

Protecting children from harm

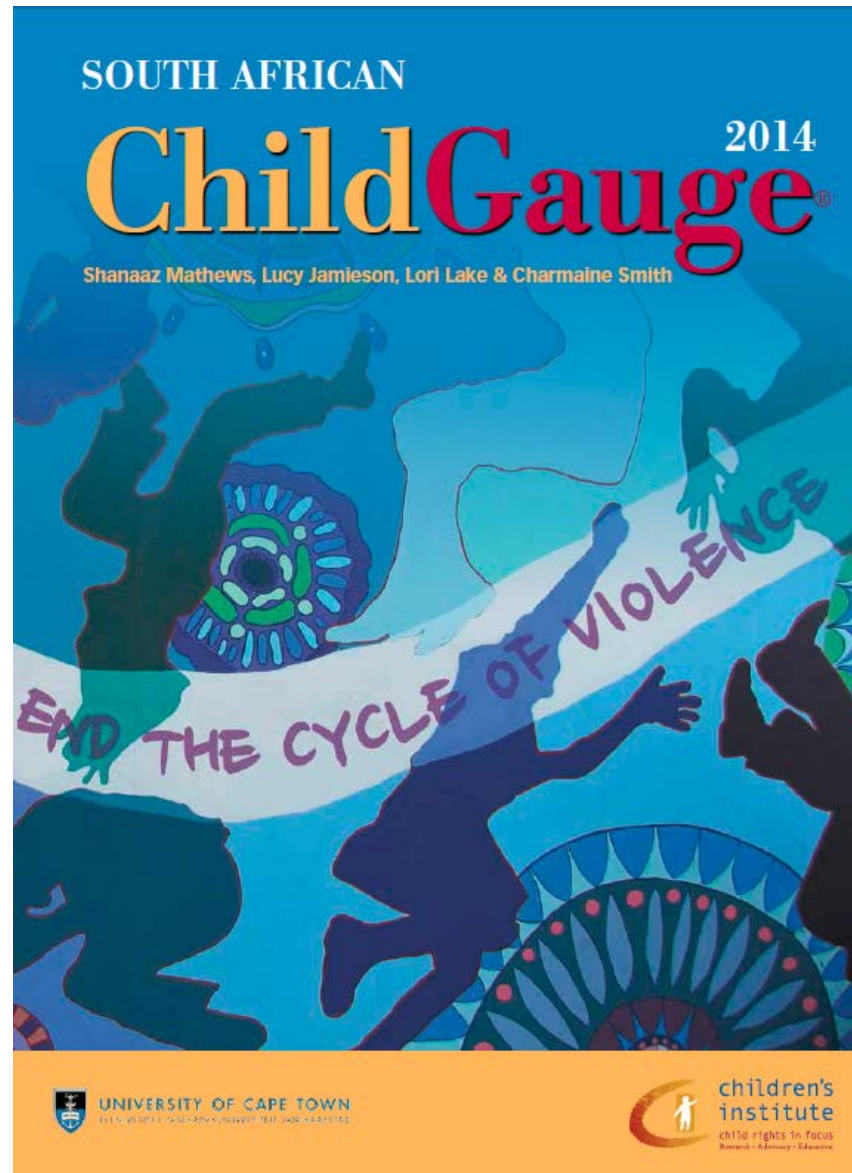
Presentation at:

Roundtable on emerging evidence on impact of
programmes on wellbeing of young children

