



The Power of Data to Action

Country experiences and lessons following
Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys



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USAID'S HEALTH EVALUATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (HEARD) PROJECT

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This report is a summary of a landscape analysis prepared by the University Research Co., LLC (URC) and The City of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. It was authored by Kathleen Cravero, Steve Whittaker, and Samantha Ski. The analysis of survey results was led by Diana Romero with support from L. Ansley Hobbs.

The landscape analysis of country efforts following Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS), is one of three components of a broader effort led by USAID's Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) project to document and support learning around 'data-to-action' (D2A) following VACS. The other two components include: (1) focused support to selected countries; and (2) the development of tools and dissemination of lessons learned from the landscape analysis and in-country work. In addition, an article was published on the use of VACS data in peer-reviewed literature.¹ The overall effort began in July 2019 and extends until November 2022.

The landscape analysis reviews post-VACS processes in each country in which a VACS has been undertaken. The review includes official documentation and peer-reviewed literature related to these processes as well as a stakeholder survey and key informant interviews from 20 VACS countries.

This summary and the landscape analysis are made possible by the support of the American People through USAID. Their contents are the sole responsibility of URC and the Center for Immigrant, Refugee and Global Health (CIRGH) at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. They do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

¹ Nace A, Maternowska C, Fernandez B, Cravero K. The Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS): Using VACS data to drive programmes and policies. *Glob Public Health*. 2021 Dec 14:1-19. doi: 10.1080/17441692.2021.2010116.

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Acronyms

Terminology

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Civil Society Organization
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
Convention on the Rights of the Child
Coronavirus Disease 2019
Data to Action Workshops
End Violence Against Children
Faith-Based Organization
Health Evaluation & Applied Research Development Project
INSPIRE Technical Package
International Organization for Migration
Multisectoral Coordination Mechanism
National Action Plan
Sustainable Development Goals
Together for Girls
U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
United Nations International Children's Fund
United Nations Organizations
United States Agency for International Development
Violence Against Children
Violence Against Children and Youth Survey
Violence Against Women

Abbreviation

CDC
CSO
CEDAW
CRC
COVID-19
D2A
EVAC
FBO
HEARD
INSPIRE
IOM
MSCM
NAP
SDGs
TfG
PEPFAR
UNICEF
UN
USAID
VAC
VACS
VAW



**History will judge us by the difference
we make in the everyday lives of children.**

Nelson Mandela

Executive Summary: What have we learned from country experiences with VACS?

This report summarizes the first comprehensive review of country experiences in transforming Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) results into concrete sex- and age-specific improvements for children and young people and into responses to gender-based violence. Referred to as post-VACS efforts, these include any actions taken to understand, implement and integrate VACS results into policies and/or programs aimed at preventing or ending violence against children; many of these actions have a strong gender lens that identifies and tailors actions recognizing the unique vulnerability of girls. The analysis synthesizes the views of 225 stakeholders across 20 countries, providing insights into key areas of post-VACS efforts, which are presented in the findings section of this report.



What are VACS?

VACS are nationally representative household surveys that generate age- and sex-disaggregated data on the prevalence of physical, sexual, and emotional violence among children, adolescents, and young people, as well as on risk and protective factors, consequences of violence, and access to services. VACS are led by national governments, with technical assistance from the CDC, as part of the Together for Girls (TfG) partnership, with support from various partners such as UNICEF, PEPFAR, USAID and the Government of Canada.

To date, VACS have been carried out in 21 countries and are underway in two more.

Taken together, the findings of the review point to five overriding conclusions. These conclusions, the evidence for which are clearly spelled out in the full report, include the following:

- 1 **VACS make invaluable, multifaceted and long-term contributions to preventing and responding to violence against children and youth and gender-based violence.** While several possible improvements are suggested, there is overwhelming consensus among the stakeholders involved in this review that VACS continue to influence policy reform, program development and service delivery long after their results are launched and post-VACS efforts get underway.
- 2 **Multisectoral coordination is key to post-VACS processes.** Where VACS have made the most significant difference, multisectoral coordination is led by a government ministry with recognized authority and adequate resources both to lead and to demand accountability from key stakeholders.
- 3 **VACS help drive the broad-based, multisectoral systems change that is needed to prevent and respond to violence against children and youth and gender-based violence.** The INSPIRE Technical Package and the Data to Action (D2A) workshop methodology – two of the tools that support post-VACS national planning and action – are used extensively at country level. There is a demand for greater funding of these tools, capacity strengthening for their use and adaptation at country level and more consistent measurement of their outcomes. The scale-up of INSPIRE strategies across countries and the approach to D2A as an on-going (rather than one-off) process is endorsed by many.

What is the VACS process?

The VACS process includes all the steps necessary to design, implement and follow up on VACS.

It is generally described in terms of four phases:



The landscape analysis is focused on the final phase (dissemination and D2A). It is the most in-depth study to date of the challenges countries face during this phase and the lessons learned as a result. Together for Girls and the CDC developed a [VACS process guide](#) for countries interested in undertaking VACS and supporting data-informed actions to address the burden and consequences of violence against children and youth.



