

Advancing SVRI's Work on VAC and CSA to Strategically Contribute to the Field

Review of SVRI's VAC and CSA work

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SVRI sexual
violence
research
initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Background

The SVRI is exploring whether and how to strengthen our specific contributions towards ending violence against children (VAC) and child sexual abuse (CSA) and advance our work in these areas in line with our broader strategy goals: building evidence, strengthening capacity, promoting partnerships, and influencing change. To successfully embark on this work, we reviewed SVRI's past and current VAC and CSA work and how it has evolved. This review provides a deep dive into the focus, depth and strength of our VAC and CSA work, providing a starting point for evolving a strategy around future work on these issues.

For the purpose of this review, a total of 1273 products were reviewed from the website as well as a further 41 entries from the SVRI Forum programmes. In addition, a key informant interview was held with the Executive Director of SVRI, Elizabeth Dartnall, on 17 March 2021. Resources were categorised according to their underlying VAC theme, SVRI strategic goal area, type of resource, and region of focus.

The review highlighted some key strengths related to SVRI's VAC/CSA work including:

- **SVRI has the capacity to be at the forefront of new approaches**, methodologically and conceptually on VAC and CSA, and the intersections of these with VAW.
- **SVRI hosts a strong collection of resources on CSA and adolescence**: 42% of resources are on these topics. Also, important work on VAC/VAW intersections and parenting is represented as well as strong work on methodologies including child participation.
- **SVRI can contribute to expanding the field and building collaboration across the VAW and VAC fields** - researchers and practitioners are recognising the connections between fields and need support to conceptualise, research, plan, and implement more integrated interventions and work in good partnerships.
- **SVRI has a strong platform, networks and experience in connecting** diverse individuals and groups from the VAC and VAW fields globally.
- **SVRI Forum** is a good platform to strengthen SVRI's contributions to advancing VAC and CSA work such as through inclusion of VAC and CSA thematic areas as well as the possibilities of highlighting more work from researchers and countries that have been less visible.
- **SVRI's donor is supporting this exploratory consultative phase** which will ensure that any decision/strategy is well informed and considered.

II. Key findings from Review of VAC Work

The review showed that SVRI has engaged in various types of VAC and CSA work since 2006 when it was identified as a priority theme. This work has included SVRI-lead projects and grant-making, through the Forums, or through amplifying and sharing knowledge and tools developed by others in the field.

Thematic Areas

Our analysis revealed four thematic areas where there is particular depth of work: **CSA, adolescence, VAC/VAW intersections, and parenting.**

- Twenty five percent of products are classified as relating to **CSA**, making it the largest single VAC theme within existing SVRI work. A key strength in the CSA category is a collection of methodological pieces related to child participation in research that affects them and how to ethically involve young people and children in sexual violence/CSA research.
- Seventeen percent of products relate to **adolescence**. 53.9% of these products focus on sexual violence, highlighting a key link between this area of work and CSA. Ten of the 19 VAC-related grants awarded by SVRI were under this thematic area.
- Work on **VAW/VAC intersections** appears on the database since 2015. This area of research is critical and has been instrumental in SVRI's consideration of strategically expanding their work on VAC and CSA. This theme is strongly linked to other thematic areas that emerged from the current review and two of these, adolescence and parenting, emerged as particular areas of strength for SVRI.
- SVRI has supported several projects relating to **parenting interventions** through granting and it appears that these are a key opportunity to explore one way of addressing VAW-VAC intersections in programming.

Types and topics of products

- A large proportion of the work that SVRI has supported and that is represented on SVRI's website is related to **building knowledge** and understanding the nature of VAC and CSA
- SVRI is engaging with content and work that is being created more broadly in the VAC and CSA field and **ensuring that it is communicated and disseminated** across their network via their weekly SVRI Update newsletter.
- The products are constituted of several different types of work including **academic articles, webinars, news articles, research reports, research briefs, toolkits and blogs**.
- 3.2 percent of the resources are 'knowledge products' such as **tools, summaries of evidence, literature reviews, lessons learned documents** and indicate a considerable level of investment from SVRI to develop and commission.
- Whilst grants related products (journal articles, blogs, webinars, review reports etc) do not constitute a large percentage of the total, it should be noted that **28 percent of all the grants that SVRI has allocated are related to VAC with a total resource allocation of more than USD 2 million.**¹

SVRI Forum

- The review found that VAC and CSA have been core themes or sub-themes at the Forum since 2009. **Child sexual abuse** has been on the agenda at SVRI Forum 10 times since 2009 and has been included as a sub-theme twice and as the main title of sessions 8 times.
- **VAC/VAW Intersections** was highlighted during a keynote address at the SVRI Forum in 2013, when Alessandra Guedes (SVRI Leadership Council Co-Chair) presented ground-breaking research findings on the intersections between VAW and VAC. It has also featured as a key theme during the 2015, 2017 and 2019 Forums.
- The Forum is a platform through which new research and findings from the field are disseminated not only via the main programme but also at pre-conference workshops, satellite sessions, launches, exhibition stands, poster displays and performances. For instance, in 2019, critical findings from the '**Out of the Shadows Index (OOSI)**, a study measuring how 60 countries are responding to sexual violence against children, was shared

¹ USD 2,054,085.60

at the Forum with a special exhibition stand devoted to raising awareness and understanding of the findings of the study.

III. Key Reflections

The review gave us clarity on many aspects of our work on VAC and CSA work and also provided food for thought in terms of points of reflection that arose from this exploratory phase. Some of these are outlined in the box below.

