



RESPONSIBLE DATA FOR CHILDREN

RD4C CASE STUDY:

MICS ZIMBABWE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MODULE

This case study is part of the RD4C initiative, an effort to build awareness regarding the need for special attention to data issues affecting children. This case study aims to offer insights on promising practice as well as potential barriers to realizing responsible data for children through the experience of UNICEF. The material relies on interviews, internal documents, and public information.



ABSTRACT

UNICEF launched the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) in 1995 to support governments in monitoring the situation of children around the world. Over the past 25 years, this survey has become the largest source of statistically sound and internationally comparable data on women and children worldwide. MICS surveys are conducted by trained fieldworkers who perform face-to-face interviews with household members on a variety of topics. The surveys have been a major data source for assessing progress for international development goals. More than 330 MICS surveys have been carried out in more than 115 countries. Throughout the years, MICS has been updated at the start of each round with new and improved questions and methodologies. Zimbabwe was part of MICS's rounds in 2009 (MICS3), 2014 (MICS5), and 2019 (MICS6). For the 2019 deployment, Zimbabwe's National Statistical Agency approached the MICS team to integrate a domestic violence module to counteract the lack of data on the incidence of domestic and gender-based violence. The insights generated from the work subsequently informed national legislation and a variety of national initiatives to combat domestic violence. Deployment of MICS in Zimbabwe captured the RD4C principles of being purpose-driven (targeted at filling a specific data gap and informing ongoing policy discussions), participatory (involved a wide variety of stakeholders in managing each phase of the effort), and preventative of harm across the data lifecycle (relied on techniques through collection, processing, and analysis to guarantee the safety and confidentiality of respondents). It is a useful example for RD4C because it demonstrates how responsible practices can evolve and be supplemented over time. It also demonstrates how principles can be realized in the field in an open, participatory fashion and the challenges that practitioners can face with field work.

Tags: Purpose-Driven; Participatory; Prevention of Harms Across the Data Lifecycle

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The table below shows the MICS6 questionnaires and modules. Refer to the MICS pages at <http://mics.unicef.org> for more detailed information and contents of the modules.

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE		QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INDIVIDUAL WOMEN AGE 15-49 YEARS		QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INDIVIDUAL MEN AGE 15-49 YEARS		QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN AGE 5-17 YEARS <i>For one randomly selected child age 5-17 years in each household</i>		QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE	
HH	HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION PANEL	WM	WOMAN'S INFORMATION PANEL	MWM	MAN'S INFORMATION PANEL	FS	5-17 CHILD INFORMATION PANEL	UF	UNDER-FIVE CHILD INFORMATION PANEL
HL	LIST OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS	WB	WOMAN'S BACKGROUND	MWB	MAN'S BACKGROUND	CB	CHILD'S BACKGROUND	UB	UNDER-FIVE'S BACKGROUND
ED	EDUCATION [3+]	MT	MASS MEDIA AND ICT	MMT	MASS MEDIA AND ICT	CL	CHILD LABOUR	BR	BIRTH REGISTRATION
HC	HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS	CM/ BH	FERTILITY / BIRTH HISTORY	MCM	FERTILITY	FCD	CHILD DISCIPLINE [5-14]	EC	EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
ST	SOCIAL TRANSFERS	DB	DESIRE FOR LAST BIRTH	MDV	ATTITUDES TOWARD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	PCF	CHILD FUNCTIONING	UCD	CHILD DISCIPLINE [1-4]
EU	HOUSEHOLD ENERGY USE	MEN	MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH	MVT	VICTIMIZATION	PR	PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT [7-14]	LICF	CHILD FUNCTIONING [2-4]
TN	INSECTICIDE TREATED NETS	PN	POST-NATAL HEALTH CHECKS	MMA	MARRIAGE/UNION	FL	FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING SKILLS [7-14]	BD	BREASTFEEDING AND DIETARY INTAKE [0-2]
WS	WATER AND SANITATION	CP	CONTRACEPTION	MAF	ADULT FUNCTIONING [18-49]			IM	IMMUNISATION [0-2]
HW	HANDWASHING	UN	UNMET NEED	MSB	SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR			CA	CARE OF ILLNESS
SA	SALT IODINATION	FG	FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION	MHA	HIV/AIDS			AN	ANTHROPOMETRY
		DV	ATTITUDES TOWARD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	MMC	CIRCUMCISION				
		VT	VICTIMIZATION	MTA	TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL USE				
		MA	MARRIAGE/UNION	MLS	LIFE SATISFACTION				
		AF	ADULT FUNCTIONING [18-49]						
		SB	SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR						
		HA	HIV/AIDS						
		MM	MATERNAL MORTALITY						
		TA	TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL USE						
		LS	LIFE SATISFACTION						
WQ	WATER QUALITY TESTING QUESTIONNAIRE <i>For a subset of households within each cluster</i>								
GP	GPS DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE <i>For countries where existing cluster location data</i>								
								HF	QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR VACCINATION RECORDS AT HEALTH FACILITY <i>For countries where all the immunization records are kept in health facilities</i>

Several of the modules which are associated with MICS6. See: "Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys 6: Questionnaires & Modules." 2016. UNICEF MICS.

I. THE ISSUE

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, is the primary United Nations body responsible for advocating for children's rights, providing aid to children and adolescents around the globe, and taking all those actions needed to help them reach their potential. While UNICEF, like most United Nations bodies, has existed for over 75 years, it was not until 1989 that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This treaty, which entered into force on 2 September 1990, sets out the civil, political, health, and cultural rights of children and calls state signatories to take steps to preserve these rights¹.

