

#EndViolenceAgainstChildrenNigeria







Ending Violence Against Children in Nigeria



Priority Actions

A multi-sectoral response to the 2014 Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey

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A multi-sectoral response to the 2014
Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey

US CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)



unicef 

The findings cited in this document are drawn from “National Population Commission of Nigeria, UNICEF Nigeria, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey: Findings from a National Survey, 2014. Abuja, Nigeria: UNICEF, 2015”.

The findings and conclusions of this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the United Nations Children's Fund or the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Foreword

The Federal Government of Nigeria is committed to ending violence against children in all settings. The National Priority Agenda (NPA) for Vulnerable Children 2013-2020 sets as one of its six priorities that all children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.

In order to achieve this goal, it is essential that we understand the prevalence, manifestations, locations, perpetrators and impact of violence. Therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Population Commission carried out the first comprehensive and nationally representative Survey on Violence against Children (VACS) in 2014, covering every State in Nigeria. The survey was supported technically and financially by UNICEF Nigeria, technically by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and financially by the US President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), with additional financial support from the European Union.

This groundbreaking research provides rich but alarming data. It reveals that prevalence of physical, sexual and emotional violence is high in Nigeria. Most children maintain silence on what they are experience and few children ever get the help they need to recover. Violence against children negatively impacts on mental and physical health in both childhood and adulthood and perpetuates the cycle of violence, with victims more likely to become perpetrators themselves.

Ending violence against children is not just an issue for the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. The Violence against Children Survey (VACS) is clear that this is an issue that cuts across all sectors at Federal, State and Local Government level. It is also clear that the government cannot effectively tackle violence against children on its own. It is therefore critical that civil society organisations, faith based organisations, religious and traditional leaders, media, and as well as communities, parents, families and caregivers and children themselves join together to prevent and respond to violence. The VACS findings are a call to action for all Nigerians to end violence against children.

Over the past two years, the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Violence against Children, convened and chaired by the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, has been energetically working together to contribute to the design and implementation of the findings, consider the impact of the findings of the VACS for Nigeria and develop priority responses across the sectors. I would like to extend my deep gratitude to all members of the TWG, which included representatives from key Ministries, Departments and Agencies - Education, Health, Justice, Social Welfare, Information, National Agency for the Control of AIDS, National Human Rights Commission, National Orientation Agency, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, National Emergency Management Agency, National Bureau of Statistics, Prisons, Police, Attorney General of the Federation, Judiciary, civil society, including legal aid providers, non-



governmental organisations and faith-based organisations, for their unwavering commitment, energy and enthusiasm. The TWG has developed a robust set of priorities that will guide our programming over the coming years. I would like to also thank UNICEF and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), through CDC and USAID, for their technical and financial support to the Technical Working Group.

This multi-stakeholder approach is critical to translating the priorities into action. I call on all sectors at Federal, State and Local Government level, as well as civil society, faith based organisations and the media to maintain the momentum created, to develop robust plans for the implementation of their priority actions and urgently invest the resources required to ensure that Nigerian children experience a childhood free from violence.

It's time to take action!

Together let's end violence against children.

Dr. Ezekiel O. Oyemomi, FCA, NPOM
Permanent Secretary

Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

List of Key Acronyms

CDC	United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CRA	Child's Rights Act
FBC	Faith Based Committees
FBO	Faith Based Organization
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Priority Agenda for Vulnerable Children in Nigeria 2013–2020
NPoPC	National Population Commission
PEPFAR	United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TWG	Technical Working Group on Violence Against Children
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Violence Against Children
VACS	Violence Against Children Survey
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. Overview of the National Survey on Violence Against Children and Key Findings

Led by the National Population Commission (NPoPC) of the Federal Government of Nigeria, Nigeria is the first country in West Africa to undertake a national survey on violence against children. The Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) continues the successful partnership between United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), as well as members of the Together for Girls Initiative to assist countries worldwide in conducting national surveys on violence against children. The Nigeria 2014 VACS follows and builds on the methodology of the surveys completed in Swaziland, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malawi.

NPoPC authored the Nigeria VACS report. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UNICEF provided technical support to NPoPC throughout the development and implementation of the survey.

The Nigeria VACS was commissioned between May and July 2014. The survey consisted of a cross-sectional household survey of females and males aged 13 to 24, designed to produce national-level estimates of experiences of violence.

What is Violence against Children?

For the purpose of the Nigeria 2014 VACS:

Emotional violence was defined as being ridiculed or put down by a parent, adult caregiver or adult relative, being told by them they were unloved or did not deserve to be loved, or that they wished they were dead or had never been born.

Physical violence was defined as physical acts of violence such as punching (hitting with a fist), kicking, whipping, beating with an object, choking, smothering, trying to drown, burning intentionally, or using or threatening to use a gun, knife or other weapon, regardless of whether or not it resulted in obvious physical or mental injury. It is not focused on acts of discipline, although many of those perpetrating the violence may be doing so in the name of 'discipline'.