- With SVRI's strong presence and focus on VAW as well as VAC work and roots in feminism, the organisation is intersectionally situated which may make VAC/VAW intersections a key channel for strengthening SVRI's work on VAC and CSA.
- SVRI's contribution to the VAC and CSA field can involve **exploring specific gaps** such as:
 - CSA affecting boys including sound, ethical methodological approaches to research in this area;
 - designing and evaluating response and prevention interventions that address both VAC and VAW in a coordinated / integrated way; and,
 - research and interventions designed specifically for adolescents, recognising this unique developmental period, rather than it being subsumed under child or youth programming and research.
- Many parenting interventions are most relevant for parenting young children, so some consideration of the overlap between parenting and adolescence themes may be strategic. Overall parenting programmes could strengthen the gender and power analysis components such that both VAC and VAW are tackled within the same programme.
- SVRI could make a vital contribution to the field by amplifying and supporting VAC and CSA research from LMICs.
- SVRI could explore how to expand how the Forum space engages with VAC and CSA researchers and stakeholders.

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1. Rationale for the Review

SVRI is exploring whether and how to strengthen their specific contributions towards ending violence against children (VAC) and child sexual abuse (CSA) and advance their work in these areas in line with their broader strategy goals: building evidence, strengthening capacity, promoting partnerships, and influencing change.

The current moment is a supportive one in terms of the state of knowledge in the field and global activism on these issues as well as strong political will. For SVRI, clarifying and strengthening our role on VAC and CSA is also very timely in the context of a growing call from both the VAC and VAW fields to work more closely together to address the multiple linkages and intersections including: shared risk factors, common underlying social norms, co-occurrence, intergenerational effects, common and compounding consequences, and adolescence.² Additional knowledge on intersections is critical to inform programme design and to examine how integrated programming would work in practice and monitoring progress.³ The SVRI is ideally placed to promote, support, and strengthen research collaborations on VAW and VAC, led by researchers in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) as well as to contribute to getting CSA onto the agendas of researchers, practitioners, policymakers and funders.⁴

To successfully embark on this work, we reviewed SVRI's past and current VAC and CSA work and how it has evolved. This required a historical perspective as well as a functional, operational overview in order to understand the focus, depth and strength of our VAC and CSA work. This review enabled us to understand where we are and set us off on the road to evolving a strategy around future work on this issue.

2. Methodology for the Review

To gain insight into the history and context of SVRI's involvement with VAC, a key informant interview was held with the Executive Director of SVRI, Liz Dartnall, on 17 March 2021.

For the purpose of this review, data were collected from the SVRI website (February and March 2021). Five areas of the SVRI website were used to collect data: The Forum Websites (2009-2019), SVRI Blogs (2015-2021), SVRI resources and publications, including SVRI Knowledge Exchanges (2006-2021), SVRI's Weekly Updates (2014-2020), and SVRI's Grants (2014-2020). With these sections in mind, an excel sheet was used to collect details for each VAC resource including the resource's underlying VAC theme, SVRI strategic goal area, type of resource, and region of focus. A total of **1273** products were finally included for analysis. A separate excel sheet was created for the analysis of the SVRI Forum content and this search yielded **41** more entries directly related to VAC.

Limitations

Whilst we created clear categories within which to analyse the resources, it should be noted that some categories are overlapping. For instance, a product that is classified as contributing to the

² Alessandra Guedes, Sarah Bott, Claudia Garcia-Moreno & Manuela Colombini (2016) Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children. Global Health Action, 9:1, DOI: [10.3402/gha.v9.31516](https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v9.31516)

³ <https://www.svri.org/documents/intersections-between-violence-against-women-and-violence-against-children>

⁴ SVRI. Oak Foundation- Core Funding Proposal.

‘building evidence’ goal of SVRI’s work might well also be ‘strengthening capacity’ or ‘influencing change’; in these cases, the review team made decisions on a case-by-case basis to assign best fit. With regard to analysing underlying VAC themes, a resource classified under adolescence and dealing with sexual assault could also fit under CSA; more discussion on this specific overlap is included later in this report.

Another limitation is that more than half of the resources were not assigned to a specific region. The data for these may have been general/global and not region or country specific but it could also be that relevant information was missed if it was not in the product abstract.

3. History of SVRI’s Approach to VAC Work

CSA has always been part of SVRI’s research agenda and priorities. In 2006, when SVRI moved from the WHO to the South African Medical Research Organization (SAMRC), the SVRI created 6 priorities for the research agenda including CSA. This was in recognition of the fact that insufficient research existed on this topic and designating it as a priority informed how SVRI would move forward and influenced what would be included on the website, what questions were asked, as well as Forum themes and the types of systematic reviews they would conduct.

Since the first SVRI Forum in 2009, VAC and CSA have been core conference themes. Funding received from the Oak Foundation (2009) allowed SVRI to expand our work on these areas and provide space within SVRI Forums for VAC researchers to present ideas and findings from their work. Alessandra Guedes (SVRI Leadership Council Co-Chair) presented ground-breaking research findings on the intersections between VAW and VAC during a SVRI Forum 2013 plenary session as a keynote address. This study has since become a benchmark in the evolving understanding on the critical need for these fields to collaborate in their efforts to prevent and finally end VAW and VAC.⁵ In addition, with Oak Foundation’s support, the SVRI was able to publish a series of ground-breaking reviews on parenting programmes as ways of addressing VAW and VAC, and to support the adaptation and testing of IPV primary prevention programmes in three east African countries.