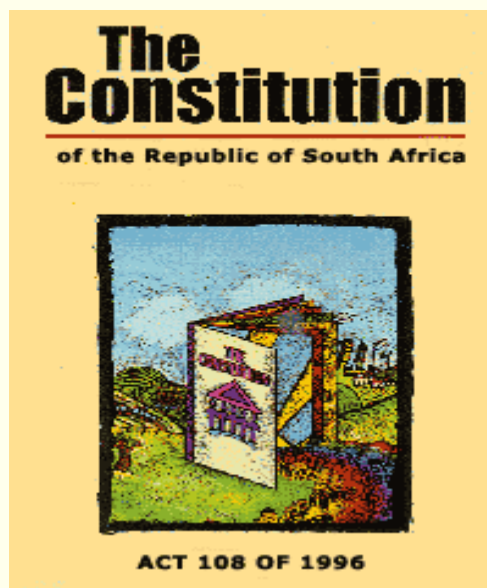
28th April 2015

**Prof. Shanaaz Mathews, Director
Children's Institute, University of Cape Town**

Preventing violence against children: *Breaking the intergenerational cycle*



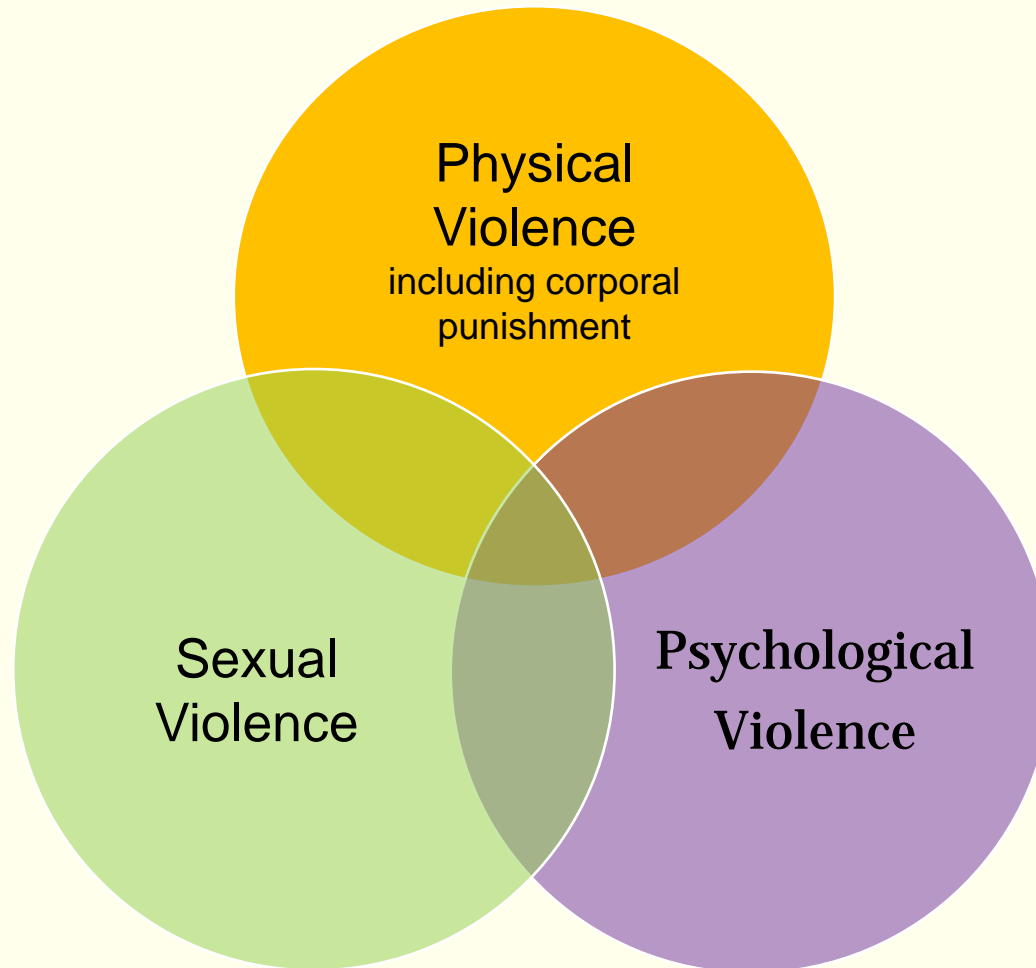
Government has put in place laws and policies to protect children from violence ...



