



PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE



A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S
STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE



PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE:
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AND PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Evaluation Summary

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This report on *Protecting Children from Violence: A Comprehensive Evaluation of UNICEF's Strategies and Programme Performance* was prepared by independent consultants Mei Zegers, David Cownie and Elena Grilli, recruited by Development Researchers' Network (DRN). Krishna Belbase, Senior Evaluation Specialist, led and managed the overall evaluation process, supported by Tina Tordjman-Nebe, Evaluation Specialist in the EO. The evaluation was supported by an interdivisional advisory group composed of UNICEF staff from the Programme Division and from selected regional offices.

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1

INTRODUCTION



This section provides background information on violence against children and explains how UNICEF is addressing this serious human rights violation through its global plans and strategies.



■ Violence against children (VAC) is a serious violation of child rights. Yet, VAC is pervasive and the statistics are sobering: 6 in 10 children worldwide are regularly subjected to physical punishment by their caregivers and 1 in 10 girls have experienced forced sexual acts at some point in their lives. Other forms of violence, including psychological violence and various forms of deliberate neglect, are also common. Many studies have shown that violence is detrimental to all aspects of a child's development – including physical, psychological and social development and functioning. It can have lifelong repercussions. Combatting VAC is thus a major development priority.

Protecting children from violence is central to UNICEF's mandate as an organization guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). UNICEF strives to support the implementation of the CRC and sustain the adoption of international standards across the board. This includes ensuring protection for the most disadvantaged children – victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation.

UNICEF's advocacy and programme response to protecting children from violence spans more than two decades, but has never been comprehensively evaluated. A synthesis review of UNICEF

programme evaluations reported weaknesses in the coverage and quality of evaluations of UNICEF's VAC programme interventions.¹ The review identified a need for further evaluation, including a more systematic analysis of UNICEF's work on advocacy, systems strengthening and social norms change. UNICEF therefore commissioned an independent evaluation to assess the organization's strategies and programme performance in protecting children from violence.

The resulting report focuses on the time period from 2009 to 2013 and also includes attention to efforts undertaken

■
"Following many decades of UNICEF action, this evaluation is the first comprehensive assessment of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance with regard to protecting children from violence. It will contribute to learning and accountability on the issue."
■

¹ United Nations Children's Fund/Evaluation Office, *Protecting Children from Violence: A Synthesis of Evaluation Findings*, UNICEF, New York, 2012.

in 2014. During this period, UNICEF's work on VAC was governed by the organization's Child Protection Strategy (CP Strategy) and strategic plans, with the latter specifically providing results frameworks to address VAC.

The CP Strategy (2008) lays out two key aims related to VAC. These are:
1) developing appropriate child protection systems as related to VAC; 2) supporting social norms change to enhance the implementation of the CRC, as related to

VAC. In turn, the most specific strategy related to VAC in UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan, MTSP (2006-2013), focused on placing "the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse more prominently on the development and humanitarian agendas of Governments, and make the protective environment more effective for all children."² The current strategic plan (SP) continues to build on this. Child Protection Outcome 6 in the current SP (2014-2017) defines the corresponding impact-level result as: "Improved and equitable prevention of and response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children"

UNICEF's programmes in over 120 countries take account of local contexts and support governments and other partners in addressing violence against children.



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² This statement is the overarching “Strategic Intent” for the area of child protection of the MTSP 2006-2013 as per the revisions. United Nations Children’s Fund, *Revised Annexes to Medium Term Strategic Plan, Annex 1: Results framework by focus area*, UNICEF, New York, 2012, p. 25.

2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS



This section lays out the rationale for conducting this evaluation and summarizes what was evaluated. It explains specifically which dimensions of UNICEF's work to address violence against children were assessed.



- The evaluation had **FIVE** objectives:



Assess the **adequacy** of UNICEF's **global** and **regional strategies** in protecting children against violence and their application at the national level, considering aspects of both prevention and response.



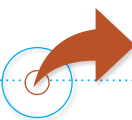
Assess UNICEF's **leadership**, **leveraging** and **convening roles** at the global, regional and country levels in protecting children from violence.



Assess the **design, implementation** and **results** of UNICEF-supported programmes addressing VAC, considering aspects of both prevention and response.



Identify **dominant programme models** set out in global and regional strategies. Assess the extent to which they are based on programme experience of approaches that effectively protect children from violence in various contexts.



Provide **forward-looking conclusions, lessons** and actionable **recommendations** for strengthening UNICEF's leadership and advocacy, organizational policies and strategies, programme response and partnerships.

The evaluation conclusions and recommendations will serve as inputs to a management review of the CP Strategy, scheduled for 2016, as well as to enhance implementation of UNICEF's SP. Furthermore, the evaluation results

will inform UNICEF's positioning in operationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG target 16.2 that reads "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children."³

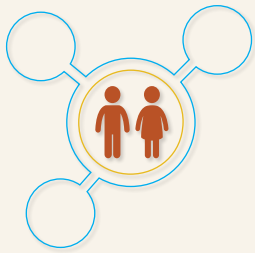
³ United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal.html>>

The evaluation has a focus on inter-personal violence. It concentrates on VAC in the family/household and the community, comprising both the public and private spheres. This includes:

- The evaluation does not cover self-inflicted violence, child labour and child marriage prevention, but does include VAC *within* these settings. Thus, the focus specifically includes violence in schools (community) and also violence perpetrated on children in the workplace, and within child marriage or other institutions such as residential care facilities.

In assessing results achieved for children, the evaluation focused on three MTSP key result areas (KRAs). The achievement of these three results was meant to make protective environments more effective for children and ensure that preventing and responding to VAC is more central to development and humanitarian agendas. UNICEF's advocacy, leadership and partnership roles as well as cross-cutting issues (child participation, gender equality, disabilities, other human rights and equity considerations) were also assessed.

