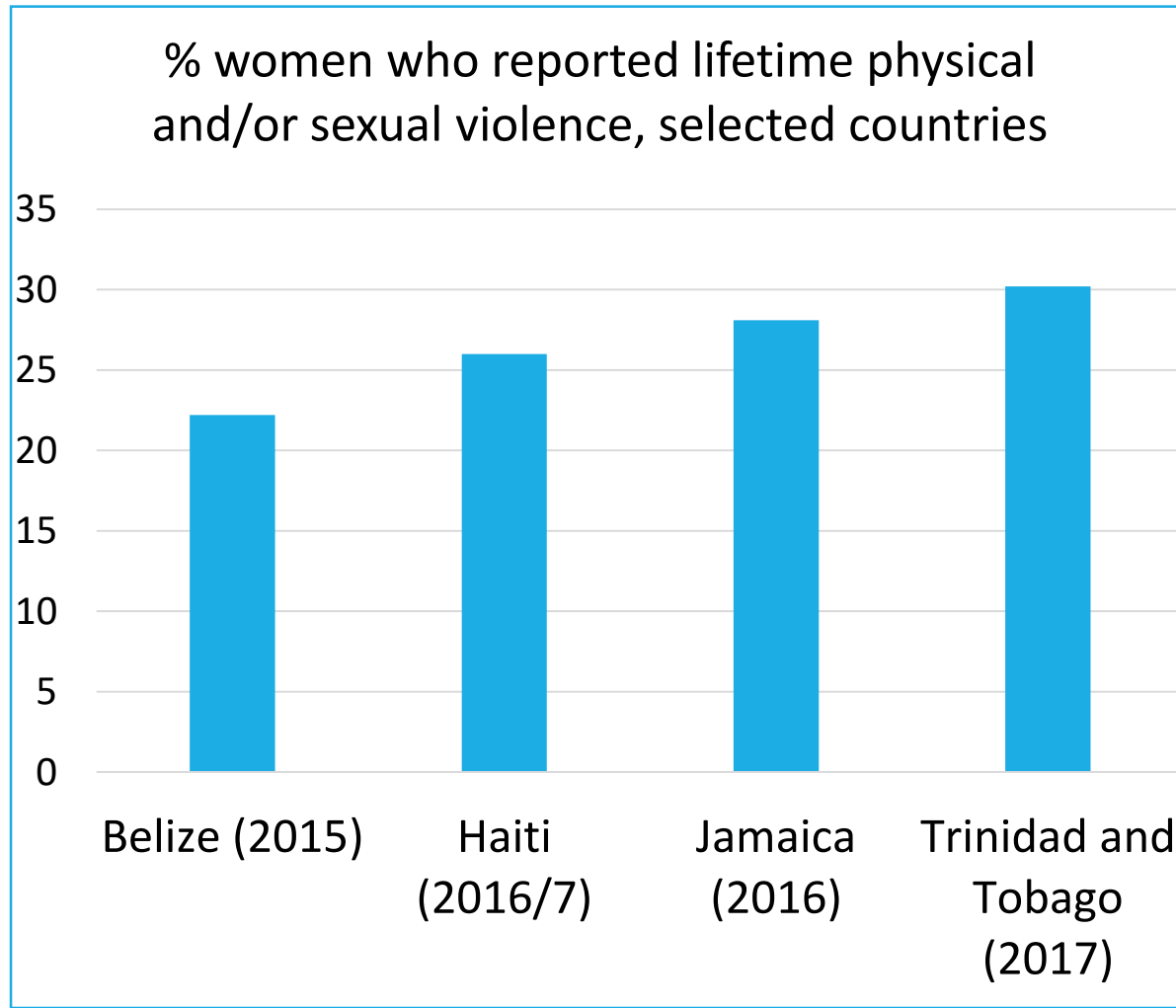
**early and forced
marriage**

trafficking

femicide

Why is it important?

High prevalence of VAWG in the region as an **ongoing challenge**.



Why is it important?

VAWG increases in any emergency, including COVID-19 – it is **especially important** to strengthen prevention and response to VAWG now



Why has the risk of VAWG increased?



- Less contact with family and Friends, less social support
- Less access to health and protection services (including SRH)



- More stress and anxiety
- Greater burden of domestic tasks on women (eg, as the result of school closures)
- Higher risk of job losses, economic worries etc.