Children have the right to **protection** from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation



... but children continue to experience violence
in their homes, schools, communities and relationships



Violence against children in SA

- ❑ No national estimates
- ❑ Community-based studies

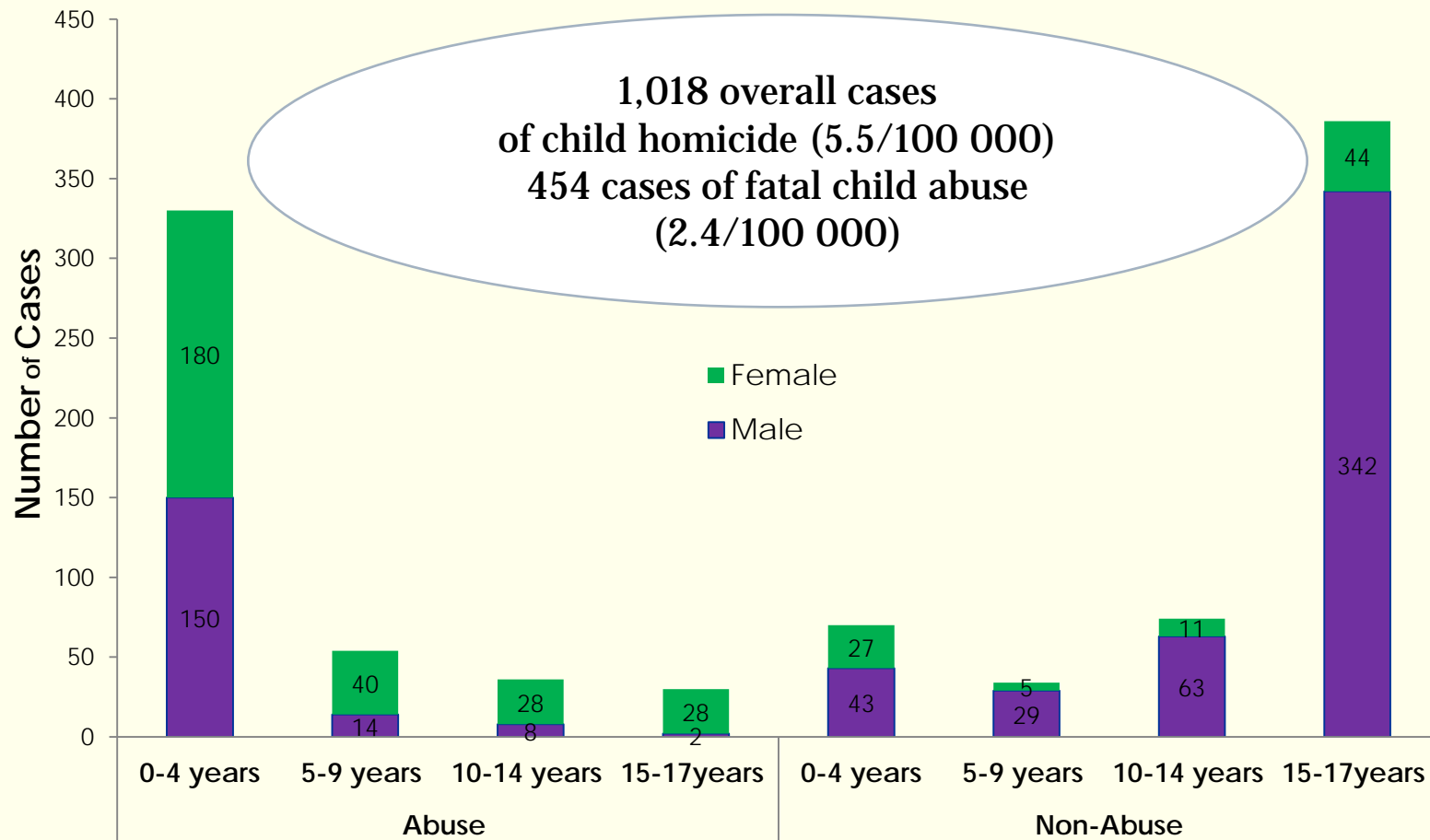
Physical abuse	55% of children ¹
Witness domestic violence	35 - 45% of children ²
Emotional abuse and neglect	53% girls + 56% boys ³
Sexual violence	39% girls + 16% boys ⁴

