

The Drivers of Violence Against Children in Myanmar

Visualized
Findings from
Adolescent
Consultations
in Kachin and
Rakhine States



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The 'Drivers of Violence Against Adolescents in Myanmar: Consultations to Inform Adolescent Programming Report' is part of the [Understanding Violence Against Adolescents in Myanmar Series](#) which aims to contribute to this growing body of evidence to understand better why violence against children is happening and what is driving it.

The series draws data from both nationally representative data as is presented in this report and from the UNICEF-supported interventions where diverse information is being collected as part of programme monitoring. The aim of the series is to look closely at the data at hand and dig deeper the issue of violence against children in Myanmar. We hope to generate evidence, create a fuller understanding of the issue and stimulate discussions, all to better inform programming to address violence against children in Myanmar.

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Overall Coverage of Adolescent Consultations

Executive Summary

U-Report and Round Robin consultations were implemented to explore the scope, causes, and consequences for: School violence and bullying; Child marriage; Adolescent intimate partner violence; Adolescent sexual and reproductive health; Help-seeking and disclosure behaviours; and Migration. Both consultations were informed by secondary analysis of existing national datasets, including the Global School Health Survey (GSHS), the Demographic Health Survey (DHS), and the 2014 Myanmar Census.

Total participants between U-Report and Round Robin consultation

2 Round Robin Consultation Regions
Kachin State, Rakhine State

14 U-Report Regions
Mon; Ayrawady; Bago; Chin; Kachin; Kayah; Kayin; Magway; Mandalay; Rakhine; Sagaing; Shan; Tanintharyi, Yangon