Focus of the evaluation



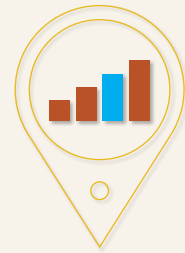
Systems strengthening (KRA 1)

Better **child protection systems** that include national laws, policies and services across sectors, in particular justice and social protection, to protect all children from violence, exploitation and abuse.



Social norms change (KRA 2)

Dialogue stimulated on social networks and nationally that reinforces **social conventions, norms and values** that favour the prevention of violence.



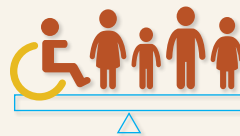
Use of data and knowledge management (KRA 4)

Improved country-level **monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data** on child protection.



Leadership/Advocacy

Effective UNICEF advocacy, leadership, leveraging, convening and partnerships at the global, regional and country levels support achievement of KRAs.



Gender/Equity

Effective integration of cross-cutting themes, including human rights, equity, gender, disability and child participation, supports achievement of the KRAs.

Evaluation criteria

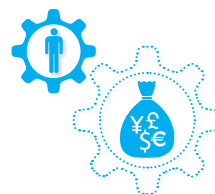
1 Relevance and coherence



2 Effectiveness



3 Efficiency



4 Sustainability



3



This section summarizes how the evaluation was carried out, what tools were used - and where - to collect what kinds of data, and notes some of the limitations of this process.

■ To respond to set objectives, the evaluation adopted a gender and human rights responsive and culturally sensitive approach together with a forward-looking perspective to maximize its usefulness for strengthening UNICEF strategies and action to address VAC.

The evaluation used data selectively gathered at the global, regional and country levels using the following methods:

- in-depth fieldwork in four case study countries (Bangladesh, Ghana, Mexico and Tanzania), including site visits/observation, focus groups/interviews with beneficiaries and key informant interviews with a variety of national partners;
- detailed review of documentation from 18 programme countries, including qualitative content analysis using Atlas-ti;
- an online survey of 70 UNICEF country offices; and

- broad-based consultations and key informant interviews at UNICEF headquarters, in two regional offices and with selected partners.

The selection of the 18 countries included in the evaluation was based on a range of criteria. These ensured a diverse representation of country size, location, population, state fragility and child protection-VAC programme experience in the sample.

For the four countries visited, the evaluators used a purposive sampling methodology to identify the individuals to be included in interviews and focus groups. Key individuals and groups selected included government and civil society representatives at all levels, international development partners, community members, parents and children.

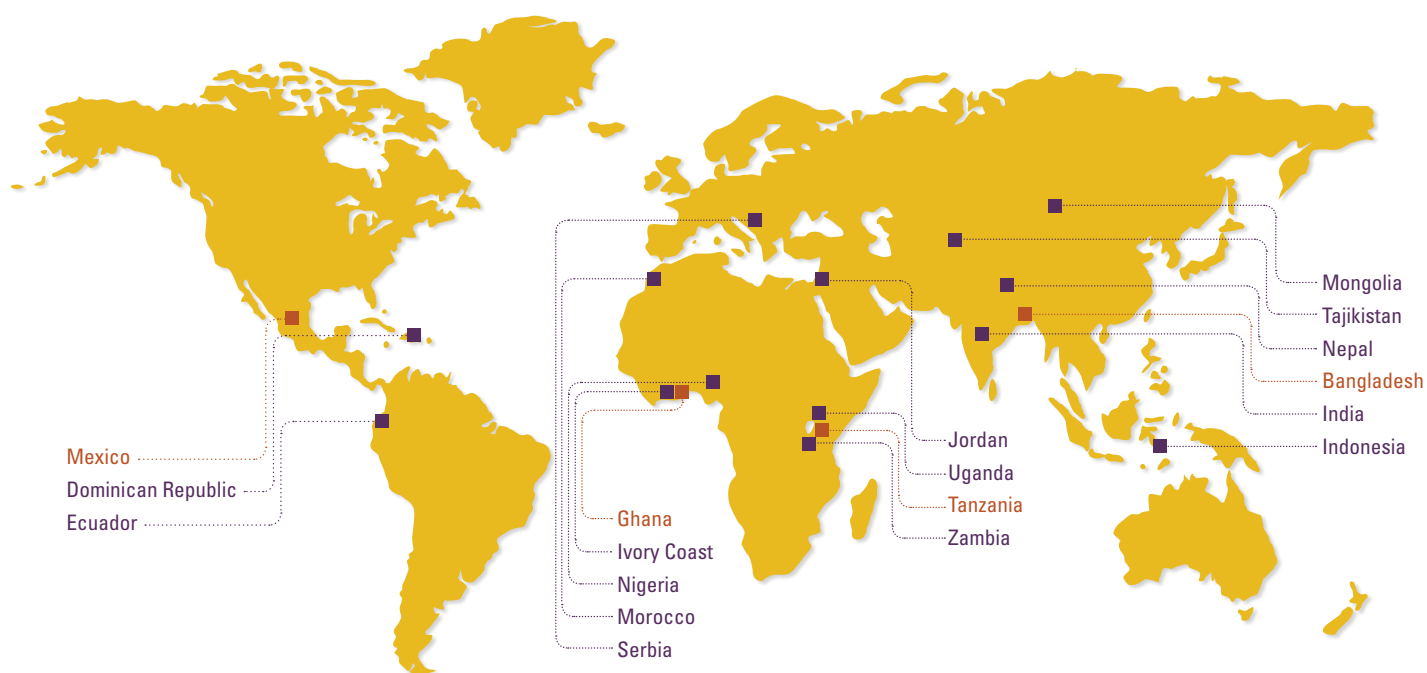
Data analysis consisted of triangulating collected data and analysing content for common trends, themes and patterns. Comparative and gap analysis as well as quantitative analyses were conducted.

Evaluation limitations included lack of baseline, endline and impact data, as well as a lack of independent documentation such as programme evaluations to complement annual reviews. Country specificities limited comparability and generalizability, which affected some parts of the analysis.



