



INSPIRE Implementation Working Group Meeting

Virtual Meeting

27 February 2025

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## Acronyms

ISS	Institute for Security Studies
IWG	Implementation Working Group
SRSg - VAC	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 Organization

The Implementation Working Group (IWG), established to support the rollout of *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children*, held its first quarterly meeting of 2025 on 27<sup>th</sup> February (see Appendix 1 for a list of participants). The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) convened and facilitated the meeting. The [previous](#) IWG meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

## Purpose and objectives

The ISS framed the meeting saying “this meeting is not business as usual. Today some of our key partners, members and friends are not, and cannot be with us. We share a concern for them, and for the work, we have been doing together. That is why this meeting is so important. We cannot allow our work to be stopped, interrupted or informed by political shifts in one country. We have to remain accountable to the children, organisations and governments who are committed to ending violence against children. The ecosystem has been changed, and the environment in which we are working is difficult. We face challenges and uncertainties, and we will always be stronger when we work together. We have built a strong, healthy community that must be sustained. The kind of leadership displayed in this group is what we need and is especially important during times like the present.”

The US Executive order stopping all work on USAID-funded projects impacted the ISS's funding to coordinate the IWG. However, the ISS assured members that they would continue to convene meetings and coordinate the IWG while seeking funding from other sources.

The meeting had the following objectives:

- For members to reconnect at the start of the year.
- To create a space for reflection and sense-making, to ask questions and raise concerns.
- To use the discussions of the meetings to inform conversations with donors.

## INSPIRE Working Group Updates

Four members of the IWG provided brief updates about key developments in their organisations or work that are relevant to the IWG.

## The INSPIRE Evidence Update

Madison Little, from the University of Oxford, who is leading the update, reported on the progress of the INSPIRE Evidence Update. The academic manuscript is complete. The final comments are being sent from co-authors over the next week. Thereafter, the manuscript will be sent to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for internal review by the end of March.

## Sexual Violence Research Initiative

The Sexual Violence Research Initiative, in partnership with Together for Girls, WeProtect Global Alliance, Brave Movement and Safe Futures Hub, recently published the [Shared Research Agenda on Child Sexual Violence \(CSV\) for Low-and Middle-Income Countries](#). Briefly, it encompasses a set of research recommendations for addressing CSV. The research report was launched on 20 February 2025 and can be viewed [here](#).

## World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) announced the release of a new publication, [Hope for Children Through Climate Justice](#). The report focuses on the role of law in addressing climate injustice, specifically by targeting financial institutions funding fossil fuel extraction. It aims to capacitate readers on climate litigation, which was identified as an increasingly impactful method of addressing climate injustice and protecting children's rights. The WCC will convene online training sessions over the coming months as part of the launch. More information on the training will be added [here](#).

## Future direction of the IWG

Members of the working group were given an opportunity to think together and reflect on the questions we have about the future of INSPIRE. The session served as a space for the IWG to raise concerns, questions, and anxieties about the changing global landscape. The intention was to determine the questions that the IWG needs to answer to sustain momentum and keep the

work moving forward. The questions that emerged from the discussion are presented below and organised according to four themes. A [presentation](#) of this session can be viewed here.

## **Questions about how we might sustain the work of the IWG in the future**

### **Theme 1: Advocacy and communications**

- How can we present information/data in a non-partisan way? Including the cost of inaction resonates with all audiences.
- What resonates with different audiences? What are the bipartisan issues? (The IWG agreed that VAC is a bipartisan issue, but the narratives used by different parties/audiences must be given considerable attention.)
- What do we do to hold true to the evidence but stay relevant to continue our work whilst recognising that many organisations are funded by governments that are questioning the underpinnings of our approaches (such as INSPIRE)? Specifically, the following is being questioned:
  - The intentional targeting of science through the push back against data and evidence.
  - Equitable norms and values.
  - Multilateralism
  - Collaboration
  - Global leaders are displaying behaviours we know contribute to interpersonal violence.
- How can we practically resist and still serve the communities most affected?
- What kind of advocacy works in this context?
- How can we creatively sustain advocacy in this context to ensure that countries remain committed?
- Can we better support countries facing cuts? How can we better meet their needs with the knowledge amassed in the IWG?
- What aspects of our work are likely to be prioritised by new leaders?

## Theme 2: Data and knowledge

- How can we bring together the knowledge about resources needed to keep going?
- How do we make the evidence/data more accessible, especially at a time when data is questioned?
- What impact does this new development landscape have on VAC prevalence?
- How can we define priorities for research and evidence?
- What type of evidence is most effective in sustaining our work?

## Theme 3: Concerning the IWG

- What is the future role of UN agencies in work at the country level? How much can we count on their continued support?
- Could we collaborate to identify the funding deficits? What would that look like? What work are we all doing, and where can we enable us to be more efficient with scarce resources?
- Will the current context change membership of the IWG?
- Can we work collaboratively to think about where our funding deficits are?
- How can we use IWG to better effect?

## Theme 4: Other questions/miscellaneous

- How can we define the current problem we're facing?
- Can we visualise how the current global situation will affect development work and, by extension, VAC work, especially since this work is multisectoral and governmental?
- What happens to the commitments countries made at the Ministerial Conference?
- How can we better analyse how the forces at play affect VAC programming?
- We have decades of experience and evidence, so should we not continue doing what we're doing?

