

Evidence Matters: Taking stock of evidence on interventions to prevent and respond to violence against children

SOLUTIONS SUMMIT | 14 SEPT 2021

Over 400 researchers, practitioners, policymakers and fellow changemakers from around the world came together to learn about the state of evidence on violence against children prevention and response and reflect on how to use this evidence to accelerate action and scale-up solutions. This summary brief presents key takeaways from the event organized by UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, in collaboration with the Global Partnership, the World Health Organization, and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative. The event was co-moderated by Ramya Subrahmanian, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, Catherine Ward, Dept of Psychology at University of Cape Town and Dipak Naker, Raising Voices, Uganda.

[WATCH THE RECORDING](#)

5 KEY MESSAGES

#1 Address critical evidence gaps

Ramya Subrahmanian presented the UNICEF Innocenti-Campbell Collaboration [Evidence and Gap Map on Interventions to Prevent VAC](#) and highlighted major evidence gaps related to:

- Impacts of interventions on different sub-populations including urban populations, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and younger children.
- Impacts of interventions on reducing sexual violence and emotional/psychological violence.
- Effective strategies to address peer violence and corporal punishment.
- Evidence on economic and social outcomes and cost-analysis.
- Evidence focused on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

CONTEXT

Every year, an estimated billion girls and boys around the world experience some form of interpersonal violence – across forms and settings.

Early exposure to violence in childhood triggers a range of consequences that reverberate through the life of an individual, families, communities and societies – and an estimated global cost of inaction of 7 trillion USD.

COVID-19 has exacerbated many of the underlying risk factors leading to a predicted increase in these numbers and costs.

Public and policy attention to ending violence against children has risen sharply. Yet limited understanding of the evidence makes it challenging to use evidence effectively.

The Solutions Summit series spotlights progress and momentum towards identifying effective solutions and actions to end violence. Knowledge, evidence and learning are a critical part of that acceleration.

#2 Invest in implementation research and adaptation in low and middle-income countries and share lessons learned

Shanaaz Mathews, Director of the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town presented findings from a global review on the prevention of violence against children in and through schools in the Global South commissioned by the [Coalition for Good Schools](#). The review highlighted the need to document ongoing implementation of interventions as well as lessons learned in adaptation. It also identified implementation challenges faced in transferring school-based programmes designed for countries of the global north to the global south, leading to less successful outcomes due to poor adaptation to different local contexts.

"Regarding adaptation, funders need to recognise that prevention will increase demand for protective services and consequently, schools will require additional funding so that children and their caregivers in low-resource settings are able to access support."

– Event participant

Expert panelists shed light on the "messiness" of adaptation of school-based violence interventions in challenging and complex settings that may be under-resourced, or where children may be experiencing multiple types of victimization such as in contexts of armed conflict and gang violence. Panelists emphasized the need to share lessons learned on intervention implementation and adaptation from

these settings with both researchers and policymakers.

#3 Strengthen the quality of evidence on VAC

"Adaptation is a critical issue especially in culturally diverse settings."

– Event participant

Both reviews emphasized the variations in the quality of evidence on what works to prevent violence against children. Study designs for violence prevention and response interventions were found to often have small sample sizes and poorly defined outcome measures. They also lacked description of ethical considerations. Event panelists emphasized the need for greater investment in and attention to high-quality and ethical research on VAC prevention and response.

#4 Recognise that evidence is not just about outputs but also about process and politics

Integrating consultations, building consensus and inclusive processes can help build strong constituencies of support for uptake of findings.

"Research uptake is seeded in relationships that are nurtured before, during and after evidence generation."

– Event participant

#5 Strengthen collaboration and capacity

Expert panelists who have worked on research uptake with a wide range of actors including policy makers and

implementers shared challenges and opportunities in using evidence for action on the ground.

They emphasized the critical importance of strengthening collaborations across countries, sectors, and stakeholder groups to promote mutual learning between evidence users and producers. From the very start of the research, efforts should be made to listen to, promote, and integrate the perspectives of the implementers of the evidence and recipients of the interventions. The importance of media engagement to build evidence-informed discussion was also highlighted.