While the adoption of this treaty was an enormous achievement, UNICEF staff realized that the treaty put new obligations on them and other partner agencies. To assess whether and how different states were making progress in improving the rights of children, both UNICEF and signatory countries would need data that did not exist or was not reliably available except in high-income countries. Exacerbating this challenge was the issue of timing. After the World Summit for Children in 1990, a landmark summit for coordination on children's protection, world leaders set specific, quantifiable goals that they intended to achieve by the year 2000². UNICEF officials set 1995, the mid-decade, as a time when they would meet to discuss

¹ UN General Assembly. 1989. "Convention on the Rights of the Child." United Nations, Treaty Series 1577 (3): 1–23.

² UNICEF Strategic Information Section. 2007. "Progress for Children: A World Fit For Children Statistical Review." https://www.unicef.org/media/86506/file/Progress_for_Children_No_6_revised.pdf.

the goals from this high-level meeting, determine what had been achieved, and assess what they still needed to do³.

Thus, in the space of a few years, UNICEF and partner countries needed to develop some way of gathering data that had (in many cases) not been collected before. It needed this data collection to be done in a way that allowed for easy comparison across countries. Most importantly, it needed to be able to use this data to track international progress toward various, high-level goals. UNICEF began exploring how it could use child-focused surveys to handle these gaps. From 1992 through 1993, UNICEF staff studied the Expanded Programme on Immunization and Control of Diarrhoeal Disease (EPI-CDD) surveys in India and Bangladesh, a leading World Health Organization (WHO) initiative to assess issues related to respiratory infection control and sanitation, as a model.⁴

II. ACTION

ORIGINS

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) emerged from the study of these survey initiatives in South Asia. As characterized by senior team leadership, the MICS household survey is “a global set of questions, generic questionnaires which [can] be adopted in every country to collect data.”⁵ These questionnaires examine a variety of issues related to children well-being—ranging from household characteristics to maternal and newborn health to child nutrition—in ways that can be adapted across different country contexts and used to track progress towards international goals, and support programming for children⁶

The development of these different modules and the ways in which they have been provided to countries has been an iterative process. In its initial incarnation MICS1 (launched in 1994 and ended in 1999) and MICS2 (launched in 1999 and ended in 2004), the survey focused specifically on gathering valid and reliable data on

³ Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022a. RD4C Interview: MICS6. Zoom.

⁴ Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. 2015. “20 Years - Key-Events - UNICEF MICS.” UNICEF. 2015. <https://mics.unicef.org/20-years/key-events>.

⁵ Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022a. RD4C Interview: MICS6. Zoom.

⁶ Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys 6: Questionnaires & Modules.” 2016. UNICEF MICS. <https://mics.unicef.org/files/job=W1siZiIsIjIwMjAvMDcvMjAvMjAvNTIvMDMvNTIzL01JQ1M2X1F1ZXN0aW9ubmFpc mVzX01vZHVzZXNfMjAyMDA2MTcuZG9jeCJdXQ&sha=dada8746a8a7af6a>.



indicators, assembled in collaboration with WHO and UNESCO, to measure progress toward the mid-decade goals.⁷ These indicators focused on issues such as immunization, adequate vitamin A supplementation, the prevalence of stunting and underweight, school enrollment, and other matters identified in the mid-decade goals.⁸ The way UNICEF hoped to facilitate this data collection was through a tool-centric approach in which UNICEF provided resources such as questionnaires, indicator lists, and sampling protocols that governments could use to guide their work with little additional assistance.⁹ In these first years, MICS provided resources to 61 countries.¹⁰ While the work was successful in producing insights and work was ongoing through 2004, expiration of the WSC goals in 2000 seemed to mark an end to MICS.

In 2002, however, interest in MICS was revived amid the 2002 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, which saw the adoption of the

World Fit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action.¹¹ Faced with a need for more data to track progress on indicators highlighted in this document, the Millennium Development Goals, and, later, the Sustainable Development Goals, MICS continued and expanded. Over the following years, MICS saw the addition of technical changes (such as the electronic sharing of data in 2002 and mobile collection devices in 2011)¹² and the addition of new questions related to emerging issues.¹³ More substantially, the initiative saw a shift toward active support for countries to expand questionnaires to include such issues as child protection, HIV and other topics. The expansion also further emphasized government ownership of efforts and the use of data for government needs as opposed to reporting on international goals.¹⁴

Over the following years, MICS carried out 346 surveys across 118 countries over six rounds. MICS 7 is in the planning phase at the time of writing this case study, and deployment is intended for 2023-2026.¹⁵ Each new iteration/round

⁷ Planning Office, Evaluation and Research Office, UNICEF. 1995. "Chapter I: Introduction." In *Monitoring Progress Toward the Goals of the World Summit for Children: A Practical Handbook for Multiple-Indicator Surveys*. New York: United Nations. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZiIsIjIwMTUvMDQvMDMvMDYvNDIvNDcvNTQ3L0NIQVAwMS5wZGYiXV0&sha=72890275e12c4b7e>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ MICS. 2022. "MICS1 Tools." UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/tools?round=mics1>.

¹⁰ Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. 2015. "20 Years - Key-Events - UNICEF MICS." UNICEF. 2015. <https://mics.unicef.org/20-years/key-events>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022a. RD4C Interview: MICS6. Zoom.

