
Understanding Children’s Experiences of Violence in Viet Nam: Evidence from Young Lives

Vu Thi Thanh Huong

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This paper is part of a series of working papers produced by UNICEF's Office of Research – Innocenti in collaboration with the University of Oxford's Young Lives research programme. Under its multi-country study on The Drivers of Violence Affecting Children, the Office of Research has undertaken research in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe which examines how structural, institutional, community and individual factors interact to affect violence in children's lives, with a particular focus on the risks and experiences of violence by gender and age.

Complementing UNICEF's multi-country study, a number of papers have been produced using the longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data produced by the Young Lives research initiative. Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, initiated in 2000, which has followed 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Viet Nam. This set of papers aims to understand various aspects of children's experiences of violence, and the impacts of violence on children's lives over time, across different settings.

Two papers use the quantitative data from the four Young Lives study sites to examine the issues of corporal punishment and bullying, their prevalence, impacts on children and the social support available to them. (Ogando Portela and Pells, *Corporal Punishment in Schools: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*; Pells, Ogando Portela and Espinoza Revello, *Experiences of Peer Bullying among Adolescents and Associated Effects on Young Adult Outcomes: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*, published respectively in 2015 and 2016 by the UNICEF Office of Research).

The remaining four papers draw primarily on the qualitative research undertaken in each country to obtain in-depth insights into children's experiences and perceptions of violence. As the surveys were not originally designed specifically to analyze violence, there are some limitations to the data, discussed in each paper. However, taken together, the papers illuminate the varied experiences of violence, primarily physical and emotional, that affect children in different country contexts, and in different settings – home, school and community. The findings show how experiences of violence condition children's life chances and key transitions (including schooling, friendships, emotional well-being etc.), and also shed light on children's own agency and their responses to violence across multiple contexts.

For other papers related to the Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children, visit www.unicef-irc.org/research/274/.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN VIET NAM: EVIDENCE FROM YOUNG LIVES

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Abstract: This paper explores children's accounts of violence at home in Viet Nam, and the ways in which factors at the individual, family, community and society levels affect their experiences of violence. The paper analyses cross-sectional survey data and qualitative data gathered from Young Lives; it explores what children know about violence, how they experience it, what they think drives violence at home, what they perceive the consequences to be, and finally, the support they find effective in addressing violence. High proportions of children experience violence (mostly physical punishment and emotional abuse). The paper contributes to knowledge about the nature and experience of violence affecting children in resource-poor settings, and concludes with some suggestions for policy, programming and practice.

Key words: Violence affecting children, domestic violence, Viet Nam.

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ACRONYMS

CSAGA	Centre for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender-Family-Women and Adolescents
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
PFCSI and SCS	Population, Family and Children Scientific Institute and Save the Children Sweden
SAVY	Survey and Assessment of Vietnamese Youth
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	7
1. Introduction	10
2. Background	12
2.1 Research on violence against children in Viet Nam	12
2.2 Conceptual framework	15
3. Methods, Ethics and Limitations	17
3.1 Methods	17
3.2 Ethics	20
3.3 Limitations	20
4. Findings	22
4.1 Children’s experiences and knowledge of domestic violence	22
4.2 Children’s perspectives on the drivers of violence	25
4.3 Children’s perspectives on the consequences of violence in the home	30
4.4 Children’s support networks and improving services for domestic violence	36
5. Conclusions	39
6. Policy Implications	41
6.1 Legislation is a necessary but not a sufficient step in addressing violence against children	41
6.2 Greater awareness of the negative impacts of domestic violence is necessary to challenge the normalisation of violence	41
6.3 Greater attention to the gender-based inequalities that underlie many instances of domestic violence is crucial	42
6.4 Improving the resources to help identify and support victims of violence is important in helping children deal with domestic violence	42
References	43
Appendix A: Effects of violence at home on children’s school performance	46
Appendix B: Vignettes for the focus group discussions	48
Appendix C: Discussion group techniques	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the fact that the Vietnamese Government has issued many laws and regulations to protect children from harm and exploitation, research has shown that violence against children in Viet Nam is widespread. With the aim of developing better national strategies for preventing violence against children, UNICEF's Office of Research is conducting a Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. This paper has been commissioned as part of this ongoing study. Drawing on Young Lives longitudinal qualitative data and school survey data, this paper provides an account of children's and young people's perspectives on violence in the home. Specifically, the paper addresses the following questions: a) what do children know about violence in the home and how do they experience it?; b) what do they think drives violence in the home?; c) what do they perceive to be the consequences of the violence they experience?; and d) what support do they find to be most effective in addressing violence in the home?

Key findings

■ Children's experiences and understandings of violence

- **Children experience multiple forms of violence in the home, including physical and psychological/emotional violence as well as neglect.** Instances of physical violence include, for example, hitting, tying up and beating, throwing, cutting, destroying things in the house, slapping and kicking. Instances of psychological/emotional violence identified by children include insulting, threatening, intimidating, shaming, cursing, screaming, name calling etc., and instances of neglect include not providing food or money to meet a child's needs, not caring for the child, abandoning a child, not allowing a child to attend school, or forcing a child to work at an early age.
- **The multiple forms of violence in the home, to which children are both subjected and/or witness, may occur either at the same time or at different times.**
- Parents typically explain the use of **violence as a mechanism for 'educating' children**, and though children accept that their parents have a responsibility to educate them, they are unhappy with the violent treatment to which they are subjected.
- **Children and young people's understandings of violence in the home and the appropriateness of the use of violence for 'educating', 'disciplining' or 'controlling' members of the household are often rooted in gender inequalities that arise from socially constructed gender roles.** Men are viewed as the heads of households and therefore retain the right to discipline or educate other members of the household, who are viewed as inferior.
- **Knowledge of and attitudes towards violence vary according to gender, location and ethnicity.** Children and young people in some regions (typically urban or less remote areas) have significantly more awareness of their rights and of legal protections against violence compared to ethnic minority children, particularly those living in remote locations. This appears to be more related to recent sensitization campaigns rather than differences in the prevalence of domestic violence.

■ The drivers of violence against children

- At the structural level, young people are well aware of **the complex relationships between economic status and violent behaviour of adults.**
 - An inability to meet the families' needs contributes to episodes of violence as parents become stressed and this may result in violence, including against children.

- Poverty and economic hardship may also necessitate that children work at an early age and possibly remain out of school. Children might be abandoned or neglected in many different ways.
- Conversely, transitions to higher levels of affluence with higher incomes and greater affordability can also lead to excessive drinking and substance abuse, thus fuelling violence.
- At the community level, **gender norms are important drivers of violence against children.**
 - The preference for boys over girls, as well as the belief in men's authority over the household, put women and girls at greater risk of domestic violence.
 - Female participants expressed anger and frustration at being subjected to violence at the hands of their husbands and fathers.
- At the interpersonal level, **parental relationships as well as gambling and the excessive consumption of alcohol contribute to violence within the home.**
 - Where parents distrust each other or experience problems in their own relationship, children are often caught up in these conflicts and as a result are the targets of violence.
 - The excessive consumption of alcohol and/or gambling among men are common and contribute to violence in the home.
 - The association between poverty, gambling and/or alcohol consumption is difficult to disentangle. It may be that the stress of economic hardship leads men to 'escape' through drinking and/or gambling; and/or that drinking and gambling lead to a deterioration of the household's economic situation.
- At the individual level, **while at times children recognize that their own behaviour can provoke violent responses from their parents, at others, they feel they are unfairly subjected to violence.**
 - As a result, some children and young people feel they cannot share their problems with their parents for fear of eliciting violent responses.
 - This fear persists with age, illustrating that the negative effects of domestic violence in the form of parental discipline are not limited to young children.

■ The consequences of violence against children

- **Children experience not only physical injury from violence, but also bodily manifestations of stress induced by psychological/emotional violence and neglect.** For instance, children report experiencing recurring headaches and stomach aches when placed in situations in which violence often occurs in the family context.
- **Children who experience violence at home describe feeling a heightened sense of fear, stress, tension and anxiety, as well as low self-esteem. There is a great deal of shame associated with experiences of violence in the home,** making children reluctant to share their problems with others, contributing to a child's sense of loneliness and isolation.

■ Children's resources against violence

- **Children draw primarily on their social networks in dealing with violence in the home.**
 - In particular, neighbours and respected members of the community (such as teachers and community leaders) are seen as playing a particularly important role in mediating and diffusing domestic violence.

- In contrast, extended family members may or may not be an important resource for children facing domestic violence. Maternal vs. paternal lineage may play a role in determining the extent to which the extended family may be helpful.
- **While the existing sources of support for children facing domestic violence are largely limited to social networks, children argue for the need for better national awareness, more counselling services and stronger children's rights and protection mechanisms.**

CONCLUSIONS

Children in Viet Nam experience relatively high rates of violence in the home, despite legislative protections. They experience multiple forms of domestic violence, and within the home are both targets and witnesses. The findings show that the factors contributing to violence in the home operate at several levels, including the structural, community, interpersonal and individual levels. Children and young people describe how living in poverty and the stresses induced by financial hardship, which can strain interpersonal and familial relationships, contribute to increasing the likelihood of violence in the home. In addition, entrenched gender norms, which are used to legitimate men's use of violence to exert their power over other family members, shape much of the violence occurring in the home. Social norms are also often invoked to justify the use of violence as a mechanism of 'educating' and 'disciplining' children. However, children and young people may suffer substantial physical, psychological, emotional and academic consequences that are associated with domestic violence, yet they have limited resources to draw on in dealing with it. Policy interventions to address domestic violence need to take into account the context of strong social norms condoning the use of violence both for parents to 'educate' children, and for men to exert their 'power' over the family, as well as for the multi-faceted nature of the types and drivers of violence occurring in the home. These policy measures will need to address issues of poverty, gender norms, interpersonal communication and positive discipline, along with creating accessible mechanisms for support for children facing domestic violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Viet Nam was one of the first countries in the world to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and the Government of Viet Nam has issued many laws and regulations to protect children from harm and exploitation. The Child Protection, Care and Education Law, passed in 1991 and revised in 2004, is the most important legal document guaranteeing children's rights and setting out the obligations of parents and caregivers. Violence against children is not covered in this law, however, except for extremely severe cases, such as child rape, child prostitution, severe injuries, and death. To specifically deal with violence and child abuse, the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control was issued in 2007, and the Child Protection 5-year Program (2011-2015) has been passed and implemented. Nevertheless, obstacles in implementing and enforcing the laws and regulations persist, and these prevent children from fully benefiting from the rights to which they are entitled. Research has shown that violence against children in Viet Nam is widespread; for example, a study conducted in 2010 with a representative sample of 4,838 women aged between 18 and 60 found that one in four women with children under the age of 15 reported that their children had been physically abused (e.g. slapped, hit, dragged, hit with an object, threatened with a weapon) by their male partners (General Statistics Office, 2010).

In Viet Nam, the term 'domestic violence' (*Bao luc gia dinh, bao hanh gia dinh*) is popularly featured in public discourses. The Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007) gives a general definition of violence in the home as "purposeful acts of certain family members that cause or may cause physical, psychological, emotional or economic injuries to other family members". At a more operational level, the law specifies that domestic violence occurs when another family member commits any of the following precisely defined acts, inclusive of emotional, physical and sexual violence:

- a) corporal beating, ill-treating, torturing or other purposeful acts causing injuries to one's health and life;
- b) insulting or other intended acts meant to offend one's pride, honour and dignity;
- c) isolating, shunning or creating constant psychological pressure on other family members, causing serious consequences;
- d) preventing the exercise of legal rights and obligations in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, between parents and children, between husbands and wives, and among brothers and sisters;
- e) forced sex;
- f) forced child marriage, forced marriage or divorce and obstruction of free will, and progressive marriage;
- g) appropriating, demolishing, destroying or other purposeful acts to damage the private properties of other family members or the shared properties of family members;
- h) forcing other family members to overwork or to contribute more earnings than they can afford; controlling other family members' incomes to make them financially dependent;
- i) conducting unlawful acts to turn other family members out of their domicile.

This definition of domestic violence covers both violence directed against children (parent-child) and the violence that children witness involving other family members (husband-wife, violence against the elderly, violence from in-laws). This definition highlights five forms of violence, namely: physical, emotional, sexual, economic abuse and neglect. This understanding of domestic violence will be used to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese children and young people on violence in the home. In this paper, the terms domestic violence and violence in the home are used interchangeably and refer mainly to husband–wife and parent–child violence.