Key pieces of VAC work since 2013:

- Launch on parenting work at the Child Health Safety Conference.
- First systematic review on parenting in LMICs which has now been taken forward by Frances Gardner at Oxford University and has resulted in many more reviews being conducted on this issue.
- SVRI partnered with ISPCAN (International Society for Child Abuse and Neglect) to present a series of systematic reviews on parenting and engaging men at the ISPCAN conference in Turkey.
- SVRI participated in London meeting between VAC and VAW researchers to promote creating a shared language for the fields which would include new definitions (given that each field has their own definitions for the same or similar things).
- SVRI Funded a project run by Raising Voices to look at the intersections of VAW and VAC in Uganda and to develop a framework .
- SVRI Funded parenting work in Uganda (Scaling up of Parenting and Evaluation Research).

⁵ Key Informant Interview. Elizabeth Dartnall (ED SVRI) March 17, 2021.

- SVRI provided on-granting funding, guidance and technical assistance to four research teams in East Africa for a primary prevention project related to testing parenting and school-based GBV prevention interventions in the region.
- Being Heard, a project focusing on the promotion of ethical, meaningful and participatory involvement of children and young people in sexual violence research was launched at the SVRI Forum 2017.

At the time of writing, specific organisational changes in terms of infrastructure or human resources have not been made in response to the decision to engage with more VAC and CSA work. This project is an investment into this process and into ensuring that “if and when SVRI participates in the VAC/CSA field we have clear messaging, know what we want to say and who we should reach out to, to ensure that the connections and relationships that are made are meaningful.”⁶ The project will support the thinking around specific questions:

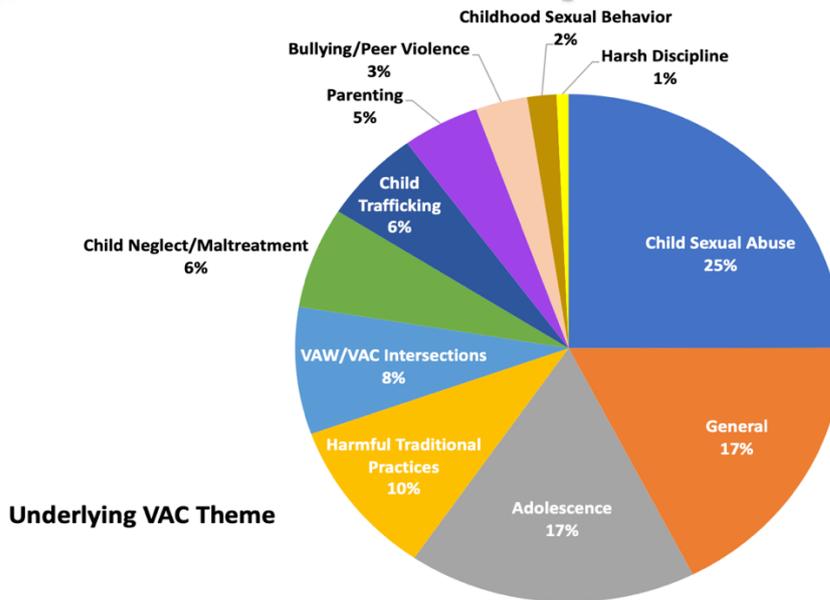
- What is our role in addressing VAC and CSA?
- What are the gaps in the field?
- How do we engage in this space without being susceptible to issues such as working in siloes or alienating either VAW or VAC / CSA stakeholders?
- What questions should we be asking about VAC and CSA?
- Do we focus only on VAW, work more on VAW/VAC intersections, focus on CSA specifically, or take another approach?

4. Review of VAC Work

a. VAC Themes

The diagram below shows the representation of the number or resources or products across 11 main VAC themes. The “General” label indicates products that addressed VAC more broadly instead of a specific type of VAC. Seventy two percent of these relate to understanding the topic; 13.5 percent of the products are related to prevention and approximately 7 percent each are classified as either methodological or interventions.

⁶ Key Informant Interview. Elizabeth Dartnall (ED SVRI) March 17, 2021.



Violence against children is a very broad area and we see here that SVRI has engaged in various types of VAC work whether through SVRI-lead projects and grant-making, through the Forums, or through amplifying and sharing knowledge and tools developed by others in the field. All of these endeavours demonstrate our engagement with the work and with the field on this important topic.

An analysis of the work across these themes taking into account both the number of products or resources as well as the kind of work done, revealed four thematic areas where there is particular depth of work: CSA, adolescence, VAC/VAW intersections, and parenting. This illustrates that SVRI has capacity within these thematic areas. What follows is a more detailed look at these areas as well as other key points related to the underlying themes.

KEY REFLECTION

- Although there may not have been a distinct strategy, we can see four strongly emerging areas in SVRI VAC/CSA work: child sexual abuse, adolescence, VAC/VAW intersections, and parenting. Could these be the areas that lend themselves best to collaboration across VAW/VAC fields and to being examined further in terms of feminist principles and achieving common ground or are there other factors driving the depth of work on these thematic areas?

Child sexual abuse: Twenty five percent of products are classified as relating to CSA, making it the largest single VAC theme within existing SVRI work.

There is a notable overlap between the CSA and adolescence themes. We understand that adolescents are legally considered children and thus work related to sexual violence during adolescence could fit into the CSA theme. Indeed, a large proportion (53.9 percent) of products in the adolescence category deal with sexual abuse / sexual violence and if they had been included under CSA, then this theme would constitute more than a third (34.1 percent) of the total work. However, we also recognise adolescence as a unique developmental period during which individual's capacities are evolving and they are at risk of both child abuse and intimate partner violence; therefore, this review has maintained adolescence and all products related to this developmental period as a distinct theme.

