

Promising Efforts to Eliminate Violence Against Children in the Asia and Pacific Region

Violence against children in the Asia and Pacific region substantially impacts the well-being of children, families, and communities (Dunne et al., 2015; Fang et al., 2015; Fry & Blight, 2016). Children as victims of violence experience psychological trauma that can affect their capacity for learning and social function throughout their life course, hence increasing the risk of experiencing poverty, engaging in risky behaviors, health issues, and mental health disorders, and perpetuating the cycle of violence (Fang et al., 2015; Fry & Blight, 2016). Economically, an analysis of the burden of violence research in the Asia and Pacific region indicates that violence against children resulted in approximately 2% loss of the region's annual GDP (Fry & Blight, 2016).

ASEAN member countries are committed to ending all forms of violence against children through the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in 2015. To protect children from violence, the Plan of Action underscores the implementation of a comprehensive approach throughout the life cycle and in various settings that are relevant to the children's lives. ASEAN member countries also recognize the multiple risk factors that increase the risk of violence, including economic poverty and lack of and disparities in access to education, gender inequality, social norms, and harmful traditional practices (ASEAN, 2018).

A systematic review of published data on child maltreatment in the region suggests three regional-specific situations of violence against children (Dunne et al., 2015). These specific situations are reflected in the articles presented in this volume. First, children and young people in the Asia and Pacific region are still experiencing and are exposed to violence in their lives. Second, risk and protective factors to violence are contextual to the local areas' social, economic, and political situations. Together, the articles provide contextual insights on ways to respond to cases of violence against children in their localities. Lastly, violence, particularly incidents that have not been responded to properly, is harming the children and the community. Articles presented in this volume provide current evidence of the negative consequences of violence against children and offer contextually relevant interventions that can strengthen the efforts of ASEAN Member countries and neighboring countries to end violence against children.

In the article 'Navigating suicidal crisis in Kyrgyzstan: A case study', Leila Salimova demonstrates that violence within the family and peer group as well as structural issues such as financial hardships and labor migration poorly affect young people's mental health conditions that led to suicide attempts. The author underlined the importance of culturally sensitive psychological support for the child and assistance for the family, which requires the collaboration of social workers and other professionals in the community.

The article titled 'Managing suicidal thoughts with DBT – Informed social work counselling: Reflections on working with a Filipino young adult, also highlights suicidal thoughts as a mental health problem found among young people in the region that may have been exacerbated due to young people's exposure to violence. Alain Matteo F. Meneses highlights Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT) as a social work intervention

that has been found promising for working with young people. With the current evidence, adaptation and replicating the approach are required to ensure intervention effectiveness across diverse contexts.

Adesty P. Dulawan and Lucila O. Bance authors of the article 'Deafening echoes: Lived experiences of adult survivors of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children', illustrate the profound effect of violence on children as adults. Adult survivors experience challenges in managing trauma symptoms and stigma. Intervention for the adult survivors is advised to also be supported by comprehensive social services that include psychosocial support as well as advocacy.

Yuki Oshaka, author of the article 'Addressing educational gaps for children of foreign origin in Japan: Insights from a literature review on Early Childhood Education and Care', highlights that the needs of a population with different cultural backgrounds, past living conditions, and family environment can hinder their participation for enrollment in services. Hence, existing services should also be tailored to facilitate families with various backgrounds to engage in prevention services such as early childhood education services.

The author of 'Power abuse in child sexual abuse in Indonesia', Kanya Eka Santi, provides a critical insight to eliminate sexual violence in Indonesia through changing norms on contributing factors such as patriarchal norms, social stigma, and reduce institutional weaknesses. A public awareness campaign is a recommended strategy that can be implemented to change social norms that can also enhance the responsiveness of reporting mechanisms and psychosocial support for victims of sexual violence. The author highlights the need for a more effective monitoring system of children living in education and religious institutions who are highly vulnerable to experiencing violence.

Florinor F. Algo, author of the article 'Child sexual abuse in focus: A case study on case management in a selected local government Unit in Metro Manila' provides evidence on the implementation of government services to respond to child sexual abuse cases, such as the tasking of local social workers as case managers. In its implementation, the author found variability in the practice that is also impacted by cultural attitudes towards child sexual abuse. More investment in training, resources, and support are required to enhance the quality of practices at the local level.

In the article 'Integration of Child Protection and Social Protection for Child Victims of Violence in Indonesia', Anna Sakreti Nawangsari, Dessy Susanty, Yoel Setiawan, and Fentiny Nugroho investigate the quality of child protection services and their integration with social protection programs in Indonesia. The study reveals that child protection services for children as victims of violence are not effectively integrated with existing social protection programs. The authors argue that such integration is essential to provide a comprehensive response to the needs of children and their families and propose the inclusion of violence against children as an indicator of poverty within the current social protection framework.

To achieve the Sustainable Development agenda of eliminating all forms of violence against children by 2030, investments in developing and implementing services to

respond to cases, known as tertiary services, are not sufficient. National and sub-national governments, non-government sectors, and communities must continue to invest and work collaboratively to prioritize the prevention of violence against children. The government must situate child welfare and protection within their national development agendas, with prioritization on ensuring access to basic services and education as well as comprehensive continuum of services for children and families that consisted of prevention, early intervention, and response services. Within the continuum, sufficient social assistance with comprehensive psychosocial support for caregivers and children must be provided. Considering poverty as one of the main drivers of violence, access and provision of basic services and social assistance are critical prevention interventions. Furthermore, access to basic education has been viewed as a promising intervention to change social norms on gender and violence.

To effectively change social norms that exacerbate violence, global and regional work plans that provide an overarching strategy and approach must be tailored to the local contexts. An understanding of social norms surrounding gender, family and children, and violence is critically required to develop and implement relevant prevention strategies and responses to cases of violence (Kohli et al., 2021). Understanding of the local norms will help stakeholders to map the structural, systemic, and social interactions that shaped the practice of violence in the community and potential factors to facilitate changes through regulations and programs. Here, social workers play a pivotal role through their practices at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of the child welfare and child protection systems.

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