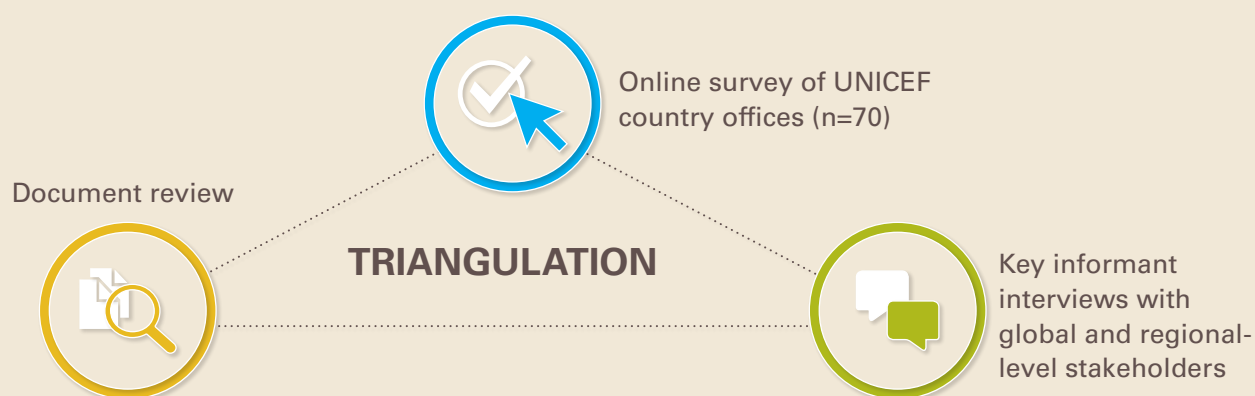
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Evidence base assessed for this evaluation



- **4 Country case studies**
Site visits/observation; focus groups/interviews with beneficiaries; key informant interviews with UNICEF staff and national partners; document review.

- **14 Desk review countries**
Detailed review of VAC programme documents/results frameworks and annual reports; long questionnaire with open-ended questions; selected follow-up interviews.



4 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



This section assesses UNICEF's work against the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Within effectiveness, it discusses UNICEF's performance on systems strengthening, social norms change, use of data and knowledge management, leadership/advocacy and gender/equity.



■ Relevance, appropriateness and coherence of UNICEF's strategies and results frameworks

Overall findings suggest that the CP Strategy (2008) and MTSP (2006-2013) were largely pertinent as organizational frameworks within which to address VAC at the country level over the evaluation period. UNICEF's work on VAC is designed to contribute to results in critical human rights and gender areas, in line with international conventions and national policies and strategies. The VAC strategies of the country programmes were found to be largely aligned with country needs, particularly with regard to the implementation of national strategies supportive of child rights objectives. The evaluation also found that UNICEF has contributed regularly to the refinement of national legislation, plans and priorities in relation to child rights.

VAC is currently one of UNICEF's key global advocacy priorities. Despite this, there is little coordination in programme planning (and implementation) across different levels and sectors in UNICEF for VAC. In practice, multi-sectoral approaches, such as UNICEF child protection teams collaborating with education and communications colleagues and their national counterparts to reduce VAC, were limited over the evaluation period. It should be added that while several country programme designs group child marriage and child labour together as 'VAC', these can also be considered as contexts within which VAC occurs.

Another key weakness identified by the evaluation was that MTSP indicators lacked clarity as they did not sufficiently consider the range of issues that need to be addressed in each VAC-relevant KRA. The SP (2014-2017) is an improvement, but the issue remains. SP indicators still do not sufficiently reflect a cross-sectoral coordinated approach to addressing VAC. Among regional

initiatives, the West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) has recently developed a regional CP Strategy including attention to VAC, and the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) is developing core indicators for measuring systems strengthening, including on VAC. However, global measurement of results on reduction of VAC using commonly agreed core indicators is lacking. This leads to difficulties in comparative analysis and informed planning.

In addition, the evaluation noted that in most countries, the programming logic on VAC was not sufficiently elaborated and evidenced, and the coherence of VAC-related activities was sometimes weak. While many country offices had conducted some kind of mapping of national child protection systems, most had not conducted in-depth gap analyses and focused mapping exercises to inform VAC programming in particular. This is especially problematic because VAC programme implementation often relies on strengthening weak institutions.

■ ■ Despite many useful initiatives, UNICEF's regional-level engagement still lacks clear strategies, results frameworks and accountabilities with regard to combatting violence against children. ■ ■



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KEY CONCLUSIONS

Performance on relevance, appropriateness and coherence is mixed.

1. The global objectives on VAC in the CP Strategy (2008) and MTSP (2006-2013) were largely internally coherent and consistent with country needs. Country programming logic on VAC, however, is in many cases not fully clear and coherent and not properly evidenced.
2. The alignment of the country programme with the national context on VAC was generally adequate with respect to national plans and priorities. However, focused mapping exercises to inform VAC programming were often lacking.
3. While improvements were introduced in the SP (2014-2017), UNICEF's work to respond to and prevent VAC is still not sufficiently broad-based and multi-sectoral to match expectations related to SDG 16.2 and UNICEF's advocacy focus on VAC.
4. Global measurement of results on reduction of VAC using commonly agreed core indicators is lacking.

■ Effectiveness of UNICEF programmes to protect children from violence

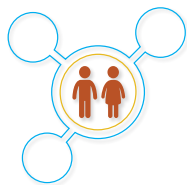
Achievement of key results as defined by UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan was found to be variable. Although progress has been made in some countries, particularly with respect to adoption of legal and policy frameworks, a great deal of work is required to substantively reduce VAC. Overall findings indicate that results on systems strengthening were partially achieved whereas results on social norms change and monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data have not yet been adequately achieved. Likewise, while efforts were undertaken to address gender and equity issues, there are still major gaps that need to be addressed. Child participation was often very limited with respect to children's impact on decision-making.