U-Report poll responses

6,809 male poll responses

9,827 female poll responses

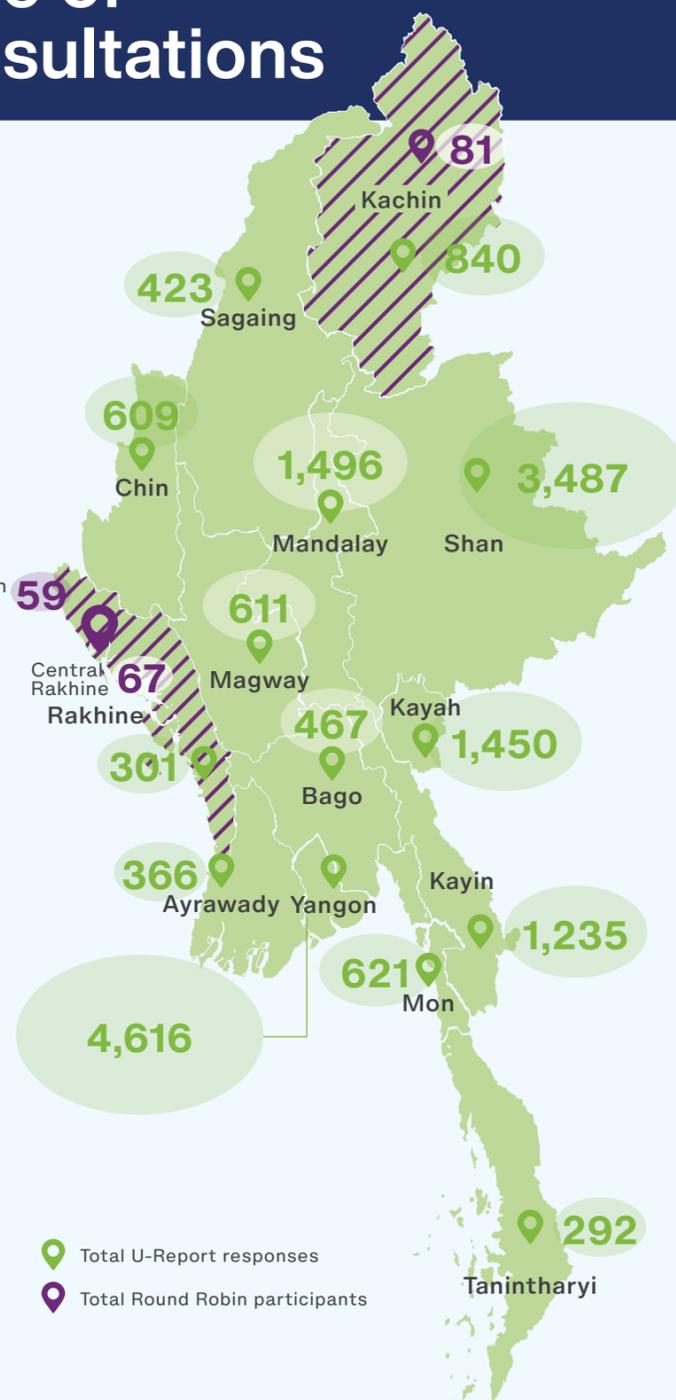
178 other/non-binary poll responses

Round Robin Participants

95 male Round Robin participants

112 female Round Robin participants

The steps of conducting this consultation



Consultations with 207 young people ages 18 to 22 years old (95 males, 112 females) using a range of participatory activities were held in Central Rakhine, Northern Rakhine, and Kachin. Participants came from Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camps and host communities (defined as non-IDP communities in Northern Rakhine with both Muslim and Rakhine participants), to explore social norms and drivers of violence against children with the specific goal of (re) designing prevention interventions.

Complimentary quantitative polls were also conducted using U-Report. U-Report is an innovation-based, user-centred social monitoring tool based on simple Short Message Service (SMS) messages to gather poll questions and results, and to share useful information. It is designed to strengthen community-led development. In total, U-Report users provided responses to several polls in the consultation phase. Of the polls, 9,827

were filled out by females, 6,809 by males and 356 by those who in non-gender binary terms as 'other'.

Key areas of exploration for both the qualitative consultation and the U-Report polls were identified through an initial secondary analysis of national surveys such as the Global school-based student health survey (GSHS), the Demographic & Health Survey (DHS) and the Myanmar Census. The consultations highlighted the dynamics of growing up in Myanmar and different adolescent profiles in relation to the following key areas:

- School violence and bullying,
- Migration,
- Substance abuse, and
- Adolescent intimate partner violence and help-seeking behaviours.



School Violence and Bullying

School Violence and Bullying

School Bullying: Adolescent perceptions on behaviours, norms, and expectations of boys, girls, and teachers (Round Robin, U-Report)

Boy Students	Teachers	Girl Students
Boys begin teasing and harassing girls at an early age, specifically about girls' body parts during puberty	Adolescents perceive that teachers prioritize their students in favour of the rich, attractive, and intelligent. This prioritization includes giving hints for exams, and treating students negatively who cannot give seasonal donations for local occasions.	In both Muslim girls' and boy's Round Robin groups, one main reason for bullying was because of being a girl
Boys also experience sexual harassment at school, mostly from other boys	Students who are treated badly by their teachers are, in turn treated badly by other pupils	The norm for a girl to report school violence or bullying to someone else is much stronger than that of boys
Boys have mixed expectations from friends to report, join in, or intervene when witnessing bullying		



Seven out of 10 girls are expected to report bullying to another adult, according to the expectation of friends (U-Report)



Four out of 10 boys are expected to report bullying to another adult, according to the expectation of friends (U-Report)



Out of 96 countries that use the GSHS measure, Myanmar is the only country globally where self-reported school violence and bullying has an increasing trend for both boys and girls



According to Round Robin participants, a lack of empathy and intolerance of difference are the main causes of bullying



Round Robin participants highlighted that the way teachers treat students influences the way that students treat each other

Perhaps what is most alarming is that out of 96 countries that use the GSHS measure, Myanmar is the only country globally where self-reported school violence and bullying has an increasing trend for both boys and girls. To understand what is causing this school violence and bullying, the consultation process asked young people about their perceptions of the causes of bullying in school.

Young people thought the main causes of bullying related to lack of empathy and intolerance of difference. Most of the main causes young people ranked as the top causes of bullying pointed to a lack of empathy that pupils have towards others who are different (e.g., ethnicity, appearance, gender, socio-economic status). This is one of the coherent overarching themes coming out of the school violence and bullying data from the qualitative focus groups. As one group from Northern Rakhine mentioned, one of their top reasons for what causes bullying is that "there is no sympathy in humanity ... hatred is always given precedence."