Sexual violence was used to describe all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation. This encompasses a range of acts, including unwanted completed sex acts (i.e., rape), attempted non-consensual sex acts, abusive sexual contact (i.e., unwanted touching), and pressured sex (such as through threats or tricks), by any person regardless of their relationship to the child experiencing the violence, in any setting. While some of the analyses focused on acts that may be narrowly defined as 'sexual abuse', the Summary Report used the broad term 'sexual violence' throughout.

The Nigeria VACS found that:

There is a high prevalence of violence against children in Nigeria

Before the age of 18 years:

- Approximately 6 out of every 10 children experienced some form of violence
- Half of all children experienced physical violence
- One in four girls and one in ten boys experienced sexual violence
- One in six girls and one in five boys experienced emotional violence by a parent, caregiver, or adult relative

Violence is rarely an isolated incident

- The majority of children who experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence in childhood reported multiple incidents
- Girls were significantly more likely to experience both sexual violence and physical violence than other combinations of violence. Boys were significantly more likely to experience both physical and emotional violence, than other combinations of violence

Violence starts at a young age

Of children who experienced violence:

- Over half first experienced physical violence between the ages of 6 and 11. Approximately 1 in 10 children's first experience is under the age of 5
- A third of girls and nearly 1 in 6 boys experienced their first incident of sexual violence between 14 and 15, while almost a third of boys and approximately 1 in 5 girls experienced their first incident of sexual violence at 13 years and younger
- Approximately half of children first experienced emotional violence before the age of 12

Perpetrators are overwhelmingly people whom children know

- A parent or adult relative was the most common perpetrator of physical violence in childhood
- Amongst adults in the neighborhood who perpetrate physical violence, male teachers were the most frequent perpetrators of the first incident of physical violence
- Girls' first experience of sexual violence was most commonly by a romantic partner, followed by a friend, neighbor, classmate and stranger. Boys' first experience of sexual violence was most commonly by a classmate or a neighbor
- Children were most likely to experience sexual violence in the perpetrator's home, followed by their own home, at school, at someone else's home and on a road
- Amongst adult caregiver or relative perpetrators of emotional violence, parents/step parents, followed by uncles/aunts, were the most common perpetrators of first incident of emotional violence

Children are not disclosing violence, seeking or receiving services

- Less than half of all respondents who experienced physical violence told someone about it. Respondents who experienced sexual violence had even lower rates of disclosure

- Children who told someone were much more likely to tell a friend or relative than a service provider or authority figure
- Children had a low awareness of people or services from which they can seek help. Boys have a significantly higher awareness than girls of where to seek help
- Of those who experienced sexual or physical violence, no more than 6% sought help and less than 5% receive help

Violence has serious impacts on girls' and boys' lives and future

Compared to persons who have never experienced childhood violence:

- Physical violence is associated with higher rates of mental distress, thoughts of suicide, and symptoms or diagnosis of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) among females and with mental distress, thoughts of suicide, and substance use among males.
- Sexual violence is associated with higher risk for symptoms or diagnosis of sexually transmitted infections, mental distress and thoughts of suicide among females and with mental distress among males. 15% of females reported getting pregnant as a result of unwanted completed sex.
- Emotional violence is associated with higher levels of mental distress and thoughts of suicide amongst females and higher levels of mental distress and drinking amongst males.

2. Implications for Prevention and Response Strategies and Programming

Effective programming to prevent and respond to violence against children must be rooted in robust data and evidence. The Nigeria VACS 2014 represents an important step – for the first time Nigeria has comprehensive information on the prevalence, characteristics, location, perpetrators and impact of violence against children, providing findings that are critical for strategy development and programming for Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), NGOs, Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and development partners in Nigeria, including that:

- Violence against children is a significant problem in Nigeria affecting millions of children every year
- Children start experiencing violence at a young age
- Perpetrators of violence against children are overwhelmingly people that children know
- Children are also perpetrators of violence against children
- Violence most commonly happens where children should be safe – in their own homes, in neighbours' homes, in school and to and from school
- Children are not speaking out about what is happening to them
- Children do not know where to go for help and even when they know, they do not try to access help. When they do try to access help, they do not always receive support services. This means that children are not receiving the support they need to recover