¹⁴ Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. 2015. "20 Years - Key-Events - UNICEF MICS." UNICEF. 2015. <https://mics.unicef.org/20-years/key-events>.

¹⁵ Hancioglu, Attila, and Eva Quintana. 2022b. RD4C Case Study Interview: MICS6. Zoom.

of the program—often preceded by pilot implementations to test survey questions and initiated with regional workshops—has come with a new set of improvements and tools.¹⁶

Through these origins to the present day, MICS has followed best practices in research and data collection activities involving human subjects. The survey requires informed consent be obtained from individual respondents before proceeding with interviews, and demands the information is handled safely and ensures confidentiality at all times. MICS relies on the implementing agencies to ensure these principles are followed and applied consistently during survey operations. As the scope and complexity of the MICS tools has grown over the years and come to include complex situations such as direct interactions with more vulnerable populations (in MICS6), MICS has strengthened its ethics procedures and is more closely monitoring their implementation. Before interacting with children under 15 years of age, for example, interviewers need to obtain the consent of the child's parent or caregiver, and the children themselves must provide their assent to participate before the interview can start. While ensuring privacy, children must always

be visible to a responsible adult in the household during the interview process.¹⁷

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT

While each MICS round begins with the publication of general tools and questionnaires developed through field tests and consultations with experts, a significant amount of work goes into customizing these resources to fit the specific needs of the country in which it is deployed.¹⁸ This customization can include translating questions to fit local languages¹⁹ and adjusting questionnaires or removing modules where the standard module would be socially or culturally unacceptable, or more commonly, where the module is either not relevant to the country or for which data exists from other sources.²⁰ All these revisions must be made while “ensur[ing] internal consistency among various survey tools [...] to maintain (global) comparability” and keeping a large number of questions and modules exactly the same.²¹

To launch a MICS survey, UNICEF (through the MICS HQ team and its regional office teams) collaborates closely with the national statistical

¹⁶ Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. 2015. “20 Years - Key-Events - UNICEF MICS.” UNICEF. 2015. <https://mics.unicef.org/20-years/key-events>.

¹⁷ Quintana, Eva. 2022. RD4C Interview: MICS6.

¹⁸ UNICEF MICS. 2022. “FAQ.” UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/faq>.

¹⁹ Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022a. RD4C Interview: MICS6. Zoom.

²⁰ UNICEF MICS. 2022. “FAQ.” UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/faq>.

²¹ “Guidelines for the Customisation of MICS Questionnaires.” 2021. UNICEF MICS. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZilsljIwMjEvMDMvMDMvMTcvNDEvMTQvNjkrR3VpZGVsaW5lc19mb3JfdGhlXON1c3RvbWlzYX Rpb25fb2ZftUIDUzZfUXVlc3Rpb25uYWlyZXNfMjAyMTAzMDMuZG9jeCJdXQ&sha=ebd4e51e5bd13ccd>.

offices who act as the implementing partners for the surveys.²² This global MICS team is composed of the HQ Data Collection Unit staff members as well as Regional Office MICS Coordinators.

For every MICS survey, the UNICEF country office and the implementing agency sign a memorandum of understanding to define the parameters of the agreement including guidelines on institutional responsibilities, access provisions and handling procedures for the data collected.²³ This process is divided into several parts:

- ▶ **Needs Assessment:** The country offices—with support from the global MICS team—helps governments undertake a data gap assessment. Though the analysis and process vary from country to country, the objective of this work is to determine what data has already been collected (and, thus, which modules can be dropped from the survey) and what is lacking.²⁴
- ▶ **Establishing Governance Bodies:** Once the data gap assessment has established that conducting a

MICS is justified, the MICS team works with the national government or its representative to establish a governance structure to design, plan, and implement the survey. This governance body often, but not always, takes the form of a steering committee that is, at a minimum, “composed of senior staff from the implementing partner, UNICEF, and other funding partners but ideally relevant line ministries and stakeholders should also be on the committee.”²⁵ The committee’s responsibility is to oversee the work and make critical decisions on issues such as which question modules to include; the level of subnational disaggregation (e.g. regional, state, or provincial level); the timetable; and budget available. The steering committee may also establish a technical committee, composed of technical experts who can “peer review” the survey and assess the methodology as needed.²⁶ A survey coordinator

²² Khan, Shane, and Attila Hancioglu. 2019. “Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys: Delivering Robust Data on Children and Women across the Globe.” *Studies in Family Planning* 50 (3): 279–86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sifp.12103>.

²³ UNICEF MICS. 2013. “English MICS MoU.” UNICEF MICS. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZiIsIjIwMTUvMDEvMTQvMDYvMDYvMDIvMzQxL0VvZ2xpc2hfTUIvMTU19Nb1VmJmAxMzAzMjluZG9jeCJdXQ&sha=b97b47321215f786>.

²⁴ “Guidelines for the Customisation of MICS Questionnaires.” 2021. UNICEF MICS. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZiIsIjIwMTUvMDEvMTQvMDYvMDYvMDIvMzQxL0VvZ2xpc2hfTUIvMTU19Nb1VmJmAxMzAzMjluZG9jeCJdXQ&sha=ebd4e51e5bd13ccd>.