Since the KRAs on systems strengthening, social norms change and monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data are separate in the MTSP, they are discussed individually in the report. It should be noted, however, that the evaluation considered them to be inter-related. In fact, social norms change to reduce VAC, and monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data efforts are integral elements of a well-functioning systems approach.



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Achievement of targets relevant to VAC from MTSP 2006-2013



Better **CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS** that include national laws, policies and services across sectors, in particular justice and social protection, to protect all children from violence, exploitation and abuse. (KRA1)

Organizational target	Evaluation finding
At least 60 programme countries have identified areas through mapping that require strengthening of the national child protection systems.	According to the current evaluation findings, 50 of the 70 countries included had conducted some type of mapping or gap analysis on systems strengthening that included addressing VAC. Only 20 of these had conducted 'substantial' mapping or gap analysis. ⁴
At least 60 programme countries, including emergency-affected countries, have improved systems and implemented programmes to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse.	<p>32 out of the 70 countries included in the current evaluation stated that they had achieved at least moderate progress on developing both legal and policy frameworks, providing a coherent response to VAC while also reaching children in need and developing tools for systems strengthening. All 70 countries had engaged in some systems strengthening in at least one area. However, this was insufficient to improve systems.</p> <p>55 out of the 70 evaluation countries had achieved at least moderate legal framework improvement, 54 had achieved at least moderate policy framework improvement, 47 had at least a moderately coherent response, while 36 had at least a moderate result for the extent to which they could reach all children in need.</p> <p>None of the countries included in the evaluation had achieved a fully-fledged functioning system to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse at the end of the MTSP period. Where evidence of systems improvement was found, this tended to happen as a (pilot) initiative at district level and needed scaling up.</p>

⁴ Similarly, according to the MTSP Specific Monitoring Questions and Management Indicators Results, 105 out of 156 countries had identified areas requiring strengthening in national child protection systems. Identification was done through a variety of means, ranging from holding a few meetings to a comprehensive mapping exercise See: United Nations Children's Fund, *MTSP Specific Monitoring Questions and Management Indicators Results*, UNICEF, New York, 2014.

Achievement of targets relevant to VAC from MTSP 2006-2013 (cont'd)



Dialogue stimulated on social networks and nationally that reinforces **SOCIAL CONVENTIONS, NORMS AND VALUES** that favour the prevention of violence, exploitation, abuse and unnecessary separation for all children and lead to questioning of child rights violations, including harmful conventions and practices, while ensuring respect for the views of children and building on young people's resilience. (KRA2)

Organizational target	Evaluation finding
Reduce social acceptance of practices harmful to children.	<p>The current evaluation found that no country had achieved a substantial change in addressing harmful traditional norms and practices; only 40 out of 70 countries were moderately countering them while the remainder were not able to counter them (yet).⁵</p> <p>Behaviour changes on FGM/C⁶ were not yet observable in most programme countries according to the thematic evaluation on FGM/C.</p>



Improved country-level **MONITORING, RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND USE OF DATA** on child protection. (KRA4)

Organizational target	Evaluation finding
At least 75 countries incorporate disaggregated baseline data on child protection indicators in national development plans and reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.	<p>While exact figures were not available across the 70 countries, the current evaluation found that only half of the 18 sample countries included in the case study and desk review had reported to the Committee on the Rights of the Child using disaggregated indicators on child protection indicators.⁷</p>

⁵ According to the MTSP Specific Monitoring Questions and Management Indicators Results 2013, 31 of the 69 countries responding said "the country explicitly addresses social norms in programmes aimed at elimination of traditional practices such as FGM". Figures on addressing other forms of VAC, such as programming on the elimination of sexual abuse and exploitation, were similarly low with only 60 out of 149 countries reporting explicitly addressing this.

⁶ UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Evaluation, *UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change 2008-2012*, Vol 1-2, New York, 2013. United Nations Children's Fund, *Evaluation of UNICEF Programmes to Protect Children in Emergencies: Synthesis Report*, UNICEF, New York, 2013.

⁷ According to the MTSP Specific Monitoring Questions and Management 2013 Indicators Results, 72 out of 150 countries reported on this to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2013.

Systems strengthening

Evidence suggests that there is a growing understanding of, commitment to, and ownership of a systems strengthening approach in UNICEF child protection programming. This is visible at the global level in terms of UNICEF's advocacy and increased discussion on VAC among key stakeholders. At the regional level, dialogue on strengthening programming on VAC has likewise increased as evidenced by the greater focus on technical support to develop programming logic and associated indicators.

The evaluation found that UNICEF's advocacy and technical support have resulted in measurable changes in legal and policy frameworks under certain conditions. These conditions include government receptivity and streamlining of administrative procedures to adopt laws and policies. UNICEF is widely perceived as a catalyst for institutional and capacity strengthening. The quality of UNICEF-supported training packages and tools to strengthen service provision/prevention of VAC, and capacity strengthening of local structures was also found to be generally high. Where conducted, the mapping and analysis of child protection systems has provided a good basis for planning for and implementing change at the national and sub-national levels. Among the countries included in the evaluation, some changes in services and service delivery mechanisms, human resources, coordination and collaboration on child protection data were identifiable and appropriately addressed VAC.

A notable weakness identified by the evaluation was the continued fragmentation of laws and policies, with few, if any, comprehensive laws in place in the countries assessed. Awareness of national laws among duty bearers, rights holders and the public in general remains limited. Enforcement of laws and regulations is likewise still problematic. This is due, at least in part, to the limited capacities of police, health and other service providers to deliver a comprehensive response to children affected by VAC as well as to their perpetrators. Social norms limiting willingness to report cases of VAC also pose challenges to response. While there have been some results in institution and capacity strengthening, relevant ministries at the country level are usually highly underfunded. This is particularly problematic at the sub-national level because lack of funding impedes the rate and coverage of efforts to prevent and respond to VAC. In addition, there is considerable need for continued capacity strengthening at all levels: national, sub-national and community.

