CONCLUSIVE
REPORT

Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean

23–24 OCTOBER 2025

PAHO Pan American Health Organization World Health Organization Americas Region

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Conclusive report: Regional Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents (VAC) in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Maestral.

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FOREWORD

Violence against children and adolescents remains one of the most urgent and persistent challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. Aware of this reality, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) convened the Regional Consultation to deepen the available evidence, share progress, and strengthen joint actions aimed at preventing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of violence present in the region.

This report synthesizes the main inputs generated through this process, including normative frameworks, evidence-based interventions, models of intersectoral coordination, and good practices implemented by participating States. The document also integrates contributions from specialists, national technical teams, civil society organizations, and community actors, whose participation made it possible to identify persistent gaps, opportunities for improvement, and key areas for regional cooperation.

It is expected that this report will support decision-making, strategic planning, and the articulation of public policies by promoting comprehensive and sustained responses that ensure prevention, early detection, and timely attention to violence. This technical synthesis serves as a tool to advance toward more robust, coordinated systems that effectively uphold the protection of children and adolescents throughout the region.

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

United Nations Children's Fund and the Pan American Health Organization extend their appreciation to the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to the public institutions, civil society organizations, academia, and international partners that participated in the Regional Consultation to end violence against children and adolescents. Their commitment, expertise, and technical contributions were essential to the development of this space for exchange, learning, and cooperation.

Special recognition is given to survivors, advocates, youth activists, and artists who shared their experiences and perspectives throughout the consultation. Their voices—critical for guiding more humane, inclusive, and effective policies and practices—strengthened the collective purpose of advancing toward a region free from violence.

We also thank the technical teams of both organizations and of the participating countries, whose preparation, coordination, and support made this regional gathering possible. We also thank RedZebra for the management of the virtual space for the conference and Maestral for preparing this report. The commitment demonstrated by all actors underscores the importance of continuing to promote multisectoral and sustained actions that safeguard the rights and well-being of every child and adolescent in the region.

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LACRO	UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
ONU	United Nations
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Violence Against Children
VACS	Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys
VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children
WHO	World Health Organization

POEM:

"ONE IN FIVE"

(1 IN 5)

by Akeem Chandler-Prescod [1]

One in five, one in five girls will become a seamstress before the age of 18. They will learn to stitch silence into their lips and sew their tongues to the back of their throat in the same pattern of all the women that came before them.

They will try to patchwork their personality with the parts not touched but so many have been touched, so many bodies have been embroidered with trauma, so many have had their innocence unraveled, pulled by men that could turn skin into fabric, who can fold their entire childhood into a family secret, so many go untreated, retreating into solitude with no one to count on.

So many daughters lost in the data and the day to day dangers of just being. One in five girls will become wounded before they become one, become moving boundary line defined by another navigating her map of consent. So many become the contents of a UN report, a case study, a hole to hold hurt with hands too soft to sculpt anything but survival from this rough life.

One in five become a headline that the other four hate to write. How do you hem a heart into healing, amend the memory of a mother tearing up after hearing how her daughter was torn apart? How many children must become charts, their days ending in diagrams? Why experts try to graph their grief? How many have been plotted on since their early teens, their sweet 16, soured by a ravenous lust, by a touch that leaves them bitter? How many don't care for the caress of caregivers? You say the best memories happen when you're small, but one in five girls will beg to differ.

How many backs must bend before a system breaks? How many more periods must come late because a girl's purity was taken early? How many more before the evidence becomes policy and fear stops being a first language spoken in anguish? We already know the damage so what is next for repair?

How do we stitch the tears in the fabric of our society to stop the bleeding, the carterise, the leaking, the spear? Because every number has a name and every name deserves a nation that will listen. We can't keep burying the bullets and call it peace.

We need to fund the silence out of the streets, treat safety like infrastructure, something to be built, something to be maintained, something that can host as many names as needed. We must disarm indifference before it could pull another trigger. This world cannot keep tallying trauma.

45 million whispers will never become a movement if a system remains torn down. So, let's train our healers, so no girl has to beg for her body to be believed. Let hospitals speak in the language of dignity. Let justice be written on her mother's tongue. Let the first response not be doubt but one of deliverance, so one in five become a statistic that we no longer have to mention. So all the girls, all the women, all the children can live a life where they do not have to stitch themselves back together.

One in five. No, scratch that, five in five. Girls in the Caribbean and Latin America deserve better.

1 Literal audio transcript.

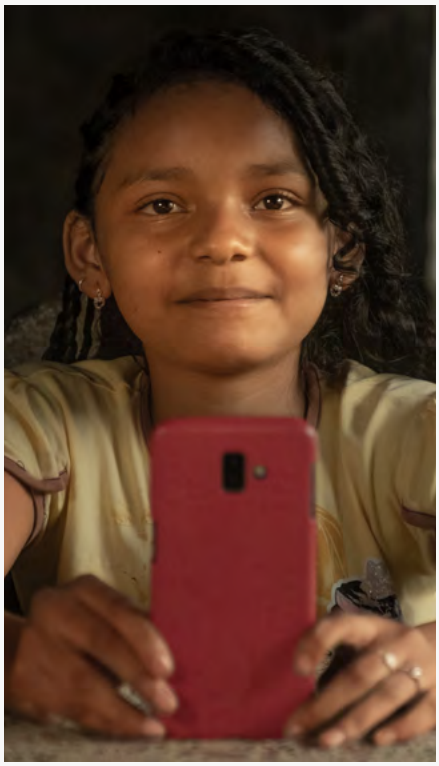
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Consultation to End Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, held on 23 and 24 October 2025, brought together ministerial representatives, international organizations, experts, civil society organizations, and young activists from many countries in the region, with active participation from more than 300 people. The overall objective was to generate a space for the exchange of experiences, good practices, and common challenges, and advance towards the eradication of violence against children and adolescents in the region.

Organized by the United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNICEF-LACRO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the consultation had the following objectives:

- Reflect on the progress made in the prevention of Violence Against Children (VAC) and identify effective, evidence-based strategies to accelerate the elimination of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Identify key measures adopted as a follow-up to the pledges made at the Bogota conference and related lessons learnt from advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Examine in-depth policies and programmes to prevent and respond to VAC, including armed violence, sexual violence, and corporal punishment, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Violence against children and adolescents is an urgent priority in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region has the highest rates of child homicides in the world, as well as high rates of sexual violence and corporal punishment. Violence against children and adolescents not only violates fundamental rights but also limits social and economic development, with losses estimated at up to three per cent of regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Faced with this reality, the regional consultation sought to strengthen governance, promote multisectoral coordination, and accelerate the implementation of evidence-based preventive and response policies.



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Violence against children and adolescents not only violates fundamental rights, but also limits social and economic development, with losses estimated at up to three percent of regional GDP.

During the conference, several countries highlighted the normative and policy frameworks they have developed to address violence comprehensively. These frameworks include specific laws prohibiting violence in all its forms, national protection systems, multisectoral policies, and national strategies to end violence involving the health, education, justice, and social and child protection sectors. The deliberations, testimonies, and experiences shared reflect both progress and persistent challenges in the region, underscoring that violence is not inevitable but is preventable with political will, sustained investment, and coordinated cross-sectoral action.

This report organized the main findings, reflections, good practices, and recommendations from the event into four central thematic areas.

1. Legal policy frameworks to prevent and respond to VAC
2. Parenting programmes to break cycles of violence against children and adolescents
3. Safe and enabling learning environments
4. Comprehensive protection and health services to respond to violence

Countries such as **Cuba, Chile, and Brazil** showcased advances in translating legislation into practice through codes and statutes that explicitly prohibit corporal punishment and safeguard children's rights and safety in digital and educational spaces. These reforms represent regional efforts to institutionalize multisectoral protection systems that integrate justice, health, education, and technology within coherent, funded national policies.

Evidence from **Belize, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Mexico, and Paraguay** reaffirmed that positive parenting programmes are pivotal for breaking intergenerational cycles of violence. These initiatives (ranging from home-based parenting sessions to large-scale national policies) demonstrate how family-centered approaches, cultural adaptation, and intersectoral coordination can transform norms and strengthen emotional bonds between children and adolescents and their caregivers. While countries have made strides in replacing punitive practices with empathy-based care, sustainability remains a challenge due to limited national funding and dependence on international cooperation. Nonetheless, the inclusion of children and adolescents in the design and evaluation of policies reflects growing recognition of their right to participate and the democratization of child protection systems.

The discussion on safe and enabling learning environments highlighted the school as a critical space for preventing violence and promoting social transformation. Experiences from **Costa Rica, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic** showed comprehensive approaches that combine restorative practices, teacher and family training, digital monitoring systems, and cultural transformation initiatives. Jamaica's Safe School Policy, Costa Rica's SEGURED system, and the Dominican Republic's Culture of Peace strategy collectively exemplify a shift from reactive disciplinary models to proactive, participatory, and inclusive educational environments. These experiences underscore that ensuring school safety requires institutional leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term investment in students' social and emotional well-being.

Finally, the session on comprehensive protection and health services emphasized the health sector's central role as the first point of contact for survivors of violence. Countries such as **Barbados, Peru, Uruguay, Colombia, and Bolivia** presented models that connect health, justice, and social protection through trauma-informed, rights-based, and culturally sensitive care. National strategies incorporating mental health services, early detection systems, and community engagement demonstrate how integrated responses can break cycles of abuse.

All these contributions were strengthened by the presentation of the research findings [2] of ODI Global, in collaboration with UNICEF and PAHO, which examines the magnitude of violence against children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as effective strategies for its prevention and response. The study shows that while millions of children and adolescents

2 Marcus, R. et. al., Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean: New data and solutions, United Nations Children's Fund, Panama City, Panama, 2025.

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experience violence each year, it is preventable through evidence-based policies and programmes, including laws prohibiting punishment, professional training, family support, safe schools, and comprehensive services.

The most effective strategies include: i) programmes and community spaces that prevent risky or violent behaviors in children and adolescents; ii) positive parenting programmes for parents and caregivers; iii) accessible helplines for complaints and immediate attention; iv) prevention of bullying, and v) digital literacy.

