



International Classification of Violence against Children Update on the Implementation Strategy

Expert Group on International Classification, 24 to 27 October 2023

Draft submitted for information

Background

The International Classification on Violence against Children (ICVAC) is the international instrument to define and classify violence against children (VAC) for the purpose of statistical measurement and analysis. It was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 54th Session (28 February - 3 March 2023).

After its adoption, UNICEF initiated the development of an implementation strategy for the ICVAC. A senior consultant was hired and an initial series of consultations with key stakeholders were held from July to August 2023. More consultations are expected to take place in the coming months.

Results from consultations

Consultations were held with key data users and producers (list available in the annex), to understand the current situation in terms of quality and availability of statistical data related to violence against children as well as to identify tools and strategies that should be developed to foster implementation of the ICVAC. Key takeaways of consultations are summarised below:

- At national level, there may be multiple agencies producing some data on VAC including ministries of health, education, social welfare, as well law enforcement and the criminal justice system. However, data harmonisation is a challenge. From available administrative data it is difficult to have a consistent picture of the situation and to assess time trends. The National Statistical Office (NSO) is usually not involved in the production and collection of administrative data on VAC and, in general, there is no dedicated entity leading the work on VAC data.
- In countries that have survey data on VAC it is thanks to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) or the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). This means that data are available every three to four years. NSOs are usually involved in implementing MICS/DHS surveys. There are no dedicated surveys on VAC that can collect comprehensive and comparable data at regular intervals and in a comparable manner.
- In general, there is a widespread lack of technical capacity on VAC data at national level, also because of limited involvement of NSOs in this area.
- VAC includes many forms: FGM, bullying, sexual violence, homicides, violent discipline, etc. and there is a need for a comprehensive and consistent statistical framework, which the ICVAC provides.
- Important policy documents or strategies on child protection at national level rarely refer to the need of improving statistical data on VAC.
- There is a great need of comprehensive and comparable data on VAC. They are needed for several purposes:
 - More effective advocacy about the need to step up efforts on child protection.
 - Trend data are needed to assess progress in the reduction of violence against children.
 - Granular data on victims and perpetrators are needed for better programming.



- Data availability and quality varies considerably across regions and countries, depending on interest and capacity of specific institutions. Some countries are more advanced than others in terms of VAC data, even within the same region.
- In many instances, there is a connection between violence against women and violence against children, both in terms of actors and victims of these forms of violence but also in terms of stakeholders or advocates. The harmonisation of respective statistical surveys was voiced as a challenge.
- There are specific ethical problems when collecting data on VAC and they need to be addressed appropriately.
- Among data users, the goal of an international statistical classification is not always clear. For example, it is not always clear that it is a tool to harmonise and improve data rather than to produce and/or make data immediately available. This lack of understanding may generate expectations that data will improve in a very short time frame.
- Apart from a few exceptions, there is a lack of comprehensive analytical products on VAC at national, regional, and international level. Global level figures on VAC are also lacking.
- The inclusion of two indicators on VAC in the SDG framework has been useful to give more visibility to child protection as an important component of sustainable development; however, the impact in terms of improved data availability has been limited.
- There is a clear need to raise additional resources to foster implementation of the ICVAC at global and national levels.
- There is a number of on-going partnerships on VAC, especially at regional level (notably in Europe, Latin America, Africa) that can be leveraged to foster the uptake of the ICVAC.

ICVAC implementation strategy contents

Based on the consultations held to date as well as a review of similar processes, it is proposed that the ICVAC implementation strategy be composed of four main pillars:

- Preparing the ground for ICVAC implementation
- Development of methodological tools
- Development of knowledge products both at national and international levels
- Implementation framework

The contents of each pillar are briefly described below.

1. Preparing the ground for ICVAC implementation

1.1 Outreach campaign

An outreach campaign should be developed to identify and engage key stakeholders that may be interested in being associated with the ICVAC implementation. These partners should support UNICEF in promoting ICVAC implementation. Examples of such partners include countries (national authorities/NSOs) that can feature as champions of ICVAC implementation and other international agencies that have a common interest in pursuing the improvement of data on VAC (such as UNODC, WHO and UN Women).



1.2 Information and advocacy campaign

- Prepare advocacy materials to inform key stakeholders about the game-changing role of ICVAC. This campaign should target two main entities - national data producers, national data users - and specific messages should be used to reach each of these groups. An advocacy video is already [available](#), and its dissemination needs to continue.
- Involve UNICEF Country Offices and develop a “call to action” at national level with relevant partners
- Translate the ICVAC into (at least) the six official languages of the United Nations - translation the six official languages of the United Nations is under way, and the translated versions are expected to become available in early 2024
- Produce technical booklets to illustrate contents of the ICVAC
- Organise visibility/advocacy events in international fora, possibly in partnership with other international agencies

2. Development of methodological tools

The development of methodological tools to provide technical guidance to data producers.

2.1 Methodological guidance to map national administrative statistics systems in ICVAC

In most countries, administrative statistics on VAC are already produced by different institutions, such as law enforcement and criminal justice institutions, health authorities and the education system. Practical guidance is needed on how to map national statistical frameworks into the conceptual and definitional framework of ICVAC. Data of this nature inherently suffer from undercounting – as a large share of VAC cases go unreported – and lack of comparability, as each institution gather data according to specific practices and definitions.

2.2 Development of a comprehensive survey instrument on VAC

Current survey data on VAC rely mainly on international multi-topic survey programs, including MICS and DHS as well as the VACS (US CDC) and Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC, WHO). Implementation of relevant survey modules on VAC need to be fostered in national surveys that are not part of existing programmes.

3. Development of knowledge products both at national and international levels

3.1 International data collection

The use of the existing international data collection system on VAC for which UNICEF is the custodian, will enable the fostering of data quality, availability and use. Through UNICEF annual country consultation and data collection exercise, it will be possible to monitor to what extent countries are complying with ICVAC, while at the same time identifying implementation challenges. It is key to establish a link between UNICEF global data collection processes and ICVAC.

3.2 Global and regional knowledge products on VAC

A vital link between data production, data collection and their analysis can support the cycle for better data and better knowledge. It is important to establish this dynamic link, as users need to see tangible results from activities promoting the implementation of the ICVAC.

4. Implementation framework

4.1 Technical advisory group

A technical advisory group should be established to support UNICEF in its role as custodian of ICVAC. The group would comprise of experts from national statistical offices and other national institutions responsible for the production and



dissemination of statistics on VAC. In particular, it will provide technical advice in the development of methodological tools and training programmes and on the application of ICVAC.

4.2 Technical assistance activities

- Implementation of technical assistance activities and programmes targeting national data producers
- Development of an implementation manual on ICVAC as well as development of an on-going capacity building component
- Priority will be given to activities at the regional level to optimize the use of resources and facilitate the exchange of expertise

4.3 Fund-raising activities

The implementation of the plan will require additional resources for which availability will determine the pace of completion.

Annex 1

Consultations held during July-August 2023

UNICEF Offices

Data and Analytics Section, Headquarters
Programme Group, Headquarters
Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office
West and Central Africa Regional Office
Türkiye Country Office
Sierra Leone Country Office
Dominican Republic Country Office

National Statistical Offices

TURKSTAT, Türkiye
ONE, Dominican Republic
STATS SL, Sierra Leone