

Quick Guide: How to kick-start implementation of the International Classification of Violence against Children at the country level

Global standard → Country-level implementation



© United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti, August 2026

Permission is required to reproduce any part of this publication. Permission will be freely granted to educational or non-profit organizations.

To request permission or for any other information, please contact:

UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti

Via degli Alfani 58

50121, Florence, Italy

Email: data@unicef.org

Suggested citation

United Nations Children’s Fund, *Quick Guide: How to kick-start implementation of the International Classification of Violence against Children at the country level*, UNICEF, Florence, 2026.

Acknowledgements

The preparation of this publication was led by Claudia Cappa (Data and Analytics Section, UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti). Sarika Mira Dewan (independent consultant) prepared the initial draft. Valuable feedback was provided by Archana Dwivedi and Nicole Petrowski (independent consultants).

This publication was edited by Alice Fogliata Cresswell and designed by Era Porth (independent consultants).

Purpose of this guide

This quick guide offers a practical entry point for countries beginning to implement the International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC). It outlines the early actions required to launch the implementation process and integrate the classification into national data systems.

The guide complements the ICVAC Factsheet, which presents the structure and content of the classification, and the ICVAC Implementation Manual, which provides detailed technical guidance on its application. It is not intended to replace existing guidance but to support countries and partners in coordinating the initial stages of implementation.

Intended audience

This guide is intended for national stakeholders involved in the production, coordination or use of data on violence against children, including:

- national statistical offices and other national statistical authorities;
- ministries and government institutions responsible for administrative data systems; and
- institutions involved in the prevention of and response to violence against children.

It may also be useful for technical experts and practitioners engaged in strengthening data systems related to violence against children.

Background and purpose of ICVAC implementation

The ICVAC provides a standardized framework for producing data on violence against children through common definitions, classifications and disaggregating variables. ICVAC implementation refers to the process of integrating and adapting this framework within national statistical and administrative data systems. Because national systems differ across countries due to variations in legal frameworks, institutional mandates, sectoral structures and data sources, implementation helps ensure that national data are coherent, internationally comparable and useful for decision-making and reporting.

Implementing the ICVAC strengthens the production and use of data on violence against children across sectors such as health, social protection, education, law enforcement and justice. It also supports the alignment of existing data collection mechanisms with internationally agreed standards while reflecting national contexts and systems. Effective implementation requires coordination among the institutions responsible for collecting, managing and using data, including national statistical offices, child protection authorities, ministries, and law-enforcement and justice institutions.

Implementation is a gradual and country-led process that includes establishing coordination mechanisms, assessing existing data systems and priorities, aligning data collection tools and classifications with the ICVAC framework, and supporting the regular production and dissemination of data. It does not require replacing existing systems; rather, it focuses on progressively strengthening current data sources to improve consistency, comparability and policy relevance, ultimately enabling stronger action to prevent and respond to violence against children.

The meaning of successful ICVAC implementation

Successful implementation of the ICVAC is achieved when data on violence against children produced at the country level are aligned with the standards set out in the classification. In practice, this means the data are:

Produced in compliance with the ICVAC framework

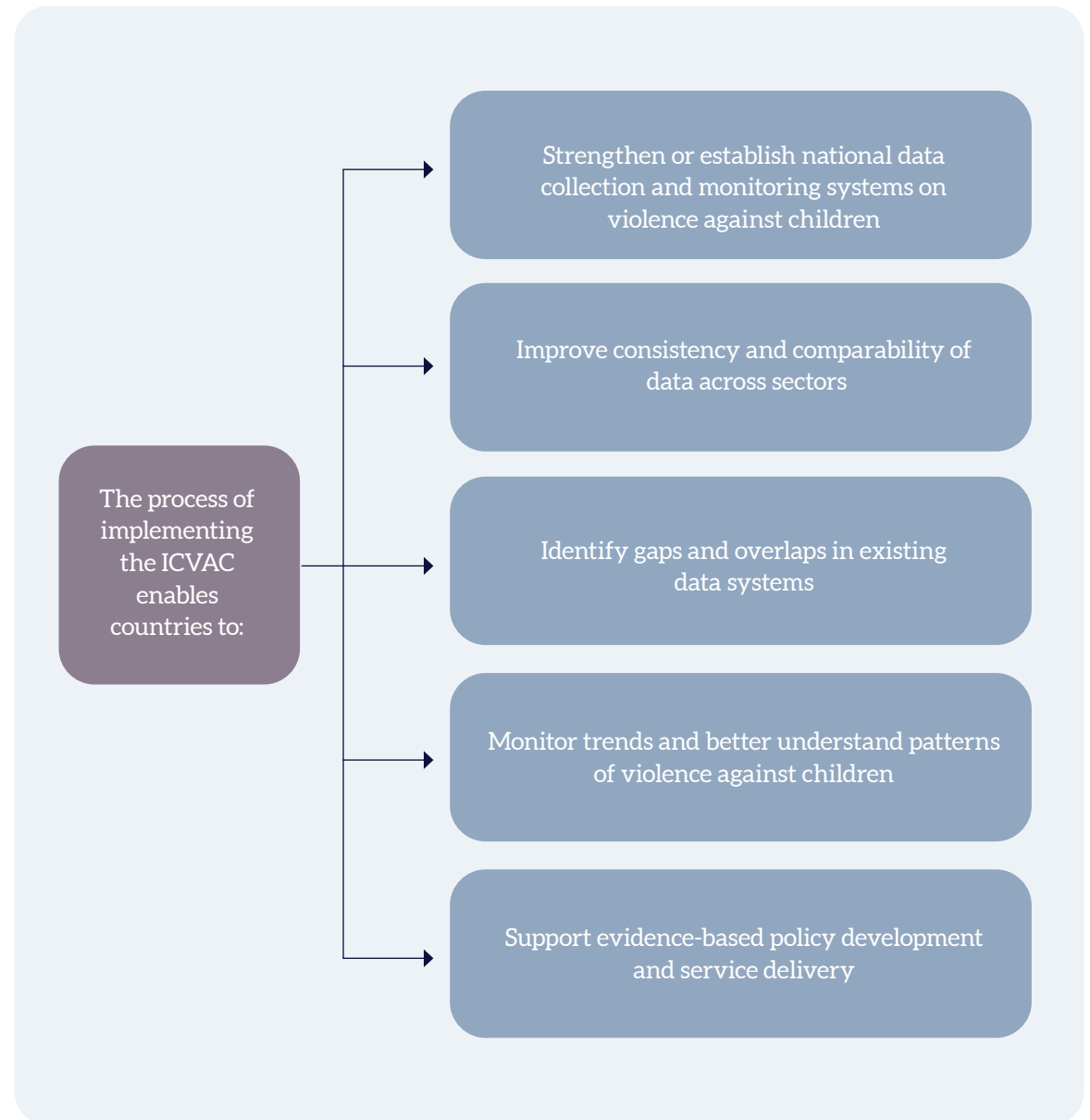
- Data are generated using the standard definitions and disaggregating variables of the classification across relevant sectors.

Regularly disseminated and comparable over time and across contexts

- Comparable data are produced at regular intervals, shared through national reporting systems and contribute to in-country, regional and international monitoring.

Actively used to inform policy, programming and service delivery

- Data are used by policymakers and practitioners to strengthen prevention, response and monitoring efforts on violence against children.



Cross-cutting considerations

Before turning to the road map and the practical steps for launching ICVAC implementation, several cross-cutting considerations should be taken into account. These considerations are not specific to any single step or component; rather, they inform decisions and approaches at every stage of the process. Reflecting on them from the outset helps ensure that implementation is grounded in the national context, builds on existing systems and progresses in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

■ Tailor implementation to the national context

ICVAC implementation should be adapted to each country's statistical needs, existing infrastructure, resources, priorities and institutional landscape. No two implementation processes will be identical, and countries should adapt the approach to their own circumstances.

■ Follow a flexible sequence

Implementation does not need to follow a strict chronological order. Many activities can take place in parallel or be revisited as the process evolves. For example, stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising may continue throughout, while the review of data systems may be carried out in stages across sectors.

■ Leverage and build on existing systems

Existing coordination mechanisms, legal frameworks and data-sharing arrangements can support implementation and strengthen national ownership. Understanding what is already in place and where gaps exist is an important starting point.

■ Plan for a gradual and iterative process

Implementation is continuous and evolves over time. Countries are not expected to apply the classification across all sectors or categories at once; a phased approach can support a manageable roll-out, with implementation expanding as capacity and coordination improve. Early production of data, even if partial, can help demonstrate the value of the classification.

■ Ensure strong cross-sectoral coordination

Classifying violence against children involves multiple sectors, including child protection, justice, law enforcement, education and health services. Data are often fragmented across institutions with different mandates and systems. Effective implementation requires coordination across sectors and government levels to ensure that data are consistent and can be used effectively.

The road map to ICVAC implementation

ICVAC implementation follows a road map comprising three sequential but interrelated components:

- 1) establishing the institutional framework for ICVAC implementation;
- 2) integrating the ICVAC into statistical data systems; and
- 3) producing, disseminating and maintaining statistical data in line with the classification.

