



VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN SURVEY IN LAO PDR

PRELIMINARY REPORT

Vientiane Capital, 2016



**“ Living safe and free from violence is
everyone’s right, reducing violence
against children is everyone’s responsibility ”**

His Excellency Thongsing Thammavong,

Prime Minister of Lao PDR, speech on International Children’s Day, 1 June 2014

Foreword

The Ministry of Planning and Investment, through the Lao Statistics Bureau, and the National Commission for Mothers and Children conducted Lao PDR's first national Violence against Children Survey in late 2014. This survey—only the second such survey to have been completed in the Asia-Pacific region—provides national estimates to describe the magnitude and nature of physical, emotional and sexual violence experienced by children in Lao PDR. The survey took place in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Lao Women's Union, with technical and financial support from UNICEF and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This preliminary report is the first to be released in relation to the national Violence against Children Survey and presents some of the key survey findings that will be useful to better understand the prevalence and circumstances of violence against children in Lao PDR. This information is important to inform violence prevention, early intervention and response, and to implement the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020.

The main survey report, which is expected to be disseminated in mid-2016, will include much more detailed information about the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual violence and the context in which these different forms of violence take place. In the meantime, the Lao Statistics Bureau and its technical partners continue to review and analyse the complex set of data that has been collected to ensure that the final data for public dissemination is of the highest quality.

On behalf of the National Steering Committee for the Violence against Children Survey, I would like to thank all Government agencies, international organizations and individuals who have contributed to making the survey a success and who have provided valuable inputs into this preliminary report.

Vientiane Capital, 25 March 2016

Head of Lao Statistics Bureau
National Steering Committee
for the Violence against Children Survey



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List of key acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
EA	Enumeration area
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
LWU	Lao Women’s Union
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MoPS	Ministry of Public Security
NCMC	National Commission for Mothers and Children
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SAS	Statistical Analysis System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Summary of the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey

The national Violence against Children Survey—the first of its kind in Lao PDR—was implemented by the Lao Statistics Bureau and the National Commission for Mothers and Children, with technical and financial support from UNICEF and CDC. The nationally representative household survey, for which data were collected between October and November 2014, provides estimates of the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual violence against children and information about the circumstances in which violence occurs.

Similar to national surveys on violence against children in several other countries, the results of this preliminary report reveal that violence in childhood is a common reality. One in six children (16 per cent) experienced at least one form of physical violence before the age of 18. The most commonly reported perpetrators of physical violence during childhood were parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives (10.3 per cent), followed by peers (6.5 per cent), and adults in the community (1.4 per cent) and intimate partners (1.4 per cent). More than a quarter of children (25.5 per cent) witnessed physical violence at home and over a quarter (27.8 per cent) witnessed physical violence in the community.

Roughly a fifth of children (21.1 per cent) in Lao PDR experienced emotional violence at home by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative. Experiences of emotional violence during childhood were reported to be higher in females than in males, with 24 per cent of females experiencing emotional violence in childhood compared to 17.7 per cent of males.

Around 1 in 10 children (9.5 per cent) experienced some form of sexual abuse as a child. Males were significantly more likely to report experiencing sexual abuse during childhood compared to females - 12 per cent compared to 7.3 per cent. The most common form of sexual abuse was unwanted sexual touching (7.5 per cent), followed to a lesser extent by physically forced or pressured sex (1.9 per cent) and unwanted attempted sex (1.8 per cent).

Only 7 per cent of children ever received services for their experiences of physical violence and only 15 per cent for their experiences of sexual abuse. Strikingly, these figures apply only to males, as not a single female reported receiving services for experiences of physical violence or sexual abuse.

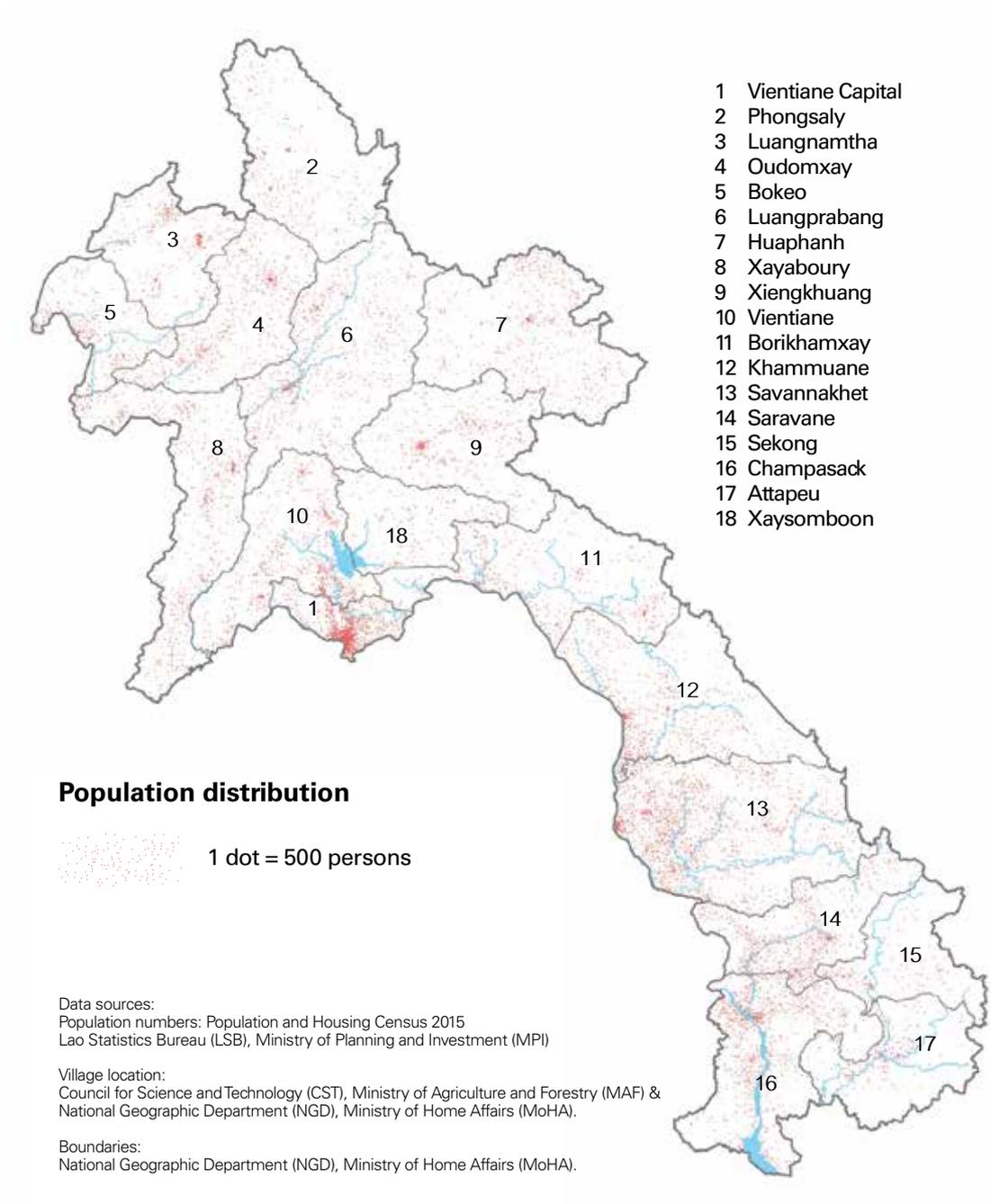
More than a third (35.7 per cent) of females and males aged 18 to 24 who experienced sexual abuse during childhood knew where to go for an HIV test, while only 4.5 per cent were actually tested for HIV. Only 12.1 per cent of females reported knowing where to get an HIV test compared to 50.6 per cent of males aged 18 to 24. Meanwhile, only a small percentage of females (4.4 per cent) and males (4.6 per cent) aged 18 to 24 who had ever had sexual intercourse and experienced sexual abuse in childhood reported that they were tested for HIV.

Summary table of key findings

Issue	Indicator	Female %	Male %	Total %
Physical violence	Physical violence during childhood	15.0	17.2	16.0
	Physical violence by parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives during childhood	11.6	8.7	10.3
	Physical violence by adults in the community	0.7	2.3	1.4
	Physical violence by an intimate partner during childhood	1.8	0.9	1.4
	Physical violence by peers during childhood	3.7	9.8	6.5
	Witnessing physical violence at home during childhood	25.2	25.9	25.5
	Witnessing physical violence in the community during childhood	25.8	30.2	27.8
Emotional violence	Emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or adult relative during childhood	24.0	17.7	21.1
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse during childhood	7.3	12.0	9.5
	Unwanted sexual touching during childhood	6.0	9.2	7.5
	Unwanted attempted sex during childhood	1.4	2.2	1.8
	Physically forced or pressured sex during childhood	1.8	2.1	1.9
	First sexual intercourse prior to age 18 was unwanted (18 to 24 year olds)	4.6	1.0	2.9
Utilization of services	Received services for physical violence during childhood	0.0	14.6	7.1
	Received services for sexual abuse during childhood	0.0	26.2	15.2
	Knowledge of where to get an HIV test (18 to 24 year olds who reported sexual abuse during childhood)	12.1	50.6	35.7
	Received an HIV test (18 to 24 year olds who reported sexual abuse during childhood)	4.4	4.6	4.5

Table 1. Summary of key findings of the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey

Map of the population of Lao PDR in 2015 by province



Map 1. Population of Lao PDR in 2015 by province

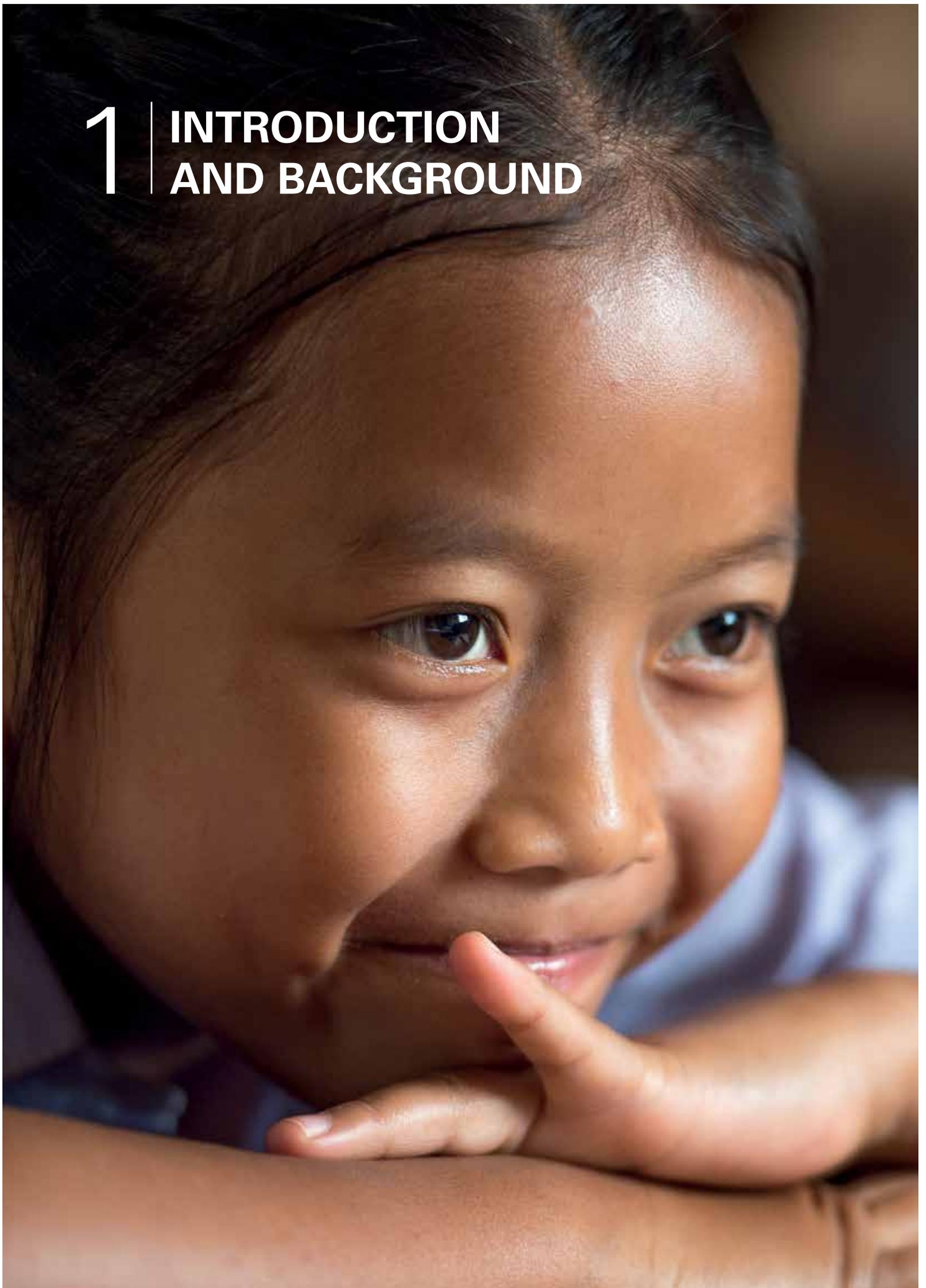
Population distribution of Lao PDR by province

According to the Lao Population and Housing Census 2015, the total population of Lao PDR is 6,492,400 (see Table 2). Of these, 2,504,567 are under the age of 18—1,273,357 males and 1,231,210 females. The most densely populated provinces, and the provinces with the largest overall number of children, are Savannakhet, Champasack, Vientiane Capital and Luangprabang. Those provinces with the highest percentage of children in relation to the total population are Sekong, Xaysomboon, Huaphanh, Oudomxay, Attapeu, Saravane, Xiengkhuang and Phongsaly. These provinces are also among those with the highest proportion of ethnic groups.

