



seven strategies for preventing  
violence against children

# INSPIRE

INSPIRE Implementation Working Group Meeting

Virtual Meeting

4<sup>th</sup> December 2025

## Acronyms

ISS	Institute for Security Studies
IWG	Implementation Working Group
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries
SRS - VAC	UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General on Violence Against Children
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 fourth quarterly meeting of 2025 on 4<sup>th</sup> December (see Appendix 1 for a list of participants). The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) convened and facilitated the meeting. The recording can be viewed [here](#).

## Faming and objectives

Dr Chandre' Gould from the ISS, welcomed the IWG to the meeting and framed the meeting as follows:

Welcome to the final INSPIRE Working Group meeting of 2025. This is also likely the last Working Group meeting that I will open with a framing in my position of co-chair. We will speak about transitioning this role to another person and institution. In this input, I want to reflect on leadership and the journey we have been on together over the past three years. I want to make visible our intentions, and the theory behind the way in which Jody [the IWG coordinator] and I have approached this role.

When I stepped into this role at the end of 2022, I took over from Mark at the CPC Learning Network. The IWG had not met since 2019, just before the COVID pandemic hit. That did not mean that work was not happening, in fact CPC Learning Network did an extraordinary amount of work and produced the excellent INSPIRE MOOC as one of the key tools for capacity building and knowledge sharing about INSPIRE.

The community that was the IWG was dispersed, there was not a regular practice of meeting and no governance or policy documents that could guide decisions about who is in, and who is out, or how new members could join. There were no overt values or principles to guide the way we work together, and no strategy.

We were invited into this role because the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other members of the secretariat felt that it was important that the IWG be led by a credible

institution, and individual from the global south, especially since the work going forward was to build on the excellent and foundational work done to develop the INSPIRE framework and all the documents that can guide organisations and states to implement and evaluate the INSPIRE strategies. The focus was to be on implementation.

I would like to think that this was also a principled decision. Since many of the countries we hoped would, and indeed were, implementing INSPIRE were in the Global South (and, indeed, on our continent - Africa), having leadership representation from the Global South was important. From the start, I was conscious that, as a white woman, I did not reflect the racial demographic of my continent.

What the ISS came in to offer was community building. Our intention was to use the approach that we apply at national, provincial and local levels to bring together diverse groups to enable the use of knowledge and evidence to prevent violence.

At the time of the first IWG meeting with the ISS in this role, in Geneva in 2022, the big issues that caused tension and significant debate were how and whether to acknowledge and incorporate practice-based knowledge into a research-evidence based framework; and how and whether violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) could or should be reflected as intersecting problems. Our system has moved, changed and matured since then.

And we have survived and are surviving cataclysmic failures in leadership globally and a sea change in the allocation of resources. This cataclysmic failure of leadership is likely the acting out or the consequence of failed parenting.

Our way of working meant that when I spoke on behalf of the IWG at the Rockefeller Foundation earlier this year, I could lean on what you had all said about the IWG because we had heard all the voices. This is what you said about the IWG. That it is a platform for:

- Connection, collaboration, resource and knowledge sharing
- Sense-making, relationship strengthening and strategising in response to developments impacting VAC and INSPIRE
- Enables regular assessments of the VAC ecosystems and the implications of changes for ending violence against children (EVAC)
- It is a source of psychosocial support and connection with people in the field from across the globe which is necessary because working on VAC can be difficult and exhausting. The IWG provides a supportive, connected community that motivates, inspires and validates the work to EVAC.
- The multi-sectoral nature of the IWG ensures that multiple perspectives on VAC-related issues are shared and inform action

This is the power of the methodology. What has this got to do with our leadership contribution to the IWG?

I would like to quote Bill O'Brien, former and late CEO of Hanover Insurance, who said in relation to leadership: 'The success of an intervention depends on the interior conditions of the intervener.' This is true for the IWG, too. As a key piece of the international architecture to strengthen the prevention of VAC, the IWG's role as an intervener will only be successful when we model the change we want to see in the world, that is, the values, the ways of sharing power, the respect, empathy, collaboration and partnership and trust we hope to see practiced by states, UN institutions, NGOs and researchers.