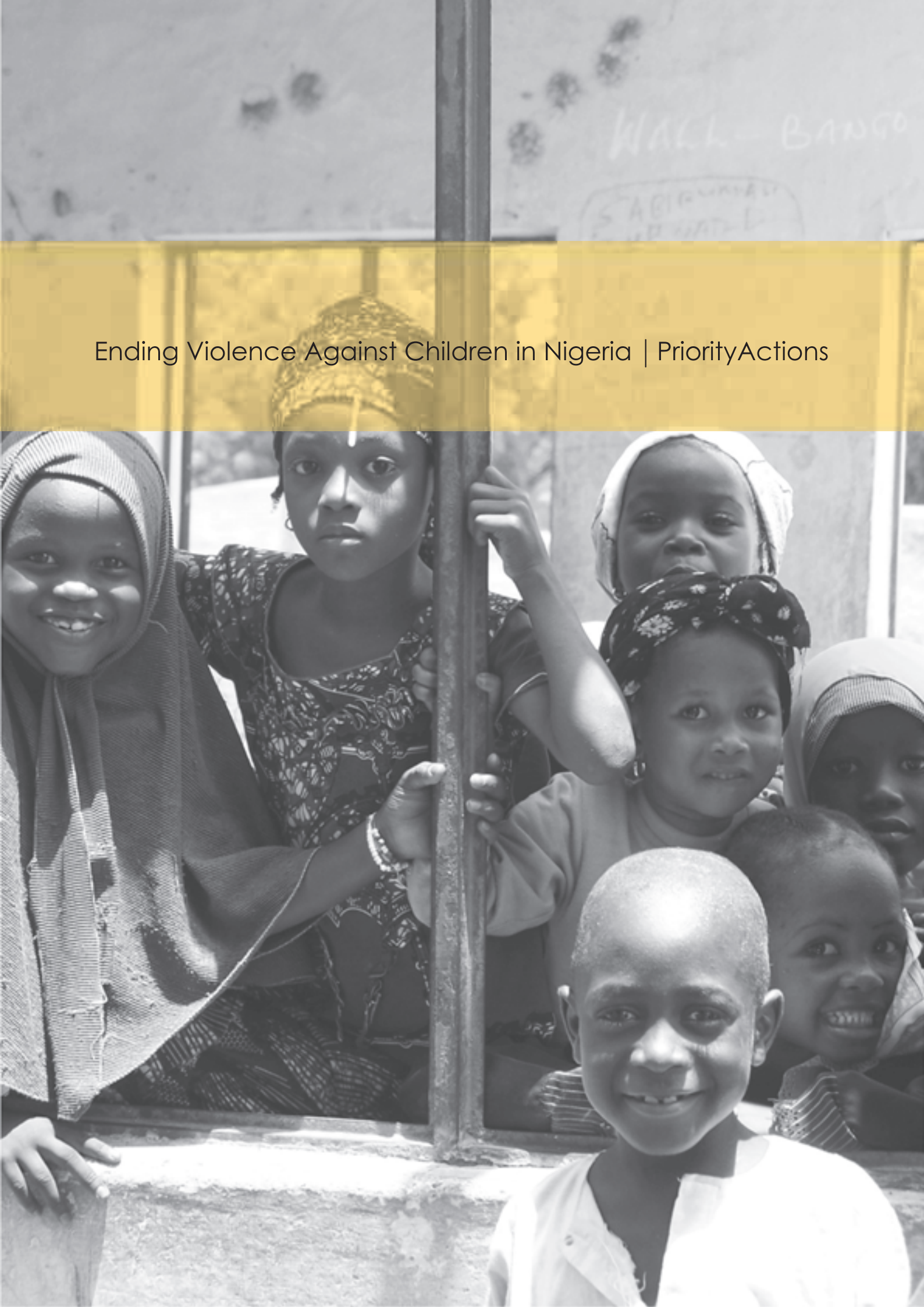
- The fact that children are not reporting violence, also means that perpetrators can continue committing acts of violence
- The fact that most children who keep silent do so because they do not think what they experienced is problematic suggests a normalization of violence and low awareness of the harm that can be caused by violence, including the emotional and psychological impact. The fact that children fear that they will get into trouble or bring shame on themselves or their families suggests that social pressures and social norms are hampering children getting the help that they need
- Violence is not just a child protection issue. Violence causes children to miss school. Violence is also linked to poorer mental and physical health outcomes for girls and boys
- Experiencing childhood in violence makes it more likely that s/he will become a perpetrator of violence in adulthood.
- Girls and boys experiences of violence are different and prevention and response programming must take this into account

The Impact of VAC on Nigeria's Sustainable Development

Violence against children is not 'just' a child protection or child rights issue and a moral imperative. Failure to invest in tackling violence against children leads to substantial social and economic losses (estimated at 2-8% of Gross Domestic Product). There is also a growing evidence base to demonstrate that preventing violence can promote economic growth.

For the first time, in 2013, the prevention of and effective response to violence against children was linked to the sustainable development of Nigeria as a nation: "All children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect" is one of the six commitments of the National Priority Agenda for Vulnerable Children 2013–2020 (NPA). These six core commitments of Nigeria's government will, if fulfilled, contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives of Nigeria's Vision 20:2020. This elevated the importance of tackling violence against children, recognizing that reducing children's vulnerability to violence, and thereby improving their wellbeing, will positively and directly impact Nigeria's economic and social well-being and development.