There is not enough operations research nor comprehensive assessments of child protection programming with attention to VAC to inform systems development. While there is an increasing recognition of the dynamic nature of systems, feedback to incorporate learning and adaptation is not yet systematically implemented in most countries covered by the evaluation. Complicating assessment matters further, the impact of systems strengthening on the prevention of, and response to, VAC is still difficult to measure, as programmes are not yet sufficiently mature. Ethical protocols and guidelines to support VAC research, prevention and response activities do exist but need further implementation across different settings.

The evaluation found limited coordination amongst actors engaged in strengthening national child protection systems as relevant to VAC, including among United Nations

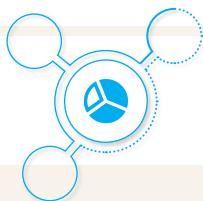


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“System-level work has been most successful at the level of enhancing legal and policy frameworks. At the level of service delivery, none of the countries had a functioning system in place to protect children from violence.”

entities. At the national level, cross-sectoral collaboration is weak and coordinated VAC referral systems among service providers are not yet sufficiently in place across countries. Stakeholders across the evaluation countries reported seeing the shift from the programme approach to a systems approach on VAC as a very challenging paradigm change, despite broad acceptance of the shift. The approach is not very clearly understood and is thus not well planned for in programming design and implementation on VAC in some country offices. Systematic linkages of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the government child protection system on VAC need improvement at the sub-national level in some countries. UNICEF's support to strengthening and involving informal development committees with attention to VAC has been shown to be crucial to effective response in the countries evaluated. The quality of inter-linkages between the formal and informal community groups is, however, variable, and needs strengthening and scaling up.

Finally, the evaluation identified weak coverage as a major shortcoming with the systems approach as it stands: service delivery to identify, refer, protect and support victims was limited to United Nations programming locations – leaving other districts void of services – and varied markedly both among and within the 18 evaluation countries. Even within identified localities, not all children in need were reached.



Results on systems strengthening have been partially achieved.

2. Success is, however, still only partial since important gaps remain in terms of:

- underfunding of relevant ministries, which impedes the rate and coverage of efforts to prevent and respond to VAC, especially at the sub-national level;
- enforcement and implementation of legal and policy frameworks;
- achieving a fully functioning system of national institutions that both prevents and responds to VAC; and
- measuring actual improvements in the functioning of systems and the outcomes for children and families.

3. Some UNICEF-supported pilot VAC response actions to strengthen the capacity of service providers at the community level are promising, though coverage is limited. Linkages between formal and informal structures to prevent and respond to VAC are frequently weak.

Social norms change

There are indications of increased awareness on VAC in the evaluated countries. Community-level actions to prevent and respond to VAC are being mobilized with the support of UNICEF. Social dialogue with respect to the role of the family and communities, including greater public education, has been stimulated.

Examples of wide-ranging interesting and innovative Communications for Development (C4D) methods to prevent VAC have been or were being developed at global, national and community-specific levels.

Community-based prevention mechanisms that contribute to reducing VAC covered only small areas within a few programme countries. Even within areas targeted for interventions, many children in need of protection from violence did not have access to prevention and response services. There was limited attention to measuring the effectiveness and impact of approaches used to bring about behavioural changes to prevent VAC and ensure cases are reported. Country offices noted that assessment of C4D intervention results in particular was lacking and needed attention. This is problematic as it is important to learn from experience so as to improve methods to bring about behavioural change. Programme effectiveness is further limited by victims' reluctance to press legal action even if a case is reported due to pressures from community members, perpetrators and families. This is coupled with weak justice systems and limited victim and witness protection programmes.

Several conceptual challenges and gaps also exist. These include the lack of differentiation between socially accepted and non-socially accepted forms of VAC. While much VAC is due to social norms, some is not – for example, child rape, incest and severely debilitating physical abuse – and is almost universally forbidden across cultures. Despite growing advocacy and awareness, few results were reported with regard to preventing and addressing non-socially accepted forms of VAC. The evaluation also found a tendency to limit discussion of social norms to 'traditional

- ■ While social norms work on female genital mutilation/cutting for instance is fast evolving, UNICEF pays less attention to forms of violence that are not socially accepted such as rape, incest and severely debilitating physical abuse and to new forms of violence such as digitally-based abuse. ■ ■

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In sum, UNICEF is providing support to the actions on social norms, but this needs to be vastly scaled up and linked more coherently to the overall systems strengthening approach.



Results on social norms change have not yet been adequately achieved.

focus on traditional harmful practices is high, it is limited on other forms of VAC.

3. Aligning the specific needs of different populations with regard to the types of VAC prevalent within different socio-cultural contexts falls short. This is partly due to a lack of mapping and VAC prevalence data and to limited sharing of relevant information among different UNICEF offices, which hampers planning.

Monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data

Reliable evidence is a prerequisite for any programming effort. There has been progress during the evaluation period in the collection and use of information for programme development and implementation. There is also a growing commitment to ensuring that country programme design is based on research and data and is therefore responsive to actual needs. Most UNICEF-commissioned research, even if limited, was well used. Strong ethical protocols were in place, but methodological protocols were variable.

Despite such progress, there is still much scope for improvement. Global-level data aggregation reflects significant gaps in VAC programme monitoring and reporting. Similarly, at the regional level, though attempts are being made through increasing targeted technical support to countries on indicator identification, monitoring and reporting, important gaps remain. Related to this is the lack of a common and agreed upon definition of VAC for programme planning, implementation and results monitoring, which also affects the quality of global data. Currently, planners and researchers interpret VAC differently, and therefore measure different things, making comparisons challenging. Thus, even when reports are provided, they do not consistently contain information that is easily comparable across countries, or is relevant to understanding trends in VAC.