So, our approach to meetings, where we ensure that all voices are heard and that we don't paper over conflict and tension, is not some touchy-feely nonsense. This is about building a community that can withstand challenges, engage in conflict without causing harm, and develop trusting collaborations and partnerships.

Our approach draws on evidence-based violence prevention practice - the Alternatives to Violence Programme. It also draws on systems change theory, particularly emergent systems change approaches.

Cynthia Bonicci and Francois Rayner's book '*Systems Work*' is based on an approach to systems change developed in South Africa, informed by dissatisfaction and discomfort with the technical approach to systems change being proposed, particularly by northern scholars. The three most important principles, they argue, of systems work are:

1. foster connection (building new collective identities that keep groups together while learning)
2. Embrace context (equipping primary actors to respond to everyday complexity, dynamically adapting as the context requires)
3. Re-configure power (putting decision-making and resources in the hands of primary actors, ensuring that the systems fully represent the people who live in them.

We cannot ignore power. We are in a world where the abuse of power by parents, UN institutions, state leaders, and indeed NGOs themselves is all too apparent. The consequences of this are dire. This raises big questions about how we work: conferences cannot achieve systems change - they do not reconfigure power. We have to become more intentional about how we convene and challenge ourselves.

We still have a long way to go to achieve this in this particular ecosystem, but if we want to see change in VAC and the way in which states and NGOs go about preventing violence, in other words if we want to see change in complex systems, we cannot only attend to the 'what' - the evidence, we have to attend to the *how*. How do we show up? How do we support actors? How do we listen to what people need? In East Africa, as you heard from Deo and Kati in our last meeting, there are organisations and individuals who are using these principles to inform their work. It can be done.

When I represented this group at the first convening of what has become the EVAC group that is driving the next Ministerial meeting, I made these points on our behalf: I said that we need to:

- Regularly assess the state of the ecosystem, with multisectoral audiences, locally, nationally and globally. Such assessments provide the data we need to inform action and advocacy. While strategically important, this also provides a much-needed outlet for sharing concerns, fears and opportunities.
- Maintain and strengthen existing relationships with countries, officials, practitioners, researchers, donors and, where appropriate, the private sector.
  - Maintain and improve data, evidence and information sharing
- We need to convene: one of the consequences of the change in the funding landscape is that it makes it difficult, or impossible for people to meet, in person. This makes it harder to do good analyses of the ecosystem and determine the changes needed to our advocacy and programming. It also makes it harder to resist the fragmentation of work – we were making good progress in fostering collaboration (globally and locally). Now, a reduction of spaces to where practitioners, policy makers and researchers can meet, risks increasing competition between NGOs, and between NGOs and academics. It is harder to build trust than to maintain it.
  - Monitor and track impact and action on the pledges made at the Ministerial Conferences and report on successes – we need to be accountable, and we can show outcomes.
- We need to be able to communicate success stories. In a time of uncertainty and fear, stories of hope are needed to inspire and motivate the sector.

As we think about the kind of leadership we want and need in the IWG today, going forward, let us think about whether this is still true for us and what that means for the leadership we need.

The meeting had the following objectives:

- To reconnect with the IWG
- To reflect on 2025
- To discuss governance issues relating to the INSPIRE co-chair

## INSPIRE Working Group Reflections

After the framing, which highlighted the role of leadership, the IWG was invited to reflect on their own leadership throughout 2025. This served as a check-in question for the meeting.

Participants responded to the following:

- What is one value that has served your leadership over the last year, and how?

