

ADVOCACY BRIEF

Kenya's Journey Towards Protecting Children: A Decade of Change (2010-2019)

JULY 2024

Introduction

Violence Against Children (VAC) is a global problem that negatively impacts not only the children who experience it but also society as a whole. Over the past decade, there has been an increasing international focus on identifying effective strategies and interventions to prevent VAC.

As part of these efforts, since 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in collaboration with various governments, has conducted the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) to measure the prevalence, nature, and consequences of physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children and youth. These surveys have provided high-quality, reliable evidence for governments to make informed decisions about resource allocation for developing, implementing, and evaluating violence prevention programs and child protection systems.

Milestones in Kenya's VAC eradication efforts

In 2010, Kenya demonstrated its commitment to eradicating VAC by becoming the third country globally to participate in the VACS. The findings from this survey were alarming, indicating that a significant proportion of children in Kenya had experienced violence. Among youth aged 18 to 24, approximately 76% of females and 80% of males reported experiencing violence at least once during childhood, with fewer than 10% receiving professional help

Following the 2010 survey, the Kenyan Government and its partners developed the National Response Plan (NRP) for VAC 2013-2018, which served as the primary framework for designing and implementing VAC programs



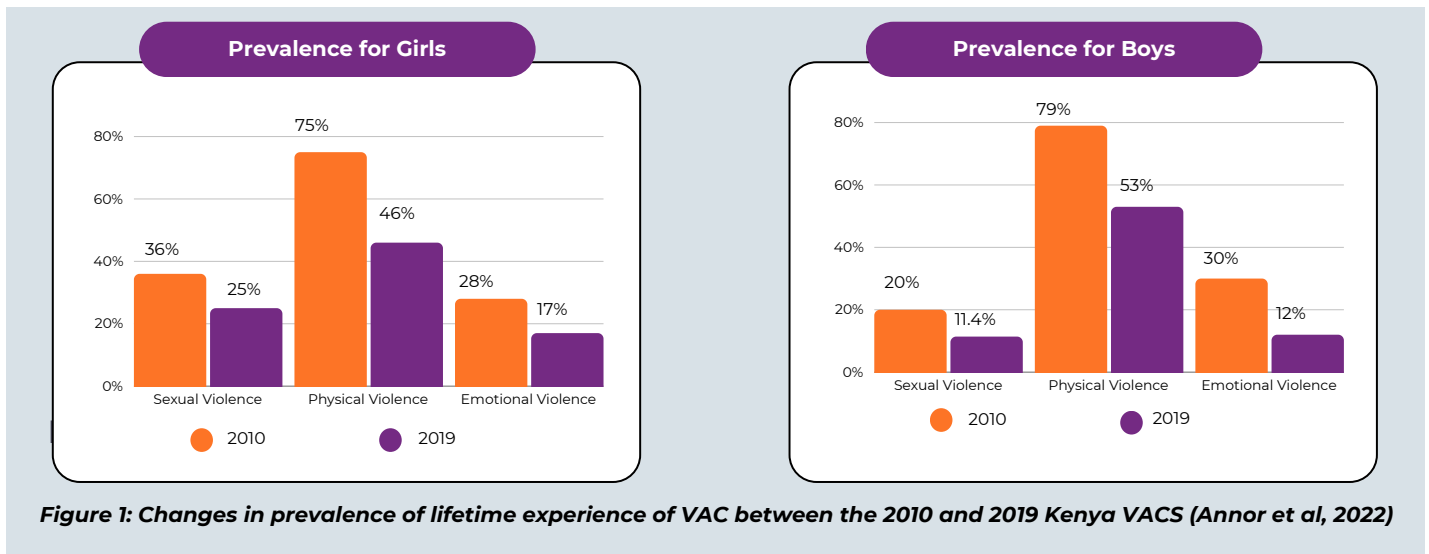
National Response Plan (NRP) for VAC 2013-2018 Pillars



In 2019, the Kenyan Government conducted a second VACS to gather updated data on the prevalence, nature, and consequences of physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children. The 2019 survey revealed that while VAC remained highly prevalent, there was a noticeable reduction in the proportion of children experiencing violence.

The comparative data from the 2010 and 2019 VACS provided valuable insights into the progress achieved over the years and highlighted areas requiring additional attention. Notable declines were observed in the prevalence of lifetime sexual, physical, and emotional violence between 2010 and 2019.

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The prevalence of lifetime sexual, physical, and emotional violence significantly declined in 2019 compared with 2010, including unwanted sexual touching, for both females and males. For example, **sexual violence decreased by 50% for females aged 18 to 24 and 66% for males** in the same age group. Physical violence saw reductions of more than 40% for females and over 25% for males aged 18 to 24 years. While the results indicated positive changes in the prevalence of VAC, the study also noted an increase in unwanted attempted sex among girls aged 13 to 17 years. This underscores the need for continuous and enhanced efforts to address VAC comprehensively.

