

Statement to the 74th Session of the World Health Assembly, 24 May to 1 June 2021
on agenda item 23. WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multisectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children

Thank you, Chair. Medicus Mundi International would like to take this opportunity to address agenda item 23. This statement is supported by the People's Health Movement.

We welcome the call to prevent interpersonal violence and address the health and other adverse consequences of such violence through multisectoral services.

We urge WHO and MS that any effort toward this objective be rooted in an understanding of structural determinants of interpersonal violence such as patriarchy, gender, racism, casteism, and internal colonization of indigenous communities.

We caution against the individualistic focus on women and urge the inclusion of other groups that experience IPV in different contexts, such as sexual and gender minorities, gender non-conforming persons, people in sex work, and men and boys.

People living in institutional settings and immigration facilities are regularly exposed to interpersonal violence. Separation from families is a form of interpersonal violence by the state. In particular, the maltreatment of children in juvenile detention centres and border control facilities is of grave concern. We call for specific focus on monitoring of and interventions for interpersonal violence against children.

We commend the Director-General's focus on improving information and evidence on interpersonal violence. This should include disaggregated national-level data that can track different forms of interpersonal violence, such as domestic violence, marital rape, violence perpetrated against racial and ethnic minorities by police and other law enforcement agencies, and sexual assault against all groups of people.

Efforts to strengthen the role of the health system in responding to interpersonal violence must build and leverage their capacity to provide shelter and income support to survivors and psychosocial support services.