Such a recognition by Nigeria is timely – the elimination of all forms of violence against children forms a key target of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, to be adopted at the Summit at the United Nations in New York in September 2015.



Ending Violence Against Children in Nigeria | PriorityActions

3. It's Time to Take Action – Priority Actions for Nigeria

No one Ministry or organization can effectively tackle violence against children on their own. The VACS findings highlight the urgent need to take a multi-agency and multi-sectoral approach to prevent and respond to violence against children in Nigeria. The findings are a call to action not just for the Federal and State Government, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) but also for NGOs, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), media, communities, parents/caregivers, families, and children.

Supported by funding from UNICEF and PEPFAR, through USAID and CDC, and based on the findings of the Nigeria VACS, priority actions were developed through a consultative and participatory approach by the Technical Working Group on Violence Against Children (TWG). The TWG was convened and chaired by the Federal Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Development. The TWG comprised government representatives from key MDAs – National Population Commission, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information, National Orientation Agency, National Prisons Service, Nigeria Police Force, Judiciary, National Agency for the Control of AIDS, National Agency for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons, National Emergency Management Agency, National Bureau of Statistics, and National Human Rights Commission. The TWG was also comprised of representatives from civil society, including over 20 legal aid providers, NGOs and FBOs, as well as actors from non traditional protection sectors – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Polio to highlight the important role that they can play in strengthening prevention initiatives and response mechanisms. A consultation workshop was also held with State level participants from State Ministries responsible for child protection and NGOs, representing 19 States.

Over the course of a year (from September 2014 to August 2015), the TWG considered how violence could be prevented, how the factors that inhibit children from speaking out could be addressed and how barriers to children accessing quality response services could be overcome.

The TWG developed a comprehensive, holistic, and multi-sectoral response, which focused on:

- adopting and implementing laws and policies that prevent and respond to violence;
- enhancing and scaling up efforts to prevent violence through:
 - o creating a protective environment for children;
 - o changing perceptions of violence;
 - o empowering children and young people;
- enhancing the response to violence through:
 - o encouraging children to speak out and enhancing access to services;
 - o improving availability and quality of services and enhancing the capacity of professionals working with children;
 - o strengthening efforts to hold perpetrators accountable;
- increasing investment in child protection;
- strengthening research, monitoring and evaluation on violence against children,

identifying the priorities for each Ministry/Sector and for civil society and religious groups.

The priority actions recognize that significant steps have already been taken by many sectors and in many States in Nigeria to strengthen prevention and response mechanism, but these efforts need to be enhanced and scaled up throughout Nigeria – in every State, Local Government Area, Ward and community. These priority actions are also designed to provide a framework for States to develop their own priority actions based on their State specific context.

3.1 Implementing Laws and Policies to Prevent and Respond to Violence

It is essential that Federal and State laws clearly prohibit all forms of violence against children and explicitly identify the bodies mandated to prevent and respond to violence. Adopting, implementing and enforcing laws that protect children from all forms of violence sends a strong message to society that violence is not acceptable.

The Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003 was a significant step in the protection of children from violence. The CRA provides the basis for a comprehensive child protection system to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. However, not all States have domesticated the CRA and there are significant gaps between law and practice in States which have domesticated the CRA. The adoption of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP) 2015 was also a significant step forward – explicitly prohibiting female genital mutilation and cutting and defining child marriage of under-18s as an act of violence.

Policies need to articulate the goals for ending violence against children and the steps for implementation, including the establishment of an effective children protection system. The NPA set as one of its six priority agendas – “All children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect”. The development of the federal implementation plan for Commitment 2 of the NPA will pull together key plans, policies, and interventions that are necessary to create a robust national policy and regulatory framework for child protection. The priority actions identified by sectors in this document is the basis for the development of this plan. This will enable all government and civil society stakeholders to clearly identify their responsibilities and contributions to the comprehensive approach. It also serves as a guiding framework for States to develop their own multi-sectoral action plans for vulnerable children under their State Priority Agendas.

Priorities for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Spearhead the development of a multi-sectoral implementation plan for Commitment 2 of the NPA to ensure that “All children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect” and advocate for the adoption of State level plans of action
- Advocate for the passage and implementation of the CRA in all states
- Advocate for the passage of the Social Welfare Professionalization Bill, creating a regulatory body for social welfare and the para-social welfare workforce

- Develop a comprehensive Social Welfare Policy that clearly articulates the long term vision of establishing an effective child protection system

Priorities for the Ministry of Education

- Develop a National Policy on violence-free basic education, including instituting a mandatory reporting and referral mechanism
- Review the 2005 Teachers Code of Conduct to ensure it contains specific articles related to children's protection and ensure all teachers are trained and aware of sanctions on non-adherence to the Code of Conduct

