Framework for Civil Society Engagement in The Global Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children

1. Introduction

The Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children will take place on November 7-8, 2024, in Bogota, Colombia. Co-hosted by the Governments of Colombia and Sweden, along with WHO, UNICEF, and the UNSGSRVAC, the Conference aims to establish new commitments, launch Pathfinding 2.0, and create a child and youth-led movement to end violence against children. It also aims to develop an inter-governmentally consulted outcome document that may call for a Decade of Action to End Violence against Children.

Civil society plays a critical role in preventing and responding to violence against children (VAC) and can significantly contribute to the Conference's success. This framework outlines key principles and opportunities for CSOs to participate globally and nationally and support the outcomes of the conference. It was developed by the Civil Society Forum to End Violence Against Children in collaboration with the Joining Forces Alliance.

2. Objectives and Principles of the CSO Engagement Framework

The main objective of the Framework is to support CSOs and CSO networks/coalitions that are working to address VAC to participate in the preparation and proceedings of the Conference:

The Framework endorses three key principles:

- **Unity in diversity**: CSOs are stronger when working collectively through existing coalitions and networks, pooling evidence and amplifying their voices.
- **Centering child and child survivor voices**: CSOs should prioritize genuine grassroots experiences and ensure meaningful participation of children and child survivors throughout the Conference.
- **Proactive engagement**: CSOs are encouraged to actively participate in the preparation process, join planning committees, and engage in the Conference with clear priorities and outcomes.

3. Opportunities for Engagement Ahead of the Conference

3.1 National Preparation Process and National Ministerial Preparation Sessions

Countries participating in the Conference should arrange a national preparation process, including National Ministerial Preparatory Sessions (NPS), to develop commitments to end violence against
children. NPS, led by senior government officials, will involve various stakeholders such as government representatives, NGOs, and UN agencies.

In ideal scenario:

- A national planning committee should be formed, inclusive of civil society organizations (CSOs), to facilitate this process;
- CSOs, selected by relevant networks, should participate in NPS, especially in Listening Sessions.
- CSO should be invited to prepare and present an official civil society submission to NPS.
- CSOs should lead and co-organise government/CSO/survivor/children dialogues on solutions to critical gaps identified in response to ending VAC in preparation for the NPS.

Where CSO involvement may be limited, NPS agendas should still include Listening Sessions and the space created for CSOs to prepare and submit official statements as well as to engage in bilateral dialogues on national commitment.

To prepare for participation in the NPS, the CSO networks/coalitions are encouraged to liaise with UNICEF and WHO country teams to join and support the national preparation process and national planning committees.

3.2 Joint Advocacy and Social Mobilisation in Preparations for the NPS and Global Conference at the National Level

CSO coalitions/networks are key in aiding NPS organization and government participation at the Inter-Ministerial Conference. They can raise public awareness and amplify the voices of children and survivors in the NPS process. Collaboration with other stakeholders, including UN agencies and existing EVAC networks, is encouraged. Possible activities include:

3.2.1 Promote strengthened national efforts and investment to address violence against children:

- Organize consultations to develop an official CSO submission for the NPS, covering VAC problems, progress, evidence-based solutions, and recommendations. Use CSO experience, existing research, and progress reports for input.
- Send letters to ministries encouraging high-level government representation at the Conference, urging the government to organize the NPS, and utilize evidence and recommendations from CSOs and children in the NPS proceedings and national commitment.¹
- Hold policy dialogues and meetings with government officials including in partnership with other relevant stakeholders (UNICEF, WHO, etc...) to share the experience of children, provide data, and propose evidence-based solutions to EVAC in response to ending VAC in preparation for the NPS.
- Establish a platform for children's involvement in preparation by assisting with their NPS submissions and arranging meetings/dialogues with government stakeholders.²
- Select representatives for participation at the NPS based on consensus choices.

¹ Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, etc.
² Guidance with instructions on engaging children/young people including safeguarding procedures will be developed with support from Restless Development.
- Collect and systematise evidence based on effective interventions, services, and programmes that are delivered by CSOs alongside recommendations for national uptake and scale-up and that can inform national declaration.
- Explain the case for increased and more effective investment in EVAC and the costs of inaction.
- Encourage relevant governments to report on progress achieved against SDG 16.2 and other EVAC-relevant targets in their National Voluntary Reviews.
- Support governments to ensure that commitments to EVAC are included in the Summit of the Future³.

3.2.2  **Engage the public in support of national efforts to EVAC**

- Increase children’s and the public’s awareness of EVAC in their country and what needs to be done to address violence against children e.g., through organizing public and media events.
- Draw attention to national efforts and commitments on EVAC including for the Global Ministerial Conference e.g., by sharing information on different media outlets including social media.

3.3 Participation in Global Governance of the Conference

CSOs are represented in the global governance of the Conference through four associations: Joining Forces Alliance, Brave Movement, ISPCAN, and Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. These groups, along with CSO Forum members, contribute to Conference planning and ensure CSO perspectives shape the agenda and outcomes. They advocate for meaningful child participation and may support the development of a Child Manifesto if requested by children.