²⁵ MICS. 2009. “Getting Started.” In *MICS4 Manual*. 4. New York. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZiIsIjIwMTUvMDEvMTQvMDYvMDYvMDIvMzQxL0VvZ2xpc2hfTUIvMTU19Nb1VmJmAxMzAzMjluZG9jeCJdXQ&sha=5822af56dd17f95>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

manages each of the day-to-day implementation activities on behalf of the committee. All this work is intended to ensure local ownership of the survey. Survey committees are responsible for anticipating potential ethical and safety concerns that may take place during data collection as well as measures to be adopted to address or mitigate these concerns. Survey protection protocols are then drafted and reviewed to ensure that interaction with respondents is conducted responsibly.²⁷

► **Preparing for Data Collection:**

After the steering committee has met and made initial decisions on what and how the survey will be delivered, the survey coordinator begins making the logistical arrangements to conduct the survey. At a very basic level, this includes setting up a “central headquarters” that can securely host administrative activities, computing equipment, and storage and communicate with field teams.²⁸ It also can include

sampling, selecting, and training fieldworkers with support of MICS regional coordinators and sometimes UNICEF staff from headquarters.²⁹ Ideal recruits for fieldworkers tend to be diverse, with secondary education or above, experience with surveys, language fluency, communication skills, and a good attitude. Training can be conducted in a variety of formats (e.g. in a large central location or decentralized) and rely on documents and questionnaires developed by MICS and the steering committee as well as expert trainers specialized in each module. The goal of these activities is to sensitize field workers to the questionnaire and issues they may encounter in the field. The MICS programme recommends at least four weeks of training, supported by a regional expert as needed.³⁰

► **Deployment:** Organized into individual teams overseen by a supervisor, field workers conduct face-to-face interviews with

²⁷ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2021). UNICEF procedure on ethical standards in research, Evaluation, data collection and analysis. UNICEF Global Development Commons. Retrieved May 2, 2022, from <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

²⁸ MICS. 2004. “Chapter 5: Preparing for Data Collection.” In MICS3 Handbook. New York, NY. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZiZlsljWMTUvMDQvMDIvMDQvMDAvMjg0ODM0L01JQ1MzX0NoYXB0ZXJfNV9fX1ByZXBhcmluZ19mb3JfRGF0YV9Db2xsZWNoaW9uXzA2MDIxOS5wZGYiXV0&sha=e19eb25f01d4c3c1>.

²⁹ MICS. 2004. “Chapter 2: Getting Started.” In MICS3 Handbook, 1–7. New York City, New York: UNICEF. MICS. 2004. “Chapter 2: Getting Started.” In MICS3 Handbook, 1–7. New York City, New York: UNICEF. <https://mics.unicef.org/files?job=W1siZiZlsljWMTUvMDQvMDIvMDQvMDAvMDQvODM3L01JQ1MzX0NoYXB0ZXJfMI9fX0dlHRpbmdfU3RhcncRIZF8wNjAyMTkucGRmll1d&sha=a45cc56cfdb23e32>.

³⁰ Hancioglu, Attila, and Eva Quintana. 2022a. RD4C Case Study Interview: MICS6. Zoom.



eligible respondents. These interviews are facilitated with tablets, though paper questionnaires may be used if a tablet fails. Following a standard script, fieldworkers inform respondents of the objectives of the survey and the voluntary nature of their participation. They describe the survey procedures and the measures to keep the information they share confidential. They obtain respondents' informed consent before initiating the interview. Then, fieldworkers record the answers they are given, though may provide notes or otherwise indicate if they believe the information provided to them needs to be further clarified.³¹ They may also take additional steps to guarantee the safety, security, and privacy of interviewees (such as pausing or terminating the interview). Data is then uploaded to a secure cloud server which is accessed by the national implementing partner and UNICEF/MICS team responsible for technical support. To address concerns about data sovereignty, MICS data can be hosted in in-country servers while the MICS team in headquarters provides support on how to set it up and use

it.³² Fieldwork is usually completed within two to four months.³³

- ▶ **Processing:** Data processing tools are customized by teams to make them country-specific and mirror the changes that other survey tools (such as questionnaires) might have undergone.³⁴ While finalizing the datasets, various techniques are employed to guarantee the anonymity of the data to ensure the confidentiality of participating individuals and households. These techniques are implemented by the headquarters office and include removing sensitive information from all data files. Information removed can include names, addresses, telephone numbers, lower level geographic information, and GPS coordinates. At the analysis stage, data is further aggregated across large samples so as to not produce individual level indicators.
- ▶ **Reporting:** After tabulating data, survey teams start work on reporting. The main output developed by teams is a survey report, which details the main findings of the report and statistical snapshots, which

³¹ Hancioglu, Attila, and Eva Quintana. 2022b. RD4C Case Study Interview: MICS6. Zoom.

³² Hancioglu, Attila, and Eva Quintana. 2022a. RD4C Case Study Interview: MICS6 Zoom; Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022b. RD4C Interview: MICS6 Zoom.

³³ Hancioglu, Attila, and Eva Quintana. 2022a. RD4C Case Study Interview: MICS6 Zoom.

³⁴ MICS. 2022. "MICS6 Tools." UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/tools#data-processing>.



provides a visual summary of the survey findings. These are drafted at a MICS workshop, involving local ministries, the UNICEF country office and partners, done at the country-level.³⁵

DEPLOYMENT

Zimbabwe was a part of previous rounds of MICS in 2009 (MICS3) and 2014 (MICS5).³⁶ The data gathered in these rounds provided decision-makers with insights into the socio-economic status and health of women and children to inform “the planning, implementation and monitoring of national policies and programmes for the enhancement of the welfare of women and children.”³⁷ MICS played a critical role in informing national policymaking, including the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable

Socio-Economic Transformation, which ran from October 2013 to December 2018.³⁸ While previous rounds included several questions related to “attitudes toward domestic violence,” Zimbabwe’s national statistical agency (ZIMSTAT) realized it lacked substantial data on the incidence of domestic and gender-based violence³⁹ needed to develop policies to counteract it. While a module to measure the prevalence of domestic violence was not part of standard MICS questionnaires, the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) program had developed a domestic violence module that had been piloted and deployed in various countries at the request of local governments.⁴⁰

During the sixth round of MICS in 2019, Zimbabwe approached UNICEF’s MICS team to request support in filling this gap. MICS, working through the

³⁵ MICS. 2022. “MICS6 Tools.” UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/tools#reporting>.