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS INTO FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGES IN VAC

To further understand the factors contributing to these changes, the Kenyan Government, in collaboration with LVCT Health, Together for Girls and University Research Council, conducted a qualitative study engaging a wide range of stakeholders. This study aimed to gather insights to refine existing policies, interventions, and strategies for VAC prevention and response. Overall, the findings from this decade-long effort underscore the critical importance of a multifaceted approach in addressing VAC.

Study Characteristics

An exploratory qualitative study was conducted to understand the factors influencing changes in VAC in Kenya. The study included key informant interviews and a comprehensive desk review, covering both national and county levels. Primary data was collected from diverse stakeholders from Government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and donor agencies involved in VAC-related activities from 2010 to 2019 were included. A thorough desk review of 195 documents, including laws, policies, strategies, and peer-reviewed articles, provided secondary data. This approach aimed to gather comprehensive insights into the strategies and factors influencing changes in VAC prevalence in Kenya.

Engaging Young Voices: Capturing Children's Perspectives

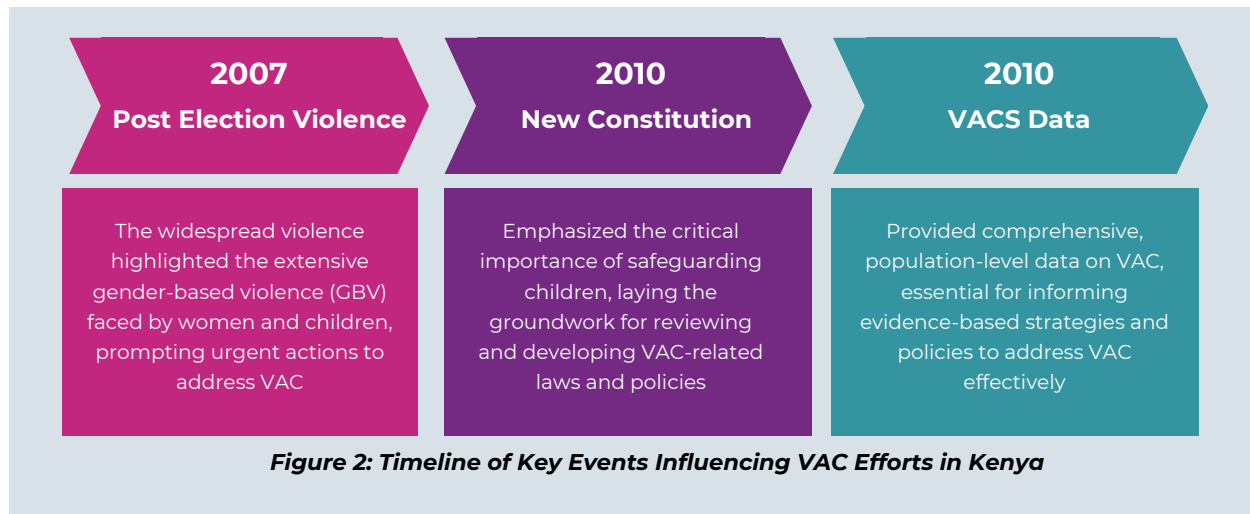
Adolescents aged 10 to 17 from various regions were engaged in discussions to capture their views on VAC. These sessions aimed to validate preliminary findings and understand their awareness of available support services, including those from teachers, police, healthcare professionals, and the community. This engagement ensured that the findings accurately reflected the experiences and perspectives of children.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Momentum in ending VAC leading up to 2010

The figure below highlights significant years and events that contributed to the increased commitment and strategic development in addressing VAC in Kenya.



Participants' Perception of Factors Leading to the Decline of VAC

The study highlighted that a combination of strategic interventions and comprehensive measures contributed to the significant decline in violence against children (VAC) in Kenya between 2010 and 2019. Key stakeholders, including government officials, NGOs, community leaders, and children themselves, provided insights into the factors they believe were instrumental in achieving this progress. These factors include;

