

Violence prevention programme

Consideration for selection and implementation

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Public health violence primary prevention programmes are designed to engage all people, not only at-risk groups. Currently programmes such as those described in the Jama Shai and Sikweyiya article in this edition tend to focus on groups at different stages of the lifespan – for example, parents and infants, or teenagers, or young adult community members. There is no evidence to suggest that targeting one developmental period over another is more effective. Given the onset of risk factors early in life (as discussed in the Skeen et al article in this edition), and the likelihood of continued exposure to risk factors, primary prevention efforts must start early and continue to be implemented across the lifespan. Implementation of evidence-based primary prevention programmes across the lifespan is essential if we are to achieve the development goals of the National Development Plan.

Since policymakers and implementing organisations face the challenge of deciding which violence prevention programmes to invest in, and how to effectively and sustainably implement them at scale, we offer this checklist as a guide.

Selection tips

What to consider when selecting a violence prevention programme:

- **Is the programme supported by good evidence?** Select *existing, evidence-based interventions* that have shown effectiveness through rigorous evaluation (as discussed in the Tomlinson et al article) or, in the absence of these, programmes where preliminary studies show promise or effectiveness – rather than developing new interventions.
- **Is there a reality-based implementation strategy?** Programmes tested in similar settings with clear and feasible implementation models should be preferred over those tested and scaled up in very different, higher-resourced settings.
- **What costs are involved in implementing the programme?** Reviewing the costs of the programme will be helpful for policymakers and implementers to understand the costs involved in successful implementation and thus to allow for adequate budgeting. Programme developers and evaluators must ensure that they gather and publish this information.
- **What is the programme's theory of change and how does it address factors at different levels of the ecological model?** Ensure that the selected programme has a *strong theoretical*

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basis (i.e. addresses causal factors of violence) and addresses factors at different levels of the ecological model, based on current literature and developments in the field.¹

- **Does the programme use participatory approaches to learning?** The interventions should use *participatory*, rather than didactic, approaches to engage participants in a process of transformation.²
- **Is the programme manualised?** *Clear, user-friendly manuals and training programmes* are helpful to ensure that interventions are implemented with fidelity, which will increase the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes.
- **Does the programme address the core content outlined below?** Core content should include:³
 - Challenging hegemonic constructions of gender and gender inequities
 - Promoting respectful, healthy relationship skills such as caring and kindness, and open, assertive communication and conflict resolution
 - Fostering supportive carer–youth relationships
 - Advocating positive discipline strategies that build self-esteem, social skills, and feelings of supportiveness and nurturing
 - Encouraging adaptive stress management and coping strategies, help seeking and the promotion of well-being

Tips for implementation and scale-up

Considerations for the successful implementation and scale up of effective violence prevention programmes:

- **Resource allocation:** *Allocate adequate resources* (staff time and budget) to implement the full programme. Programme developers and evaluators should make this information clear in their cost analysis report to guide policymakers and implementers.
- **Milestone-based programming:** Develop a clear *implementation plan* associated with resource allocation, and a strong monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure fidelity to the model, to understand the impact and on-going success of the programme, and to ensure continued relevance or guide any further adaptations.

- **Formative monitoring, evaluation and phase-in planning:** Conduct some *formative pilot work to ensure that the programme will be acceptable, feasible and relevant within your setting*. This kind of phase-based approach to rolling out a programme has budgetary implications, but may save money in the long term and increase the positive impact by ensuring that a programme is effective and appropriate for its setting, especially if it is being implemented in a context different to that in which it was developed and evaluated.
- **Partnerships:** Where possible, it may be advantageous to partner with other organisations that have implemented the same or similar programmes, or, where possible, to work with the developer to assist with adaptation and implementation advice, based on previous experiences with the programme. In our experience of doing local and regional capacity development work in this field, organisations with a strong track record of developing and implementing such programmes have extensive lessons on what has worked well and why, as well as what has not worked and why, that are not always reported or published. New implementers or policymakers can access and apply these learnings through partnerships with experienced intervention developers and evaluators.
- **Training for transformation:** *Training and ongoing support for facilitators and supervisors* are particularly important for the long-term success and sustainability of primary prevention programmes. These interventions are a transformative process, and therefore it is essential that supervisors and facilitators go through the programme themselves as part of pre-service training. Training and support are fundamental and must thus be included in the budget.
- **Management, mentoring and support:** Ongoing, regular support and supervision contribute to maintaining a high-quality programme and preventing burnout among programme implementers. For example, weekly group meetings with programme staff to share experiences, challenges and achievements, and to discuss needs or ideas for any adaptations or

improvements are important. These interactions maintain staff morale and dedication as well as fidelity to the programme model, and facilitate ongoing development and strengthening of the programme in systematic ways.



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Notes

- 1 LL Dahlberg and EG Krug, Violence: a global public health problem, in EG Krug et al (eds), *World report on violence and health*, Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002, 1–56.
- 2 SL Dworkin, S Treves-Kagan and SA Lippman, Gender-transformative interventions to reduce HIV risks and violence with heterosexually-active men: a review of the global evidence, *AIDS Behav*, 17:9, 2013, 2845–63.
- 3 A Gevers, N Jama Shai and Y Sikweyiya, Gender-based violence and the need for evidence-based primary prevention in South Africa, *African Safety Promotion*, 11:2, 2014, 14–20.