

# **VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS**

## **TRAJECTORY AND WAY FORWARD**

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# The Report

Analysis of the situation and response to violence in the Americas, based on a literature review of the epidemiologic situation, country policies, laws, plans, and initiatives to address *violence in all its forms*. It seeks to point out the trajectory thus far, and to reflect on the path and the challenges that lie ahead. It prioritizes interpersonal and collective violence.



# Methodological considerations

- *WHO/PAHO documents*: **19** documents on violence prevention from 1996 to 2017.
- *Systematic bibliographic review* concerning the types of violence and the prevention strategies reported in the countries of the Americas: **368** articles published between 2016 and March 2018
- *Google review*: **503** records in the countries of the Americas from 2016 and 2018, aimed at understanding what information is published online by the countries of the Americas on violence prevention.
- *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*: the policy, legal and programmatic environment in 21 countries of the Americas.
- *Technical Needs of Country Offices to Respond to the Violence Problem*: survey with focal points on violence prevention from 27 country offices in PAHO Member States.

Countries have been grouped geographically  
North America, Central America, Caribbean, and

# Principles and Development of Violence Prevention in WHO / PAHO

Health sector can take a leading role in violence prevention

- Prevention of violence structured on a *comprehensive strategy*, based on an *ecological model* (individual, relationship, community-based, and societal approaches).
- Need of *multisectoral action*;
- Stimulus to create, implement, and monitor *national action plans, international treaties, laws* to protect human rights / prevent violence;
- Need to improve: collecting *data*, information systems, evaluation, *evidence*, training of professionals;
- Promote *primary prevention of violence*;
- Strengthen *care and support services for victims*;

# Principles and Development of Violence

## Prevention in WHO / PAHO (2)

- Integrating violence prevention into social and educational policies.
- Promote *gender and social equality* as well as seeking cultural and social change that supports violence.
- Implementing programs to develop life skills;
- Priority investment in prevention of violence against children and women. 2006 PAHO published two reports on prevention of youth violence. In the years that followed, no document was produced that exclusively focused on this topic;
- Creating and sustaining safe environments;
- Improving families' economic security and stability.



# Principles and Development of Violence

## Prevention in WHO / PAHO (3)

2009 - Violence Prevention, The Evidence:

- *Developing safe, stable and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and caregivers;*
- *Developing life skills in children and adolescents;*
- *Reducing the availability and harmful use of alcohol;*
- *Reducing access to guns, knives, and pesticides;*
- *Promoting gender equality to prevent violence against women;*
- *Changing cultural and social norms that support violence;*
- *Victim identification, care and support programs.*



# Principles and Development of Violence Prevention

in WHO / PAHO (4)

2014 - *Global Status Report* (Americas):

- Addressing violence requires comprehensive multisectoral action, but intersectoral articulation is fragile;
- Inequality in the distribution of prevention plans and strategies across countries (more child maltreatment and violence against women prevention/ less youth violence, armed violence, gang violence, etc.);
- Key social and educational policies addressing multiple types of violence (ex. incentives for youth to complete schooling) remain too rare across the countries;
- Prevention activity is really underway;
- Gaps in services to identify, refer, protect, and support victims;
- Most countries have violence prevention laws, but implementation and scope need to be assessed;
- Lack of data on violence prevention in a large number of countries in the Americas.

# **Violence as a growing social problem in the Americas**

The state of knowledge, action plans, policies, laws, data, and information on violence prevention strategies in the Region of the Americas.

Data on Youth Violence

# Youth Violence Prevention Programs

- Wide age range: 10 - 29 years (different concepts of legal age, laws and preventive measures)
- Involves people who are unrelated and who may or may not know each other (different forms of relationships and social life).
- Generally takes place outside of the home.
- It includes harmful behaviors that may start early and continue into adulthood, and a range of acts from bullying and physical fighting, to more severe sexual and physical assault, to homicide.