Young people highlighted the link between how teachers treat students and how students treat each other. When young people talked about bullying in the listing and ranking activity, they often talked about the preferential treatment from teachers (either for good or in terms of corporal punishment) and the links with bullying between pupils. The example given by participants in Central Rakhine was around teachers favouring rich students by giving them hints for exams. They also mentioned that students who cannot make donations for seasonal occasions (such as Khathe ceremony offerings to monks) are badly treated by teachers. In turn, those students are also badly treated by pupils. In this way, teachers' treatment of pupils sets the example for how pupils treat each other.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) was commonly mentioned by both boys and girls. Strikingly, in both the Muslim girls' and boys' groups, one main reason for bullying was because of being a girl or gender inequality. This also came up in girls' IDP camps as a main reason, but specifically teasing and bullying behaviours related to girls' body parts especially during puberty (e.g. growing buttocks and breasts). Whereas, SRGBV also happened to boys in IDP camps as a way to put boys in their place and make fun of them through sexual harassment. Examples given include getting their trousers and longyis pulled off and their butts being fingered from behind – almost always by other boys.

Norms differ among boys and girls about what they should do if they witness school violence or bullying. When asked how they thought their friends would expect them to react if they witnessed bullying, 70 per cent of females, compared to 42 per cent of males, said their friends would expect them to report it to another adult – the most common expectation for both genders. Boys also had expectations from friends to join in on the bullying in 1 in 5 instances, or to intervene in nearly 1 in 4 instances.

This suggests that the norms to report are much stronger for girls, whereas there are conflicting norms from friends for boys on whether to report, to try and stop the bullying or to join in on the bullying. Likewise, young people experienced conflicting normative messages from parents and teachers about what they are expected to do if they witness bullying. This data suggests that a school-based intervention that focuses on bystander roles could be successful in shifting norms since there is not one single strong norm influencing behaviour.

Intimate Partner Violence and Disclosure

Intimate Partner Violence and Disclosure

Intimate Partner Violence and Disclosure: Adolescent perceptions on controlling behaviours in relationships (Round Robin, U-Report)



15–19 years old: 10% of wives report 3+ marital control behaviours from their husbands (DHS)



15–19 years old: 15% of girls have experienced physical violence by their partner. Among these, 10% have experienced violence often or in the past 12 months (DHS)



One in every three young people believe that monitoring their partner's social media is acceptable

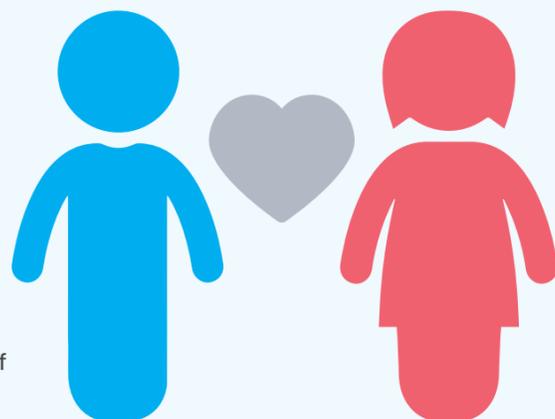


15–19 years old: 1 in 2 girls told someone about the violence that they experienced, but did not seek professional help (DHS)

Intense jealousy, described as “loving too much,” underpins controlling and violent behaviours, leading to attention seeking and restricting social networks

Social media activity is monitored and feels pushed to demonstrate proof of his affection publicly

The lack of job opportunities in Rakhine and Muslim communities is cited as one of the top reasons for violence within the relationship



Has the expectation to play a communicative role to reason with her partner

Lack of awareness and trust in laws in place to protect her

Belief that her experience with violence is written off as her luck or destiny (linked to religion)

Anecdotes shared by Round Robin participants on intimate partner violence

“A friend of mine married her husband because they were in love. Not long after he began to beat her. Once, we asked why and she said that she didn't wait for him to have dinner together.”

“A friend was in love with a younger boy. He didn't have a job so she supported him with clothes, a phone and money. He is violent and calls her ugly. She couldn't bear it anymore and left him.”

Round Robin Participants cited family shame and social stigmas as key barriers for survivors of violence to disclose and seek help.



Existing nationally representative data from the Demographic Health Survey (2015/16) highlight that **intimate partner violence is frequent in adolescent relationships** in Myanmar with 15 per cent of 15- to 19-year-old girls who are in relationships having experienced physical violence by their partner since age 15. Of these, 10 per cent have experienced it often or sometime in the past 12 months.