No.	Province	Total population			Total population under the age of 18		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1	Vientiane Capital	820,900	408,700	412,200	232,913	118,953	113,960
2	Phongsaly	178,000	90,700	87,300	75,504	38,497	37,007
3	Luangnamtha	175,700	87,300	88,400	72,415	36,763	35,652
4	Oudomxay	307,600	154,700	152,900	133,795	67,527	66,268
5	Bokeo	179,300	90,000	89,300	72,559	36,674	35,885
6	Luangprabang	431,900	218,700	213,200	176,458	89,743	86,715
7	Huaphanh	289,400	147,700	141,700	129,252	66,124	63,128
8	Xayaboury	381,300	194,900	186,400	129,250	65,632	63,618
9	Xiengkhuang	244,700	124,400	120,300	104,753	53,816	50,937
10	Vientiane	419,100	211,400	207,700	156,016	80,091	75,925
11	Borikhamxay	273,700	138,600	135,100	110,143	56,358	53,785
12	Khammuane	392,100	194,800	197,300	154,142	78,210	75,932
13	Savannakhet	969,700	480,700	489,000	370,484	187,056	183,428
14	Saravane	397,000	195,700	201,300	170,244	85,873	84,371
15	Sekong	113,200	56,800	56,400	54,542	27,485	27,057
16	Champasack	694,000	345,200	348,800	262,624	133,795	128,829
17	Attapeu	139,600	69,800	69,800	60,314	30,765	29,549
18	Xaysomboon	85,200	44,700	40,500	39,159	19,995	19,164
	Total	6,492,400	3,254,800	3,237,600	2,504,567	1,273,357	1,231,210

Table 2: Population distribution in Lao PDR by province (Lao Population and Housing Census 2015)

1 | INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



Introduction and background

Introduction

In recent years the magnitude and severity of violence against children has become an increasing focus of research agendas worldwide. Several global studies, including the 2006 United Nations Secretary-General's World Report on Violence against Children, the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014, and the 2014 UNICEF report "Hidden in Plain Sight", have shown that violence is widely prevalent in all societies. The United Nations World Report was the first and most comprehensive global study on all forms of violence against children and reported astonishingly high levels of violence in multiple settings, including in the home and family, in schools, in care and justice systems, and in the workplace and community. Perpetrators include parents, family members, teachers, caretakers, law enforcement authorities and other children.

While the United Nations World Report on Violence against Children succeeded in drawing attention to this important issue, the recent approval of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has made the elimination of all forms of violence against children a global priority, in particular Target 16.2 (see Box 1). The personal attendance of the President of Lao PDR at the SDG adoption ceremony highlights the country's commitment to this important global agenda, and with it the obligation to ensure that every child grows up free from violence and exploitation¹.

Physical, emotional and sexual violence can have wide-ranging consequences for children and families and society as a whole. Children exposed to violence can experience severe short- and long-term health problems² and a variety of behavioural and emotional issues. Victims of violence in childhood are also more likely to engage in high-risk behaviours as adolescents and adults, and are more likely to grow up to become perpetrators of violence themselves. Given the serious and lasting impact of violence on children, it is important to understand the scale and nature of the problem in order to develop effective prevention and response initiatives that help keep children safe from harm.

As in many other countries, violence against children, including child sexual abuse and severe physical violence, remains an issue in Lao PDR. The few qualitative studies and quantitative surveys that have been conducted to date show that children are at risk or become victims of violence at home, in the community, and in schools. In many cases, the very people who are supposed to protect children, such as parents and other family members, as well as teachers and other adults in the community, are the ones committing violence against children.

Despite the seriousness of the issue, there has been limited national data on the prevalence of violence against children in Lao PDR and the circumstances under which it occurs. Evidence to support awareness raising, to inform national policy, planning and funding allocation and to implement and monitor programs to address all forms of violence was therefore urgently needed. In response to this concern, and to determine priorities in child protection and child welfare, the Government of Lao PDR, with technical and financial support from UNICEF and CDC, has conducted the first ever national survey to determine the magnitude of violence against children in Lao PDR.

1. United Nations, 2015. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1.

2. United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/presskits/2%20Study%20findings_Press%20kit%20EN.pdf

Box 1: Sustainable Development Goal targets related to violence against children

- Provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (Target 4a)
- Ensure all learners acquire knowledge... [for] promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence (Target 4.7)
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (Target 5.2)
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (Target 5.3)
- End child labour in all its forms, including recruitment and use of child soldiers (Target 8.7)
- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (Target 16.1)
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (Target 16.2)
- Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all (Target 16.3)
- Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration (Target 16.9)
- Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime (Target 16a)

The main objectives of the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey are to:

- Estimate the national prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual violence against boys and girls.
- Identify risk and protective factors for the different forms of violence against children to inform stakeholders and guide prevention.
- Identify the health and social consequences associated with violence against children.
- Assess the knowledge and utilization of medical, psychosocial, legal, and protective services available for children who have experienced sexual, emotional and physical violence.
- Identify areas for further research.

- Make recommendations to relevant ministries in Lao PDR, United Nations agencies and international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on developing, improving and enhancing prevention and response strategies to address violence against children as part of a larger, comprehensive, multisectoral approach to child protection.

The findings from the survey will be used to better understand the scope, different forms and contexts of violence against children in Lao PDR, including its underlying risk and protective factors. This information will be used by the Government to develop and implement more targeted and informed prevention and response programs to address all forms of violence against children.

Background

In Lao PDR, a growing body of evidence from various quantitative and qualitative data sources suggests that violence affects a large number of children. According to the Lao Social Indicator Survey³ 2011-2012, 76 per cent of Lao children aged 2 to 14 are subject to at least one form of psychological aggression or physical punishment from an adult in their home. Of these, 77 per cent are boys and 74 per cent are girls. In addition, the percentage of children experiencing these forms of violence remains high across all education levels of household heads and wealth quintiles.

The findings also showed that 8 per cent of Lao children experience severe physical punishment from an adult in their household, a figure that increases with decreasing education levels of household heads and wealth quintiles. Ten per cent of children whose household heads have no education experience severe physical punishment compared to 4 per cent of children whose household heads have higher education. The percentage of children from the poorest quintile who experience severe physical punishment is more than twice that of children from the richest quintile (11 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively). Children from rural areas without road access (12 per cent) experience more severe physical violence than children in urban areas (8 per cent).

Little is known about the specific risk and protective factors for violence against children in Lao PDR. While some qualitative studies provide information on the risks and impact of some forms of violence against children, in particular trafficking, they are mostly limited in scale and cannot be generalized. Furthermore, less focus has been given to understanding protective factors for violence against children. Some factors, such as whether a parent has died, whether a child is still living with their biological parents, parent education level, relationship quality with parents, and perceived family and social support, have implications for identifying children at highest risk of violence and therefore help to determine how best to prioritize and allocate available prevention resources. A greater understanding of the risk and protective factors influencing violence against children can help to guide prevention strategies designed to safeguard against these risks and strengthen the efforts of concerned sectors in child protection.

In addition, there is evidence that suggests social norms may contribute to violence against children in Lao PDR, including the social acceptability of violence in relationships. In Lao PDR, social and cultural norms generally purport the belief that violence against children in the home is a private affair and that physical violence is an acceptable way to discipline and educate a child.

3. Ministry of Health and Lao Statistics Bureau. The Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS), 2012. Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Some 42 per cent of adults in Lao PDR believe that physical punishment is necessary to properly raise a child.⁴ This opinion varies considerably across provinces, from a low of 7 per cent in Luangnamtha to a high of 94 per cent in Oudomxay.⁵ Forty-six per cent of respondents with no education believe that a child needs to be physically punished compared to only 27 per cent of respondents with higher education.⁶ Meanwhile, children are reluctant to report incidents of violence committed against them, sometimes in fear of retribution against themselves or family members, out of shame or guilt, or due to the belief that they merited such treatment or were in some way responsible.⁷

Box 2: International conventions relating to violence against children ratified/acceded to by Lao PDR

- Convention on the Rights of the Child: *ratified in 1991*
- First Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict: *acceded to in 2006*
- Second Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography: *acceded to in 2006*
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: *ratified in 1981*
- ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour: *ratified in 2005*
- Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: *acceded to in 2003*

In response to these issues, violence against children is receiving increasing levels of awareness as an important child rights, social, health and child protection challenge in Lao PDR. As such, the Government of Lao PDR has put violence against children high on its political agenda and has taken measures towards protecting children from all forms of violence. At the international level, Lao PDR has committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and signed key international conventions relating to violence against children (see Box 2). The Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular, has provided important guidance for national efforts to build a protective environment for all children in Lao PDR. In 2011, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child considered the second periodic report of Lao PDR and recommended that the Government pursue the following in relation to violence against children:

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. UNICEF Lao PDR. Factsheet: Violence against Children in Lao PDR. 2014.

- Consolidate a national system of data collection, analysis and dissemination, and a research agenda on violence against children.
- Prohibit all forms of corporal punishment of children in all settings and promote the use of alternative forms of discipline.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to address violence against children.
- Introduce explicit legislation that bans all forms of violence against children.
- Establish a mechanism to identify the number of cases and the extent of violence, abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation.
- Provide access and adequate services for children as victims of violence.

In response to these recommendations, the Government of Lao PDR has made progress in several areas and will continue to strengthen the response to violence against children, in particular access to quality child protection services, in follow up to the findings of this survey.

At the regional level, Lao PDR has committed to several important declarations relating to violence against children. This includes the 2015 ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children, the 2013 New Delhi Declaration on South-South Cooperation on the Rights of the Child and the 2013 ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children, which encourages Member States to report on efforts to eliminate violence against women and violence against children.

At the national level, important progress has been made in recent years towards establishing a comprehensive legal and policy framework to address violence against children. Most significant is the passing of a new Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Violence against Children, which was promulgated in January 2015. The law prohibits physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence against women and children in all settings and includes prevention, protection and assistance to women and children who have experienced violence. It explicitly states that no custom, tradition or belief should be invoked to justify violence and, for the first time, introduces specific protection and assistance measures for victims of violence.

Box 3: Regional commitments by Lao PDR in relation to violence against children

- ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children, 2015
- New Delhi Declaration on South-South Cooperation on the Rights of the Child, 2013
- ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children, 2013
- ASEAN Declaration against Human Trafficking, particularly Women and Children, 2004

Other relevant laws include the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children (2007), which defines principles, rules and measures related to the management, monitoring and inspection of implementation of the protection of the rights and interests of children in Lao PDR. This law includes legal measures to punish those who commit offences towards children in order to ensure that children are in full physical, moral and mental health. Furthermore, the Law on Development and Protection of Women (2004) includes provisions to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and to prevent and combat trafficking in women and children and domestic violence. According to this law, women and children who are victims of domestic violence have the right to seek assistance and report to police officials for remedial action in accordance with regulations and laws. Finally, the 2008 Family Law of Lao PDR specifically references parental violence against children and states that “if parents do not meet their obligations in the education of their children, exceed their parental rights, make use of violence and ill-treatment to them, the court may withdraw their parental rights (Article 32)”. However, the type of violence that would lead to the withdrawal of parental rights is not defined.