Priorities for the Ministry of Health

- Incorporate violence against children of the national guideline for integration of Adolescent Youth Friendly Services in the Primary Health Care and scale-up implementation

Priorities for the Ministry of Justice

- In collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission, advocate for the passage and implementation of the CRA in all States
- Advocate for the passage and implementation of the VAPP and Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015 in all States
 - Domestication of the CRA, VAPP and Administration of Criminal Justice Act to be on the agenda of the next Body of Attorney General's meeting
- Amend relevant legislation to allow prosecutors and courts to continue criminal cases in the face of overwhelming evidence of the perpetration of violence against a child
- Amend the Penal Code/Criminal Code to strengthen the law on rape

Priorities for civil society

- Advocate for and participate in the development of a multi-sectoral implementation plan for Commitment 2 of the NPA to ensure that "All children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect" at Federal and State level
- Advocate for the effective implementation of the existing laws and policies on child protection
- Advocate for the development and effective implementation of the National Child Protection Policy
- Facilitate access to copies of the CRA/ State Child Rights Laws (CRL) to children and those with responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill their rights
- Support the production and translation of an abridged version of the CRA and facilitate distribution of copies to children and other relevant agencies
- Support the domestication of the National Child Protection Policy in all states, including the Federal Capital Territory
- Support and encourage civil-society organizations to develop or adapt a child-protection policy in their respective organizations

Priority for the media

- Advocate for the acceptance and domestication of the CRA by all States in Nigeria
- Advocate for the implementation of policies that promote the prevention of and effective response to VAC

3.2 Escalating Efforts to Prevent Violence

Creating a Protective Environment for Children

The importance of creating a protective environment for children at home, in schools, and in the community, in which children enjoy safe, stable and nurturing environments and relationships with their parents and caregivers is fundamental to the prevention of violence against children.

Priorities for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Review and popularize the National Caregivers' Training Manual to include children's protection from violence and to promote parenting-education programs
- Promote and establish community care centers that are standardized, regulated, and affordable for parents, using the National Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Care Centers in Nigeria
- Build the capacity of personnel at child service points to provide child friendly services

Priority for the Ministry of Health

- Develop a parent-child-communication training manual on sexuality and on the health implications of violence against children

Priorities for the Ministry of Education

- Promote sensitization and awareness of violence against children through School Based Management Committees, teachers, parents and the community at large
- Scale up the implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy and its programs in every school by using full licensing and inspection and advocate Early Childhood Care Development and Education for in all public schools

Priorities for the Justice Sector

- Provide legal assistance to children in detention
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, ensure children who are in need of care and protection are not prosecuted by the justice system and detained
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and the Nigerian Prison Service advocate for the upgrading of borstals and the establishment of under-18 detention centers in every State

Priorities for the National Human Rights Commission

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, undertake regular inspection visits to all places of detention

Priorities for civil society

- Strengthen community structures that promote child protection, including community-improvement teams, child-protection committees, and school-based management committees
- Strengthen the role of caregivers to prevent (and respond) to violence against children
- Advocate for and ensure that all States and/or Governors create budget lines and assign resources to the strengthening of the social-protection programs, in order to support vulnerable families in caring for and protecting their children

Priorities for faith-based organizations and religious leaders

- Encourage and support parents in bringing up their children, especially the care and protection of particularly vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities

Priorities for non traditional child protection sectors (e.g. WASH and polio sectors)

- Promote provision of access to water sources and sanitation facilities in safe areas for use by children that do not expose children to risk of sexual and physical violence

Changing Perceptions of Violence

Changing the attitudes and social norms that normalize and hide violence is vital in preventing violence from occurring in the first place. As revealed by the Nigeria VACS, differences in gender behaviors and roles can create unequal power relations between females and males. This increases the vulnerability of girls and young women to violence by males. At the same time, the stigma around violence against boys must be challenged so that they are also protected from violence and can seek and receive services and support if they are harmed.

The priorities set out below highlight the urgent need for widespread campaigns and targeted programs that both raise awareness on violence against children and challenge negative social norms. To have the greatest impact, the initiatives proposed by Ministries and non-government actors, should be coordinated.

Priorities for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Run a public awareness and sensitization campaigns on violence against children and gender based violence
- Actively engage men and boys, along with women and girls, to address negative

gender norms that encourage gender discrimination, violence against children, and domestic violence

Priority for the Ministry of Health

- Develop public health messages on violence against children and implement a public campaign to promote awareness-raising about the negative impact of violence on children's health, including through engagement with community leaders and existing community-owned resource persons

Priority for civil society

- Deliver sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns and programs on child rights, which engage school children and caregivers
- Support the production and dissemination of VAC information materials