Perpetrators may:

- Use restrictions due to COVID-19 to exercise power and control over their partners to further reduce access to services, help and psychosocial support from both formal and informal networks.
- Limit access to necessary items such as soap and hand sanitizer
- Exert control by spreading misinformation about the disease and stigmatize partners

Who deserves particular attention in the context of COVID-19?



Groups in conditions of vulnerability:

- Households with existing violence
- Women and girls with disabilities
- Homeless women and those living in informal urban settings
- Women and girls from low-income households, employed in the informal economy or without education
- Orphan children, street children
- Older women

Intersections across the lifecycle



- Children that witness violence in their homes are more likely to experience or perpetrate violence in future.
- Domestic violence can increase the risk of child maltreatment and other types of VAC.
- Adolescence is a time of heightened vulnerability – including early forms of partner violence.

Responding to violence is always multisectoral and collective



Government
and
policymakers



Humanitarian
organizations



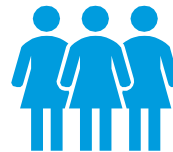
Health facilities



Communities



Health workers



Women and
girls

The risks of
violence that
women and
their children
face during the
current COVID-
19 crisis cannot
be ignored.

Forthcoming WHO guidance:



Plan



Inform



Prevent



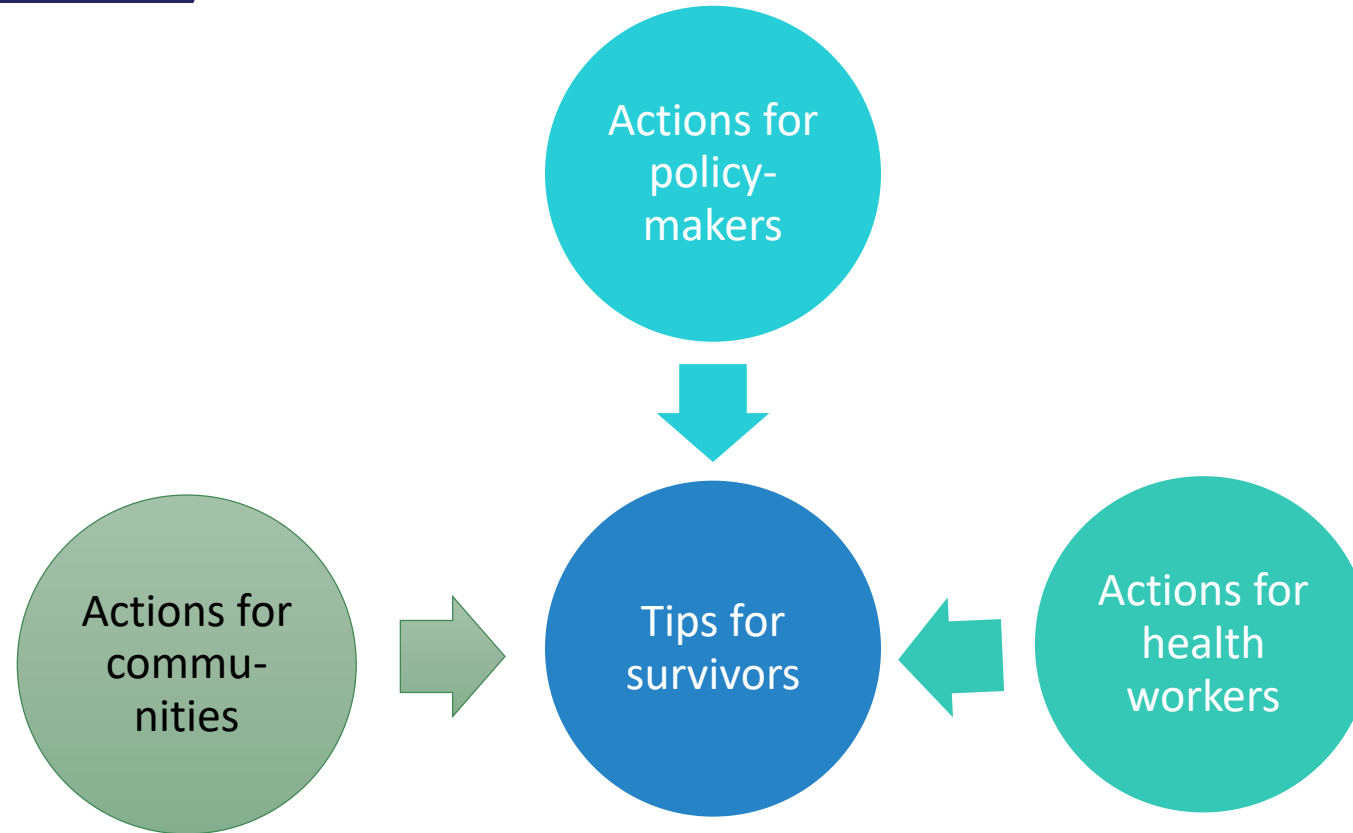
Respond



Collaborate

Key actions for addressing violence against children, women and older persons during the COVID-19 pandemic

Key messages for key target groups



10 messages for policy makers & program managers

1. Include domestic violence when designing, implementing and monitoring health emergency preparedness and response plans.
2. Deliver and resource the prevention of and response to violence as essential services in the context of COVID-19.
3. Strengthen access to online services such as hotlines, mHealth and telehealth.
4. Innovate ways to provide information and support, e.g., through pharmacies, supermarkets, etc.
5. Train health sector staff on how to identify survivors and how to provide first-line support.

10 messages for policy makers & program managers

6. Provide guidance to shelters, care homes and other institutions to facilitate ongoing support to survivors.
7. Prevent harm to children – e.g., by supporting parents, preventing long-term child-family separation, and establishing safe and acceptable alternative care arrangements in case of illness or death of a caregiver.
8. Share information on available support with survivors and communities and engage them in developing responses.
9. Mobilize communities to promote gender equality and zero tolerance for violence.
10. Coordinate with other sectors to address the risk factors of violence (e.g., harmful use of alcohol) and protect women and children.

5 actions for health workers



- ❖ Be aware of the increased risk of domestic violence in the context of COVID-19.
- ❖ Recognize the signs and know when and how to ask about violence.
- ❖ Provide timely care for physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health.
- ❖ Provide first-line support to survivors.
- ❖ Share information about available support and establish referrals to other essential services.

