



MEASURING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS:

A scoping exercise of methods and tools

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From May-December 2013, the Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) Network and Save the Children UK conducted a scoping exercise in order to examine two child protection issues considered “hard to measure” in humanitarian settings: *sexual violence against children* and *violence within the household*. The goal of this exercise was to identify existing methodologies and tools to assess these issues, as well as to highlight gaps in current approaches and offer recommendations for further action. The study involved a structured review of academic and grey literature, resulting in the identification of 20 methods and tools, including a range of approaches and instruments for measuring violence against children in humanitarian contexts. Each method or tool was also analyzed according to the humanitarian phase(s) in which they are applicable, as well as whether they involve an *active* or *passive* approach to investigation.

Findings from this study suggest there is a need to explore additional ways in which existing data can be used predictively during the **preparedness phase** in order to help inform predictions regarding the types and nature of violence that may be present during an emergency. Although information from prior surveys and assessments can not be used to determine *current trends* of violence following an emergency, data gathered through these sources could be used by child protection actors during the preparedness phase to consider who may be among the most vulnerable, as well as ways in which pre-existing forms of violence could potentially be exacerbated following an emergency. Findings also suggest that the Multi-Cluster/Sector Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is the primary tool employed within the **first two emergency phases**. Although the MIRA represents a multi-sectorial approach, data from this exercise on physical and sexual violence as well as other related issues can be used by child protection actors to inform subsequent assessments as well as program decision-making. In light of its *rapid nature*, however, the MIRA should not be considered as a robust means of measuring violence, but rather as a potential source of initial information.

Among the documents analyzed as part of this review, a number of **passive surveillance mechanisms** were described, many of which are applicable to multiple humanitarian phases. These approaches represent a means of measuring *reported* cases of violence against children, and in this way contribute to existing knowledge regarding the number of survivors of violence who seek out formal services or who report their cases through official channels. However, in light of the large number of cases that go *unreported*, data produced through passive surveillance methods will only capture a fraction of the total cases of violence and do not provide a means by which to estimate magnitude. In addition, data gathered through passive surveillance may skew perceptions of the *types* of violence taking place. As such, developing program approaches based solely on passive surveillance data could potentially leave out a large number of survivors in need of support, and cause practitioners to prioritize areas of violence that are in fact not the most prevalent. In this way, findings from passive surveillance approaches—such as those mentioned in this review— must only be viewed as *part of the story*, and compared against available prevalence data in order to inform decision-making and future research initiatives.

Another finding of this study is that there are limited approaches for measuring violence against children during the **third and fourth phases** of emergencies. Two child protection rapid assessments were highlighted during these phases, including the Interagency First Phase Child Protection Rapid Assessment Resource Kit and the Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) toolkit. On one hand, focusing on rapid assessments during these phases is in line with IASC guidance, which specifies that cluster-specific assessments should take place within this period in order to build upon initial data gathered through the MIRA process (IASC, 2011). However, the use of rapid assessments alone, along with passive surveillance methods, still does not capture *prevalence rates* of violence within emergency contexts, suggesting that existing approaches are needed to expand on findings produced through these efforts. In addition, the study found a limited emphasis in included documents on measuring violence within the **recovery and transition period**. As such, findings from this study suggest a need to explore additional ways to measure violence against children within transitional and recovery contexts, and to promote systems strengthening as part of these efforts. The study also found that the

largest number of approaches, and greatest capacity to measure prevalence, was described in *protracted contexts or fragile states*. Although this review examined methods and tools used in each context separately, there was little variation between protracted and fragile settings in terms of the types of tools and approaches that were used. Another theme that emerged throughout all phases of the study was a lack of methods to collect *representative data across age and gender*, as well as with regard to *“hidden” or hard to reach populations*. This was particularly true regarding young children (under 13) as well as male survivors, suggesting that the development of new methodologies and tools to measure violence in these areas is urgently needed.

Recommendations:

Explore additional ways in which existing secondary data can be used predictively during the preparedness phase: Findings from this review suggest that data gathered through multiple methods and tools can be used during the preparedness phase in order to make predictions regarding the types and nature of violence that may be present during an emergency. Although information from prior surveys and assessments cannot be used to determine *current trends* of violence during an emergency, data gathered through these sources could be used by child protection actors during the preparedness phase to consider ways in which pre-existing forms of violence could potentially be exacerbated following an emergency, as well as particular populations that may be among the most vulnerable.

Develop additional approaches for establishing active surveillance on issues of violence against children during emergencies: While a number of passive surveillance approaches for measuring violence against children were identified in this review, there is currently a lack of active surveillance methodologies that specifically target violence against children in emergency contexts. In light of the limits of passive surveillance to accurately measure prevalence or magnitude, there is a need to explore additional ways in which active surveillance could potentially be used to measure violence against children in emergency contexts in order to gather data that is more representative of the nature and scale of violence. Based on this, child protection actors should increasingly use techniques such as the Neighborhood Method that have been shown to gather more robust data on violence than passive surveillance approaches or other methods that rely on subjective information from key informant interviews or focus group discussions.

Develop additional tools or methods to capture data on violence against young children: Findings from the review suggest a lack of existing methods and tools to measure violence against young children, particularly those under the age of 13. In light of the fact that young children are often among the most vulnerable, and least able to independently access forms of assistance and support, developing ways to identify, measure, and respond to cases of violence against children within this age range is particularly important. As such, the development of new methodologies and tools to measure violence against young children is urgently needed.

Develop ways to make existing tools or approaches capture data that is more representative, including gathering information on male survivors of violence, as well as other hidden or hard to reach populations: Findings from this review also suggest a lack of existing methods and tools to measure violence against male survivors, as well as other hidden or hard to reach populations. As such, there is a need to evaluate existing approaches to determine ways in which they can potentially be revised to capture data that is more representative, and to develop new methods and tools as needed.

Explore ways for information gathered during the transition phase to inform programming using a systems-building approach: In light of the lack of methods and tools that emerged in documents pertaining to measurement of violence against children during the transition and early recovery phase, there is a need to explore ways in which existing approaches can be used within this period, and to identify potential areas in which new or revised methods and tools are needed. In addition, as information on violence against children within this phase is available, child protection actors should explore ways in which these findings can be used to inform programming using a systems-based approach.

Increase use of data on physical and sexual violence from MIRA assessments to inform child protection and VAC-focused research and programming: Child protection actors should explore additional ways to use data collected by MIRA assessments to inform the development of research and programming efforts during subsequent humanitarian phases. Although the MIRA only provides rapid assessment data, its multi-sectorial focus, and emphasis on uncovering information on vulnerable populations and reported cases of violence, makes it a potential source of initial information. In addition, child protection actors should consult data found in MIRA reports while preparing for assessments with the CPRA toolkit so as to avoid duplication and explore possible issues of violence identified in MIRA data in greater depth.

Build the capacity of child protection in emergencies practitioners to measure violence against children in emergencies, and establish deployable specialist support for such initiatives: In light of the importance of measuring violence against children in a rigorous manner, additional training and capacity building opportunities in this area should be developed, in order to increase the number of child protection actors in the field who possess the necessary knowledge and capacities to conduct this type of research. In addition, a roster of deployable specialists should be developed to support with the measurement of violence against children in humanitarian contexts, and to support the implementation of new methods and approaches as they are developed.