The study emphasizes the importance of scaling up these interventions by integrating them into existing systems and by promoting decentralization, operational simplicity, and local adaptation – as in the case of GREAT[3], KIVA[4] , or the ACT[5] programmes. To ensure that no child is left behind, four key approaches are proposed: i) listen to the most vulnerable, ii) trust communities, iii) make inclusion a norm, and iv) implement comprehensive responses. The study also emphasizes the need to address gender norms that perpetuate inequality and violence against girls and adolescents.

The study identifies six priority actions for governments and partners: i) strengthen laws; ii) assume multisectoral responsibilities; iii) collaborate with civil society; iv) make evidence-based investments; v) promote cultural change or positive social norms campaigns; and vi) integrate solutions into existing services. It emphasizes that preventing all forms of violence becomes possible when political leaders translate their will into long-term, coordinated action.

KEY ACTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

Participants prioritized strengthening prevention and promoting protective environments, followed by intersectoral and inter-institutional coordination, training frontline personnel, the participation of children, adolescents, and families, using data for evidence-based management, and comprehensive care for survivors of violence. The presentations illustrated a comprehensive approach that combines preventive action, institutional strengthening, and community empowerment.

3 Through this programme, police officers visit schools to talk to students about violence prevention. Currently, this programme is operating in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama. https://www.great-online.org/es/About/What-Is-GREAT

4 Anti-bullying programme developed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and proven effective in rigorous scientific studies. It has been adapted to more than 25 countries including Chile, Colombia and Mexico with excellent results. https://espanaes.kivaprogram.net/

5 The programme originates in the United States, but is currently implemented in Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Guatemala thanks to the programme offering free technical support. https://scielo.isciii.es/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1132-05592017000200063

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Specifically, priorities for 2026 include: i) Training of frontline personnel; (ii) strengthening multisectoral response services; and iii) support for parents, caregivers, and families. These priorities reflect a regional commitment to practical and sustained implementation of actions to improve institutional capacity and coverage of protection services.

In the area of regional and sub-regional collaboration, the consultation allowed participants to identify six areas of joint action[6], highlighting the importance of coordinated responses to cross-border issues such as digital violence, human trafficking, organized crime, and human mobility. Continuous training for service providers, intersectoral articulation, and the participation of children and adolescents are central pillars to this approach. The participants agreed on the need for regional spaces for exchanging good practices, protocols, and evidence, thereby consolidating a community of learning and shared action.

Participants called for standardized regional protocols, interconnected information systems, and impact evaluations that strengthen evidence for decision-making. In addition, they underlined the urgency of specific budgets, permanent training, intersectoral coordination, and community participation as necessary if this effort is to succeed.

RECOGNITION AND PARTICIPATION OF VIOLENCE SURVIVORS AND ACTIVISTS

The voices of survivors, advocates, young activists, and artists throughout the regional consultation were fundamental to center efforts and joint work: to protect the integrity and dignity of all children and adolescents, leaving no one behind. The sum of their interventions revealed a strong message: it is not possible to eradicate violence without the active participation of those who have survived it.

The words of Claudia Montes, Sebastián Cuattromo, Carolina Caballero, Mackdiel Romero, and Nahomy Acosta highlighted the urgency of empathetic justice, cultural transformation, and the inclusion of survivors as agents of change and co-authors of public policies. They agree that the experiences of those who have gone through violence provide unique knowledge about institutional failures, healing processes, and the need for comprehensive care. They demand to move from mere testimony to effective participation in decision-making spaces and in the design of public policies, historically off-limits to survivors.

Their testimonies advocated justice focused on reparation and dignity, not just punishment.

6 i) Strengthening prevention and promotion; ii) intersectoral and interinstitutional coordination; iii) staff training and capacity building; iv) participation of children, youth and families; v) evidence and data based management.

They demanded accessible, non-judgmental, trauma-focused processes in which survivors do not have to prove their credibility or relive the pain. They stressed that psychological first aid must be a basic competency of the education system. They also denounced the inadequate government responses, marked by bureaucracy, lack of resources, and ineffective protocols. They argued that transformation requires alliances between government, civil society, and survivors, sustained by funding, political will and ethical commitment. The work of poets La Shawna Griffith, Comment Section, and Akeem Chandler-Prescod, One in Five (1 in 5) expanded the testimony about art as a political tool.

CONCLUSIONS

The Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean confirmed a strong political and technical will to move towards a region free of violence, consolidating learnings, commitments, and common strategies around four thematic axes.

Legal and policy frameworks

Countries agreed that having laws is not enough: intersectoral plans with sustainable financing, effective coordination, and community and child participation are required. Strengthening local capacities and ensuring a rights-based, equal, and socially co-responsible approach were reaffirmed and recognized as urgent.

Support for mothers, fathers, and caregivers

Participants recognized positive parenting programmes as essential tools to break intergenerational cycles of violence. They must be permanently sustained, inclusive, evidence-based, intersectoral, and culturally relevant. These programmes should be anchored in public policies and complemented with community services.

Safe and enabling learning environments

Governments recognized schools as priority spaces for preventing violence and promoting peaceful coexistence. They also define a comprehensive approach as one that incorporates physical safety, restorative justice, student leadership, and active family engagement.

Comprehensive Health and Protection Services

The health sector was identified as the first point of contact for child and adolescent survivors of violence, which requires close coordination between the health, justice, education and protection sectors. Governments emphasized the importance of continuous training for frontline personnel, comprehensive mental, sexual, and reproductive health services, and the development of intersectoral pathways with a rights-based and youth-centered approach.

Mutual Learning and Regional Standards

Countries expressed great interest in exchanging experiences and lessons learned, especially on intersectoral articulation, referral mechanisms, existing legislation, and impact assessment. Participants want to see strengthened regional evidence, the creation of common protocols, and the development of shared quality standards and follow-up protocols. Participants recognized that the meaningful participation of children, adolescents, and survivors in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of these processes is central to these efforts.

REGIONAL CALL TO ACTION AND FINAL COMMITMENT

With less than five years to achieve SDG target 16.2, the conference reaffirmed that ending violence against children is an urgent and collective task. Progress shows that change is possible, but it requires sustained political will, sufficient investment, policy coherence, and broad social participation.

The momentum must be translated into concrete actions, accountable systems, and dedicated budgets, reaffirming that a childhood free of violence is not an aspiration, but an inalienable right.

In her closing remarks, Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children,

emphasized that *"child protection is not an expense, but a strategic investment"*, and called on countries to move from commitments to effective implementation, ensuring that no child or adolescent is left behind.

The Regional Consultation is a decisive step towards building a Latin America and the Caribbean free of violence, where every child can grow up in safe, inclusive, and protective environments, supported by strong systems, coherent policies, and societies committed to their well-being and dignity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ensure comprehensive legislation** that prohibits all forms of violence and implements coordinated multisectoral plans across health, education, justice, and protection. Strengthen the traceability of children and adolescents through interconnected data systems and reinforce the institutional leadership of child governance bodies to coordinate and remain accountable.
- **Institutionalize evidence-based parenting programmes** as permanent public policies, offering flexible delivery formats that reflect cultural and territorial diversity (rural, urban, indigenous, and migrant contexts). Promote cultural strategies that transform social norms justifying punishment to ones that foster care, empathy, and respect.
- **Implement national safe school plans** that integrate adequate infrastructure, socio-emotional well-being, and peaceful coexistence. Provide continuous teacher training in positive discipline and peaceful conflict resolution, and strengthen coordination between education, health, and protection sectors to ensure comprehensive responses to school violence.
- **Strengthen the health sector's role** as a key entry point for detecting and addressing cases of violence. Establish clear intersectoral pathways, safe referral mechanisms, and standardized protocols. Continuously train personnel using gender-responsive, culturally relevant, and child- and adolescent-centered approaches.
- **Create genuine opportunities for child participation** in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies. Conduct social mobilization campaigns that promote shared responsibility for protection among government, families, communities, and the private sector.
- **Secure sustainability** by allocating specific and sufficient budgets, strengthening technical capacities at all levels, and promoting regional cooperation through the exchange of good practices and evidence. Develop integrated information systems to measure results and enhance the quality of interventions.
- **Reaffirm the regional commitment** to maintain political and technical momentum and to follow up on the pledges made at the Bogotá Conference (2024), working towards a region where every child and adolescent lives with dignity and is free from violence.

I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION

Violence against children and adolescents is one of the most pressing challenges countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) face. It prevents millions of children from fully exercising their rights, affecting the social, human, and economic development of entire societies. Violence against children has a long-term impact on their physical and mental health. It undermines the care and investments made by families, communities, and countries in the future of their children. In addition to these repercussions, direct economic costs to countries include a reduction in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and, in particularly violent areas, a decline in economic activity of about four percent.[7]

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VAC undermines the care and investments made by families, communities, and countries in the future of their children.

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are facing an unprecedented number of fatalities due to armed violence, with one in ten deaths being the result of homicide.[8] According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the region of the Americas has the highest rate of homicides in children under 18 years of age.[9] Homicide is the leading cause of death among adolescents aged 10 to 19 years.[10] Recent UNICEF estimates also indicate that almost one in five women in Latin America and the Caribbean reported having suffered sexual violence with physical contact during childhood and adolescence. The number of girls and women of all ages who have experienced violent sexual contact before their 18th birthday in the region is 45 million. The percentage of women over the age of 18 who

7 Conflict, Crime and Violence Team, 'Making Societies more Resilient to Violence', Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2009, cited in Report of the Secretary General, A/64/228, 5 August 2009.

8 Gregson, Kendra. (2024) Armed Violence and Programming for UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Working Paper. UNICEF. Panama.

9 PAHO. (2020) Regional Status Report 2020: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children in the Americas Washington DC: Pan American Health Organization.

10 United Nations Children's Fund, A Statistical Profile of Violence against Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF, New York, 2022.

Image 1: Foundational frameworks driving global efforts to end violence against children and adolescents.

have experienced sexual contact with violence before the age of 18 in Latin America and the Caribbean is 18 per cent.[11]

However, despite these alarming figures, available data from both demographic and health surveys (DHS) and surveys on violence against children and adolescents (VACS) indicate that many survivors of sexual violence in childhood and adolescence throughout the region do not have access to services or professional support resources. In addition, 73 million children and adolescents live in countries where corporal punishment is not prohibited at home or at school, and two out of three suffer forms of violent discipline in the countries whose data allow it to be determined.[12] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a global target to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children and adolescents by 2030, while the Convention on the Rights of the Child protects the right of all children to grow up protected from violence in a safe and favorable environment. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, and the Sustainable Development Goals are the foundational frameworks that drive global efforts to end violence against children and adolescents. These frameworks underscore the urgency of protecting children from all forms of violence as an essential pillar of sustainable development and human rights.