Basic data to inform evidence-based planning and implementation is often lacking. This includes baseline, midline and endline surveys, and evaluability assessments. A particular gap was identified with respect to results monitoring for VAC, regarding measuring higher level impacts, such as policy innovation and legal developments. At the operational level, monitoring of activities implemented by programme partners was often weak.

“VAC is a data-poor area of work, not least because of the sensitivity of the issue of violence. Basic data to inform programme planning as well as basic monitoring data are often still lacking within UNICEF.”



KEY CONCLUSIONS

Results on monitoring/research/evaluation/use of data have not yet been adequately achieved.

1. There has been progress during the evaluation period on data collection and use, although the amount and quality of data often falls short of requirements. Weaknesses in data collection on service provision and in results monitoring are also notable in many countries and will need considerable attention into the future.
2. The lack of a common and agreed upon definition of VAC with a

sufficiently comprehensive analysis of prioritized types of VAC and their drivers impedes effectiveness and measurement of results.

3. Strong ethical protocols are in place, but methodological rigour is variable, resulting in challenges with respect to data quality and comparability of findings.



KEY CONCLUSIONS

Overall performance on advocacy, leadership and partnership is strong, but there is scope for improvement, especially in some regions.

1. UNICEF is well placed to be a leader and to leverage its potential to address VAC due to its mandate, capacity and reputation. Governments and other implementing partners recognize UNICEF's advocacy and leadership on VAC.
2. UNICEF is seen as actively engaged in the development and review of appropriate actions on VAC although inter-sectoral collaboration can be improved.
3. The aligning of UNICEF efforts with those of other organizations working on VAC-related issues is making slow progress.

■ Cross-cutting themes and implementation modalities (child participation, gender equality, disabilities, other human rights and equity considerations)

National legal and policy development documents adopted at the country level during the evaluation period generally take gender issues in VAC into account. UNICEF's approach to gender equality is also integrated into national child protection work on VAC. Countries do disaggregate data on VAC by sex and in some cases by age in research and case management. As a result, it is possible to derive gendered guidance information for planning and implementation, but only where the quality and quantity of collected data is adequate.

Many of the country programmes evaluated were making progress on the prevention of VAC among certain types of vulnerable children, such as children who live and/or work on the street. Despite such progress, greater attention must be paid to the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of children, especially of those with disabilities. Programmatic responses were either project-based and not integrated in a systems approach, or did not accommodate such children. This was partly due to insufficient human resources in most UNICEF country office Child Protection sections. In addition, the evaluation found that the issue of abuse of boys was not sufficiently addressed. Social norms and economic constraints place boys at particular risk of certain forms of abuse, such as sexual abuse; UNICEF's programming did not sufficiently recognize boys' vulnerability to sexual abuse. Boys' masculinity roles also impede their willingness to report VAC. The evaluation found that insufficient attention was given to children in non-poor households. There is a potential tension between UNICEF's corporate focus on equity and the nature of the problem, i.e., VAC, which is pervasive even if it affects some groups more than others, which should be addressed.

“Child participation in programme design was found to be limited. It is unclear how far programmes respond to the specific needs and interests of diverse children of different ages.”



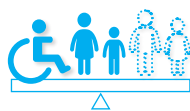
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Noorani

The evaluation noted that child participation in UNICEF activities on VAC was insufficient. Regardless of whether children had been trained on participation with support from UNICEF, the evaluation found that children were very skilled at providing input/ideas on how to address VAC. Their comments showed remarkable insights. Nevertheless, the extent to which UNICEF's strategies and programme design on VAC were informed by the needs and interests of diverse groups of rights holders, including children, was unclear. The evaluation found that children emphasized that they lacked the power to:

- influence decision-making on VAC at all levels within their countries; and
- have a strong impact on social norms change since adults did not always listen to them due to existing social norms.

Methods to prevent and respond to child perpetrators of VAC, including perpetrators of bullying, physical and sexual VAC, and digitally-based VAC are insufficiently considered in planning and implementation. Types of VAC and the type of perpetrator tend to vary in accordance with the age of the child. Little explicit differentiation with respect to age is, however, made in programming on VAC.

“VAC is pervasive in society and affects all children, from all socio-economic backgrounds. UNICEF has yet to spell out what this implies with regard to the organization’s corporate focus on equity.”



KEY CONCLUSIONS

Performance on cross-cutting themes and implementation modalities is mixed, with some good examples on targeting girls. Weak implementation is a key issue.

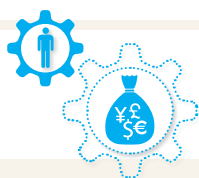
1. While UNICEF includes a human rights and equity focus in programming to prevent and respond to VAC – including attention to gender issues in programme design and implementation, particularly with respect to VAC against girls – in practice there is room for much improvement.
 2. Design and implementation of programming at the country level on gender and equity is still limited and underfunded, including with regard to:
 - abuse of boys and the social norms related to boys' masculinity;
 - children with disabilities and other especially vulnerable groups;
 - children in conflict with the law;
 - vulnerability of children in all socio-economic groups to VAC; and
 - integrating gender issues and adopting cross-sectoral approaches to addressing VAC.
 3. Children are able to express their opinions on how to address VAC, but feel that they lack the power to effectively influence decision-making and social norms change. Children are included in UNICEF VAC activities, but not sufficiently.

■ Efficiency in financial and human resource management

The evaluation found that, in the case study countries, although very limited, funds were generally well utilized within available budgets across strategies and interventions. There were good examples where cost-effective solutions were identified and applied for human resource and financial management. Globally speaking, funding challenges appeared prominently, including across KRA 4 (monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data), though evaluation findings indicated that it was key to achieving outcomes across all other KRAs.

Of note is that conducting detailed cost analyses was challenging at the country programme level as activities, outputs and outcomes were often disconnected in programming and reporting, and financial allocations for VAC were not earmarked. The related lack of sufficiently developed ToCs (or programme logics) and reporting on concrete core indicators, which do not yet exist, may have affected the capacity of UNICEF to attract funds for child protection.

