Using the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) to conduct global research on violence against children and violence against women
1 billion children experience violence annually
Health consequences of violence against children

Injury
- Head Injury
- Internal Injury
- Fractures
- Burns

Mental Health
- Depression and Anxiety
- PTSD
- Suicide
- Eating/Sleep Disorders

Maternal and Child Health
- Unintended and Adolescent Pregnancy
- Fetal Death
- Pregnancy Complications
- High school Non-completion
- Household Poverty

Disease Outcomes
- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Stroke
- Chronic Lung Disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Alcohol Disorders
- STDs
- HIV

Risk Behaviors
- Unsafe Sexual Practices
- Smoking
- Multiple Partners
- Physical Inactivity
- Alcohol and drugs

Life Opportunities
- Unemployment

Health consequences of violence against children
Linkages between VAC and VAW

- Shared risk factors
- Common social norms
- Co-occurrence
- Intergenerational abuse
- Adolescence

Violence against women (VAW)

Violence against children (VAC)
Global Shared Research Agenda on VAW

Domain 1
Research to understand VAWG in its multiple forms

1. How are new feminist social movements (e.g., Me too, Ni una menos) and menist social movements (Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), incels, etc.) positively or negatively influencing individual, social and policy perspectives related to the experience and perpetuation of violence?

2. What are the impacts (including disability-related impacts) of under-researched forms of IPV on women and girls, including emotional and economic IPV, revenge porn and ‘honour’-based violence?

Domain 2
Intervention research

1. What types of interventions can effectively prevent multiple forms of violence, and why?

2. What types of interventions are most effective for preventing IPV (including ‘honour’-based violence) against women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (including age, poverty, disability, ethnicity, race, sexuality)?

Domain 3
Improving existing interventions

1. What alternative modalities (besides in-person programming) are effective in VAW prevention at scale?

2. How can large-scale sector programmes be adapted to optimise their impact on violence prevention and response, particularly education, health, economic development, infrastructure and social protection programmes?

Domain 4
Methodological and measurement gaps

1. What are the most effective tools to measure harmful traditional practices against women and girls (including Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), early and forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of honour, dowry-related violence, and son preference)?

2. What methods can be used to measure the intersection and pathways between different types of violence, including polyvictimisation and intersections between violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC)?
About VACS
The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) serves as a core partner in Together for Girls and leads the Data pillar.
The largest source of comprehensive data on violence against children and youth in the world

Representing around 10% of the global children and youth population
IN PROGRESS
Baltimore, MD (pilot), 2024

REPEATING
Eswatini: 2007, 2022*
Kenya: 2010, 2019
Tanzania: 2009, 2024
Zimbabwe: 2011, 2017

COMPLETED
Botswana, 2016
Cambodia, 2013
Colombia, 2019
Cote d’Ivoire, 2018
El Salvador, 2017
Ethiopia, 2022*
Haiti, 2012
Honduras, 2017
Jamaica, 2023*
Laos, 2014
Lesotho, 2018
Malawi, 2013
Moldova, 2019
Mozambique, 2019
Namibia, 2019
Nigeria, 2014
Rwanda, 2016
Uganda, 2015
Zambia, 2014

*Countries have completed data collection. Reports are in development.
VACS Objectives

+ Assess the burden of violence and its contexts
+ Examine health consequences
+ Identify risk and protective factors
+ Assess utilization of services
+ Help guide violence prevention and HIV programs and policies
VACS Methodology

+ National household surveys
+ 13-24-year-old males & females
+ Three-stage cluster sample survey design
+ Carried out by in-country institutions
+ Extensive training and protocols to protect child respondents
+ Offer HIV testing and counseling to respondents who can receive results on their own
VACS Catalyze Action

Government Ministry Lead

Other Government Ministries

Universities

Civil Society & NGOs

UNICEF/IOM In-Country

Multi-Lateral and other Agencies

USG In-Country USAID, PEPFAR

Multi-Sector Task Force

Advocacy tool

Breaks the silence

Starts a new conversation

Creates action
Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys

Data to Action Tools and Workshops

INSPIRE: Seven Strategies to End Violence Against Children
VACS Indicators
VACS as a comprehensive data source

- Physical Violence
- Sexual Violence
- Emotional Violence
- Risk Factors, Demographics
- Health Outcomes
- Risk Taking
- HIV/AIDS Testing Behaviors
- Gender Attitudes
- History of Migration
VAC and VAW indicators
How is violence measured in VACS?

+ Violence prior to age 18
  + Defined as first experience of violence prior to age 18 among youth ages 18-24

+ Any lifetime experience of violence
  + Defined as any experience of violence among youth up to age 24

+ Violence in the past 12 months
  + Defined as an incident of violence that occurred within the past year

---

**Childhood violence**

**Lifetime violence**

**Past 12 month violence**
Physical Violence

- Slapped, pushed, shoved, shook, or intentionally threw something at the participant to hurt them.
- Punched, kicked, whipped, or beat the participant with an object.
- Choked, smothered, tried or attempted to drown, or burned the participant intentionally.
- Used or threatened the participant with a knife, gun or other weapon.
### Emotional Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intimate partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Insulted, humiliated, or made fun of you in front of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kept you from having your own money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tried to keep you from seeing or talking to your family or friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kept track of you by demanding to know where you were and what you were doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Made threats to physically harm you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Made you get scared or feel really bad because they were calling you names, saying mean things to you, or saying they didn’t want you around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Told lies or spread rumors about you, or tried to make others dislike you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kept you out of things on purpose, excluded you from their group of friends, or completely ignored you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Caregiver/Adult relative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Told you that you were not loved, or did not deserve to be loved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Said they swished you had never been born or were dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ridiculed you or put you down, for example said that you were stupid or useless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Peer and intimate partner EV questions only added in past five years. Prior VACS only included parent/caregiver EV.*
Emotional Violence

