



## ***Bridging the Knowledge Triad: Integrating Data, Practice-Based Expertise, and Lived Experience to Strengthen Child Protection***

### *Executive summary*

The *knowledge triad* – comprising scientific data, practice-based expertise, and lived experience – is a foundational model for strengthening child protection systems. Together, these complementary knowledge streams ensure that prevention and response efforts are evidence-based, contextually grounded, and accountable to those most affected.

The Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) demonstrate how robust data can drive legislative reform and national action plans. Yet, without practice-based learning and survivor-led insights, policy responses risk being incomplete or disconnected from community realities.

This policy brief presents strategies and tools identified during the ISPCAN Rise Up Policy Forum session [Bridging the Knowledge Triad](#) co-hosted by Together for Girls, the Brave Movement, and the Safe Futures Hub. Drawing on experiences from Kenya, Northern Ireland, and globally, it outlines how integrating the triad into national frameworks can transform child protection governance, ensuring responsive, inclusive, and sustainable systems.

*This policy brief draws on insights from the blog [Toward Inclusive Knowledge: Bridging Science, Practice, and Lived Experience](#), by Dr. Daniela Ligiero, CEO and President of [Together for Girls](#) and Founder of the [Brave Movement](#).*

### *The questions we sought to answer*

- ✓ What is the knowledge triad?
- ✓ How can countries integrate scientific data, practice-based expertise, and lived experience into child protection policies and governance?
- ✓ What practical mechanisms enable collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and survivors?



### *A public health approach to child protection*

This policy brief presents strategies that strengthen the following public health pillars:

- **Data and evidence-based solutions:** Leveraging VACS and administrative data for system reform. Developing practice-based knowledge, translating field experience into scalable interventions.
- **Child, survivor, and community participation:** Embedding lived experience into decision-making.

## The problem

Child protection systems increasingly rely on quantitative data to inform policy. However, data collection is irregular in many resource-constrained contexts, and practice-based and experiential knowledge remain undervalued. This limits the responsiveness and equity of national systems.

Key challenges include:

- Fragmented data ecosystems that fail to connect administrative and survey data.

- Weak mechanisms to capture frontline and practitioner learning.
- Limited institutional roles for survivor and youth leadership.
- Insufficient cross-sector coordination between health, education, justice, and social welfare.

The result: well-intentioned policies that often miss the complexity of children's and communities' lived realities, undermining prevention and response efforts.

## Policy recommendations

### 1. Institutionalize the Knowledge Triad

- Integrate [scientific](#), [practice-based](#), and [lived experience](#) data within national child protection frameworks.

### 2. Strengthen [Data-to-Action](#) Systems

- Sustain and expand the implementation of surveillance instruments like [VACS](#).
- Link VACS findings and other data with administrative, programmatic, and case management data.

### 3. Elevate Practice-Based Knowledge

- Support structured documentation of implementation learning through the [Safe Futures Hub](#).
- Invest in peer learning networks to share models across countries.

### 4. Institutionalize Survivor and Youth Councils

- Establish [survivors councils](#) to [advise](#) government policy- and decision-makers.
- Ensure [survivors](#) are compensated, trained, and resourced as equal partners.

### 5. Invest in Capacity Strengthening

- Expand [training](#) for government and civil society partners to utilize all three knowledge types in planning, budgeting, and monitoring.

Brave's "Data to Action" training workshop is a core capacity-building training designed to help survivor advocates, government and CSO partners translate data into policy recommendations and accountability tools. The workshop connects lived experience with scientific evidence and practice-based knowledge, strengthening participants' ability to engage governments, interpret VACS findings, and push for measurable systems change. The most recent training workshop was conducted in partnership with the [South Africa Government in Cape Town, South Africa](#).



### Kenya: A decade of change

The [Government of Kenya](#) led the implementation of its first VACS in [2010](#), and the country was among the first to complete a second VACS in [2019](#). Notable [declines](#) in the prevalence of lifetime sexual, physical, and emotional violence for both females and males were observed between 2010 and 2019. [Factors](#) that contributed to this decrease include government leadership and multisectoral collaboration, system strengthening for VAC prevention programs, meaningful child participation, and the expansion of VAC prevention services and funding.

The VACS process demonstrates that change is possible. The significant reduction in violence against children and youth in Kenya since 2010 highlights the importance of data in providing evidence to inform policies and programs aimed at preventing violence. It also illustrates the impact of governments, organizations, partnerships, and individuals working together to create safer communities for children, adolescents, and youth.



### Practitioners' insights at the forefront: Practice-based knowledge

The use of practice-based knowledge has significantly strengthened child participation in Kenya's justice and protection systems. A significant success has been the establishment of the National Strategy on Justice for Children, which brings together practitioners and children to advance child-centered justice.

The development of the national strategy relied on lessons learned by government duty bearers as well as the lived experiences of children, including those in contact with and in conflict with the law. Practice-based knowledge has also helped entrench community-based dialogues at the grassroots level through Children's Court Users Committees, ensuring that solutions are grounded in local realities and informed by the voices of children. Additionally, practice-based knowledge has played a key role in legal and policy reforms aimed at addressing child sexual violence and eliminating procedural bottlenecks within the justice system. Initiatives such as "My Day in Court" further demonstrate how practice-based knowledge has been used to reduce children's fear of justice practitioners and make justice spaces more responsive to their needs.



### The value of survivors' expertise

The Brave Movement's capacity strengthening work across Africa is anchored in national platforms supported through UBS catalytic grants. These platforms equip survivor advocates, grassroots CSOs, and government partners with tools to analyse data, design policy responses, and co-create accountability mechanisms. Through multi-stakeholder workshops in Zambia, [Uganda](#), [Kenya](#), Tanzania, Ghana, Zimbabwe, [Nigeria](#), and [South Africa](#), survivors and CSOs jointly develop action plans, influence national child protection frameworks, and integrate lived experience into policy implementation.

## Conclusion

Integrating the knowledge triad is not an abstract aspiration – it is an operational necessity. Sustainable progress in child protection depends on recognizing data, practice, and lived experience as co-equal sources of truth and accountability.

Embedding this triad into national frameworks will strengthen governance, align resources with need, and most importantly, center children and survivors in shaping the systems that serve them.



## Resources and further information

- From silence to leadership: How national survivor councils can drive prevention healing and justice. [G20 call to action on survivor council](#)
- [Kenya's journey towards protecting children: A decade of change \(2010-2019\)](#)
- [Linking Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys to Coordinated and Effective Action](#)
- The power of Data to Action: [Country experiences and lessons following Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys](#)
- Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) Dashboard: [www.togetherforgirls.org/vacs](http://www.togetherforgirls.org/vacs)

## About the authors of this policy brief



**Together for Girls** – A global organization leveraging data and advocacy to drive collective action to end violence against children.



**Brave Movement** – A survivor-led global movement demanding political action to end childhood sexual violence.



**Safe Futures Hub** – A global collaborative initiative (SVRI, TFG, WeProtect Global Alliance) supporting evidence-based action.

The [ISPCAN Rise Up Policy Forum](#) is a global initiative to catalyse progress in child protection through a public health and system strengthening approach. It brings together governments, researchers and practitioners in a community of practice and learning, to build on and translate into action the pledges made during the 2024 Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children.



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