Adolescents who are married as children also experience the highest levels of controlling behaviours from their spouses and partners. Most marital control behaviours are more common in the youngest age group: 10 per cent of women age 15–19 report that their husbands demonstrate three or more marital control behaviours, as compared with 6 per cent of women age 40–49.

Adolescents also hold more negative gender norm beliefs around intimate partner violence than adults with 64 per cent of all adolescents agreeing with at least one statement condoning the use of intimate partner violence compared to 52 per cent of adults. **Common across all the activities in the focus groups, equating love with violence was a central theme particularly for young people from host communities in Kachin and Central Rakhine.** For Northern Rakhine in both Rakhine and Muslim community sites we see stressors, such as lack of employment opportunities, as being one of the top reasons for violence within relationships (mentioned more frequently by boys) alongside gender inequality (mentioned by girls).

A total of 5,174 participants aged 18 to 24 years old filled out the U-report questions on gender norms (3,140 girls and 1,976 boys, and 58 non-binary participants from 15 regions in the country). **Findings show that perceptions of the acceptance of controlling behaviours came up frequently among young people.** About 1 in 5 young people approved of monitoring partners' movements, and around 1 in 3 young people were okay with monitoring social media. Monitoring social media was perceived to be acceptable at around the same rate, whether it was done by a teenage boy (30.4 per cent of girls and 34.4 per cent of boys agreed) or by a teenage girl (34.1 per cent of girls and 30.8 per cent of boys agreed) to their partner.

While controlling behaviours happen to both boys and girls in relationships, the gender norm is that girls cannot go against their partner's control without

repercussions (disapproval from parents and even violence from partners, for example). For girls, more than half believe that parents and friends will disagree with them if they disobey their husband or boyfriend. This sanction or negative repercussion for not following the social norm (in this instance to obey your husband and boyfriend) only existed for girls. The social norm around who has control over the other person's behaviour is important for understanding repercussions (such as violence) when a girl breaks this norm. Parents serve as the main reference network for how a young wife should behave in marriage.

Feelings of jealousy, often described as “loving too much”, underpin controlling behaviours among adolescents in intimate relationships. These controlling behaviours were linked to attention seeking among boys which also lead to restricted social networks and activities for their female partner. Among girls these feelings of jealousy also lead to social media monitoring within the relationship as well as pushing their male partner to prove their affection. When discussing how girls could respond to experiencing physical intimate partner violence, both boy and girl groups responded with suggestions that the girl could explain herself and reason with her partner. **Such responses underpin the typical expectation of girls to play a communicative role in their relationship, family, and community. This gender role was a regular theme across many discussions including forced migration and child marriage.**

Adolescents do tell someone such as a family member about the violence they experience in their relationships but they are less likely to seek professional help than adults. Both boys and girls mentioned the shame and stigma of having experienced violence as a barrier to help-seeking alongside being fearful of the safety for a girl if she does report. Girls also mentioned what they called ‘cultural norms and attitudes’, citing that a girl may not know that what she is experiencing is violent behaviour, nor the existing laws in place surrounding intimate partner violence. They also mentioned that even if she was aware of them, the laws themselves would not be helpful to her. Girls' religious beliefs reinforce the concept that the violence they are experiencing in their relationships are their given luck or destiny, because their lives have already been written for them. These are significant normative barriers to help-seeking that programming should seek to address among girls.

Migration

Migration

Round Robin participant perceptions on expectations and recommendations for girls and migration



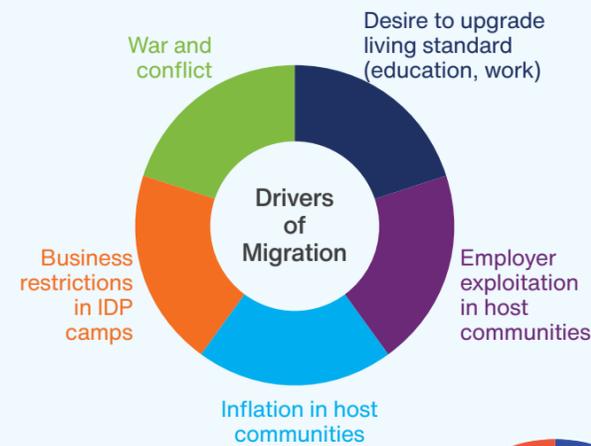
15–24 years old: In Myanmar, one in every five young people have migrated from their place of birth (DHS)