11 United Nations Children's Fund, When Numbers Demand Action: Confronting the global scale of sexual violence against children, UNICEF, New York, 2024.

12 United Nations Children's Fund, A Statistical Profile of Violence against Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF, New York, 2022.

The First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents, held in Bogotá in November 2024, reminded participants that they are the first generation with data on the prevalence of violence against children and adolescents, and the evidence on how to prevent it. At this Conference, 22 governments of the Americas established concrete commitments to end violence against children and adolescents, and to offer a forceful, multisectoral, participatory response with sustained political will to eradicate all forms of violence against children and adolescents. At the PAHO-sponsored Pre-Conference for the Americas, 30 Member States of the Americas reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening health system responses to violence against children and adolescents, including concrete ways forward related to the updating of health protocols and guidelines, the training of health personnel, and the development of health personnel, the quality of health services, especially on sexual violence, the strengthening of the documentation of violence in health information systems, etc. Among the core commitments of the Bogota Call to Action are the following:

1. Guarantee the rights and well-being of children	• Integrate violence prevention into all sustainable development plans. • Prioritize target 16.2 as the axis of national and international policies. • Address the structural causes: poverty, inequality, discrimination, and harmful social norms.
2. Ensuring legal protection	• Total prohibition of all forms of violence, including physical punishment, sexual violence, online exploitation, child marriage, and recruitment by armed groups. • Effective access to justice and reparation. • Adapt judicial systems to the needs of children, with a focus on gender, disability, and age.
3. Investing in evidence-based approaches	• Apply the INSPIRE frame. • Prioritize three strategies: » Universal support for caregivers and parents. » Universal access to safe and enabling learning environments. » Accessible mental health, and psychosocial support and response services. • Increase national and international funding.
4. Strengthening child protection systems	• Expand coverage to groups in situations of greater vulnerability (indigenous children, Afro-descendants, migrants, people with disabilities, and children without parental care). • Implement cross-sectoral systems, with sufficient resources and trained personnel.
5. Addressing online and technological risks	• Strengthen legal frameworks against violence in digital environments and cross-border crimes. • Regulate the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. • Protect vulnerable children from digital exploitation.
6. Fostering broad and meaningful collaboration	• Actively include children, survivors, caregivers, civil society organizations, human rights institutions, the private sector, and academia. • Promote child participation in the formulation of public policies. • Strengthen international cooperation and the exchange of good practices.
7. Commitment to international instruments	• Effective implementation of international treaties and frameworks on the rights of children. • Called upon to ratify the instruments not yet adopted by some countries.

Source: First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents: Bogota Call to Action. Bogota, November 7-8, 2024.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION

The Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean brought together authorities and high-level representatives of governments responsible for addressing violence against children and adolescents across Latin America and the Caribbean, along with experts, specialists and stakeholders, to assess progress towards SDG 16[13], including the concrete commitments made in Bogotá to end violence against children and adolescents.

The Regional Consultation was held from October 23 to 24, 2025, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (Panama time), in virtual format, with simultaneous translation in four languages: English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) co-hosted this joint event, which brought together representatives from governments of countries across the LAC region and other regions of the world. More than 300 participants representing the following LAC countries attended the consultation: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas (the), Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic (the), Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the Republic of Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Image 2: Objectives of the Regional Consultation.

13 Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, facilitate access to justice for all people, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. People around the world should live free from the fear of any form of violence and feel safe in their daily lives, whatever their ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Specifically, target 16.2 is to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children. Source: United Nations (2025) Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/peace-justice/

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION

The agenda of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean was structured in three sections. The detailed agenda is included in Appendix 1 of this report. At the beginning of the meeting, a quick live survey indicated that most participants wanted to learn about creating a comprehensive, intersectoral system as the leading regional priority (see Graph 1).

Moderators and speakers shared best practices, progress, and lessons learned on these topics, while participants used the open chat to contribute, exchange resources, and ask questions. The voices of survivors and activists highlighted the main objective of the countries' efforts: to create a space for regional dialogue so that no child is left behind, and everyone can enjoy protection from all forms of violence, thus promoting truly integral and equitable development.

Below is a summary of the discussions, good practices, progress, lessons learned, and conclusions of the event, following the planned agenda structure.

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Most participants of the Regional Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children wanted to learn about creating a comprehensive, intersectoral system as the leading regional priority.

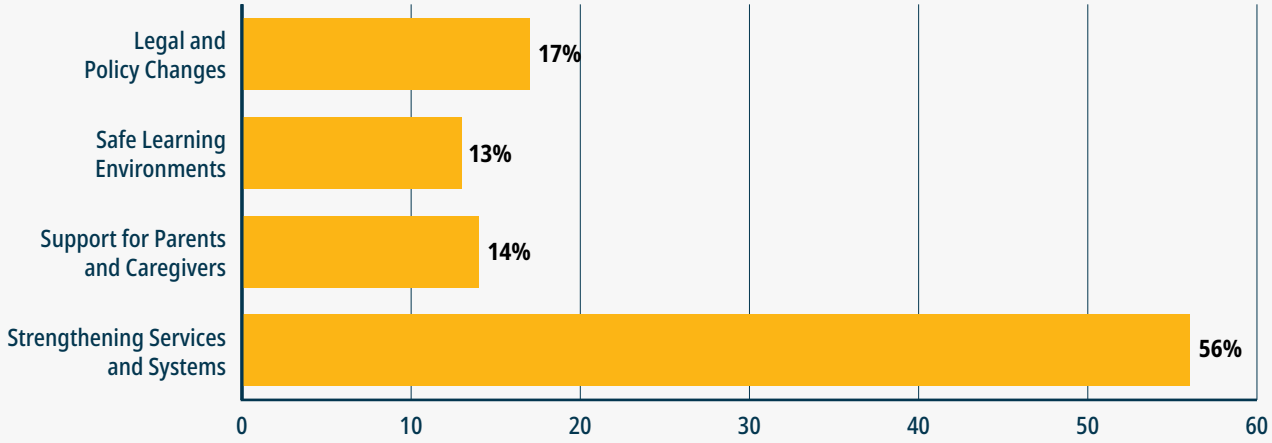
2.1 PART 1. WELCOME/OPENING

Moderator: Silvana Luciani, Head of the Noncommunicable Diseases, Violence and Injury Prevention Unit of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

Speakers:

- Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Jr., Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Americas.
- Anne-Claire Dufay, Deputy Regional Director of the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Claudia Montes Padilla, survivor and human rights advocate, Valientes, Honduras.
- Akeem Chandler-Prescod, poet, Barbados.

Graph 1: Which intervention area are you hoping to advance and learn more about over the next two mornings?



Source: Chat of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF/PAHO

Silvana Luciani, Head of the Noncommunicable Diseases, Violence and Injury Prevention Unit of PAHO, introduced **Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Jr., Director of PAHO and Regional Director of WHO for the Americas**, who framed the magnitude and urgency of violence against children and adolescents through relevant regional statistical data, such as those presented in the background of the report. He also highlighted that Regional Consultation arose from the conviction that every child has the right to grow up free of violence, in a safe environment at home, at school, and in the community, enjoying a childhood full of opportunities. In addition, he emphasized the importance of health services in prevention and response, noting that they should be in daily contact with communities. For example, when health workers identify at-risk groups early and provide them with quality support, it makes a real difference for survivors, their families, and communities. To move forward in this opportunity, it is necessary to work together to promote evidence-based policies, staff training, and multisectoral alliances.

> **"We are the region that best knows what it takes to achieve real and lasting change."**
>
> *– Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Jr., PAHO.*

Next, **Anne-Claire Dufay, Deputy Regional Director of UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean,** shared that the cost, both individual and social, of violence against children and adolescents collapses health systems, generates greater insecurity, and limits the economic and social potential of the entire region. Data from the Inter-American Development Bank estimate that the cost of crime and violence in the LAC region exceeds 3 per cent of GDP, equivalent to 78 per cent of the education budget and twice the social assistance budget.

Ending violence involves redirecting resources toward improving education, health, and protection systems, expanding access to support programmes for parents and caregivers, increasing the availability of quality preventive and response services, and strengthening justice systems. She highlighted that there are effective practices in programmes that promote positive parenting, in school initiatives that encourage non-violent discipline, in legal reforms and public policies that prioritize children's rights, and in digital platforms that help protect children online. However, these practices still suffer from fragmentation and limited scale.

> **“Investing in the protection of children and adolescents is not an expense. It’s one of the smartest investments we can make. The return is immediate and long-lasting”.**
>
> *– Anne-Claire Dufay, UNICEF LACRO.*

The voices and perspectives of survivors of violence are essential to addressing violence against children and adolescents, which were reflected throughout the regional consultation. In this context, **Claudia Montes** spoke about the reconceptualization of justice and its meaning beyond a criminal conviction for the aggressor/perpetrator and explained the importance of guaranteeing access to accompaniment services and safe, empathetic and non-revictimizing environments. She called for a trauma-sensitive approach in policies and programmes. She invited the audience to adopt guidelines and emblematic cases, such as the Brisa de Angulo case (IACHR v. Bolivia[14]), as examples to improve institutional responses. Her final call was a plea to ensure that all decision-making is child- and adolescent-centered.

> **“A victim does not speak when she/he wants to or when she/he needs to. If not, at last, when she/he can. And as a system we must embrace, value and protect that voice that could finally speak.”**
>
> *– Claudia Montes, Survivor and Advocate.*

The opening session was closed by the spoken poet, **Akeem Chandler-Prescod**, with a powerful and moving denunciation of sexual violence against girls, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, through a poem titled “One in Five,” about the silent and painful experience of millions of girls and adolescents who have been survivors of violence.

