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National Baseline Study on Violence against Children:  
Philippines

# 2015 National Survey Results EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Recommendations

RYAN



Council for  
the Welfare  
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in partnership with

unicef  for every child



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Philippines**

**2015 National Survey Results  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
Recommendations**

October 2016

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# Acknowledgment

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To our VAC partners (GOs, NGOs, academia), for being with us throughout the years of planning and preparation, and for making sure that all these efforts will be translated into action- for the well-being of the children, their families and communities in the Philippines.

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Thank you everyone. Let us join hands in ensuring the health and safety of the Filipino children. As Jose Rizal, our national hero said, they are the hope of our Fatherland (Motherland).

- National Steering Committee  
National Baseline Study on Violence against Children

# Recommendations

**T**hese recommendations are based on the results and discussion of the National Baseline Study on Violence against Children (NBS VAC). The aim is to present a general framework for the recommendations that will be given in-depth detail in the National Plan of Action for Violence against Children (NPA VAC). The recommendations are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals as it is the first time that universal goals specifically aimed to end violence against children. The Philippine government committed to the 2030 Development Agenda in September 2015. Together with the government's partners, it has worked to build awareness among stakeholders and engage them in the new agenda. It must be noted that the Government have existing programs that prevent and address violence against children. However, the scale and quality of implementation mostly have to be evaluated and enhanced to directly address the results of the NBS VAC. New interventions and programs will also be suggested and will be given detail in the NPA VAC.

## In line with the Sustainable Development Goals

"In line with Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights standards, the **Government of the Philippines is committed to ending all forms of violence against children**. The government is also committed to delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes ambitious targets for ending violence, as part of a broader vision of "a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation." (Stevens, 2016)

Three SDG targets address violence directly:

**Target 16.2:** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

**Target 5.2:** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.



**Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

For the first time ever, the global community has committed to aim for concrete targets that reduce violence. This calls for policy makers to include "violence prevention in all policies." (WHO, 2016) The government is also strongly committed to the delivery of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children 2016-2025. The plan includes priority actions for the next five years in the following areas: prevention; protection, response and support services; legal framework, data collection, co-ordination and monitoring and evaluation; and partnership." (Stevens, 2016)

Although there are three targets specific to preventing and addressing violence, other targets address the underlying causes of violence. In a policy brief by WHO on Scaling up Interpersonal Violence Prevention: How the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can Strengthen Policies, Strategies and Programmes (2016) it grouped common causes of violence at the levels of the individual, close relationships, the community, and society. This helped point out relevant SDGs and recommendations in prioritizing national violence prevention policies.