A key strength in the CSA category is a collection of methodological pieces related to child participation in research that affects them and how to ethically involve young people and children in sexual violence/CSA research. This is highlighted as an area of strategic importance to the SVRI as evidenced by the 'Being Heard' project, mentioned above. A collaboration between the SVRI and the International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking' (IC), University of Bedfordshire, 'Being Heard' seeks to promote the ethical, meaningful and participatory involvement of children and young people in sexual violence research. Several of the products that were analysed are related to this project and include webinars, research briefs, videos and blogs.

Several of the SVRI products on CSA focus on boys and their experiences of sexual abuse, reflecting the organisation's stance that although much of the CSA literature focuses on girls, boys also experience CSA, and we cannot neglect their needs, experiences and perspectives. These products include specific articles on rethinking the research on sexual exploitation of boys, the design of specific tools to measure child sexual abuse experiences in men and analysis on the additional risks to boys of being sexually exploited in times of crisis (such as the pandemic). In 2020, SVRI also provided inputs for a comprehensive literature review that specifically examined the magnitude, causes, risk factors and consequences of the sexual exploitation of boys as well as ethical and methodological approaches to this research.

SVRI granting in this area has the capacity to be responsive to emerging needs in the field. For instance, the most recent cohort of grantees (2021) includes an organisation conducting a project on Research and Response to Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) Amidst COVID-19 in the Philippines. This will address the unique challenges and trauma associated with OSEC and findings will be used to inform caregiver training on the provision of care for OSEC survivors.

CSA has also been included in every SVRI Forum since 2009 as a subtheme or as the main content of sessions 10 times. This has included 2 panels on methodological approaches such as 'Amplifying Youth Voices in Sexual Violence Service Advocacy.'⁷

KEY REFLECTIONS

- SVRI already has considerable capacity in this area and has a good foundation upon which to strengthen its work.
- Ensuring the highest ethical standards for research with children, especially as SVRI reaches out to new partners and regions, will be an area of continuing need and focus and thus this work will fit well into SVRI's capacity strengthening goal.
- SVRI could explore additional ways to advance a survivor centred approach in this field.
- Given the significant focus on girl children, SVRI could explore addressing the gap of CSA affecting boy children including sound, ethical methodological approaches to research in this area?

⁷ See section 4 f, SVRI Forums Analysis.

Adolescence: We have approached this theme as a distinct developmental period and adopt the United Nations definition that adolescence is the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years. A small percentage of the products, 16 percent, included adolescents and ‘youth’ (young people up to the age of 24) and we retained these due to their relevance for adolescents.

As mentioned earlier, a considerable proportion of the work in this thematic area (53.9 percent) deals with sexual abuse, including coercion, rape and sexual assault within and outside of intimate partnerships, as well as sexual harassment at school which overlaps with the CSA theme but we took the decision to keep it within this distinct theme.

Adolescence features quite strongly as an underlying theme on the website products related to VAC, constituting 50 percent of the knowledge exchange products, 60 percent of the grants, 33 percent of the articles and 22 percent of the blogs. Almost 20 percent of the products related to work in Africa and the Middle East and North Africa whilst a further 14 percent related to Latin America and the Caribbean. 45 percent of the resources had no region specified.

Resources and products on adolescence also include boys, highlighting the need to engage boys for the purposes of building gender equality and preventing VAW as well as to address context-specific needs, experiences and vulnerabilities of boys themselves. Most of the grants allocated under this VAC theme (examples below) support prevention and intervention research with all adolescents and some of these projects have specific components designed to acknowledge and respond to the needs and contexts of adolescent boys. For instance, the Zona Segura project in Honduras includes an SMS campaign which reaches young men and boys (YMB) with targeted messages on health, relationships and gender equality as well as addressing masculinity stereotypes.

A total of 19 VAC products were classified as grants awarded by SVRI. Ten of these were under this thematic area through the SVRI Grant and the SVRI WBG Development Marketplace: Innovations to Address Gender Based Violence programme (run in partnership with the World Bank until 2020) which funds innovative research on GBV in LMICs. Examples include:

- Online Intimate Partner Violence Against Teens and Young People in Nepal
- ‘Evaluating a walking school bus as a school-related gender-based violence intervention in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa’.
- **Primary prevention of sexual and intimate partner violence for male and female adolescents who experience conflict and non-conflict related stressors, DRC.**
- **Building research capacity and data use for gender-based violence prevention and response in adolescents/ young adults.**
- Impact evaluation of the Adolescent Mothers Program of the Juanfe Foundation for the prevention of gender-based violence in Colombia.
- Examining the potential of comprehensive sexuality education for intimate partner violence prevention among young people in Mexico City.

KEY REFLECTIONS

- There are notable links between the CSA and adolescence thematic areas, with 53.9% of resources and products in the adolescence theme focusing on sexual violence. The value of focusing on adolescents as a distinct group and special theme should be further considered as the strategy for future work is developed. In particular, SVRI should reflect on research and interventions designed specifically for adolescents, recognising this unique developmental period, rather than it being subsumed under child or youth programming and research.
- One noticeable content gap is material related to LGBTIQ adolescents and adolescents living with disabilities. Only 2 documents related to these groups were found during data collection. Some reflection on multiple intersecting vulnerabilities (and the systems that create and reinforce them) would be useful when clarifying SVRI's role on VAC and CSA work going forward.

VAW-VAC Intersections: Work on VAW/VAC intersections appears on the database since 2015. This area of research is critical and has been instrumental in SVRI's consideration of strategically expanding their work on VAC and CSA. This theme is strongly linked to other thematic areas that emerged from the current review; namely, adolescence, parenting, child neglect/maltreatment, harsh discipline, and bullying/peer violence. All of these areas together amount to 40 percent of the total resources and products analysed for this review.