> **“So let’s train our healers. So no girl has to beg for her body to be believed. Let hospitals speak in the language of dignity. Let justice be written on her mother’s tongue. Let the first response not be doubt, but one of deliverance. So one in five become a statistic that we no longer have to mention. ...”**
>
> *– Akeem Chandler-Prescod. Poem: One in Five (full poem on page 4 of this report).*

From evidence to action

Moderator: Cairn Verhulst, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF

Speakers:

- Dr. Diana Jiménez Thomas R., Senior Research Officer, ODI Global
- Dr. Carmen León-Himmelstine, Research Fellow, ODI Global
- Paola Pereznieto, Research Associate, ODI Global
- Youth for Health Group, PYHG, OPS. (Video #vocescontralaviolencia)

14 Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), Case of Angulo Losada v. Bolivia, Judgment of November 18, 2022, (Preliminary Objections, Merits, and Reparations). Retrieved from: https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_475_esp.pdf

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The moderator, **Cairn Verhulst, Child Protection Specialist from UNICEF,** shared academic research jointly produced by ODI GLOBAL, UNICEF, and PAHO[15] that reviewed available data on violence against children and adolescents in the region, as well as an overview of effective interventions. The main findings were shared through a short video highlighting data from Latin America and the Caribbean that shows that millions of children and adolescents suffer various forms of violence every year. These data represent lives deeply affected, with consequences for health, self-esteem, opportunities, and participation. The evidence also demonstrates that violence is preventable and that some countries in the region are implementing effective strategies: laws prohibiting violence, staff training, support for caregiver families, safe schools, and multisectoral care services.

Three of the study's authors discussed with Cairn the main contributions of this recent study. Among the strategies highlighted in the research and considered most practical and effective to prevent and respond to violence are the following five: i) programmes and community spaces that help keep children away from risky or violent behaviors; ii) training for fathers, mothers, caregivers and teachers in non-violent positive parenting; iii) accessible helplines for children to report abuse and obtain immediate legal, medical or psychosocial support; iv) programmes to prevent bullying; and, v) digital literacy.

The scalability of the strategies is achieved through integration into existing systems and services, as is the case with the GREAT programme[16]; the design of programmes that are adaptable to operate at scale, such as Kiva[17]; and the use of decentralized models to facilitate decisions at the local level, such as the ACT programme Educating Children in Safe Environments.[18] Designing programmes that are intentionally simple and focused on their most important elements increases their chances of success.

15 Marcus, R. et. al., Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean: New data and solutions, United Nations Children's Fund, Panama City, Panama, 2025.This is available in English and Spanish.

16 Through this programme, police officers visit schools to talk to students about violence prevention. Currently, this programme is operating in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama. Retrieved from: https://www.great-online.org/es/About/What-Is-GREAT

17 Anti-bullying programme developed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and proven effective in rigorous scientific studies. It has been adapted to more than 25 countries including Chile, Colombia and Mexico with excellent results. Retrieved from: https://espanaes.kivaprogram.net/

18 The programme originates in the United States, but is currently implemented in Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Guatemala thanks to the programme offering free technical support. Retrieved from: https://scielo.isciii.es/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1132-05592017000200063

According to the evidence, there are practical strategies that can help governments and partners ensure that the most vulnerable children are not left behind. This is achieved through four approaches: i) listening to children and adolescents in situations of greater vulnerability; ii) trust in communities as agents of change; iii) making inclusion a norm, not the exception; and iv) implementing comprehensive approaches. Addressing traditional gender norms that reinforce inequalities and heighten the vulnerability and risk faced by women, girls, and adolescents is also essential.

The main actions that governments and partners can take to transform intention into sustainable investments to prevent and fight violence consists of six measures: i) strengthen existing laws; ii) encourage different sectors of government to assume responsibilities in public programmes and policies; iii) work closely with civil society; iv) use evidence and data to guide government investments strategically; v) lead campaigns to change attitudes and behaviors; and vi) integrate solutions into existing services.

The segment concluded with a video from the Youth for Health Group (PAHO), highlighting the daily violence that children and adolescents face in various settings (including schools, streets, communities, digital spaces, and intimate relationships) and how these experiences deeply affect their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The youth spoke about multiple forms of violence: school discrimination, street harassment, intimate partner and community violence, digital abuse, and structural insecurity. The video served both as an expression of awareness and protest, and as a call for cultural transformation. It urged the audience to recognize that violence takes many forms (often invisible or normalized) and that addressing it requires a comprehensive approach grounded in active listening, empathetic care, education for equality, and meaningful youth participation. It concluded with a powerful message affirming the belief that prevention and change are possible through collective action.

> **“Violence has many forms, but none are inevitable”.**
>
> *– Youth for Health Group, PAHO.*

2.2 PART 2. TAKING ACTION

Topic 1: Multisectoral legal and policy frameworks

Moderator: Grace Agcaoili, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF.

Speakers:

- Marlen Triana Mederos, Deputy Minister of Education, Cuba.
- Carla Andrade, Director of Orientation and Psychologist, Ministry of Social Development, Chile.
- Minister Macae Evaristo, Ministry of Human Rights, Brasil.
- Ricardo Lins e Horta, Acting National Secretary for Digital Rights of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Brasil.

Marlen Triana Medeiros, Deputy Minister of Education from Cuba, presented the country's progress with the approval of the new Code of Children, Adolescents, and Youth[19] (July 2025), considered both a structural and legal reform. Key reforms preceded this process:

- Constitution of the Republic[20] (2019): Article 86 recognizes protection against all forms of violence.
- Agreement 9231/2021, the Comprehensive Strategy for the Prevention and Care of Gender-Based Violence in the Family Setting, and Family Code 156/2022 prohibit physical punishment in the family environment.
- Comprehensive Policy for Children, Adolescents, and Youth[21] (2023).

19 Cuba, Código de la Niñez, Adolescencias y Juventudes (Julio 2025). Retrieved from: https://www.parlamentocubano.gob.cu/sites/default/files/documento/2025-07/proyecto-de-ley-codigo-de-la-ninez-adolescencias-y-juventudes-2.pdf

20 Cuba, Constitución de la República de Cuba. Retrieved from: http://media.cubadebate.cu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Constitucion-Cuba-2019.pdf

21 Cuba, Política Integral de Niñez, Adolescencias y Juventudes (2023). Retrieved from: https://www.parlamentocubano.gob.cu/sites/default/files/documento/2024-02/politica-integral-de-ninez-adolescencias-y-juventudes.pdf

The highlight was the participatory process, which included consultation with more than 800,000 children and adolescents which influenced 29 changes to the bill. The new code establishes protection against all forms of violence as a cross-cutting principle; expressly prohibits corporal punishment in all settings (art. 79.1); creates a specialized protection system, institutional protocols, monitoring and data collection on violence; and promotes cultural and institutional changes as challenges for its implementation.

> **"This Code is today a concrete contribution by our country to the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and reaffirms our willingness to continue strengthening institutional capacities and promoting the participation of children and adolescents as agents of transformation."**
>
> *– Marlen Triana Mederos, Ministry of Education, Cuba.*

Carla Andrade, Director of Orientation and Psychologist, Ministry of Social Development, Chile, presented the implementation of Law 21430 on Guarantees and Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents[22] (2022). This law dejudicializes the protection of rights, transferring attention from the courts to the Local Children's Offices. To date, there are 280 of 345 municipal offices installed, as an arm of administrative protection in the territory, even in the smallest communes. The law also created an Intersectoral Early Warning System for the prevention of homicides of children. After analyzing the trajectories of children who survived lethal violence, it was determined that 95 per cent of these children had had previous contact with government services and 60 per cent had gone through the specialized protection system, evidencing failures in the timely detection of risk.

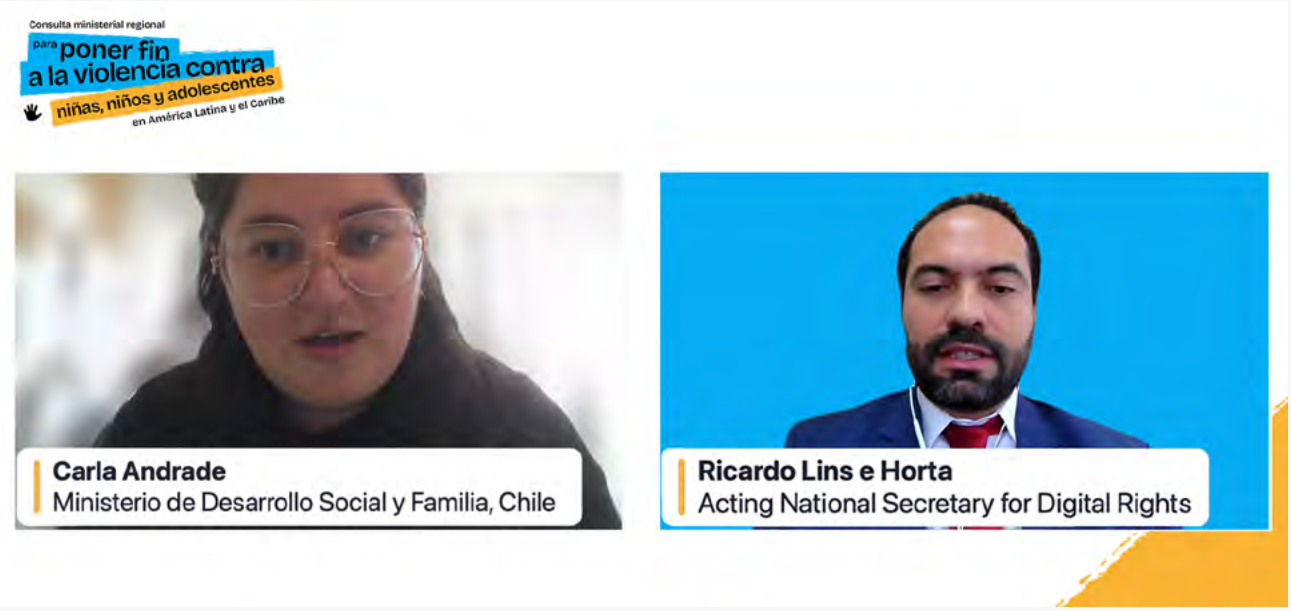
This reformed system is already yielding initial results, with a decrease in the upward curve of homicides against children and adolescents. Chile has developed an interconnected technological platform across ministries (using the RUN)[23] that enables the reading and sharing of data on health, education, and social programmes, among others. The new legal framework allows for cross-referencing of data for the best interests of the child, ensuring coordination without duplicating interventions. The next step is to harmonize other legislation with the new law on Guarantees and Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents to ensure there are no legal gaps and enable better implementation.