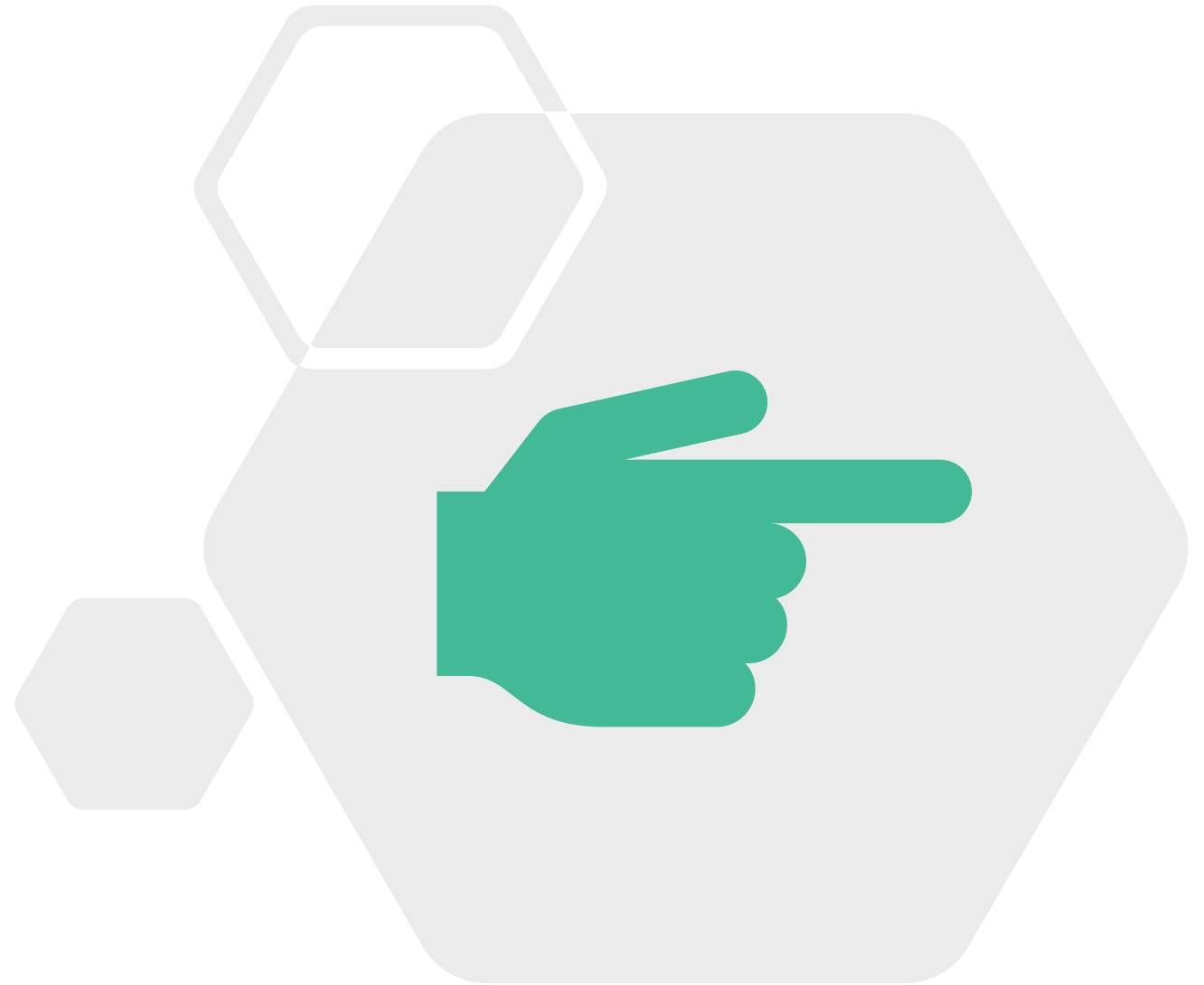
Identifying survivors

Clinical enquiry: actively look out for signs and ask when you suspect violence

NOT universal screening

Do not pressure her.

Have information available in case she does not disclose.



Remember: Avoid putting her at further risk

- Be careful about contacting the survivor if the abuser is in the home (e.g. phone, info materials)
- Talk about abuse only when you cannot be overheard – check with her!
- Maintain confidentiality – even with friends and family members



HOW HEALTH PROVIDERS CAN SUPPORT WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE

- L** Listen closely, with empathy and no judgment.
- I** Inquire about their needs and concerns.
- V** Validate their experiences. Show you believe and understand.
- E** Enhance their safety.