What follows are the IWG's responses:

- Constant curiosity about wanting to build my knowledge and push myself out of my comfort zone.
- Compliance, determination and commitment to the work of EVAC.
- A sense of purpose that anchors me and enables me to keep moving forward.
- Honesty and speaking truth to power. This is something that we have achieved in the IWG, especially over the last year. The sector has been stripped from many things, in some cases our own agencies and power so we had to be more honest.
- Consistency and the importance of holding onto a position, especially an evidence-based approach to prevention.
- Accountability. Sometimes, the evidence is insufficient, and decision-makers get away with doing things that trigger more VAC.
- A combination of tenacity and empathy.
- Being present and appreciating leaders who hold space for discomfort.
- Openness to ongoing feedback.

- Trust and authentic relationships are the foundation of our work.
- Adaptability to the unexpected changes in the sector
- Team-building and the ability to move and respond accordingly.
- Pride in what has been achieved and an openness to what I do not understand.
- Listening and seeking to understand other perspectives.
- Maintain integrity in our work.

## The INSPIRE Evidence Update

At the previous quarterly IWG meeting, Madison Little from the University of Oxford presented a deep dive on the findings and implications of the INSPIRE Evidence Update. The Evidence Update has since been [published](#). The aim of this session was to delve deeper into the Update, particularly to ensure that the IWG has the information, understanding, and knowledge needed to share it with actors and institutions. The session began with inviting the IWG to journal on the following two questions:

1. What do you still need to understand or know in order to use the Evidence Update well?
2. Where, with whom, and how do I see myself using the Evidence Update?

Thereafter, the IWG shared the answers to the questions in breakout groups. What follows are the group's reflections on the first question, organised in themes:

### What do you still need to understand or know in order to use the Evidence Update well?

#### **Evidence-based relation questions and reflections:**

- What are the critiques and gaps of the current evidence base?
- How can we support researchers to be involved in the Update?

- The IWG must reach an agreement on how it will approach/communicate with different stakeholders, including new donors in the field and the private sector.
- The IWG needs clear messaging on what is known about the evidence base and what is not.
- There needs to be a stronger focus on how climate change impacts VAC.

**Questions and reflections relating to the Update’s dissemination plan, knowledge products, communications, and next steps:**

- What are the future plans for the Update? Will future plans include a multi-lingual review? Will the Evidence Update be translated into different languages?
- A key need is a knowledge translation piece on programming guidance, how to use the Update for grant applications, and capacity-building for staff.
- Key advocacy messages are needed for:
  - to enable the field to hold leaders accountable
  - and to justify and support evidence for multisectoral collaboration, and to show why sectors should invest in a whole systems approach.
- One of the knowledge products should address shifts in evidence, specifically what it means for the field if the strength of evidence for certain interventions or programs has decreased and what this means for practice.
- We need to be truthful about the nuances of the evidence, capturing the complexity of what it means for practice on the ground.
- There is a need for analysis or communication on the intersections, similarities and differences between the INSPIRE and RESPECT frameworks.
- Will the Update be integrated into the INSPIRE framework, and how?
- How do we address the question of technology-facilitated VAC? There is a collective agreement that the field hasn’t yet bridged that gap.
- How will the Update reach the audiences it is intended for?
- How can we better engage children and survivors in this conversation?

- How do we best use the Update, given the current state of the sector? How do we strategically position the Update?

### **Implementation-related questions**

- How do we move governments, cities and municipalities from evidence into action?
- How do we appropriately convey the nuances of evidence?
- The field needs a common language around systems change and systems approaches.
- How can we utilise the Update to encourage governments to continue their commitment to VAC?
- How do we enable governments to take the first step?