Box 4: National laws and policies relating to violence against children

- Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children (2015)
- Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children (2007)
- Law on Development and Protection of Women (2004)
- Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedure (2013)
- Family Law (2008)
- Labour Law (2013)
- Trafficking in Persons Law (2016)
- National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020
- National Strategy and Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour for the Period 2014-2020

The key policy document guiding Lao PDRs efforts to address violence against children is the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020, a first of its kind for Lao PDR. Developed jointly by the National Commission for Mothers and Children and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, the National Plan of Action seeks to address violence against children through a coordinated multisectoral approach that combines knowledge, skills and resources from sectors and professions that have roles and responsibilities in preventing and eliminating violence against children.

With the legal and policy framework firmly in place, timely and complete data is warranted to develop prevention and response initiatives for effective implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children. To this effect, the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey provides comparable, national population-based estimates which describe the magnitude and nature of the issue, as well as the epidemiologic patterns of risk and protective factors of violence experienced by children in Lao PDR. At the country level, this study is aligned with key government priorities in child protection, most notably the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children. It also follows the thematic direction of the United Nations in conducting studies aimed at protecting children and young adults.⁸ The results of this survey will serve as an important baseline national estimate of violence against children for future interventions and prevention strategies.

Survey process

In 2012, an introductory workshop on the Violence against Children Survey took place in Lao PDR, supported by UNICEF and CDC. At the workshop, the Ministry of Planning and Investment's Lao Statistics Bureau presented for the first time the Lao Social Indicator Survey findings on violence against children, which served as an impetus for conducting more comprehensive research on violence against children. As a result of the workshop, through the National Commission for Mothers and Children, the Government of Lao PDR took the leadership to pursue the coordination of the Violence against Children Survey, with data collection implemented by the Lao Statistics Bureau. A national Steering Committee, consisting of government officials from the National Commission for Mothers and Children, the Lao Statistics Bureau, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Lao Women's Union, was subsequently established by the Minister of Planning and Investment to oversee, coordinate and implement the survey and to ensure that the findings are followed up with appropriate policies and programs. The Steering Committee has been instrumental in adapting the survey to the local cultural context and enabling and fostering broad ownership of the study and building local capacity to generate reliable data on violence against children.

Following the workshop, a number of meetings were held to plan, develop, provide inputs, and agree on the objectives and use of the survey in Lao PDR. Further technical meetings discussed the sample design, the survey process, the survey questionnaire and the response plan to support respondents who had experienced violence. All participating partners from the national and sub-national level who were involved in the preparation process have additionally worked in their respective sectors to promote the Violence against Children Survey to other relevant partners. The Lao Statistics Bureau was given responsibility to implement the survey in Lao PDR with technical assistance for planning and conducting fieldwork and processing and analysing data provided by UNICEF Lao PDR and CDC.

8. United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/presskits/2%20Study%20findings_Press%20kit%20EN.pdf



2 | METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Study design and sampling

The 2014 Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR was a national household survey of 13 to 24⁹ year olds to retrospectively assess physical, emotional and sexual violence against children (before 18 years of age). The survey used a four-stage clustered sample design, with statistically valid sample sizes calculated based on available data from previous country surveys.

In the first stage of selection, a total of 209 villages were selected out of 8,622 villages in the sampling frame using probability proportional to size with allocation by urban, rural with road and rural without road. At this stage the villages were allocated as either female or male. In the second stage, 209 enumeration areas (EAs)—the primary sampling unit based on geographical subdivisions determined by the Lao Statistics Bureau—were selected from the 209 villages. In the third stage, a fixed number of 30 households were selected by equal probability systematic sampling. In the fourth stage, one eligible respondent (female or male depending on the selected EA) was randomly selected from the list of all eligible respondents (females or males) 13 to 24 years of age in each household and administered the questionnaire. This study design yielded nationally representative prevalence estimates of violence for (a) girls and female youth 13 to 24 years and (b) boys and male youth 13 to 24 years.

In the report, 13 to 24 year olds have been separated into two age sub-groups for analysis: 13 to 17 year olds and 18 to 24 year olds. The survey therefore estimates 1) lifetime prevalence of violence in childhood, defined as violence occurring before 18 years of age, and 2) prevalence of violence in childhood in the 12 months prior to the survey among 13 to 17 year olds, thus representing current estimates and allowing the examination of current patterns and contexts of violence in childhood in Lao PDR.

To calculate separate male and female prevalence estimates for violence victimization, a split sample approach was used, meaning the survey for females was conducted in different EAs than the survey for males. This approach was used to protect the confidentiality of respondents, and eliminate the chance that a perpetrator of sexual violence and the victim in the same community would both be interviewed.

A total of 2,948 females and 3,333 males aged 13 to 24 were selected to participate in the survey in urban and rural areas across Lao PDR. A short questionnaire was also administered to an adult in the household to build rapport with the family and to determine current socio-economics of the household.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork took place in all 17 provinces and Vientiane Capital between mid-October and the end of November 2014. Data was collected by male and female interview teams consisting of one team leader and four interviewers from the National Commission for Mothers and Children, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Lao Statistics Bureau.

9. Data for 13 to 17 year olds is used to produce estimates for the 12 months prior to the survey (12 month victimization rate), whereas data for 18 to 24 year olds produces lifetime estimates of violence for events prior to age 18.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for survey respondents

Inclusion criteria for this study were males and females living in selected households in Lao PDR who were 13 to 24 years of age and spoke Lao. Males and females older than 24 were excluded from the study because of a desire to focus on understanding violence against children, and the fact that recall bias becomes a greater issue the further a respondent is from the target age range.

Males and females with mental disabilities who did not have the capacity to understand the questions being asked and those with physical disabilities (e.g. hearing and speech impairment) that prevented the interviewer from oral administration of the survey were excluded from the study as specific skills (e.g. sign language) and survey tools would be required to interview these groups. It is acknowledged that people living with disabilities may be at even greater risk of violence than the general population. However, since this survey is not designed to produce statistically stable estimates of violence in this sub-population, this issue would be best addressed in a separate study.

Children living in institutions, such as prisons, orphanages and boarding schools, and children living on the street were also excluded from the survey.

Selection of households and respondents

Upon entering a selected household, interviewers confirmed that they were in the correct sampled household by asking the first name of the head of household and comparing this to the list of sampled households. Once the interview team correctly identified the sampled household, they asked to speak with the head of household or the person representing the head of household in order to introduce the survey and complete a household census to determine eligibility of household members to participate in the survey. In cases where a head of household was a female or male 13 to 24 years old, she or he was included in the household listing and was eligible for selection as the respondent. In this case, she or he completed the household questionnaire and the respondent questionnaire. For households with more than one eligible respondent, the CSPro software randomly selected one respondent for interview.

After selecting an eligible participant, the interviewer first asked for consent from the head of household to participate in a short (15 minute) survey about the household. If there was no eligible respondent, the interviewer still asked for consent from the head of household to participate in the household survey. The purpose of the head of household survey was twofold: firstly, to assess the socio-economic conditions of the household, and secondly, to build rapport with the head of household by providing the head of household an opportunity to participate in the survey.

For all selected eligible respondents under 18 years of age, interviewers first obtained the permission of the parent/primary caregiver for participation in the survey. Once permission was obtained by the parent/primary caregiver, informed consent was sought from the respondent.

If the selected respondent was not available after three attempts or refused to participate, the household was skipped regardless of whether another eligible respondent existed in the household. The household was not replaced.

Electronic data collection

Data for this survey was collected electronically using a netbook, with the operating systems Windows 7 or 8, and the specialized survey collection software CSPro V5.0. Each interviewer used the software to conduct the interviews and collect the data in real time.

The electronic data collection system included a series of graphical screens for data entry, skip pattern programming, consistency checks programming and a validation component to check the validity of entered data. Given the complexity of the skip patterns and logic sequencing in the core survey questionnaire, electronic data collection helped eliminate routing errors, reduced interviewer training on skip pattern sequencing, reduced data inconsistencies, and eliminated the need for data entry and thus data entry errors.

Assuring privacy during interviews

Several precautions were used to ensure privacy during the respondent interviews. The interviewers were trained to identify, in consultation with the respondent and head of household, a safe and private space outside the house, unless it was determined that a private space inside the house was safer and more appropriate. All interviewers were given plastic mats to help facilitate the use of a private space, e.g. in the garden under a tree.

If the interview was interrupted, interviewers were trained in ways to offer and take the respondent to an appropriate place. Interviewers were also trained to handle interruptions (e.g. by switching to a non-sensitive survey which was saved on the netbook used for data collection). The respondent was briefed on this technique before the interview began so he/she would follow the cues of the interviewer.

If privacy could not be ensured, interviewers were instructed to reschedule the interview for another time. If the interview was rescheduled, the interviewer and respondent determined a time and place to meet while the survey team was still in the community. If the interview could not be rescheduled while the survey team was in the selected community, the interview was considered incomplete. If the respondent was not available after three attempts to contact her/him, the household was omitted and not replaced. The initial visit record form of the survey tool had a section that allowed the survey team to track household or respondent refusals, incomplete interviews as well as interviews that needed to be rescheduled. The name of the respondent was not written on any of the survey forms and the completed survey form did not contain any identifying information.

In-field quality control checks

Fieldwork was monitored on an ongoing basis by a team of experienced survey coordinators from the Lao Statistics Bureau. This ensured the quality of data collection and quickly identified any problems that required additional technical assistance from UNICEF or CDC.

Ethical considerations

Ethical review

The Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey underwent an in-country ethical review process through the National Ethics Committee for Health Research under the National Institute of Public Health, which independently reviewed and approved the survey protocol. This helped ensure that the practices and protections for respondents were ethical and sound and in adherence with the WHO guidelines on safety and ethics in studies of violence against women.

Response plan

A survey response plan was put in place to provide services for respondents who were screened to need and want help for past or current experiences of physical, emotional or sexual violence. Respondents who became upset during the interview; shared at any point during the interview that he or she did not feel safe in his or her current living situation and was likely to experience recurrent violence; or had experienced violence in the past, were offered assistance and a referral to counselling and support services. The response plan formed part of a commitment to meet ethical standards and minimize risks when conducting research with children and young people.

In addition, a general list of service providers was given to all survey respondents at the end of the interview, identifying education and vocational training support, medical assistance, counselling and support services, services for people living with a disability, and legal assistance. Interviewers were instructed to indicate which organizations and agencies provide services for violence, so that the respondents clearly understood where to obtain and how to access the necessary services.

Development of the response plan was led by the National Commission for Mothers and Children in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Public Security, the Lao Women's Union and NGOs at the national and subnational level, with technical support from UNICEF. A two-day training workshop on the survey response plan was held for around 70 provincial government counterparts nationwide as well as key focal points from central level. The referral process was as follows:

STEP 1: After completing the questionnaire, the respondent requests a referral.

STEP 2: The interviewer completes the referral form and gives the form to the team leader. The team leader immediately contacts the Provincial Commission for Mothers and Children focal point to alert them about the referral and to relay the information on the referral form.

STEP 3: The Provincial Commission for Mothers and Children focal point contacts the appropriate provincial department, NGO service provider and/or National Government counterpart to respond to the needs of the respondent.