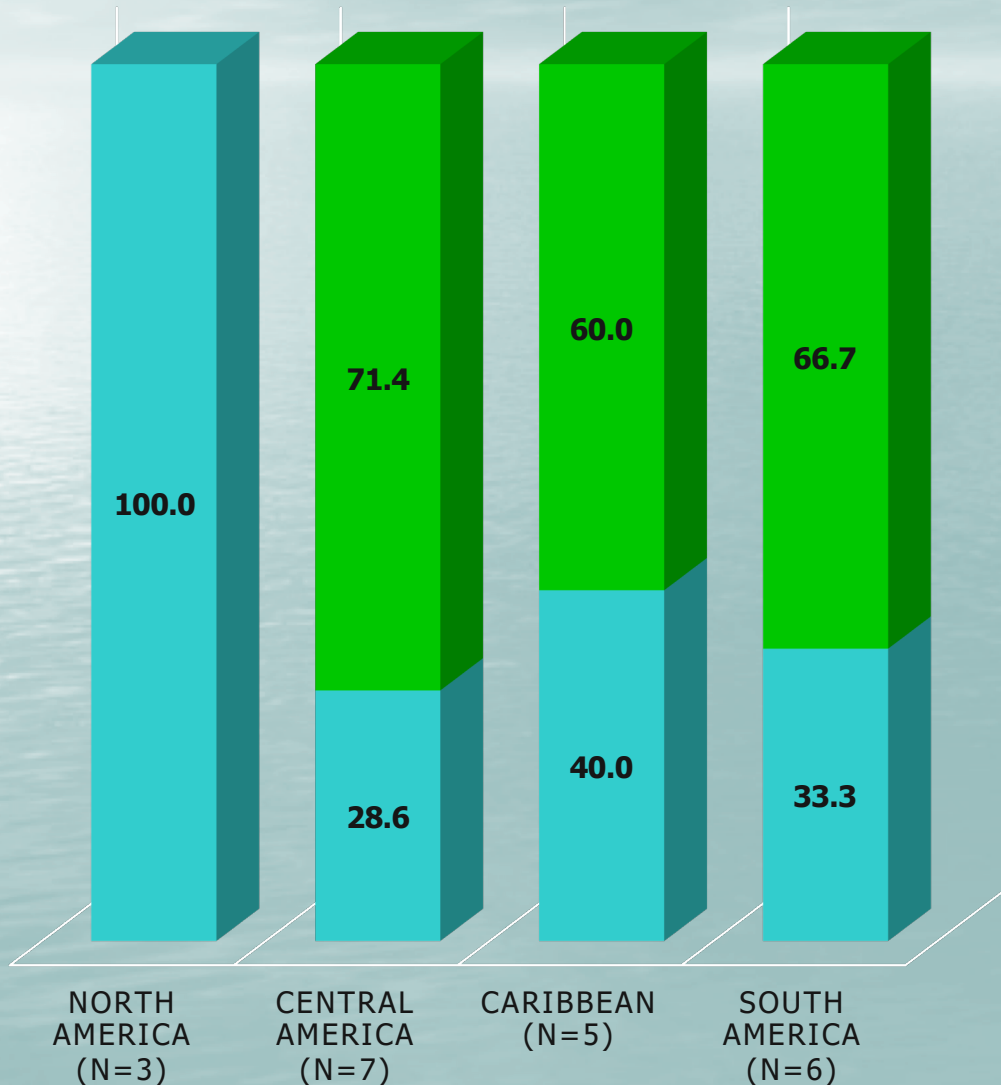
# Youth Violence Prevention Programs

- There is scarce information on youth violence in the Americas.
- The five countries and territories in the Americas with the highest proportion of youth homicides in 2013 were Puerto Rico (54.4% of deaths), Colombia (43.4%), El Salvador (41.2%), Bahamas (41.0%), and Brazil (37.7%) (PAHO Mortality Database, 2017)
- Although data for the continent are scarce, in many American countries there are a high number of adolescents deprived of liberty and in some countries statistics are on the rise, indicating the importance of investing in youth violence prevention.