> **"What makes this initiative (Intersectoral Early Warning System) sustainable is that we have a legal framework to request this information."**
>
> *– Carla Andrade, Ministry of Social Development and Family, Chile.*

Macaé Evaristo, Minister of Human Rights and Citizenship of Brazil, and Ricardo Lins e Horta, Acting National Secretary for Digital Rights, addressed the country's response to the increase in online violence and school attacks, especially after the pandemic. Measures include:

22 Chile, Ley Núm. 21.430, Sobre Garantías y Protección Integral de los Derechos de la Niñez y Adolescencia (2022). Retrieved from: https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1173643

23 RUN, Rol Único Nacional, is the unique and unrepeatable identification number that every Chilean has, whether or not they reside in Chile and also of all foreigners who remain in Chile, temporarily or permanently. The body that grants the RUN is the Civil Registry and Identification Service, and it is granted to those born in Chile at the time of registering the birth in the respective repertoires. It is granted following a sequential order, from birth registrations.



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- Law No. 15,211, of September 17, 2025, provides for the protection of children and adolescents in digital environments 'Digital Statute of Children and Adolescents'[24], one of the most advanced globally in terms of digital protection of children. Sets:
  - Responsibility of platforms in the design of secure environments.
  - Mechanisms for age verification and mandatory reporting.
  - Prohibition of access to inappropriate content (alcohol, pornography, gambling).
- Creation of the Interministerial Committee for the Protection of Children in the Digital Environment, with the participation of the Ministries of Justice, Human Rights, Communication, and the Presidency; the Federal Police; the National Council for Children's Rights; civil society; and adolescent advisory committees.
- Active participation of children in the preparation of official guides on digital use.
- Law No. 15,100, of January 13, 2025, provides for the use of personal portable electronic devices by students in public and private basic education establishments.[25] It restricts the use of non-pedagogical digital devices in schools, thereby reducing cyberbullying and improving academic performance.

> **"The Internet as we know it was created by adults, for adults, thinking of adults. If we take the principle of evolutionary capabilities from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we must adapt digital environments to ensure that they are safe for children."**
>
> *– Ricardo Lins e Horta, Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Brazil.*

24 Brazil, Lei Nº 15.211, de 17 de Setembro de 2025, Dispõe sobre a proteção de crianças e adolescentes em ambientes digitais (Estatuto Digital da Criança e do Adolescente). Retrieved from: https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/2025/lei-15211-17-setembro-2025-797997-publicacaooriginal-176498-pl.html

25 Brazil, Lei Nº 15.100, de 13 de Janeiro de 2025, Dispõe sobre a utilização, por estudantes, de aparelhos eletrônicos portáteis pessoais nos estabelecimentos públicos e privados de ensino da educação básica. Retrieved from: https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/2025/lei-15100-13-janeiro-2025-796892-publicacaooriginal-174094-pl.html

The countries represented shared how political leadership, through laws, policies, and structures, can lay the foundations for effective child protection. They emphasized that laws are not an end in themselves but tools that must be implemented, funded, and monitored with evidence and child participation, advancing prevention, participation, and intersectoral response in both physical and digital spaces.

Topic 2: Parenting programmes to break cycles of violence against children and adolescents

Moderators:

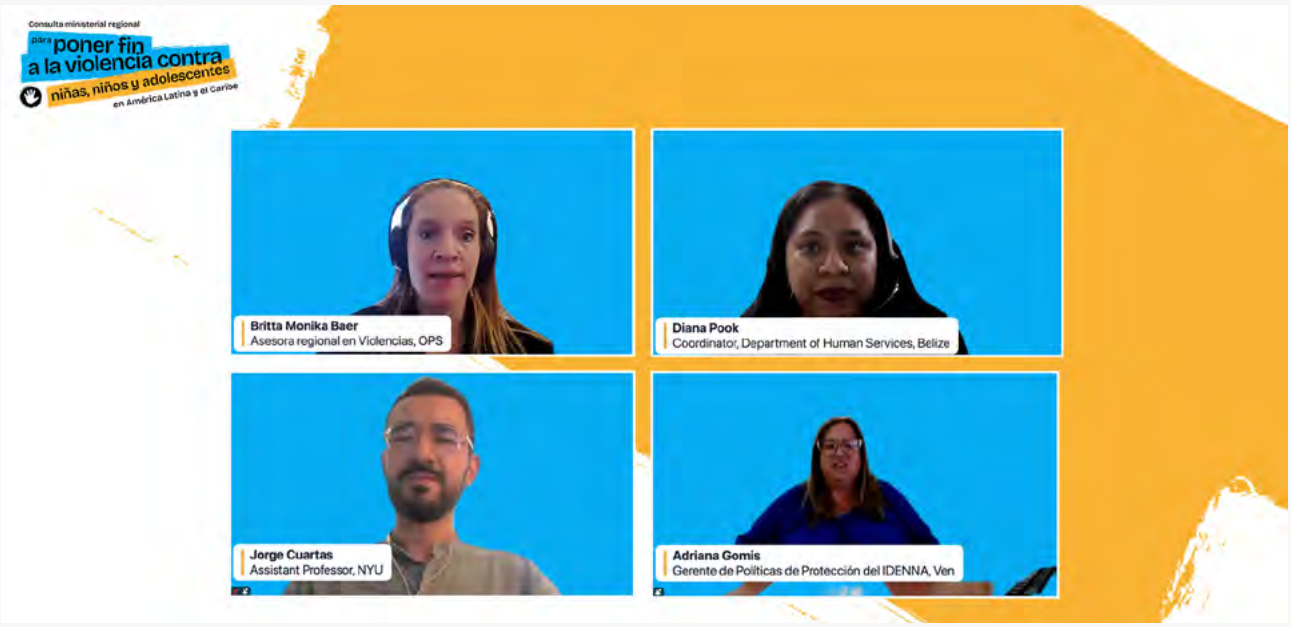
- Jorge Cuartas, Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology, New York University Steinhardt.
- Britta Monika Baer, Regional Advisor on Violence and Injury Prevention, PAHO.

Speakers:

- Ms. Diana Pook, Human Development Coordinator of the Community and Parent Empowerment Programme (COMPAR), Department of Human Services, Belize.
- Adriana Gomis, Manager of Policies for the Protection of Children and Adolescents of the Autonomous Institute of the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (IDENNA), Venezuela.
- Mtro. Roberto Fuentes Suárez, Deputy Director of the Area of Early Childhood Care Policies and Strategies of the Executive Secretariat of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA), Mexico.
- Dr. Diana Verónica Arguello Cañiza, Vice Minister of Regional Development for Children and Adolescents, Paraguay.

Britta Monika Baer, Regional Advisor on Violence and Injury Prevention from PAHO, opened this session and established the conceptual framework of the segment: violence prevention begins at home. It requires structured accompaniment to families to build environments of care and respect. She emphasized that violence is not inevitable, but a behavior learned from childhood in various environments and, therefore, can be unlearned and prevented.

Participants shared their views on the following question: *What is the most critical role that parents and families can play in preventing violence against children and adolescents?* From the answers in the conference chat, a shared vision emerged: preventing violence begins in the family, and parents are essential agents of change. Participants agreed that parenting with love, respect, and empathy not only protects children but also transforms family and community relationships. Strengthening parental skills, promoting communication and working on the emotional healing of caregivers are essential pillars to break cycles of violence and build safe and affective environments for children.



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Jorge Cuartas, Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology, New York University Steinhardt, underlined the relevance of parenting programmes in the eradication of violence against children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. He highlighted the importance of intersectoral work, youth participation, and financial commitments to sustain actions. In his closing, he emphasized: the need for culturally relevant, sustainable and nationally funded programmes; the inclusion of men and other caregivers in parenting; and the urgency of policies that support the mental and emotional health of families as a direct way to prevent violence.

> **"Preventing violence is an economic investment that all our countries must continue to make."**
>
> *– Jorge Cuartas.*

Diana Pook, Human Development Coordinator for the Community and Parent Empowerment Programme (COMPAR) at the Department of Human Services in Belize, presented two initiatives promoted by the Ministry of Human Development and the National Parenting Committee in Belize: court-ordered parenting sessions and the Roving Caregivers Programme. The first focuses on parents who have committed some child abuse. This initiative is delivered in cycles of eight group or virtual sessions to work on topics such as child development, positive discipline, stress management, and abuse prevention. The other initiative, the Roving Caregivers Programme is a model of home visits aimed at families with children from 0 to 3 years old, especially in indigenous, migrant, rural communities or with a high rate of violence. It promotes affective bonds, early stimulation and nutrition, incorporating the local language and culture. This programme has contributed to improving children's health, cognitive development, and school readiness, as well as reducing abusive behaviors and strengthening access to health and social services.

From the conference chat, a participant added to this intervention the BOOST (Belize's Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation), a conditional cash transfer initiative that provides financial assistance to poor households to help reduce immediate poverty and break the cycle of poverty through human development. The programme requires beneficiaries to meet specific conditions related to education and health, including school attendance, childhood vaccinations, and prenatal checkups.

> **"Positive parenting not only benefits children. It also transforms adults and strengthens the entire community."**
>
> *– Diana Pook, Department of Human Services, Belize.*

Adriana Gomis, Manager of Policies for the Protection of Children and Adolescents of the Autonomous Institute of the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (IDENNA), Venezuela, presented the plan *"More love, we are all family together",* led by the IDENNA. This territorial strategy seeks to strengthen families, prevent violence, and promote loving environments through house-to-house actions and joint work between the government, popular power, and communities. The approach integrates awareness of good treatment, positive discipline, prevention of sexual abuse, and comprehensive care for vulnerable families. The programme has reached more than a thousand families and hundreds of children and adolescents, characterizing their conditions, activating care routes, and promoting local protection networks. Its success lies in inter-institutional coordination, community protagonism, and articulation with social missions that guarantee follow-up and direct attention in the territory.