With respect to cross-sectoral collaboration, work on VAC across UNICEF country offices was still variable. Government, United Nations and other agencies were not yet working on common approaches to VAC. Instances of collaboration to address VAC within child marriage by partnering with agencies focusing on gender-based violence, for instance, were limited.



KEY CONCLUSIONS

Performance in terms of efficiency has been generally adequate, within the limits of resources available. Staff capacity remains a concern in some situations.

1. From the countries visited, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that management of resources on VAC programming has been efficient, compared to results achieved, especially considering the extremely limited funding available. In particular, this is evident in KRA4 on monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data. For real impact, much more investment is needed.
2. Although attempts are being made through increasing regional-level targeted technical support to countries on indicator identification, monitoring and reporting, important gaps remain.
3. The human resources allocated at the regional level to strengthen these are inadequate to effect substantial improvements in these areas at the country level.
3. Although VAC is UNICEF's top advocacy priority,¹⁰ there are insufficient funds to support this priority, especially with a view to "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children" as indicated in SDG 16.2. Major efforts are needed to mobilize more funds and ensure allocation of resources to all sectors working to address VAC.

“While UNICEF’s work on VAC has largely been efficient within the limits of resources available, current means and organizational structures are insufficient to respond to the SDG agenda and end violence against children by 2030.”

¹⁰ United Nations Children’s Fund, *A Post-2015 World Fit for Children: An agenda for #Everychild 2015*, UNICEF, New York, 2015.

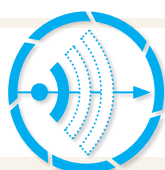
■ Sustainability and scalability of VAC programme implementation processes and results

Global and regional coordination, national partnerships and advocacy efforts will likely continue into the future and may also be scaled up as recognition of the necessity to address VAC increases. Results with respect to systems strengthening at the national level are likely to be sustainable over the medium and long term. Similarly, the guidelines and tools developed for duty bearers are likely to be sustainable and scalable if resources allow. There is evidence of increased national ownership and recognition of the need to reduce VAC. While the evaluation saw evidence in the case study countries¹¹ that government budget allocations to prevent and respond to VAC were increasing, the level of such allocations was still low.

“Some results achieved through systems strengthening work were found likely to be sustainable while most project-type interventions that still co-exist in many settings were found to be unsustainable.”

The laws and policies that have been developed are likely to be sustainable, to the extent that they are implemented and enforced. Non-enforcement and continued fragmentation of legal and policy frameworks can, however, hamper sustainability and the scaling up of UNICEF-supported results within countries over the short, medium and long term. Strengthening the capacity of service providers and advocacy to fully enforce legal and policy frameworks has been insufficient. In countries where project-supported activities were not well linked with system strengthening, however, the sustainability of project activities was limited.

The evaluation found that there was a lack of concrete planning in the form of global and regional road maps to increase effectiveness and sustainability. That is, global or regional road maps that go beyond strategies and the development of tools and include details on actions, roles and responsibilities to mobilize and effectively utilize resources to address VAC.



KEY CONCLUSIONS

Sustainability and further expansion of VAC prevention and response efforts are likely to be hampered by limited budgets, limited partner capacities and lack of coherence in global planning and standard setting.

1. Some results achieved with respect to systems strengthening at the national levels are likely to be sustainable. Progress has been made towards strengthening institutions, capacities and ownership. Concerted planning and attribution of roles and responsibilities across sectors to prevent and respond

to VAC are, however, limited at the global and regional levels.

2. Without an increase in the available national and donor budgets, scaling up of all actions to ensure coverage within countries will be limited. Mid- and long-term sustainability are especially unlikely unless resources are allocated.

¹¹ The evaluation was not able to reliably assess budget increases in other countries due to lack of information. It should be noted that budget allocations are sometimes provided at a decentralized level, making it difficult to fully report on this information.

A close-up photograph of a person's bare feet walking on a dirt path. The person is wearing blue shorts with a white stripe. The ground is dry and dusty, with several large, deep footprints visible. A single yellow leaf lies on the path near the feet.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the evaluation puts forward the following recommendations. It is to be noted that the recommendations are not stand-alone but are inter-linked and should be implemented as such.



1 Make VAC an **ORGANIZATION-WIDE** multi-sectoral priority and agree on an overarching **THEORY OF CHANGE** and **CORE INDICATORS**.




2 Launch a **MULTI-SECTORAL ROAD MAP** to reducing VAC and translate it into **REGIONAL ROAD MAPS**.

3 Strengthen context-specific **ADVOCACY** and **RESOURCE MOBILIZATION**.



4 Accelerate the **ROLL-OUT** of the **SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING APPROACH** to preventing and responding to VAC.





5 Renew the focus on **PREVENTING VIOLENCE**, including through addressing social norms.

6 Improve the focus on **GENDER** and **EQUITY** approaches.

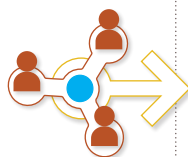



7 **INSTITUTIONALIZE** child protection systems mapping and strategically plan for follow-up **RESEARCH AND DATA INITIATIVES**.

8 Develop a web-based **KNOWLEDGE NETWORKING PLATFORM**.




Overarching strategic recommendations



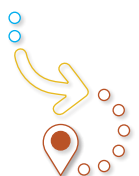
1. Revision of the CP Strategy and/or mid-term review of the SP should make VAC an organization-wide multi-sectoral priority with strong involvement at the regional level, coordinated by the Programme Division in NYHQ. Review efforts should emphasize (a) the development of an overarching Theory of Change for addressing VAC; and (b) agreement on core indicators for measuring VAC prevention and response actions.

Developing a Theory of Change should involve a wide range of stakeholders and may be integrated with the road map development (Recommendation 2). The resulting Theory of Change should have the needed flexibility and depth to respond to variations and changes in context and to integrate learning. The selection of core indicators for VAC prevention and response should be based on consultations with existing expert groups as well as with in-house specialists at all levels of the organization. It should emphasize indicators for which there are a comparable means of verification.