# Proportion of countries with five types of youth violence prevention programs in 21 countries of the Americas (WHO, 2014)

■ All ■ Partial ■ No



## *Five Intervention strategies* (larger or limited scale)

- **Preschool enrichment**
- **Life skills and social development training**
- **Mentoring**
- **After-school supervision**
- **School anti-bullying**

**All programs and large scale:** Canada, US, **Mexico**, Nicaragua and Colombia

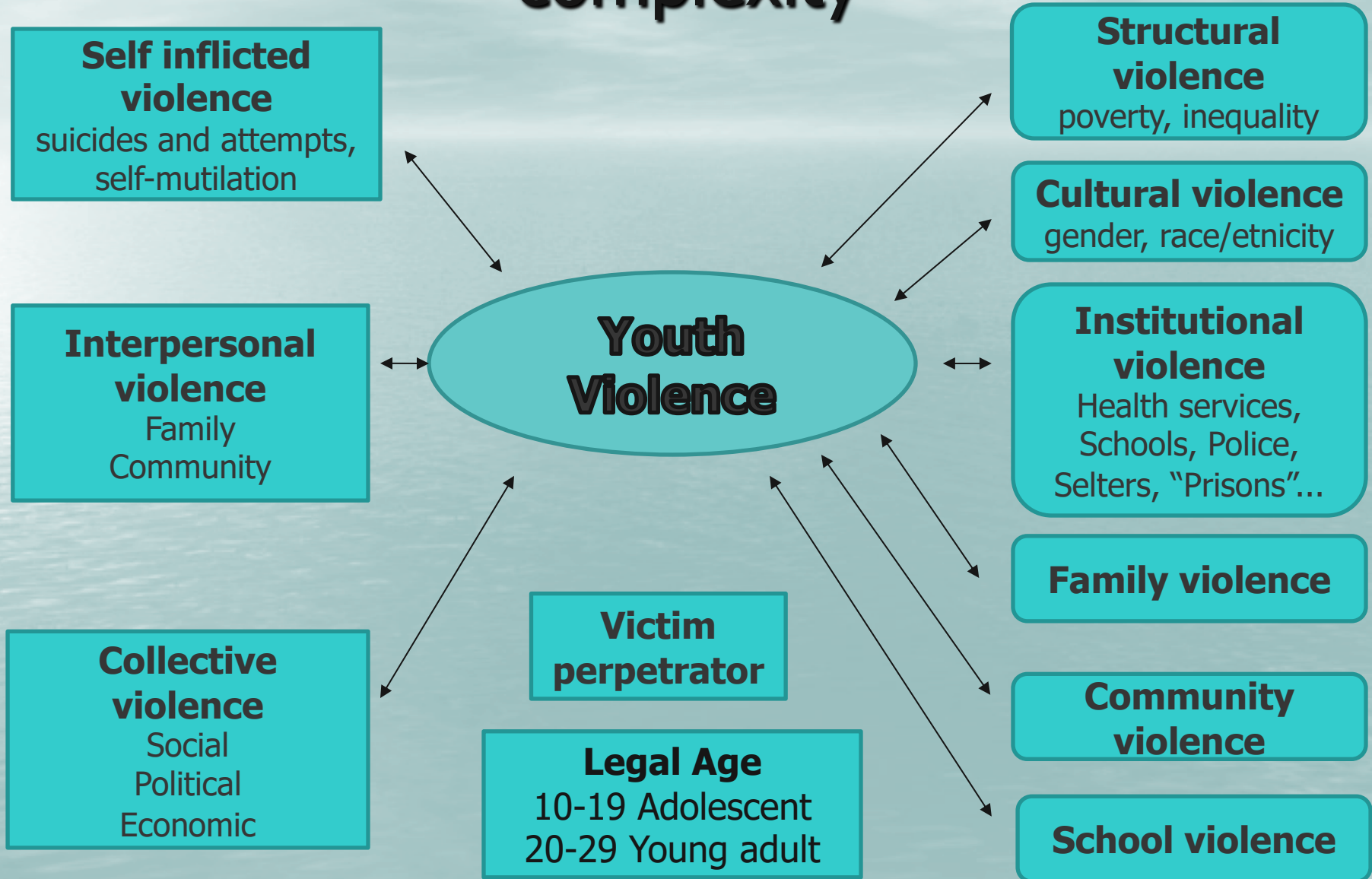
**Most mentioned:** Life skills and social development training