The first component sets the institutional foundation for implementation. It focuses on engaging stakeholders, raising awareness of the classification, designating leadership and coordination arrangements, and developing an initial workplan to guide subsequent action. The second component addresses the technical integration of the ICVAC into existing statistical and administrative data systems. It builds on the institutional arrangements established under the first component and adapts national tools and classifications in line with the ICVAC framework, taking into account existing capacities and infrastructure. The third component focuses on the production, dissemination and long-term sustainability of ICVAC-aligned data, ensuring that the classification is applied consistently across sectors and that data are made available to inform policy, planning and programming on violence against children.

Although presented sequentially, the three components are interlinked and may be undertaken in a flexible and iterative manner. Countries are encouraged to adapt the sequence to their national contexts, priorities and institutional capacities. Activities under one component may inform or run in parallel with those under another. For example, awareness-raising and capacity-building can be embedded throughout the process, and the early production of partial ICVAC-aligned data can serve as a proof of concept and help build institutional engagement before full integration is achieved. Detailed technical guidance on each component, including practical considerations and country examples, is provided in the ICVAC Implementation Manual.



Where to begin: Establishing the institutional framework

Initiating the implementation of the ICVAC requires a set of practical preparatory actions to understand the national context, establish ownership and define objectives. These actions focus on organizing stakeholders, reviewing existing data systems and putting in place basic coordination structures. The steps outlined below can be undertaken in parallel and should be adapted to national capacities and priorities. They reflect the early stages of implementation and provide the foundation for a more structured process.

Step 1. Identify and engage key stakeholders

The first step is to identify and engage the institutions involved in the production and use of data on violence against children. This includes institutions responsible for national administrative and survey data, as well as those involved in policy and service delivery. Practical entry points include national data planning cycles, reforms to administrative data systems under way or alignment with international or regional reporting needs. However, multiple actors need to be engaged along the way. Relevant stakeholders typically include, in addition to the national statistical offices: ministries responsible for health, education, justice and social welfare; child protection authorities; and law-enforcement and justice institutions. In many countries, civil society organizations, academic institutions and non-governmental service providers also contribute to the national data systems and should be considered.

Given the wide range of institutions that may have a stake in data on violence against children, countries are encouraged to apply clear criteria when identifying participating stakeholders. Priority should be given to institutions that hold a legal or operational mandate for the production, coordination or use of relevant data; are custodians of key administrative or survey data sources; or contribute substantively to the national evidence base. For civil society organizations and academic institutions, additional criteria may include the existence of established national data collection efforts on violence against children, recognized technical expertise or formal partnerships with government bodies.

Engagement at this stage typically combines bilateral consultations to understand each institution's mandate and data holdings with broader convenings to introduce the ICVAC, clarify its purpose and gather initial input on existing data systems and priorities. Early engagement helps ensure that all relevant actors are aware of the implementation process and can contribute to its design.

Resources:

- [ICVAC Factsheet](#) – This document provides information to facilitate the introduction of the ICVAC to prospective stakeholders.

Step 2. Build awareness and understanding of the ICVAC

Awareness-raising activities should be initiated to ensure that stakeholders understand the purpose and value of the ICVAC. This may include sharing key materials, organizing briefings or integrating the ICVAC into existing forums. Communication should be tailored to different audiences and should highlight how implementation can support improved data and decision-making. Early awareness helps build commitment and supports sustained engagement throughout the process.

Resources:

- [ICVAC Factsheet](#) – This document provides information to facilitate the introduction of the ICVAC to general and technical audiences.
- [ICVAC Data Briefs](#) – This series illustrates how ICVAC-classified data can be used to analyse complex and emerging forms of violence and inform policy responses. The first two briefs focus on technology-facilitated violence and violence against children in organized sport, with additional briefs to be added as they become available.

Step 3. Designate a lead institution and focal point

A lead institution should be identified to coordinate the implementation process. This institution is responsible for guiding activities, facilitating coordination and ensuring continuity over time. A national focal point should be designated within this institution to lead day-to-day coordination. This role is particularly important for maintaining communication among stakeholders and ensuring alignment with national statistical processes.

From a technical standpoint, national statistical offices are often best placed to lead the implementation process, given their responsibility for the quality and consistency of official statistics and their role in coordinating national statistical systems. However, in countries where there is an institution that holds a coordination function on violence against children – including a subcomponent on data – that body may be the more appropriate lead, working in close coordination with the national statistical office. The choice should reflect existing national mandates, technical capacities and coordination structures.