This paper has been commissioned as part of the UNICEF Multi-Country Study on the Drivers¹ of Violence affecting Children in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. The Multi-Country Study (1) analyses how individual, family, community and structural level factors interact and contribute to violence in children's homes and communities; and (2) aims to provide direction for national strategies for the prevention of violence against children. The paper principally draws on results from Young Lives, a longitudinal study of 12,000 children in four developing countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam. Drawing on qualitative data gathered from children and young people in Viet Nam, the paper provides an account of children's and young people's perspectives on violence in the home. Specifically, the study tries to answer the following questions: a) what do children know about violence in the home and how do they experience it?; b) what do they think drives violence in the home?; c) what do they perceive to be the consequences of the violence they experience?; and d) what support do they find to be most effective in addressing violence in the home? Qualitative analysis is complemented with exploratory analysis from the Young Lives school survey in Viet Nam, which provides data on the prevalence of the use of corporal punishment on children by parents and the associated effects on children's performance in school.

This paper is structured in five sections. The following section reviews the literature, and describes the theoretical framework for the paper. The third section describes the methods, ethics and limitations of the study. The fourth section presents results of the analyses relating to children's experiences, the factors associated with violence, the consequences of violence, and children's responses to violence. The concluding sections offer some reflections and implications for policy and practice.

¹ The concept of 'drivers' is frequently used in international child protection research rather than the terms 'risk and protective factors' or 'vulnerabilities and resilience'. Violence happens in families, in schools, in communities, and violent acts occur within wider contexts of power dynamics along multiple lines (gender, age, status etc.). The drivers of violence then are triggers that can interact at all levels to create risk and protective factors.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN VIET NAM

In this section, we review studies of the prevalence of violence against children in Viet Nam, as well as existing ethnographic and qualitative research on the issue. Most research in Viet Nam has used quantitative methods to report on the prevalence and effects of violence on children. A survey of 50 boys and 50 girls (aged from 4 to 18) and their parents conducted in 2001 (Hoang et al., 2001) linked parents' use of physical punishment to their understandings of 'educating' their children. Physical punishments took the form of slapping the face or hitting on the head, hitting on the buttocks, beating with a whip, beating on the thighs, kicking the buttocks, pinching, beating 'an annoying [sic] child', pushing down, beating and pushing, and kicking.

Research conducted by the Population, Family and Children Scientific Institute and Save the Children Sweden (PFCSI & SCS, 2005), based on a survey of 571 parents or adult family members and 514 children aged 6-18 from four provinces in Viet Nam (the North, Central, Central Highland and the South), as well as in-depth interviews and focus groups, similarly suggested a high prevalence of physical punishment. The study found that 37 per cent of parents scolded, 29 per cent used corporal punishment, and 20 per cent verbally abused a child if he/she made a mistake. Children's descriptions of their experiences of violence gave a somewhat different picture, however, with more than half reporting they had been beaten, kicked, tied up, or threatened with being thrown out of the home.

In more comprehensive research on child maltreatment in Viet Nam for UNICEF, Michaelson (2004) surveyed 2,800 people aged 8-35 in Hanoi (capital city), Lao Cai (northern mountainous province), and An Giang (in the south), and conducted qualitative interviews with 178 children and young people (aged 8-25) and 134 adults (aged 27-63). The study showed that violence was a common experience, with 70 per cent of children reporting being beaten on their buttocks by hand, 51 per cent reporting being beaten with a whip, and 16 per cent experiencing a physical attack by adults. More than one-third of participants reported emotional abuse, nearly 8 per cent had experienced touching on their bodies, and 3 per cent had suffered some form of sexual abuse in their childhood. In line with Hoang et al., (2001), the study found that physical punishment was understood as a way for parents to 'educate' their children.

Michaelson (2004) shows that perceptions of violence can vary by age: adults and the elderly considered physical punishment to be a reasonable way of educating or disciplining children, while children and young people believed there were more effective ways of educating children. Similarly, the cultural practice of adult relatives touching penises of baby boys was highlighted as an experience disliked by young men. (In Vietnamese culture in general, touching someone's penis is prohibited or taboo, but adult relatives fondling the penises of baby boys has been considered an innocuous way of showing affection). The study also found that children experienced pressure from parents to achieve well at school, as many parents wanted their children to concentrate on studying, seeing it as the best way to achieve a prosperous life. If children failed to do well at school, they might be beaten or scolded by their parents. Children in urban areas tended to suffer more than

children in rural areas. The same study also noted differences with regard to awareness of forms of violence against children. Generally, people were highly aware of child prostitution and trafficking, but much less aware of child pornography and internet-related child abuse, though concerns about the internet have changed very rapidly in Viet Nam in the past decade (Pells and Woodhead, 2014).

Nguyen (2006) surveyed 2,591 students (aged 12-18) in eight secondary schools in urban (Hanoi) and rural (Hai Duong) areas in northern Viet Nam to examine the nature and co-occurrence of four forms of child maltreatment (physical maltreatment, emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, and neglect), and to determine the extent to which such adverse experiences impact self-reported health risk behaviours and physical and mental health. Results from multivariate regression analyses showed no significant differences between urban and rural students. No gender differences were found in reports of sexual abuse; however, girls were more likely to report emotional maltreatment and neglect, while boys were more likely to report physical maltreatment.² The most consistent factor predicting child maltreatment was difficulties in the family environment, including parental quarrelling, fighting, and the quality of parental relationships. Similar research with 269 families in Hanoi by Emery, Nguyen and Kim (2014) found a series of factors in the family environment to be associated with abuse and neglect. These included low parental self-control (such as impulsivity and risk seeking), stressful life events, and parents' own experiences of violence, whether present (intimate partner violence) or past abuse during childhood.

To examine the role of neighbourhood in child maltreatment in Hanoi, Nguyen Hai Trung (2013) conducted a survey of 300 families in 2010-2011. The study focused on physical maltreatment and neglect, and the results support previous research that child maltreatment is prevalent and physical abuse much more common than neglect.³ Child maltreatment was divided into minor physical abuse, severe physical abuse, and neglect. Neighbourhood factors included neighbourhood structure, consisting of neighbourhood instability (measured by the percentage of people moving in and out of the neighbourhood over the course of the previous five years); poverty (measured by the percentage of people living in poverty); childcare burden (measured by the child/adult ratio, male/female ratio and elderly population); and neighbourhood processes, consisting of social informal control (norms and values) and social cohesion. All neighbourhood factors were found to have a significant relationship with almost all types of child maltreatment, with the exception of social informal control, which had no relationship with minor physical abuse.

Evidence from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4) in Viet Nam identified a series of risk factors for children experiencing violent discipline, encompassing both physical punishment and verbal aggression from caregivers (Cappa and Dam, 2014). Boys, children living in rural areas, poorer households, and children whose caregivers had lower levels of education were more likely to experience violent forms of discipline. Children aged 5 to 9 were more likely to experience violent discipline compared with younger or older children. Parental attitudes towards corporal

² Sexual abuse had a very broad definition in this study which may account the lack of gendered differences: 'Frequency of sexual behaviors between any adult family member or non-family member and a minor (under 18 years old) against a child's will including talking in a sexual way, exposing an adult's private part to a child, forcing a child to see a sexual scene, touch or fondle adults' private parts, attempted intercourse or intercourse'. (Nguyen, 2006: p72).

³ This could also be due to the fact that neglect is not measured well.

punishment were also a key factor; children with caregivers who agreed that corporal punishment was a necessary part of child-rearing were three times more likely to be physically punished than children with caregivers who did not think it was necessary. Analysis from the first and second Survey and Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY1 and SAVY2) also indicated that males (aged 14 to 25) have higher rates of injury by family members than females, and levels of violence decrease with age (Vu Manh Loi, 2015). These findings suggest that a developmental perspective and life-course approach is needed in understanding age and gender differences in experiences of violence throughout childhood and youth.

As noted, most research on violence in the home in Viet Nam has been survey-based, and quantitative. Qualitative research on a large scale was used in Viet Nam as part of a Save the Children comparative study on physical and emotional punishment (2005) in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. The research took a rights-based approach, with more than 3,000 children and over 1,000 adults from eight countries. In Viet Nam, the study involved 499 children aged 9 to 14, and 306 adults from the north (Hanoi and Thai Nguyen province), centre (Quang Ngai province) and the south (Ho Chi Minh city). The sample included Kinh majority and ethnic minority children. The study used a variety of child-centred and child-friendly tools, including diaries, drawing and discussion, body mapping, sentence completion, interviews and group discussions, to explore what children think about physical punishment, types and contexts of punishment, who punishes children and why, and what adults think about physical punishment and discipline. The results show that children were overwhelmingly punished by direct physical assault and verbal attacks in the home, and that mothers were as violent as fathers. Children reported that punishment hurts, both physically and emotionally, leaving them with feelings of fear, pain and confusion, as well as physical injuries. The contradiction between what adults say (direct assaults are not an appropriate way to punish children) on the one hand, and the main form of punishment children report receiving (direct assaults) on the other, confirm findings cited earlier from PFCSI and SCS (2005).

In her ethnography of a northern Vietnamese commune, Rydstrøm (2006) documented the ways in which rural fathers and grandfathers used physical punishment to discipline their sons and grandsons. The study highlighted that violent intergenerational practices emerged as a tangible manifestation of a masculine discourse, and although,

... both men and boys recognize a father's or grandfather's 'right' to beat a 'disobedient' boy, men's understanding of a justifiable beating is contested by boys' definitions of 'fair' vs 'unfair' punishment. (Rydstrøm, 2006, p. 344)

Boys tended to accept that 'some violence might be used against them throughout their childhood provided they can see some logic in the punishment' (Rydstrøm, 2006, p. 341), but if they were beaten without good reason this was 'unfair', and they saw themselves as victims of injustice. Rydstrøm (2006) emphasizes the importance of understanding violence with reference to Confucianism and patrilineal ancestor worship, as well as an examination of the historical context and notions of masculinity that have emerged from a long history of violent political struggle and war in Viet Nam.

Recent research by Pells et al. (2015a; 2015b) analysed Young Lives qualitative longitudinal data to examine children's experience of violence in the home and the impact of violence on children's

feelings and perceptions, social relationships and schooling. The authors suggest that poverty and gender hierarchies shape children's experiences of violence in the home and that children's responses to violence are far from predictable. Children can both reproduce and resist violence, with both positive and negative implications for their well-being, social networks, and engagement with school. Children's responses to violence can change over time: while younger children exhibited confusion and uncertainty about how to respond to violence, older children adopted multiple strategies to negotiate and challenge violence (Pells et al., 2015b), thus playing an active and influential role in their mothers' decision-making in the context of domestic violence (Pells et al., 2015a).