In Kachin State, Round Robin participants often linked migration for girls with child marriage



In IDP camps, Round Robin participants two unique themes: the freedom that comes with migration into urban centres, and the racial and religious discrimination that led to conflicts that caused their migration



Rakhine State

Research where she is going to make sure that a broker is not taking advantage of her

Memorize hotline numbers and embassy resources

Learn about the culture of the destination

Reason with the debtor

Provide for her family

Learn about her rights

Kachin State

Communicate her feelings and aspirations to stay in school

Ask others for financial favours to prevent her from leaving

Provide for her family

Learn about her rights

Substance Abuse

Substance Abuse

 Both boys and girls responded that drugs were both available and affordable in their communities

 Approximately one in every two young people said that drug use was common amongst their friends

 The majority of respondents from all genders and regions indicated that they would speak to their friend if worried someone was using drugs. Girls indicated that they would also disclose to their mothers

Comparisons on community response to male and female drug users

Kachin State

Inform authorities, police, and community leaders

Institutionalize at rehabilitation centre

Teach him about the dangers of drugs

Relocate him to another area

Enlist him in the military

Find a job for him

Pray for him, engage with the church

Rakhine State

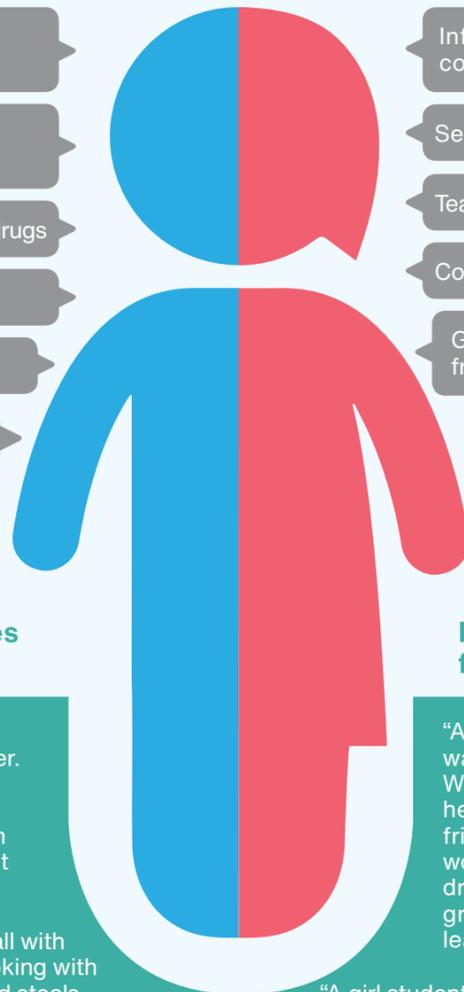
Inform teachers, the police, community leaders

Seek help from the hospital

Teach her about the dangers of drugs

Consult with her friends for support

Go to the movies, spend time with friends, and distract her from drugs



Round Robin Anecdotes from Kachin

“One boy was spoiled by his parents and became a drug user. The surrounding people tried to drive him out because they suspected him of stealing, even from his own house. He was put into jail often.”

“One boy started played football with the elder boys and started smoking with them. Now he’s using drugs and steals donations from the church.”

“Two boys became addicted to drugs after working in the mines, they were sent away to rehab by their parents but escaped.”

Round Robin Anecdotes from Rakhine

“A sixteen-year-old girl at school was an outstanding student. When her grades became bad, her parents were upset. Her friends convinced her that she would learn better by taking drugs. Her parents thought her grades were improving but later learned she was addicted.”

“A girl student uses WY pills not to feel sleepy. She used for six days and now is addicted.”

“There is a boy with rich parents who steals from his family to buy drugs. When they found out, they drove him out of the house. He still steals money and takes drugs more than before.”

Adolescents within the study sites perceived substance abuse as a big problem. Substance abuse is an area where there is no nationally representative data for adolescents in terms of prevalence. Among the 4,160 respondents to the U-Report poll, both female and male said they know someone who uses drugs (n=2,304). **Approximately 1 in every 2 young people said that drug use was ‘common’ amongst their friends.** Considering that the U-Report respondents are likely to be more ‘engaged’ youth, we can hypothesize that this may even be an underestimate of the true prevalence. **Both boys and girls also responded that drugs were both available and affordable to adolescents in their communities.**

When asked what they thought caused drug use, a combination of boredom and being influenced by others accounted for approximately 50–70 per cent of the reasons, according to young people. Consistent with previous findings that determine the strongest reference network, the majority of respondents from all genders and regions had indicated that they would speak to their friend if they were worried that someone was taking drugs.