The voices and experiences of local actors as well as young people are invaluable to evidence generation and use. Additionally, efforts must be made to equip implementers and policymakers with the knowledge of and training on tools to better advocate for and advance evidence use to inform their work.

QUOTES FROM EVENT SPEAKERS

Matodzi Amisi, Senior Research Consultant, Institute for Security Studies

“The way we design, and test interventions must consider the messy and complicated contexts where these interventions will be adapted.”

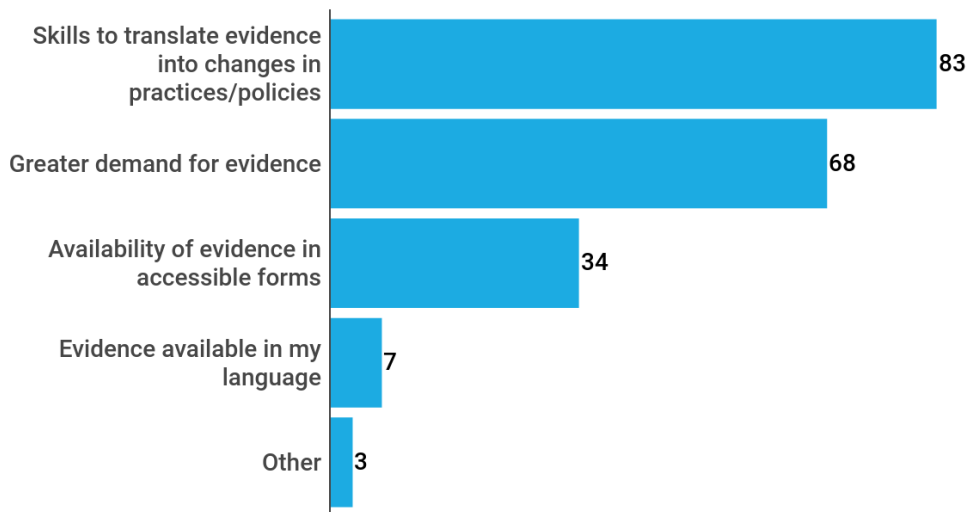
Berit Kieselbach, Technical Officer, Violence Prevention at World Health Organization

“I strongly believe that we need to increase more high-quality implementation research particularly in low- and middle-income countries for example focusing on how to take INSPIRE approaches to scale.”

Enrique Chaux, Department of Psychology, University of the Andes

“Media can play an influential role in amplifying evidence. Researchers must engage with the media, translating research into simple language.”

Which of the following would be most helpful in overcoming barriers to evidence uptake?



Howard Taylor, Executive Director, End Violence Partnership

“The cross-cutting agenda for all of us is to use evidence to reframe ending violence against children as an opportunity with scalable solutions. That is what leaders need to hear. ... ending violence against children as not just important in and of itself but as a cost-effective accelerator which can achieve multiple development outcomes including gender equality, empowerment, health, education, livelihoods etc. And to do that requires investment in robust data and rigorous evidence generation.”

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

“I appreciated the practicality of the information shared as well as the robust discussions.”

“I loved how the webinar was organized into two parts – the ones doing the “evidence research” and the ones in the “field” applying interventions.”

“The diversity of participants and ‘real world’ conversation stood out to me. Thank you for such a powerful event.”

USEFUL LINKS

- [Evidence and Gap Map on Interventions to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children](#) produced by UNICEF Innocenti and Campbell Collaboration.
- [Evidence brief summarizing findings of EGM](#)
- [Report on Evidence and Gap Map Coalition for Good Schools](#)
- [South African evidence gap map on interventions to prevent violence against women and children](#)
- [Report](#) and [policy brief](#) on how violence against women and children is framed in intervention research in South Africa
- [Violence Prevention Forum](#)
- [Aulas en Paz](#) ("peace in classrooms")
- [WHO Guidelines for the health sector response to child maltreatment](#)
- [WHO clinical guidelines on Responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused](#)
- WHO tools to support health systems/providers to respond to women who have experienced intimate partner violence, including a training curriculum ([here](#) and [here](#))
- [Research uptake, lessons from a multi-country global programme: What Works to Prevent Violence against women and girls](#)