Resources on VAC/VAW intersections include those that provide extensive reviews of the state of the field and 61 percent of them are not from a specific region. More than 10 percent of the products relate to Africa including many deriving from a project that SVRI funded on parenting in Uganda in 2015 (discussed below).

SVRI's involvement within this area focused on building evidence (88 percent of the resources fall under the 'build evidence' strategy goal). SVRI has supported research in this area and there is evidence of dissemination of important new findings to diverse audiences with this theme featuring as one of the main themes during the SVRI Forum in 2017 and 2019. Classification of these products into a 'topic area' showed that 86 percent are related to 'understanding the issue' as opposed to methodological/prevention/intervention in nature.

KEY REFLECTIONS

- With SVRI's strong presence and focus on VAW as well as VAC work and roots in feminism, the organisation is intersectionally situated which may make this thematic area a key channel for strengthening SVRI's work on VAC and CSA.
- The intersections thematic area has a lot of overlap with a number of other thematic areas (including two that emerged as particular areas of strength for SVRI), so it may be strategic to build on the strengths in these areas.
- Are there other intersections that should be further explored? For example, much of the work on VAC-VAW intersections looks at IPV and child maltreatment, not child sexual abuse.
- A key gap in SVRI's work on this theme and the field more broadly in addressing VAC-VAW intersections is designing and evaluating response and prevention interventions that address both VAC and VAW in a coordinated or integrated way.

Parenting: Although products on parenting only constitute 5 percent of the total, this is an area wherein SVRI has invested significant resources through granting. SVRI has supported several projects relating to parenting interventions. Examples include:

- Developing early parenting interventions to promote and support effective parenting practices in South Africa
- Evaluation of a parenting intervention to prevent the development of aggression in children in South Africa.

Much of the parenting work overlaps with VAC-VAW intersections as discussed in the previous section. In 2015, SVRI funded a mixed methods study in Uganda aimed at understanding the connections between intimate partner violence and violence against children in families in Kampala, Uganda, to inform primary prevention. This work has been important to the field because “evidence of effective, culturally relevant parenting programmes from low and middle income countries is extremely limited” and “of the handful of programmes that exist, very few deliberately seek to address outcomes associated with both intimate partner violence and child maltreatment.”⁸ This project gave rise to several resources on this topic over the next few years including SVRI blogs, journal articles, presentations and webinars conducted in partnership with the study authors and connected to the findings and reflections from the project. Findings from the project were also disseminated at SVRI Forum sessions in 2019. Other important work on parenting includes the recent (2021) grant we awarded to support a project in Zimbabwe, ‘Can a co-parenting intervention reduce both Intimate Partner Violence and Violence against Children?’ This project aims to adapt and pilot-test the *Parenting for Lifelong Health for Adolescents* programme in Zimbabwe with a view to including a more explicit focus on preventing violence against women and engagement of fathers.

KEY REFLECTIONS

- It appears that parenting interventions are a key opportunity to explore addressing VAW-VAC intersections in programming. It may be helpful to conduct a deeper dive into this area of research to understand how specifically to strengthen the intersections aspects of this work.
- Many parenting interventions are most relevant for parenting young children, so some consideration of the overlap between parenting and adolescence themes may be strategic.

⁸ <http://www.svri.org/parenting-good-behaviour-and-respectability-programme>

Harmful Traditional Practices: 10 percent of products relate to harmful traditional practices. Although a small number relate to female genital mutilation (FGM) the vast majority of these resources focus on child marriage and forced marriage with a regional focus (over 30 percent) on the Middle East and North Africa as well as some countries in West Africa. SVRI has supported this work through grant making, specifically research on early marriage among Syrian refugee girls.

KEY REFLECTIONS

- If SVRI were to decide to strengthen its work in this area, it could be useful to include dowry crimes, as a corollary to child/forced marriage that does impact adolescent girls, as well as honour killings. Expanding the regional focus to include more resources from South Asia, would potentially achieve this.

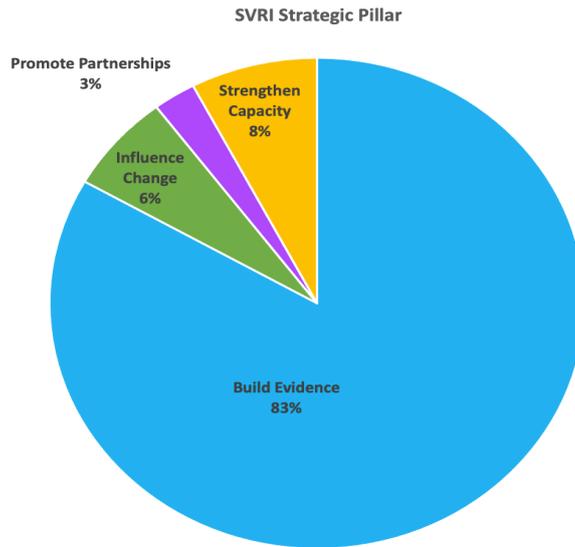
b. SVRI's strategic goals

As we can see from the figure below, the vast majority of products, 83 percent, across all the underlying VAC themes fit under the 'Building Evidence' strategic goal. A huge range of products are available and cover multiple themes, regions, countries, and groups including some material on marginalised groups related to disability, sex work or refugees. It is clear from this preliminary analysis that the products contribute to identifying, amplifying and disseminating new knowledge and trends on VAC.



