The Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children

The Challenge
Confronted with growing global evidence on the incidence and prevalence of violence, government officials and policy makers worldwide are asking:

What drives violence affecting children and what can be done about it?

The Study
The study identifies and analyses how structural factors—the social, cultural, economic, legal, organizational, or policy responses—interact to affect everyday violence in children’s homes and communities. In turn, it will identify causal pathways to better inform national strategies for violence prevention. Unpacking the drivers of violence—focusing on girls and boys at different stages of the life course, from the very young to older adolescents—will contribute to comparative global and national evidence bases on why and how change happens.

The main outcome will be improved primary violence prevention interventions which are sensitive and responsive to variations by age and gender and that fully consider the needs of children and the adults who live with them.

The Approach
This action-oriented and analytical research explores both the drivers of violence and “what works” within different perspectives and contexts and among different programmatic approaches. Effective violence prevention efforts hinge on identifying both risk and protective factors and determining when in the course of a child’s development they emerge.

The UNICEF Office of Research—Innocenti in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh, UNICEF Country Offices and their national counterparts, and with the support of NY Head Quarters, promotes research linked to programme (re)-design, implementation and measurement—in effect, the development of more contextualized approaches to violence prevention.

The multi-country study combines research with programme practice to generate innovative platforms for global and national learning.
Stage 1  Secondary analysis of national data sets and a literature review, including an analysis of what works (and why) to situate current understandings of VaC and guide national discussions on priority determinants.

Stage 2  Mixed methods and social norms research on selected factors such as poverty, gender inequality and power relations help identify points for intervention yielding new theories of change and programme logic.

Stage 3  Development of new interventions (or the re-design of existing interventions), based on findings from Stages 1 & 2 will test theories of change. The study will use rigorous evaluation designs which can be adjusted along the way to respond to changing programmatic demands.

Countries share common research methodologies, adjusted to national contexts to generate different types of knowledge during all stages. Findings are continuously linked into existing programming and improved outcomes for children. This makes the research iterative, applied and programmatically-relevant from the start.

The study deploys a **Cyclical Model** that involves understanding the drivers of the issue (in this case, interpersonal violence), developing a theory (or multiple theories) of change, designing interventions (on the basis of these theories), and implementing and measuring their impact on the drivers of violence.

A typical project is often linear—with a beginning, middle and end; the research intervention cycle is circular. Rigorous evaluation is more likely to measure actual results for children and changes in the conditions that may contribute to the risk of violence. Programme outcomes occur at all stages of the cycle so that findings can inform practice and policy on a continual basis in a positive and reinforcing feedback loop.