1. Meinck, Cluver & Boyes in press; 2. Seedat et al 2009; 3. Jewkes et al 2010; 4. Jewkes et al 2009.

- ❑ 44% (22 781) of sexual offences reported to the police are children under the age of 18 years (SAPS 2013/2014)



Fatal Child Abuse





Life-course perspective

- ❑ Different forms of violence more prevalent at certain developmental stages
- ❑ Differential impact based on developmental phase of the child
- ❑ Early experiences of violence influence later outcomes
- ❑ Cumulative effect can have long term negative consequences

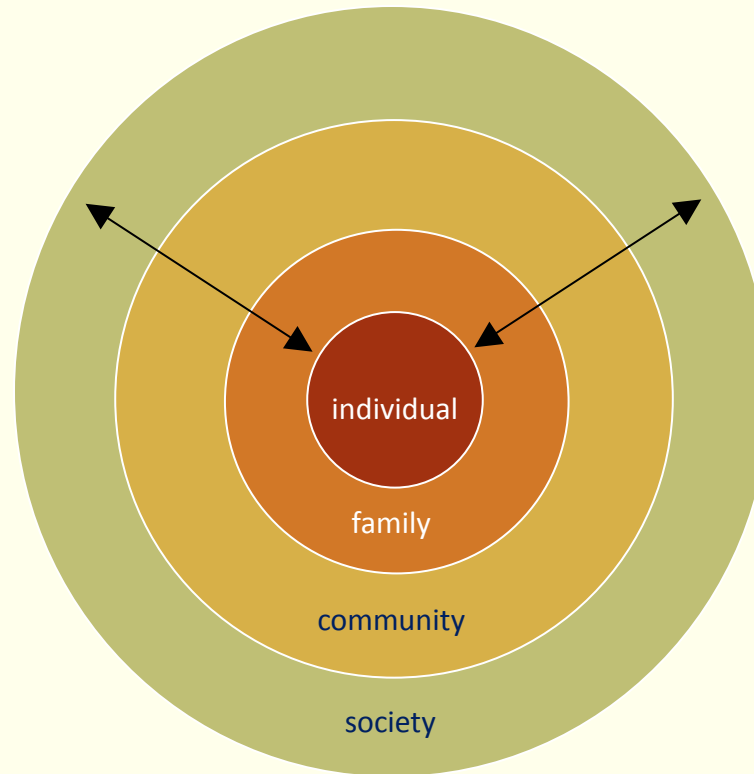


Why is it important to intervene early ?

- ❑ To prevent - injury and premature death
- ❑ To prevent lasting neurological and psychological damage
 - Trauma during childhood “*toxic stress*” affects brain development enhancing anti-social behaviour (Seedat et al 2009)
 - Witnessing violence in the home associated with increased violence outcomes (Abrahams and Jewkes 2005)
 - Children not living with parents or orphaned are more vulnerable to abuse (Cluver et al 2011; Nduna & Jewkes 2012)
 - Impacts on adult relationships and ability to parent
- ❑ Threatens well-being of the next generation
- ❑ Economic costs to society