Priorities for faith-based organizations and religious leaders

- Thoroughly examine the holy books and institute a code of conduct to change attitudes and social norms that promote or condone all forms of violence against children and women
- Employ the medium of worship services to instruct on actions to prevent violence
- Encourage the education of all segments of the membership on their perceptions of occurrences of the incidences of violence against children, using special days and special programs
- Place issues on VAC on the agenda of forthcoming conferences (and in all National and Regional Conferences) organized by religious communities and develop strategies for increasing knowledge and awareness on VAC
- Include strategies for ending VAC explored during these Conferences in statements made by high level religious leaders. These statements to be widely publicized in collaboration with print and electronic media
- Distribute VAC materials through these conferences
- Create programs in places of worship to show available films that raise awareness on VAC

Priorities for non traditional child protection sectors (e.g. WASH and polio sectors)

- Contribute to creating awareness on violence against children through community networks

Priorities for the media

- Increase coverage of VAC, including on radio, on TV and in print and electronic media
- Develop messages combating violence against children and engage the media to influence society, challenge harmful practices, encourage children to speak out and promote social norms that care for and protect children
- Disseminate key messages on VAC, including through social media, using hashtags

- that cut across all social media platforms
- Disseminate edutainment materials on VAC
- Support the Federal and State Information Centers to engage rural and urban communities on VAC
- Document campaigns of awareness-creation at community levels

Empowering Children and Young People

Giving children and adolescents the skills to cope and manage risks and challenges without the use of violence and to seek appropriate support when violence does occur is crucial for reducing violence at home, in schools and communities.

Priorities for the Ministry of Education

- Review the Family Life and Health Education curriculum and implement it in all primary and secondary schools focusing on children's life skills
- Implement gender-sensitive child participation activities in all primary and secondary schools, empowering children to know their rights – using school clubs and societies' activities

Priority for the National Human Rights Commission

- Run Human Rights Clubs in schools

Priorities for civil society

- Build capacity on life skills for both in and out of school adolescents
- Mainstream life-skills education as co-curriculum activity at all levels (schools, communities, and religious/social institutions)

3.3 Enhancing the Response to Violence

The Nigeria VACS revealed that children were reluctant to disclose experiences of violence, had low awareness of where to go for help, had low rates of reporting violence, and received a poor response from service providers. This resulting in children never receiving the help that they need to recover and perpetrators remaining free to continue abusing children.

Encouraging Children to Speak Out and Enhancing Access to Services

Encouraging children to seek high-quality professional support and report incidents of violence helps them to better cope with and resolve experiences of violence.

Priority for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Complete the mapping of child-protection services in Nigeria and promote awareness-raising of available child protection services to children, families, and communities

Priority for the Ministry of Education

- Introduce and strengthen Guidance and Counseling Units in all primary and secondary schools to support children on issues related to violence and increase awareness of available support services

Priorities for the Ministry of Health

- Strengthen the implementation of school health programs and services, in order to address issues of violence against children
- Integrate free-of-charge violence-against-children-related health services (e.g., counseling, post-rape care) for victims under the Primary Health Care component of the National Health Insurance Scheme
- Establish One Stop Centers for effective VAC (and gender based violence) service provision and case management in hospitals and health facilities
- Develop a protocol for accessing post-exposure preventive (PEP) treatment kits, especially during humanitarian situations

Priorities for the Justice Sector and Police

- Strengthen the emergency police line to enable cases to be reported and children to receive immediate assistance.
- Implement a “Speak Out!” communications campaign to encourage reporting to the Police
- Establish and strengthen complaints mechanisms for children in all forms of detention

Priority for the National Human Rights Commission

- Provide effective complaints and investigation mechanism for children who have experienced violence

Priorities for civil society

- Create and promote safe spaces (children's clubs, youth clubs, and child parliaments) for children in communities to speak out

- Develop and implement strategies to increase knowledge and awareness on violence-against-children services
- Work with the children's parliament to promote access to child-protection services
- Strengthen the capacity of caregivers and children to respond to violence against children
- Facilitate access to justice for children and the provision of legal aid
- Map Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) services and disseminate the OVC Service Providers' Directory to communities

Priorities for faith-based organizations and religious leaders

- Integrate proposal for establishing safe spaces in places of worship for children to report/speak out in forthcoming conferences organized by religious communities
- Faith Based Committees (FBCs) institute and strengthen gender-friendly counseling services to facilitate the reporting of abuse by children
- FBCs place boxes in boxes in places of worship to encourage children affected to make reports

Priorities for the media

- Develop messages to create awareness on available social-welfare and child-protection services
- Create awareness on existing hotlines and short codes to report violence against children
- Link victims, whose stories are covered in the media, with government and non-government support services

Improving Availability and Quality of Services and Enhancing the Capacity of Professionals Working with Children

To ensure services are child-friendly and that reports of violence can be acted upon effectively, it is essential that the work force, institutions, and networks charged with the responsibility of addressing violence against children have the capacity to fulfil their mandate. An increase in the numbers of social welfare officers and an enhancement of their skills will contribute to more effectively responding to violence against children. It is also necessary to build the capacity of other professionals who have contact with children, such as teachers, health workers, and caregivers, to ensure they have a basic knowledge and skills of child protection and are empowered to refer concerns they may have about a child.