- 4 There is an urgent need for more funding for ending violence against children and youth and gender-based violence.** Country experiences with VACS to date serve as a strong “proof of concept” that sex- and age-specific levels of violence can be measured, reported and used to improve country-level action. Yet funding remains inadequate and is especially needed to: implement surveys in additional countries; support technical assistance and capacity-building from the CDC and other partners; support follow-up VACS or similar surveys; strengthen prevention and response efforts, including with a specific lens to the unique needs of girls and boys; and build capacities at national (and sub-national) level to design, implement and monitor evidence-based interventions.
- 5 VACS demonstrate that preventing and responding to violence against children and youth and gender-based violence is a knowable, solvable problem.** As such, it is an issue deserving greater global and national priority, one on which – with sustained political will, technical expertise and funding – significant progress could be made. VACS data provide the foundation for developing interventions that work and measuring progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Target 16.2 which calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against children and Target 5.2, which demands the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. Violence against children is more than pervasive and unacceptable; it is preventable.^{2, 3}

What are post-VACS efforts?

Post-VACS efforts include any actions taken to understand, implement or integrate VACS results into policies and programs aimed at preventing or ending violence against children. These efforts include, for example:



Each of these phases is often guided by a **Multisectoral Coordination Mechanism (MSCM)** established by the government to facilitate coordination of efforts across the range of sectors critical to enacting a comprehensive strategy to address and end violence against children. Not all countries carry out each of the steps nor do they all do them in the same order, but these steps are typical in many countries following the VACS.



2 Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

3 Target 5.2: Elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other forms of exploitation.

Who are the VACS stakeholders involved in this review?

A total of 225 individuals contributed to the findings – 177 survey respondents and 48 key informants.

The 177 stakeholder survey respondents, across 15 countries, represent government ministries and departments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international non-governmental organizations and local civil society groups. The key informant interviews involved 48 individuals, nine working at global level and 39 working at country level.

The perspectives of global level informants, who represent senior officials in bilateral, multilateral, or international non-governmental organizations (directors, coordinators and technical specialists), reflect engagement in multiple countries and post-VACS processes. Country-level informants provide insights on specific VACS efforts in which they are now engaged, are planning, or have taken part in previously. They represent government ministries and departments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and local civil society groups.

In this summary, several references are made to survey respondents and key informants. Distinctions are made in the text, tables and figures when referring to feedback from one of the two groups. Taken together, they are referred to as VACS stakeholders.



government ministries
and departments



bilateral and multilateral
agencies



international
non-governmental
organizations



local
civil society groups



Multisectoral partners and high-level officials at the launch of Nigeria's VACS report in 2015. Photo courtesy of UNICEF Nigeria.

What findings emerge from the review of country experiences?

This report summarizes key findings from the five areas of post-VACS action included in the landscape analysis: 1) multisectoral coordination; 2) launches of VACS results; 3) development and implementation of national responses to VACS results; 4) use of VACS data for learning and action; and 5) funding of post-VACS efforts.

1. Strong multisectoral coordination, led by national governments, is the single most important factor in the success of post-VACS efforts

Multisectoral coordination plays a role in every step of the VACS process. In the design and planning stage, multisectoral groups – usually referred to as multisectoral coordination mechanisms (MSCMs) – help engage a wide range of stakeholders in the adaptation of country-specific questions, training of interviewers and logistics, among other areas (Figure 1). The MSCMs not only ensure representation across ministries and sectors but also, through the process of VACS implementation, build capacity in prevention and response to violence. The membership of MSCMs sometimes changes as the challenge shifts from designing and implementing the survey to acting on its results. In many cases, post-VACS MSCMs involve a similar set of national and international stakeholders, with the representatives of those stakeholders changing to strengthen policy and program expertise that can translate VACS results into positive action for children.

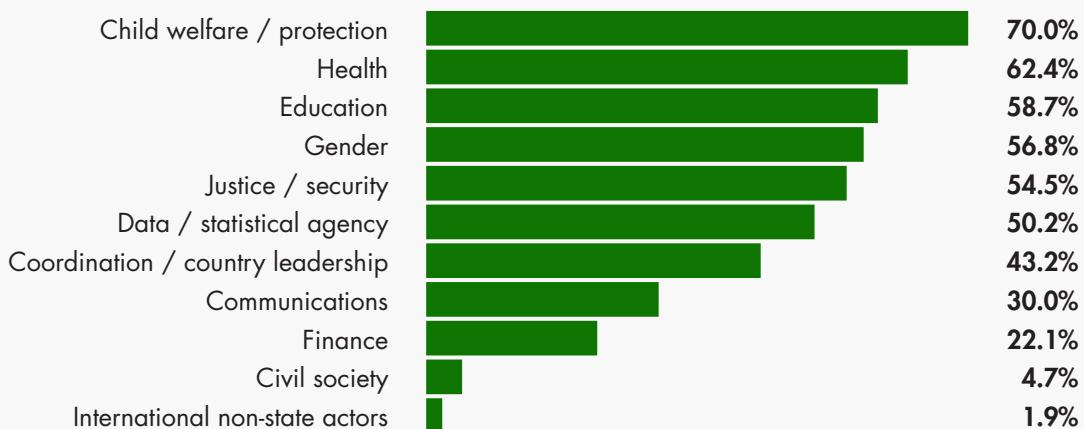
As part of post-VACS efforts, these MSCMs take on a range of roles, including organizing D2A workshops, launching VACS results, developing National Action Plans (NAPs), and raising funds to coordinate and implement these activities. While the form and functioning of MSCMs differ in each country, the landscape analysis found broad agreement both on their importance and on some key factors that contribute to their effectiveness.