³⁶ MICS. 2022. “Surveys.” UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/surveys>.

³⁷ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT). 2014. “MICS Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014: Key Findings Report.” Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2014/Key%20findings/Zimbabwe%202014%20MICS%20KFR_English.pdf.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ MICS relied on the World Health Organization definition of this violence, which is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” See: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and UNICEF (2019). Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT and UNICEF. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2019/Survey%20findings/Zimbabwe%202019%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report-31012020_English.pdf.

⁴⁰ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT). 2014. “MICS Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014: Key Findings Report.” Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2014/Key%20findings/Zimbabwe%202014%20MICS%20KFR_English.pdf.



Zimbabwe UNICEF country office and in coordination with national leaders via a steering committee, subsequently added the DHS domestic violence module to the questionnaires and associated tools.⁴¹ Given the sensitivity of this topic, the introduction of the domestic module in the MICS raised ethical and protection concerns that other standard MICS modules had not before. Questions arose, such as: What to do if a respondent is visibly distressed while recalling an instance of abuse during the interview? How to offer psychosocial support to individuals in need while ensuring confidentiality to prevent stigmatization or potential retaliation from an abuser? Throughout this process, the UNICEF team supporting the MICS in Zimbabwe customized existing frameworks and tools that had been applied in similar contexts. The module itself was based on the DHS domestic violence module. ZIMSTAT had direct experience administering this module as it had been included in the 2015 Zimbabwe DHS and implemented with quality oversight by ICF International. The MICS program also had previously adapted the DHS

program guidelines for the domestic violence module during the 2018 Madagascar MICS. The protection protocol used in Madagascar was further refined for use in the 2019 Zimbabwe MICS, and it incorporated revisions based on the ethics protocol for the 2012 Zimbabwe Violence Against Children Survey which was implemented by ZIMSTAT with the support of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).⁴²

International and local stakeholders interested in the data worked on the planning, training, and deployment of the module. Organizations such as the Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare (MPSLSW), ZIMSTAT and others provided their expertise and capacity while the European Union, UK Department for International Development, Embassy of Sweden and United Nations Population Fund provided funding.⁴³ Many of these parties were involved in the steering committee.⁴⁴ Many of these parties were involved in the steering committee. They also assisted in the translation of the

⁴¹ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and UNICEF (2019). Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT and UNICEF. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2019/Survey%20findings/Zimbabwe%202019%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report-31012020_English.pdf.

⁴² Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and UNICEF (2019). Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT and UNICEF. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2019/Survey%20findings/Zimbabwe%202019%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report-31012020_English.pdf.



modules into three languages: English; Shona; and Nbedele.⁴⁵

UNICEF worked closely with ZIMSTAT, the Ministry of Women Affairs and the Ministry of Public Service, Labour & Social Welfare to devise a set of measures that would ensure respondents' safety during fieldwork while maximizing the disclosure of adolescents' and women's experiences of violence. Critical cases were defined as those who were visibly upset during the interview or reported not feeling safe in their current living situation. A protocol for the voluntary referral of critical cases to psychosocial support services was developed. Both ministries designated national, provincial and district focal point persons who could be reached by SMS or phone call in the event of an emergency by ZIMSTAT staff. In addition to the critical case referrals, all households received information on locally-available support services for women experiencing violence. These were combined with other general health and social services to minimize the visibility of services addressed to abuse survivors.⁴⁶

Additional procedures were adopted to maximize the safety of respondents. For

example, while MICS interviews all females aged 15-49 years in sample households, the domestic violence was administered to only one randomly selected female respondent per household to prevent others from knowing what was discussed with them. Interviewers were also required to obtain informed consent from the respondent prior to administering the domestic violence module.⁴⁷

All survey team members—including administrative and technical personnel—received special training on the purpose of the module and the need for special measures. This training included teaching survey team members how to obtain additional informed consent, sensitive interviewing techniques (e.g. awareness of the emotional reactions that questions may trigger), approaches for ensuring privacy, and how to emotionally prepare themselves for the work.⁴⁸ Trainees also received an overview on concepts of domestic violence — what do victims look like, signs to look out for to identify violence, and how respondents may try to address their experiences. This and all other training for other MICS modules

⁴⁵ Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom. abuse survivors

⁴⁶ Quintana, Eva. 2022. RD4C Interview: MICS6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and UNICEF (2019). Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT and UNICEF. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2019/Survey%20findings/Zimbabwe%202019%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report-31012020_English.pdf.



took place over 35 days between November and December 2018.⁴⁹

In early 2019, the steering committee authorized the deployment of the MICS6 survey, including the domestic violence module. Seventeen teams—each composed of four interviewers, one driver, one measurer, and one supervisor—conducted fieldwork from January 2019 through April 2019 using tablet computers.⁵⁰ At the request of the Government of Zimbabwe, personnel stored data on servers hosted by ZIMSTAT, the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency.⁵¹ To ensure the privacy of respondents, ZIMSTAT instituted measures such as requiring stakeholders (itself and the MICS global team included) to sign a confidentiality form ensuring the responses were not made public before they were anonymized.⁵² The survey team removed appropriate location and personal identifiers from all data files so as to not produce individual level indicators.

