

Towards A Violence-Free Generation: Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS)

2017

More than 1 billion children—half of all the children in the world—are victims of violence each year.

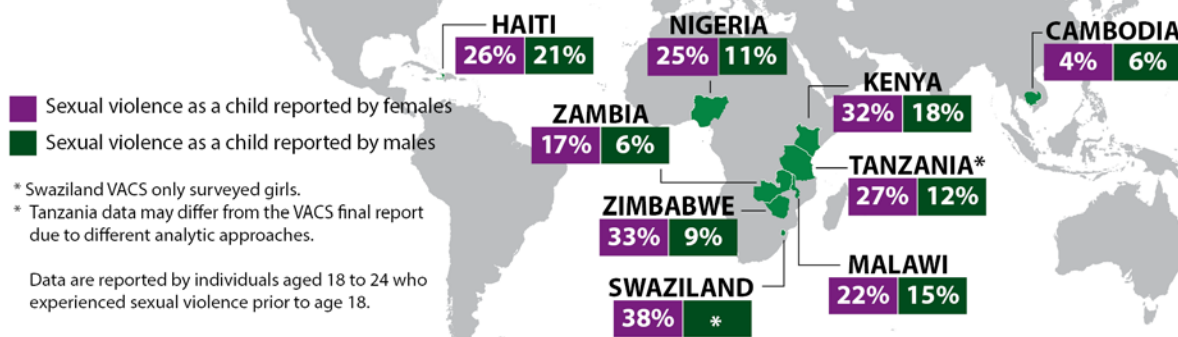
Violence underpins many public health problems and increases vulnerability to other health problems. Violence against children leads to higher risks of health and social problems, such as chronic disease, HIV, mental health issues, substance abuse, and violence perpetration later in life. The economic impact of violence against children is estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars per year. The right to be free from violence is recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 calls for ending all forms of violence against children.

Many inter-related factors contribute to violence against children. Institutions and sectors must work together to prevent and respond to it. Country-specific data and evidence-based approaches can inform how to best address violence against children at individual, family, community, and society levels.

Using Science to Fuel Action and End Violence against Children

A first step in preventing violence is better understanding its magnitude, nature, and consequences. Violence against Children Surveys (VACS) measure physical, emotional, and sexual violence against girls and boys. We do these surveys to guide programs and policies to prevent violence before it starts. Findings from VACS provide reliable evidence to enable countries to make better decisions using limited resources to develop, launch and evaluate violence prevention programs and child protection systems.

Percent of Females and Males Aged 18–24 Years Who Reported Sexual Violence Prior to Age 18



VACS are nationally representative household surveys of children and young adults aged 13-24 years. The data collected can inform steps already being taken to address violence against children and give insight into where these can be strengthened or expanded. In addition, findings can help raise awareness of the scope of the problem, support outreach and advocacy, and bring in new and diverse stakeholders

Snapshot of Global Trends in Violence against Children from VACS

- For more than 1 in 4 girls, her first sexual intercourse was unwanted.
- Over half of all children experience physical violence before age 18.
- Girls who suffer sexual violence may have increased high risk behaviors for HIV, unwanted pregnancies, substance abuse, suicidal attempts, and other negative health consequences.

INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children

INSPIRE is a collection of strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children in various contexts They are:

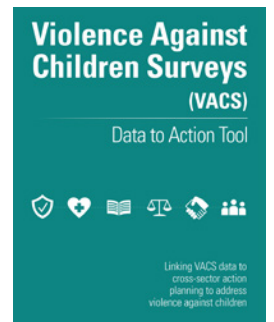
- I**mplementation and enforcement of laws;
- N**orms and values;
- S**afe environments;
- P**arent and caregiver support;
- I**ncome and economic strengthening;
- R**esponse and support services; and,
- E**ducation and life skills



The strategies above are most effective through multi-sector collaboration and with rigorous monitoring and evaluation. INSPIRE is the World Health Organization's main contribution to the newly established Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. Ten international agencies and partnerships worked together to develop the INSPIRE technical package.

From Data to Action

Turning data into action requires efforts from many stakeholders. The VACS Data to Action (D2A) Tool offers a bridge between collecting VACS data and acting on it. It draws on the INSPIRE technical package and helps stakeholders focus on how to work together across sectors to address issues shown by the VACS findings. Linking VACS data to cross-sector action planning is essential to effectively address violence against children.



D2A Workshops help support host countries by working through a multi-sector task force to bring key leaders from a wide range of government ministries, civil society organizations, and global organizations together to help link VACS data to the INSPIRE technical package. The task force leads the development of a comprehensive, national plan to prevent violence against children. Once the national plan has been developed and agreed upon, partners continue to work together to carry out its stated activities and expand prevention efforts.

Working in Partnership: Together for Girls

Together for Girls is a global public-private partnership dedicated to breaking the cycle of violence against children, with a particular focus on sexual violence against girls. In partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector, Together for Girls calls attention to the issue and mobilizes support for country-driven efforts for change.

Currently, 22 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are actively engaged in this critical work. Eight national reports are publicly available here.

The partnership includes five UN agencies, the governments of the United States and Canada, several private sector organizations and implementing country governments. Our UN partners are led by UNICEF and include UNAIDS, UN Women, WHO and UNFPA. The United States and Canada are represented by their respective agencies, the U.S. CDC's Division of Violence Prevention; the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief; the U.S. Agency for International Development; the U.S. Department of State's Office of Global Women's Issues; and Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. Our private sector partners are BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company), Cummins & Partners, and the CDC Foundation.