Five key findings around multisectoral coordination include:

- a **The strength, skills and commitment of the lead Ministry is the most important factor in ensuring the success of MSCMs.** This includes the ability to convene across sectors, resolve tensions among sectors and partners, mobilize political support and financial resources, and coordinate external assistance. For these reasons, supra-ministerial bodies such as national commissions for children or the Offices of the President or First Lady are often successful “leads” for MSCMs, although the VACS process is also an important strengthening opportunity for the technical ministries with direct responsibility for children. Several stakeholders emphasize the need to balance political influence with technical expertise.
- b **Effective MSCMs enjoy the support of a broad range of sectors.** At present, the five most engaged sectors are child protection, health, education, gender and justice/security. The finance sector, civil society groups, and the private sector are less engaged. There are several views on how a wider spectrum of actors might be involved, including greater outreach by the lead ministry, creating incentives for collaboration among stakeholders and the possibility of funding for post-VACS efforts.
- c **Accountability remains a key issue.** Some MSCMs develop detailed sectoral plans and benchmarks but are unable, not empowered or lack the resources to insist that commitments are met. This is true even when evaluation and monitoring systems are in place that expose lack of follow-up on pledges and commitments.
- d **By bringing stakeholders together, MSCMs make important contributions to policies and programs to end VAC.** They promote the use of VACS results to improve a wide range of policies and programs, including: legal reforms that impact children; the case management of children who have experienced violence; the ability of local actors to take a systems approach to ending violence against children; connections between the prevention of violence against women and violence against children; and the integration of prevention and response services.
- e **The funding of MSCMs is generally inadequate.** This includes funding for coordination, to ensure that lead ministries have the human and financial resources to function effectively, as well as for specific post-VACS actions. In addition, investments must be made in strengthening the capacities of MSCMs and of local (especially front-line) actors to design, implement and evaluate post-VACS actions.

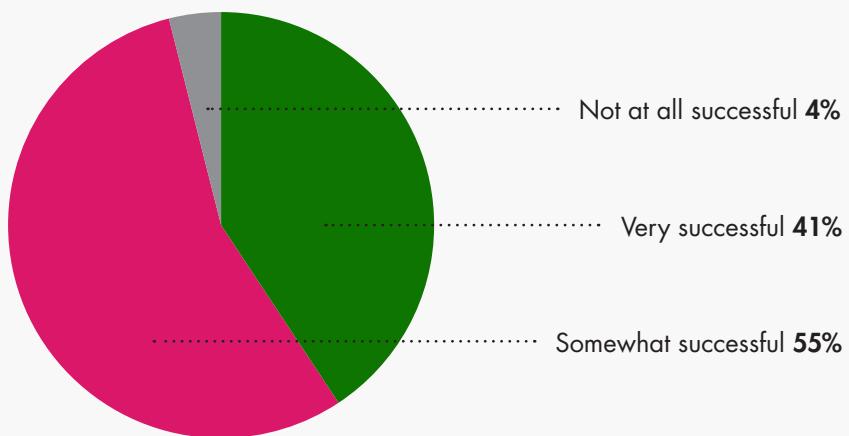
Figure 1. Survey respondents’ indication of sectors engaged in MSCM



2. VACS launches are key to raising awareness and commitment

The launch of VACS results is an event or series of events, usually led by the government, that involve the public dissemination of a report or summary of survey findings. While each VACS launch is unique and deeply reflective of the country context, almost 75 percent of survey respondents identify raising public awareness and commitment as their primary purpose. Furthermore, more than 90 percent believe that launches are successful in achieving this goal (Figure 2).

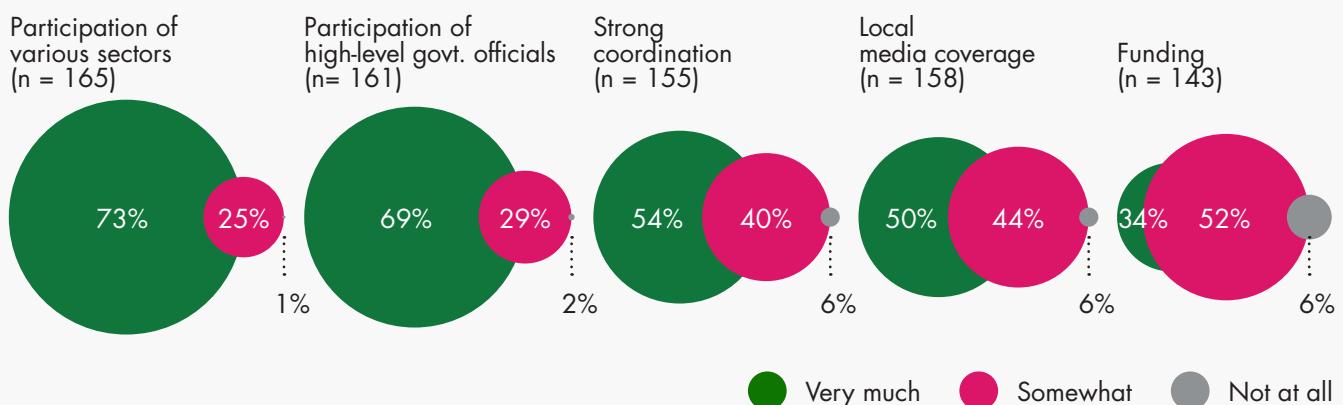
Figure 2. Survey respondents' ratings of the success of VACS report launches in raising awareness about violence against children, n = 170