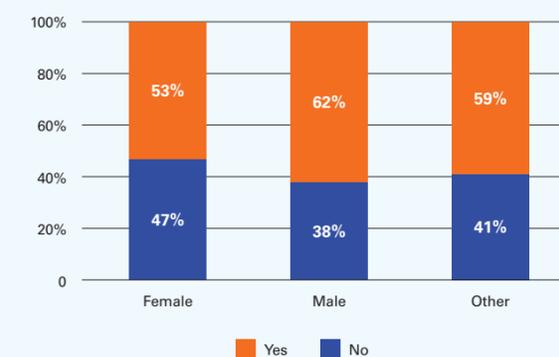
While similar to the issue of adolescent intimate partner violence, many girls would also disclose to their mothers when worried about someone’s potential drug use.

In Central and Northern Rakhine, community anecdotes shared by participants show that drug abuse is an issue that affects both boys and girls.

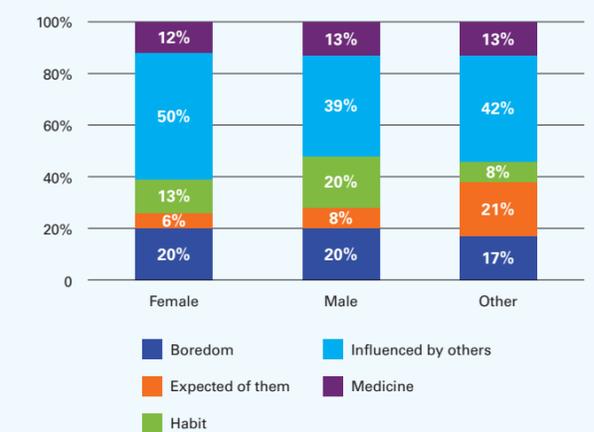
Although this may also be true in Kachin State, all community anecdotes shared by participants were of boys who had become addicted to drugs. Discussions with participants during the vignette activity also showed that intervention approaches in response to the individual’s drug use vary based on location and sex of the victim. In Kachin, the common intervention method for the male drug user in the vignette story focused on relocation, rehabilitation, military enrolment, and religious intervention with local leaders and youth groups. In Central Rakhine however, the intervention response for the female drug user in the vignette, apart from seeking external support from family and service providers, was to shift her focus away from drugs through increased socialization and activities with her friends.

The U-Report polls, which are not nationally representative but are of a large sample size of young people across the country, asked if young people knew someone who takes drugs and from the 4,160 respondents (F 2,382 M 1,728 O 50) to this poll, the majority of respondents, both female and male said they did know someone (n=2,304). In addition, both boys and girls responded that drugs were both available and affordable to adolescents in their communities.

Do you know anyone who uses drugs?