Priorities for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Advocate for the implementation of the Social Welfare Workforce Strategy and for sufficient numbers of social-welfare officers and para-social welfare officers to be employed in all states

- Enhance working conditions for social welfare officers to attract and retain qualified personnel
- Strengthen social-welfare services focusing on: community care centers; child-care services parenting-education programs; provision of emergency and alternate care (e.g., foster care); reintegration; and psychosocial support as part of a minimum package of social-work services in Nigeria
- Strengthen the coordination role of state ministries responsible for social welfare and child development on violence against children including working with civil-society organizations and traditional leaders

Priorities for the Ministry of Health

- Establish One-Stop Centers for effective violence-against-children and gender-based service provision and case management in hospitals and health facilities
- Incorporate topics on violence against children into the curriculum of health-care workers and ensure identification of and response to violence against children is incorporated as part of routine health services
- Strengthen the mental-health system and psychosocial services to be able to respond to cases of violence against children
- Preposition HIV test kits and PEP kits in hospitals and health facilities, especially for during humanitarian situations

Priorities for the Ministry of Justice, Justice Sector and Police

- Equip frontline workers (including those assisting children through the justice sector/family-courts process) with the skills and capacity handle children's cases, through pre- and in-service training
- In collaboration with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, equip frontline workers with the skills and capacity handle cases of child trafficking
- Develop a working protocol (referral pathway) between police, justice, health and social welfare on handling children's cases
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, build the capacity of all detention-center personnel and establish linkages and referral mechanisms between detention centers, social welfare, and legal services for children in detention (Nigeria Prisons Service)
- Develop standard-operating procedures (SOPs) to establish clear reporting and referral protocols and for managing cases of violence against children and gender-based violence in the health sector

Priorities for civil society

- Build capacity in health workers so that they are better equipped to provide child-friendly services
- Advocate for the establishment of community-based psychosocial support for children who have experienced violence and their caregiver
- Provide technical support for the development and implementation of SOPs to address violence against children in conflict and post-conflict situations

- Strengthen the technical and organizational capacities of civil-society organizations, their networks, and non-state actors in integrated-case management process, monitoring, and reporting

Priorities for faith-based organizations and religious leaders

- Strengthen the capacity of Sunday school teachers/ulamas/imams to identify and respond to violence against children
- FBCs institute and strengthen gender-friendly counseling services in places of worship for children and adolescents who have experienced violence, and for their families and perpetrators

Priorities for non traditional child protection sectors (e.g. WASH and polio sectors)

- Train and sensitize structures with appropriate information on how to seek justice, redress, and services for children affected by violence
- Train environmental-health clubs in schools to build interpersonal skills on how to identify and report cases of violence
- Network with other structures to track, refer, and report incidences of violence against children in communities
- Mobilize communities and formal institutions to provide water and sanitation where cases of violence against children occur

Strengthening Efforts to Hold Perpetrators Accountable

To establish norms of acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a society and create safe and peaceful societies, it is necessary to enforce legislation on crime and violence. This should include strengthening institutional mechanisms and resources and increasing the human capacity needed to ensure enacted legislation protects people from violence and holds perpetrators to account.

Priority for the Ministry of Health

- Strengthen the capacity of health workers to collect forensic evidence for cases of sexual violence involving children and to give evidence in court cases

Priorities for the Nigeria Police Force

- Develop a harmonized vision for specialist units at police stations for handling children's cases and develop harmonized operating procedures for these units
- Develop and implement uniform in service training pack training for police officers staffing these specialist units
- Develop and implement a specialist training module on investigative techniques and forensics for children's cases, for the police academies

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and Nigerian Prison Service, appropriately discipline perpetrators of violence against children in detention

Priorities for the Ministry of Justice and the Justice Sector

- Establish a Child Rights Protection and Enforcement Unit in the Citizens' Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice
- Develop specialized training for prosecutors handling cases of violence against children and counsellors handling cases of violence against children
- Issue a practice direction to all courts to ensure privacy (e.g., maintaining a closed court room) for cases concerning violence against children
- Advocate for the establishment and operation of Family Courts in every State and monitor implementation
- Train Family Court magistrates and judges on handling children's cases
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, train Family Court Assessors
- Train judicial workers (i.e., court staff, registrars, bailiff, etc.) on the need to bring cases of violence against children to the immediate attention of the judicial officer so that such cases may be expedited
- Establish a data registry of perpetrators of violence, especially perpetrators of sexual violence against children

Priorities for civil society

- Advocate for the strengthening of specialized police units that respond to crimes against children, in order that to enhance service delivery
- Advocate for the establishment and functionality of the Family Courts and specialized child justice systems