Socio-ecological model

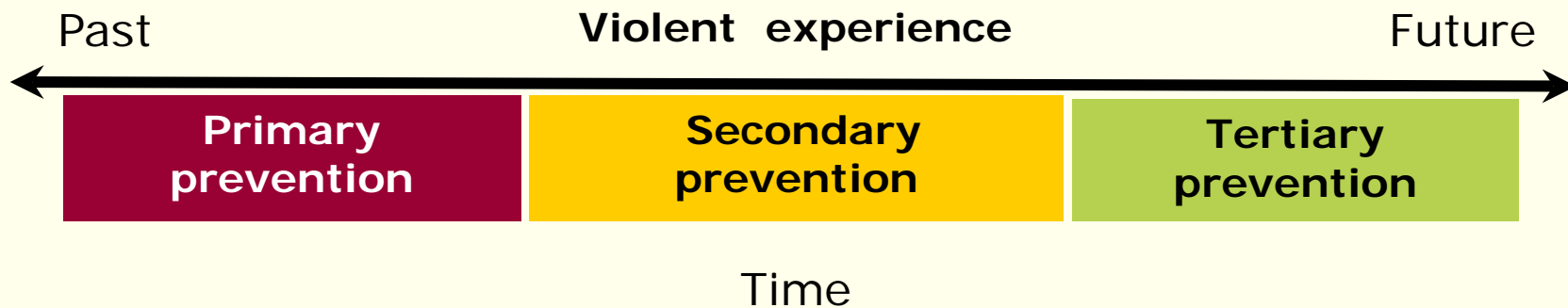




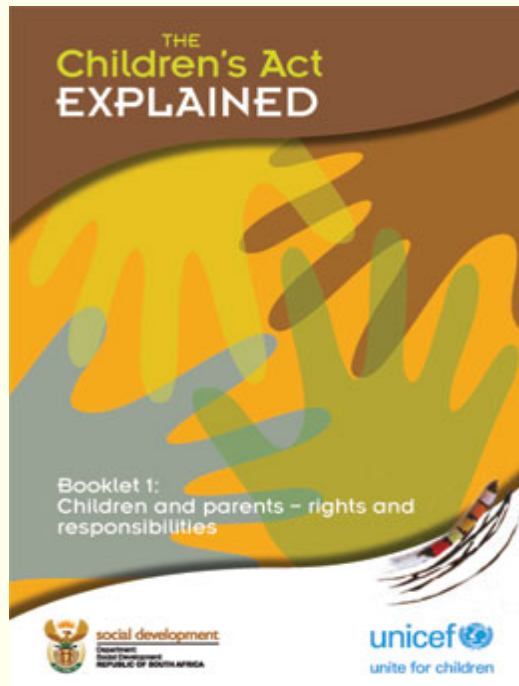
VIOLENCE **CAN** BE PREVENTED



A shift to primary prevention



How is South Africa doing?



- ❑ Children's Act of 2005 provides the policy framework
- ❑ Continuum of care –
Prevention, early intervention ,
statutory and aftercare services
- ❑ Draft National Strategic
Plan – Prevention and
Early Intervention