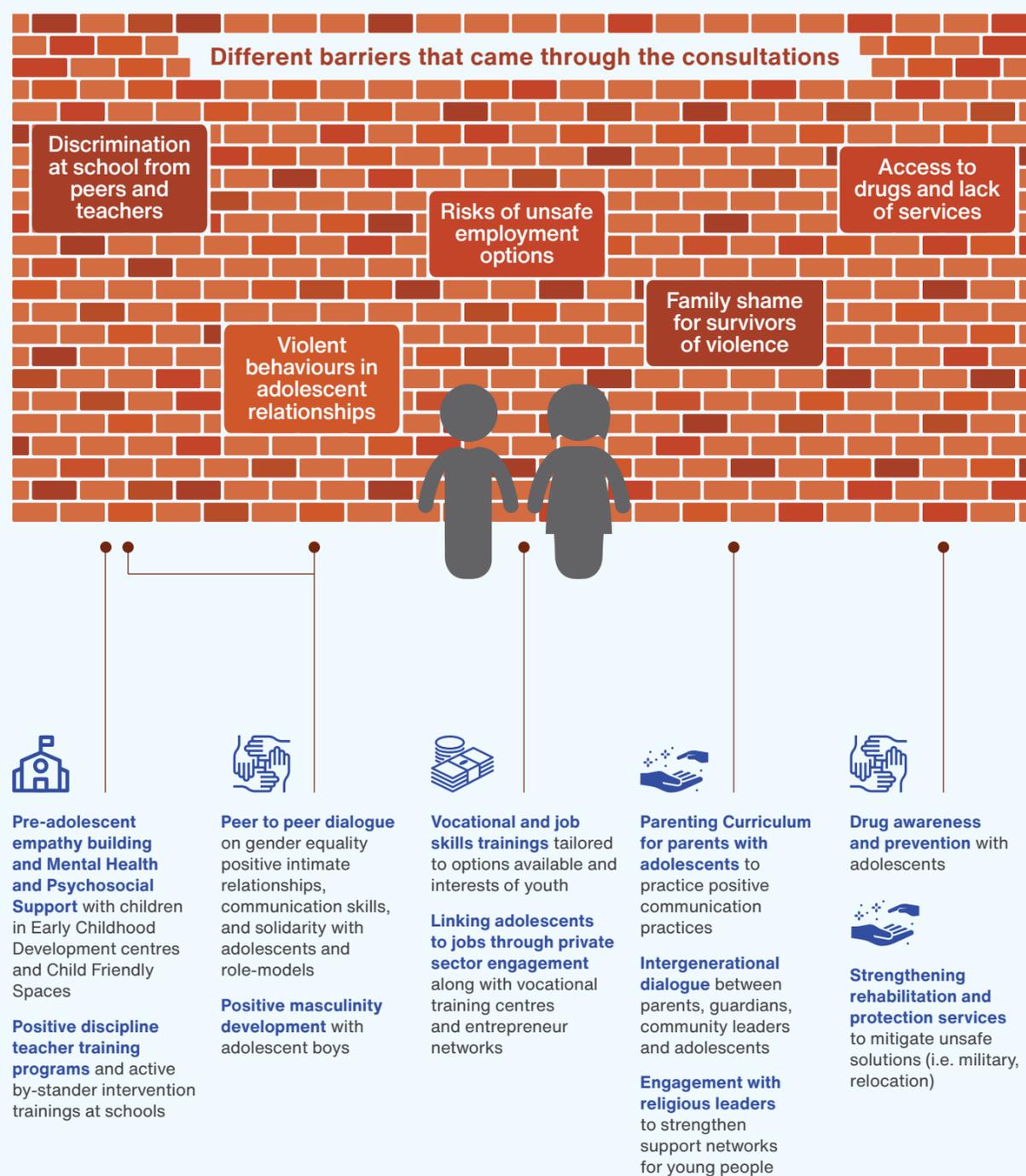
Why do you think people in your community take drugs?



Programming Recommendations

Programming Recommendations

Adolescent Barriers and Programming Response



Responses from these groups across all activities not only identified underlying trends that link behaviours, practices and expectations to the drivers behind violence against children, but also the programming interventions and potential entry points to mitigate and respond to them. The following programmatic recommendations are not meant to be taken as stand-alone interventions to be applied in one region, but rather as elements of a design that should be included or strengthened with the partnership and collective input shared among the development community, including local civil society organisations (CSOs), government stakeholders, service providers, community leaders, parents, and most importantly youth themselves. These recommendations are based on the evidence found through this consultation process of analysing national data, consultations with young people in three sites and findings from U-Report polls.