**Intimate partner**

**Peer**

**Parent/Caregiver/Adult relative**

**Frequency**

**Past 12 months**

- **Most recent time**
  - Age
  - Relationship to perpetrator
  - Live in household (parent/caregiver)
  - Marital status (partner)

- **1st time**
  - Age
  - Relationship to perpetrator
  - Live in household (parent/caregiver)
  - Marital status (partner)
# Sexual Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unwanted sexual touching</th>
<th>Attempted forced sex*</th>
<th>Physically forced sex*</th>
<th>Pressured sex*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Anyone ever touched in a sexual way without your permission, but did not try and force you to have sex (Touching in a sexual way without permission includes fondling, pinching, grabbing, or touching you on or around your sexual body parts)</td>
<td>• Current/ex-partner OR anyone else ever tried to make you have sex against your will but the sex did not happen (They might have tried to physically force you to have sex or they might have tried to pressure you to have sex through harassment or threats)</td>
<td>• Current/ex-partner OR anyone else ever physically forced you to have sex</td>
<td>• Current/ex-partner OR anyone else ever pressured you to have sex, through harassment or threats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asked separately of current/ex-partner (among ever partnered) or anyone else
Sexual Violence

- Unwanted sexual touching
- Attempted forced sex
- Physically forced sex
- Pressured sex

Most recent time:
- Last 12 months
- Age
- # of perpetrators
- Relationship to perpetrator
- Perpetrator age
- Use of weapon
- Location
- Time of day

1st time:
- Last 12 months
- Age
- # of perpetrators
- Relationship to perpetrator
- Perpetrator age
- Use of weapon
- Location
- Time of day

Disclosure

Service utilization
Violence Perpetration

Physical violence

Ever done the following to a current or ex-partner OR someone else

+ Pinched, slapped, pushed, shoved, or shook them, knocked their head with a knuckle, twisted their hand, pulled their hair, or intentionally threw something to hurt them
+ Punched, kicked, whipped, or beat them with an object
+ Choked, smothered, tried to drown them, or burned them intentionally
+ Used or threatened them with a knife, gun or other weapon

Past 12 months

Sexual violence

+ Ever forced a current or ex-partner to have sex with you when they did not want to
+ Ever forced someone who was not your current or ex-partner to have sex with you when they did not want to

Past 12 months
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Harsh discipline                | • Verbal and physical  
• Past 12 months by parent or caregiver  
• Among 13-17 year old youth only                                                                 |
| Witnessing household violence   | • Before age 18 (or any time in life for participants 13-17)  
• Physical IPV or child abuse  
• Past 12 months exposure (for 13-17 year olds only) and frequency data available |
| Witnessing community violence   | • Before age 18 (or any time in life for participants 13-17)  
• Physical violence  
• Past 12 month exposure (for 13-17 year olds only)                                                                 |
| Technology-facilitated violence | • Experiencing of psychological harassment online or via mobile phone  
• Experiences of tech-facilitated sexual violence in some VACS countries                                                                 |
| Forced sexual initiation        | • Pressured or forced at sexual debut, among those who ever had sex                                                                 |
| Reproductive coercion            | • (females only) sexual partner ever refused to use a condom, among those with at least one sexual partner ever |
Risk factors & consequences
Risk factors

Financial insecurity
- Food insecurity at individual and household level
- Poverty score
- Material insecurity

Social isolation
- Friendships
- Community connectedness
- Relationships with parents and death of parents

Attitudes
- Gender attitudes
- Attitudes toward IPV
- Attitudes toward corporal punishment

HIV & sexual risk behaviors
- HIV status, testing and knowledge
- Sexual history and partnerships
- Sexual risk behaviors (e.g. transactional sex, low/no condom use)
Health Consequences

Substance use
- Alcohol use and abuse
- Smoking
- Drug use

Mental health
- Mental distress (Kessler-6 scale)
- Suicidality
- Self-harm

Sexual transmitted infections
- Diagnoses
- Abnormal discharge
- Sores or ulcers
Accessing & using VACS
How to access VACS data

+ Most VACS data are publicly available
+ Request access to VACS data sets through the Together for Girls website: https://www.togetherforgirls.org/en/analyzing-public-vacs-data
Data analysis resources are available on the Together for Girls website.
Country reports

+ Country reports are a valuable tool to understanding country priorities on violence against children and youth
Together for Girls is leading a new VACS Data to Action Research Course

- Together for Girls and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine course supports, engages and equips early career researchers (post-doctoral, research fellow, research associate) to conduct research using VACS data and communicate findings to policymakers and key stakeholders.

- The course supports researchers working on child health, protection, violence, and child rights issues in universities or research institutions located in Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, El Salvador, Honduras, Kenya, Lesotho, Moldova, Mozambique and Namibia.

- The course will take place from June to October 2023. Ten two-hour sessions will be delivered in English via Zoom approximately every 4-5 weeks. Session timings will be finalised with the cohort of selected participants based on time zones of participants and the teaching team.

- Participants will receive compensation (USD $1,000) upon completion of the course and course deliverables.

- While the 2023 course is now closed, stay tuned for course offerings in the future!
The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.