Findings of the national Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR reveal that violence in childhood is a common reality in Lao PDR.

**THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM**

More than 1/3 of girls and boys in Lao PDR are subjected to some form of violence before they turn 18.

1 in 6 children experience at least one form of physical violence.

Around 1 in 14 girls and 1 in 8 boys experience some form of sexual abuse.

1/5 of children are subjected to emotional violence at home by their parents, caregivers or adult relatives.

1/4 of girls and boys witness physical violence at home.

The majority of children subjected to physical violence are between 6 and 11 years old when it first happens.

62% girls and 91% boys subjected to emotional violence experience more than one incident.

1/5 girls and over 1/3 boys who are sexually abused experience their first incident when they are 13 years old or younger.

3/4 of girls and boys aged 13 to 17 think a woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IS WIDESPREAD**

Physical Violence
Parents, caregivers and other relatives are the most common perpetrators of physical violence.

Emotional Violence
The most common type of violence experienced by children is emotional violence.

Sexual Violence
Most incidents of sexual abuse take place in a home setting – someone else’s home, the child’s home or the perpetrator’s home.

Knowing where to seek help
Only 5.2 per cent of girls know where to get help if they are sexually abused, compared to 57.8 per cent of boys.

Receiving help
Around 1/4 boys subjected to sexual abuse receive help for their experiences, however no girls report receiving help.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**
refers to all forms of harm to children, including physical, sexual and emotional violence, neglect, trafficking or exploitation.
The costs of violence against children are high. Violence obstructs economic growth because of lost productivity, disability, increased expenditures on health, social welfare and justice, and decreased quality of life, all of which can hold Lao PDR back from fully developing.

Research in East Asia and the Pacific, commissioned by the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, found that child maltreatment is costing lower-middle income countries like Lao PDR as much as 3% of GDP.
The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child specifies that every child, everywhere, has the right to survive, grow and be protected from all forms of violence. This right must be upheld, regardless of the child’s nationality, place of residence, sex, gender identity, age, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other characteristic.


A national legal framework to address violence against children has been established in particular the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Violence against Children (2015).

Other relevant laws include:
- Trafficking in Persons Law (2016)
- Labour Law (2013)
- Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedure (2013)
- Family Law (2008)

To prevent and respond to violence against children, multiple sectors of society must work together.
Based on the findings of the national survey, the Government of Lao PDR is pursuing the following priority actions to address violence against children in all its forms:

### ENHANCING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- **Implementing laws and policies.** Implementing and enforcing laws and policies that protect children sends a strong message to society that violence is unacceptable and will be punished.

- **Data collection and research.** Increasing the knowledge base on violence against children is essential for effective advocacy and programming and setting targets to monitor progress over time.

- **Strengthening capacities.** Identifying and responding to violence against children requires an effective workforce of professionals and non-professionals across the social welfare, justice, health and education sectors.

- **Management and coordination.** Strong coordination between health services, policing, social services, education sector and justice is essential to deliver services to victims of violence and their families.

### PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- **Changing attitudes and behaviours.** Interventions that challenge and help to change negative social norms can help prevent and reduce violence in children's lives.

- **Supporting parents and families.** Providing parents and caregivers with child-rearing strategies and techniques that promote children's wellbeing can help to address a range of individual and family risk factors associated with childhood violence.

- **Empowering children to protect themselves.** Giving children the skills to cope and manage risks and challenges without the use of violence and to seek appropriate support services when violence does occur is crucial for reducing violence in all settings.

### RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- **Providing support services.** Violence against children can lead to a range of serious health and social outcomes costly to both individuals and society. Minimizing these consequences requires a variety of treatment and support services, including counselling, psycho-social, legal and medical services.

- **Bringing perpetrators to justice.** Concrete actions to stop perpetrators from committing violence in the first place, to effectively bring them to justice, and to change their behaviours to prevent re-offending builds confidence in the justice system and acts as a deterrent to others.