Four key findings around launches include:

- a **High-level government participation in VACS launches is seen as critical to success** (Figure 3). That said, both survey respondents and key informants emphasize that attendance at the launch is an important but insufficient step. High-level government officials need to express acceptance and understanding of the results; they also need to support strong and effective post-VACS processes. If this is not the case, the success of the launch will be short-lived. Key informants also cite the presence of high-level international partners as helpful, particularly if this is tied to support for post-VACS efforts.

Figure 3. Survey respondents' ratings of the factors facilitating success of VACS report launches



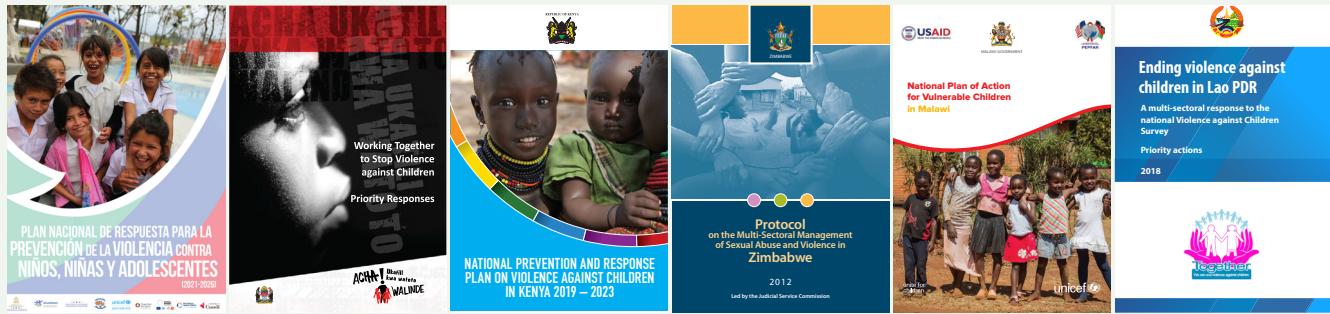
- b **Strong multisectoral engagement – referred to by some survey respondents and key informants as “inclusiveness” – is also key to launch success.** This starts with survey design, continues through the launch and is critical to post-VACS processes. More recent launches use communication and advocacy techniques that have broad outreach, in addition to more traditional approaches (e.g., television or radio spots), to generate awareness and action. There is a feeling among some stakeholders that civil society organizations and affected groups (e.g., children and youth) should be more meaningfully engaged in VACS launches.
- c **Launches are more successful in raising public awareness, engaging actors across sectors and catalyzing action when they are designed as one in a series of events.** They may be the “kick-off” to broad understanding of results or the culmination of “socializing” the results across sectors; the key factor seems to be their connection to genuine understanding and acceptance of VACS results and commitments to action. De-centralized or sub-national launches are seen as helpful to engaging other sectors, particularly when VACS data can be tailored to local interests and concerns.
- d **“Force majeure” events (e.g., political transitions, natural disasters and COVID-19) are continuing to impact progress.** In some cases, these events have delayed launches, stalled follow-up and hindered post-VACS processes. Lessons have been learned about navigating political transitions and working remotely, which should inform future efforts. In at least three countries, for example, “virtual” launches enabled more remote districts or provinces to participate than would have been possible in person.



Cambodia Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Mrs. Men Sam An, spoke at the launch of Cambodia's VACS report in 2014.
Photo courtesy of Sofia Ollvid, UNICEF Cambodia.

3. National responses to VACS results take a range of forms

There is a broad range of plans, policies, and strategies developed to respond to VACS results. These include stand-alone national plans (National Action Plans – NAPs), integration of violence prevention measures into overall development strategies and/or the improvement of existing plans and policies related to children including those that focus on adolescent girls. Several stakeholders challenge the conventional wisdom of developing a stand-alone plan, believing that this decision should be context-specific.



Covers of National Action Plans from six countries: Honduras, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Lao PDR.

Six key findings around national responses to VACS results include:

- a **There is a high degree of government ownership – and leadership – in this area.** Most survey respondents and key informants feel that the government ministry that led or is leading the development of a stand-alone plan or the improvement of existing plans, policies and programs is doing so effectively. Appropriate levels of authority and adequate human and financial resources are seen as key factors for their success.
- b **Stand-alone plans are seen as one option among many to build a national response.** Key informants offer the most detailed information on this issue, stressing that the decision to develop such a plan depends on each country context. In some cases, a plethora of national plans related to children and/or violence prevention, including violence against women and girls (VAW) already exists; in others, a conscious choice is made to integrate ending violence against children into broader plans to increase attention, resources and action (Table 1).
- c **There is a convergence of views on what makes a stand-alone plan effective.** For example, such plans should be multisectoral in their design and implementation, have clear lines of accountability and build on existing systems and give special consideration to age, sex, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability status. When stand-alone plans have reliable, ongoing and easily accessible measurement of benchmarks or milestones, it is easier to track outcomes that lead to longer-term change.