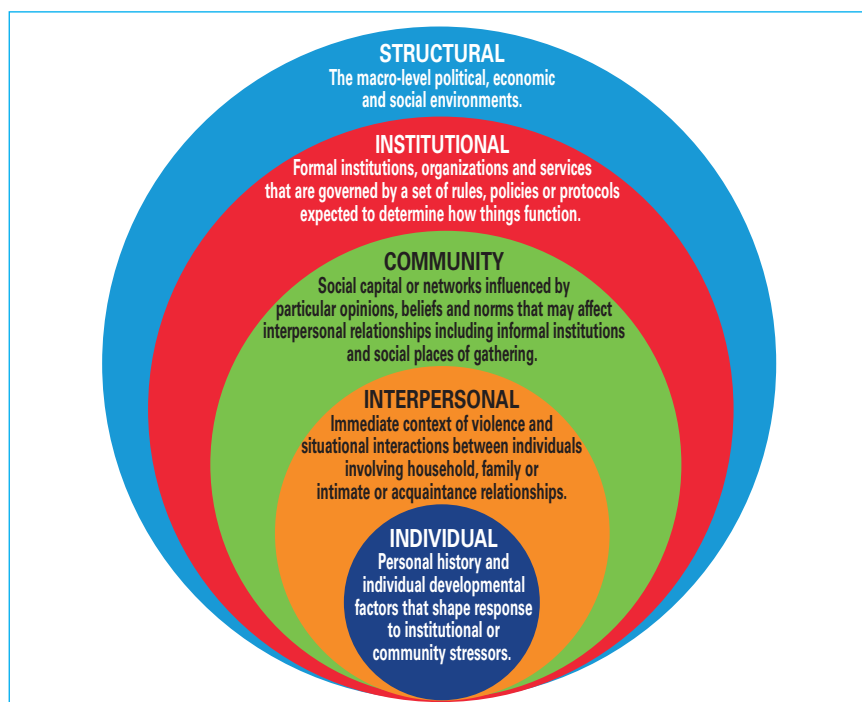
In summary, there is limited survey research on violence against children in the home in Viet Nam, and a particular dearth of qualitative research on the subject. Prevalence studies suggest that the use of violence is widespread, and a number of factors have emerged as important drivers of the violence children witness and experience in the home, including gender inequality, family environment, and community factors. Qualitative research highlights the differing understandings of violence from adults to children, and the role of gender norms and cultures of masculinity. Building on Pells et al. (2015a; 2015b) and drawing on Young Lives' qualitative longitudinal data, this paper describes the types of violence children experience (including multiple forms); the factors that shape children's knowledge of violence, including place (urban/rural locality), ethnicity (majority/minority group) and gender norms; and finally, the sources of support that children and young people suggest are needed to address violence.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In general, research in Viet Nam on violence towards children tends to draw on Western models that are focused on individuals. Nguyen (2006) reviewed the main theories: *attachment theory*, *psychopathology theories*, *social learning theory*, *the environmental model* and *the ecological framework*. Nguyen (2006) concluded that the ecological framework is the most widely accepted model as it provides a multi-dimensional perspective for understanding child maltreatment. Despite the widespread acceptance of the ecological framework, it does not account for factors operating the institutional level, which a recent UNICEF review of drivers of violence against children argues is critical to understanding children's experiences of violence (UNICEF, 2016). A multilevel and life-course framework that acknowledges the evolving capacity of children as they become young adults may enable incorporation of the individual level (biophysical, psychological and social factors), interpersonal level (children's relationships with their parents, teachers, peers and community members), institutional and community level (formal and informal institutions, cultural beliefs and norms affecting interpersonal relations), and structural level (socio-economic, political and social policy environment) in understanding their experiences of violence (see Figure 1, page 16). This model demonstrates that no single level of cause determines or explains violence but that each, when combined with one or more additional causal variables, may yield a situation where violence occurs.⁴ This framework – accounting for how violence affects boys and girls at different ages – is helpful in making sense of children's accounts of domestic violence, the correlates and consequences.

⁴ See: https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/pdf/440-TOOLKITstep-by-step_28Sept2016_OK.pdf

Figure 1 – Socio-ecological Framework



Source: Maternowska and Fry, 2015

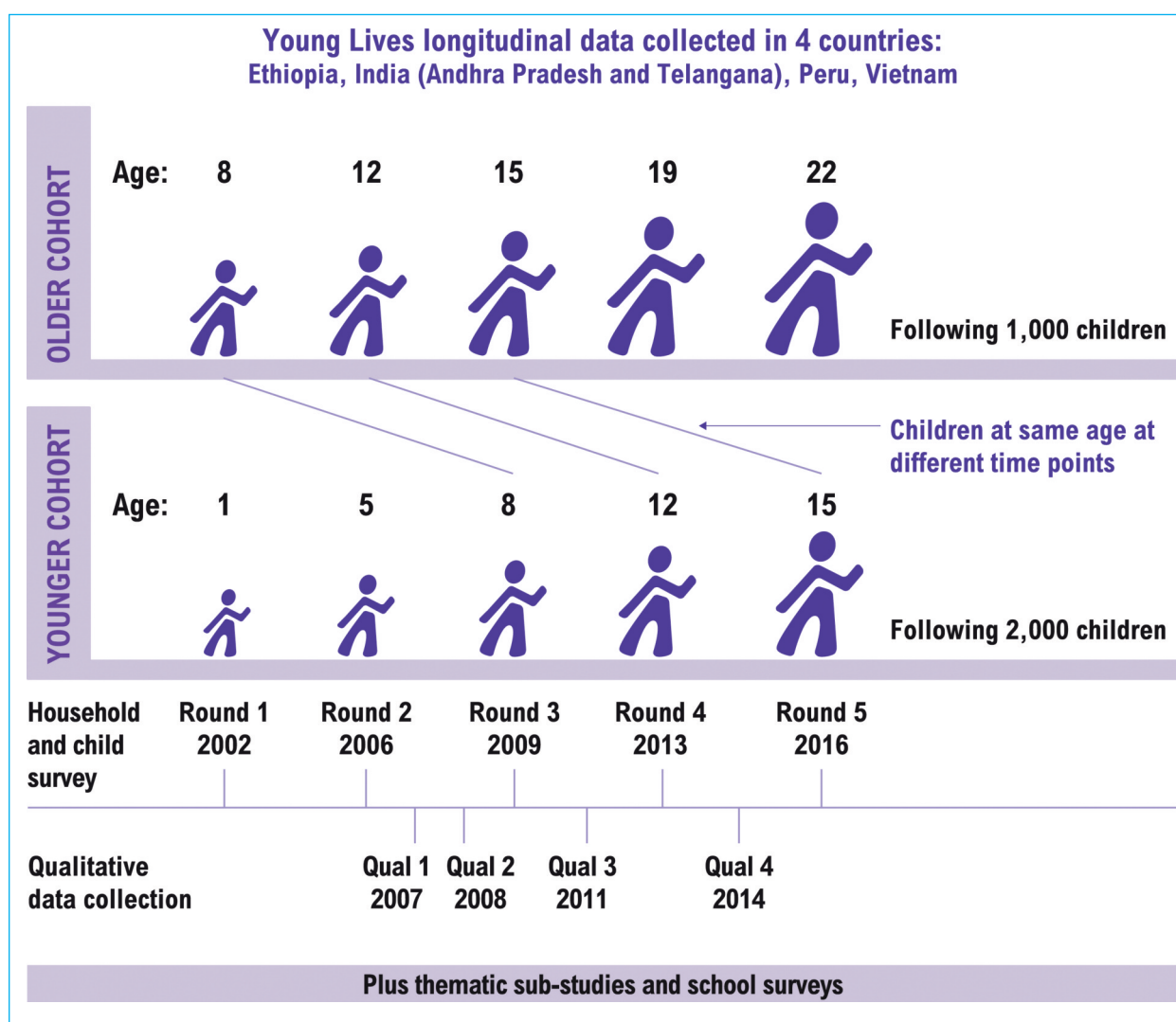
3. METHODS, ETHICS AND LIMITATIONS

3.1 METHODS

This paper draws on two rounds of qualitative longitudinal data from the Young Lives study gathered in 2011 and 2014 in three sites: Van Tri, Nghia Tan, and Van Lam. Van Tri is a prosperous rural commune in the Red River Delta with high population density and good infrastructure, about 25 km from Hanoi, the capital of Viet Nam. Nghia Tan is an urban neighbourhood with average infrastructure in Da Nang city where people are engaged mostly in manual work. Van Lam is a very poor rural commune in the central highlands where the Kinh and the Cham H'roi (a minority ethnic group) cohabit. People here are engaged mainly in agriculture. These sites were selected for the Young Lives survey sites to enable an exploration of variations in location (rural and urban), ethnicity, and socio-economic status, and to include differing regions, reflecting the main ethnic groups. In terms of child protection, in all three sites the Commune's People's Committees are responsible for the execution of laws and policies relating to welfare services and child protection. Within the Commune's People's Committee there is one person in charge of Population, Family Planning and Child Protection, who coordinates various activities and mobilizes resources to support children under special circumstances. Civil organizations, such as the Women's Union, Youth Union and the War Invalids Union, are quite active in providing support to child protection. The disputes (among family members or among community members) are first resolved at the village level by the Village Mediation Team, led by the village head. If this fails, the dispute is passed on to the Commune's Mediation Team, led by the commune head. No official records of family disputes are known, except for an extreme case of a father in Van Tri using a knife to cut his son's neck. Of the three sites, Nghia Tan is most active in advocating to end domestic violence. Since 2009, under the leadership of the first Chair of the City of Danang People's Committee, Nguyen Ba Thanh, a hotline was established for victims of domestic violence to seek assistance at any time. A meeting with perpetrators of the violence was organized where Mr Thanh talked about domestic violence and the role of the husband in the family. After the meeting, the men were asked to sign agreements not to use violence in the future. A number of regulations were issued: victims of violence were to report to the local office; upon receiving the report, if no appropriate action was taken, police officers in charge were to be dismissed from office; neighbours and Women's Unions who knew of cases of domestic violence but did not help or report the incidence were to receive official remarks. In the community group discussions in 2011, people acknowledged that incidents of domestic violence in Nghia Tan were much reduced thanks to these measures.

In each research site, 12 Young Lives index children were selected using purposive sampling – 6 older children born in 1994, and 6 younger children born in 2001 (see Crivello et al., 2013, for a description of the range of methods used, including in-depth individual interviews with the Young Lives index children and separately with their caregivers, as well as separate focus group discussions with the younger and older children and caregivers). These children are part of the wider Young Lives survey that follows 1,000 Older Cohort children and 2,000 Younger Cohort children (see Figure 2, page 18).

Figure 2 – . Young Lives Study Design



The same index children and families were followed up at each round. In each round of data collection, a team of field researchers stayed in the sites for 15-17 days. The fieldwork team were researchers and university professors in the social sciences who belong to the Kinh majority group and who speak only Vietnamese. Each field researcher was responsible for 4 children and followed them in both 2011 and 2014 rounds. The researchers typically spent 4-5 days living with each family. Most families in Van Tri and Van Lam are extended, while most families in Nghia Tan are nuclear. During this time, group activities and discussions, in-depth interviews and observation data were collected from the children, their caregivers, siblings, other relatives, friends, their teachers and community representatives in their homes, at school, at workplaces and in the local social settings.

In 2011, interviews with children (aged 10 and 17, from the Younger and Older Cohorts respectively) and their parents explored their experiences and perceptions of the key transitions in their lives and their families, the risks and support to children's transitions and their perceptions of learning. In 2014, interviews (with children aged 13 and 20) further explored children and young people's transitions and factors shaping their trajectories. Children and caregivers were not specifically

asked about violence in the home but the topic was raised in conversation once trust had been built between the researchers and the children and their families. To get a fuller understanding of violence against children in the home, during the 2014 round of fieldwork, a part of the group discussions with children, community representatives, and others, was dedicated to the topic of violence. In Van Tri and Van Lam, children's group discussions were done in one of the children's homes. In Nghia Tan, the group discussions were done in the ward's cultural house, which is familiar to the children. Only children were present at these discussions. 13-year-old boys and girls, and young men aged 20⁵ were given a story (vignette) about domestic violence to read and discuss in groups (see Appendix B; references to Mai (female) and Duy (male) characters below are from the vignettes developed by UNICEF).⁶ Then they were asked to discuss what was described in the story. Building on this, children were asked to discuss similar situations of violence in their neighbourhood. Participants were also encouraged to use different mediums to facilitate the discussion, such as drawings and writings. At the end of the activities we used the 'Umbrella' technique⁷ (with the 13-year-old, boys and girls) and the 'Problem Tree'⁸ technique (with the 20-year-old males, and the women's and men's community group discussions) through which participants could represent the results of their discussions about the drivers and consequences of domestic violence against children. Participants (both children and adults) seemed to enjoy this activity and the information gathered was rich. The field researchers then wrote reports about these discussions and these were also used to inform the present paper.

We also draw on three case studies, purposively selected for detailed analysis because the children had mentioned violence in their interviews, and for the variety and depth in their narrative, rather than to seek representative cases.

Table 1 – Brief Description of Case Study Children

Sites	Child's name*	Cohort	Ethnicity	Family composition	Main economic activity
Van Lam	Ho Na	Younger (b.2001)	Cham H'roi (minority)	Father, step-mother and two sisters	Subsistence farmers
	Y Sinh	Younger (b.2001)	Cham H'roi (minority)	Mother, stepfather and two stepsisters	Subsistence farmers
Van Tri	Huu	Older (b. 1994)	Kinh majority	Grew up with two parents, brother and sister	Currently studying at university

* All names have been changed to protect identity.

The paper also draws on evidence⁹ from the Young Lives school survey conducted with 3,284 students in Grade 5, across 176 classes in 56 schools or 92 school sites (satellite sites are considered separately

⁵ 20-year-old young women were not asked to discuss violence in groups – other research priorities and limited resources meant there was no time to do so.