IMPACT

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

For over 25 years, the MICS program as a whole has served as a leading source of data on women and children

worldwide. More than 330 MICS surveys have been carried out in more than 115 countries. The survey program has been a major source for the Millennium Development Goals indicators and it currently informs 33 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators in support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.⁵³ In this way, MICS allows UNICEF and the partners to better understand the contexts in which it works around the world. Moreover, in an increasing number of countries, MICS is embedded in national statistical plans, development plans and SDG frameworks. For many countries, MICS is the sole source of many indicators on child well-being. In this way, MICS can be used to both motivate action and assess the impact of policies. Surveys conducted worldwide often lead to policy changes, improved budget allocations, and targeted programming.

The next round of MICS is now being developed. To best determine which topics will be included in the standard MICS7 questionnaires, the UNICEF MICS team has created a scoring system which includes 16 indicators to evaluate each topic previously in MICS and new topics that have been proposed/considered. A new questionnaire architecture is being proposed

⁴⁹ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and UNICEF (2019). Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Harare, Zimbabwe: ZIMSTAT and UNICEF. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Eastern%20and%20Southern%20Africa/Zimbabwe/2019/Survey%20findings/Zimbabwe%202019%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report-31012020_English.pdf.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ UNICEF MICS. 2022. "FAQ." UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/faq>.

tentatively, where a core set of modules will be placed in Base Questionnaires and lower scoring topics will be included as Complementary packages. It is expected that a handful of topics previously included in MICS may be excluded, while a number of new topics that have been proposed may not be pursued at this point.⁵⁴

A new module, based on the DHS domestic violence module, for example, will be added to address violence. In addition, staff plan to begin testing MICS 7 in the field. The global MICS team will specifically be looking at testing the efficiency of the refined tools from a qualitative and quantitative standpoint (e.g. Do interviewees' interpret questions as intended? Are interviewers' instructions clear? Do any difficulties arise in the interviewer-respondent interaction?). They will also identify potential challenges to implementation of protection protocols.

SOCIETAL IMPACT

The UNICEF team argues that data about children is a major tool in advocacy work globally and provides a variety of examples of societal impact to support this argument. They noted, for instance, that MICS findings are often

used by the media, in public education materials, or with the purpose of influencing public opinion on the situation of children and women around the world.⁵⁵ The surveys have also been cited by governments in host countries as inspiring policies. For example, Thailand used survey results that showed low rates of exclusive breastfeeding to spur the adoption of the Breastmilk Substitutes Code Act and Control of Marketing of Infant and Young Child Food Act of 2017.⁵⁶ In Montenegro, surveys showing low immunization rates led the Ministry of Health to investigate the root causes and launch an improvement plan intended to boost immunization.⁵⁷ In Argentina, three provinces (Buenos Aires, Salta and Entre Ríos) implemented policies targeting violence against children after the MICS survey indicated it occurred in seven out of ten households.⁵⁸

In the case of Zimbabwe, the data collected by MICS has been used to inform specific programming and interventions.⁵⁹ In 2019, MICS findings contributed to informing Spotlight Initiative which sought to “advance the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices through

⁵⁴ Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022b. RD4C Interview: MICS6 Zoom.

⁵⁵ MICS. n.d. “User Guide to Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).” UNICEF. https://fr.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/user_guide_to_mics_eng.pdf

⁵⁶ Hancioglu, Attila. 2022. “RE: RD4C: MICS Interview - Follow-up Questions,” March 11, 2022.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom.



a broad partnership with civil society, government, private sector, media.”⁶⁰

Interviewees also cited MICS’s domestic violence module as a key factor in inspiring various policies, including the Zimbabwe’s Marriage Act, a piece of legislation introduced and subsequently passed by parliament seeking to limit child marriages, and other national government initiatives.⁶¹ They noted that the specificities of the MICS findings allowed for more targeted responses by the government. After learning that domestic violence was higher amongst women with primary education and those in the poorest quintile of the country, for instance, policy-makers could target anti-domestic violence efforts on education and social protection. The geographic specificities of the findings additionally allowed for very regionally targeted responses. The team, for example, found that various religious sects were very prevalent in certain areas, providing further context to explain why domestic violence issues were higher in a specific zone.

Interviewees also claimed that the results from MICS surveys allowed UNICEF country office in Zimbabwe to better target their advocacy efforts

towards making education free for all in the country. They suggested that this work resulted in the government amending the existing “Education Act,” which “places the duty on the State to progressively fund basic education within the limits of resources available.”⁶² MICS data was used in the development of a five-year National Development Plan (2021-2025), with the 2019 MICS providing the baseline information for setting targets on basic social service delivery.⁶³

The UNICEF team in Zimbabwe further stated that the MICS survey findings had also helped inform financing models that enable the implementation of legislation aimed at making sure that girls remain in school.⁶⁴ These models, designed to respond to the vulnerabilities of girls in the country, can only be designed if “this vulnerability is understood within the context of the data that is generated under MICS.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. 2021. “Project Factsheet Zimbabwe Spotlight Programme.” December 31, 2021. <https://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00111645>.

⁶¹ Machivenyika, Farirai. 2022. “Zimbabwe: Marriages Bill Passed.” The Herald, March 9, 2022, sec. News. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202203090145.html>.