- S** Support them to connect with additional services.

Do no harm. Respect women's wishes.



World Health Organization

First-line support LIVES

Learn to listen with your



Eyes –

giving her your undivided attention



Ears –

truly hearing her concerns



Heart –

with caring and respect



Pan American Health Organization
World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Americas

PAHO

Provide timely medical care of good quality

Health

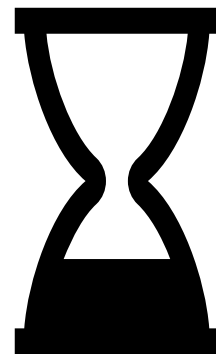
physical

mental

sexual

reproductive

Why is **timeliness** important?

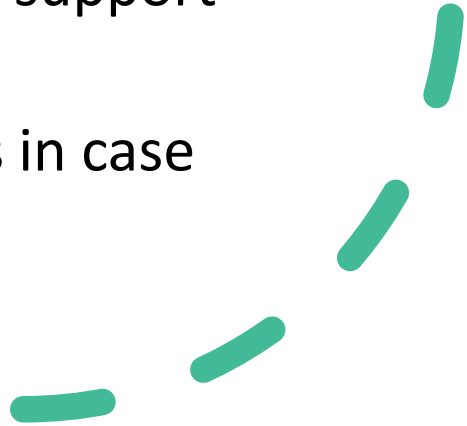


Every hour counts:

Consider time limits for quality care after sexual violence (PEP, EC)

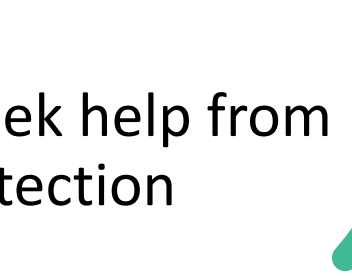
Actions for Communities

Everyone deserves to feel safe at home. There is never any excuse for violence.