Despite intensive preparations and a readiness to respond to survey participants who had experienced violence and requested a referral, only one case was referred to the local authorities for further support. This is not indicative of the number of cases of violence that were found during

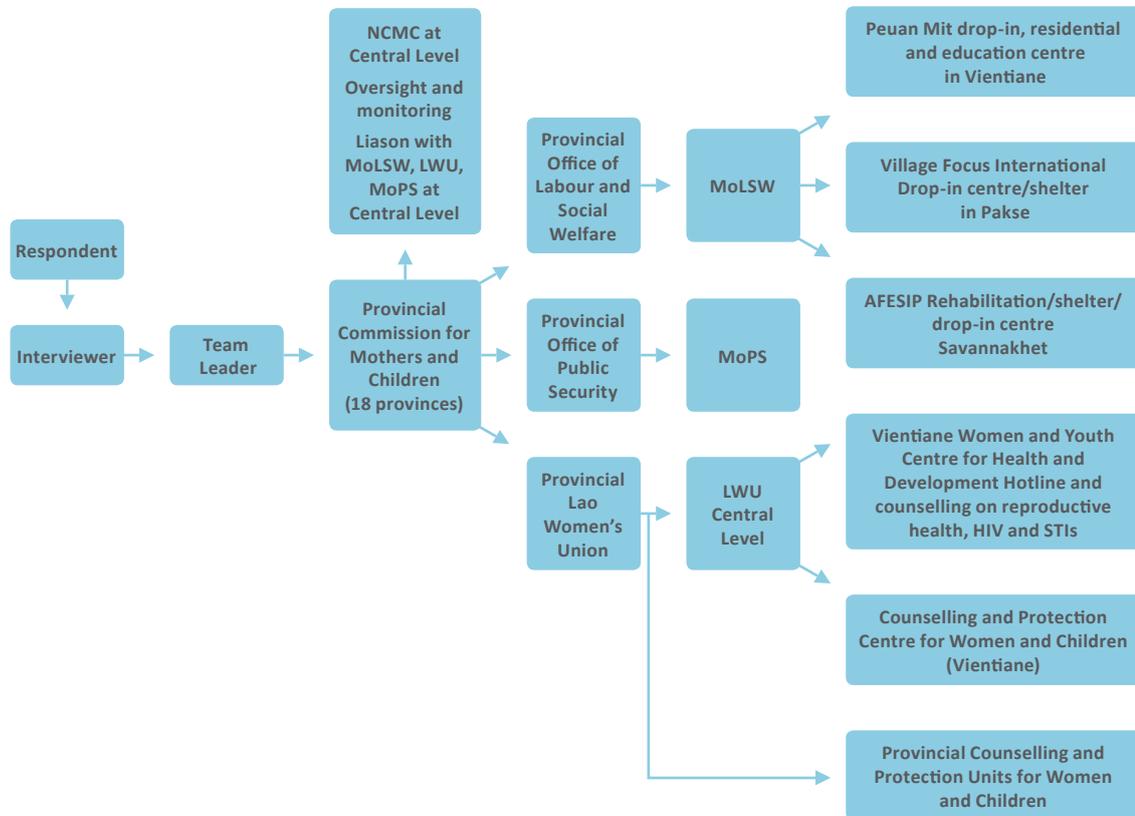


Figure 1. Referral process for Violence against Children Survey response plan in Lao PDR

data collection, but more likely a reflection of the current lack of demand for such services. This could be due to a number of factors, including lack of services across the country (particularly outside large urban areas), distance to available services, issues surrounding discrimination, or lack of confidence in the ability of service providers to meet the needs of respondents. In follow up to the Violence against Children Survey, the Government is working to expand and improve access to and delivery of community-based services for victims of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Informed consent

Full and informed consent was sought from all participants before participating in an interview. For all selected eligible respondents under 18 years of age, permission was first obtained from the parent/primary caregiver. Interviewers were trained to determine if the head of the household or another household member was accountable for the child’s health and welfare in order to ensure that the responsible person provided permission for the respondent. The interviewer informed the parent/primary caregiver that the survey was both voluntary and confidential.

When the respondent was a child (under the age of 18), consent was required by the parent or guardian for the child to participate in the survey. The only exception was children who lived in child-headed households. Even with full consent from the parent or guardian, the child also had to agree to participate in the survey. Both parent/guardian and child had to consent before conducting an interview. If a parent agreed and a child did not agree, the selected child was not included in the survey.

When getting permission from the parent or guardian for their dependent child to participate in the survey, interviewers provided the respondent and parents/guardians with information about the study, including the risks and benefits from their participation. This ensured that respondents and parents were aware of the nature and subject matter of the questions. However, only selected information about the content of the survey was given to parents and primary guardians. Parents and primary guardians were informed that sensitive topics are included in the survey, but the interviewer was careful not to make any reference to violence that may be occurring in the home or being perpetrated by the head of household or other household members. This helped to protect the respondents and their privacy.

Response rates

A total of 6,281 households were visited during data collection across Lao PDR: 2,948 households for females and 3,333 households for males. The household response rates were 96.5 per cent for females and 97.0 per cent for males (Table 3). Within all visited households, a household census was conducted to determine whether an eligible male or female respondent resided in the household. As a result, 1,911 individuals aged 13 to 24 participated in the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey. A total of 988 females and 923 males completed the individual questionnaire, yielding an individual response rate of 96.3 per cent for females and 93.0 per cent for males. The combined household and individual response rates provide an overall response rate for females of 92.9 per cent and a response rate for males of 90.2 per cent. Reasons for uncompleted interviews include the respondent refused, the respondent was not home at the time of the survey, and the respondent was unable to communicate in the Lao language.

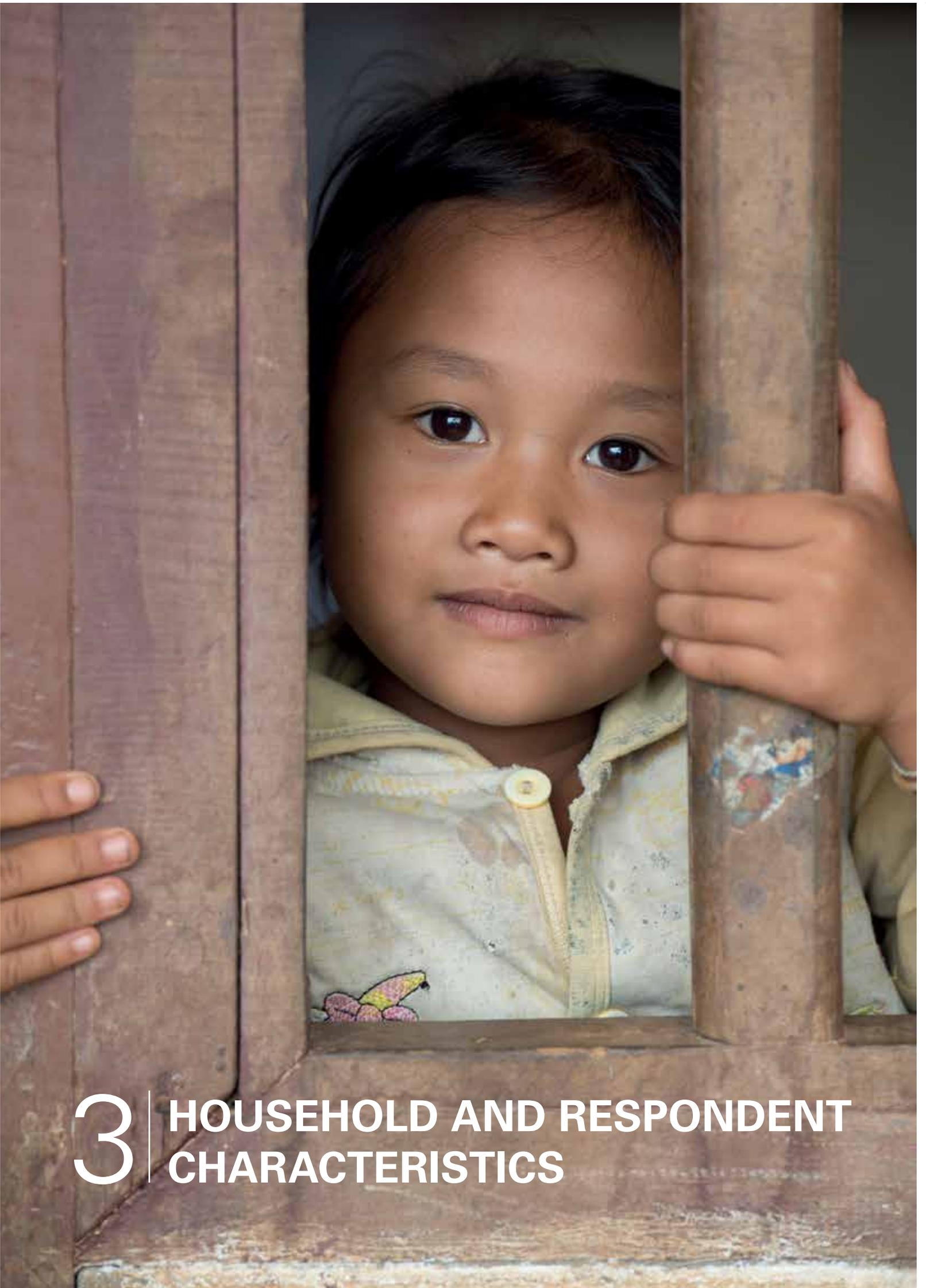
Response rate	Females	Males
Overall response rate	92.9	90.2
Individual response rate	96.3	93.0
Household response rate	96.5	97.0

Table 3. Response rates for the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey

Data analysis

The statistical packages SAS (version 9.3) and SPSS (version 22) were used for data management and analysis to produce weighted point estimates and standard error calculations. SAS is the standard statistical package used in other countries implementing the national Violence against Children Surveys, while SPSS is typically used for data analysis in national surveys by the Lao Statistics Bureau. A mixed approach was therefore used with the analysis of core indicators in SPSS (accompanied by a strong capacity building process of local counterparts) and additional complex analysis in SAS. All results were calculated using sampling weights to yield nationally representative estimates.

Data have typically been analysed separately for males and females. The respondents were partitioned into two sub-groups for analysis: a 13 to 17 age group and an 18 to 24 age group. The 13 to 17 age group yields information on events occurring in the past 12 months (current estimates of violence against children). Lifetime estimates of violence during childhood are based on responses from participants aged 18 to 24 reporting on their experiences prior to age 18.



3 | HOUSEHOLD AND RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Household and respondent characteristics

This section describes selected household and respondent characteristics from the Violence against Children Survey. Household characteristics include age and ethnicity of the head of household, place of residence (i.e. urban, rural with road or rural without road), and economic status of the household. Respondent characteristics include gender and age distribution, educational status, orphan status, marital status, sexual activity, and working for money or other payment.

Questions about household and respondent characteristics were asked in this survey because they provide information on child vulnerability and may be associated with the risk of violence in childhood. For example, educational attainment orphan status, time spent working, marital status and the age at which marriage took place may all be associated with an increased or decreased risk of violence.

Household characteristics

Ethnicity of head of household

Heads of households from 33 ethnic groups were represented in the Violence against Children Survey (Table 4). The overwhelming majority (58.7 per cent) of heads of households were of Lao ethnicity. The other main ethnic groups represented by heads of households were Khmou (11.5 per cent), Akha (5.5 per cent), Phouthay (3.5 per cent), Tai (2.6 per cent) and Katang (2.3 per cent).

Ethnic group	n	Per cent
Lao	1,122	58.7
Khmou	220	11.5
Akha	106	5.5
Phouthay	67	3.5
Tai	49	2.6
Katang	43	2.3
Makong	36	1.9
Brao	34	1.8
Lahu	24	1.3
Katu	22	1.2
Other	188	9.7
Total	1,911	100.0

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by ethnic group

Place of residence

The majority of respondents (66.2 per cent) resided in rural areas with road, compared to 26.4 per cent in urban areas and 7.4 per cent in rural areas without road (Table 5). Overall, the allocation of female and male respondents by place of residence was similar. The number of villages selected in the survey sample was directly proportional to the number of urban and rural areas with and without road in Lao PDR.

Place of residence	Females	Males	Total
Urban	30.2	28.3	26.4
Rural with road	64.0	65.1	66.2
Rural without road	5.8	6.5	7.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5. Distribution of respondents by gender and place of residence (urban, rural with road and rural without road)

Characteristics of female and male respondents

Gender and age distribution

A total of 1,911 female and male respondents participated in the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey (Table 6). Of these, 947 were between 13 and 17 years old (480 females and 467 males) and 964 were between 18 and 24 years old (443 females and 521 males).

Age Group	Females	Males	Total
13-17 years old	480	467	947
18-24 years old	443	521	964
Total	923	988	1,911

Table 6. Distribution of respondents by gender and age group

Education status

The majority of respondents (85.5 per cent) had completed at least primary education, 87.9 per cent among females and 85.8 per cent among males. However, 14.5 per cent had either never attended school or did not complete primary education. Almost twice as many females (7.7 per cent) had never attended school as males (4.4 per cent). However, more than twice as many males (9.8 per cent) had completed less than primary education compared to females (4.3 per cent). Significantly more females (38.6 per cent) had completed secondary education compared to males (28.2 per cent).