⁶ UNICEF Participatory Tool, available online at

<http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/pdf/UNICEF%20Participatory%20Assessment%20Tool.pdf>

⁷ See Appendix B for details of method.

⁸ See Appendix C for details of method.

⁹ Background note by Louise Yorke, entitled 'An Exploration of the Relationship between Corporal Punishment by Parents and Students' Academic Outcomes', commissioned for the current paper. See also Ogando Portela, M.J. and K. Pells (2015). Corporal Punishment in Schools: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam, *Innocenti Discussion Paper* No. 2015-02, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence.

from the main school) during the 2011-2012 school year (for more details see Rolleston et al., 2013).¹⁰ The average age of participants was 10 years old, with 53 per cent male participants. Children completed a questionnaire including an academic stress scale developed by Hesketh et al. (2010), which contained the item: 'Are you hit by your parents?' The children were also administered a test in Vietnamese and in Mathematics. The Vietnamese test consisted of 10 items to gauge students' reading comprehension. Maths consisted of 10 items that covered geometry, basic arithmetic, algebra, fractions and general number manipulation. Test scores in Vietnamese and Maths were standardized to allow for comparisons across subject and gender. The analysis was run separately for male and female students, recognizing that boys and girls may experience corporal punishment differently. The paper presents descriptive statistics on the percentage of children who report being hit by parents and the frequency of experiences of violence, before using multilevel modelling to control for background characteristics and school fixed effects in order to examine the associations between one indicator of corporal punishment and test scores. The multilevel model was implemented using SPSS and maximum likelihood estimation.

3.2 ETHICS

The aim of the research was to learn about children and young people's explanations of and attitudes towards violence in the home. However, we understood that some children might have had violent experiences themselves, making it painful to discuss them. Consequently, we told children not to disclose any names in their discussions and that they should share only what they wanted to. We also recognized that it was difficult to articulate some perceptions and experiences of violence so, to facilitate children's discussions, we used the creative vignette technique. In addition to using appropriate child-friendly methods, our research adhered to the Young Lives research ethics protocol to ensure that the principles of justice, respect and avoiding harm to the research participants were upheld (Morrow, 2009). Before the fieldwork started, written informed consent was sought from each caregiver and each child, and verbal consent was again sought before each interview or activity. The research team made sure that the caregivers and children understood the purposes of the research, that they could withdraw at any time, that the information they provided would be kept confidential, and that the data would be used anonymously by trusted researchers for research and policy engagement purposes. Fieldworkers were trained in child protection and if a child disclosed that he or she was experiencing serious violence in the home then cases were referred to the fieldwork team leader to report to those responsible for child protection in the community (see Morrow, 2009). Young Lives has formal research ethics approval from the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Young Lives has since received Research Ethics Committee approval from the Ethics Committee at the Hanoi School of Public Health for future rounds of research). All names of people and places (including all communities) in this paper are pseudonyms.

3.3 LIMITATIONS

Young Lives qualitative research has several limitations. As it is based on a small sample and provides qualitative insights into the perceptions and perspectives of a group of Young Lives children

¹⁰ 1,138 of these pupils are Young Lives Younger Cohort index children.

and young people, the findings are not necessarily generalizable to all Young Lives children, or all children in Viet Nam. The activities and discussions with Cham H'roi children were conducted in both Vietnamese and Cham H'roi, as the children preferred to speak in their own language. Although the research team had a local interpreter, it was acknowledged that the interpretation might not capture the full story of what children said amongst themselves. A further limitation is that we have focused mainly on children and young people's accounts, but, as noted above, children's accounts may differ from those of adults (Save the Children, 2006; see also Pells et al., 2015a, for an exploration of mothers' experiences). This suggests an area for further research.

In relation to the survey analysis, it is important to note that the tests in Vietnamese and Maths were administered around the same time as the child-level questionnaire. This means that it is not possible to separate out the direction of the effects. It is plausible both that children may perform less well at school as a result of a violent home environment and that children could be beaten at home for poor school performance. The effects may also be indirect, for example corporal punishment may affect motivation and subsequently outcomes. As this paper is an exploratory analysis, further research is needed to investigate this relationship.

4. FINDINGS

This section will discuss findings on violence in children's lives from Young Lives qualitative and school survey data. The findings are structured around several key dimensions of violence: (a) children's experiences and knowledge of domestic violence; (b) drivers of violence perpetrated against children; (c) consequences of children's experiences of violence, including physical as well as psychological and emotional well-being and learning outcomes; and (d) sources of support available and sought by children in a situation of domestic violence. These themes are elaborated based on children's reported experiences and views, in contrast to much existing research, which has not tended to explore children's descriptions of violence in their everyday lives.

4.1 CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When children were asked to describe types of domestic violence, they cited many acts that could be categorized into three types of violence; namely physical, emotional, and neglect.

Physical violence included acts such as hitting (caregivers hitting children, husband hitting wife, siblings hitting each other), tying up and beating (father tying up wife/child), throwing (husband throwing things at wife/child), cutting (a father in Van Tri used a knife to cut his son's neck), chasing (husband chasing wife with a knife), destroying things in the house, and other acts, such as slapping and kicking.

Emotional violence included acts such as insulting, threatening/intimidating (caregivers threatening the child, husband and wife insulting each other), shaming, yelling, cursing, screaming, name calling, not allowing children to speak up, and threatening to kick them out of the house or to abandon them.

Neglect here is interpreted to include acts such as caregivers not providing food or money to meet a child's needs, not taking care of a child, abandoning a child because she is a girl, not letting a child go to school, or forcing a child to work when they are too young. The sample is too small to trace patterns according to age and gender.

Different types of violence were often interwoven and could represent multiple forms of violence. This is evidenced by the group discussion with young men in Van Tri in 2014, who articulated a broad definition of violence: *"Forcing children to work early is the same as beating, it is physical violence"*, and *"Parents arguing and fighting in front of the child is emotional violence.... Parents fighting is emotional violence for the child witnessing it"*.

Often, children in violent homes described multiple forms of violence. Children may witness parental violence, may be victims of physical and emotional violence themselves, and may be neglected by their parents. These different forms of violence can occur either at the same time in a given violent episode, or at different times. The example of Ho Na, a Cham H'roi girl, born in 2001, illustrates this. Ho Na's mother abandoned her husband and her three daughters when Ho Na was aged 3. Since then she has lived with her father, stepmother and two sisters. Ho Na's memories of her childhood and first years of school were very unhappy, and fearful. Her father used to help

her with her studies in Grade 1 but he scared her more than helped her, as he often brutally beat her and reprimanded her when she failed to understand what he said. When he was interviewed in 2008, Ho Na's father admitted,

She [Ho Na] has been in Grade 1 for two years now and yet she knows nothing. I felt so frustrated and lost my interest in helping her... If it is a son, I would try more, but it is a daughter, I am so sad and so desperate.

He not only lost interest in helping his daughter with her learning but also refused to sustain his parental responsibilities towards her, thus neglecting her. In 2011, the researcher noted:

... Many changes have occurred in these children's [Ho Na and her sister's] lives. They do not receive care from their parents. They prefer to stay with their grandfather, but very often nobody can tell whether they are at home or at school or somewhere else, nobody can be sure whether they are fed or are hungry. They have both father and mother but they are like orphans. Nobody takes care of them.

(Source: Fieldwork notes).

Children appeared to accept that in many cases their parents' violent acts were triggered by their own bad deeds, that their parents have rights and responsibilities to "educate" them, but they were unhappy with violent treatment and were especially angry with unfair violent treatment (as Rydstrøm, 2006, also noted). In one of the children's group discussions focused on the vignette of Mai's story, girls (aged 13) disapproved of the violent treatment by Mai's parents and her grandmother:

It is not right for Mai's parents to do that [to scold her and said she is stupid as a pig], because they should not put all of their angry mood on Mai. Even when Mai did something wrong, it is better to tell her softly, and especially when Mai did not do anything wrong, and they scolded at her, that is not right.

The children argued that "Even when Mai did something wrong, her parents should just talk to her softly, explain things to her". This shows children's sense of injustice and an understanding of who is a 'good' and 'bad' child, who is a 'good' and 'bad' parent.

Although none of the children were familiar with the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, their accounts reflect much of the concept of domestic violence featured in public discourse: "Violence is a way people use power to resolve problems they encounter in their life," explained a young man in Nghia Tan (group discussion, 2014). This power, in the form of violence, is the manifestation of gender norms. The tradition of patrilineal ancestor worship means men are usually the heads of the households and have the right to discipline and educate other household members – such as junior male kin and junior women – who are considered inferior (Rydstrøm, 2006). People have been socialized into this belief in men's superiority, and it frames their social interactions, reflected in the words of two young Cham H'roi men in Van Lam: "When we were in love, I listened to whatever she [his lover who later became his wife] said. Now that we are married and have children, I do not listen to her anymore," and "When we have children, I will be able to beat [children and wife] as much as I wish," (group discussion, 2014). Thus, young people's understandings of

violence and the appropriateness of the use of violence as a mechanism for 'educating', 'disciplining' and 'controlling' were very much rooted in traditional gender roles and identities.

While the young Cham H'roi people quoted above in Van Lam did not explicitly use the words 'violence' or 'power', 'power' was inherent to the young men's awareness of their perceived right to drink and beat their wives and their children. It was echoed in the Cham H'roi girls' fearfulness of their fathers' drunkenness, and in a young Cham H'roi woman's bitter complaint in a discussion group:

Honestly, if coming home after finishing work in the fields we take a shower and go out, our heads would be chopped off. When the husbands are at home, they do nothing, they don't cook, don't do laundry or sweep the floor. But when they drink and are drunk, we are in big trouble. We are always afraid that we do not get things done for them... Every single one of them is the same, they drink every day, not like once every two or three months. After going to parties, they also stop somewhere else to drink some more and don't go home right away, and then again ask their friends to go home to continue drinking. When they come home, the wives ask why they are so drunk since they are afraid that the husbands might get into accidents, but then the wives get beaten up for that...

(Women's community discussion, 2014, Van Lam)

Knowledge of and attitudes towards violence, however, varied according to location and ethnic group. The Kinh majority children and young people in Nghia Tan and Van Tri (13- and 20-year-olds) showed a much better understanding of the child protection law and their rights than the Cham H'roi children and young people in remote Van Lam. This was the result of recent sensitization campaigns on domestic violence and children's rights in the mass media, and the frequent occurrence of violent cases in their local areas.

We often hear about domestic violence on TV and internet and in newspapers.

I witnessed many violent cases, they are very common in our neighbourhood.

(20-year-olds, group discussion, 2014, Nghia Tan)

I feel sorry for Duy. He is doing well at school, why do his parents treat him badly? Duy obviously performs his duties as a son in the family and as a student at school well. His father does not perform his duties well. He often drinks alcohol and beats his wife. He violates the child protection law. This is true domestic violence (bao hanh gia dinh).

(13-year-old boy, group discussion, 2014, Van Tri)

Attitudes towards violence, and knowledge of existing legal protections did not appear to be the result of differing prevalence of violence among different regions. Children and young people in urban Nghia Tan – both the 13-year-olds and the 20-year-olds – explicitly stated that domestic violence occurs very often in their community, as shown in the following extract:

I have seen many similar situations like Duy's family in my area. This is about a family living next to my house. There was a couple living together with their family. The mother-in-law was always scolding her daughter-in-law, and the couple often had many conflicts. The husband always went out drinking, and when he came home at night he beat his wife. The wife felt that her life was too much suffering, so sometimes she fought back. The two of them chased each other, fought with each other, sometimes they even ran into neighbours' houses, creating a lot of problems for everyone. Sometimes the husband even burned things, and broke things.

(13-year-old boys, group discussion, 2014, Nghia Tan)

Although children in the regions of Van Lam and Van Tri indicated that domestic violence was rare, the phrase "this happens very often" was repeated frequently when they described violent cases they knew about, suggesting that discussion of violence is often hidden:

This is about a family in my area. The husband went out to drink and came home late. His wife did not open the door for him, which made him angry, and he beat her up. My father ran out to stop the husband. This man often went out to drink and got home like that. Their children saw that and were very afraid, they cried a lot because they were very small.

