

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND YOUTH SURVEYS (VACS)



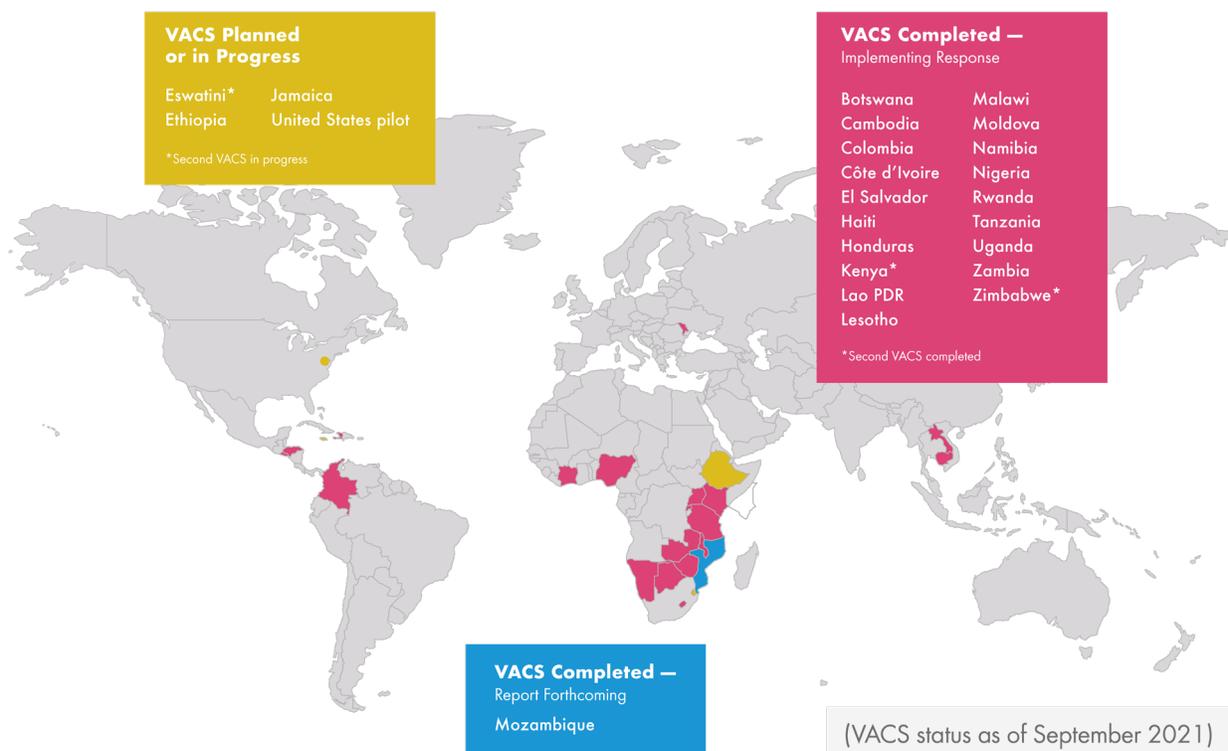
## WHAT ARE THE VACS?

The Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS), led by national governments with technical assistance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as part of the Together for Girls (TfG) partnership, are nationally representative population-based household surveys of 13- to 24-year-old males and females.

The VACS are designed to measure the prevalence, past 12-month incidence and circumstances surrounding sexual,

physical and emotional violence in childhood, adolescence (before age 18) and young adulthood (ages 18 to 24 years). The surveys also identify risk factors, protective factors and consequences of violence.

VACS results are published in national reports, used in the development of national action plans, and guide effective, evidence-based programs and policies.



## WHO IMPLEMENTS THE VACS?

At the country level, the implementation of the VACS is led by the national government, with CDC providing technical support. This approach embeds the VACS in national structures in order to enable ownership, build capacity and lay the groundwork for a comprehensive response once the data become available.

Depending on the country, TfG partners (in addition to CDC) may play a critical role. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are invaluable in supporting the multi-sector task force to coordinate the surveys and response efforts, ensuring wide participation and facilitating the transition to

action when the surveys are completed. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Government of Canada and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) make critical financial and technical contributions to implementing the VACS.

Other partners, such as UN Women, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) provide important technical contributions to the VACS and to the ensuing response at the country level. They also facilitate wide dissemination of the data at the regional and global level.

*The findings and conclusions in this document are those of authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

## WHAT INFORMATION DO THE VACS PROVIDE?

The VACS provide strong, reliable evidence on sexual, physical and emotional violence among children, adolescents and young adults. The questionnaire includes questions on the following survey topics:

- **Background (e.g. demographics, socioeconomic status, education)**
- **Gender attitudes related to violence and social norms**
- **Perception of safety**
- **Witnessing violence**
- **Violence victimization**
- **Violence perpetration**
- **Health risk behaviors—including HIV risk**
- **Health outcomes—including physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health outcomes (e.g. unintended pregnancy)**
- **Service-seeking and utilization after experiencing violence**

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR VACS IMPLEMENTATION?

**STUDY DESIGN:** The surveys include a randomly selected, representative subset of 13- to 24-year-olds, providing estimates of violence by age group, sex and other demographic factors. All data are collected through in-person interviews with trained interviewers.

**SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR PARTICIPANTS:** Due to the sensitive nature of the questions in the surveys, and possible strong emotional response or current risk, all countries develop a referral plan and resource list that allows interviewers to link participants to support and services.

**ETHICAL REVIEW:** The VACS adheres to globally established ethics and safety protocols—with typically two levels of ethics reviews: the U.S. CDC Institutional Review Board and the in-country ethics body.

**FIELDWORK DATA COLLECTION:** Data collection for the VACS takes approximately 4–6 weeks in each country. Male interviewers conduct interviews with male participants and female interviewers conduct interviews with female participants.

## HOW CAN VACS DATA BE ACCESSED?

Public access to the data can provide an opportunity for researchers to expand on the use and application of the data. Many of the datasets from the VACS are available for public use—usually one year after the launch of the report. Access to the public use datasets is coordinated through Together for Girls and made available with permission from the respective country governments. In addition, links to the full country reports are available at [togetherforgirls.org](http://togetherforgirls.org).

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VACS, VISIT:**  
[togetherforgirls.org](http://togetherforgirls.org)