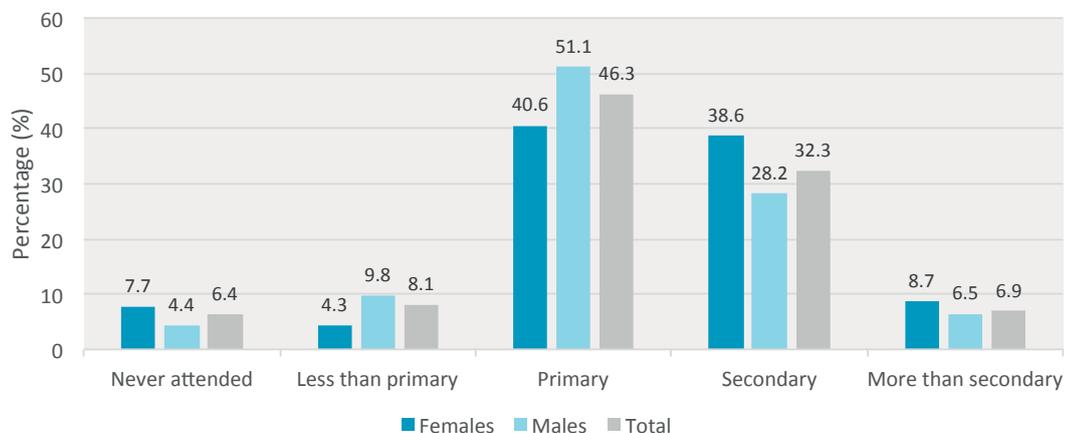


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by education status

Orphan status

Among 13 to 17 year olds, 9.8 per cent of respondents (approximately 1 in 10) were either single (lost one parent) or double (lost both parents) orphans (Table 7). Single and double orphan status occurred in similar proportions among males and females - 8.6 per cent of females compared to 9.3 per cent of males. The majority of 13 to 17 year olds (90.2 per cent) were not orphans.

Orphan status prior to age 18	Females	Males	Total
Not an orphan	91.4	90.7	90.2
Single orphan	8.2	9.1	9.4
Double orphan	0.4	0.2	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 7. Distribution of respondents by orphan status prior to age 18

Marital status

More than a quarter (27 per cent) of respondents aged 18 to 24 reported ever being married or living with someone as if married. This figure was twice as high among females (35.4 per cent) as males (16.7 per cent). Among 13 to 17 year olds, 11.3 per cent of respondents reported ever being married or living with someone as if married. Females in this age group were more than four times more likely to have ever been married or living with someone as if married compared to their male counterparts—16.9 per cent compared to 4.5 per cent, respectively.

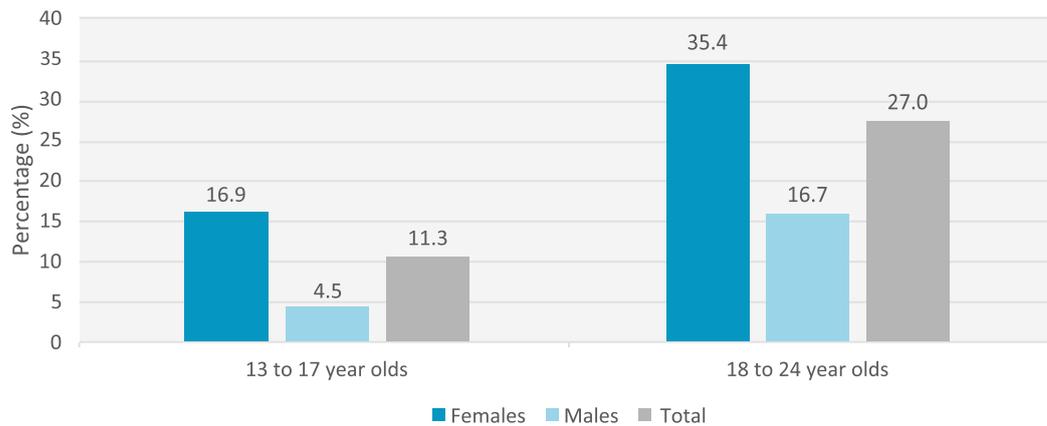


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by those who have ever been married

Sexual activity

More than a third of respondents aged 18 to 24 (almost 40 per cent) reported that they had ever had sex, compared to 20 per cent of respondents aged 13 to 17. There was no difference in the percentage of females and males who reported ever having had sex in either age group.

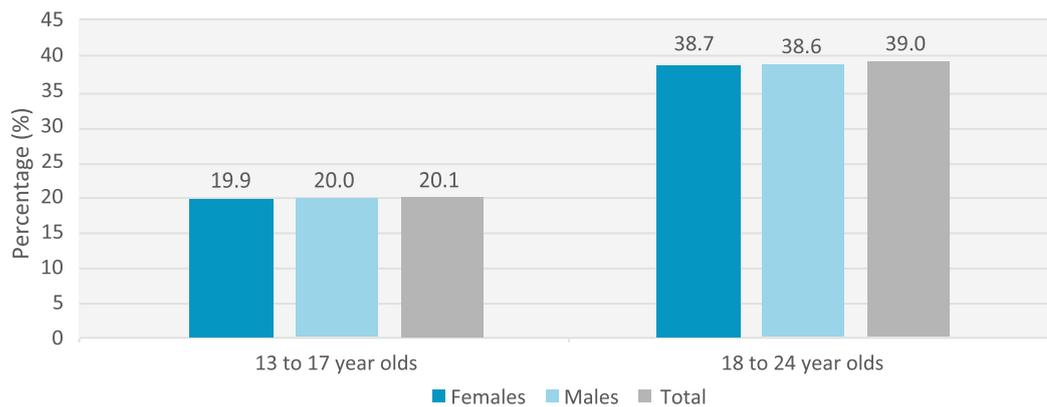


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by those who have ever had sex

Working for money or any other payment

Two thirds of respondents (66 per cent) reported having worked for money or any other payment. More than three quarters of males (77.9 per cent) reported having worked for money or any other payment compared to just over half (54 per cent) of all females.

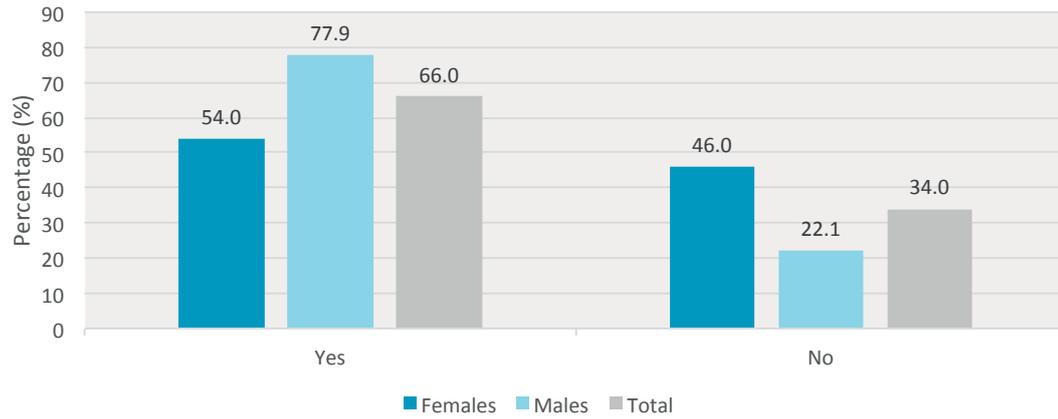


Figure 5. Distribution of respondents who have ever worked for money

4 | PHYSICAL VIOLENCE



Physical violence

Summary of key findings

- Nearly 1 in 7 females (15 per cent) and 1 in 6 males (17.2 per cent) experienced physical violence during childhood.
- The most commonly reported perpetrator of physical violence during childhood was parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives (10.3 per cent).
- More than a quarter of females and males witnessed physical violence in the home during childhood - 25.2 per cent and 25.9 per cent respectively.
- Almost a third of males (30.2 per cent) and a quarter of females (25.8 per cent) witnessed physical violence in the community during childhood.

This section describes the prevalence of physical violence during childhood in Lao PDR and the exposure of children to physical violence in the 12 months preceding the survey.

In this survey, respondents were asked about experiences of three measures of physical violence:¹⁰ punching, kicking, whipping, or beating with an object; choking, suffocating, trying to drown, or burning intentionally; and using or threatening to use a knife, gun or other weapon. The survey specifically asked about physical acts of violence perpetrated by:

- Intimate partners: people with whom the respondent has had a romantic relationship. This includes boyfriends/girlfriends, romantic partners, fiancés, live-in partners, and husbands/wives. The respondent does not need to have had a sexual relationship with this person for them to qualify as a partner. However, they must consider the relationship to be romantic.
- Peers: people who are the same or a similar age as the respondent, not including a husband or romantic partner. These include people who the respondent may or may not know such as siblings, schoolmates, neighbours or strangers.
- Parents, guardians, adult caregivers and other adult relatives: This includes biological parents, adoptive or step-parents, other adult relatives (such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents) and relatives that may be closer to the age of the respondent (such as adult siblings and adult cousins).
- Adults in the community: a wide variety of people (non-relatives) in the community that the respondent may or may not already know. This includes teachers, police, employers, religious persons or community leaders, neighbours, village authorities, or adult strangers.

10. The agreed terms and definitions used for the Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR are in line with internationally recognized definitions and technical terms relating to violence against children. They are consistent with the terms and definitions used in other national Violence against Children Surveys to allow for future comparison across countries and regions. The definitions vary from those used in the 2015 Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children and the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020 as the survey definitions were agreed before the processes for the development of the law and national plan of action began.

Physical violence

Nearly 1 in 7 females (15 per cent) and 1 in 6 males (17.2 per cent) experienced some form of physical violence during childhood, giving a combined childhood prevalence of 16 per cent (Figure 6). In the 12 months prior to the survey, 7.4 per cent of children reported experiencing some form of physical violence, with slightly more males experiencing physical violence (8.2 per cent) compared to females (6.6 per cent).

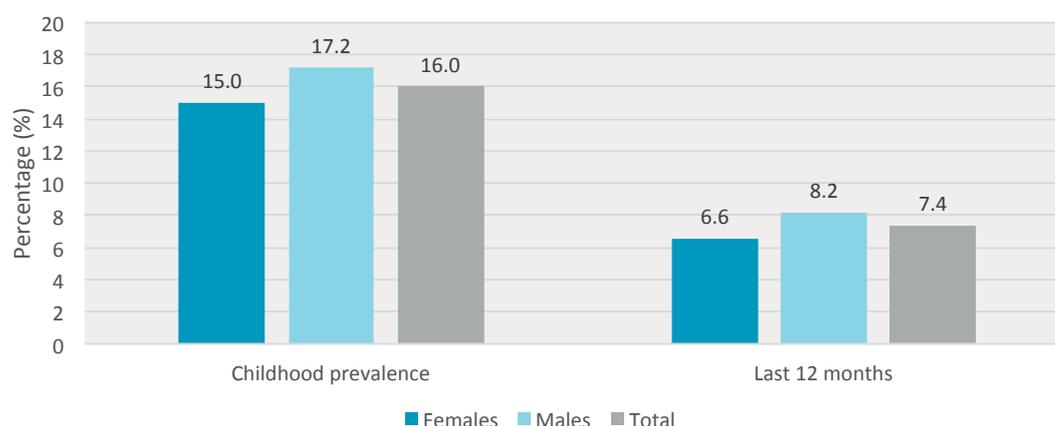


Figure 6. Per cent of females and males who reported experiencing any physical violence during childhood and in the past 12 months

Perpetrators of physical violence

Perpetrators of physical violence in childhood

The most commonly reported perpetrator of physical violence during childhood was parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives (10.3 per cent), followed by peers (6.5 per cent), and adults in the community (1.4 per cent) and intimate partners (1.4 per cent) (Figure 7).

A higher percentage of females (11.6 per cent) experienced physical violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative during childhood compared to males (8.7 per cent). While females most frequently reported parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives as the perpetrators of physical violence during childhood, males were most likely to experience physical violence during childhood by peers (9.8 per cent), followed closely by parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives (8.7 per cent).

Three times as many males (2.3 per cent) experienced physical violence by adults in their community during childhood compared to females (0.7 per cent). However, twice as many females (1.8 per cent) experienced physical violence by an intimate partner during childhood as males (0.9 per cent). One in ten males (9.8 per cent) experienced physical violence by peers during childhood, nearly three times as many as females (3.7 per cent).

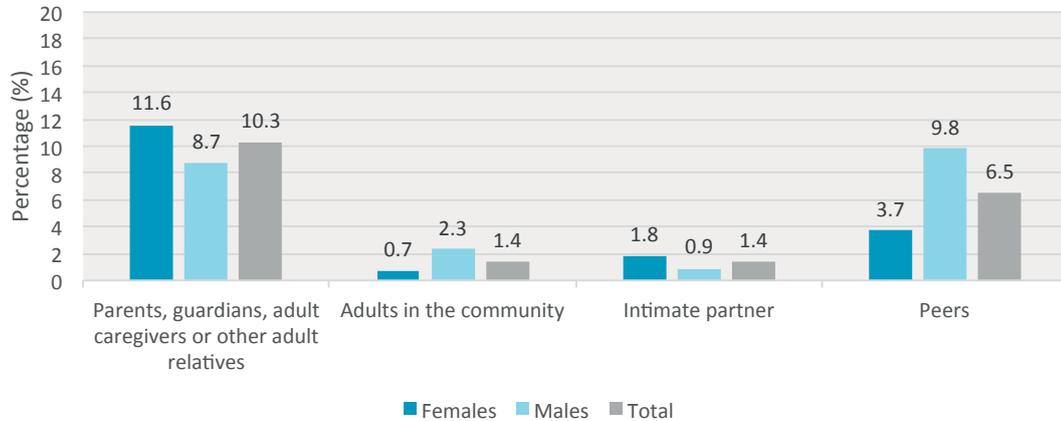


Figure 7. Per cent of females and males who reported any physical violence during childhood by type of perpetrator

Perpetrators of physical violence in the past 12 months

In the 12 months preceding the survey, similar patterns were found in the types of perpetrators of physical violence as during childhood. Parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives were the most frequently reported perpetrator of physical violence (4.2 per cent), followed closely by peers (4 per cent). There were, however, higher levels of physical violence by an intimate partner (1.2 per cent) reported in the 12 months prior to the survey than adults in the community (0.4 per cent) (Figure 8).