3.4 Information Sharing and Soliciting Inputs from CSOs in Preparations for the Conference

WHO hosts bi-monthly town hall meetings to facilitate open dialogue with CSOs and stakeholders. Additionally, the upcoming CSO Forum will conduct webinars, dialogues, and information sharing through its Facebook page and listserv to gather and disseminate CSO contributions and views to organizers and governance bodies.

4.  **CSO Participation at the Conference**

4.1 **CSO Representation in National Delegations to the Global Conference**

Governments are urged to incorporate designated CSO representatives into their official Conference delegation. The CSO representatives should be selected by the relevant CSO coalition/network for EVAC ensuring diverse CSO experiences, considering language proficiency, ability to represent the country's CSO coalition, and existing CSO Focal Points.

4.2 **Participation at the Global Conference**

³ The Summit is a high-level event, bringing world leaders together to forge a new international consensus on how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future. The aim of the Summit is twofold: accelerate efforts to meet our existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. This will be achieved through an action-oriented outcome document called the Pact for the Future. The Pact will be negotiated, and endorsed by countries in the lead-up to and during the Summit in September 2024.
CSOs will have an opportunity to come together virtually and in person with Ministers the day before the Conference to share and discuss their perspectives, priorities, and recommendations. This ‘CSO ‘Seat at the Table’ session will also create space for voices from children and survivors’ organisations. The programme for the session will be developed by CSOs in collaboration with the co-organisers. In preparation for this session, CSOs will have an opportunity to develop CSO-led recommendations and Call to Action. These will be integrated into the programme and deliberations of the Ministerial Conference. Furthermore, this will be an opportunity for CSOs to come together as a constituency and strengthen their global and regional coordination and networking.

CSO representatives will actively participate in panels, sessions, and proceedings throughout the four-day Conference. They will have opportunities to contribute to discussions and sessions. A joint CSO statement and call to action will be delivered on the Political/Ministerial Day. Additional opportunities during the technical day and satellite events allow CSOs to showcase their expertise and share new research on ending violence against children.

5. **Beyond the Conference**

CSO networks/coalitions, both nationally and globally, should set success indicators for their engagement early in the process. They should hold at least one post-Conference meeting to assess achievements and challenges, informing future engagements. Importantly, they should monitor commitment implementation after the Conference, aligning with existing accountability processes such as CRC reporting and VNRs.
Annexes: Resources to Support CSO Engagement

Annex 1: Key Resources and Reports

1) Information on Pathfinder countries and list of countries is available on the End Violence Against Children website https://www.end-violence.org/pathfinding-countries to guide the understanding of existing countries committed to the Pathfinder initiative.


3) National accountability framework to end violence against women and girls https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Media/Publications/UNIFEM/EVA_Wkit_01_10pointChecklist_en.pdf

4) The 2006 UN Secretary-General Study on Violence against Children on the extent and causes of all forms of violence against children and recommendations for action https://www.unviolencestudy.org/ and the 2013 follow-up survey of recent global trends and updated recommendations, as well as specific country profiles.

5) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Countries ratified the CRC’s the main international legal foundation for the right of children to be protected from violence and the related obligations of State parties, care-givers and other stakeholders that enter into contact with children https://childrightsconnect.org/

6) General Comment No. 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf


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4 This list will be regularly updated and expanded.
## Annex 2: Glossary

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<th>TERM</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<td>‘Bright Spots’ Countries</td>
<td>These are countries identified by the co-organisers as those with proven commitment to ending child violence and shown the propensity to implement policy and practice change at the national level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Society Organization (CSO) Networks/Coalitions</td>
<td>These are coalitions of child-focused organizations working together to harness the collective power of CSOs to end violence against children.</td>
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<td>Decade of Action to End Violence Against Children</td>
<td>The United Nations Decade of Action implores communities and nations together to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development to help reduce the risk of violence in children’s lives and provide effective responses for child victims. Decade of Action to End VAC is proposed document to spearhead the implementation of the Agenda 2030.</td>
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<td>National Ministerial Preparatory Sessions (NPS)</td>
<td>The NPS are conceived as preparatory sessions for the Ministerial Conference that provide opportunities for member states to prepare lessons learned around the implementation of ending violence against children, define ways to scale up proven strategies, and agree on renewed commitments to end violence against children.</td>
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<td>The UN Secretary General’s Special Representative on Ending Violence Against Children (UNSGSRVAC)</td>
<td>The UNSGSRVAC is a global independent advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. The mandate of the SRSG is anchored in human rights standards, promoting the universal ratification and effective implementation of core international conventions. The SRSG cooperates closely with human rights bodies and mechanisms, with UN funds and programmes and specialized agencies, and with regional organizations. She also promotes cooperation with national institutions and civil society organizations, including children and young people.</td>
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<td>Pathfinding Countries</td>
<td>These are countries whose leaders have made a formal, public commitment to comprehensive action to end all forms of violence against children and embark on a nationally-driven process to develop a multi-sectoral action plan informed by evidence-based solutions.</td>
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<td>World Health Assembly Resolution</td>
<td>World Health Assembly resolution endorsed the first ever WHO Global plan of action on strengthening the role of the health system within a national multi-sectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women, girls, and children.</td>
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