

**World Report on Violence and Health:
a public health context for school-based violence prevention**

The World report on violence and health shows that the death and disability caused by violence make it a leading public health issue. Violence is among the major causes of death for people aged 15-44 years of age, accounting for 14% of deaths among males and 7% of deaths among females. On an average day, 1424 people are murdered — almost one murder every minute. Roughly one person commits suicide every 40 seconds. About 35 people are killed every hour as a direct result of armed conflict. The Report presents a definition of violence and a typology of violence encompassing interpersonal violence, suicidal behaviour and collective violence. The seven topic-specific chapters address youth violence; child abuse and neglect by caregivers; intimate partner violence; sexual violence; elder abuse; suicide, and collective violence. For each type of violence the magnitude and impact; key risk factors; intervention and policy responses, and action recommendations are described.

Risk factor analyses and prevention recommendations for each type of violence are organized around an ecological model that examines violence at four levels: individual (e.g. age and sex, psychological and personality characteristics, substance abuse, exposure to violence); close relationship (e.g. between intimate partners, parents and children, friends and work colleagues); community (e.g. social capital, crime levels, gangs, characteristics of schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods); societal (e.g. social norms, educational and welfare policies, economic factors).

Schools-based violence prevention activities fit into the prevention matrix at the close relationship and community levels, and WHO participates in three initiatives aimed at enhancing the violence prevention capacity of schools. The first is development of a global school health surveillance system. In collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Control this involves developing a questionnaire to tap a variety of health indicators, including substance abuse, intentional and unintentional injuries, physical fighting, sexual abuse and bullying. The second activity, led by the Finnish CONNECT group, has involved development of a "Proposal for an action plan to combat violence in schools" and efforts to secure European Union commitment to its implementation. The third activity involves integrating violence prevention into WHO's health promoting schools programme.

To ensure that interventions in specific settings such as schools are integrated with interventions at other levels and settings, the World report on violence and health proposes that national and local plans of action be developed in collaboration with all sectors involved to ensure that governmental and non-governmental agencies agree on a set of joint priorities, objectives and principles for evaluation. Finally, the report presents nine general prevention recommendations aimed at providing countries with a common prevention framework around which to build their own prevention programmes tailored to local realities.