



INSPIRE Implementation Working Group

Virtual Meeting

24 April 2024

Abbreviations

CIFF	Children’s Investment Foundation Fund
EVAC	Ending Violence Against Children
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
IWG	Implementation Working Group
SRSB	UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Violence Against Children
WHO	World Health Organisation

Purpose and objectives

The Implementation Working Group (IWG) held a special meeting on 24th April 2025 (see Appendix 1 for a list of participants). The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) convened and facilitated the meeting.

The impetus for this special meeting emerged in the [February meeting](#), where members expressed a need to meet more regularly to maintain connections and to have a thinking and sense-making space given the global shifts in our ecosystem. The meeting had the following objectives:

- To maintain relationships and the community of the IWG.
- To create a space for thinking and processing.
- To hear updates from two key developments in the field.

This report provides a brief overview of the meeting, which included an input by the Office of the SRSg on VAC, about their strategy to strengthen and reinvigorate Pathfinding, and an input by the WHO on the emergence of the Ending Violence Against Children group.

Chandre Gould (ISS) provided a framing for the meeting and offered an overview of where we find ourselves now:

When we last met in February, we were all in a state of shock. USAID had just been closed, and our colleagues from the CDC and PEPFAR were barred from participating. While the shock has worn off, the uncertainty remains about how our world will be impacted by the massive global shifts in power and by the destruction of key institutions and changes in the funding environment. The founding partners of the INSPIRE framework were institutions that held knowledge, generated knowledge, distributed resources, and had enormous normative power. Many are either no longer operating or are at risk. This has serious implications for all of us and for our work together.

This working group is part of the global architecture to prevent violence against children. It's a key part of that architecture and is worth protecting.

We are called in this time as individuals, organisations, and as a collective, to make difficult decisions, to question what we want to be, and how to respond to this moment in history. The impact of these changes on our thinking and on our mindsets is apparent in our ability to generate a long list of threats and risks, and a very much shorter list of opportunities.

In our meeting in February, we found comfort, reassurance, and solidarity in being together and in having the IWG as a place to share our concerns and our thinking and to plan and strategise together. It is essential to retain institutions that are part of the ecosystem working to prevent VAC, not least because in this new world, the risks to children's well-being are even greater, and the reduction of resources to address VAC increases the chances of us competing against one another rather than collaborating and cooperating.

So, we do have choices and decisions to make. The picture is not all bleak. We can make decisions. We have choices, and there are things that we might have wished to have changed in the way that power was distributed and used in the past, that we now have an opportunity to address. In East Africa, in South America, in Southern Africa, in Asia, the Pacific, there are examples of extraordinary leadership in the field, and tremendous progress is being made by people in the IWG.

The ISS was invited to coordinate and help lead this group two and a half years ago, and since then, together with all of you, we've developed and sustained an organisational culture, a rhythm of meetings and decision-making tools that provide a governance structure. We also showed that we can work together in the spirit of generosity to foreground INSPIRE at the Ministerial Conference last year. The two primary strengths of this group, aside from our deep commitment to ending VAC, are our ability and intention to collaborate and our willingness to reflect and make sense together to ensure that we move towards our goal of using evidence and knowledge to prevent VAC. The ISS will continue to convene and serve this group, despite having no dedicated funding, for as long as we possibly can. And for as long as we believe that this collective has a role to play in preventing and ending VAC, and is a useful tool for that purpose.

Pathfinding Global Alliance strategy by the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children

Edith Bardell from the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG) presented the new Pathfinding Global Alliance strategy. What follows are key highlights from the presentation, which can be accessed [here](#):

- The Pathfinding Global Alliance was launched at the Global Ministerial Conference on VAC in November 2024.
- The focus of the relaunch of Pathfinding centres on 1) the urgency of investing in child protection and well-being, and 2) the economic cost of violence.

- At the launch in November 2024, there were 38 pathfinding countries. Now, there are 43 countries, 15 of which are in Africa.
- The Alliance is multisectoral and adopts a whole-of-society approach, including UN agencies, states, regional and subregional organisations and networks, the private sector, development partners, and community leaders.
- The Alliance is intended to offer countries opportunities to accelerate efforts to end VAC, which include:


Pathfinding Global Alliance

Why become a Pathfinding Country?

The Alliance offers a wide range of opportunities to accelerate efforts to end violence against children.