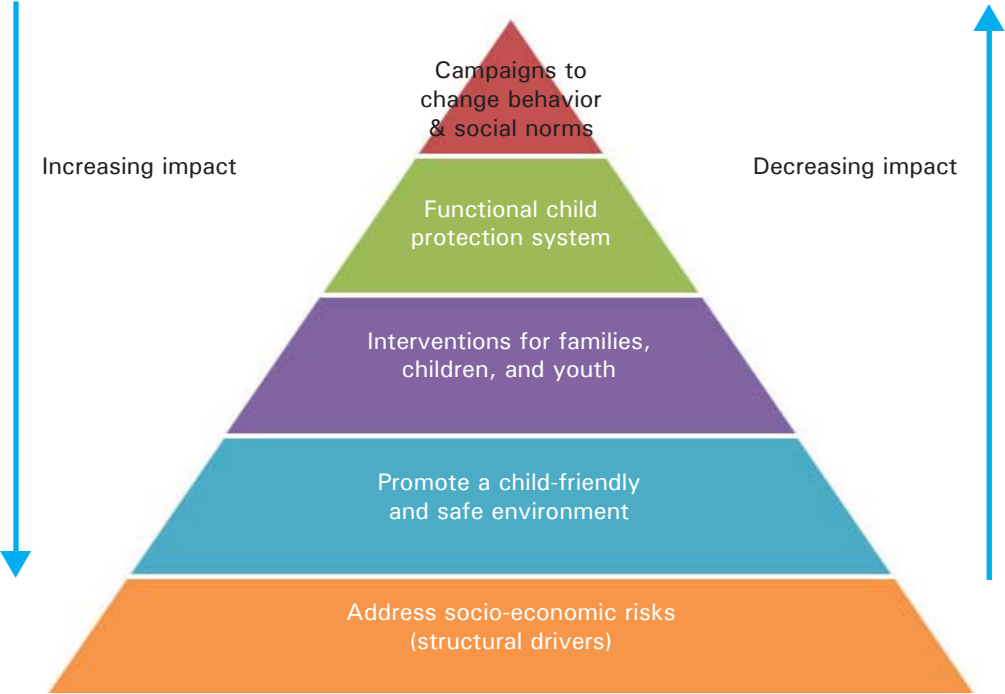


### The SDGs: Preventing and reducing VAC (WHO, 2014)

- Targets 1.1., 10.1., and 10.4: Reducing poverty and inequality, increasing social protection, and violence results to poverty reduction, increased social protection, and economic inequality which results to reduction affect interpersonal violence.
- Target 3.4 Promoting mental health and well-being – backed by research on the links between mental health and violence has focused on mental disorders as a risk factor for being a victim of violence, as a risk factor for being a perpetrator of violence – will contribute to preventing VAC.
- Target 3.5 Strengthening the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol prevents VAC as the SLR on VAC specifically noted alcohol abuse and drug use as risk factors.
- Target 4.2: Ensuring that all boys and girls have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education will result to preventing VAC as programmes are designed to improve the growth and development of young children, prevent the occurrence of risks, and ameliorate the negative effects of risk (Engle et al, 2011 as stated in WHO, 2016) Parenting programmes, and multicomponent ECD programmes are among those that have been shown to prevent violence. Reducing children’s exposure to violence and other stressful experiences is therefore important to ensuring healthy, non-violent development throughout childhood and across the lifespan.
- Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship and Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.
- Targets 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, and Target 5.c Adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls address inequalities that lead to women often being victims and men perpetrators of violence, and help sustain and condone such violence. Interventions that confront the entrenched beliefs and cultural norms from which gender inequalities develop, and that encourage gender mainstreaming in society, should therefore help to reduce gender-based violence and violence against women, as should policies and legislation that promote gender equality.
- Target 11.1 Ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrading slums will address a number of risk factors for most forms of interpersonal violence.
- Target 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all and Target 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels – both aims to identify the role of laws in regulating risk factors violence.

The discussion above underscores that national prevention programs and addressing VAC need to be multi-sectoral with all national agencies toeing the line in developing and implementing policies that contribute to reducing violence. To help guide in developing recommendations Frieden’s framework (2010) for public health action which is five-tier pyramid describing the impact of different types of public health interventions is revised.

Figure 1: Framework for Preventing and ending VAC



The following recommendations are classified into levels based on scope of impact it has on the population. The base which addresses socio-economic risk factors that are underlying causes of VAC will target the general population and as one goes up the pyramid levels, the interventions and programs target more specific groups of the population:

- Address socio-economic risks (structural drivers)  
 The SLR on VAC (2016) noted that a number of studies on violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children commonly identified economic stress or poverty as underlying causes of violence. However, prevention and intervention programs often fall short to implementing effective and appropriate programs that address poverty. This is because addressing socio-economic problems is anchored on national economic policies that are often not linked to violence prevention. The SDGs are linked such that aside from SDG 1 – No Poverty, the other related SDGs are: SDG 2- end hunger, food security and improved nutrition; SDG 3- good health and well-being; SDG 4 - quality education and SDG 8 is on achieving decent work and economic growth.
- Promote a safe environment  
 This level focuses on policy and program recommendations leading to a child-friendly and safe environment. This includes law enforcement; regulation of alcohol use and situational prevention strategies that makes for a safe as well as polices that protect children from corporal punishment, sexual harassment and other forms of abuse in schools, organizations and workplaces where children and youth frequent.
- Interventions for families, children, and youth  
 This level focuses on delivering universal or targeted services specifically designed for parents, children, youth, families and communities at specific points in the lifespan to



prevent violence from occurring. Programs need to be piloted, evaluated, and scaled-up with strong links between the formal and informal sector, national and local government, children and youth groups, NGOs, FBOs, POs, and other CSOs.