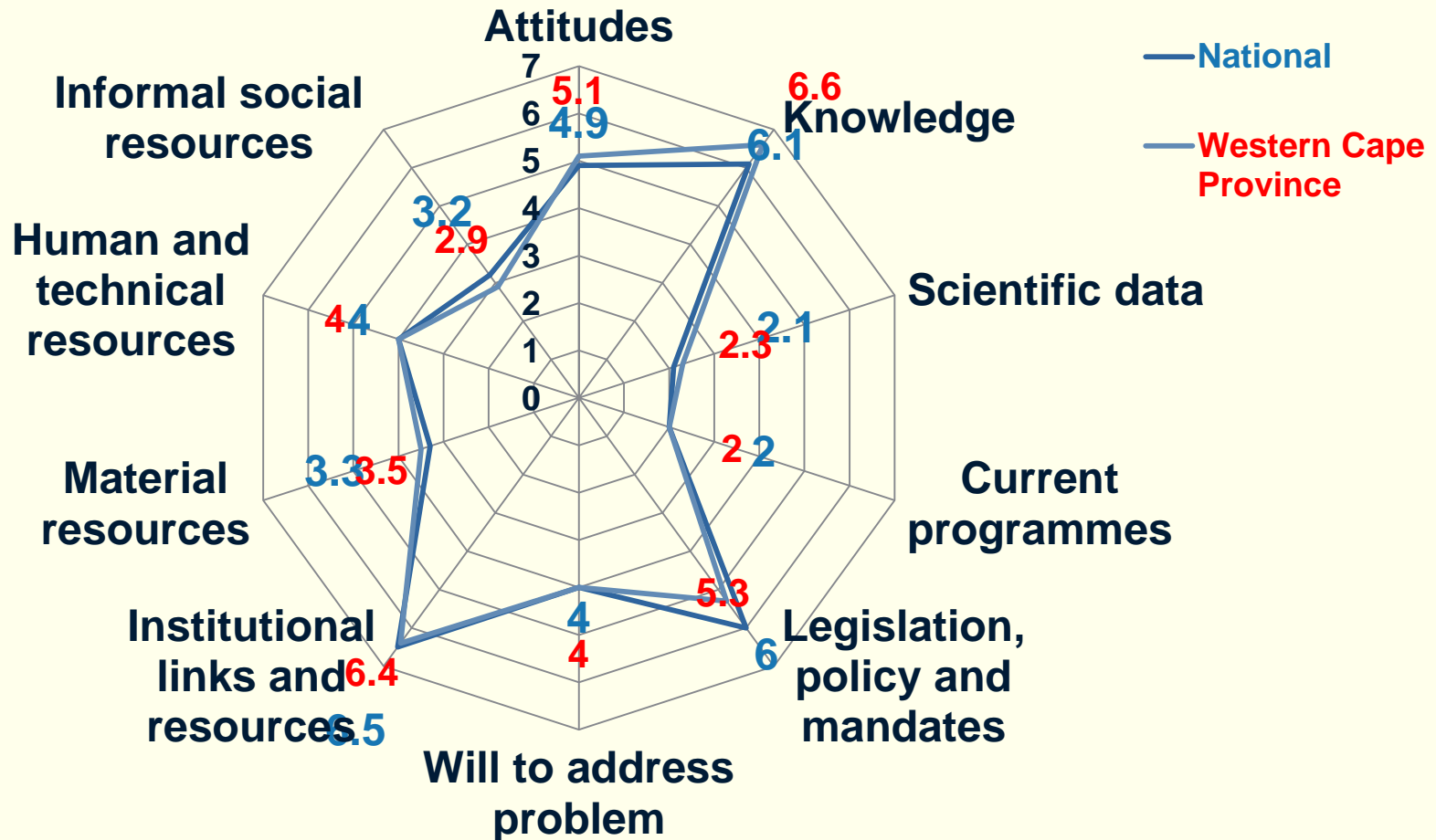


But....

- ❑ Prevention and early intervention does not neatly match the public health conceptualisation of prevention
- ❑ Shift to prevention has been slow
- ❑ Low level of readiness to implement large scale prevention programmes