> **“The right to good treatment is a fundamental strategy to raise awareness and prevent violence in families.”**
>
> *– Adriana Gomis, IDENNA, Venezuela.*

Roberto Fuentes, Deputy Director of the Area of Early Childhood Care Policies and Strategies of the Executive Secretariat of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA), Mexico, explained the efforts of the SIPINNA to promote a national policy of positive parenting. He noted the persistence of corporal punishment, which affects more than half of children under five, and the impacts of adverse experiences on physical and mental health. In response, Mexico has promoted forums throughout the country to listen to experts and children themselves and workshops for mothers, fathers, and caregivers focused on three pillars: parenting with the heart (emotional management), parenting with the brain (secure attachment and play), and parenting without fear (loving authority and healthy limits).

The objective is to transform the culture of parenting and replicate these workshops on a national scale, articulating the education and child protection sectors. The approach combines scientific evidence and accessible language to promote nonviolent affective relationships and strengthen the emotional health of families. Considering that programmes cannot be “one-size-fits-all”, they must be adapted to sociocultural contexts and specific needs, seeking to reach vulnerable populations and leave no one behind.

> **“It is not enough to prohibit violence; effective and fear-free alternatives must be taught.”**
>
> *– Roberto Fuentes, SIPINNA, México.*

Diana Argüello, Vice Minister of Regional Development for Children and Adolescents in Paraguay, reported progress in legislative and public policy measures to protect children and adolescents. The unanimous approval of Law 5659/2016[26], which prohibits physical punishment and humiliating treatment, is the result of years of political advocacy. Since then, the Ministry of

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26 Paraguay, Ley N° 5659 / Promoción del Buen Trato, Crianza Positiva y de Protección a Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Contra el Castigo Físico o Cualquier Tipo de Violencia Como Método de Corrección o Disciplina (2016). Retrieved from: https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/5176/ley-n-5659-promocion-del-buen-trato-crianza-positiva-y-de-proteccion-a-ninos-ninas-y-adolescentes-contra-el-castigo-fisico-o-cualquier-tipo-de-violencia-como-metodo-de-correccion-o-disciplina

Children and Adolescents has consolidated a protection system that includes more than 50 laws, 24/7 helplines (147[27] and 155[28]), immediate response devices ("red vests"), and national campaigns such as "We Are All Responsible." Recently, Paraguay launched the Seeds of the Future programme, an investment of 100 million dollars to create 100 Comprehensive Early Childhood Care Centers, which integrate health, education, civil registration, and positive parenting workshops. These actions reflect a sustained commitment to prevention, decentralization, and institutional strengthening to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents.

> **"For the first time, the Paraguayan State invests massively in early childhood development with a comprehensive and humane approach."**
>
> *– Diana Arguello Caniza, Vice Minister of Regional Development for Children and Adolescents, Paraguay.*

The countries represented, through their speakers, unanimously recognized the importance of positive parenting programmes as a key tool to prevent violence against children and adolescents. These programmes are not limited to the family environment, but are articulated in government policies, with intersectoral and community coordination. They are comprehensive approaches that highlight educational, emotional, and social components.

A commitment to inclusion and adaptability was evident. Countries have implemented mixed strategies (face-to-face, virtual, home-based, and community-based) that respect ethnic and geographic diversity. These modalities aim to reach more families, especially in rural or indigenous contexts, by leveraging community networks and local services as nodes of care and accompaniment.

Active efforts are underway to transform deeply rooted cultural norms that legitimize corporal punishment.[29] While programmes have made progress in fostering collaboration across sectors (including health, education, and social protection), financial sustainability remains a key challenge. Even where institutionalized mechanisms exist, such as the Ministry of Children and Adolescents in Paraguay, there is still significant reliance on international cooperation. There is an urgent need for dedicated, sustained national budgets to ensure that these initiatives are not vulnerable to political shifts. Furthermore, recognizing children's and adolescents' right to participate in the design and implementation of policies that affect them strengthens both the democratic and transformative dimensions of these programmes.

Topic 3: Towards ensuring safe and enabling learning environments

Moderator: Gemma Wilson-Clark, Head of the Safe to Learn Coalition.

Speakers:

- Sebastián Cuattromo, founder of the Civil Association *Adultxs por los Derechos de la Infancia*, Argentina.
- Hyacinth Blair, Director-General of the Division of Children Affairs and Policy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information of Jamaica.
- Guiselle Alpízar Elizondo, Academic Vice Minister, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.
- Divina García Vásquez, Director of Guidance and Psychology, Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic.
- Carolina Caballero, Youth for Health Group (PYHG), PAHO

27 Helpline for orientation.

28 Helpline for attention to crisis situations and mental health.

29 At the National Health Center for Children and Adolescents of the Ministry of Health of Mexico, a Life Skills strategy is being developed aimed at children and adolescents from 5 to 19 years of age so that, through self-care, they can identify and avoid risks to their health and development. Promoting healthy lifestyles; mothers, fathers and caregivers are also involved. The strategy can be implemented in various areas of health, education and community. Contact: Blanca Villa blanca.villa@salud.gob.mx Source: participant Blanca Villa from the event chat.

The second day began with **Sebastián Cuattromo, founder of the Civil Association** *Adultxs por los Derechos de la Infancia*, **Argentina**. Sebastián narrated his experience as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse in a religious-educational environment and his path to reparation, more than twenty years later. Based on his story, he founded an organization that promotes the rights of children and the visibility of abuse as a social and political problem. He vindicated the role of survivors as fundamental actors in the construction of public policies and in cultural transformation in the face of institutional silence and impunity. He called on governments and international organizations to include the knowledge and experiences of survivors in policies and programmes on violence against children and adolescents. He warned of the risk of a political setback if there is no will, resources, and genuine participation of those who lived through the violence.

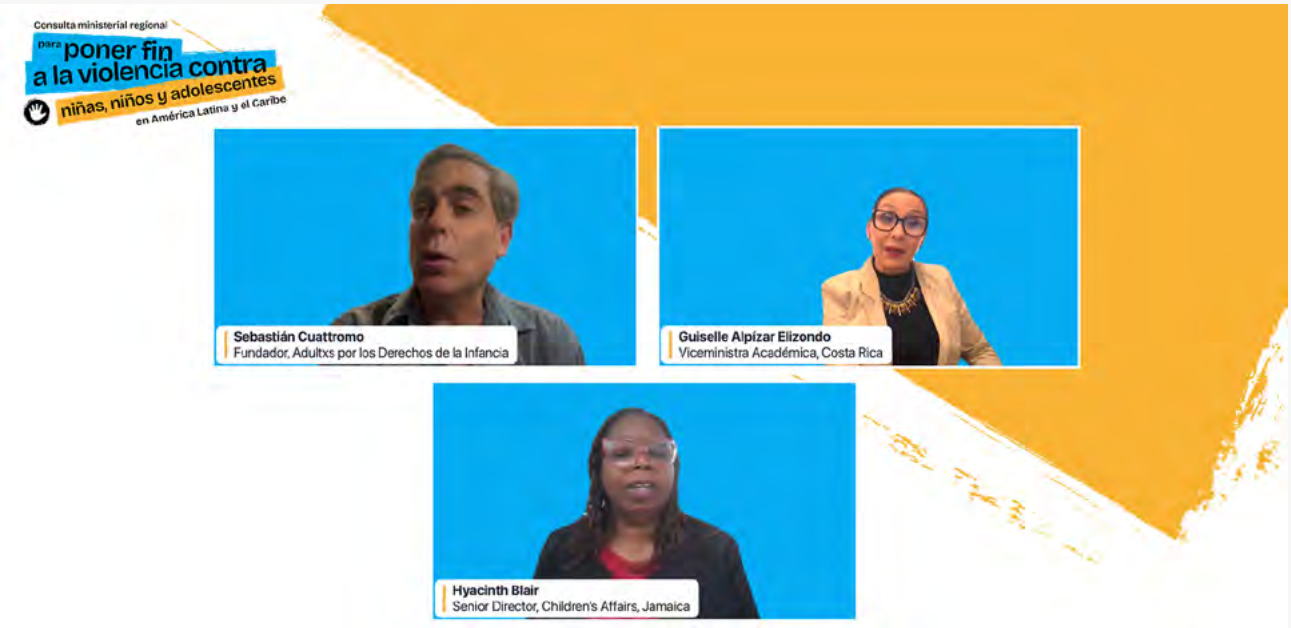
> **"If those of us who, from the social base, have been making such a valuable contribution are not summoned, there is a risk that these policies will be set aside."**
>
> *– Sebastián Cuattromo, Adultxs por los Derechos de la Infancia.*

Hyacinth Blair, Director-General of the Division of Children Affairs and Policy at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information of Jamaica, presented a comprehensive set of policies and programmes aimed at creating safe, violence-free schools. Although the Safe School Policy is still in the final phase of approval, the country already has multiple guides and protocols: against trafficking in children, against the use of firearms and illicit substances, and for the management of critical incidents. She highlighted the *School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support* framework, a comprehensive tool applied in more than 500 schools to promote positive behaviors and provide differentiated support based on each student's level of risk. Complementing this approach are Safe Schools Certification, infrastructure audits, and emergency preparedness, the *National Restorative Justice Programme* to strengthen peaceful conflict resolution, and the *National Child Diversion Programme* to prevent the criminalization of adolescents. These measures, together with the installation of security cameras, school transport in rural areas and school leadership training for safe environments, reflect a multisectoral approach focused on prevention and the culture of peace.

> **"Safe Schools Certification strengthens protective factors and reduces violence in schools."**
>
> *– Hyacinth Blair, Ministry of Education, Jamaica.*

Deputy Minister Alpízar, Academic Vice Minister, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica, highlighted the *comprehensive SEGURED* plan, a digital educational safety management system that, with the support of UNICEF, allows the mapping of risks, protective factors and action plans in all schools in the country. This system articulates three dimensions: internal security, environmental security and emergency risk management. Together with this instrument, Costa Rica has implemented an *Education Programme for Peace and Coexistence* that promotes life skills, responsible citizenship and respectful relationships from 7th to 10th grade.

The country complements prevention with student life programmes (arts festivals, sports games, school governments, and community service), all aimed at strengthening youth expression, empathy, and leadership. In addition, teachers and families are continuously trained in peaceful coexistence and respectful parenting. This comprehensive approach combines technological innovation, socio-emotional education, and inter-institutionality to promote a sustained culture of peace and safe learning.