Similar to physical violence during childhood, more females (5 per cent) reported experiencing physical violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative in the 12 months prior to the survey than males (3.5 per cent). Males were also more likely to experience physical violence by adults in their community in the past 12 months, although overall levels were relatively low (0.6 per cent). However, in the year preceding the survey significantly more males (2.2 per cent) experienced intimate partner violence than females (0.6 per cent), the reverse of levels found during childhood. Finally, in the 12 months prior to the survey males (5.3 per cent) were also significantly more likely to experience physical violence by a peer than females (2.7 per cent).

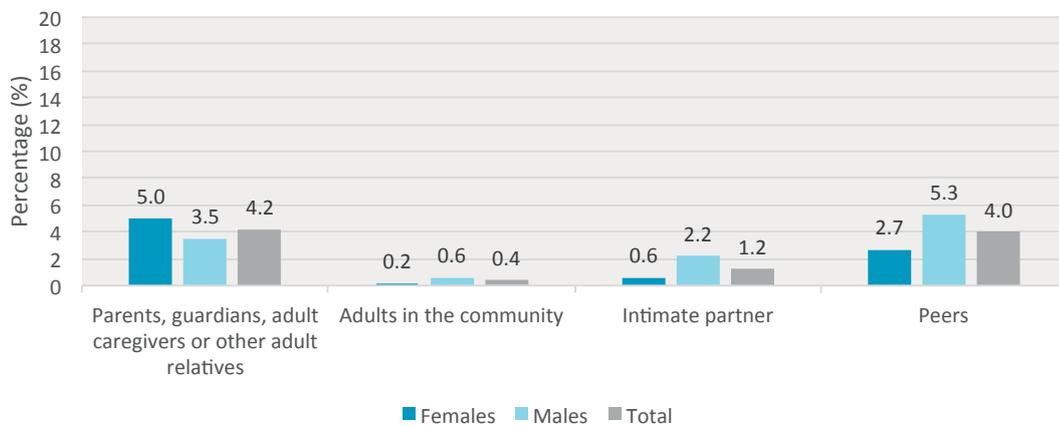


Figure 8. Per cent of females and males who reported any physical violence in the past 12 months by type of perpetrator

Witnessing physical violence

To explore the circumstances of physical violence in more detail, the survey asked respondents whether they had witnessed any physical violence in the home or community during childhood and in the previous 12 months by strangers or people known well to them. Witnessing violence in the home included seeing or hearing a parent being punched, kicked or beaten up by the other parent or a romantic partner, or seeing or hearing a parent punch, kick or beat a brother or sister. Witnessing community violence included seeing anyone getting attacked in the community or another community.

These questions were asked because witnessing violence may be associated with experiencing violence in childhood or later in life, with perpetrating violence, or with harmful gender norms. Furthermore, witnessing violence in childhood can have similar effects on cognitive, behavioural and social development as directly experiencing violence.

Witnessing physical violence in the home

More than a quarter of females and males witnessed physical violence in the home during childhood - 25.2 per cent and 25.9 per cent respectively (Figure 9). In the 12 months prior to the survey, 10.4 per cent of females reported witnessing physical violence in the home, twice as many as males (5.2 per cent).

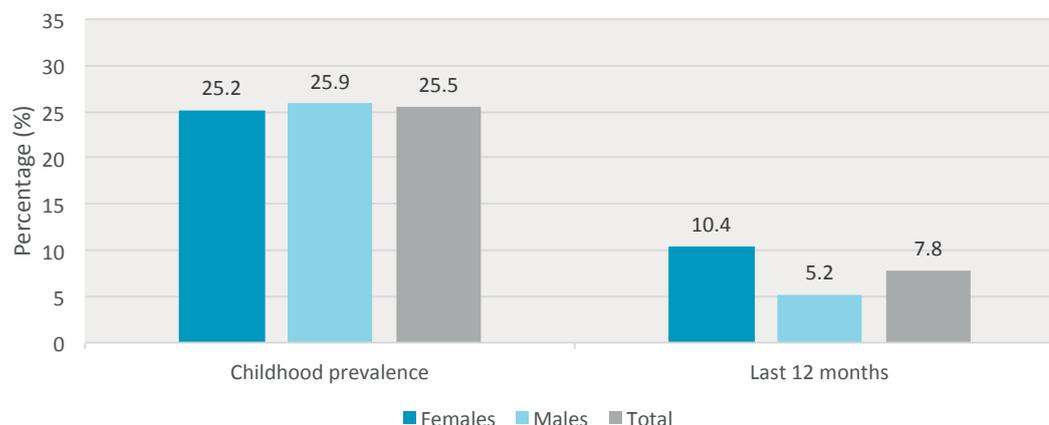


Figure 9. Per cent of females and males who reported witnessing any physical violence at home during childhood and in the past 12 months

Witnessing physical violence in the community

Almost a third of males (30.2 per cent) and a quarter of females (25.8 per cent) witnessed physical violence in the community during childhood (Figure 10). The sample size was not large enough to calculate statistically reliable estimates for witnessing physical violence in the community in the 12 months prior to the survey.

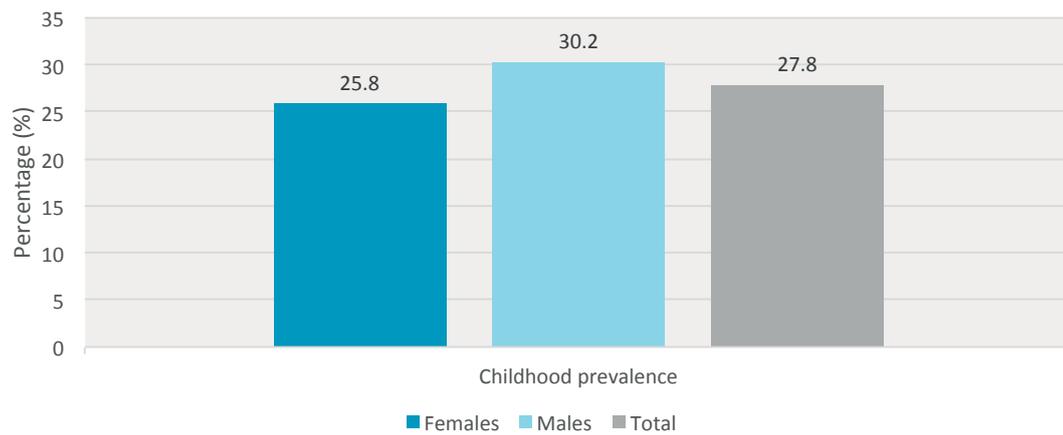


Figure 10. Per cent of females and males who reported witnessing any physical violence in the community during childhood

5 | EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE



Emotional violence

Summary of key findings

- More than 21 per cent of children (1 in 5) experienced emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative during childhood.
- Twenty-four per cent of females (1 in 4) experienced emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative during childhood compared to 17.7 per cent of males (more than 1 in 6).

This section presents the childhood prevalence of emotional violence by parents, guardians, adult caregivers or other adult relatives in Lao PDR. It also provides data on current patterns of emotional violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Unlike physical violence, the questions on emotional violence only collected information about violence committed by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver, or other adult relative.

In this survey, emotional violence is defined as a pattern of verbal behaviour over time or an isolated incident that is not developmentally appropriate and supportive and that has a high probability of damaging a child's mental health, or his/her physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Emotional acts of violence include being told you are not loved, someone wished you had never been born, or being ridiculed or put down. In this survey, respondents were specifically asked about the following emotional acts of violence perpetrated by parents or caregivers:

- Told the respondent that they were not loved, or did not deserve to be loved
- Said they wished the respondent had never been born or was dead
- Ridiculed the respondent or put them down (for example said that they were stupid or useless).

Emotional violence

More than 21 per cent of females and males reported experiencing emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative during childhood (Figure 11). Experiences of emotional violence during childhood were reported to be higher in females than in males, with 1 in 4 females (24 per cent) experiencing emotional violence in childhood compared to almost 1 in 6 males (17.7 per cent).

In the 12 months prior to the survey, 9.8 per cent of children reported emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative. Similar levels of emotional violence in the last 12 months were reported among females and males - 9.6 per cent and 10.1 per cent respectively.

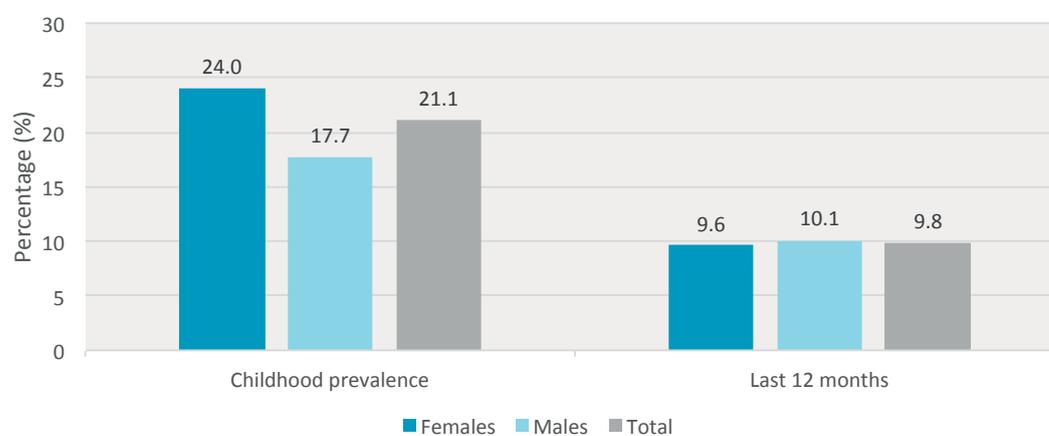


Figure 11. Per cent of females and males who reported emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative during childhood and in the past 12 months



6

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence¹¹

Summary of key findings

- Overall, 9.5 per cent of children (1 in 10) experienced sexual abuse during childhood in Lao PDR.
- Males were significantly more likely to report experiencing sexual abuse during childhood compared to females - 12 per cent (1 in 8) compared to 7.3 per cent (1 in 14).
- Males were more likely to experience all types of child sexual abuse than females.
- The most common type of child sexual abuse experienced during childhood in Lao PDR was unwanted sexual touching.

This section describes the prevalence of sexual abuse during childhood and in the 12 months prior to the survey in Lao PDR. It also presents data on the types of sexual abuse reported, the different perpetrators of sexual abuse, and respondents whose first experience of sexual intercourse prior to age 18 was unwanted. The four types of sexual abuse measured in this survey include unwanted sexual touching, unwanted attempted sex, and physically forced or pressured sex:

- Touching in a sexual way without permission: this includes fondling, pinching, grabbing, or touching the respondent on or around their sexual body parts without their permission. Sexual touching does not include trying or forcing the respondent to have sex.
- Unwanted attempted sex: someone tried to physically force or pressure the respondent into having sex (vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the anus or vagina) without their permission, but sex did not happen.
- Physically forced sex: if anyone ever physically forced the respondent to have sex (vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the anus or vagina) regardless of whether the respondent did or did not fight back.
- Pressured sex: if anyone ever pressured the respondent to have sex (vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the anus or vagina) when they did not want to and sex happened. Pressured sex may involve threats, harassment, coercion, bribes or tricking the other person to have sex.

Sex or sexual intercourse: means vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the respondent's vagina or anus.

11. In the Lao PDR Violence against Children Survey, sexual violence is defined as including all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children (see Appendix 2 for the full definition). In this Preliminary Report, data is presented on sexual abuse only. Data for other forms of sexual violence will be presented in the main survey report.