No.	Thematic Programming Area	Target Groups	Intervention Specified	Evidence-based Issue Targeted
1.	Gender Transformative Child and Adolescent Programming	Children	Mental health and psychosocial support / empathy building with children	Bullying and early gender-based harassment between young students at school
		Adolescents	Peer-to-peer dialogue on healthy intimate relationships, communication, gender roles, and solidarity	Peer bullying at school, violence in relationships and community
		Adolescents	Regional specific vocational and job skills training	Unsafe job environment (i.e. migration, trafficking, mines)
		Adolescents Boys	Positive masculinity development with boys and role-models	Violent behaviours relationships; Risk behaviours
		Adolescents	Drug awareness prevention linked to productive alternatives	Drug use among school-aged boys and girls
2.	Parent/Guardian Intervention	Parents / Guardians	Adolescent Parenting Curriculum	Family / community shame is a barrier to disclosure and help seeking for girls
		Parents / Guardians & Adolescents	Intergenerational Dialogue	
3.	School-Based Violence and Bullying Intervention	Teachers of children and adolescents / students	Active by-stander intervention trainings	Discriminatory behaviours sourced from both teachers and students; Gender-based discrimination cited as early as 6-7 years old at school
		Teachers of children and adolescents / students	Gender-based bullying prevention, including primary schools	
		Teachers	Collaboration with government on positive discipline focused training programs and identifying effective teaching approaches	
4.	Community Support Strengthening	Health / protection service providers	Youth friendly, counseling, service provision, protection response networks, and reporting platforms	Mixed community / household solutions to drug use, i.e. relocation, military, etc.
		Religious Leaders		Perception that survivors of violence are "destined" to be victims
		Private sector / vocational schools / entrepreneurs	Private sector collaboration to identify and develop employment opportunities and vocation training	Risk of unsafe jobs (i.e. migration, child marriage, trafficking, drug use)

In Summary

Through these consultations, young people highlighted social norms of being shamed in front of friends and specific emotional abuse/controlling behaviours as being a key driver of intimate partner violence and bullying. Discrimination came up substantially in the social norms data as both a driver of coercive controlling behaviour between partners but also between peers (e.g. bullying). Young people also highlighted the more structural drivers of both substance abuse and migration and the complex drivers' pathways for both that differ by region.

The consultation findings are intended to help practitioners and policymakers advance their awareness to support investments on prevention intervention programmes to reduce the prevalence of violence against children. The findings document theoretical and practical learning on how implementation can and should be adapted in context-sensitive, complex situations found in humanitarian settings. A workshop was held in Yangon in June 2019 to discuss findings with key stakeholder groups which has informed this final consultation report. A suite of other materials including key thematic papers from secondary analysis of national quantitative data are also available from this reprogramming exercise.



Community Anecdotes from Consultation Participants



Child Marriage

There's a 15 year-old girl finishing grade five. Her family can't afford all of their expenses, so she has to marry a rich man from Malaysia, breaking up with her boyfriend.
-Central Rakhine IDP

One girl's family owes money and planned to marry her to someone in Malaysia. She didn't want to go but wanted to solve the problem for her parents. After persuading her, she left and married the man and now sends money home. Her parents have payed off the debt and are living happily.
-Central Rakhine IDP

A 17 year-old boy had to leave for another village to work because his parents are poor. The married women that he stays with forced him to marry her. She won his life but not his love.
-Central Rakhine IDP



Migration and Employment

Once, a girl came home after being trafficked in China. People say that when she was there, she was injected with something, but no one knows what. After she came back, she often suffered from seizures.
-Kachin IDP

A girl went to Thailand for work but lost contact with her family after three years. Her parents are worried about her and suppose that she was trafficked.
-Central Rakhine HC



School Bullying

There's a boy studying in grade six and his parents have poor ethics. They do bad things like drinking and playing cards and are looked down on by the community. Because of them the boy is also regarded as bad by his friends. When something is lost in the class he is always accused of stealing it.
-Central Rakhine HC

One girl goes into the city to learn. She tries to listen carefully to the teachers and they care for her. The other girls get envious of her for this. They'll say, 'Don't be bossy' and tear her notebooks, throw her bags, push her to the ground and accuse her of things she has never done. They'll even persuade some of the boys to pretend to be in love with her and ruin her life.
-Central Rakhine IDP

One boy joins our school from the IDP camp. He came to join our government school because they only have temporary schools. The boys from school don't care much for his cleverness. They accuse him of things he never does to the teachers. They make fun of him and try to hurt him but pretend like they are joking.
-Central Rakhine IDP



Drug Use

A boy of 15 was at school and he was always distant. At first, he didn't have many friends when he was new to the school but later had many. He started chewing betel and smoking and was persuaded to try drugs by his friends. He became addicted and steals money from home and from others. He was put in jail and his parents are suffering.
-Central Rakhine, HC

There was a 14 year-old boy who began working in the mines. Eventually he and a few others started using WY and couldn't continue working because they would stay up all night. One of them was able to quit but the others were sent to a rehabilitation camp by their parents and later escaped.
-Kachin, HC



Canada 

Australian
Aid 



unicef 
for every child