Thereafter, there was a discussion on several matters, which is summarised as follows:

- Georgia State University reminded the IWG that the original impetus for the Evidence Update was to address criticisms that INSPIRE was not rigorous or evidence-based. Therefore, the intention was never to address both the criticisms and the complex implementation questions in the Evidence Update. It was further acknowledged that, while the Update was necessary to address criticism of INSPIRE's evidence base, it is insufficient to drive implementation.
- Regarding implementation questions, the WHO noted that the IWG and the field have been implementing INSPIRE for years. However, a different approach is required to achieve the desired traction and impact at the country level.
- The ISS mentioned that the EVAC Strategy Group had met recently. The meeting began planning for the second Global Ministerial Conference on VAC, scheduled for November 2026. It will be hosted by the government of the Philippines and co-convened by the WHO, UNICEF and likely UNODC and the SRSV-VAC. One of the objectives of the second Ministerial Conference is to ensure that evidence on VAC and VAC prevention is well represented. It was proposed that the IWG champion this. The IWG expressed interest in pursuing work to support the presentation/use of evidence at the Ministerial

Conference. The following IWG members expressed interest in forming a sub-committee to take this forward in 2026:

- Georgetown University,
- Georgia State University
- World Vision International
- ISS
- University of Oxford
- University of Edinburgh,
- CPC Learning Network
- Universidad de los Andes
- Red por la Infancia
- WHO
- UNICEF Innocentii (potentially).

It was noted that this sub-committee is currently comprised of Global North institutions and that IWG members from the Global South would need to be approached to ensure better representation. Relatedly, several IWG members expressed that championing INSPIRE, the evidence-based and learnings from implementing and adapting INSPIRE, it will be important to think about *how* to do this at the Ministerial Conference. One proposal was to move away from a seminar or conference-style approach where experts are “talking at” governments. Instead, the IWG should consider adopting a methodology that enables relationship-building with governments to understand their position and challenges in addressing VAC.

Next, Greta Massetti from Georgia State University provided an overview of the Evidence Update's dissemination plan.

- At the time of writing, the Update has been [published](#) with a [commentary](#). It was also presented at the one-year anniversary webinar of the Global Ministerial Conference on VAC in November 2025.
- The Update will be published in print in January 2026.
- The team is developing seven short, plain-language policy briefs for each strategy. These are currently being finalised.
- A webinar focused on the update will be held in April 2026. This will be hosted in partnership with key partners, including SVRI and ISPCAN. The IWG was requested to advertise and circulate the webinar within their networks.
- Over the course of 2026, a social media series titled '*INSPIRE 10 years of evidence and action*' will be launched. This will elevate success stories, programmes and strategies that have been implemented and adapted in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The IWG was called to share examples of success stories from their organisation, if they wish to be included in the digital series.

### [Presentation on Exploring the Science and Art of Violence Prevention: Reflections from the Implementation of a Public Health Approach](#)

Lara Snowdon, a PhD researcher at the WHO Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention at Liverpool John Moores University, UK, provided a [presentation](#) on her PhD research. She also works as Violence Prevention Programme Lead at Public Health Wales.

The presentation shared emerging findings from a qualitative study exploring the implementation of a public health approach to violence prevention. It draws on interviews with international violence prevention experts, including academics, programme leads working across NGOs, UN agencies, and governments, to examine how a public health approach to violence prevention is implemented in practice. It highlights the role of collaboration, adaptation, pragmatism, and professional judgement in navigating complex, political

implementation environments. The data were analysed using multi-level perspective theory and policy transfer theory.

Findings demonstrate the enabling factors and barriers to embedding prevention approaches within national systems, and how actors manage the balance between fidelity to evidence and responsiveness to local context. A summary of the research includes:

- Structural barriers to adopting a public health approach to violence prevention include competing global priorities, normalisation of violence, major shifts in international landscapes and patriarchal.
- National or regional factors that enable implementation include long-term funding, adopting a whole-systems approach, and researcher-practitioner partnerships. Barriers on this level include short political and funding timeframes, overly interventionist and technocratic approaches and sectoral siloes.
- The analysis identified four 'meta' challenges facing the violence prevention sector.
  - Field fragmentation – multiple disconnected interventions and fragmentation across different types of violence. In other words, there is little integration across the field.
  - Political fragility – short time frames and political shifts are in contradiction to the long timeframes required for violence prevention impacts.
  - Power and inequality gaps – communities with the highest burden tend to be the least reached, historical inequality of colonialisms; and working to disrupt power is not central to violence prevention efforts.
  - Interventionism – states and funders prefer interventions that change individuals rather than systems.
- Violence prevention practice must use evidence and political advocacy. It must be deliberate in addressing issues of power.