Sexual abuse

Overall, 9.5 per cent of females and males reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse during childhood in Lao PDR (Figure 12). Males (12 per cent or 1 in 8) were significantly more likely to report experiencing some form of sexual abuse during childhood compared to females (7.3 per cent or 1 in 14). In the 12 months prior to the survey a total of 5.2 per cent of children reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse - 4.1 per cent of females and 6.2 per cent of males.

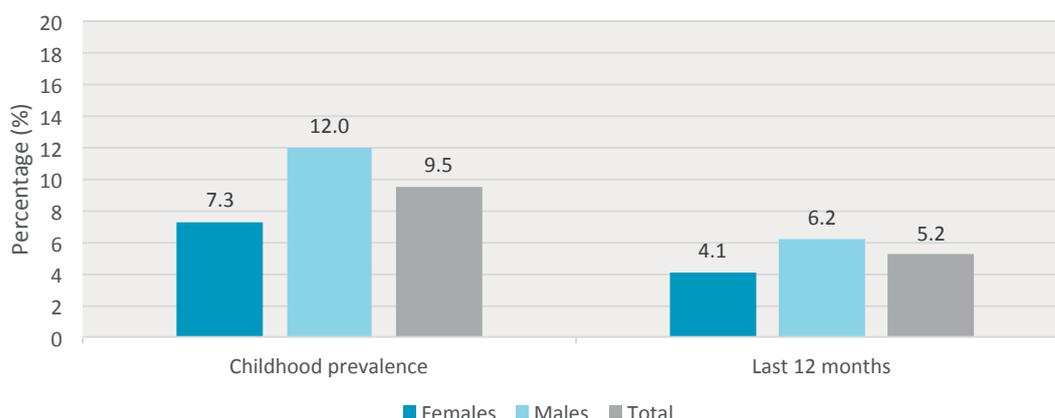


Figure 12. Per cent of females and males who reported any sexual abuse

Types of sexual abuse in childhood

The most common type of child sexual abuse experienced during childhood in Lao PDR was unwanted sexual touching (7.5 per cent), followed by physically forced or pressured sex (1.9 per cent) and unwanted attempted sex (1.8 per cent). Males were more likely to experience all types of child sexual abuse than females, with the percentage of males experiencing unwanted sexual touching significantly higher than females at 6.0 and 9.2 per cent, respectively.

A total of 1.4 per cent of females and 2.2 per cent of males reported experiencing unwanted attempted sex during childhood, while 1.8 per cent of females and 2.1 per cent of males reported experiencing physically forced or pressured sex during childhood.

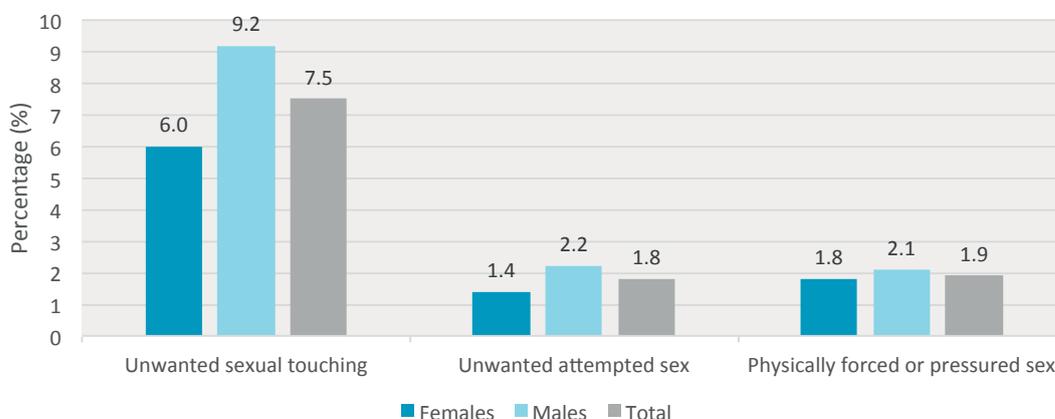


Figure 13. Per cent of females and males who reported sexual abuse during childhood by type of sexual abuse

Types of sexual abuse in the past 12 months

In the 12 months prior to the survey, unwanted sexual touching was the most common type of sexual abuse reported (4.5 per cent) (Figure 14). As in childhood, males (5.4 per cent) were also more likely than females (3.6 per cent) to experience unwanted sexual touching in the previous 12 months. Females and males were equally as likely to experience unwanted attempted sex in the last 12 months (0.9 per cent), while 0 per cent of females and only 0.3 per cent of males reported any physically forced or pressured sex.

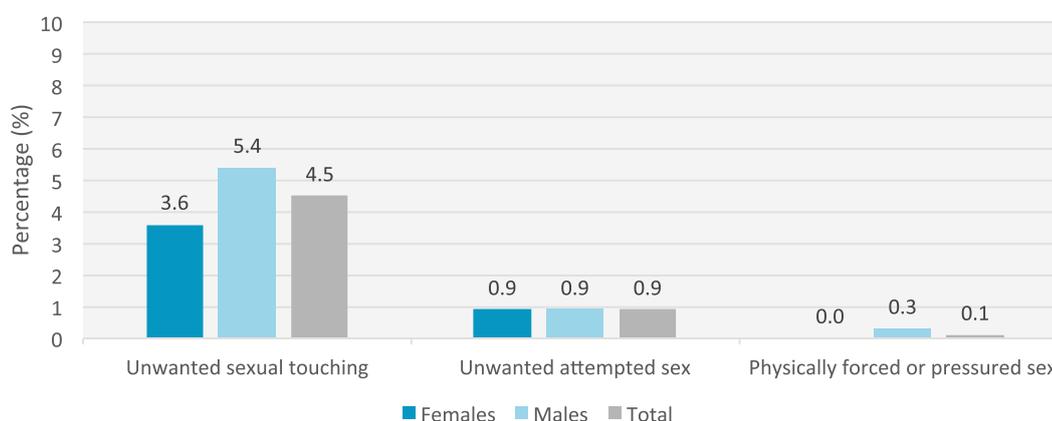


Figure 14. Per cent of females and males who reported sexual abuse in the past 12 months by type of sexual abuse

First sexual intercourse was unwanted

Of the 18 to 24 year olds whose first sexual intercourse was prior to age 18, 4.6 per cent of females reported their first sexual intercourse as unwanted compared to 1.0 per cent of males (Figure 15). Among those aged 13 to 17 who had ever had sexual intercourse, females (8.3 per cent) were significantly more likely than males (0 per cent) to report their first incident of sexual intercourse as unwanted.

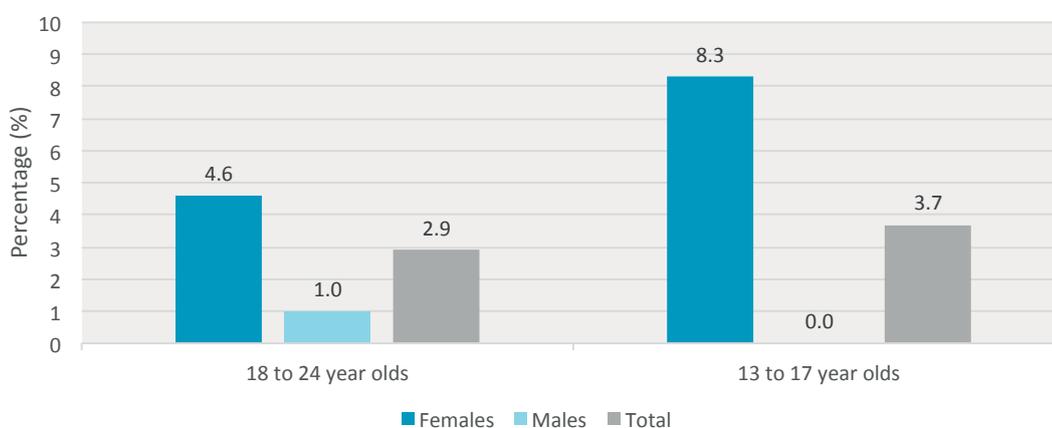


Figure 15. Per cent of females and males who reported their first experience of sexual intercourse was unwanted



7 | UTILIZATION OF SERVICES

Utilization of services

Summary of key findings

- In total, 14.6 per cent of males received services for an incident of physical violence during childhood and 26.2 per cent for an incident of sexual abuse during childhood.
- No females reported receiving services for experiences of physical violence or sexual abuse.
- Only 12.1 per cent of females aged 18 to 24 reported knowing where to get an HIV test, compared to 50.6 per cent of males.
- Only a small percentage of females (4.4 per cent) and males (4.6 per cent) aged 18 to 24 who had ever had sexual intercourse and experienced sexual abuse in childhood reported that they were tested for HIV.

This section presents the findings on receipt of services and other sources of support for experiences of physical violence and sexual abuse during childhood and in the 12 months prior to the survey. This section also presents data on HIV testing knowledge and behaviours of respondents who experienced at least one incident of sexual abuse during childhood, specifically knowledge of where to get an HIV test and whether respondents have ever received an HIV test.

Services for physical violence

There are significant differences in services received by females and males for experiences of physical violence in Lao PDR. Around 14.6 per cent of males received services for an incident of physical violence during childhood compared to 0 per cent of females. Similar data was found for utilization of services for any physical violence experienced in the last 12 months, with 9.6 per cent of males receiving services compared to 0 per cent of females.

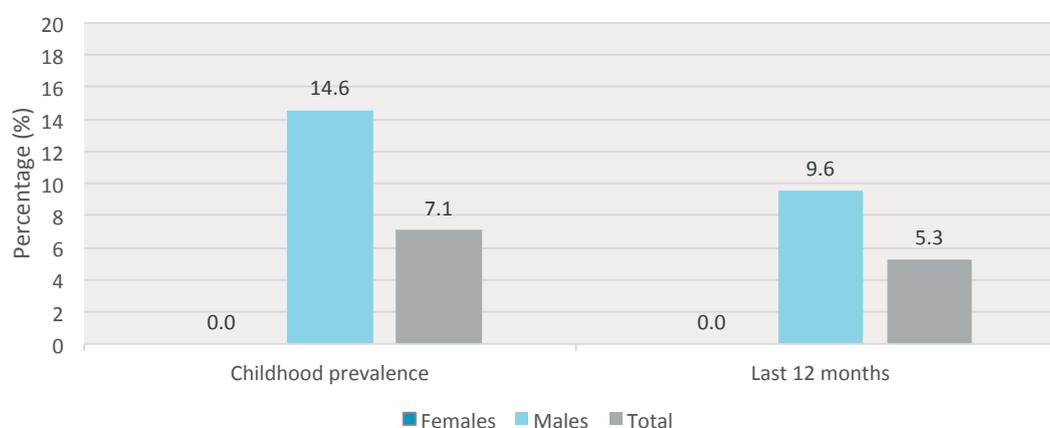


Figure 16. Per cent of females and males who experienced physical violence during childhood and in the past 12 months who reported receiving services for any incident of physical violence

Services for sexual abuse

Patterns in the receipt of services for experiences of sexual abuse were similar to those for physical violence. In total, 26.2 per cent of males in Lao PDR received services for an incident of sexual abuse during childhood compared to 0 per cent of females. Likewise, in the past 12 months 20.5 per cent of males reported receiving services for experiences of sexual abuse, compared to 0 per cent of females.

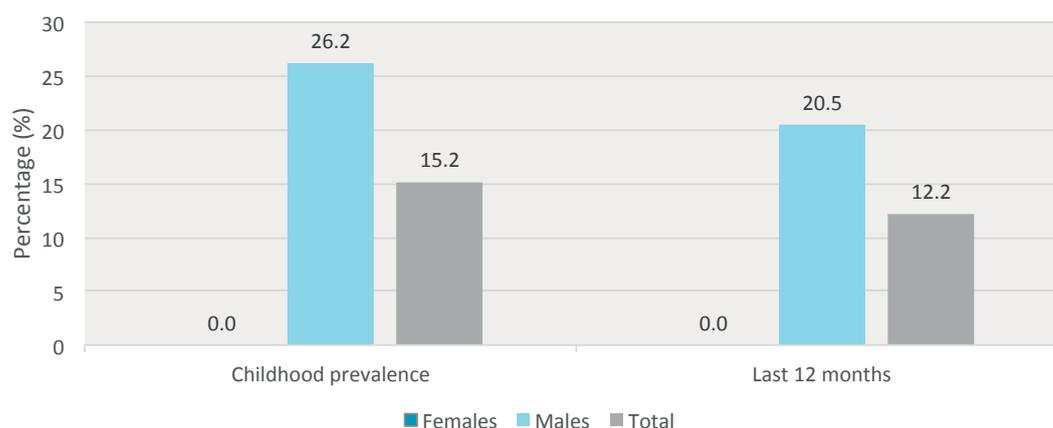


Figure 17. Per cent of females and males who experienced sexual abuse during childhood and in the past 12 months who reported receiving services for any incident of sexual abuse

HIV testing knowledge and behaviours

More than a third (35.7 per cent) of females and males aged 18 to 24 who experienced sexual abuse during childhood knew where to go for an HIV test, while only 4.5 per cent were actually tested for HIV.