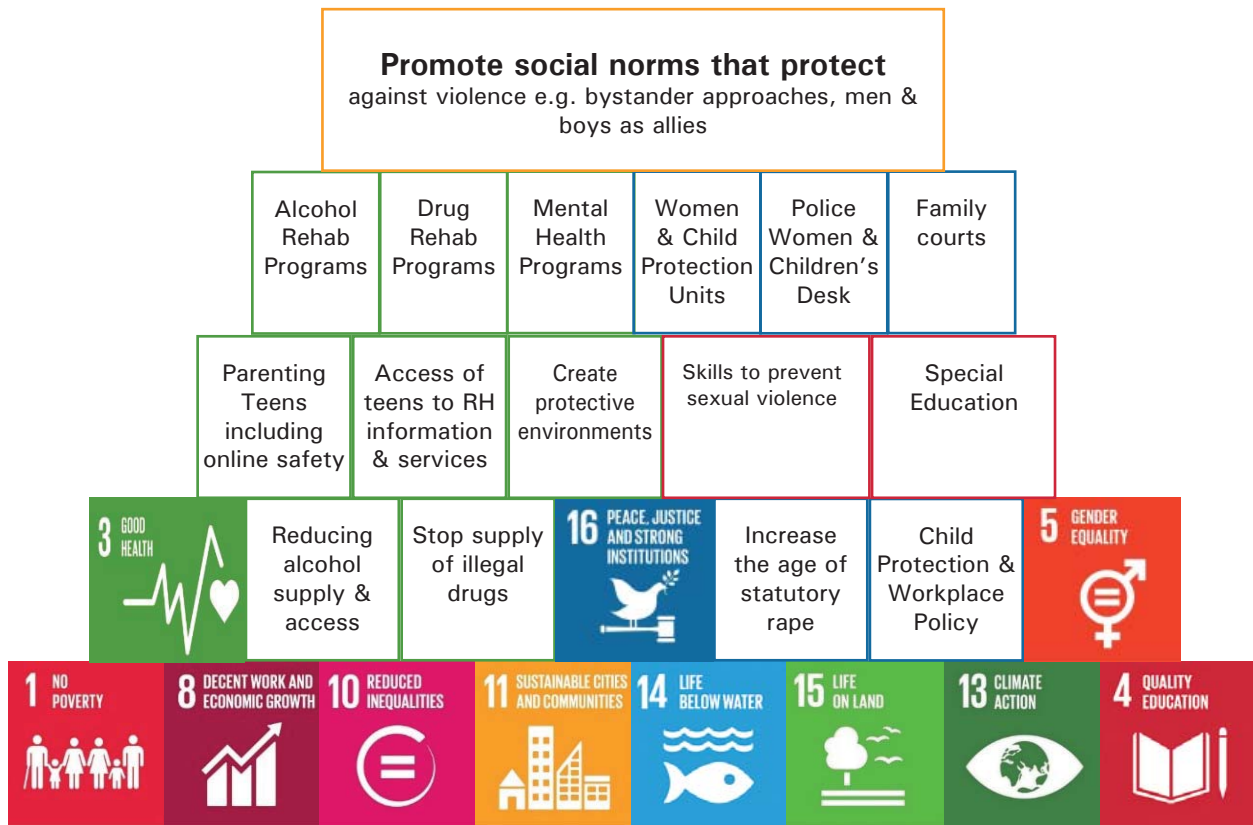
- **Functioning child protection system**  
There is a functioning child protection system in the Philippines but there are gaps in capacity and resources, limitations in scope, and challenges in sustainability. Recommendations for the system will be on this level.
- **Awareness raising that promotes non-violence and promotes non-violent behavior**  
This involves the development and monitoring the implementation of a purposive advocacy and mobilization national plan for VAC. The results of the NBS VACS point to looking at changing norms with regards to corporal punishment, masculinity, gender roles and individual and professional responsibility.