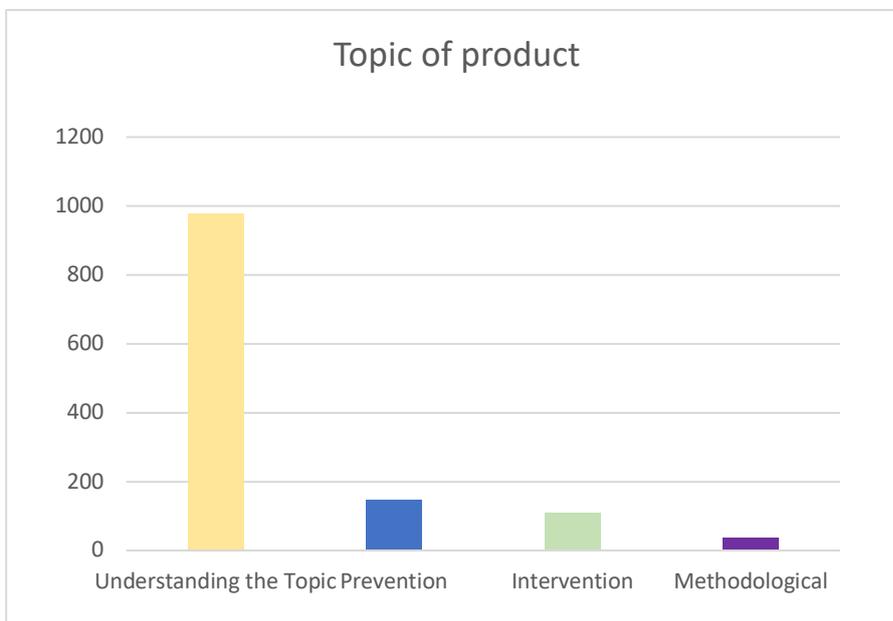
8 percent of the resources examined contribute to SVRI's strengthen capacity goal, which aims to "strengthen capacity for quality, policy relevant research and practice." These are focused on methodological guidance pieces such as:

- tools to ensure children's participation in VAC research;
- ethical research standards for research on VAC/CSA with children; and,
- prevention-oriented toolkits and manuals with practical guidance for agencies that work with children.



c. Topic of the products

We reviewed the topic areas that products and resources addressed including: understanding the issue, prevention (interventions and theory), intervention (response and key learnings), and methodological. Some intuitive correlation is visible between how the products contribute to the strategic goals and the topic of the product. So, for instance, ‘understanding the topic’ is the topic of most of the products reviewed and most of these are classified under SVRI’s ‘building evidence’ goal. On the other hand, most of the ‘methodological’ focused products are contributing to the



‘strengthening capacity’ goal as are many of the ‘prevention’ focused products. It should be noted that there is considerable overlap between categories, but it is possible to conclude that a large proportion of the work that SVRI has supported and that is represented on their website is related to building knowledge and understanding the nature of VAC and CSA.

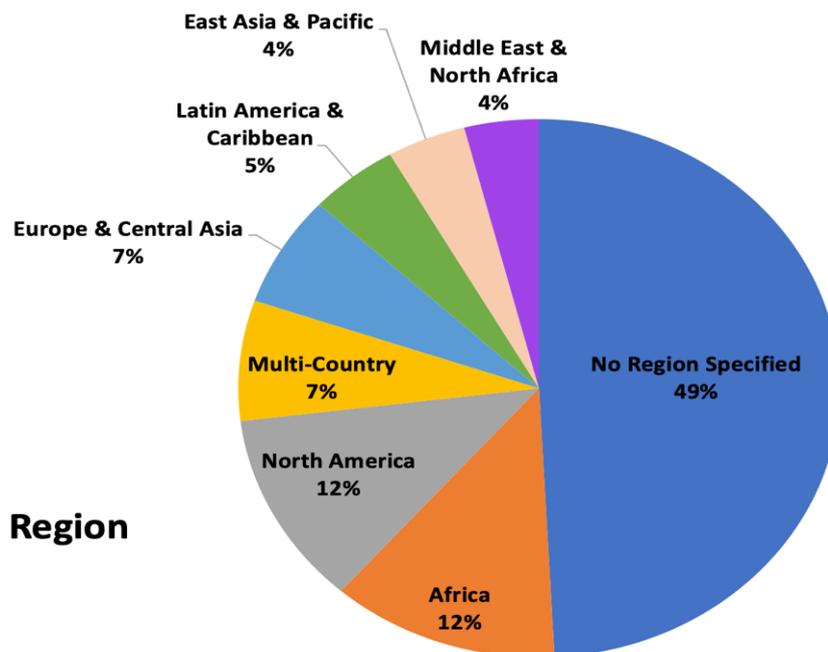
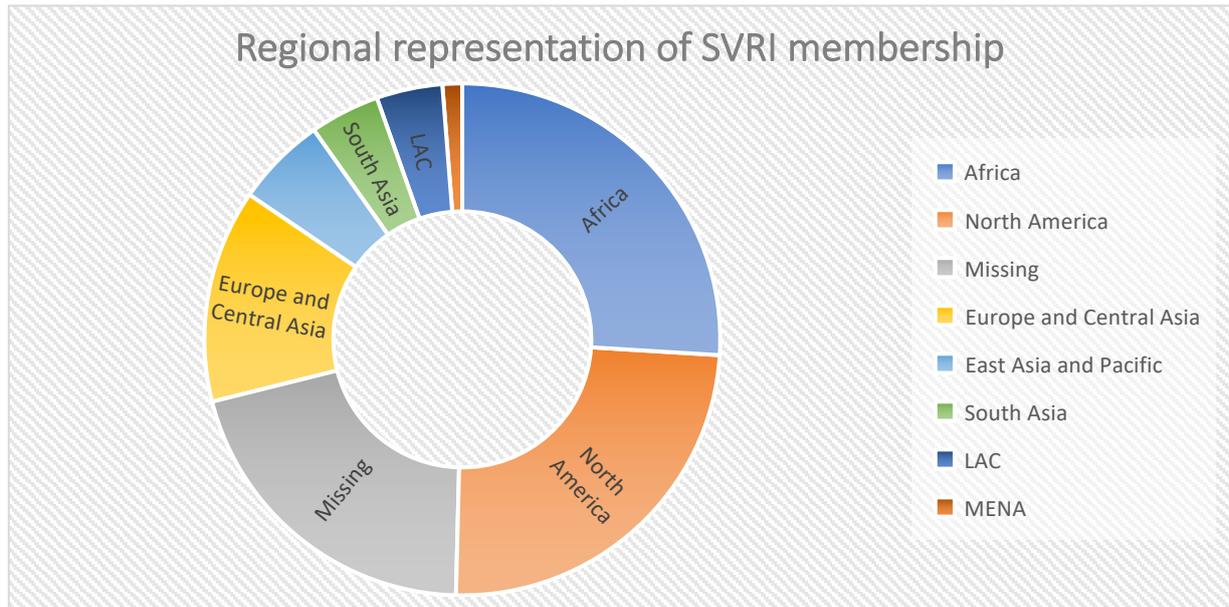
KEY REFLECTIONS