(13-year-old boys, group discussion, 2014, Van Tri)

Thus, children and young people seemed to be well aware of episodes of violence, even though the extent to which the topic of violence appears to be taboo may vary across communities. The evidence presented here, however, suggests that sensitization campaigns may be helpful in raising awareness of domestic violence, in reducing the taboo associated with it, and in helping children and young people understand their roles and rights in the context of violence. The next section considers children's understandings of the drivers of violence in the home, drawing on the socio-ecological framework developed earlier in the paper.

4.2 CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE

The multilevel, life-course, socio-ecological framework discussed above can be applied to explain children's accounts of factors that contribute to domestic violence. The risk factors mentioned by the children were present at all four levels of the framework, from individual factors pertaining to the victim and the person using violence, to factors relating to interpersonal relationships among family members, to social norms of valuing boys over girls, and structural level factors linked to poverty and unemployment. These risk factors are analysed below, structured around the socio-ecological framework for understanding factors that contribute to violence against children (see Figure 1, page 16).

4.2.1 STRUCTURAL LEVEL: ECONOMIC HARDSHIP, POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT

At the structural level, poverty and difficult household financial circumstances can shape children's experiences of violence. Indeed, children in all discussion groups mentioned economic hardships of

the family as an important factor associated with subsequent violence in the home. According to the children, when families' needs were not met due to lack of money, the parents blamed each other, which led to confrontations, injuries, cursing, and things being broken: *"Parents have quarrels due to 'money issues'. The money issues will make people stressed, they lose self-control, drink alcohol and have bad behaviour"*, explained a 13-year-old boy (group discussion, Van Tri, 2014).

The children participating in the group discussions explained that a family's economic hardship was often caused by unemployment of one or both parents or by the failure of their business. The turmoil that ensued affected everyone in the household; however, children often suffered physical and emotional violence as well as neglect in the context of household economic hardship.

In the emerging middle-income context in Viet Nam, many people are working in low paid and temporary employment and cannot make ends meet. Living in these stressful situations may contribute to subsequent domestic violence. Economic hardship may also necessitate that children work at an early age, especially children of ethnic minorities. This is well illustrated in Y Sinh's narrative:

Y Sinh is a Cham H'roi boy born in 2001. He lives with his mother, stepfather and two stepsisters in Van Lam. He has never known who his biological father is. In 2008, when he was 7 years old, Y Sinh's mother told the researcher that Y Sinh did not like his stepfather as he often beat Y Sinh and gave the food to his own daughter but not to Y Sinh. In 2011, when the research team returned to visit, they found that the family were living in a stilt house of 20 square metres built on land of a relative with no electricity and no water. The researcher wrote in her notes that Y Sinh was 10 years old, but he looked like he was 5 or 6. He never went to school as his mother insisted that he should stay at home to take care of his little sister and then herd the family's cow and go chop sugarcane to earn money. For a day chopping sugarcane he earned about 30,000 dong (1.5 US dollars). He kept 5,000 dong for himself and gave the rest to his mother. His mother explained that she needed his money badly:

"I was sick and we had nothing in the house to eat. I rely on him. I would die if I didn't have him."

When the research team returned in 2014, Y Sinh (not yet aged 13) had just finished a year contract of herding cows for a family in his village. He earned 2,500,000 dong (120 US dollars) but he never had a chance to see the money as his mother took it before he began the contract.

Thus, poverty was a key factor shaping Y Sinh's experiences of violence. Y Sinh's family had no land on which to build a house or to grow plants. The family depended on daily hired work to survive. Y Sinh suffered from physical abuse and neglect from his stepfather, and this distant and strained relationship was another contributing factor. Yet, Y Sinh loved his mother and he began working at an early age to help his family. It is important to note that Y Sinh, like other Young Lives children who work to help their families, never complained that he had to work; rather, he was happy that he could help his family.

4.2.2 COMMUNITY LEVEL: GENDER NORMS

Violence in the household in Viet Nam, while variable by age, gender and region, is largely framed within gender norms. Several studies have pointed out that social norms of male superiority contribute to intimate partner violence (Rydström, 2003; MOLISA, 2011; Pells et al., 2015a and 2015b), and indeed, women and girls identified gender as a crucial factor shaping experiences of violence. For instance, in a community group discussion, the Cham H'roi women discussed men's drinking behaviour in Van Lam, and said that husbands beat their wives badly whenever they were not happy and the wives had to accept this unfair treatment as part of the social norm of male superiority and authority within the household, for the sake of preserving family harmony. Thus, gender inequality framed much of the violence children and young people witnessed between parents and adults.

Gender inequality also often lay behind the violence experienced by girls, whether from male or female caregivers. In the discussion groups in Van Tri, both young girls and women identified the social norm of valuing boys over girls as driving domestic violence towards girls. In discussing the story of Mai who was often scolded by her parents and grandmother at home when they were not happy, the first answer to the question of why Mai was treated like that in her family was *"because her parents want to have boys and Mai is a girl. Her parents want to have boys to be their successor"* (13-year-old girl). Similarly, the cultural preference for boys is clear from Ho Na's story mentioned earlier, when her father declared that if she had been a son, he would have tried harder to help with her studies, but Ho Na was a girl, so he lost his interest in helping her.

Anger and frustration with discrimination against girls was strongly expressed in the accounts of family violence in the women's discussion group:

... for example a family has two children, a boy and a girl. All of a sudden they pay more attention to the son than to the daughter. They make the daughter work more. The son gets to go sightseeing and travel while the daughter is not allowed to go anywhere. Or when it comes to clothes, the son is prioritized. The daughter often has to work a lot, but has less clothes to wear. That is psychological [emotional] violence... When she gets sick, she is not taken to the hospital as promptly as when the son gets sick. For example, the son has only a minor fever, the family immediately takes him to a health check-up. That kind of thing often happens here.

... whenever the husbands shout or yell at the girls, they do it with much contempt and clearly discriminate that "you are girls, you have to do this or that, you are not allowed to have a rest". And this attitude has been deeply imprinted on the girls' minds.

... when the wife is pregnant with a baby girl the husband starts to ignore her and beat her, sometimes he forces her to get an abortion. This is emotional abuse... The girls are less cared for and less valued.

Although Van Tri, like other rural places in the Red River delta, has the highest rates of boys at birth compared to the rest of the country (about 120-130 boys to every 100 girls), the greater cultural

value placed on male children prevails in many other areas of the country. According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment (2011), the sex ratio at birth in Viet Nam has been increasing since 2000, from the normal ratio of 104-106 boys to 100 girls, to 110.6 boys compared to 100 girls in 2009. This gender imbalance at birth is most evident among the better off and more educated groups because of greater access to information during pregnancy (see also Guilmoto, 2012).

4.2.3 INTERPERSONAL LEVEL: PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

At the household level, difficulties in interpersonal relationships are important factors in violence against children. Children consistently identified several aspects of household dynamics linked to violence: the quality of parental marital relationships, alcohol consumption, and gambling.

From children and young people's point of view, violence often occurred in families where parents distrusted each other. This distrust often resulted in verbal conflicts, separation or divorce. Children witnessed their parents' violent behaviour, and became victims themselves of physical and emotional violence as well as neglect, as seen in the account from Huu from Van Tri:

Huu was a 20-year-old university student in 2014. When he was asked to remember the happiest and the saddest periods in his life, without hesitation Huu said he was happiest when he was in elementary school. At that time his life was peaceful. He was an excellent student every year and his dad loved and indulged him so much, sometimes bought him presents. His family was happy then. Then his father began to drink and beat his mom, his sister and himself, but not his elder brother. Huu could not explain why his dad hit him but not his brother despite the fact that he was always good at learning and obedient. And his mother worked very hard every day to support the whole family as his dad was not fit enough to work.

In Huu's case, his father suspected that his mother had had an affair and that Huu was not his biological son. Huu's father beat and cursed at him because of his jealousy towards Huu's mother.

As noted above, children clearly understood that life stressors, such as unemployment, economic hardship, and substance abuse, among other reasons, often led to the breakdown of parental relationships, which in turn could contribute to violence in the home. As one 13-year-old boy said in the group discussion in Van Tri "... people in the home quarrel because of many different reasons...".

As is partly evident in Huu's narrative, alcohol consumption by men is associated with violence. Children in all age groups unanimously affirmed that when men came home after drinking they often argued with their wives, lost self-control and beat their wives and children. Children found it difficult to distinguish whether economic hardship, unemployment and business failure led to alcohol consumption, or whether alcohol consumption led to economic hardships and business failure. One 20-year-old in Nghia Tan said in the group discussion:

Poverty is the most determining factor of domestic violence... Because of economic difficulties and business failure, the husband is too tired and stressed and goes out to drink with friends and gets addicted to alcohol... husband and wife have conflicts and then beating...

But another young man argued back:

It is because the man in the house drinks too much and gets drunk, and that leads to the decline of the family's economic conditions. Perhaps the wife did not want it [violence] to happen, but if the husband desires to gamble and drink, of course he does not want to work, he only wants to play. The wife would be angry, and they would be fighting all the time, which is the reason why the family's economic condition would decline.

This example illustrates young people's awareness of the complex relationships between poverty, economic hardship, alcohol consumption, and violent behaviour. The complexity of these relationships was illustrated in another young man's argument that though many men in his hamlet drank and got drunk, it was not because they did not have jobs, but rather because they were addicted to alcohol. Whenever they had money, they spent it on alcohol. They would come home when they were drunk and beat their wives and children. He added that if one went to places where drink was sold in the afternoon, one could see many factory workers drinking for fun, to get drunk. This example shows that the transition to affluence with higher incomes and greater affordability of excessive drinking and drugs may also fuel the violence. It also clearly illustrates the connections between the different levels of factors shaping violent behaviours.

Children also mentioned gambling as a risk factor of domestic violence, as evidenced in the story of a 13-year-old boy in Van Tri. He told the group that he knew a family with a husband who gambled. When he came home he beat his wife, fought with her, cursed at his children. This happened very often. The boy added that in his neighbourhood there were many men who gambled in cockfights, then came home and fought with their families.

Men's alcohol consumption was particularly prominent in the rural areas of Van Tri and Van Lam. Children in Van Tri often saw men gathering in the drinking shops and fighting with each other brutally when they got drunk. For the Cham H'roi children in Van Lam, men's drinking had become so habitual in the village that children did not question why they drank. This echoed the opinions of the Cham H'roi women in the community group discussions:

Men drink almost every day, like they eat rice, because friends ask them to hang out and party.

We do a lot of things at home. And husbands, coming home after drinking, beat us badly, and no one can understand that.

4.2.4 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR AND THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

At the individual level, children's behaviour was associated with their experiences of violence: children admitted that sometimes they are wrong, disobedient and 'spoiled' (*hu hong*) and their parents are right to 'educate' them, "*because we are bad, we do not obey our parents, playing around foolishly...*". This notion of 'educating' children to behave properly parallels parents' perceptions of how they should bring up their children (CSAGA, 2004; UNICEF, 2008). At the same

time, children viewed physical punishment to correct their behaviour as problematic. Children described feeling angry and sad when physically or verbally punished, including being cursed at. This was particularly the case when they felt they had done nothing wrong, explaining *“the parents cannot throw their anger at anyone so they take it out on their children to make them feel better.”* Both boys and girls confirmed that they felt ‘degraded’ and ‘unconfident about their roles’ when subjected to physical and verbal abuse. As noted, children wished that their parents could just gently explain their wrongdoings. The negative emotions linked to parental discipline were not limited to young children, but rather persisted for many young people well into adulthood. For instance, some young people, aged 20, mentioned that they were still afraid of sharing their problems with their parents for fear of being scolded, and some reported that they stopped telling their parents how they felt after they moved to senior high school (Grade 10), as they felt that their parents did not understand them properly.

In summary, a socio-ecological approach to analysis shows that violence is influenced by many elements in children’s lives, and these elements are present at all levels; they interconnect, feed into each other and are difficult to disentangle. At the structural level, poverty creates stressors in meeting daily needs and, in some cases, this stress is manifested in instances of violence directed at children or other family members. At the community level, social norms contribute to the use of violence as an acceptable way to discipline children, while gender norms – particularly the power ascribed to men in the household and the greater cultural value placed on male children – contribute to the preference of boys at birth and the increased risk of violence for girls and women. At the interpersonal, familial level, children and young people highlighted the importance of the quality of relationships between parents and how the problematic behaviour of men – drinking and gambling – increased the likelihood of domestic violence. At the individual, personal level, children were ambivalent – they accepted that mothers and fathers would hit them if they were disobedient, supporting the social norm of the use of violence to ‘educate’ children mentioned above. They did not accept, however, the use of violence by mothers and fathers for what they perceived to be no reason at all. The next section explores children and young people’s experiences of the consequences of violence.

