

Safe environments

Objective

Create and sustain safe streets and other environments where children and youth gather and spend time.

Rationale

Creating and sustaining safe community environments is a promising strategy for reducing violence against children. This strategy concentrates on community environments other than homes and schools, as these are covered in the *Parent and caregiver support* and *Education and life skills* strategies in this package. Interventions included in this strategy on *Safe environments* focus on modifying communities' social and physical environments (rather than the individuals within it) with the aim of fostering positive behaviours and deterring harmful ones.



Changes to the physical and/or social environment may influence individual and community behaviours by changing people's perceptions, attitudes, and actions. These changes may reduce the risks of violence against – and by – children and adolescents.

Modifying the physical environment to be child-friendly and safe sends a clear message about what activities are promoted, tolerated, or accepted in public spaces.



Modifications to the social environment can include situational crime prevention techniques and broader urban planning and community development initiatives.

All efforts to create safer environments benefit from robust community participation in planning and implementation, to ensure interventions are useful and relevant and to strengthen community ownership. This participation should include children and adolescents.

Approach

Reducing violence by addressing “hotspots”

These interventions focus on areas where violence regularly occurs and work to reduce violence in those places through monitoring, awareness, and environmental changes.

- **Evidence:** There is insufficient rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of hotspot policing in schools, which is often combined with other interventions. Other interventions for “safe schools” are covered in the *Education and life skills* strategy.



Improving the built environment

These interventions focus on increasing community safety through environmental planning, design, and infrastructure.

- **Evidence:** Resettlement programmes in high-income countries, such as *Moving to Opportunity* in the United States, showed promising evidence of effectiveness on youth violence. Urban upgrading interventions had substantial differences in intervention content, which restrict conclusions on overall effectiveness. There is limited evidence from low- and middle-income countries. There is no strong-quality evidence in support of diversification interventions.

Creating safe spaces

These programmes create violence-free spaces to facilitate empowerment of children and adolescents as well as to provide psychosocial support and share knowledge.

- **Evidence:** Evidence is only available in low- and middle-income countries and humanitarian settings. These interventions alone are likely insufficient for reducing rates of violence, but may be essential in creating an enabling environment for other social interventions.

Intervention Type	HICs	LMICs
Hotspot policing in schools on youth violence or dating violence	✗	✗
Resettlement interventions on youth violence	✓	—
Urban upgrading interventions on youth violence	✗	✗
Diversification interventions on youth violence	✗	—
Child-friendly spaces on child sexual abuse	—	✗
Combined safe spaces on sexual violence	—	✗

- ✓✓ Recommendations for prioritized implementation are well-supported or supported by evidence
- ✓ Recommendations for prioritized implementation have promising or emerging evidence, or are prudent
- ✗ Recommendations for prioritized implementation are not currently supported by evidence
- No new systematic reviews