# Youth Violence Prevention Programs

- *Bibliographic review* :life skills training is found more frequently in the Americas, compared to the other prevention strategies for youth violence (preschool enrichment, mentoring, after school supervision) (Assis, 2018).
- There are many publications on strategies to prevent youth violence in the Americas (mainly from the U.S.), several of them connected to the Youth Violence Prevention Centers, funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Two studies address a fundamental issue for youth violence prevention: the understanding that a comprehensive multi-level approach is necessary for reducing youth violence (Heinze et al., 2016; Bolton et al., 2017).
- Some prevention strategies for youth violence interface with school and community violence prevention strategies.

# Youth Violence: intersections and complexity

WHO definitions



# The technical needs of PAHO country offices to respond to the violence problem

Area of Work		Youth/Community Violence
Policies	North Central Caribbean South	— — BAR —
Protocols	North Central Caribbean South	— SAL — PER, URU
Training	North Central Caribbean South	— — — GUY, PAR, URU
Surveys	North Central Caribbean South	— — — —
Admin/Service Data	North Central Caribbean South	— BEL, SAL CUB, DOR ARG, BRA, PAR, PER
Advocacy	North Central Caribbean South	— BEL BAH PER
Other	North Central Caribbean South	— — BAH, JAM, DOR ARG, GUY

Countries that requested technical assistance from PAHO headquarters (27 offices) in their current/planned work, by area, 2018-2019 \*

The table summarizes the document *Technical assistance needs of PAHO country offices: Prevention of violence against women, violence against children, youth and community violence, 2018-2019*. PAHO.



# The technical needs of PAHO country offices to respond to the violence problem (2)

- Among the planned activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 58% of countries reported current/planned activities on youth/community violence - the percentage of countries that do not have current/planned work is 42%.
- The majority of countries responding to the survey requested some sort of technical assistance from PAHO headquarters, indicating the need for support for violence prevention in the countries of the Americas. Although the 27 country office focal points were designated to work on violence against women and children, youth/community violence has not had the same level of investment in recent years.
- Most frequent request from the countries: training for health care providers, adding the need for essential technical knowledge for prevention, case management, and *protection of the health team itself*.

# **The technical needs of PAHO country offices to respond to the violence problem (3)**

- For youth/community violence, the most-requested technical assistance was for strengthening administrative/service data and “other,” suggesting that youth/community violence prevention was at an earlier stage of development.
- Given the burden posed by community violence, including youth violence, this is likely to change as this area of work is expanded at the regional level. Connections with the work on violence against children need to be strengthened.
- Precariousness of existing resources for the prevention of violence in the countries of the Americas, in the current economic and social crisis: only 38% of activities already have funding (35% of youth/community violence activities).
- There is a need to strengthen technical support in the area of youth/community violence.

# Considerations and recommendations

- Current scenario (economic, political, and social crisis) requires investment and support, especially in Latin American and Caribbean countries – increased fragility of health services and social protection systems.
- WHO/PAHO documents: evolution of thinking about violence prevention.
- Prevention:
  - Child Maltreatment, Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence - consistent proposals for actions for the health services covered by the areas of violence against women and violence against children in PAHO.
  - Youth violence and elder abuse do not show the same pace of development, despite their relevance in the Americas. Remember that adolescents (10-19 years) and young adults (20-29 years) have different legal status and that they require age-appropriate prevention measures.
  - Community violence prevention and Prevention of homicide has only begun to be incorporated in more recent years. There is a lack of knowledge and proposals for more consistent actions to support the health services.



# Considerations and recommendations (2)

- Themes closely connected: homicides, crimes, community violence, and youth violence. Caution: although young people are very affected by violence (especially boys), community violence affects **all** age groups, and the deaths of children, adults, or older people by homicide are regular occurrences, mainly in socially disadvantaged communities.
- Homicides, community violence, and youth violence are priority areas for work to be developed by PAHO in order to provide the health sector with needed preventive measures, in view of their social, economic and health impacts on many countries of the Americas.



