Intersections between violence against women and violence against children

Violence against women and violence against children often happen in the same families, initiating cycles of abuse within the home and across generations. Despite this link, efforts to address these types of violence are often conducted in isolation. Existing knowledge of how and why they occur together is limited, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Deeper understanding is critical to identifying opportunities for integrated prevention programmes. To increase the knowledge base, Raising Voices partnered with Columbia University on a study that explored the intersections between violence against women and children in Kampala, Uganda, between 2015 and 2016.[1;2;3]

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AND ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS

Seventy-five percent of child-caregiver pairs in the study (total: 535 pairs) experienced at least one form of violence, and one-third reported violence against both women and children (within the pair). Furthermore, caregivers who reported perpetrating or experiencing violence were more likely to also report perpetrating violence against their children compared to caregivers who did not report any violence in their intimate relationships.

Risk factors identified in families reporting violence against both women and children include younger male caregivers, lower socioeconomic status, less educated female caregivers, older children, female caregivers with mental distress, male caregivers using alcohol, and caregivers who report less emotional attachment to an intimate partner.

DRIVERS AND PATTERNS OF INTERSECTING VIOLENCE

Co-occurring violence against women and children is common in study participants' families. The study found that the patriarchal family structure – including rigid gender and childhood norms, sex and age hierarchies, and an emphasis on controlling "subordinate" family members – normalises many forms of violence. Poverty and alcohol often exacerbate these dynamics in ways that trigger violence.

Four common patterns of intersecting violence were identified, highlighting cycles of physical and emotional abuse that extend beyond the primary perpetrator and victim:

- Bystander trauma. Women and children experience emotional

distress or trauma after witnessing violence against a family member.
- Negative role modelling. Children, especially boys, may adopt abusive behaviour after witnessing intimate partner violence. They could also lose respect for their mother after witnessing violence against her.
- Protection and further victimisation. The mother or child tries to stop the husband/father using violence
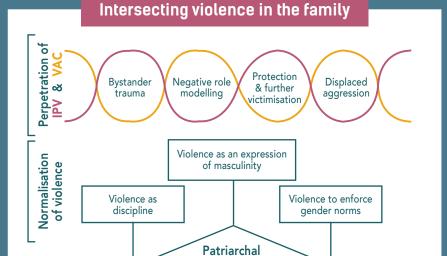
KEY TAKEAWAY

Patriarchy is a cross-cutting risk that influences violence against both women and children.

Both adults and children frequently normalise and justify intimate partner violence and violence against children.

Violence against women and violence against children not only occur in the same household, they also have the potential to trigger each other.

Attitudes justifying violence against children are more deeply entrenched than those relating to violence against women.

Despite widespread acceptability and frequency of violence, children and adults aspire to violence-free relationships.

Intersecting violence in the family

against a family member, often triggering further abuse.
- Displaced aggression. Parents intentionally use children to retaliate against each other or women redirect violence against themselves to their children.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED PREVENTION PROGRAMME
While fully integrated approaches may not always be desirable, this research highlights potential entry points for programmes to prevent violence against both women and children. Findings underscore the need to address the patriarchal family structure and consider the different power

dynamics between intimate partners compared to parents and children. Additional entry points include:

- Addressing rigid gender norms and power imbalances between women and men.
- Developing strategies to foster positive relationship qualities such as love, respect and empathy.
- Encouraging reflection on the harmful effects of direct and indirect experiences of violence in the family.
- Deepening communication and shared learning across the intimate partner violence and violence against children prevention fields.

[1] Raising Voices. 2017. Potential pathways to prevention: Understanding the intersections of violence against women and children in the family. *Learning from Practice Series, No. 7: Research Perspectives.* Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices. Available: http://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2017-05-15/LP7.PotentialPathwaystoPrevention.FINAL_May2017.pdf [2017, May 30].

[2] Namy, S., Carlson, C., O'Hara, K., Nakuti, J., Bukuluki, P., Lwanyaaga, J., Namakula, S., Nanyunja, B., Wainberg, M.L., Naker, D. & Michau, L. 2017. Towards a feminist understanding of intersecting violence against women and children in the family. *Social Science & Medicine.* 184: 40-48. Available: http://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2017-05-12/1-s2.0-S0277953617302721-main.pdf [2017, May 30].

[3] Carlson, C., Namy, S., Norcini Pala, A., Wainberg, M., Michau, L., Nakuti, J., Knight, L., Allen, E., Naker, D. & Devries, K. (under review). Violence against children and intimate partner violence against women in Uganda: Overlap and common contributing factors.

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