Table 1. VACS data and post-VACS efforts propel policy reform and strengthen programs

| Country | Adding/ amending existing child safety laws/ regulations | Banning child marriage | Banning corporal punishment | Improved staff capacity | New initiatives addressing the safety of girls | VACS questions/ indicators in national statistics |
|---------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Botswana | ● | | | | | |
| Cambodia | ● | | | | | ● |
| Colombia | ● | | | | | |
| Côte d'Ivoire | ● | ● | | | | |
| El Salvador | ● | ● | | | | |
| Honduras | ● | | | | | ● |
| Kenya 2010 | | | ● | | | |
| Kenya 2019 | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Lao PDR | | ● | | | | |
| Lesotho | | ● | | | | |
| Malawi | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Nigeria | ● | | | ● | | |
| Rwanda | ● | | ● | | ● | |
| Uganda | ● | ● | ● | | | ● |
| Zambia | ● | | ● | ● | | ● |
| Zimbabwe 2011 | | ● | ● | | ● | |
| Zimbabwe 2019 | ● | ● | ● | | ● | |

All countries that participated in the landscape analysis have undertaken action as a result of the VACS findings

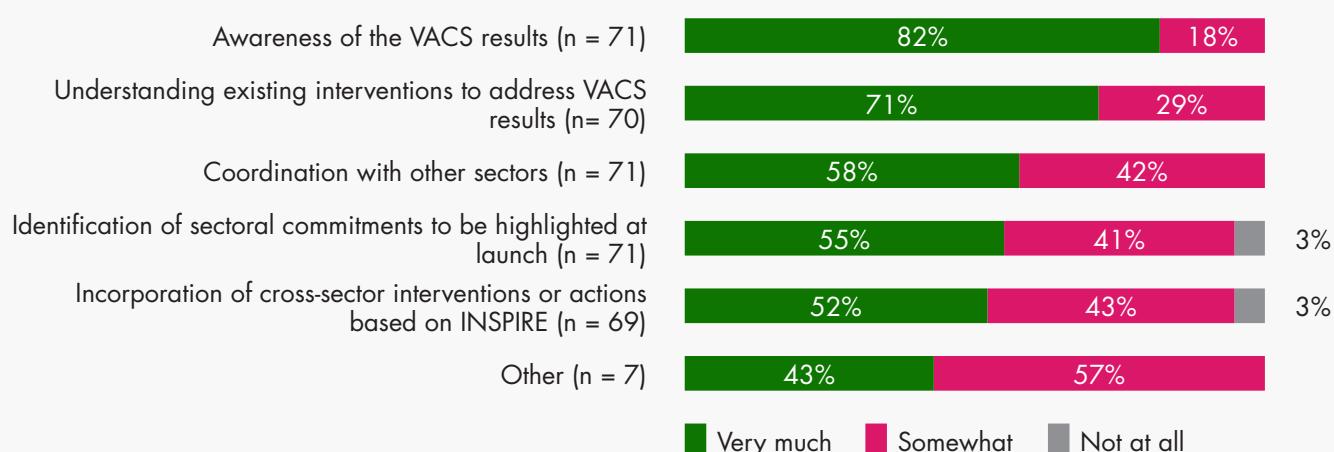


- d **Beyond their use in the development of stand-alone plans, VACS results help drive broad and specific policy change, including those which benefit adolescent girls and young women.** Examples cited most often by survey respondents include banning corporal punishment, banning child marriage, and strengthening child safety laws and regulations, as illustrated in Table 1. In addition, VACS results help improve training materials, integrate EVAC interventions into other sectors and generate debate on priority actions.
- e **The INSPIRE Technical Package and D2A workshops contribute to fundamental strengthening of violence prevention and response systems.** They support the “translation” of VACS results into action on the ground and help shape interventions at sub-national levels. They also help identify the specific commitments and responsibilities of each sector. These tools are seen as complementary: INSPIRE provides the “menu” of evidence-based interventions that can be discussed and adapted through D2A workshops. Over 85 percent of survey respondents identified the INSPIRE package as helpful in informing post-VACs planning. D2A workshops were also identified as helpful (Figure 4).
- f **There are perceived gaps in many existing national responses.** These relate primarily to both costing and financing of sectoral interventions and systems-based approaches. Gaps also exist related to accountability, for example, lack of indicators of success and weak evaluation mechanisms. There are initiatives underway to address these gaps, e.g., through the additional support offered to pathfinding countries. A pathfinding country is one that has pledged to the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children to make a formal, public commitment to comprehensive action to end all forms of violence against children. This involves, among other actions, appointing a senior government official to lead the effort and establishing a multisector steering group to develop a national plan to end violence against children.

Data to Action (D2A) Workshops

Led by governments and supported by the CDC, UNICEF and other TfG partners as well as by local and international experts, VACS data to action (D2A) workshops connect findings from the VACS with evidence-based and evidence-informed policies and programs to prevent and respond to violence and inform plans, policies and programs that are developed as a result. **The workshops bring together stakeholders from multiple sectors** to review VACS findings from their country and identify priority issues shown by the data, as well as possible strategies for addressing those issues.