Step 4. Establish a coordination mechanism

A coordination mechanism should be established to bring together relevant stakeholders and support joint decision-making. This may take the form of a national ICVAC working group or build on an existing coordination structure related to data or child protection. The coordination mechanism should define clear roles and responsibilities for each participating member or institution and provide a platform for regular communication among institutions. Establishing this mechanism early supports alignment across sectors and facilitates implementation.

Step 5. Conduct an initial review of existing data systems

An initial review should be carried out, in parallel with the identification and engagement of stakeholders (Step 1), to understand how data on violence against children are currently collected and managed. The two steps are mutually reinforcing: Stakeholder mapping identifies which institutions hold which data, while the review of data systems clarifies which institutions need to be engaged further and on what basis.

The review identifies key data sources, examines definitions and recording practices across sectors, and documents existing processes. Its purpose is to identify strengths and gaps in existing systems and to provide a basis for defining priorities for implementation. A more detailed assessment is conducted at a later stage as part of the development of the national workplan.

Resources:

- [ICVAC Implementation Manual](#) – This comprehensive manual includes a dedicated section with detailed guidance on the assessment of national data systems.
- [ICVAC Correspondence Table](#) – This document provides guidance on mapping national data categories to corresponding ICVAC classification categories.
- [UNICEF Toolkit for Assessing Administrative Data on Violence against Children](#) – This toolkit provides guidance on assessing the maturity of administrative data systems on violence against children.

Box 1. Country example: Step 1 and Step 5 in Jamaica

A [2020 UNICEF review of administrative data on violence against children](#) identified contributions from more than a dozen institutions across multiple sectors in Jamaica. These included the Child Development Agency; the Jamaica Constabulary Force; the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of National Security; the Office of the Children's Advocate; the Office of the Children's Registry; the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; the Planning Institute of Jamaica; the Statistical Institute of Jamaica; the courts; and a number of non-governmental organizations. The review highlighted the multiplicity of mandates, recording practices and data flows that need to be brought into alignment for ICVAC implementation. It also illustrated why stakeholder mapping (Step 1) and the initial review of existing data systems (Step 5) are so closely linked: Understanding which institutions hold which data is the first step to translating a global classification into the national context.

Step 6. Define initial scope and priorities

Based on the initial review, countries should define a feasible scope for implementation. This may involve selecting specific sectors, data systems or variables as a starting point. A phased approach can support a manageable implementation process and allow countries to build experience before expanding further.

Resources:

- [ICVAC Implementation Manual](#) – This comprehensive manual includes a dedicated section with guidance on phased and tailored approaches, including the selection of initial sectors, data systems and disaggregating variables.

Step 7. Develop an initial workplan

An initial workplan should be developed to guide the implementation process. It should outline key activities, timelines, responsibilities and resource requirements, while remaining responsive to evolving needs. The workplan should reflect the priorities identified during the initial review and provide a basis for coordination among stakeholders. It may also support the mobilization of resources and the alignment of implementation with national strategies. This initial workplan serves as the foundation for the full national workplan, which is developed at a later stage and addresses technical integration, capacity-building and risk mitigation in greater depth.

Resources:

- [ICVAC Implementation Manual](#) – This comprehensive manual includes a dedicated section providing guidance on developing the national workplan, including its key components.

Summary of key challenges and practical tips

Countries may encounter practical challenges when initiating and implementing the ICVAC. These challenges will vary depending on national context, institutional arrangements and available resources. The considerations below highlight common issues and practical ways to address them.

Limited awareness of data on violence against children and resistance to change

Initiate awareness-raising early and continue it throughout the implementation process. Tailor communication to different stakeholder groups and clearly demonstrate how the ICVAC supports their existing functions, such as improving case management or reporting. Use existing coordination platforms or sector meetings to introduce the classification and build engagement.

Weak coordination across institutions

Establish a formal coordination mechanism with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Ensure regular meetings and communication across institutions. Where possible, build on existing coordination structures and secure support from senior stakeholders to strengthen accountability.

Fragmented data systems and limited interoperability

Begin with a limited number of priority data systems and focus on aligning definitions and categories in those systems. Use correspondence tables to map existing data to the ICVAC and progressively expand harmonization across sectors.

Limited financial and technical capacity

Prioritize activities based on feasibility and available resources. Start with a phased approach, focusing on high-impact areas. Identify training needs early and explore opportunities for technical assistance or partnerships to support implementation.

Challenges related to data protection and confidentiality

Review existing data protection policies and identify any gaps related to sensitive data on violence against children. Strengthen protocols for data access, storage and sharing, and ensure that all participating institutions apply consistent standards.