There is a significant difference in knowledge of where to get an HIV test between females and males aged 18 to 24 who experienced sexual abuse during childhood. Only 12.1 per cent of females reported knowing where to get an HIV test compared to 50.6 per cent of males. Among 18 to 24 year olds who have ever had sexual intercourse and experienced sexual abuse during childhood, only 4.4 per cent of females and 4.6 per cent of males reported that they were tested for HIV. The vast majority of females and males in this age group who reported experiencing sexual abuse have therefore never been tested for HIV.

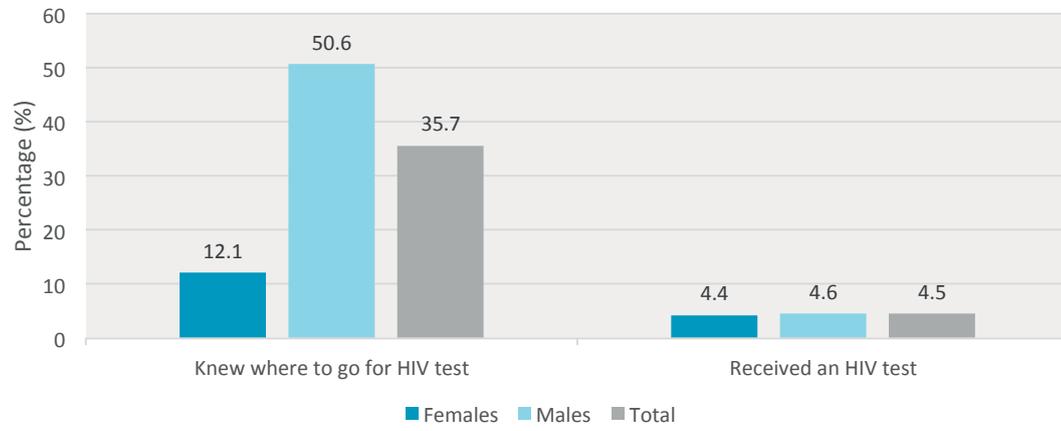


Figure 18. HIV testing knowledge and behaviour among 18 to 24 year olds who have ever had sexual intercourse and reported sexual abuse during childhood

8

CONCLUSION



Conclusion

This report presents the summary findings of the national Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR, which provides—for the first time—comprehensive nationally representative data on the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual violence against children. These data are essential for better understanding the patterns, circumstances and contributing factors of such violence in Lao PDR in order to enhance knowledge around this complex issue.

Similar to national surveys on violence against children in several other countries in Asia and in other parts of the world, the results reveal that violence in childhood is a common reality in Lao PDR. One in six children experienced at least one form of physical violence before the age of 18. More than a quarter of children witnessed physical violence at home and almost a third witnessed physical violence in the community. Roughly a quarter of children in Lao PDR experienced emotional violence at home and 1 in 10 experienced some form of sexual abuse as a child. Only 15 per cent of children ever received the support they need to recover from their experiences of sexual abuse.

The data generated in this survey also highlight the fact that violence in childhood affects males and females differently and that knowledge of and access to services differ substantially according to gender. The survey highlighted that males were more likely than females to experience all types of sexual abuse, while females were more likely to report their first experience of sexual intercourse as unwanted. Furthermore, males were significantly more likely to receive services for their experiences of physical violence and sexual abuse compared to females, revealing that females' knowledge of and access to services are particularly limited.

While the data confirm that violence is prevalent in Lao society, global evidence demonstrates that violence against children can be prevented if effective strategies are implemented to address its contributing risk factors. Through the development of recent laws and policies relating to violence against children, in particular the 2015 Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children and the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020, the Government of Lao PDR has already laid a strong foundation to address violence during childhood. As part of these efforts, concrete data and research are essential for revealing harmful attitudes and social norms that may perpetuate the cycle of violence and informing the development of appropriate family support and community-based services to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Based on the complete findings of this survey, which are expected in mid-2016, detailed priority actions that are time-bound and costed will be developed across the different sectors to support implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020. These actions will pave the way for important prevention and response initiatives that will help to ensure that all children in Lao PDR are protected from all forms of violence.

Appendix 1: Acknowledgements

The national Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR was made possible through the leadership of the National Commission for Mothers and Children. This report was produced under the direction of the National Steering Committee on the Violence against Children Survey, which was responsible for the overall design and coordination of the survey. The Steering Committee was comprised of representatives from the National Commission for Mothers and Children, the Lao Statistics Bureau, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Lao Women's Union. Implementation of the survey was undertaken by the Lao Statistics Bureau.

We would like to thank all organizations and individuals who have contributed to making the survey a success. Particular thanks goes to H.E. Khempeng Pholsena, former President of the National Commission for Mothers and Children, H.E. Lytou Bouapao, Acting President of the National Commission for Mothers and Children, Chongchith Chantharanonh, Acting Secretary General of the National Commission for Mothers and Children, Phonsaly Souksavath, Deputy Director General of the Lao Statistics Bureau, Yavang Vachouma, Director General of the Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau, Thipsavanh Intharack, former Deputy Director General of the Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau, Thirakha Chanthalanouvong, Deputy Director of the Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ninpaserth Xaiyaphone, Acting Director General of the Department of Women's Advancement, Lao Women's Union, and Khamheng Keovongsy, Deputy Director General of the Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, for their valuable guidance throughout the survey process.

We would also like to thank the data collection team from the Lao Statistics Bureau, the National Commission for Mothers and Children and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare led by Soulysack Phommasak, Director of Data Collection, Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau, for their hard work and dedication in conducting the interviews for this survey. Thanks also goes to the data centre team and those responsible for data analysis at the Lao Statistics Bureau. Most importantly we would like to thank each of the respondents who gave their time to participate in this survey and for sharing valuable information with our team.

The Violence against Children Survey was made possible through technical and financial support from UNICEF, funding support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and technical support from the Division of Violence Prevention of CDC. The Government of Lao PDR would like to acknowledge this support. The Government of Lao PDR would also like to thank Kirsten Di Martino, Chief of Child Protection, Carly Witheridge, Technical Specialist – Violence against Children, Phetviengkhone Sayasane, Child Protection Officer, and Kongchay Vongsaiya, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for their active contribution.

The report was prepared by Carly Witheridge, UNICEF Lao PDR, in close coordination with the Lao Statistics Bureau and the National Commission for Mothers and Children, with guidance from the National Steering Committee on the Violence against Children Survey and the National Secretariat for the National Commission for Mothers and Children. Valuable inputs and feedback were provided by CDC and the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

Appendix 2: Key terms and definitions

The agreed terms and definitions used for the Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR are in line with internationally recognized definitions and technical terms relating to violence against children. They are consistent with the terms and definitions used in other national violence against children surveys to allow for future comparison across countries and regions.

Physical violence

Physical violence is defined as any act of violence such as being punched, kicked, whipped, or beaten with an object, choked, smothered, tried to drown, burned, scalded intentionally, or used or threatened with a weapon such as a knife or other weapon. In this survey, respondents were specifically asked about physical acts of violence perpetrated by:

1. Intimate partners: people with whom the respondent has had a romantic relationship. This includes boyfriends/girlfriends, romantic partners, fiancés, live-in partners, and husbands/wives. The respondent does not need to have had a sexual relationship with this person for them to qualify as a partner. However, they must consider the relationship to be romantic.
2. Peers: people who are the same or a similar age as the respondent, not including a husband or romantic partner. These include people who the respondent may or may not know, such as siblings, schoolmates, neighbours or strangers.
3. Parents, guardians, adult caregivers and other adult relatives: This includes biological parents, adoptive or step-parents, other adult relatives (such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents) and relatives that may be closer to the age of the respondent (such as adult siblings and adult cousins).
4. Adults in the community: a wide variety of people (non-relatives) in the community that the respondent may or may not already know. This includes teachers, police, employers, religious persons or community leaders, neighbours, village authorities, or adult strangers.

Emotional violence

Emotional violence is defined as a pattern of verbal behaviour over time or an isolated incident that is not developmentally appropriate and supportive and that has a high probability of damaging a child's mental health, or his/her physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Emotional acts of violence include being told you are not loved, someone wished you had never been born, or being ridiculed or put down. In this survey, respondents were specifically asked about the following emotional acts of violence perpetrated by parents or caregivers:

- Told the respondent that they were not loved, or did not deserve to be loved
- Said they wished the respondent had never been born or was dead
- Ridiculed the respondent or put them down (for example, said that they were stupid or useless).

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is defined as including all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. This encompasses a range of offences, including completed non-consensual sex acts (i.e. rape), attempted non-consensual sex acts, abusive sexual contact (i.e. unwanted sexual touching), and non-contact sexual abuse (e.g. threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism, verbal sexual harassment). This also includes the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful or psychologically harmful sexual activity; the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; and the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Sexual abuse

In this survey, questions were asked about four types of sexual abuse:

- Touching in a sexual way without permission: this includes fondling, pinching, grabbing, or touching the respondent on or around their sexual body parts without their permission. Sexual touching does not include trying or forcing the respondent to have sex.
- Unwanted attempted sex: someone tried to physically force or pressure the respondent into having sex (vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the anus or vagina) without their permission, but sex did not happen.
- Physically forced sex: if anyone ever physically forced the respondent to have sex (vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the anus or vagina) regardless of whether the respondent did or did not fight back.
- Pressured sex: if anyone ever pressured the respondent to have sex (vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the anus or vagina) when they did not want to and sex happened. Pressured sex may involve threats, harassment, coercion, bribes or tricking the other person to have sex.

Sex or sexual intercourse: means vaginal, oral or anal sex, or the insertion of an object into the respondent's vagina or anus.

Sexual exploitation: If anyone has ever given the respondent money, food, goods, favours or other gifts to have sexual intercourse or perform any other sexual acts with them.

Non-contact sexual violence/exploitation: If anyone ever forced the respondent to participate in a sex photo or video or forced them to show their sexual body parts in front of a webcam, camera or mobile phone whether they wanted to or not.

Appendix 3: Overview of survey questions

Three questionnaires were used in this survey: a household questionnaire, a male questionnaire and a female questionnaire.

Household questionnaire

The household questionnaire collected information on the following:

- Demographics of the household
- Socio-economic situation of the household
- Water and sanitation
- Fuel
- Housing structure and household items
- Livestock and land use for agriculture by the household
- Bank account owned by the household
- Child vulnerability within the household
- Basic needs
- Migration
- Disability

Respondent questionnaires

The male and female questionnaires collected information on the following topics:

- Background of respondent. Questions about the respondent's age, education, friendships, work, parents, marriage and partnerships.
- Gender attitudes. Questions about general attitudes towards gender roles.
- Safety. Questions about how safe respondents feel in their community.
- Witnessing physical violence. Questions about witnessing physical violence by strangers or people respondents know in the home or in the community.

- Physical violence victimization and services. Questions about the respondent's experiences of three measures of physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner; a peer; a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative; and adults in the community. This was followed by questions exploring whether respondents have accessed services and other sources of support for physical violence.
- Emotional violence victimization. Questions about the respondent's experiences of three measures of emotional violence by a parent, guardian, adult caregiver or other adult relative.
- Sexual behaviour. Questions about whether the respondent has ever engaged in sexual activity, pregnancy (female questionnaire only), sexual history and risk taking.
- Sexual exploitation. Questions about exchanging money, goods or favours for sex.
- Non-contact sexual violence. Questions about participation in sex photos or videos, or showing of sexual body parts in front of a webcam, camera or mobile phone.
- Sexual violence victimization and services. Questions about the respondent's experiences of three measures of unwanted sexual contact by a romantic partner, family member, friend or stranger. This was followed by questions exploring whether respondents have accessed services and other sources of support for sexual violence.
- Perpetration of violence. Questions about whether the respondent has ever been physically or sexually violent towards another person.
- Substance abuse and health. Questions about the respondent's use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, their mental health, and HIV and sexually transmitted infections.
- Responding to sensitive questions. Questions that were used to conclude the interview, and to document the respondent's feelings about the interview.

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Disclaimer: the photos in this report and the children shown within them are in no way associated with the subject matter of violence.

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