4.3 CHILDREN’S PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

The long-term effects of violence on children are well documented in the international literature, but research in Viet Nam on its impact as identified by children and young people themselves is sparse. Children and young people clearly saw the differences between abused children and non-abused children, and they clearly articulated the impact of domestic violence on their lives, and how this changed throughout childhood and according to gender. Here, we consider the impact of violence in the home on children’s physical, psychological and emotional well-being, as well as on their learning.

4.3.1 CHILDREN’S PHYSICAL WELL-BEING: PHYSICAL HEALTH AND INJURIES

While children did not discuss the physical impacts of violence extensively, some health problems and physical injuries associated with violence in the home were identified. Ho Na, described earlier,

said "... dad beat mom very hard," and that she was "afraid there would be no money to buy medicine for mom [to treat the injuries]". Ho Na's father also beat her and swore at her when he helped her with her homework. Ho Na suffered constant headaches and stomach aches when she was in grades 1 and 2.

To give an example of physical injuries resulting from domestic violence, children in Van Tri mentioned a well-known case in their community in 2013:

The father used a knife to cut his son's neck and the boy was taken to hospital. This injury affects the boy's larynx and he is now very weak and thin, and he has some problems with breathing....

Children and young people recognized that neglect, which can include withholding food, also resulted in health problems, such as malnutrition and stunting for children, especially when they were small. The case of Y Sinh, the Cham H'roi boy mentioned above, illustrates this. In 2011, the researcher noted that "...he is 10 years old but he looks as small as a 5- or 6-year-old". He had not grown much, three years later. Similarly, as one young man said in a group discussion: "Repeated violence will lead to serious consequences such as injuries and life-long impact on health, a child will be under-developed".

4.3.2 CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING: ANXIETY, FEAR, STRESS, LOSS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Descriptions of anxiety, fear, stress, tension, shame, and low self-confidence permeated children's accounts of consequences of violence:

These events have very big consequences on children's psychology, make them mentally depressed, they become lonely, shut down...

Abused children may have autism, which is very difficult to cure, or they may even carry the disease for the rest of their life. They would be mentally broken down.

(13-year-old boys, group discussion 2014, Van Tri)

I feel sad, degraded... I like to sit alone in a room to think what I have done wrong, what I can do to fix it...

If a child makes a mistake, it is fine to scold her, but adults should not swear, because swearing would make the child feel unconfident about her roles. If a child does not make any mistakes and parents still scold her just to take the anger out on them, it is very wrong.

There is a psychological [emotional] impact... children are not confident in what they do, they might feel sad and unconfident, feel bad about themselves...

(13-year-old girls, group discussion 2014, Van Tri)

Similarly to the children in Van Tri, 13-year-old girls in Nghia Tan emphasized that they would feel 'vulnerable and uncomfortable', 'sad', 'angry', "insecure with the thought that they are no longer needed by their parents".

Children thought that girls were more emotionally affected by violence than boys. When they were asked to compare how a boy and a girl would feel when she/he is scolded at home, the 13-year-old girls in a group discussion in Van Tri said:

Boys don't care much.

Boys do care, but they take it less personally with parental scolding than girls.

Girls often feel bad about themselves and feel very unconfident.

Boys do not usually obey parents like girls. Girls are more sensitive than boys.

Girls are more likely to feel sorry for themselves, and find it difficult to forget things, while boys can go out to play and forget everything.

Girls' interpretations of the impact of violence on boys may not tell the full story. The conversation with 20-year-old Huu from Van Tri (mentioned earlier) shows that domestic violence may have long-lasting emotional consequences for boys as well as for girls. When he was asked to talk about the happy memories, Huu said:

... Going to university and having a girlfriend are happy events. But if you ask me about my life in general, I have a lot of concerns. Before, I don't think much. But I felt sad since I started grade 6. My dad got sick. At that time, no one knew why my dad started drinking and beat my mom and us. If my dad wasn't that badly sick, I would have been less sad. I think that mentally affected me. I was too young then...

I just looked at my mom when she was beaten. I was hiding behind the door crying, and couldn't do anything. My brother was a little older. My dad never hit him. My dad always had a liking for my brother. He loved me as well, but he always hit me and never hit my brother. During the one year my dad was drinking, my family was in chaos. I was being yelled at all the time, even my mom and sister scolded me... My mom worked every day, and when she came home, she was scolded.

Witnessing his father beating his mother made him feel unhappy and hopeless because he was young and could not stop his father beating his mother. When he grew older he came to understand how difficult and miserable this was for his mother, and how self-sacrificing she was:

Because my dad was sick, he has been staying home since. So it has been more difficult for my mom. My sister was in university, I was in middle school and my brother was in high school. She had to take care of the three of us, without any kind of support, so it was really difficult...

Huu felt lonely in his sadness, and when he went to school, always tried to hide his feelings "I don't want anyone to know that I am sad, that something happens in my family". Thus, violence was seen as a private matter and one that invoked a great deal of shame, and so children tried to keep it

secret (see also Pells et al., 2015a). The only person from his secondary school peer group with whom he trusted sharing his feelings was his girlfriend. This relationship was important for Huu in his struggle with his sense of unhappiness, discouragement and disappointment that resulted from his family situation:

Every time I was with Trang [his girlfriend] I felt like I was able to pour out all my burdens, and like there is nothing I needed to hide and to refrain myself from, that I just needed to be true to myself. I feel serene and happy every time. Otherwise, I was always under pressure, which sometimes made me unreasonable and irrational.... I felt discouraged, boring, disappointing and unhappy...

Stereotypical gender roles have shaped Huu's thinking and sense of self. He explained that he thought he 'acted like a girl' because he lacked courage, was shy, and could not decide things on his own. He felt he had to change, but found it difficult: "...it is hard to fix it... I am not so determined and it is very disappointing." Huu was acutely aware of the emotional trauma resulting from his exposure to domestic violence when he was young. He explained his family's disruption was as a result of his parents' unhappy marriage, and was determined that he would only marry someone he loved so that violence would never occur in his future home.

4.3.3 CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC WELL-BEING: POOR PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

Exposure to violence in the home may increase the risks for poor educational performance and behavioural problems among children. Here we present an analysis of survey data to provide an overview of the prevalence of one type of violence experienced by children in the home and the associated effects with children's performance in schools.¹¹ Figure 3, page 34, shows that more than half of children experienced corporal punishment from parents 'sometimes' (61 per cent), just over one-third experienced violence 'rarely or never' while a small portion of children experienced violence always (5 per cent).¹² Boys experienced slightly higher levels of corporal punishment than girls.

The association between children's experience of corporal punishment and two indicators of academic performance – in Maths and Vietnamese – was investigated.¹³ Three categories were collapsed into two to indicate those who experienced corporal punishment (always/sometimes) versus those who did not experience corporal punishment (rarely/never). Those who rarely or never experienced corporal punishment from their parents had a slightly higher average score in Vietnamese and Maths than those who experienced corporal punishment sometimes/always. These results were statistically significant for both Vietnamese and Maths and the results are presented in Table 2 (page 34).

In order to investigate whether the associations between parental corporal punishment and test scores persisted after controlling for child and school characteristics, a two-level mixed effects model was employed. Multi-level modelling allowed for the prediction of presumed outcomes

¹¹ For the full tables please see Appendix A.

¹² The analysis for this section is based on a background note: 'An Exploration of the Relationship between Corporal Punishment by Parents and Students' Academic Outcomes' prepared by Louise Yorke.

¹³ For both boys and girls, there is evidence that being hit is associated with worse learning outcomes, which is statistically significant for Vietnamese, but not for Maths (for Maths, statistically significant for boys only).

adjusted for group differences. A two-level mixed effects model tested the associations between experiences of corporal punishment by parents and gender on students' test scores in Maths and Vietnamese across schools. Corporal punishment and gender were included as fixed effects, while school was included as a random effect to represent the fact that students' learning outcomes are likely to vary across schools.

Figure 3 – Percentage of children aged 10 reporting corporal punishment by parents

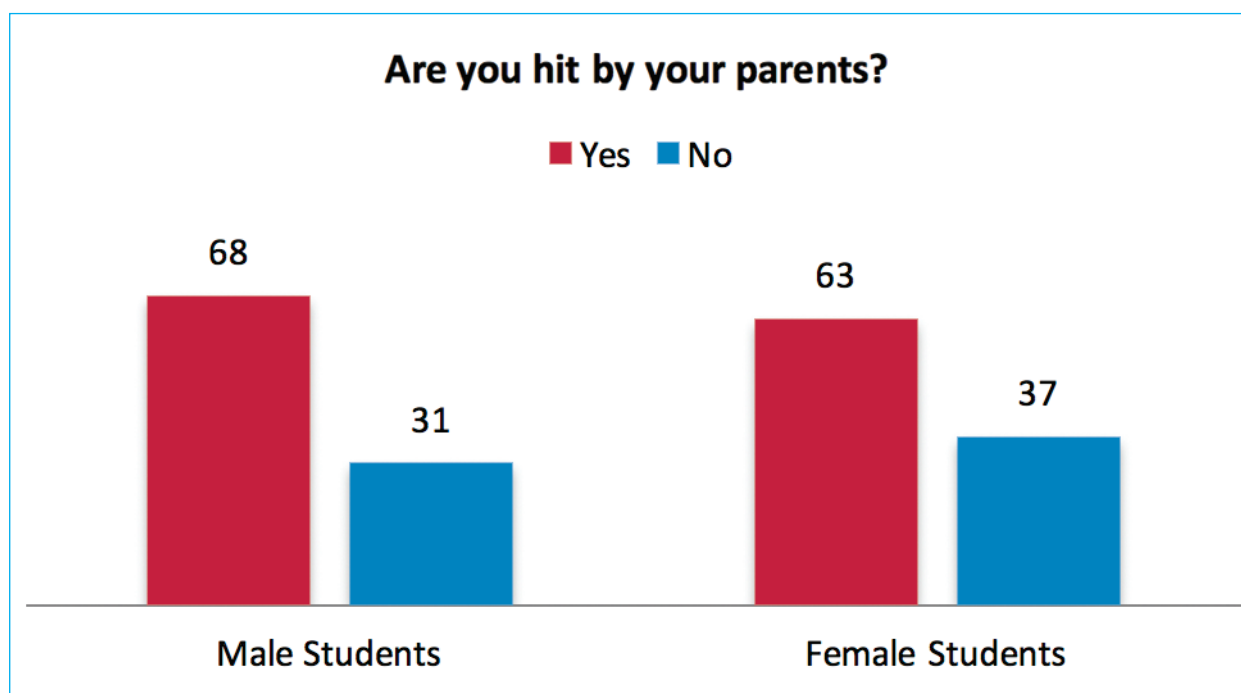


Table 2 – Corporal punishment and test scores at age 10 (in standard deviations)

		Vietnamese	Maths
<i>Are you hit by parents?</i>	Yes	-.03	-.02
	No	.06	.05
	<i>Difference</i>	.09**	.07*

t-test significance: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. See Appendix A for details of means and standard deviations.

Two models were run. First, a single-level model tested the associations between corporal punishment and gender on student's test scores without school effects. Second, a two-level model tested the associations between corporal punishment and gender on students' outcome with the school effects. The two-level model provided a better fit than the single level model, thus indicating the benefit of including school effects in the model (see Appendix A). The inclusion of school effects accounts for 18 per cent of the variation for boys and girls in Vietnamese and 12 per cent and 6 per cent of the variances in outcomes in Maths for boys and girls, respectively. This justifies the inclusion of a higher-level model.