⁶² Banya, Nelson. 2021. “Promise Tracker: Free Education.” ZimFact (blog). April 30, 2021. <https://zimfact.org/promise-tracker-free-education/>.

⁶³ Hancioglu, Attila. 2022. “RE: RD4C: MICS Interview - Follow-up Questions,” March 11, 2022; Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022b. RD4C Interview: MICS6 Zoom.

⁶⁴ Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

INSIGHTS RELEVANT FOR ADVANCING RD4C LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

ENABLING RD4C: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES:

- ▶ **Participatory.** The MICS team uses a participatory approach that involves a wide variety of stakeholders. From the inception of a MICS survey, governments are given full ownership of the survey's conception and deployment, receiving only technical support from the UNICEF team. For example, in Zimbabwe, local stakeholders oversaw the planning, training, and deployment of the module. Involved organizations included the Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare, and ZIMSTAT alongside donors including the European Union, UK Department for International Development, Embassy of Sweden and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Additionally in Zimbabwe and other countries, fieldwork teams from the government agencies receive training on how to approach individuals and deliver the questionnaire, including ways to address risks and challenges that may arise during interviews, how to use the MICS platform to

collect data and the procedures needed for effective and responsible data collection and analysis. These trainings include specific modules on how to interview children and may include live interviews with children for preparation purposes, though children are not otherwise specifically approached or involved in survey inception.⁶⁶ These modules compliment other generalized training sessions that are in place to ensure the sensitivity of data collection is understood by everyone. They also complement the work of other teams involved in other deployments; modules on issues such as domestic violence are the result of prior efforts and protocols whose work has been adapted and refined.

- ▶ **Professionally Accountable:** To be professionally accountable, the MICS team developed a specific training approach for the domestic violence module that is substantially different from the standard training for other modules (e.g. facilitating a session with interviewers to unpack the social and gender norms that enable abusers and the forms abuse take place). In addition, the MICS team developed special protocols for the domestic violence module following best practices and principles in ethical research, which included a

⁶⁶ MICS. 2022. "MICS6 Tools." UNICEF. 2022. <https://mics.unicef.org/tools#data-collection>.



referral protocol for critical cases. The experience adapting and developing protection protocols specifically for the collection of violence data began in Madagascar and was refined in Zimbabwe. These efforts will inform the standard domestic violence-related tools that will be rolled out in MICS 7.

- ▶ **Prevention Of Harms Across The Data Life Cycle:** During interviews, the MICS team emphasized that ensuring the security of the data was paramount. During the collecting stage, for example, they discussed how data entered into tablets during interviews undergo rigid checks for quality—checking and cross-checking data across the interview. Data is then uploaded to a secure cloud server which is accessed by the national implementing partner and UNICEF. Responding to concerns around data sovereignty, MICS has also developed a data management system that can allow countries to host data in local servers with the MICS team in headquarters providing support on how to build the network. While finalizing the datasets, various techniques are employed to guarantee the anonymity of the data to ensure the confidentiality of participating individuals and households. These techniques were also employed in Zimbabwe where personnel stored data on secure servers hosted by ZIMSTAT. In Zimbabwe, ZIMSTAT

further required that stakeholders sign confidentiality forms to keep data private until it was anonymized. In this process, analysts removed location and personal identifiers from all data files and aggregated them across large samples so as to not produce individual-level indicators.

- ▶ **Purpose-driven:** MICS surveys are directed toward addressing real, specific data needs that benefit government, international organization, and non-governmental organization programming. In Zimbabwe, for example, MICS’s domestic violence module provided impetus for Zimbabwe’s Marriage Act, a piece of legislation introduced and subsequently passed by parliament seeking to limit child marriages and address aspects of intimate partner and domestic violence against women. It also informed national government initiatives to reduce domestic violence and improve child welfare.

BARRIERS TO RD4C: CHALLENGES TO NAVIGATE:

- ▶ **Difficult, Ethically Challenging Field Work:** While conducting interviews, field workers sometimes faced challenges that required them to adapt to difficult or complicated situations. For example, in Zimbabwe, after one team discovered that a respondent's partner had hidden



his phone under a table and attempted to record her interview, teams went about checking under tables and chairs before starting each subsequent interview to guarantee total confidentiality.⁶⁷ In the context of the women's questionnaire delivered to some polygamous households, interviewers conducting the women's questionnaire became aware that respondents had been told some of the questions in advance by the other members of the household.⁶⁸ In other circumstances, interviewers had to address unique sources of discomfort about the questions or adapt to the physical restrictions imposed by the homes in which they worked.⁶⁹

The MICS team working on the domestic violence module in Zimbabwe, realized that while teams successfully developed sound and comprehensive ethics protocols, monitoring the actual implementation of these protection protocols was challenging. For example, an attempt developed by the team to put in place a system to monitor referral of critical cases during fieldwork did not work as expected. Once referred by the ZIMSTAT field

teams to the relevant government agencies, getting information on whether those cases were successfully contacted or not was difficult. As a result, the MICS team was unable to evaluate the success of these referrals. The MICS team acknowledged the complexity of coordinating between statistical offices and different government agencies sitting in different ministries. The communication across various administrative levels (national, provincial and local) within various ministries presented various challenges as well. Lack of specialized government services in remote or underserved areas may pose challenges to effectively support respondents identified as critical cases during MICS.