- Government Leadership, Governance, and Multisectoral Collaboration:** Strong government commitment and leadership were crucial in creating and implementing comprehensive strategies to combat VAC. The establishment of coordination mechanisms and partnerships among different sectors enhanced the effectiveness of these strategies. There is a need for increased domestic funding and integration with other health initiatives to ensure sustainable VAC services.
- Strengthened VAC Legal and Policy Frameworks:** The enactment of the 2010 Constitution was a pivotal milestone, explicitly including provisions for child protection. This led to the review and establishment of various laws and policies related to VAC, such as the Children's Act of 2001 and its subsequent amendments, and the 2010 National Children's Policy. Despite significant legal advancements, challenges in enforcement and practical application remain.
- System Strengthening for VAC Prevention Programs:** Investments in system strengthening, including enhancing human resource capacities, refining data collection systems, and integrating VAC services into other health programs, were significant. These efforts ensured the sustained delivery of VAC services even with fluctuating external funding. Insufficient staff and training programs focused on general GBV rather than specific VAC needs.
- Enhanced Coordination and Collaboration Structures:** The establishment of robust coordination mechanisms among stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and community organisations, facilitated the effective implementation of VAC interventions. These structures enabled a cohesive response to VAC across different sectors
- Research and Evidence-Based Interventions:** Increased focus on researching VAC prevention interventions led to a solid body of evidence supporting their effectiveness. Interventions such as community mobilization and education programs were recognized for their significant impact
- Expansion of VAC Prevention Services:** Various community awareness and mobilisation efforts were recognised as key factors. Continuous sensitisation within communities, coupled with media campaigns, increased public awareness about VAC and the importance of addressing it. Efforts to enhance school enrollment and retention also played a significant role in creating safer environments for children
- Economic Support and Household Stability:** Government-led cash transfer programs enhanced household financial stability, reducing economic stressors that often contribute to VAC. These programs played a significant role in mitigating the impact of poverty on children's vulnerability to violence
- Community Awareness and Mobilization:** Efforts to create awareness and mobilise communities were critical in promoting child protection. Initiatives aimed at sensitising community members about the various forms of VAC and the importance of addressing them effectively reduced VAC incidences
- Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Strengthening VAC data collection and reporting systems provided valuable insights into the prevalence and characteristics of VAC. The availability of reliable data was essential for developing targeted interventions and informed policy decisions
- Meaningful Child Participation:** The introduction of child participation guidelines and initiatives such as Children's Assemblies and rights clubs in schools empowered children to actively participate in VAC prevention efforts. Ensuring substantial contributions from children and fair representation in participation frameworks remains a challenge.

CALL TO ACTION

Kenya has made significant progress in protecting children from violence, but the journey is not yet complete. To sustain and build on these achievements, we call on all stakeholders to take decisive actions.

Enhancing financial investments

- Increase domestic funding and collaborate with the private sector
- Integrate VAC programs with initiatives in HIV, SRHR, parenting, education, and violence against women (VAW) to create a comprehensive approach.
- Ensure core and multi-year funding for sustainable change

Improving service provider capacities

- Increase the number of staff dedicated to VAC services and provide specialized VAC training across sectors
- Training should cover foundational concepts of VAC and focus on prevention programming
- Encourage cross-sectoral collaboration to enhance service delivery

Enforcing VAC laws and policies

- Rigorous enforcement and integration of laws and policies into local frameworks.
- Regular revision of obsolete guidelines and updated training for service providers
- Establish accountability mechanisms at the county level

Genuine child participation

- Ensure genuine child participation in policy formulation and program design
- Establish direct communication channels with children and robust feedback mechanisms
- Dedicated officials and accessible online platforms should be promoted to facilitate child participation



Evaluating and scaling up effective interventions

- Conduct formal evaluations of VAC prevention and response interventions
- Scale up effective interventions to benefit a wider population

Adopting programs for adolescent girls:

- Design VAC prevention programs that consider the distinct needs of adolescent girls
- Invest in girls' programming models and initiatives like school re-entry programs

Enhancing data collection systems

- Conduct formal evaluations of VAC prevention and response interventions
- Develop a comprehensive solution to aggregate high-level data for national VAC prevention. [ANI] [ANI] You may advise the best way to present this information here, keep the icons and the key

KEY  Government

 Private Sector

 CSO's/ NGOs

Conclusion

Kenya has made remarkable progress in the fight against violence against children (VAC) over the past decade. The collective efforts of government leadership, enhanced legal frameworks, robust community mobilisation, meaningful child participation, and significant economic support have created an environment conducive to reducing VAC. Persistent challenges in enforcing laws, inadequate service provider capacities, limited child participation, and the need for sustainable funding highlight the areas that require continuous attention and improvement. By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommended actions, Kenya can further protect its children from violence and ensure their well-being and safety.

The commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, community members, and children themselves, are crucial for sustaining the momentum and achieving lasting change. Together, we can create a safer and more secure environment for every child in Kenya.

Continued efforts and strategic collaborations are essential to build on these achievements and address the persistent challenges in protecting children from violence in Kenya

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