- Do these results indicate a gap in intervention research from LMICs that is available in the field? For instance, are more studies needed on VAC and CSA prevention and response interventions and how they work? Is this a strategic area of growth for SVRI’s future contributions to the field?

d. Regional coverage

Almost half (49 percent) of the products do not have any regional or country classification. This could be a limitation of the methodology (see above) but is also likely to indicate that many of the studies are more general overviews, multi-country research studies or products without regional specificity.

The most represented continents in the products and resources reviewed are Africa (12 percent or 16 percent if we include Middle East and North Africa) and North America (10 percent). These are also the most represented continents in terms of SVRI's membership.



KEY REFLECTIONS

- SVRI could make a contribution to the VAC and CSA field by particularly amplifying and supporting research from LMICs.
- Although SVRI is a global network, they also recognise the importance of contextualising information and recommendations for different regions and this lens should be a key consideration in the future VAC and/or CSA work.
- Examine how we can expand the reach of products through different languages or through other techniques such as more audio files to accompany products.

e. Type of product

A very large proportion of the products reviewed, 91.5 percent, are classified as ‘update content’- which means that these are resources shared in the weekly SVRI Update newsletter and they do not always feature as standalone work on the website. The products are constituted of several different types of work including articles, webinars, news articles, research reports, research briefs, toolkits and blogs. The largest category is academic articles which constitute 60 percent of the resources that are shared in the Updates. This indicates that SVRI is engaging with content and work that is being created more broadly in the VAC and CSA field and ensuring that it is communicated and disseminated via their networks.

Blogs and articles that are on the website constitute 3.9 percent of the products whilst 1 percent, are specifically related to grants that SVRI has awarded including journal articles, blogs, webinars, review reports etc. Finally, 3.2 percent of the products relate to ‘knowledge exchange’. These are typically ‘knowledge products’ such as tools, summaries of evidence, literature reviews, lessons learned documents and indicate a considerable level of investment from SVRI to develop and commission these products.

Grants: It should be noted that the grants constitute a larger proportion of financial resources used to address VAC and CSA than the percentage of products suggests. SVRI has allocated more than 7 million USD to 68 projects since 2014. Of these 19 projects, or 28 percent are related to VAC with a total resource allocation of more than USD 2 million.⁹

KEY REFLECTIONS

- SVRI’s engagement with the evidence generated within the VAC and CSA field is encouraging and it will be important to strengthen this engagement with stakeholders from the field and not just products from the field.

f. SVRI Forum

The SVRI Forum is the largest abstract-driven conference dedicated to research on prevention of and responses to VAW and VAC and is a key part of our capacity strengthening and partnerships strategy. The Forum provides a global space where delegates share knowledge, expand their networks, and create collaborations with diverse stakeholders in the field. It has been described as, *“a space where lead thinkers and young researchers from different yet related fields can meet,*

⁹ USD 2,054,085.60

*discuss, compare findings and learn from each other, in an environment characterized by constructive criticism and intellectual rigor.*¹⁰ The Forum is a central part of SVRI's work and marks a very specific type of engagement with the external field so resources within this section of the website were analysed separately. This is relevant because an important goal of SVRI's is to disseminate new research and findings from the field and the Forum is a platform through which they are able to do this very effectively; therefore, it is helpful to understand how VAC and CSA have been included or amplified through the Forums.

A total of 6 Forum events were looked at, from 2009- 2019 and 41 VAC-related products were found. VAC and CSA have been core themes or sub-themes at the Forum since 2009. In this section we discuss key findings from the Forums analysis.