High-level engagement to ensure child protection and well-being is high in the political agenda

Strengthen coordination mechanisms and information management systems

Gain access to good practices, knowledge, and expertise

Strengthen engagement with civil society organizations

Support to the pledges and Call to Action - Bogota Ministerial Conference

Technical support for the road map's design

Support to design and cost of the integrated services

Support capacity-building and peer learning

Support to assess the cost of violence and the return on investments

Showcase progress

- The SRSB is convening regional meetings with pathfinding countries. The European meeting was held in March. An African ministerial-level pathfinding meeting will be convened in Abuja in May 2025. The Americas meeting is planned for July, and the Asia and Pacific meeting is in September.
- A ‘marketplace for knowledge sharing’ will be launched as part of the Alliance. It is intended to be a knowledge hub for countries, focusing on peer learning and sharing best practices.

After the presentation, the IWG was invited to share their reflections and ask questions about the Alliance. They were encouraged to consider what the new strategy means for them and INSPIRE. The following emerged during the conversation with the IWG and the SRSG:

- IWG members spoke about the abundance of knowledge hubs already in the field. They suggested coordinating or networking with existing hubs to avoid duplication. The SRSG's office agreed, and they did not want to duplicate work. The knowledge hub is intended to be a platform where pathfinding countries and partners can see what others have actioned, request information, or connect to people. It is intended to be dynamic.
- The University of Oxford asked how, if at all, the Alliance related to the plans for the next Global Ministerial Conference. The SRSG's office stated that their current focus is on supporting countries to implement their pledges from the first Global Ministerial Conference, and not thinking about the next one.
- The ISS asked if the SRSG was offering technical support to countries and if the IWG could support their efforts. The office said that the SRSG provides overall technical advice to countries. In other words, the SRSG is able to provide general advice and strategic direction on what she thinks countries, UN country teams and civil society should do. However, the SRSG does not receive or distribute funds to countries or any institutions. The SRSG's office aims to act as a broker between the needs of countries and those who are able to support in addressing the country's needs.

[Feedback from the Ending Violence Against Children Meeting and implications for the INSPIRE Working Group](#)

On the 11th and 12th, the WHO and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) convened global VAC leaders and donors, Oak and Wellspring, at the Rockefeller Institute in New York City to discuss the field's current needs and what is needed to end violence against children (EVAC). Several IWG members attended the meeting. Helen Morton, from the WHO,

provided feedback on the decision and outcomes of the meeting. The presentation can be viewed [here](#), with a summary of outcomes below:

- In the build-up to the Ministerial Conference last year, there was a loose group that was informally called a 'strategic working group'. The group met once a month and was focused on maximising political support and mobilisation in advance of the Ministerial Conference. About 90% of these individuals and institutions attended the meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation.
- The meeting mapped out existing plans and initiatives currently underway in the VAC field. In addition to knowledge sharing, the mapping experience was intended to identify opportunities to support one another and maximise the impact and interconnectedness of initiatives underway across the group.
- Participants identified thirty-three 'priority' countries in which they were currently placing a significant amount of emphasis, work, and expenditure. The list also reflected where there was a fairly significant overlap amongst work being done by partners in the room. The WHO emphasises that the circumstances were not identified through a rigorous, scientific process. It was meant to indicate where most work was being done.
- There are plans to convene an event of sorts on the first anniversary of the Ministerial Conference in November 2025. The WHO is beginning to brainstorm possible ideas of what this could be and welcomes ideas from the IWG.
- There was a discussion about the purpose of the 'strategic working group' and whether it should exist. It was agreed that the vision of the new strategic working group is 'to maximise the impact of the first and forthcoming Ministerial Conference through a loose governance structure, focused on political mobilisation' and advocacy.
 - It is intended to be a 'covert' group in the sense that it will not have branding, institutional logos behind it, terms of reference or a website.
 - Moreover, the strategic working group is intended to be a collaboration of the willing. Nor is it meant to be a technical working group. There was recognition at the meeting of the role of the IWG, and how technical expertise is one of the IWG's strengths, so it is not intended to duplicate those efforts. While it was

recognised, the overlap between the IWG and the nascent strategic working group, the nascent group's focus is on political mobilisation rather than a technical specialism on VAC.

- One of the strategic working group's immediate next steps is to develop a concept for the second Ministerial Conference. There are ongoing conversations with Member States around potential hosting and co-hosting of the next Global Ministerial Conference. Ideally, the Ministerial Conference would take place either in the fourth quarter of 2026 or the first quarter of 2027.
- An additional next step is developing a concept around doing work on strengthening the narrative/strategic communications on EVAC. It was identified that the field needs to refine and hone its key messaging.