# Considerations and recommendations (3)

Need for expansion of violence prevention:

- violence against the elderly, refugees, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) persons, people with disabilities, those who suffer racial or ethnic discrimination, those who have attempted suicide;
- The need for investments in research, care offered to victims and workers in institutions (especially health services) and specifically in strategies to prevent violence occurrence.
- Training priority for health professionals on violence prevention.
- Despite the emergence of laws and plans on violence prevention in the countries of the Americas (stimulated by official WHO/PAHO documents) and the existence of actions and information on violence prevention among the countries, **knowledge on violence prevention measures, their production and dissemination is still uneven between high-income and low/middle-income countries in America, demanding specific action in light of the most pressing need in each country.**

## WHO/PAHO documents on violence prevention reviewed (in chronological order)

<b>1996</b>	WHO. Prevention of violence: a public health priority. WHA49.25. Forty-Ninth World Health Assembly. Geneva, WHO, 20-25 May 1996.
<b>2002</b>	WHO. World report on violence and health. Geneva: WHO; 2002.
<b>2004</b>	WHO. Preventing violence: a guide to implementing the recommendations of the world report on violence and health. Geneva, WHO, 2004.
<b>2006</b>	Schopper D, Lormand JD, Waxweiler R (Eds). Developing policies to prevent injuries and violence: guidelines for policy-makers and planners. Geneva: WHO; 2006.
<b>2006</b>	Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence. WHO, International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, 2006.
<b>2006</b>	Cardia N. Estado del arte de los programas de prevención de la violencia en jóvenes basados en la promoción del desarrollo. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2006.
<b>2006</b>	Vega Casanova J. Estado del arte de los programas de prevención de la violencia en jóvenes basados en el uso de los medios de comunicación. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2006.
<b>2008</b>	PAHO. 48th Directing Council. 60th Session of the Regional Committee. Washington DC, 29 September–3 October 2008. Preventing violence and injuries and promoting safety: a call for action in the Region. <a href="http://www1.paho.org/english/gov/cd/cd48-20-e.pdf?ua=1">http://www1.paho.org/english/gov/cd/cd48-20-e.pdf?ua=1</a> . Accessed 10 May 2018.
<b>2009</b>	WHO. Violence prevention: the evidence. Geneva: WHO; 2009.
<b>2010</b>	WHO. Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence. WHO/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; 2010.
<b>2012</b>	PAHO. Abaakouk Z. Informe analisis de las diferentes intervenciones acerca la prevención de violência y lesiones y su importância em la region. Final draft. Internal document. June 2012. Accessed 10 May 2018.
<b>2012</b>	WHO. Violence Prevention Alliance. Global campaign for violence prevention: plan of action for 2012-2020. Geneva. Accessed 21 May 2012. <a href="http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/actionplan/en/">http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/actionplan/en/</a>
<b>2014</b>	WHO. Global status report on violence prevention. Geneva: WHO; 2014.
<b>2015</b>	WHO, PAHO. Violence against women. Strategy and plan of action on strengthening the health system to address violence against women, 2015.
<b>2016</b>	WHO, 29 January 2016. EB138/SR/12. WHO global action plan to strengthen the role of the health system in the framework of a multi-sectoral national response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children in general.
<b>2016</b>	WHO. Draft global plan of action on violence. Report by the Director-General. Sixty-Ninth World Health Assembly, March 2016. <a href="http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=10249%3Apolices-plans-violence-prevention-response&amp;catid=7476%3Apillars&amp;Itemid=41343&amp;lang=fr">http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=10249%3Apolices-plans-violence-prevention-response&amp;catid=7476%3Apillars&amp;Itemid=41343&amp;lang=fr</a> . Accessed 10 May 2018.
<b>2016</b>	WHO. Inspire. Seven strategies for ending violence against children. Geneva: WHO; 2016.
<b>2016</b>	PAHO. Status report on violence prevention in the Region of the Americas, 2014. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2016. <a href="http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/18832">http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/18832</a> . Accessed 10 May 2018.
<b>2017</b>	PAHO. WHO Regional Office for the Americas. Addressing violence and injuries in the Americas. Taking stock and moving forward. Draft for discussion by SAC on 8 November 2017.

# Thank you

# Obrigada

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