### Addressing and Preventing Child Physical and Sexual Violence

The following illustrates and discusses how the population impact framework is applied to addressing child physical and sexual maltreatment:



**Impact Pyramid for Interventions for Child Physical Violence**  
(Adaptation of Frieden's Health Impact Pyramid, 2010)



**Impact Pyramid for Interventions for Sexual Violence**

**Address socio-economic risks**

As shown above the base is on promoting programs in line with the SDGs that address structural risks such as addressing poverty, inequality, unemployment, frequent disasters and climate change, peace and order, and poor implementation of laws. While the direct connection to some of the SDGs may not be apparent immediately, the NBS VACS and the SLR points to the underlying causes of violence that the SDGs impact on. For example, more than 90 percent of the children and youth have experienced a major disaster where there is some evidence to show that violence increases three-fold after a disaster. Climate change leading to poor agricultural yield and less fish in the usual fishing grounds have led to migration to cities in the hope of finding jobs. Migration has been identified by the SLR as one of the drivers of physical, sexual and emotional violence against children. The Global Partnership to End VAC's report on the Philippines noted that the 4Ps or conditional cash transfer programme has demonstrated positive impacts on household economic security. DSWD clarified that while the program does not reduce poverty at the present time it has the potential to alleviate poverty in the future. It contributes to breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle. That is why health and education are included among the conditionalities for receipt of benefits and considered as investments in children. The 4Ps is only one strategy in helping to reduce poverty with a focus on protecting the developing child. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the government's independent economic development and planning agency, should be linked to national government agencies leading the efforts to reduce VAC so that economic policies have clear connections to reducing VAC

## Promote a safe environment

Three SDGs guide the recommendations at this level: SDG 3 on good health; SDG 16 on peace and justice, strong institutions; and SDG 5 on gender equality. The level on promoting a safe environment recommends policy and programs that aims to prevent the causes of violence such as:

- Reducing use and access to alcohol and illegal substances with DOH, law enforcement and LGUs. There are existing laws that prohibit the sale of alcohol without a permit issued by the local government. However, small sari-sari stores sell alcohol in communities, thus making them more accessible and prone to abusive use. Stricter monitoring is needed to be done. DoH has existing campaigns on preventing lifestyle diseases which includes discouraging alcohol abuse. However, this program needs to be enhanced with prevention of VAC since the Systematic Literature Review on Drivers of Violence affecting Children in the Philippines (2015) noted that alcohol use is a primary driver of violence in the home;
- For child physical maltreatment, promoting a law prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings is crucial with CWC taking the lead in coordinating efforts in lobbying and advocacy;
- For child sexual abuse, a law that increases the age of statutory rape is crucial. The lobbying and advocacy on this issue has strong support from CSOs. DSWD and CWC must express its support and take in lead; and
- Policies that promote family-friendly workplaces, child protection policies for all organizations, and gender equality. CWC Board has directed all member agencies<sup>1</sup> to develop and implement child protection policies. The Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry can require business and private corporations to have child protection policies ensuring greater scope and awareness of child protection.

## Interventions for families, children, and youth

This level focuses on delivering multi-sectoral services targeted to at-risk groups and individuals such as:

- Mainstreaming and strengthening VAC parenting and caregiver support and interventions in different sectors such as health, socio-economic programs, education, etc. The focus of parenting programs are often on early child and development care. DSWD has existing modules for parenting teens but the program needs to be evaluated and scaled up to reach more parents. Parenting programs must be complemented by:
  - o Home visitation programs where families in difficult circumstances will be guided through difficult situations where children become vulnerable to violence at home
  - o Teaching parents about child online protection. DepEd has “Cybersafe lesson plans” that need to be rolled out for children but parents need to be learn about new technology and how they can pro-actively protect their children;
  - o Relevant national agencies such as DSWD, DepEd, DoH, should evaluate programs that aim to provide support to parents and children and enhance these to explicitly include violence prevention.

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<sup>1</sup> The CWC board is chaired by Department of Social Welfare and Development and it is composed of the Department of Interior and Local Governance, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Justice, Department of Agriculture, the National Economic and Development Authority, the National Nutrition Council, Council for the Welfare of Children, three private individuals where one of them is a child/youth representative.