Globally, teams have sought to address these types of challenges through rigorous training and standards around data use. In Zimbabwe, training and standards were supplemented by the country's Data Act and Research Act, which provided an additional framework for data collection, processing, transmission and storage.⁷⁰ During individual deployments, the MICS team has

⁶⁷ Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom.

⁶⁸ Ibid. While the women's Questionnaire allows all women aged 15-49 to participate in the survey, a protection measure introduced for the domestic violence module was that only one woman could be interviewed per household.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

been able to react quickly and adapt its interviewing style and approach to meet the challenges faced. To further enhance this adaptability and responsiveness, MICS teams might consider conducting a study to assess and validate its procedures, particularly in cases where it was faced with difficulties. MICS's existing procedures regarding the documentation of best practices and possible bottlenecks might be further institutionalized in the future to facilitate the exchange of information. These approaches might enable the staff to better anticipate challenges and be in a better position to address them proactively. In addition, to address gaps during referral cases, collaboration with local organizations with expertise in psychosocial support should be explored and incorporated in the plan. Finally, it is critical to estimate the costs of implementing and monitoring the domestic violence protection protocol early on, and ensure the required resources are in place for an effective roll out of these protocols.

- ▶ **Repetitional Concerns Over Openness:** MICS, and UNICEF more broadly, promotes openness and seeks to make processed data about its surveys widely accessible. However, interviewees noted that countries were, at

times, hesitant to make the data collected through MICS surveys available to the public or UNICEF staff.⁷¹ Staff attributed these actions as being motivated by concerns over reputation and a concern that MICS data, when analyzed, could reflect poorly on their governments. UNICEF has tried to mitigate this by having local partners sign MoUs detailing data sharing conditions. To counter this problem, staff might find it helpful to, if possible, host meetings with leaders of local government and implementing agencies prior to deployment to reiterate the survey's main goals and purpose-driven nature along with UNICEF values. Country Offices might also think critically about how they can convey the values of openness to implementing partners. For instance, they might note that the professional accountability enabled by data openness can unlock external capacity or partnerships that can help implementing partners achieve core missions and objectives.

- ▶ **Political Challenges:** Another challenge can stem from the political aspect of MICS's deployment strategy.⁷² By choosing to include governments throughout the process, UNICEF is at risk of being influenced by politically motivated decisions and

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022a. RD4C Interview: MICS6 Zoom.



processes that may not always have data protection at its heart. When deciding how and whether to launch in a country, those involved in MICS might try to think critically about the different interests at play to understand how actors might make decisions. With these interests in mind, steering committees might develop policies and procedures to mitigate bias and political influence.

- ▶ **Complications and Delays:** Work can also result in delays and loss of momentum. MICS surveys can be subjected to lengthy political processes and approvals, especially if data needs to move from one office to another.⁷³ In certain countries, MICS cannot be approved by anyone except the prime minister’s office, requiring staff to wait until senior political leadership have the time to authorize work. These efforts can be further complicated if leaders have little interest in the survey itself and are unwilling to commit resources. Logistical challenges were faced by the MICS in Zimbabwe as a result of the economic situation but barriers were successfully overcome thanks to the commitment and resolve of the parties involved. UNICEF staff had to sign different

memoranda of understanding and confidentiality forms with the government and complete procedures to verify that data on the MICS survey was stored in the country and not at a central server in UNICEF headquarters.⁷⁴ In Zimbabwe, the MICS was completed within the stipulated timeline, but delays and complications in MICS seem inevitable given the participatory approach put forward by the MICS team and the contextual differences from country to country. They might, however, be helped by furthering ties to local government stakeholders and by having regular conversations to clarify the roles of involved stakeholders. Conducting a decision provenance mapping could be useful in identifying “pain points” in bureaucracy, how to overcome them, and who needs to be involved.⁷⁵

⁷³ Quintana, Eva, and Attila Hancioglu. 2022b. RD4C Interview: MICS6 Zoom.

⁷⁴ Makoni, Catherine, Lloyd Muchemwa, and Rumbidza Tizora. 2022. RD4C Case Study - MICS Zimbabwe. Zoom.

⁷⁵ Responsible Data for Children initiative. 2020. “RD4C Decision Provenance Mapping.” The GovLab. https://files.rd4c.org/RD4C_Decision_Provenance_Mapping.pdf.





The duration of the MICS program and constant iterations of it over the years demonstrates how responsible actions can evolve and be supplemented over time. The participatory nature of the survey design and implementation demonstrates how principles can be realized in the field in an open and efficient fashion all while remaining conscious of the challenges that may be encountered in implementation. Indeed, if there was one aspect of MICS that became clear through interviews and research it was that the program was constantly evolving to meet new challenges and promote the well-being of those surveyed.

While this case study notes several specific challenges related to political tensions and community engagement and offers general approaches to mitigate these challenges, the research team acknowledges that it may be difficult for the MICS global team to achieve these tasks. The team recognizes that some of these matters are dependent on local partners. It also recognizes that some of the solutions offered are not scalable to a global context but may instead be more relevant for a single implementation team. The researchers opted to include these proposals with the hopes they could be useful examples of the kinds of work steering committees might opt to pursue based on the context in which they work. They also felt they were indicative of the kinds of difficulties that arose in the deployment in Zimbabwe.

Nonetheless, we find MICS a strong example of how UNICEF can be proactive in promoting responsible data for children. We encourage it to continue its work in institutionalizing practices that address ethically challenging field work, to further document best practices and challenges across deployments, and to consider ways to make referral procedures more efficient. Through these and other activities, MICS can continue building on the strong foundation it currently has for MICS7.