- Be aware of the increased risk of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and remember: Violence is never justified.
 - Reach out to, keep in touch with and support women and children.
 - Be careful of contacting survivors when the abuser is present in the home.
 - Get and share information on available support with survivors and communities.
 - Be prepared to call emergency services in case someone needs urgent help.
- 

Tips for survivors

VIOLENCE AGAINST YOU IS NEVER YOUR FAULT

- Be aware that isolation and distancing measures can affect your and your family's well-being.
 - Reduce and manage stress as much as possible – e.g., through physical exercise and relaxation techniques.
 - Reach out to trusted family and friends for practical help and support.
 - Make a plan to protect yourself and your children any way you can.
 - Find out about available services and seek help from a hotline, shelter or other health or protection services.
- 

PAHO support



01

Raise awareness of the need for action to reduce violence in the Region of the Americas in the context of COVID-19;

- Example: new risk communication materials on violence and COVID-19

02

Identify, synthesize and disseminate data and evidence on what works to reduce violence;

- Example: ongoing monitoring of trends and experiences

03

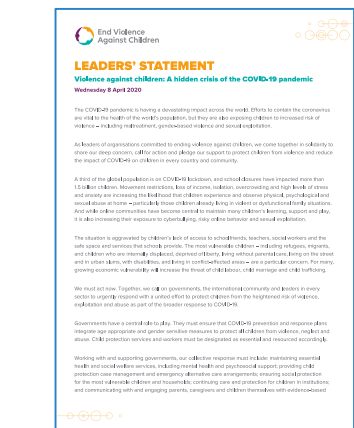
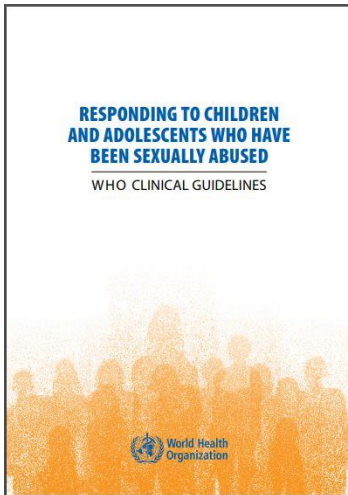
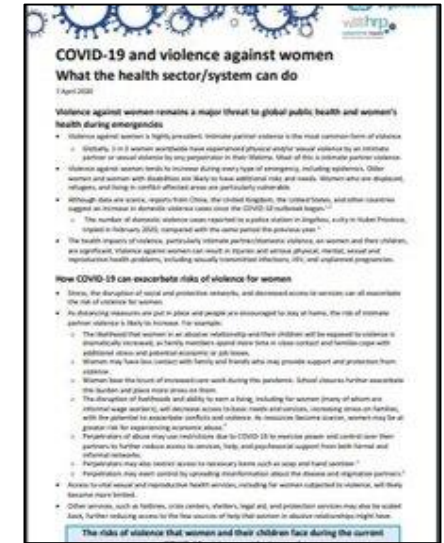
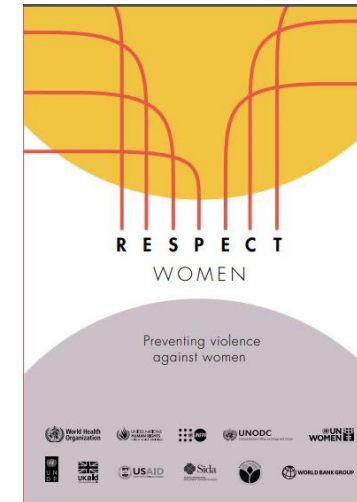
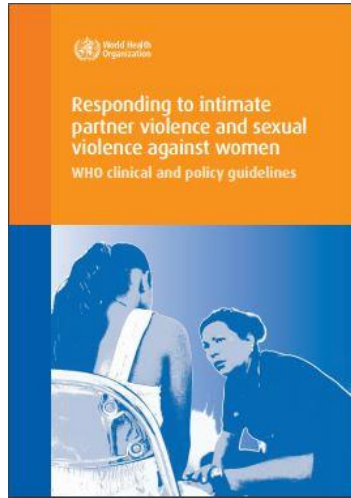
Provide guidance and technical support to countries to develop evidence-based prevention and response capacity;

- Example: training for health workers and hotlines, guidance for shelters etc.

04

Strengthen partnerships across sectors and stakeholders for violence prevention and response.

Other resources





PAHO

Many thanks!

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.paho.org/en/topics/violence-against-women>

<https://www.paho.org/en/covid-19-communication-materials>

Or contact:

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violence**