Most of the Forum sessions related to VAC/CSA (60%) have been related to understanding the topic and 24 percent of the sessions were related to interventions in the field. 10 percent of the sessions were prevention related and only 4 percent were methodological in nature. The methodological sessions were related only to CSA. Approximately 27 percent of the sessions related to VAC were classified as "General". Almost 82 percent of these were related to understanding the nature of this violence. These sessions tended to have more general titles such as:

- Understanding violence against children: data, meaning and action
- Diverse nature of violence against children
- Drivers of violence: The multi country study of violence affecting children

SVRI Forums provide a platform to highlight new initiatives and projects, within the main programme but also at pre-conference workshops, satellite sessions and launches and exhibition stands, poster displays and performances. In 2017, the Being Heard project (mentioned on page 6) had a strong presence at the Forum with 10 youth researchers from the project organisations taking part in multiple participatory activities including a pre-conference workshop where they shared their research methodologies with one another; a graffiti art workshop where they translated the Minimum Standards into graffiti art; and the closing plenary where they gave performances on the ethical and meaningful engagement of young people.

Satellite sessions have included, in 2015, 'The Missing 'C': Addressing Violence Against Children' highlighting emerging work on violence against children in East and Southern Africa, including ethical issues, interventions, challenges, and opportunities. In 2019, critical findings from the 'Out of the Shadows Index (OOSI), a study measuring how 60 countries are responding to sexual violence against children, was shared at the Forum with a special exhibition stand devoted to spreading awareness and understanding related to the findings of the study.

Child sexual abuse has been on the agenda at SVRI Forum 10 times since 2009 and has been included as a sub-theme twice and as the main title of sessions 8 times. This underlying theme represents 24 percent of the Forum based VAC products. Half of these were related to understanding the topic, but important methodological approaches were also highlighted. In 2015, several presentations discussed research tools for studies involving children. In 2019 a session was held on 'Building the violence against children prevention infrastructure: globally, nationally and locally.' This parallel session included content on using data to drive action, adapting the Good School Toolkit in Uganda and implementing child focused gender norms programming in Myanmar. A focus on CSA has also been visible at pre-conference workshops. For instance, in 2017, a pre-conference workshop was held on the topic: 'Creating safe spaces to talk about unsafe relationships: developing guidance for children and young people's participatory involvement in research about sexual violence.'

¹⁰ <https://svri.org/svri-forum>

VAC-VAW intersections: As mentioned above, this theme was highlighted during a keynote address at the SVRI Forum in 2013, when Alessandra Guedes (SVRI Leadership Council Co-Chair) presented ground-breaking research findings on the intersections between VAW and VAC. It has also featured as a key theme during the 2015, 2017 and 2019 Forums. Many of the sessions on VAC-VAW intersections were related to programmes and interventions, particularly parenting interventions. Some examples include:

- The use of technology to prevent and respond to sexual and intimate partner violence and child abuse (main theme and panel 2017)
- Intervention Content Panel – Parenting, Fatherhood and Play (panel 2017)

KEY REFLECTIONS

- Is the Forum space engaging VAC researchers and stakeholders very widely? Is there scope for expansion? Understanding other VAC conferences (e.g., IPSCAN) will be necessary to understand SVRI Forum's niche contribution.
- The Forum may be a key space to facilitate dialogues that can bring the VAW and VAC fields together and understand how SVRI can contribute to this work.

5. Strengths and Gaps in SVRI's current VAC work: a Mini-SWOT analysis

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VAC and CSA is on SVRI's agenda (officially so since 2006) and working on these areas is in line with our strategic priorities. • SVRI has the capacity to be at the forefront of new approaches, methodologically and conceptually on VAC and CSA, and the intersections of these with VAW. • Strong platform, networks and experience in connecting diverse individuals from the VAC and VAW fields globally. • Funder support for this work and for this exploratory phase. This ensures that any decision/strategy is well informed and considered. • Strong collection of resources on CSA and adolescence: 42% of resources are on these topics. Also, important work on VAC/VAW intersections and parenting is represented as well as strong work on methodologies and child participation. • SVRI Forum is a good platform to use to increase strength of SVRI VAC/CSA work through specific inclusion of thematic areas as well as the possibilities of highlighting more work from researchers and countries that have been less visible. 	<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of ideas, strategies and thinking which each field can benefit from. • SVRI can contribute to expanding the field and collaboration across the VAW and VAC fields - researchers and practitioners are recognising the connections between fields and need support to conceptualise, research, plan, and implement more integrated interventions. • CSA is a clear gap in the field • SVRI is situated at a nexus of the VAW and VAC / CSA fields, and could use this unique space to play a key role in creating space for increased connections and collaboration across fields as well as dialogue to resolve issues that the VAC and VAW fields do not agree on. • SVRI's reach and platform can potentially ensure more participation from and inclusion of LMICs in VAC and CSA work. • Need for more work on VAC and CSA research and programming methods and tools. • SVRI can explore addressing the gap of CSA affecting boys including sound, ethical methodological approaches to research in this area • Need for more work on definitions and language in VAC and CSA work. • SVRI could address key gaps within VAC-VAW intersections - designing and evaluating response and prevention interventions that address both VAW and VAC in a coordinated or integrated way. • SVRI could reflect on research and interventions designed specifically for adolescents. • As SVRI rebuilds its website and online knowledge hub, key resources on VAC / CSA can be included.
<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No distinct strategy on how to work on VAC/CSA. • Until now experts in VAC invited to SVRI events, not SVRI projects specifically • Very little content related to LGBTIQ children and violence or disability/intersectional approach for VAC 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining staff / consultants to work on VAC and CSA within SVRI. • Differing levels of training and experience of practitioners and researchers, need to ensure best practice in terms of ethical standards. • Ensure that SVRI is supporting and not duplicating work already being done. • Being drawn into a siloed approach ourselves. • Unresolved tensions in the VAC/VAW fields - is SVRI the right organisation at the right time to engage with this and facilitate conversations? • Global backlash and resistance against research and science.



SVRI sexual
violence
research
initiative