IWG members who attended the EVAC meeting were invited to add to what the WHO presented. The Care and Protection of Children Learning Network (CPC) attended the meeting as representatives of the IWG and shared the following reflections:

- One of the values of INSPIRE was that it helped make sense of all the noise and evidence on VAC. It distilled it into the technical package. In thinking about the IWG and the nascent strategy working group, CPC noted overlap and potential redundancy. However, Sabrina also said that this could be an opportunity for both working groups to better define who they are and their role. Additionally, CPC anticipated that INSPIRE would be central at the EVAC meeting. Instead, what was interesting was learning how participants in the EVAC meeting perceived the IWG compared to how CPC viewed it.
- A final reflection was that everyone in the VAC space is hard at work on the issue and is well-intentioned. However, there is a concern that the field does not replicate groups, thereby becoming the problem that we sought to address.

At this point, the IWG was invited to share their question and comments on the EVAC presentation.

The ISS suggested that perhaps the most important thing the IWG could do is to ensure it does not contribute to the noise. Since this is not a moment for contributing to the noise and creating multiple structures that draw resources in many different directions and there is a real risk that might happen. Moreover, the VAC field should be cautious about creating new structures that replicate the functions of existing structures.

Linking to this, UNICEF raised a concern on the risks of fragmentation and asked the WHO to clarify the need for 1) a strategic working group and 2) strengthening the strategic communications of VAC. For UNICEF, strategic communications would need to strike a balance between, on the one hand, having simple, unified messaging, while on the other hand, showcasing the nuances of the evidence. They also expressed concern that working groups focused on strategy may not be sufficiently linked to technical expertise, and that the IWG is concerned with political mobilisation.

In response, the WHO said that the idea of the strategic communication for EVAC was put forward by CIFF. It was explained that about 10 years ago, CIFF and a number of other donors invested in the Global Strategic Communications Council on climate change. At that point, there was an absolute need to ensure that the science married with public conversation to ensure there was more public salience and more public support for climate change at a time when funding and policy shift on the issue was in massive jeopardy. So there has been an ongoing conversation with CIFF and a number of other donors. Today, the Global Strategic Communications Council on climate change has 100 million pounds behind it, 40 staff working in every country. That is what has led to a conversation about whether it would be possible to replicate something like that for VAC.

In responding to UNICEF's reflection about the concern that the communications and strategy strategic working group would be insufficiently linked to technicality, the WHO said that it certainly does not want to be reductionist, and the need for messaging to be grounded in technical expertise is absolutely at the forefront of their minds.

The University of Edinburgh also expressed concern about the overlap between the two working groups. Instead of duplicating work, collaboration and coordination should be prioritised.

SVRI reflected on the list of priority countries identified at the EVAC meeting. They flagged that it tends to be the same list of countries that keep coming up in every conversation. These are countries that have political will, existing infrastructures and VAC momentum to build on. However, the concern was that the field risks overlooking countries where investments might be needed the most. When SRVI, We Protect, and Together for Girls were conducting the recently published evidence [review](#) on ending childhood sexual violence, the same handful of countries had the most evidence.

The WHO stated that the strategic working group's intention was not to duplicate ongoing work. Instead, it is intended to be seen as complementary, and if that is not the case, then it should be discussed.

Feedback for the INSPIRE Communications Meeting

At the February IWG meeting, it was agreed that the ISS and the WHO would have a meeting with the communication company to refine and reframe the IWG's messaging and communications. That meeting took place on the 3rd of April. The key outcome from that meeting was that the WHO offered to support the IWG to strengthen its communication strategy. This will take the form of two half-day virtual workshops. The dates of the workshop are set for mid-June.

The overlap between the IWG and the strategic working group's communications work was highlighted. It should be noted that the WHO was not present during the SRSG's session on the Pathfinding Global Alliance strategy. Therefore, the WHO was informed that the SRSG's office stated the focus should be on supporting countries' implementation of pledges and not

necessarily on a second Ministerial Conference. The clearly conflicting feelings on the prospects of a second conference from two significant agencies are of great concern to the IWG.

Next steps

The following actions will be taken after the meeting:

- The coordinator will produce and circulate a report of the meeting.
- The two half-day workshops will be convened by Helen Morton and the IWG and set for mid-June.
- The ISS will soon be planning for the annual IWG strategic meeting in June. These meetings were previously held in person, but will be held virtually this year. The dates for the meeting are 26-27th June.

Appendix 1: List of participants

The following IWG members were present at the meeting on 24th April 2025.

INSPIRE Secretariat members:

- Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
- Care and Protection of Children Learning Network (CPC)
- Joining Forces Alliance

INSPIRE Implementation Working Group members:

- Child Protection Network Foundation, Inc
- Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC)
- Oxford University
- Plan International
- Raising Voices
- Red Por La Infancia
- Sexual Violence Research Initiative
- Together for Girls
- Universidad de los Andes
- University of Edinburgh
- UNICEF
- UNICEF Innocenti
- Violence Prevention Alliance Jamaica
- World Vision International