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> **"SEGURED is the first national map of educational safety, making it possible to diagnose risks and formulate precise preventive plans."**
>
> *– Guiselle Alpízar Elizondo, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.*

Divina García, Director of Guidance and Psychology, Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic, presented the *National Strategy for the Culture of Peace* of the Ministry of Education, designed to create safe, inclusive and violence-free school environments. The strategy is structured around two axes: the change of educational norms towards respectful and restorative practices, and the strengthening of socio-emotional and communicative competencies throughout the educational community. Priority is given to teacher training in positive discipline, school mediation, emotional self-regulation and prevention of psychosocial risks, as well as family awareness to replace violent parenting patterns with healthy relationships. The country has a network of more than 14,000 school counselors and psychologists, supported by regional and district technical teams, which allows for broad national coverage. The *Family is Transformed* and *Epiphany* programmes integrate families, teachers and students in training and accompaniment processes. Together, these initiatives reflected a sustained policy that seeks to transform the cultural roots of violence and consolidate the school as a protective and restorative space.

> **"The National Strategy for a Culture of Peace transforms the social norms that perpetuate violence, promoting inclusive and restorative relationships."**
>
> *– Divina García, Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic.*

The experiences shared by the speakers highlighted a strong regional commitment to educational safety and to positioning schools as spaces for violence prevention, peaceful coexistence, and holistic wellbeing. Schools were seen not only as places of learning but also as central hubs

connecting institutions, families, and communities. Education was recognized as intrinsically linked to mental health, protection, and social development, with progress reflected in improved regulations, technology, and teacher training that enhance both physical and emotional safety.

A multidimensional and preventive approach to creating safe and enabling learning environments was emphasized. Actions include managing physical risks through improved infrastructure, transport, and safety protocols; preventing interpersonal violence through positive discipline and restorative justice; and promoting peace, art, and sports through socio-emotional education. Countries presented models of multisectoral coordination and innovative technology use, underscoring that sustainability depends on stable budgets, ongoing training, and strong institutional leadership.

Topic 4: Comprehensive protection and health services to respond to violence

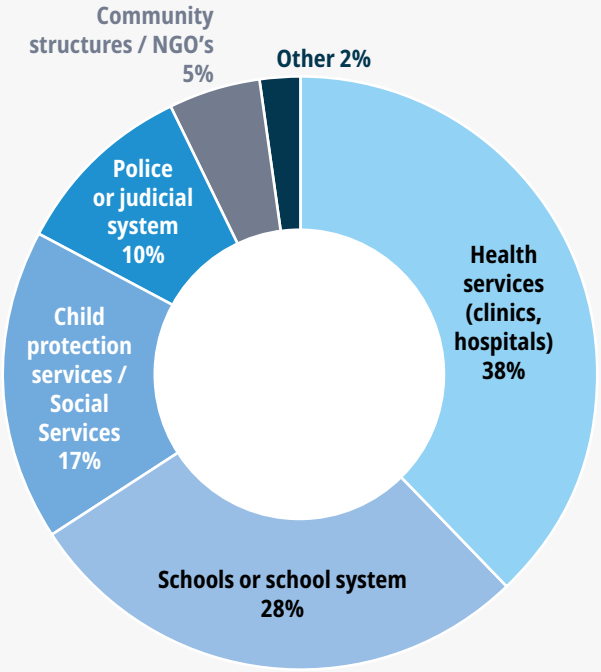
Moderator: Britta Monika Baer, Regional Advisor on Violence and Injury Prevention, PAHO.

Speakers:

- Hon. Minister Dr. Shantal Munro-Knight, Office of the Prime Minister, Barbados.
- Kelly Castro, Psychiatrist and Professional of the Technical Team of the Directorate of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Perú.
- Silvia Liliana Méndez, Psychiatrist and Professional of the Technical Team of the Directorate of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Uruguay.
- Astrid Eliana Caceres Cardenas, Director, Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, Colombia.
- Roxana Biggemman, representative of the Ministry of Health and Sports of Bolivia.
- Mackdiel Romero, PAHO's Youth for Health Group (PYHG).

This section of the regional consultation looked at how health systems, protection services, and multisectoral responses can work together to ensure that no survivor is left without the support they need.

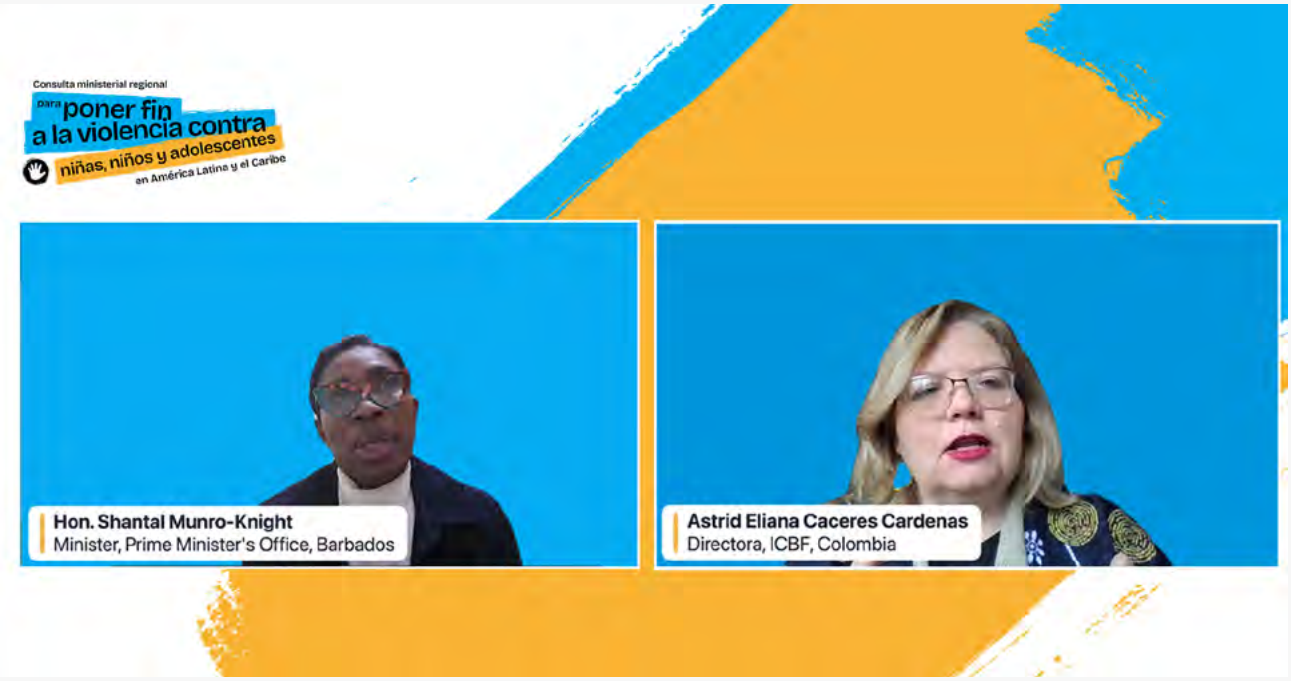
Graph 2: If a child survivor of violence seeks help in your country, which service is most likely to be their first point of contact?



Source: Chat of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF/PAHO.

It was an opportunity to reflect on where, how and with whom a comprehensive response can be provided to children who have experienced situations of violence. A dynamic was carried out for the participants, according to their context, to identify what is the most likely first point of contact a child would go to for help. The multiple responses were categorized, which made it possible to identify that health services (clinics, hospitals) are the most likely first point of contact for a child or adolescent who has suffered violence, with 38 per cent of the respondents coinciding with this category (see Graph 2)[30]. The role of the health sector stood out, as it maintains continuous contact with communities (vaccination, primary care, prenatal care) but does not always take advantage of this opportunity to detect cases of violence in time, which would be key to preventing its escalation. It was stressed that every point of contact with the comprehensive response system must be

30 Community structures / NGO's : 5 per cent; and Other (for ex. Religious groups, helplines): 2 per cent.



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prepared to detect and respond appropriately to violence. It is critical to build capacity to offer frontline support to all child survivors of violence, also known as ANIMA.[31]

The Hon. Minister Dr. Shantal Munro-Knight, Office of the Prime Minister, Barbados, emphasized the critical role that culture plays in preventing violence, especially in the face of the recent increase in youth violence in Barbados, with adolescents aged 17 to 19 involved in serious crimes, an unprecedented phenomenon in the country. She argued that culture should not be seen only from an economic or entertainment perspective, but as a tool with "soft power" capable of strengthening national identity, promoting inclusion and transmitting essential social values.

In the face of increased violence, the Government of Barbados adopted an innovative multi-sectoral strategy, led by the cultural sector and in partnership with UNICEF, which integrated several ministries, including youth, sports and community empowerment; education; and the Crime Prevention Unit (with the National Peace Programme, established in 2003). This strategy was implemented through two key pillars: i) innovative use of the arts; and ii) a national campaign with influencers and artists. With this, the minister underlined the need to reassess the role of culture as a long-term transformative tool, as a way of social cohesion and identity, and to promote real, non-segmented multisectoral approaches.

> **"The importance of culture. I think it is something that's undervalued and underestimated within our arsenal of tools that we can use".**
>
> *– Minister, Dr. Shantal Munro-Knight, Barbados.*

31 PAHO has launched the ANIMA tool, a 5-step model to strengthen the capacity of frontline response personnel, including health personnel, in identifying and supporting frontline in cases of violence. See: https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/57102 A video series, produced with the support of Canada, is part of PAHO's work to provide technical assistance to member states to respond to violence in all its forms: https://www.paho.org/es/noticias/13-6-2022-anima-nueva-serie-videos-para-reforzar-respuestas-sistema-salud-violencia-contra . Same resource in English: https://www.paho.org/en/news/13-6-2022-lives-new-video-series-strengthen-health-system-responses-violence-against-women

Kelly Castro, Psychiatrist and Professional of the Technical Team of the Directorate of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Perú, stressed that violence, especially against children and adolescents, is recognized in Peru as a serious public health problem. The government's response is being organized from the first level of health care, which represents both an opportunity and a challenge due to the multiple aspects of the problem. She framed the action of the health sector within national policies such as the National Multisectoral Policy for Children and Adolescents to 2030 (PNMNNA)[32] and the National Policy for Gender Equality (PNIG).[33] Among the key programmes, she highlighted those aimed at the prevention and care of mental and psychosocial health, as well as the reduction of violence against women. Peru has specialized services, such as 294 Community Mental Health Centers (first-level of care), which provide specialized care for children, and 32 Child and Adolescent Abuse Care Modules (MAMIs) located in hospitals, which provide comprehensive care to survivors. Health sector regulations are relevant to standardize and guide the actions of professionals at the different levels of care[34], which makes it possible to establish joint action routes, assess risks, guarantee free services, and incorporate criteria such as the best interests of the child, cultural relevance, and the role of caregivers as the first point of contact.