How ready is South Africa?¹

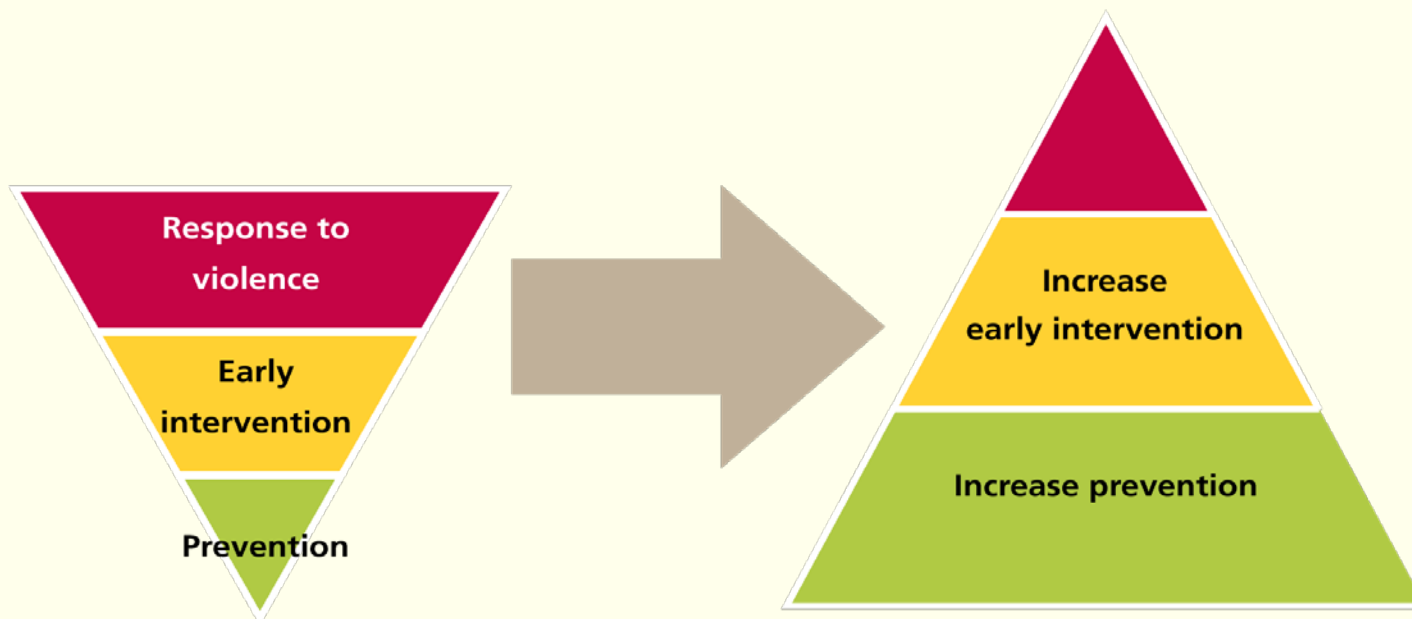


¹ Mikton, C., Power, M., Raleva, M., Makoae, M., Al Eissa, M., Cheah, I., Cardia, N., Choo, C. & Al Muneef, M. (2013) The assessment of the readiness of five countries to implement child maltreatment prevention programs on a large scale. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 2013 Aug 17;pii: S0145-2134(13)00189-0. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.07.009.



What shifts are required?

Increase investment in prevention



What happens now:

more money goes to services for children who have been abused

What should happen:

more money should go to programmes that prevent violence against children



CRITICAL POINTS OF INTERVENTION ACROSS THE LIFE-COURSE



What works for young children



- ❑ Integrate prevention/protection into **health, ECD and development programmes** to increase reach
- ❑ **Parenting programmes** promote positive parenting and reduce harsh punishment
- ❑ **Target high-risk families** to support vulnerable children and caregivers
- ❑ Prevent **corporal punishment** in the home drawing on multiple strategies

Primary-school children



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- **Primary prevention** programmes mobilise community stakeholders and create safe spaces for children to play
- **Early intervention** services protect children from further harm and/or reduce secondary trauma
- **Diversion** programmes rehabilitate young offenders

Adolescents



- ❑ **Life-skills programmes** challenge peer pressure and violence in intimate relationships
- ❑ **School-based interventions** can influence individuals, peers, parents and teachers
- ❑ **Community-based interventions** can target multiple risk behaviours
- ❑ **Quality education and access to jobs** enable young men to gain respect without resorting to violence

A targeted multi-dimensional approach

- ❑ requires a **shift in practice** and resources
- ❑ starts by **defining the extent of the problem** to inform the targeting of services
- ❑ strengthen **reporting and surveillance** systems
- ❑ locates the child within a **broader system**
- ❑ focuses on **reducing the risk** and enhancing protective factors
- ❑ **investing in young children and their families** has the potential to break the cycle of violence