Overall, parental corporal punishment is significantly associated with poorer test scores. These effects are statistically significant for both boys and girls in Vietnamese and for boys but not girls in Maths. The results from this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Association between corporal punishment and test scores

	Vietnamese		Maths	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Regression Coefficients (Fixed Effects)				
Intercept	-.37(.07)***	.12(.07)*	-.16(.07)**	.05(.06)
Corporal Punishment (Yes)	-.09(.05)*	-.09(.05)**	-.09(.05)*	-.08(.05)
Variance Components (Random Effects)				
Residual (within)	.71	.60	.77	.76
Intercept (between)	.33	.29	.24	.19
ICC	.18	.18	.12	.0

Note: Parameter estimate standard errors listed in parentheses, * P < .10, **P<.05,***P<.01

The effect sizes for corporal punishment on Vietnamese and Maths were tested using Cohen's D coefficient and the effects were found to be small (see Appendix A). The effect of corporal punishment is a small but real trend and is associated with poorer learning outcomes for those who experience corporal punishment.

The qualitative findings reflect the survey data. From children's accounts, violent parental behaviour had a negative effect on children's learning. In group discussions, 13-year-old children in Van Tri identified poor performance at school as a consequence of witnessing or being victims of violence in the home:

These things make children unhappy. When they are sad, certainly their study will be affected. Their heads will always be thinking about the events that have happened ...

The negative effect of violence on children's learning is also illustrated in the example of Ho Na, the 13-year-old Cham H'roi girl mentioned earlier, who described how her father's violent discipline in relation to her school work meant she could not concentrate on learning, and was afraid to learn.

The impact of experiences of corporal punishment, however, are also reflected in other behaviour that they perceived to be negative, including truancy and dropping out of school, drinking, fighting, stealing, gambling, running away from home and joining street gangs:

These events have very heavy consequences on children. Because children are still growing and have not fully developed their perception, they could quickly learn and imitate to do the same things later in life...

These events could make children sad, angry. They would imitate to do the same things, and are likely to fall into other social evils.

These accounts also clearly show how children are acutely aware of the risk of the intergenerational transmission of violence through imitation.

Children could imitate their parents and go out to tease others, curse at other friends.

Children are very quick to learn and imitate.

(13-year-old boys, group discussion, 2014, VanTri)

It is a very big problem [family violence]. Children can learn and follow. They can imitate what the adults do and do the same. It scares the children.

These things have a big impact on children. Because people will gossip, and say bad things about the family. The mother's and father's families will be in conflict, they will fight, which may lead to bloody violence. When children go to school, if their friends know about it, they will gossip. If the father and the mother got divorced, each follows his or her own happiness, the child might be abandoned to an orphanage, and his future will become very dark and unknown...

The children would feel very sad, and that would affect their study badly.

Being abandoned by the parents, the children will have a bad future. They may not be able to go to school and later on they might become drug addicts.

(13-year-old boys, group discussion, 2014, NghiaTan)

In summary, children and young people had clear views about the negative effects of violence on emotional well-being and development, and an acute awareness that the cycle of violence can be intergenerational. The next section explores their views about what possible solutions and sources of support might help them.

4.4 CHILDREN'S SUPPORT NETWORKS AND IMPROVING SERVICES FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the group discussions, children expressed a belief that violence was not an appropriate way to deal with conflict in the home or to 'educate' children, and that it has to be stopped. Children also reflected on how family ties and other social support networks can be important in providing protection.

Children saw neighbours, relatives, teachers and friends at school as people who could provide help when violence occurs in the home. Neighbours, in particular, were perceived to play an important role in protection from violence:

When parents are angry and they beat the child, neighbours can come to stop violence.

Neighbours can report violence to the organizations in charge.

Neighbours can have the abused child stay with them for a few days. Meanwhile they will explain the rights and wrongs to both the parents and the child.

At school, teachers were seen as a potential source of support:

I have seen teachers giving advice to their students. When teachers see a student with a sad face in the classroom, the teachers will know right away that something is wrong. Nothing can escape from the teachers' eyes. So, if the teachers know about the things that happen to her students like Duy in the story, the teachers will give them advice. Children have the right to speak up so they [teachers] can talk to their parents. Teachers can also go to students' houses to talk to their parents...

Teachers can first take care, comfort and pacify children mentally and then advise the families, report to the police and do other necessary things to protect the child.

Friends were also a source of support:

Friends can give good advice, share sadness and happiness. Friends will have ways to help friends in need.

Relatives were seen as a source of help when violence occurs in the home: "Grandparents and relatives can comfort the abused children, give them advice, help them be strong and protect them." However, children also mentioned that relatives on each of the parents' sides of the family may treat the abused child differently, based on gender norms, as the following excerpt from a group discussion with 13-year-old boys in Nghia Tan shows:

When Duy goes to his mother's relatives, they can certainly help him a lot. They can even bring him up, if his parents were fighting too much. They could for sure talk to the parents to stop the fighting. If Duy goes to his father's relatives, maybe he would get less help.

Why is that? Duy is a child of both families, isn't he?

Although Duy is the child of both families, paternal family often cares much only about the oldest grandson. So if Duy is a girl, perhaps the paternal family would not care about her. If Duy is a boy, perhaps they would care and help.

Children saw a role for local authorities in dealing with domestic violence and they particularly stressed the roles of village heads and the police in serious violence cases:

Victims of domestic violence need help from the society, the local community, especially the head of the hamlet.

When the husband hit the wife, the neighbours could come in in time to help. But sometimes, the husband could use a knife to threaten the wife, chasing a wife around, then the neighbours, the relatives from both maternal and paternal families really cannot interfere. They must get help from the police and the local authority to come in and help solve the situation.

Child protection organizations, orphanages, religious centres like churches and pagodas were seen as good shelters and sources of support and care for abused and abandoned children.

Pagodas treat people well. Abandoned children can come to pagodas and they will be given a place to stay, food to eat...

Children saw the need for counselling services for both parents and children. Counselling centres can help parents better understand their children's psychological emotional development and advise them on how best to educate their children or how to deal with specific cases. Children described their own need for counselling services where they could share their stories and seek advice, and some suggested establishing a helpline for free counselling services.

Finally, children felt that laws should be strengthened to protect children. They saw a need for a nationwide campaign against violence affecting children, a need for a mass programme and campaign on children's rights and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control.

In summary, children draw primarily on social networks for support in dealing with violence in the home, particularly neighbours and respected community members, such as teachers and community leaders. Extended family members were not, however, a reliable source of support for children, and support was perceived to be conditional on gender norms and lineage. Children offered clear ideas of other potential sources of support that they would find helpful, such as counselling services, better targeted legal protection, and greater social awareness of domestic violence and legislation against it. These suggestions show that children and young people have great potential to contribute ideas for improved programming and awareness-raising about violence and its impacts on children in general.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has documented how Young Lives children and young people experience and understand domestic violence. Children can clearly articulate their experiences of domestic violence, their views on what factors contribute to violence in the home, the consequences of violence, as well the support networks and services they need when experiencing violence in the home.

Our analysis offers a number of findings. Children and young people experience various forms of violence in the home, including physical and emotional/psychological violence as well as neglect. Data from the Young Lives school survey shows that two-thirds of children aged 10 experience corporal punishment by parents 'always' or 'sometimes'. Much of the high prevalence of violence can be explained by parents' perception that violence is an appropriate way in which to 'educate' and discipline children.¹⁴ Nonetheless, children and young people were unhappy with adults' violent treatment. Even when they recognized that they have done something wrong, they wished that adults could use alternative methods of discipline that respect their rights.

Using a multilevel developmental and life-course socio-ecological framework, we analysed the factors that contribute to violence against children in the home. Key drivers of violence against children operate at various levels. At a structural level, economic hardship, poverty and unemployment contribute to violence in the home. At the institutional level, services are not designed to address domestic violence or provide legislative protection against it, with limited organizations and services to provide support (such as child protection authorities and counselling services). At the community level, informal institutions, cultural beliefs and norms affecting interpersonal relations, and specifically gender norms, reinforce gender inequality putting girls at greater risk of violence. Non-biological sons, such as step-sons also appear to be at risk. At the interpersonal level, the quality of parental relationships, men's heavy consumption of alcohol, and gambling all contribute to violence in the home. At the individual level, children seemed to accept parents' authority to punish them when they had done something wrong, but felt it was unfair to be punished when they had not transgressed. Violence is a complex process, however, and these factors can be mutually reinforcing, combining to create situations in which violence occurs frequently in the home (UNICEF, 2015). Cutting across all four levels, it is clear that poverty, power and control, and gender inequality are key factors linked with a child's experiences of violence in the home. Men frequently use force in establishing authority over women, as do adults over children.

In terms of the consequences of violence, children and young people experience physical as well as emotional and psychological harm, such as physical injuries, increased anxiety, fear and stress, as well as lower self-confidence and self-esteem. The psychological and emotional impacts may also have physical manifestations, with some children describing having a headache or stomach ache in situations (for instance, completing homework with parents) that often erupted into violence. Moreover, evidence from the Young Lives school survey shows that experiencing violence in the home is associated with poorer learning performance in school.

¹⁴ See: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap3.pdf

Children and young people have limited sources of support to draw on in facing domestic violence, the most important of which is their social networks. In particular, neighbours and respected members of the community (such as teachers and community leaders) are key sources of support for children in situations of violence. Children and young people have clear ideas of other sources of support that would be helpful in dealing with violence in the home, however. They note that a national awareness campaign to increase knowledge of children's rights, domestic violence, and legislative protection against it, as well as organizations and services to provide support (such as child protection authorities and counselling services) would be helpful mechanisms in eliminating violence against children.

Finally, our findings show that context matters: children's and young people's experiences of violence in the home are not necessarily the same across different places, ethnic groups, ages and genders. Attitudes to, and knowledge of, domestic violence and protective systems vary by location. Ethnic minority Cham H'roi children were less familiar than other groups with the public discourse on domestic violence and children's rights. Violence among younger children may have lasting consequences over the life-course. Gender also mediates both experiences of violence and the consequences and sources of support that children have in dealing with domestic violence: while girls may be at higher risk for domestic violence due to prevailing gender norms, gendered roles and identities may make it more difficult for boys to talk about domestic violence and thus to seek help. Overall, the findings suggest that the experiences and key drivers of violence in the home are multi-layered. Policy responses, interventions and sources of support for children in dealing with violence must also be multi-dimensional and context-specific.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This paper has highlighted that the violence witnessed and experienced by children, both at school and at home, is the result of a complex interaction of factors at multiple levels – from the structural inequalities and stressors that shape families' lives, to the interpersonal relationships and interactions within families themselves. Addressing this violence thus requires a multi-level approach that encompasses the various contributors to children's experiences of violence and the sources of support that can prevent violence and intervene to protect children and youth. This section offers some policy implications based on our findings.

6.1 LEGISLATION IS A NECESSARY BUT NOT A SUFFICIENT STEP IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Current legislation already prohibits many forms of violence against children. Despite existing legislation, the implementation and enforcement of such laws and regulations remain problematic, hindering the protection of children and the rights to which they are entitled. Specifically, limited financial and human resources and poor inter-agency cooperation and coordination have hampered child protection service delivery. Improved funding and cooperation for all relevant government agencies involved in child protection services would facilitate more effective implementation of existing and future legislation.

School is, for many children, an extension of the home and having positive reinforcing good practices in school is important. While legislation exists banning the use of physical and psychological violence by teachers, there is no effective strategy in place for the prevention of and intervention in cases of school-based violence. Training teachers in the use of non-violent and positive alternative methods of discipline, as well as establishing a formal code of conduct for teachers, could help reduce the use of violence as a disciplinary method and protect children from corporal punishment in schools. In addition, creating mechanisms for reporting instances of violence at school, whether perpetrated by teachers, parents or peers, could expand children's resources for dealing with violence in all settings (see Ogando Portela and Pells, 2015, for a full discussion of corporal punishment, and Pells et al, 2016, on bullying).

6.2 GREATER AWARENESS OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NECESSARY TO CHALLENGE THE NORMALISATION OF VIOLENCE

There is evidence from some regions in Viet Nam that recent sensitization campaigns have increased awareness of and attitudes towards domestic violence. Broader national sensitization campaigns on domestic violence, especially on the negative impacts of experiences of violence on children throughout the life-course and on children's rights, could be helpful in challenging the use of violence as a means to 'discipline' or 'educate' children. Part of the sensitization campaign could include expanded education on children's rights, responsibilities for protection, and the resources available to both adults and children in dealing with instances of violence. This could take place both at the school and community levels, as well as in the national media, and should include information and resources in both majority and minority languages.