- Ensure access to ECCD services and programs. DepEd should ensure that both public and private programs must include parenting programs with parent support components, links to child protection services for the identification and referral of cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and services for children with disabilities;
- Scale up availability of Special Education classes in public schools as children with learning disabilities, behavioral and developmental problems are addressed. These children are at-risk of violence in the home as parents do not know how to address the needs of their children. Currently, there are very limited SPED classes especially in the provinces;
- Improve the capacities and encourage appropriate behavior and attitudes of services providers such as teachers, social workers, house parents, social welfare assistants, health professionals, law enforcers, lawyers, and judges to be able to respond to VAC cases from both boys and girls:
  - o Social workers need to enhance and improve case management skills in working with both boys, girls, and LGBT children who are victim/survivors of severe forms of violence;
  - o Local social welfare and development offices (LSWDOs) need to hire and capacitate more social welfare assistants to assist social workers in the provision of social services to their constituents. Social workers in LSWDOs are often confronted with heavy workloads since all social services fall under their supervision. They often do not have time for case management;
  - o Existing training courses for house parents on positive discipline need to be scaled up. Psychosocial support programs for house parents also need to be made available to help house parents manage stress and anger;
  - o Health professionals in government hospitals and regional health units (RHUs) are trained on identification, reporting, recoding and referral of cases of violence against children;
  - o Law enforcers should be trained or go through refresher courses on the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act in order for them to understand and appreciate the law; they should be trained on how to handle cases of violence against children especially on how to protect child victim/survivors from further harm and trauma that may be brought about by questioning and investigation; they must have regular gender sensitivity trainings in order to equip them with proper attitudes in handling severe cases of abuse where the victims are boys, girls, and LGBT;
  - o Family court judges and lawyers need training and refresher courses aimed to help them understand the dynamics of victimization and the evolving capacities of children vis-à-vis their capacity to participate in court processes. The continuing training courses could also aim to change beliefs and attitudes on gender stereotyping, victim-blaming, and further enhance insights on what is the best interest of the child.
- Improve knowledge and skills, modules and programs by strengthening the link between the academe and practitioners and involve professional associations this;

- Scale-up life skills programs for children and young people that includes personal safety, anger and stress management
  - o Implementation of the K to 12 program that will allow youth to be employable after completing senior high;
  - o Establish and mainstream structures and mechanisms for the participation of children and youth in developing and implementing anti-VAC policies and programs, research and advocacy, monitoring and evaluation at the local and national levels;
  - o Encourage children and youth participation through developing and organizing peer support groups such as mobilizing existing national youth group structures like the Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP) and the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK);
  - o In the prevention of sexual violence, increase the access of teens to RH information and services with DoH, the Commission on Population, and LGUs working together.

Programs need to be piloted, evaluated, and scaled-up with strong links between the formal and informal sector, national and local government, children and youth groups, NGOs, faith-based organizations, people's organizations, and other members of the civil society.

### **Functioning child protection system**

These are specific recommendations to address the needs and further protect the victim/survivors of severe violence:

- DOH should lead in the development of rehabilitation programs for alcohol and drug abuse as are risk factors for perpetration and at same time victims of violence turn to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism. There are current rehabilitation programs for substance abuse and addiction but these are few and expensive since most are offered by private hospitals and centers. The few public programs need to be evaluated and scaled up. These programs are also mainly for adults and not for children and youth;
- Mental health programs that specifically provide assistance to victim/survivors and even the rehabilitation of perpetrators should be more accessible. There are few existing programs in government national and regional hospitals and mental health professionals specializing on child victim/survivors are very even fewer and are often unavailable in provinces. Mental health programs should not only be available but should also be evidence-based;
- Increase the number of functional Women and Children Protection Units in government hospitals in all provinces, Women and Children Protection Desks and officers in police precincts, and Violence Against Women and their Children desks in every barangay with trained personnel;
- Increase the number of family courts, improve the capacities of the judges, and ensure that court processes involving VAC and other CP issues are child-friendly and timely;
- Develop and enhance the capacity of all who work for and with children and families in promoting non-violence. Programs must be developed to equip them with knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for the prevention of violence against children in all settings
  - o Increase the capacity and number of WCPD Police officers;

