



Global Ministerial Conference
on ending **violence against**
children

Guidance Note

Children, youth, public survivor, and civil society engagement



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Background

The first-ever Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children will be held on 7–8 November 2024, in Bogota, Colombia. It is co-hosted by the Government of Colombia, the Government of Sweden, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (UNSRSGVAC).

Bringing together governments, international organizations, donors, children and youth, civil society organisations (CSOs), public survivors and survivor leaders, the Conference seeks to establish new commitments from governmental and non-state actors. In doing so, it aims to make a reality of a child’s right to protection under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the promise of SDG Target 16.2 to end all violence against children (VAC).

Children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders all play a critical role in preventing and responding to VAC. They are central actors in the Conference, with this Guidance Note outlining key principles and recommendations around their inclusion, representation, and engagement – leading up to and during the event itself.


It should also be noted, that although the violence experienced by children (under 18) is the focus of the Conference, youth (defined as 18 - 24+ years) serve as a critical group of allies and advocates, often with recent lived experience of violence as children. The presence and participation of both before, during and after the event is essential.

This Guidance Note was developed by the Brave Movement, Civil Society Forum, and Restless Development, and was informed by materials and evidence from other affiliated organizations and networks¹. It is aimed at Conference organizers and partners to ensure that active opportunities are created for – and where possible with – meaningful representation of child, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders. Let us ensure that these voices are heard and considered throughout all proceedings.

Diverse and supportive voices

Children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders, all work closely in this space. They play an important role and can use their respective voices and expertise to hold governments to account and inform, design, and implement policy and programme work to end VAC.

¹ Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805cb0ca



It is important to remember that each group is distinct and brings their own unique perspective to the debates. For all engagement opportunities, the distinctness of their respective contributions, as individuals and as different actors, will need to be considered. For example, in many countries, especially low-income and fragile countries, CSOs provide critical services and bring valuable experience and knowledge on what it takes to end VAC.

Representation matters

A quarter of the world's population are children under the age of 18. They are not a homogenous group. Rather they reflect the diversity of “all nations, and all peoples and all segments of society” as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Their allies are similarly diverse. When it comes to who is speaking from the perspective of children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders, representation matters. We must encourage and enable as broad a representation as possible.

Ahead of the conference


1. Framing and ambition

The framing, themes, and ambition for the Conference are critical strategic elements that will inform event outcomes, including policy and financial commitments. Efforts to engage children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders, are underway notably through the engagement and governance processes set out above.

Action(s): Allow and enable space for diverse voices and perspectives, including the timely translation of key documents into local languages. Develop and include child-friendly information that will enable different stakeholders to easily provide input and comments.

2. Proactive engagement in preparations for the Conference and its proceedings

Public survivors, survivor leaders and CSOs have been invited to proactively participate in Conference preparation, planning and proceedings. We welcome and encourage this. Mechanisms for representation in the global governance of the Conference currently include the “Group of Friends”, an Advisory Working Group, town hall meetings, and associated processes and consultations.



Action(s): Proactive outreach to invite and engage children in the preparation and planning of the Conference and its proceedings. The exploration of appropriate, safe, and meaningful ways to include children in governance arrangements, in a similar manner to the inclusion of other stakeholder groups. Convene standalone sessions to specifically prepare children, young people, public survivors and survivor leaders for their engagement at the Conference.

3. Engagement in national preparation processes

Participating countries are encouraged to organize a national preparation process, culminating in the organization of National Ministerial Preparatory Sessions (NPS) and the development of national commitments to ending VAC – to be presented at the Conference.

The NPSs will bring together government, senior political representatives from education, health, justice, social welfare, interior, and finance, as well as members of the national stakeholder platform to end VAC, including non-government partners. These sessions will be organized with support from UNICEF, WHO, and the UNSRSGVAC in approximately 40 “Bright Spot” countries, as well as in other interested countries.

Action(s): Enable children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders to be active members of the NPSs and any associated national committees. Create an accessible and safe space that enables authentic contributions and ensures their voice is heard.


4. Policy development: submissions and calls to action

At all levels – national, regional, and global – children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders should be included in the discussions shaping policy and financial commitments. The NPS is critical to ensuring that their voices and experiences are included and heard. Adequate space should also be provided to governments and international institutions to be encouraged to be more ambitious with policy commitments.

Action(s): Ensure that children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders are facilitated into negotiations during NPS, and into any global declaration, roadmap or Conference outcome. Provide formal channels so that official contributions and submissions can be made.

5. Awareness raising

Children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders will play an important role in promoting the Conference and mobilizing demands for stronger action to end VAC in and beyond the event.



Action(s): Make time and space for children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders to lead or take up campaigning and communications opportunities that raise awareness of VAC, the importance of the Conference, and make a call for national and global action.

During the conference

6. Representation in national delegations to the Conference

We strongly encourage governments to prioritize the inclusion of children as part of their official delegations to the Conference, and to consider including representatives of youth, CSO, public survivors and survivor leaders as appropriate.

Action(s): Member States to engage with relevant specialist organizations and networks working with these groups, to facilitate such representation.

7. Role of inside events and high-level sessions

Throughout the Conference, representatives of children, youth, CSO, public survivors and survivor leaders will be participating in panels, sessions, and proceedings. Let us ensure that they are given space to actively contribute to conversations and sessions.

Action(s): In every session, integrate child and, as appropriate, a youth, public survivor and/or survivor leader, and CSO. Where possible, sessions should be designed in partnership with identified stakeholder groups. Organize preparatory sessions ahead of the Conference and put in place rigorous and robust safeguarding measures to ensure the safe participation of children.

8. Share their own experience

When it comes to the role of children, youth, public survivors and survivor leaders, it is for the individual to decide whether or not they want to share their own experiences, and in how much detail. This recognition applies to the guidance they should receive for a session, as well as any questions posed to them in a question-and-answer session.

Action(s): Show respect for the views and opinions sincerely expressed by individuals, even where disagreements may exist. For children, young people, public survivors and survivor leaders, let them have the questions to answer agreed upon, ahead of time.

9. Facilitation of activist and activation spaces

Civil society, children, youth, public survivors and survivor leaders will need space to undertake activism, activations, and campaign activities, which are safe and strategic. These must not feel separate from the main Conference and should be integral to the Conference to further discussions and engagement.

Action(s): Make activist areas available in places where duty-bearers will be able to engage and use them. Enable these areas to be co-convened by children, young people, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders.

10. Specific and safe spaces

It is important to think about the safe spaces that children, young people, public survivors and survivor leaders need to advocate in. It might be difficult for children and youth to feel comfortable in seemingly safe spaces, due to their experiences of exploitation or harm. We have a responsibility to ensure that the space provided has been approved by representatives of those groups.

Action(s): Conference organizers should facilitate the provision of both on-site psychological support and safeguarding teams (including for public and non-disclosed survivors). This support should be organized by specialist and experienced organizations, taking into account the needs of children and adult survivors.

After the conference

In line with this Guidance, it should be noted that children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders will reflect on the delivery of established good practice. Their reflections will inform future global political processes and conferences on ending VAC.

Action(s): Follow up with children, youth, CSOs, public survivors and survivor leaders. Debrief with them on their experiences and the next steps following the Conference, aligned with commitments and roadmaps agreed during the event.