



# MONITORING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Strategies for quality research and documentation



## SUMMARY

This reader outlines best practices in developing monitoring data around violence against children (VAC) and highlights specific strategies for ethical research for VAC with disability and special needs, particularly in low-resource settings. The reader reviews the prolific research practices of UNICEF, WHO, the Technical Working Group on Data Collection on Violence against Children and how national organizations can emulate these at the local level. It also provides recommendations from the INSPIRE Indicator Guidance and Results Framework.

**Keywords:** Violence against Children, disability, special needs, research ethics, child protection, ethnography

## Why VAC prevention and response hinges on the numbers

Against the backdrop of multiple regional and global frameworks (Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals, for example) protection of children against violence is now recognized as one of the most urgent issues for development practitioners. However, the lack of quality disaggregated data on prevalence has remained a deterrent to these efforts. In a 2019 multi-stakeholder international meeting, UNICEF noted that: *“the lack of robust, disaggregated data and evidence to understand the magnitude and nature of violence against children in their respective countries remains a challenge.”*

Without strong up-to-date quantitative and qualitative data, monitoring progress of VAC interventions is severely hampered which limits documentation of sustainable VAC approaches as evidence to inform policy and practice.

## UNICEF VAC monitoring and research model

In 2014, UNICEF pioneered the Research to Policy & Practice Process (R3Ps) model which breaks down the research process into more manageable parts that contribute to the whole picture. The strength of the model is based on inclusiveness through multi-partner collaboration –government statisticians, academic researchers, and field researchers to develop scaled

### Box 1: UNICEF principles for human-centred research design: ‘What drives VAC and how can it be prevented?’

- Involve government as co-researchers rather than as recipients of evidence for policy formulation
- Co-opt government statisticians to conduct data analysis rather than outsourcing this to external consultants
- Utilize ethnography as a valid form of qualitative research to deepen understanding of issues around VAC
- Engage in iterative sense-making at key checkpoints of the research to avoid nonspecific recommendations

### UNICEF multi-country studies research process

- Literature review of academic papers including theses and dissertations
- Analysis of existing national data sets
- Mapping of each country's interventions
- Stakeholder analysis and prioritization
- Develop national theories of change

**For more information:** [Understanding the Drivers of Violence: A step-by-step guide to conducting preliminary research around what drives violence](#)

down studies that are then reviewed by UNICEF Country offices to identify prevention and response interventions.

## Recommendations for monitoring VAC through quality research practice

1. Use globally accepted definitions and indicators of the different types of VAC; however, other types that may not fall into a specific classification should still be documented.
2. Work with and build capacity of existing national data collection systems or national working groups to avoid parallel data collection which can produce conflicting data and undermine prevention and response efforts.
3. UNICEF recommends using the five clusters of indicators as a guideline for monitoring data: (1) home and family environment, (2) school and other education, environments, (3) care, rehabilitation and juvenile justice institutions and environments, (4) working environments, (5) street and public sphere.
4. Disaggregate data by age, sex, geographic location, ethnicity and socio-economic background by identifying risks to specific populations and ensuring no child is left out

## INSPIRE Indicator Guidance and Results Framework

Developed by a partnership of international agencies the framework supports the monitoring of progress around implementation of the seven INSPIRE strategies.

### Guidance for obtaining data for core indicators

- Use primary data from existing national surveys and databases; national data is regularly updated by international databases e.g. SDGs and UNICEF
- Advocate/ lobby for the incorporation of new questions around VAC in future national data collection processes to bridge gaps in evidence
- Focused surveys on VAC following [ethical guidelines](#) research protocols and survey instruments; this also requires being prepared to respond, refer based on violence disclosed by children and adolescents

### Emerging areas for VAC data monitoring

- VAC data in emergency and humanitarian settings (armed conflict, natural disasters, pandemics)
- Follow-up and recovery of violence survivors placed in care or referred for services
- Qualitative data measuring change
- Indicators for measuring scale up and coverage of INSPIRE

## Box 2: Special considerations for conducting ethical research on children with disability and special needs

Data on children with disability is often not standardized due to the lack of a global standard on definitions and measurements which complicates data evaluation across countries and regions. However, the Child Functioning Modules developed by United Nation's Washington Group on Disability Statistics and UNICEF, is now recommended for children 2-17years.

Good research practice on child disability and violence requires:

- Informed consent that involves community leaders and clearly explains to the children or their caregivers how the research will be used
- Identification of key measurement indicators
- Focus on broader questions about experiences of violence rather than specific acts of violence
- Use qualitative methods such as participatory discussions which allow children to discuss their feelings freely
- Participatory tools and techniques:
  - Body maps-representing the child's body;
  - Feeling dice with different feelings on each side
  - Story boards representing how the child feels in different physical spaces
- Careful structuring of interview tools to build rapport and trust
- Building social trust with caregivers as they provide key support to children
- A clear referral plan embedded within existing community systems to address any violence discovered during the research
- The principle of 'do no harm' should particularly apply for these children even beyond the research activities

Detailed information: [BMC Public Health](#) (Kyegombe 2019)

## Globally validated tools for VAC research

- International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. IPSCAN Child Abuse Screening Tools (ICAST): Questionnaires and guides available for UN study on violence against children IPSCAN; 2016. Available from: <http://www.ispcan.org/?page=ICAST>.
- The Centre for Disease Control's Violence Against Children (VACS) surveys
- The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) Child Abuse Screening tools (ICAST)
- The Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ)
- UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
- Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)

### References and Further Reading

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INSPIRE Indicator Guidance Results Framework: <https://www.unicef.org/media/66896/file/INSPIRE-IndicatorGuidance-ResultsFramework.pdf>

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Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group, Measuring Violence against Children: Inventory and assessment of quantitative studies, Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF, New York, 2014

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