Priorities for faith-based organizations and religious leaders

- Provide support to parents and caregivers of children who have been victims of violence to pursue justice in order to hold perpetrators accountable in the justice system

Priority for the media

- Actively seek out reported cases and issues of violence against children and appropriately follow up to promote justice and protection for children

Priority for non traditional child protection sectors (e.g. WASH and polio sectors)

- Mobilize communities to support and bring perpetrators to account through the justice system

3.4 Increasing Investment in Child Protection

Resource allocation for child protection is inadequate to meet the huge needs highlighted in the Nigeria VACS. The VACS provides an opportunity to advocate for additional resources to prevent and respond to violence against children. This needs to be backed up by a costing of the system, an analysis of current allocation and monitoring of allocation. It would also be useful to understand the cost of violence against children to Nigeria.

Priorities for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Collaborate with the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Commission to undertake a study on the cost of violence against children to Nigeria
- Collaborate with the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Commission to develop budgeting guidelines on child protection and monitor resource allocation
- Support States to undertake a Social Welfare Services Costing exercise to be able to accurately budget for child protection services

3.5 Improving Research, Monitoring and Evaluation on Violence against Children

The Nigeria VACS provides groundbreaking data on violence against children. However, there is no system in place for the continuous monitoring of the prevalence of and response to violence through State and Federal collection, collation and analysis of data from different sectors handling children's cases. Carrying out data collection and research is essential to planning and designing intervention strategies, to setting numerical and time-bound targets to monitor progress and end violence and to evaluate progress of programs and initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against children. There is also a need to delve deeper into the findings of the Nigeria VACS to understand the drivers of violence and barriers that prevent children speaking out and seeking support in order to strengthen programming.

Priorities for the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

- Commission a gender-focused study on the drivers of violence, factors fueling sexual violence against children, and barriers to accessing services in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory
- Strengthen the inter-agency and case-management system to improve coordination and delivery of child-protection services
- Develop the National OVC Management Information System to include child-protection indicators, and develop the Child Protection Management Information System (CPMIS)

Priority for the Nigeria Police Force

- Develop a police case-management system on violence against children and gender-based violence, linked with the CPMIS

Priorities for civil society

- Support the implementation and institutionalization of the CPMIS
- Develop a database on incidence and trends of child-protection concerns through the CPMIS
- Monitor the implementation of the CRA/CRL and National Child Protection Policy
- Monitor and review operation of the justice sector and family courts in handling children's cases
- Strengthen the capacity of Child Protection Networks to prevent, monitor/respond, report, and advocate for effective child-protection systems in all states

3.6 Modelling the Child Protection System

It is critical that the policy and regulatory framework established at Federal level is translated into action at State level. Currently, there is no clear vision as to how that can be accomplished at State level. To provide guidance and support to States and to demonstrate the impact of a child protection system which is implementing the components envisaged under the Child Rights Act, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development is spearheading a child protection modelling process in nine States - Benue, Cross River, Edo, Federal Capital Territory, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Lagos and Plateau, in partnership with the State Ministries responsible for child development and social welfare, with support from UNICEF, PEPFAR and the European Union. This process also involves the education, health, justice and non traditional child protection sectors, as well as civil society, FBOs and the media at State level.

The group of nine State and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, which comprise the Child Protection System Learning Group, was inaugurated in June 2015. Over the next two years, this group will collectively develop a harmonized vision and model for the child protection system, with agreed essential and desirable components. The purpose of this groundbreaking initiative is to produce minimum standards for child protection country wide and a standard set of tools and guidance to support the operationalization of the child protection model nationwide (in both States that have and have not domesticated the CRA). The purpose is not to insist the same approach is taken in each State, but to have an agreed core child protection system that can be adjusted for the realities of each State.

4. Year of Action to End Violence Against Children

The release of the Nigeria VACS findings provided a unique opportunity to mobilise Nigerians to take action. Consequently on 15th September 2015, His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, launched the Year of Action to End Violence Against Children. This was not only an endorsement of the priority actions set out in this report, but also a call to action for all sectors of society.

In response, MDAs, NGOs, FBOs and the media committed to implement the identified priority actions over the next 12 months. States were also called on to develop their own specific action plans to address violence against children.

While one year is not enough to end violence, for the first time in Nigeria this campaign brings together all sectors of society in a concerted and intensive effort to prevent and effectively respond to violence against children. After one year, key government and non government stakeholders will come together to review the progress made and identify the next steps required on the long road to ending violence against children.



ⁱPerezniето, P., Montes, A., Routier, S., and Langston, L., The costs and economic impact of violence against children, Overseas Development Institute 2014

ⁱⁱWorld Health Organization. (2014). Global status report on violence prevention 2014. Geneva: WHO, p. 17.

ⁱⁱⁱWorld Health Organization. (2014). Global status report on violence prevention 2014. Geneva: WHO, p. ix.