Notwithstanding these questions, the IWG recognized that the current political situation in the US is not reflective of what is happening in all countries. There is still a need for the IWG's work

globally. It is during times of uncertainty like these that multisectoral structures, such as the IWG, are important in ensuring ongoing collaboration, advocacy, knowledge building, and sharing, and development. Many countries, including the Philippines and South Africa, have not abandoned the VAC and violence prevention agenda.

It was also said that it is possible to advocate for the VAC and violence prevention agenda in a way that appeals to right-leaning governments. This involves reframing messages using narratives of ‘family values’ and ‘family well-being’, for example. However, the risks associated with such an approach were also noted.

These questions should inform our collective interactions with donors and philanthropists. On the 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> of March, global VAC leaders will convene at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York City. Several WG members have been invited to the meeting. These questions raised in this session inform discussion about what the field needs. It was agreed that feedback about the meeting in New York will be shared in the next IWG meeting.

### Collective strategising on the way forward for INSPIRE

Members of the IWG identified priorities for the IWG. Participants were divided into two groups, one which looked at the risks, and the other at opportunities for INSPIRE, the IWG, and the VAC ecosystem. This information would also be drawn on to inform discussions at the Rockefeller meeting.

### Risks and threats facing the IWG and INSPIRE

- The level of burnout in the field cannot be overstated. Recent global developments will compound burnout in an already overstretched field.
- VAC and VAW are relatively young fields with a massive problem, and now the issue of violence has increased.
- The burden is now on governments without inequality between nation-states having been addressed or acknowledged.



- Pushback on gender equality, rights (children, women, humans) and a rise of anti-rights agenda and sentiments while couching this in family-centeredness.
- Long-term funding for the IWG coordination is precarious
- Having the space for the IWG to be together and meeting in person will be challenging.
- Disappearing data and de-prioritisation of prevention in the field. There seems to be an increase in response-services rhetoric.
- Rolling back on the gains made in the field and being derailed by current events.
- The threat of a third world war has vast implications for violence and unimaginable outcomes.
- Development systems, structures and funding mechanisms often prevent us from collaborating and cooperating effectively.
- Fewer resources will increase competition between organisations fighting for a smaller pot of funding.

### Opportunities for INSPIRE and the IWG.

- The IWG should combine efforts to be a resource hub and collate everything in one repository, such as key talking points, different pitches for governments and donors, and an updated slide deck with core messaging, keeping prevention as part of the key messaging.
- Donors like collaboration. How could we submit proposals that are not expensive, collaborative, and support a specific research strand, context, or type of work?
- Reach out to people who are sceptical about helping us (even within our group or organisations) for critical feedback on our messaging.
- Bring in and pitch to people with communications experience to sense-check accuracy and speak to the audience. We need to be clear about who we are trying to influence (donors, governments, particular country or context).
- We'll need to pull on our voluntary network to continue technical support.

- INSPIRE should consider collaborating with local or provincial governments. The potential impact of this was demonstrated at the [Buenos Aires meeting](#).
- This moment in our history presents an opportunity to reduce our dependence on the United States government.

With the risks and opportunities identified, the IWG was asked to consider what this means for the IWG in 2025. Relatedly, it is unlikely that the annual in-person IWG meeting will take place since the ISS has lost its operating funds, and key players who may have been able to support the meeting are no longer allowed to participate.

### What should the IWG prioritise in 2025? Where do we go from here?

Despite the current global context, the IWG identified the following as efforts and activities that can continue to move the INSPIRE and VAC agenda forward.

- Strengthen the INSPIRE website and build its resource hub.
- Focus capacity-building efforts through the INSPIRE Massive Open Online [Course](#).
- The field has done excellent work over the years. We need to keep doing our work and align with people and organisations who believe in what we are doing.
- Engage with possible new donors.
- The IWG needs to work with communication experts to:
  - Reframe our messaging and advocacy to use terminology palatable to different political audiences.
  - Sense-check our messages.
  - The WHO offered to set up a meeting with the communications company responsible for the Global Ministerial Conference. The following members indicated participation in this meeting:
    - ISS
    - Joining Forces
    - University of Oxford

- University of Edinburgh
- To continue convening quarterly IWG meetings, especially to maintain the community and connection within the IWG and to create a thinking and sense-making space.
- The IWG expressed a need to hear the outcomes of the upcoming Rockefeller meeting.
- To share information and updates more regularly. There was a significant appetite for this to the extent that the IWG requested more regular meetings.
- To invite the SRSG-VAC to present their new Pathfinding strategy to the IWG.
- Since most secretariat members are now unable to attend the bi-weekly meetings, the space could be used to meet more regularly if and when the IWG is able to.

## Next steps

The following actions will be taken after the meeting:

- The ISS will produce and circulate a report.
- In response to the IWG's request to meet more regularly, the ISS will convene an additional IWG on 24 April 2025. The ISS will invite the SRSG-VAC to attend this meeting and present their new Pathfinding strategy.
- The WHO will set up a meeting with the communication company to refine and reframe the IWG's messaging and communications. At the time of writing, this meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. The meeting outcomes will be shared at the special IWG meeting on 24 April.

## Appendix 1: List of participants

IWG members were represented at the meeting held online on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

### INSPIRE Secretariat members:

- Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
- Care and Protection of Children Learning Network (CPC)
- Joining Forces Alliance
- World Health Organisation
- United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

### INSPIRE Implementation Working Group members:

- Child Protection Network Foundation, Inc
- Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC)
- Oxford University
- 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 Council of Churches
- World Bank