PRIORITY:
VERY HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Deputy Executive Director, Programme; Director - Programme Division; Director - Division of Research and Policy; Regional Directors



2. In 2016, develop and launch a multi-sectoral road map to reducing VAC within a particular time frame.

Implementation of this recommendation should include:

- focusing on institution and capacity strengthening, down to the service provision level;
- increasing UNICEF's financial and human resources to achieve outcomes on VAC;
- addressing gaps in strategies to ensure that all children, especially children with specific vulnerabilities to VAC, receive the support they need;
- at the regional level, translating the road map on reducing VAC to regional road maps corresponding to region-specific needs and contexts; and
- at the country level, adapting the road map to national contexts and priorities, while emphasizing evidence base development and capacity strengthening of national systems to prevent and respond to VAC.

PRIORITY:
VERY HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Regional Directors



3. Strengthen context-specific advocacy and resource mobilization, including at the regional and global levels – on the basis of bolstered evidence and use of data (see recommendation 7) – commensurate with higher expectations for UNICEF action in light of SDG 16.2.

Implementation of this recommendation should include the formulation/revision of regional and global-level advocacy strategies on VAC. It would encompass ensuring that information gaps are systematically addressed and making a business case highlighting the human, social and economic impact of VAC. This may require further research and assessment.

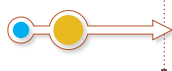
PRIORITY:
HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Director - Division of Communication;
Director - Division of Research and Policy; Director - Office of
Research/Innocenti; Regional Directors

Detailed recommendations: Operationalizing the systems approach

The following recommendations provide further detail. Some can be implemented as part of the 'overarching recommendations', others are additional.



4. Accelerate the roll-out of the systems strengthening approach to preventing and responding to VAC.

Implementation of this recommendation should include revamping the systems approach so as to: a) strengthen the enabling environment including laws, policies, institutions and capacities; b) improve coordination across planning and implementation entities within the organization and with partners; c) include programming for specific vulnerable populations with the involvement of formal and less formal actors; d) strengthen service delivery across sectors; and e) improve integration of social norms programming to address VAC in the systems approach.

The revamping of systems strengthening must be:

- based on a common understanding of VAC;
- equity, human rights and gender responsive;
- well-resourced;
- accompanied by consolidation, analysis and sharing of information on VAC situations and programme responses, including multi-sectoral progress; and

- supplemented by accelerated capacity building initiatives for staff and partners, insisting on the common understanding of VAC and the systems approach.

PRIORITY:
VERY HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Regional Directors; Country Representatives (including through the Field Results Group)



5. Renew the focus on preventing violence, including through fostering supportive social norms, addressing harmful social norms, strengthening structural change for equality and equity and reducing drivers at the personal level that may lead to VAC.

Implementation of this recommendation should include:

- more emphasis on structural change that would support prevention, such as challenging gender norms, increasing positive parenting training, supporting local economic development, adopting labour-saving tools, and developing programmes to address alcohol and drug abuse by caregivers;
- increased attention to preventing forms of violence that are not socially sanctioned such as rape, incest and other serious abuse;
- greater efforts to identify and integrate local supportive social norms in the prevention and response to VAC; and
- integrating prevention more firmly into the systems approach through collaboration with governments and CSOs to design and implement actions.

PRIORITY:
HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Regional Directors; Country Representatives (including through the Field Results Group)



6. Improve the focus on gender and equity approaches and interventions within the overall systems approach, including through child participation in the prevention and response to VAC and through stronger targeting of boys and of children living with disabilities.

Implementation of this recommendation should include:

- increasing the focus on addressing VAC in different child population groups;
- specifically increasing attention on the abuse of boys and of children with disabilities;

- considering how to reach children subject to violence across socio-economic groupings; and
- increasing participation of children, from global to community levels, in discussions, decision-making and actions to prevent and respond to VAC.

PRIORITY:
VERY HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Director - Division of Research and Policy; Regional Directors; Country Representatives (including through the Field Results Group)

Detailed recommendations:
Data, knowledge-base development and use



7. Institutionalize child protection systems mapping and assessment exercises and strategically plan for follow-up research and data initiatives. Promote and support the use of practical protocols to aid measurement of results on VAC, so as to inform future programme planning and provide an evidence-base for advocacy and resource mobilization.

Implementation of this recommendation should include:

- supporting development of a common definition, highlighting which types of VAC are prioritized, for use in UNICEF research and monitoring;
- conducting comprehensive VAC surveys (as done in Tanzania) or similar analyses of the various types of VAC and their drivers in different national settings;
- encouraging consistent adoption of UNICEF ethical protocols. Strengthening national VAC monitoring and evaluation systems;
- supporting capacity building with regard to child protection evidence generation and use; and
- using information to feed back into and improve systems functioning by embedding a culture of evaluation in all child protection work.

PRIORITY:
VERY HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Director - Division of Research and Policy; Director - Office of Research/Innocenti; Regional Directors; Country Representatives (including through the Field Results Group)



8. Develop a web-based knowledge networking platform that facilitates information sharing and incorporates the experiences (good practices, lessons learned) of countries on child protection systems strengthening overall with particular attention to VAC.

Implementation of this recommendation should include:

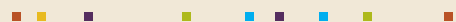
- involving all key stakeholders from global to sub-national levels, including development agencies, government representatives, civil society groups and other non-state actors;
- linking the platform to the #Endviolence campaign site; and
- using the platform to develop greater coherence and clarity on VAC issues and strategies as well as improve the effectiveness and efficiency of actions undertaken.

PRIORITY:
HIGH

Key responsible entities:

Director - Programme Division; Director - Division of Communication;
Director - Division of Research and Policy

See the full evaluation report on:
www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_VAC.html



For further information, please contact:

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