## INSPIRE Governance and leadership

The final session of the meeting focused on the leadership transition as the ISS steps down as INSPIRE co-chair. The session focused on two matters in this regard and sought the IWG's input and reflections on:

1. The proposed role and characteristics of an INSPIRE co-chair
2. A process for selecting the new co-chair

It should be noted that this session was to begin the process of appointing a new co-chair to take over from the ISS, with the WHO remaining as the other co-chair.

### *The proposed role of an INSPIRE co-chair*

- Ensure the effective functioning and sustainability of the IWG
  - Ensure regular meetings take place and reports are produced and shared
  - Ensure that the IWG regularly review and updates its objectives
  - Ensure governance polices are developed as required
  - To promote and be an ambassador for INSPIRE
- Create enabling conditions for the IWG to meet its objectives.
  - Ensure that meeting processes are well-designed and the interactive style of the meeting is maintained
- Manage and oversee the IWG coordination
- Anticipated time commitment:
  - Institutional backing for a minimum of 2-3 years.
  - Time commitment: 2/3 hours/week, approximately and occasional travel

The IWG agreed on the above and raised no additional comments or changes.

### *Proposed characteristics of the INSPIRE co-chair (individually and institutionally).*

- Credibility in the field

- Convening power
- Offer thought leadership
- Strategic and acts in the interests of the collective
- Visionary with a good understanding of the field
- Able to work with conflict and difficult situations
- Good communicator
- Valued/respected authority in the field of evidence and data

The CPC raised a question on whether the co-chair should be an institution from the Global South. Ideally, this would ensure balanced representation across co-chairs (the INSPIRE co-chair can be seen as a position of power) and maintain continuity from the ISS, a Global South institution.

Georgia State University responded, stating that this issue was discussed at a previous secretariat meeting. While it is possible that several institutions from the Global North and South may be nominated for the position of co-chair, there is also the possibility that there may only be one nomination. The IWG will need to balance the realities of the nominations with the ideal of Global South representation. If, for example, the new co-chair is a UN institution, then the implications of having both co-chairs from the UN would need to be considered. In closing, Georgia State University said that it would be preferable for the new co-chair to represent the Global South.

The University of Edinburgh proposed that if Global South representation cannot be secured for the next co-chair, then more Global South organisations should be invited to join the IWG. There was a collective agreement on this.

#### *Proposed process for selecting the new co-chair*

The following process was proposed to the IWG for a new co-chair:

The INSPIRE coordinator will circulate the IWG's call for nominations for a new co-chair. Nominations should be submitted with a one-page write-up explaining how the nominee meets the criteria as outlined above. Self-nominations are also welcome. Submissions will end at the end of January 2026. Nominations and selection for a new co-chair will be done at the first quality IWG meeting in 2026.

All IWG members agreed on this process.

### Next steps

The following will be actioned after the meeting:

- A meeting report will be produced and circulated.
- The committee will circulate the call for co-chair nominations with a deadline of January 31, 2026.
- The 2026 IWG quarterly meeting dates will be announced as:
  - Q1: 5th March 2026
  - Q2: 24-25th June 2026
  - Q3: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2026
  - Q4: 3rd December 2026

## Appendix 1: List of participants

IWG members were represented at the meeting held online on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

### INSPIRE Secretariat members:

- Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
- Joining Forces Alliance
- CPC Learning Network
- World Health Organisation
- Georgetown University
- Georgia State University

### INSPIRE Implementation Working Group members:

- Child Protection Network Foundation, Inc
- Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC)
- Oxford University
- Red Por La Infancia
- Sexual Violence Research Initiative
- Together for Girls
- Plan International
- International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- Universidad de los Andes
- University of Edinburgh
- UNICEF Innocenti
- Violence Prevention Alliance Jamaica
- World Council of Churches
- World Vision International | CSO Forum