An effective social norms approach focuses on understanding how others' expectations of one's behaviour may be the determining factor in whether or not one engages in a harmful practice.¹⁵ This type of approach challenges practitioners and their partners engaged in preventing violence against children to rethink 'traditional' approaches to behaviour change. National campaigns can easily signal the wrong message, inadvertently reinforcing negative behaviours; such initiatives would benefit from the findings in this paper. If properly designed, campaigns and educational resources could serve as a catalyst to community-level conversations about the underlying causes and contributors to domestic violence, training in alternative methods of discipline, as well as possible context-specific resources that could be put in place to support victims of domestic violence.

6.3 GREATER ATTENTION TO THE GENDER-BASED INEQUALITIES THAT UNDERLIE MANY INSTANCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS CRUCIAL

Girls, young and adult women are at greater risk of violence due to a variety of gender-based inequalities – from a preference for sons to men's use of violence to exert authority within the household. Thus, a crucial component of policies to address domestic violence is the promotion of greater gender equality through national and local campaigns, as well as through gender education that targets both girls and boys in order to establish views and behaviour conducive to more equal gender relations in adulthood. This should be underpinned by greater acknowledgement of gender-based violence in national legislation, including a clear definition of gender-based violence and legislation explicitly prohibiting gender-based domestic violence.

6.4 IMPROVING THE RESOURCES TO HELP IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IS IMPORTANT IN HELPING CHILDREN DEAL WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Children have limited resources in dealing with instances of domestic violence, which typically extend only to their own social networks. National and community-level efforts to provide more formal mechanisms for identifying and supporting children in experiencing domestic violence could expand the resources at their disposal and ultimately mitigate experiences of violence. Resources for adults also need to be made available so that the onus of change does not stay entirely with children. Formal mechanisms for reporting violence and for mediating between parties are stipulated in the Domestic Violence Law of 2007 (Article 18), but reporting and intervention need to be significantly improved. Greater attention must be given to the reasons why domestic violence goes unreported within communities, and to what can be done to improve reporting rates, effectiveness of interventions and prevention efforts such as community information or mediation. Taken together, this is what is needed to reduce violence, improve the effectiveness of the policy and practice and ultimately the quality of life for children and youth in Viet Nam.

¹⁵ In August 2015, the UNICEF Viet Nam Country Office and the Ministry for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, hosted the UNICEF Country Offices and Government partners from Indonesia and Philippines for a four-day International Training Workshop on Social Norms and Violence against Children. The participatory course moved learners through the basics of social norms, drawing on case studies from the region.

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APPENDIX A – EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AT HOME ON CHILDREN’S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Figure A1 – Normal Distributions for Vietnamese and Maths

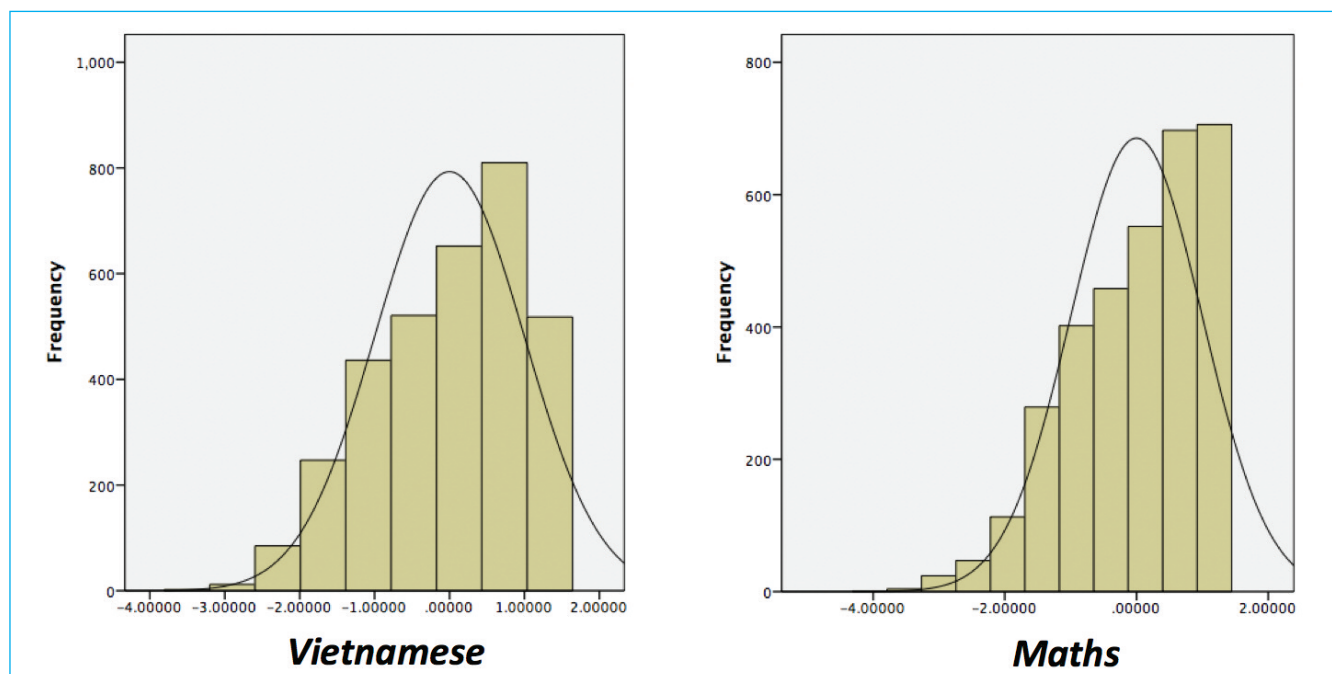


Table A1 – Descriptive Statistics for Maths and Vietnamese

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Vietnamese (raw)	3283	2	10	7.79	1.65
Maths (raw)	3283	0	10	7.74	1.91
Vietnamese (Standardised)	3283	-3.41	1.98	.00	1.00
Maths (Standardised)	3283	-3.91	1.35	.00	1.00

Table A2 – T-Test (Corporal Punishment and Outcomes in Maths and Vietnamese)

	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff	S.E. Diff	95%	CI
Vietnamese	-2.55	2310.75	.011	-.09	.04	-.17	-.02
Maths	-2.34	3254	.019	-.09	.04	-.16	-.01

Table A3 – Correlations between Variables

	V	M	CP	G
V	1	.68**	.04*	.25**
M	.68**	1	.04*	.11**
CP	.04*	.04*	1	.06**
G	.25**	.11**	.06**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

V = Vietnamese, M = Maths, CP = Corporal Punishment, G = Gender

Table A4 – Comparison of Multilevel Models

		Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Parameters	df	X2 Difference Test
Vietnamese	Boys	Without School Effects (L1)	4849.92	4		
		With School Effects (L2)	4421.98	3	1	M1-M2= 427.94*
	Girls	Without School Effects (L1)	4135.66	4		
		With School Effects (L2)	3770.85	3	1	M1-M2= 364.81*
Maths	Boys	Without School Effects (L1)	4853.78	4		
		With School Effects (L2)	4544.03	3	1	M1-M2=309.75 *
	Girls	Without School Effects (L1)	4292.03	4		
		With School Effects (L2)	4080.79	3	1	M1-M2= 211.24*

Table A5 – Effect Sizes (Cohen's D)

	Boys	Girls
Vietnamese	.10	.12
Maths	.09	.08

Small=.20, Medium=.50, Large=.80

APPENDIX B – VIGNETTES FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

VIGNETTE FOR THE YOUNGER COHORT, GIRL DISCUSSION GROUP:

Mai is a girl who lives with her parents and her grandmother. She loves being outside with her friends. They love to chat together. She has two close friends, Nga and My, who live close by. Mai is generally quite happy and carefree but sometimes she becomes sad and cries when people at home treat her badly. Sometimes when her parents are upset they scold her for spending too much time with her friends. They call her names and demean her, and though her grandmother is more tolerant, she also scolds Mai when she comes home late. When such things happen, Mai feels very hurt. Her friends Nga and My try to distract her by inviting her to their houses to chat and watch TV. When Mai is sad, she cries a little bit and wonders why her parents treat her badly. Sometimes she feels that she made a mistake, like for example when she comes back home late, she feels they might have been worried and she should have come back home early. At other times she feels that they treat her badly even though it is not her fault. But even when it is her fault she feels that her parents could have told her in a more gentle way rather than treat her badly.

VIGNETTE FOR THE YOUNGER COHORT, BOY DISCUSSION GROUP:

Duy is a boy who lives with his parents and his two younger sisters. Duy goes to the nearby school. He likes school and he is doing well. His favourite subject is maths. He is also on a football team and plays football with his friends every weekend. However life is not always so easy for Duy. Sometimes he can't sleep at night as he can hear his parents arguing about money and how they will afford to buy food. Recently, his father has started drinking a lot at weekends. This causes problems at home, as he comes home very late at night and makes a lot of noise, waking everybody up. Sometimes Duy has noticed bruises on his mother's face after his father has gone out drinking. Duy asks his mother what happened, but his mother never wants to tell him. Duy feels sad when he sees his mother like this, but at the same time, he feels angry with her for not talking to him about it. Duy often feels confused as he loves both his parents and he doesn't know how to help.

VIGNETTE FOR THE OLDER COHORT BOY DISCUSSION GROUP:¹

Luong is 17-year-old girl. She is in her final year of high school. She is outgoing and sociable and she has many friends. She really likes sports, particularly volleyball. She lives with her younger brother, her mother and her grandmother. Three months ago she started to date a boy in her community. His name is An. An is also in his final year at high school. An is a very popular boy at school and the best at football. Luong and An spend a lot of time together, particularly at the weekends. They like to watch DVDs, go to the internet café and hang out in town. Luong's family does not approve of An, as they think that Luong should not be spending time with boys but instead she should focus on her studies so she can get good grades and then get a good job. Luong has lots of arguments with her mum about this, which makes her very unhappy. Sometimes she cries for hours. Generally Luong is very happy with An. He makes her feel very beautiful and very

¹ As noted above, group discussions were not undertaken with Older Cohort young women, due to resource/time constraints.

special. However, recently she has become a bit worried as they have started to argue as well. An doesn't like Luong to spend too much time with her friends. He says it is his girlfriend's duty to spend all her time with him. So, Luong has stopped contacting her friends and she has dropped out of the volleyball team. This makes her upset and a bit lonely. Sometimes they have big arguments about it, and one time An slapped her face.

(Vignettes adapted from UNICEF Participatory Tool, available online at

<http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/pdf/UNICEF%20Participatory%20Assessment%20Tool.pdf> accessed 26/10/2016

APPENDIX C – DISCUSSION GROUP TECHNIQUES

UMBRELLA TECHNIQUE

The purpose of this exercise is to understand where children can go for support when they experience problems in the home, whether they feel able to go by themselves or with others, and what can be done to strengthen these sources of support.

Umbrella Exercise:

Split the discussion group into two. Ask each group to draw a big umbrella with many sections (like below).



Then ask the children, what is the purpose of an umbrella, why do we use an umbrella? [elicit answers, such as to protect from the rain, or to be prepared].

Then say, just as an umbrella provides support and protection from the rain, we are going to think about the types of support children have in this community.

ASK: if children in this area are experiencing problems at home, like Duy and Mai, where can they go for help?

Ask them to WRITE the sources of support in each section of the umbrella. Remind them that this can be both formal sources such as NGOs etc. and informal such as friends, family, and teachers.

Then ASK them for each type of support, can they go there alone or do they have to go with others? Who do they go with?

How do these people/places respond when children go there? For example, are they open and kind, or are they a bit intimidating?

Finally ask them to brainstorm how these sources of support can be improved.

PROBLEM TREE TECHNIQUE

The problem-tree exercise aims to elicit young people and adults' views on the causes ('roots') and consequences ('branch') of domestic violence. Participants of focus group discussions are first asked to describe the different types of violent acts that occur in the home. Ideas are written on cards and then arranged in order of importance, providing context-specific 'violence indicators'. Participants then draw a big tree and are asked to consider what are the causes and consequences of violence in the home. The causes and consequences of violence are written on coloured cards – each cause or each consequence is on a separate card, and causes and consequences are assigned to different colour cards.

All the cards are then placed on the tree, according to colour. Causes are placed in the roots and the consequences are placed as branches. With this method, participants can see clearly the links between the causes and impacts of poverty, drawing arrows between the different cards on the tree. Discussions are meant to be 'general' and concerned with the dynamics of violence in the community, and not about individual participants' experiences.