- o Improve the capacities of health professionals, teachers, and day care workers on recognizing, recording, reporting and referring child abuse cases;
- o Ensure that services developed/provided for prevention and response to VAC meet the needs of both girls and boys and are sensitive to gender specifics including needs of LGTBs as well as children living on the streets;
- o Aftercare programs for victims/survivors of abuse, neglect, and exploitation have to be strengthened;
- o Diversion programs for children in conflict with the law have to be scaled-up;
- Develop a unified child protection information management system;
  - o Strengthen the monitoring of government compliance of its obligations (CRC, SDG, etc) as well as the implementation and dissemination of recommendations and conclusions by government agencies and civil society.
  - o Develop a national database on children with defined variables (common definition of terms, tools, indicators, etc)
- Repeat the implementation of the NBS VAC survey in a few years as part of the monitoring mechanism to measure change/s over time as this also encompasses the identified indicators for the report on the progress of SDG 16. Strengthen LGUs and their LSWDOs, LCPCs, BCPCs to prevent and respond to VAC;
- New ways of funding programs or streams of funding need to be developed such as a PhilHealth Insurance benefit package for should victim/survivor packages;
- Ensure functional referral pathways during emergencies; and
- To truly have an impact, this goes beyond coordination among the various inter-agency committees that focus on various child protection issues. This would need a national-level priority setting body that has the capacity to allocate resources necessary to develop a sustainable, accountable infrastructure that will shepherd the goal of reducing violence against children significantly by 2030.

### **Awareness raising that promotes non-violence**

This involves the development and monitoring the implementation of a purposive advocacy and mobilization national plan for VAC which will include:

- To address physical violence in all settings there has to be campaigns to promote non-violent norms and behaviors;
- To address sexual violence in all settings, social norms that protect against violence should be addressed through campaigns. Develop, implement, and scale up sessions and workshops with men, women, girls, boys, and LGBT on positive masculinity and gender and equality; Organizing children and youth as advocates to end VAC;
- Influence conceptualization of radio and TV drama series and entertainment to integrate VAC messages;
- Developing strategic partnership with media, Faith-Based Organizations, NGOs and CSOs on the promotion of child rights and child-rights planning, programming and budgeting for VAC prevention and response;

- Develop policy briefs out of this study as an advocacy material; and
- Link with global advocacies on ending VAC.

## Translating data into action

### The National Plan of Action

In order to effectively implement the above recommendations and strategies, the Philippine National Plan of Action for VAC (NPA VAC) is being developed through consultative processes. It is a multi-sectoral plan of action that will involve integrating of VAC into the 3rd National Plan of Action for Children (2017-2022) with CWC and the new Philippine Development Plan NEDA. . It aims to establish a structure that will coordinate and oversee the implementation of the NPA VAC; review and assess existing VAC-related interventions, programs and services and enhance if necessary; ensure that line-agencies have budgeted activities to prevent and address VAC and develop indicators guided by the SDGs.

### A community of practice

A recommended strategy is to establish a community of practice around preventing and addressing VAC. It can be led by a committed local government with identified partners who will buy-in to the vision such as NGOs, FBOs, local children and youth organizations, various multi-sectoral committees, the academe and professional associations. It will pilot holistic prevention and intervention programs that has evidence of effectiveness. It will aim to document and identify good practices and learning, and convene practitioners and service providers to share experiences, achievements, and challenges. Sustainability of the interventions will also be explored, and efforts evaluated and documented. Budget and resource allocation must be considered for the long-term. A unified and standard M&E system anchored on the SDGs will be developed on the level of measuring the progress of reducing VAC in coordination with the national level.

### Pursue further research

The NBS VAC survey results and analysis has led to the identification of issues that need further research, including the following:

- The experiences of violence among vulnerable groups such as CAAC, IPs, CWD, CICL, LGBT, etc
- The Effectiveness of current interventions on parenting, including child protection messages and information within Family Development Sessions.
- Understanding of social norms that may condone or prevent/limit violence,

The study on the economic costs of violence against Children and youth should be encouraged and supported. A National Research Agenda on Violence against Children across all settings where violence occurs should be developed and a research network or group such as the Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation research group (CANE) can help the government and its partners set a research agenda.



## National Baseline Study on Violence against Children Philippines

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