

Shared Global Research Priorities for the Intersections between Violence against Children and Violence against Women



INTRODUCTION

There is growing global recognition that violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) intersect in different ways^{1,2}. The Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and the UNDP-UNFPA-UNICEF-WHO-World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP) hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) partnered to coordinate a global, participatory process to identify research priorities for the intersections between VAC and VAW. Identifying research priorities helps to advance the field in a more structured way and serves to monitor progress against initial evidence gaps. Whilst priorities are important, the way in which these priorities are set is also important, especially for ownership, contextualisation and use. Inclusive, participatory research setting serves to promote a diversity of voices – especially from low-and middle-income country (LMIC) settings – which historically lack representation, and minimize the risk of biases when establishing research priorities.

ADVISORY STRUCTURES

The following structures were established to steer and validate the process, and were instrumental in ensuring the process was inclusive and diverse:

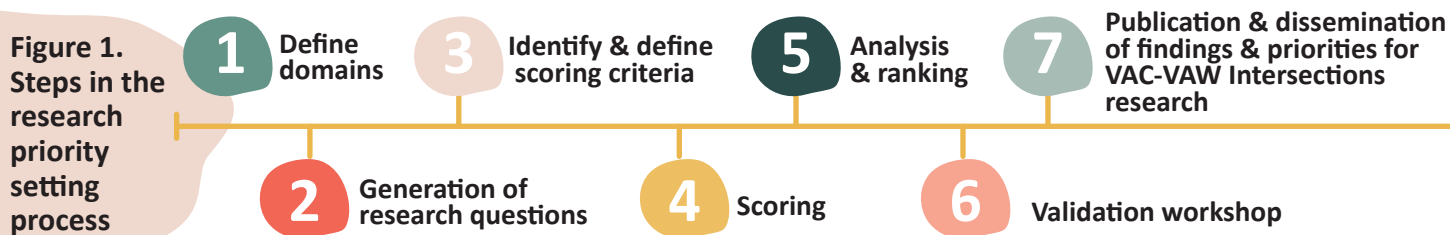
- **Coordinating Group.** This group included representatives from SVRI, UNICEF Innocenti, WHO/HRP and a technical expert on the CHNRI method from Stellenbosch University.
- **Advisory Group.** The Advisory Group included representatives from around the globe working on research and practice on VAC, VAW and their intersections.
- **Global Stakeholder Group.** Anyone working to address VAC, VAW, or the intersections between these forms of violence were welcome to sign up and give inputs into the priority setting process.

1 Guedes, A., S. Bott, C. Garcia-Moreno and M. Colombini, 'Bridging the gaps: A global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children', *Global Health Action*, vol. 9, no. 31516, 2016.

2 Fulu, E., et al., 'Pathways between childhood trauma, intimate partner violence, and harsh parenting: findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific', *The Lancet Global Health*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2017, pp. e512–e522.

METHOD

Priorities were developed by following 7 steps adapted from the Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI) method and informed by lessons learned from the process of developing the Global Shared Research Agenda for VAW³. Figure 1 illustrates the seven-step process used.



STEP 1: Define domains. Based on two systematic literature reviews, the following five overarching themes or umbrellas under which potential research questions could be grouped were drafted by the coordinating and advisory groups:

Domain 1: Strengthening our understanding of VAC-VAW intersections
Gender sensitive research to understand the different intersections across multiple forms of VAW and VAC – including types, frequency, severity, prevalence, incidence, nature, and impacts of, pathways between, and risk and protective factors associated with co-occurrence of VAW and VAC across the life course and generations.

Domain 2: Interventions and services focused on VAC-VAW intersections
Research on programs, interventions, and services that prevent and/or respond to both VAW and VAC, including building an understanding of when and how interventions to prevent or respond to both VAW and VAC work and when coordinated or integrated VAC and VAW interventions are not recommended (and why).

Domain 3: Tools, methods, and measurement in VAC-VAW intersections research
Research to identify new and innovative ways to measure intersections of VAW and VAC; challenge hierarchies of knowledge, encourage practice-based learning and participatory approaches; and address ethical issues and strengthen monitoring and evaluation of interventions in ways that investigate outcomes relevant to both VAW and VAC.

Domain 4: Coordination and collaboration across VAW and VAC sectors
Research into challenges and facilitating factors in coordination and collaboration across sectors at multiple levels, as well as research that provides insights into shared language, common values and principles, and helps address “thorny” issues (such as mandatory reporting, parental alienation) which often impede collaboration.

Domain 5: Policy research
Research to better understand policies including how they address VAC-VAW intersections, how they influence governance and delivery of services (availability, mandates, funding, etc.), and what impacts they have.

STEP 2: Generation of research questions. Everyone involved in this process – the global stakeholder group, the advisory group, and the coordinating group – was invited to submit key questions they would like answered about VAC-VAW intersections for each of the 5 domains identified. This took place in March/April 2022 via an online submission form. Submissions could be made in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. A total of 463 questions were received from 86 respondents. The coordinating and advisory groups organized submissions by removing duplicates and reducing the number of questions to be scored to a manageable number.