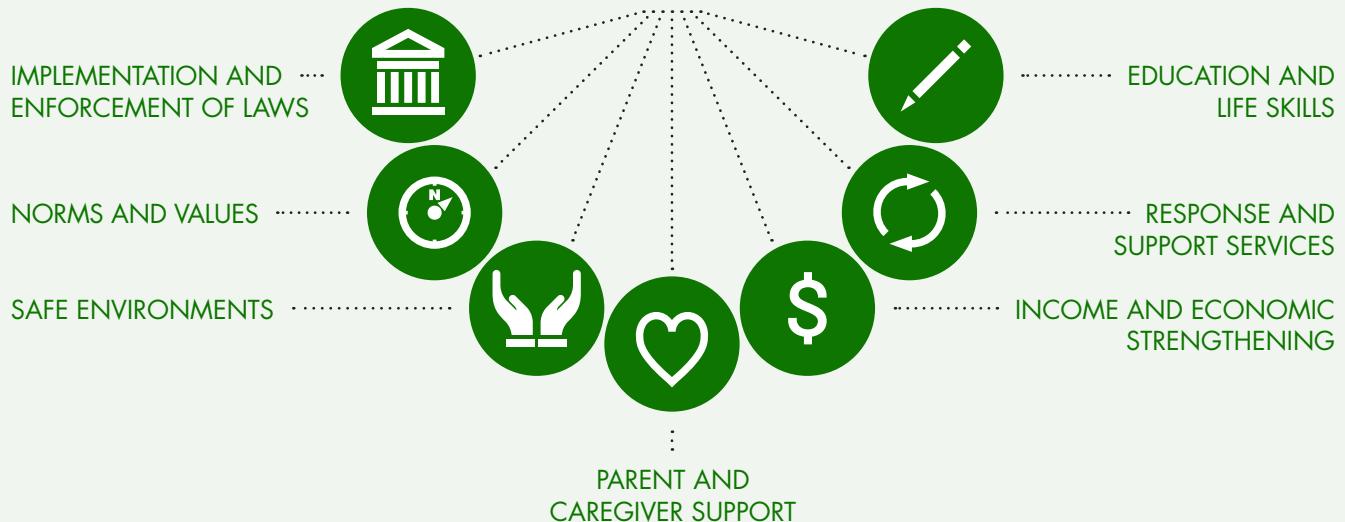
Figure 4. Survey respondents’ rating of factors strengthened by D2A workshops



INSPIRE Technical Package

Crafted by ten agencies with a long history of child protection work, the INSPIRE Technical Package is an evidence-based technical package to support countries in their efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children. The package includes the core document describing what the INSPIRE strategies and interventions are; a handbook that provides details on how to implement the interventions; a set of indicators to measure the uptake of INSPIRE and its impact on levels of violence against children; and guidance on how to scale-up the interventions.

The seven strategies include:



Multisectional partners at the Data to Action workshop in Rwanda in 2018. Photo courtesy of Begoña Fernandez, Together for Girls.

4. VACS data and associated capacity-building processes generate learning and action

Within countries, VACS data provide, often for the first time, detailed information on to whom, by whom, where and when violence occurs. This detailed age and sex-disaggregated data spurs awareness and action and generates interest to learn more. Stakeholders express a range of views on the availability, ease of access and usefulness of learning resources related to VACS, as well as on how VACS data are used to inform evidence-based interventions (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

Four key findings around the use of VACS data to generate learning and action include:

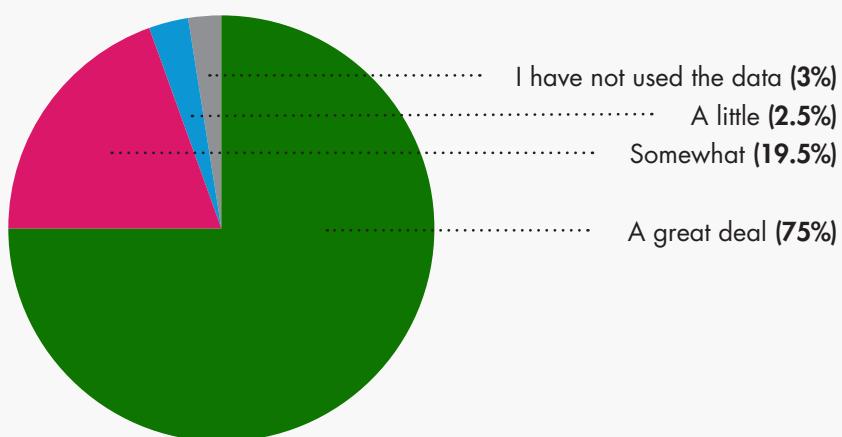
- a **Demand for reliable, easily accessible information on evidence-based interventions to end violence remains high.** The INSPIRE and RESPECT⁴ frameworks help meet this demand, but government and local actors need support to translate these strategies at national (and sub-national) levels and to prioritize funding interventions based on country-specific VACS results. The significant disparities that exist within countries (e.g., between urban and rural areas) in capacities to design and implement evidence-based strategies to end violence against children need particular attention.



