Intersections between violence against children and violence against women: Global research priorities
Executive Summary

There is growing global recognition that violence against women and violence against children, and in particular intimate partner violence against women and violence against children by parents or caregivers, intersect in different ways (1,2). As global evidence of and interest in these intersections continue to grow, strategies are needed to enhance collaborations across these fields and thus ensure the best outcomes for both women and children. In response, the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), the UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)–United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)–UNICEF–World Health Organization (WHO)–World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP) hosted by WHO’s Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health, partnered to coordinate a global participatory process to identify research priorities that relate to the intersections between violence against children and violence against women.

Identifying research priorities is important as it will help to advance our understanding the intersections of violence against children and violence against women in a more structured way and help monitor progress to fill evidence gaps. Setting research priorities also contributes to building knowledge systematically and ensures that research efforts make the best use of limited resources. Furthermore, the research priorities will guide research efforts to: inform the implementation of the multi-agency RESPECT Women and INSPIRE frameworks; support the efforts of UNICEF to respond to the gender dimensions of violence against children and of WHO to strengthen work across violence against children and violence against children; guide the SVRI grant making strategy; and promote coherence in research and programming for the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

While priorities are important, the way in which these priorities are determined is also crucial, especially for ownership, contextualization and use. Inclusive, participatory research-setting, such as used in this work, serves to promote a diversity of voices – especially from low- and middle-income countries which have historically lacked representation – and minimize the risk of bias when establishing research priorities.

This report describes the process used to determine the priorities for research on the intersections between violence against children and violence against women, and the top 10 research questions identified.

Advisory Structures

The following bodies were established to steer and validate the process. They were instrumental in ensuring the process was inclusive and diverse.

• **Coordinating group.** This group included representatives from Sexual Violence Research Initiative, UNICEF Innocenti, WHO Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health including the Human Reproduction Programme and Research and Stellenbosch University.

• **Advisory group.** This group included invited representatives from around the world who worked in research and practice on violence against children, violence against women and their intersections.

• **Global stakeholder group.** Anyone working to tackle violence against children, violence against women, or the intersections between these forms of violence was welcome to sign up for this group and provide their input into the priority-setting process.
Method

Priorities were developed by following seven steps adapted from the Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI) method and informed by lessons learnt from the process of developing the Global shared research agenda on violence against women (3).

Step 1: Define domains. Two systematic reviews were undertaken to support this prioritization exercise and led to the identification, by the coordinating and advisory groups, of the following five overarching themes under which potential research questions were grouped.

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

Domain 2. Interventions and services focused on the intersections between violence against children and violence against women
Research on programmes, interventions, and services that prevent and/or respond to both violence against women and violence against children, including building an understanding of when and how interventions to prevent or respond to both violence against women and violence against children work and when coordinated or integrated violence against children and violence against women interventions are not recommended (and why).

Domain 3. Tools, methods and measurements for research on the intersections between violence against children and violence against women
Research to identify new and innovative ways to measure intersections of violence against women and violence against children; 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 violence against women and violence against children.

Domain 4. Coordination and collaboration across the sectors concerned with violence against women and violence against children
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 violence against children-violence against women intersections, how they influence governance and delivery of services (availability, mandates, funding, etc.), and what impacts they have.
Step 2: Generate research questions. Everyone involved in this process – global stakeholder group, advisory group and coordinating group – was invited to submit key questions they would like answered about violence against children–violence against women intersections for each of the five domains. This took place in March–April 2022 through 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 removed duplicates and combined questions when appropriate to reduce the number of questions to be scored. The groups aimed to reduce the questions to 10 per domain.

Step 3: Identify and define scoring criteria. The coordinating group reviewed criteria used in other research priority-setting processes – particularly in the Global shared research agenda for violence against women and girls (3) – to identify and define three criteria to be used in the scoring process. Each research question was scored on each criterion.

Applicability and impact. Will the knowledge from this research question influence understanding, practice or policy on violence against children–violence against women intersections?

Advancing the evidence base. Will the knowledge generated through this research question change our current understanding or approaches to researching violence against children–violence against women 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 generated in step 2 were organized into a survey with scoring options according to the three criteria in step 3. Stakeholders – including practitioners, service providers, researchers and academics, activists, policy-makers, donors and others – working worldwide to tackle violence against children and/or violence against women were invited to score the research questions in June 2022. Online surveys were available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and were widely disseminated both by social media and directly by email to specific colleagues in the field; because of the extremely low number of inputs on the Portuguese form for question submission, this language was not included in the scoring survey. 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 to 100) ranking the extent to which respondents believed that the research question best satisfied the priority-setting criteria (applicability and impact, advancing the evidence base, answerability and feasibility) (4).

Step 6: Validation workshop. A validation workshop with key stakeholders was held at the 2022 Forum of the Sexual Violence Research Initiative to critically examine and discuss the results.

Step 7: Publication and dissemination
The findings on and priorities for research on the violence against children–violence against women intersections are published and widely disseminated.

Results
Most participants in the scoring survey were females (82%) and most surveys (85%) were completed in English. Practitioners/service providers/programme managers made up 44% of the participants, followed by researchers/academics/scholars who made up 41%. More than half of the respondents (59%) had expertise in violence against children–violence against women intersections. The greatest proportion of the participants (39%) were from sub-Saharan Africa followed by North America (20%) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (16%), and most (59%) were based in low- and middle-income countries. Racial and ethnic minorities and indigenous people made up 22% of the respondents.
Based on the process of ranking (step 5) by the participants, the top 10 questions for research on the intersections between violence against children and violence against women were identified (Table 1).

Table 1. Top 10 ranked questions, by score and domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
<th>RESEARCH PRIORITY SCORE</th>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What are the essential elements of effective integrated programmes to address violence against women and violence against children?</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How can parenting programmes be adapted to effectively prevent multiple forms of violence against children and violence against women?</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What are innovative and valid measures for violence against women and violence against children that have been developed and tested in low-resource settings via participatory approaches?</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How can we use the evidence of the violence against children–violence against women intersections to develop a common language and a shared framework for effective coordination and collaboration?</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What are the policies which address violence against women and violence against children together?</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>At global, regional, national, and local levels, what are the key barriers to effective collaboration across violence against children and violence against women sectors and what are the main opportunities for driving forward a joint agenda (e.g., investment in positive parenting programmes)?</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How do effective violence against women–violence against children prevention interventions achieve change?</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What forms of violence against children and violence against women do adolescents experience, including in the digital sphere?</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>How are adolescent girls adequately addressed in policies that address violence against children, violence against women and their intersections?</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How do we evaluate primary prevention interventions of violence against women and violence against children?</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Way forward

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 research in the field of violence against children–violence against women intersections.

Through an inclusive and participatory process, we created opportunities for respondents from different geographical regions, multiple sectors and relevant fields to share their perspectives. The high level of participation of people from LMICs and both researchers and practitioners is encouraging.

We must now focus on building the evidence base in strategic ways that will ultimately increase effective services, interventions, and policies to make the world a safer place for women and children. Whatever the research that is undertaken in this field, ethics, safety, equity and gender inequality must be central to the approach.