STEP 3: Identify and define scoring criteria. After a review of criteria used in other research priority processes (particularly the Global Shared Research Agenda for Violence Against Women and Girls) the coordinating group identified and defined three criteria to be used in the scoring process. Each research question was scored on each criterion.

Table 1: Scoring criteria

Criteria	Question
Applicability and impact	Will the knowledge from this research question influence understanding, practice or policy on VAC-VAW intersections?
Advancing the evidence base	Will the knowledge from this research question change our current understanding or approaches to researching VAC-VAW intersections?
Answerability and feasibility	Can an ethical research study be designed and implemented to document data to answer this question (within 10 years)?

STEP 4: Scoring. The research questions were built into a survey with scoring options according to the three criteria. All stakeholders – including practitioners, services providers, researchers/academics, activists, policy makers, donors, and others – working worldwide to address VAC and VAW were invited to score the research questions during June 2022. Online surveys were available in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. A total of 225 respondents participated but only 153 surveys were completed and included in the analysis.

STEP 5: Analysis and ranking. Data from the 153 fully completed scoring surveys were analysed and the research questions ranked according to a Research Priority Setting score – a score from 0-100, ranking the extent to which respondents believed that the research question best satisfies the priority setting criteria (applicability and impact, advancing the evidence base, answerability and feasibility).⁴

STEP 6: Validation workshop. A validation workshop with stakeholders at SVRI Forum 2022 will critically examine the results.

STEP 7: Publication and dissemination of findings and priorities for VAC-VAW Intersections research.

RESULTS / FINDINGS

Table 2:
Participants who completed the scoring survey

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS		% (n)
Gender	Female	82% (126)
	Male	15% (23)
	Non-binary	1% (2)
	Other	1% (2)
Language of Survey	English	85% (130)
	French	8% (12)
	Spanish	5% (8)
	Arabic	2% (3)
Role	Practitioner/Service Provider/Programme Manager	44% (68)
	Researcher/Academic/Scholar	41% (62)
	Activist	9% (13)
	Donor	2% (3)
	Policy Maker	1% (2)
	Other	3% (5)
Expertise	VAC-VAW Intersections	59% (90)
	VAC	18% (28)
	VAW or VAWG	21% (32)
	Other	2% (3)
Geographical Location	Sub-Saharan Africa	38% (58)
	North America	20% (31)
	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	16% (25)
	Latin America and the Caribbean	10% (15)
	South Asia	7% (11)
	East Asia and Pacific	5% (7)
	Middle East and North Africa	3% (4)
LMIC vs HIC	Based in Low- or Middle-Income Country	59% (90)
	Based in High Income Country	40% (61)
Marginalised Voices	LGBTQI+	9% (14)
	Racial or ethnic minority	14% (22)
	Indigenous people	10% (16)
	People with a disability	9% (14)

⁴ See: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1952202/> for more information on the methodology.

**Table 3:
The top 10
ranked
questions**

Overall Rank	Research Options	RPS	Domain
1	What are the essential elements of effective integrated programmes to address violence against women and violence against children?	94,94	2
2	How can effective parenting programs be adapted to effectively prevent multiple forms of VAC and VAW?	91,93	2
3	What are innovative and valid measures for VAW-VAC that have been developed and tested in low resource settings via participatory approaches?	91,79	3
4	How can we use the evidence of the VAC-VAW intersections to develop common language and a shared framework for effective coordination and collaboration?	91,61	4
5	What are the policies which address VAW and VAC together?	91,59	5
6	At global, regional, national, and local levels, what are the key barriers to effective collaboration across VAC and VAW sectors and what are the main opportunities for driving forward a joint agenda (e.g., investment in positive parenting programmes)?	91,27	4
7	How do effective VAW-VAC prevention interventions achieve change?	91,02	2
8	What forms of VAC and VAW do adolescents experience, including in the digital sphere?	90,55	1
9	How are adolescent girls adequately addressed in policies that address VAC, VAW and their intersections?	89,93	5
10	How do we evaluate primary prevention interventions of VAW and VAC?	89,68	3

The ranking emphasizes intervention research (Domain 2) rather than epidemiological research (Domain 1). It is also notable that the top ranked question scored 3 points more than the next question, suggesting that this question is a particularly high priority for the field.

NEXT STEPS

Further analyses are underway, including disaggregating results to understand differences and similarities in priorities identified by different groups of participants (e.g., based on field of expertise, geographic location, etc.). We will be disseminating and discussing these findings in various ways, including via an upcoming online launch event to share all the results – keep an eye on SVRI social media channels and SVRI Update for the announcements. Finally, as individual institutions, we will use these findings to steer our future work and invite others to do the same.

Email researchpriorities@svri.org
with any questions or comments.