Joseph Trikka Beugre (CDC Côte d'Ivoire), Dr. Solange Amethier (PN-OEV), Bibala Ngalamulume (PEPFAR Côte d'Ivoire), Manuela Balliet (Together for Girls) and Shirish Balachandra (Country Director, CDC Côte d'Ivoire) at the high-level launch of the Côte d'Ivoire VACS report in 2020. Photo courtesy of Manuela Balliet, Together for Girls.

- b **VACS data are useful in informing national responses to end violence against children.** Stakeholders identify six key areas in this regard: the strengthening of national and local capacity to design and implement interventions to end violence against children; improving training materials; integrating EVAC efforts into other sectors (including health, education, and justice); building knowledge and public awareness; strengthening existing plans and policies; and scaling up successful interventions.
- c **Barriers exist to the full use of VACS data for learning and action.** These include limited numbers and skills of front-line workers, limited funding, limited tracking of how and where the materials are used and competing priorities. Stakeholders believe that learning materials should be tailored to specific groups of children and local contexts (e.g., to children of ethnic and racial minorities or children living with disabilities) and be user-friendly for children and community leaders.
- d **International partners are critical to the development of high-quality, accessible learning materials.** International partners provide much-needed technical as well as financial support. Close coordination among international partners, led by local actors and institutions, leads to the best results.

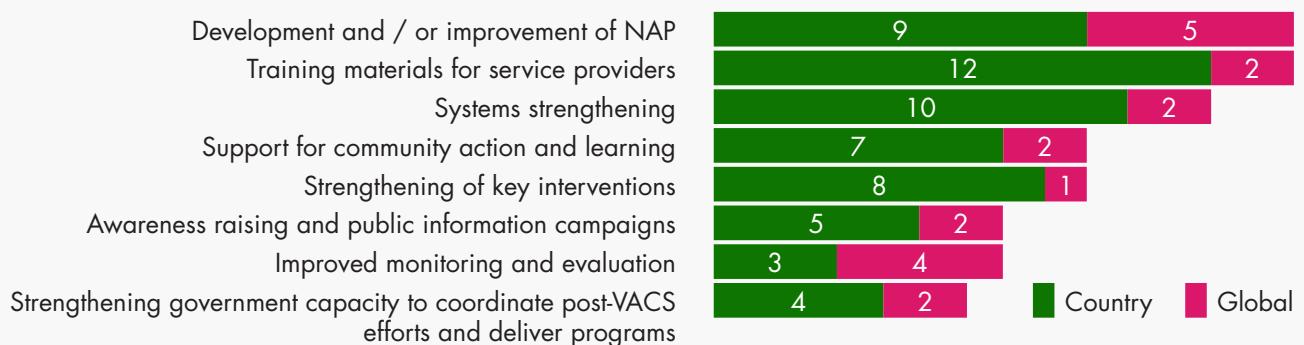
Figure 5. The extent to which VACS data informs the design of national plans, policies and programs to end violence against children, as reported by survey respondents (n = 165)



5. Gaps in funding are a major obstacle to post-VACS efforts

There is broad consensus that the funding available for post-VACS efforts is highly insufficient.

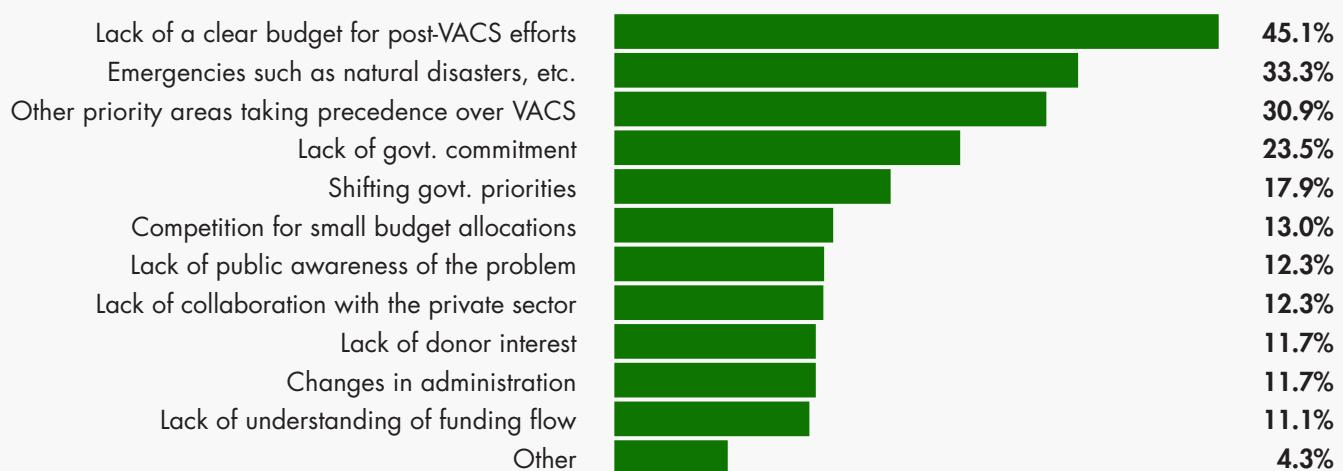
Figure 6. Key informants' ratings of VACS-related programs in need of funding



Four key findings around funding include:

- a **Funding of post-VACS efforts is insufficient in both scale and flexibility.** Almost 90 percent of survey respondents cite inadequate funding as a barrier to post-VACS efforts. Funding is also described as short-term, unreliable and often not linked to country priorities. The greatest funding gaps are cited regarding the coordination of post-VACS processes, systems strengthening, the integration of VACS results into existing plans and programs across sectors, community-based action and learning and monitoring and evaluation (Figure 6).
- b **Factors that facilitate the funding of post-VACS efforts** include the development of strong, comprehensive national responses to end VAC, clear government commitment to implement these responses and public awareness of the problem and potential solutions.
- c **Factors that hinder the funding of post-VACS efforts include, among others:** lack of a clear budget; emergencies or "force majeure" that occur at critical points in post-VACS processes; competition from other areas that capture government attention and support; lack of government commitment and/or capacity; and lack of donor interest in the implementation of VACS results (Figure 7).
- d **There is some concern about the cost of VACS and about whether these costs limit their uptake at country level.** Some stakeholders suggest integrating VACS indicators into existing national surveys and data collection as ways to reduce costs and increase government ownership of results. Key informants also make several observations on the types of donor funding that would facilitate post-VACS action, e.g., more flexible, multi-year commitments.

Figure 7. Survey respondents' ratings of barriers to funding post-VACS actions (n=162)



What recommendations emerge from the findings?

The findings of the landscape analysis suggest several recommendations for both ongoing and future post-VACS efforts.



Multisectoral coordination – and the MSCMs that lead it – should have strong government ownership, participation across sectors and adequate funding.

They also need the authority and mechanisms to hold stakeholders accountable for post-VACS commitments. There is a need for engagement of government entities with sufficient authority and political influence (Ministries of Interior, Finance and supra-ministerial bodies) as well as those with technical skills and specific responsibilities for children (Ministries of Health, Education, Gender, Youth and Social Welfare). MSCMs face formidable challenges, some of which are hard to anticipate (e.g., natural disasters, COVID-19, armed conflict, political transitions) and many of which require political as well as technical solutions.



The launch of VACS results should be celebrated as a critical step in a longer process to catalyze action and raise awareness. The organization of multiple, decentralized launches enhances their impact and effectiveness.





National responses to VACS results should continue to be encouraged in a range of forms, whether stand-alone plans or the improvement of existing plans, policies or programs. The decentralization of these plans, ideally with data tailored to sub-national contexts, is key to the sustainability of post-VACS efforts, as is strengthening the capacity of local actors in their design and implementation. Lead ministries should be supported to secure the authority and financial and human resources to implement multisectoral plans and strategies.



D2A workshops and the INSPIRE Technical Package are widely known and used, i.e., by 95 percent and 85 percent of survey respondents, respectively. They should be seen as integral components of post-VACS efforts and be promoted as ongoing exercises rather than one-time events and as system-strengthening efforts. Local partners should be helped to adapt them to sub-national areas, especially those experiencing high levels of VAC. There should also be robust monitoring of their effectiveness and use.





There should be greater emphasis on the use of VACS results to generate systems-based learning and action. VACS results – ideally disaggregated by regions and different groups of children (e.g., children on the move, those living outside family settings, disabled children) – should be used to: develop context-specific and user-friendly materials and tools to end violence against children (e.g., training of front-line workers, non-violent discipline); strengthen capacity in a range of technical and operational areas; and address wide disparities among national and sub-national levels in designing, implementing and monitoring the quality of programs and services. Furthermore, there is broad agreement on the need to integrate VACS indicators into national surveys and data collection efforts, which would make the gathering and use of this data more routine and less dependent on costly, externally supported surveys.



Advocacy with both governments and donors should be strengthened to ensure that efforts to end violence against children receive adequate priority at country level, including funding in national and sub-national budgets. The inclusion of a specific target (16.2) within Sustainable Goal 16 provides a platform for this advocacy, as does the compelling connections to target 5.2 of SDG 5 on the elimination of violence against women and girls. Similarly, the monitoring of changes in key VACS indicators provides a sound and consistent basis for monitoring progress toward target 16.2.



Civil society, including survivor-led and -centered organizations, should be more consistently and meaningfully engaged in the implementation of post-VACS actions, including in D2A processes and MSCMs. At present this engagement varies widely across countries and phases of post-VACS action. Stronger civil society participation would increase the reach and impact of post-VACS processes and leverage the experience and perspectives of front-line practitioners and advocates.



Funding for post-VACS actions should increase in scale (to ensure full implementation of post-VACS actions), flexibility (to allow local actors to decide on priorities) and duration (to facilitate continuity of multi-year efforts). Survey respondents and key informants specified several areas in particular need of funding, including system strengthening for VAC prevention and response, coordination, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation. At present, even countries that demonstrate strong national commitment to ending violence against children – through national action plans, multisectoral coordination and use of VACS data – report lack of funding as a major impediment to progress.



Photo: Kike Arnaiz, Stocksy

Our collective responsibility to prevent violence against women and children is set out in many global commitments. It is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reinforced in CEDAW, Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in Goals 5 and 16 of the SDGs. The return on investment in children – to their families, communities and nations – is well documented, as are the long-term negative impacts of childhoods lived in fear and want.



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