From prevention and school-based work, the "Mental Health at School" 2025-2026 plan was implemented[35] as a tool to prevent other forms of violence in educational spaces. The Ministry reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening services, from promotion and prevention to treatment and recovery for survivors of violence.

> **"In all these regulations, the best interests of the child are highlighted. And specific considerations have also been established, little by little, which consider the role of caregivers, cultural belonging in the establishments, in order to promote the participation of different communities. That is so important in our country, in Peru, respecting their beliefs, and thus being able to promote cultural adaptation in care".**
>
> *– Kelly Castro, Technical Team, Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Peru.*

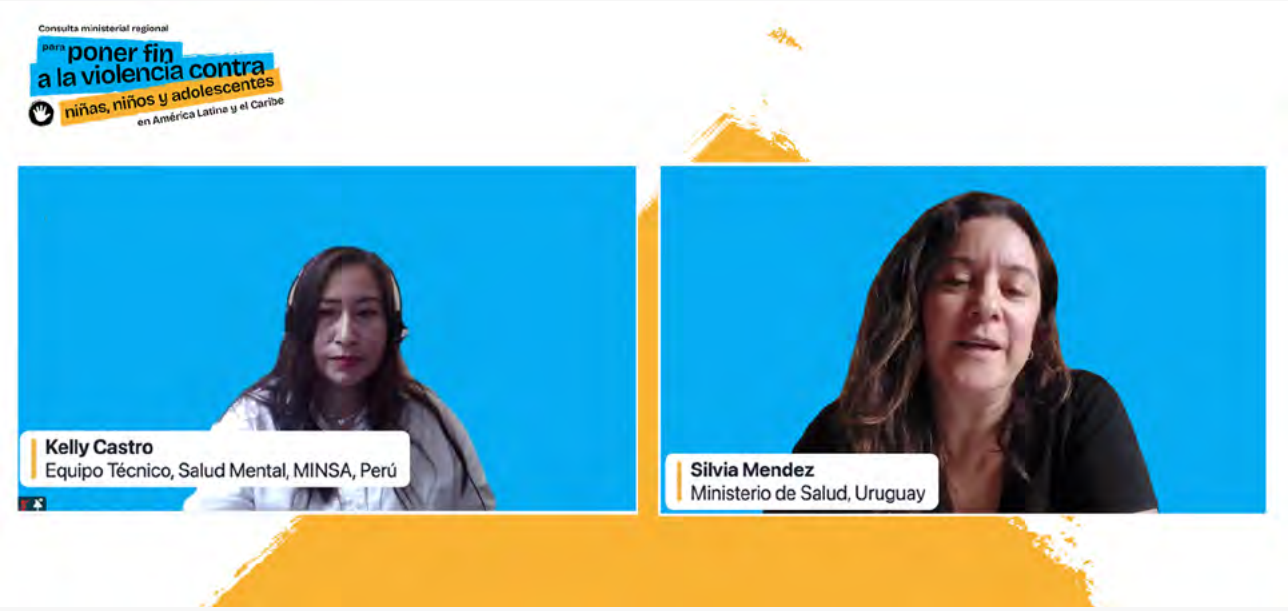
Silvia Méndez, Psychiatrist and Professional of the Technical Team of the Directorate of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Uruguay, explained how to break with fragmented approaches through the articulation of different programmes (perinatal, adolescent, gender, sexual diversity, and mental health), with a perspective of rights and gender. She stressed

32 Government of Peru (2025) Unique Digital Platform of the Peruvian State: Start. The State: MIIMP: National Multisectoral Policy for Children and Adolescents by 2030 – PNMNNA. Retrieved from: https://www.gob.pe/42698-politica-nacional-multisectorial-para-las-ninas-ninos-y-adolescentes-al-2030-pnmnna

33 Government of Peru (2025) Unique Digital Platform of the Peruvian State: Start. The State: MIMP: National Policy for Gender Equality (PNIG): https://www.gob.pe/44830-politica-nacional-de-igualdad-de-genero-pnig

34 In which the following stand out: Joint action protocol with the Women's Emergency Centers (MIMP), which offer psychological, legal and social care: https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minsa/informes-publicaciones/393873-protocolo-de-actuacion-conjunta-entre-los-centros-emergencia-mujer-cem-y-los-establecimientos-de-salud-eess-para-la-atencion-a-las-victimas-de-violencia-version-amigable. Technical Guide for Comprehensive Mental Health Care for Child Victims of Sexual Violence (2022): https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minsa/normas-legales/3634911-868-2022-minsa . Health Directive for Comprehensive Mental Health Care for Victims of Violence and Family Members in Community Mental Health Centers: https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minsa/normas-legales/4906534-1110-2023-minsa

35 The Peruvian Government, through the Ministry of Health (Minsa) and the Ministry of Education (Minedu), presented the National Plan for Mental Health in Educational Institutions "Mental Health in your school" 2025-2026, an intersectoral effort that represents the firm commitment to promote the mental well-being of children and adolescents. Retrieved from: https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minsa/noticias/1226913-minsa-presento-plan-salud-mental-en-tu-cole-2025-2026



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that the right to health must encompass the complexity of childhood and adolescence and consider diverse realities and social determinants. For this reason, specific protocols have been developed to address cases of sexual violence and child abuse and are currently being updated to strengthen continuous and coordinated care between institutions.

One of the central challenges is training all health personnel to provide a respectful, high-quality response from the first contact, with effective follow-up. In addition, work is being done on a comprehensive care model with a gender and rights approach that incorporates indicators sensitive to risk and harm, including gender-based violence and new forms of violence, such as digital violence.

Uruguay also participates in coordination forums, such as the Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor (CETI) and the National Committee for the Eradication of Commercial and Non-Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (CONAPEES), where a joint conceptual review between health, education, justice and protection is promoted. Finally, she stressed that the approach to situations of pregnancy in girls and adolescents is being strengthened, both in prevention and in care and accompaniment, within the framework of a continuous process of review and improvement of the comprehensive care model.

> **“ The right to health must be understood, ... in its complexity and in its comprehensiveness.”**
>
> *– Silvia Méndez, Ministry of Health, Uruguay.*

Astrid Cáceres, Director, Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, Colombia, shared three concrete experiences of intersectoral coordination for integrated care for children and adolescents in situations of violence, underlining the country’s commitment to joint, timely action, both preventive and responsive. She presented two scenarios of integrated services and one on inter-institutional articulation.

- **Adolescent criminal responsibility:** Incorporates therapeutic and restorative justice approaches, particularly for cases involving psychoactive substance use, in collaboration with the health sector.

- **Malnutrition reduction:** Involves joint action between child protection and health services. Sixty-two public hospitals apply a nutritional recovery model through home visits, nutritionist support, food baskets, and child monitoring, helping prevent hospitalizations or supporting recovery at home.

- **Integrated protection services:** Provide direct support to survivors of violence against children and adolescents, coordinated with the Prosecutor's Office.

The director stressed that these successful practices show how coordination between the health, justice, and protection sectors allows for comprehensive, timely, and quality responses for child and adolescent survivors of violence.

> **"We have set a challenge since the last Ministerial Conference: to arrive together and on time."**
>
> *– Astrid Eliana Cáceres Cárdenas, Director, ICBF, Colombia.*

Roxana Biggemman, representative of the Ministry of Health and Sports of Bolivia, presented the main normative[36], political[37] and operational[38] advances of the Plurinational State of Bolivia in the care of child survivors of violence. In the area of intersectoral and inter-institutional coordination, there is the National Inter-institutional Roundtable to Combat Gender-Based Violence. This is based on the approved Inter-institutional Action Route (RAI)[39], signed by ministers, NGOs, and local governments. It includes a specific chapter for children. Training has been provided to the different government sectors involved. She also mentioned Bolivia's implementation of indicators to monitor violence against children and adolescents; supervision through the Departmental Health Services (SEDES), which has authority in the territory; and mandatory training.

Bolivia has strengthened its legal framework, articulated multisectoral care routes, and developed operational capacities in the health system to care for child survivors of violence, with special emphasis on continuous training of personnel and effective territorial implementation.

> **"With these instruments we have managed to articulate the three subsectors of the national health system.... strengthening the supervision and ongoing training of staff to ensure effective compliance with the right to care and access to the law".**
>
> *– Roxana Biggemman Zaconeta, Ministry of Health and Sports, Bolivia.*

Mackdiel Romero, from PAHO's Youth for Health Group (PYHG), reflected on his life experience, marked from an early age by community violence and loss. His testimony broadened the view

36 Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ley Integral para Garantizar a las Mujeres una Vida Libre de Violencia Ley 348 (9 March 2013). Retrieved from: https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/2013_bol_ley348.pdf . Código Niña, Niño y Adolescente Ley No. 548 de 17 de julio de 2014. Retrieved from: https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/ley_548-2014.pdf . Law 1639, which modifies Law 603 of the Family Code and Family Procedure, eliminating child marriage and early unions without exceptions: https://plan-international.org/america-latina/noticias/2025/09/25/bolivia-prohibe-el-matrimonio-infantil-en-una-victoria-historica-para-las-ninas/

37 Plurinational Early Childhood Policy (July 2023): https://www.unicef.org/bolivia/informes/politica-publica-plurinacional-para-el-desarrollo-integral-de-la-primera-infancia ; Plurinational Plan for the Prevention of Teenage and Young Pregnancy (PPEAJ) (2015) https://consejoderedaccion.org/webs/opendata/docs/PLAN%20PLURINACIONAL%20PREVENCION%20EMBARAZO%20ADOLESCENTE%20(3).pdf

38 24/7 Health Establishments of Comprehensive Care Services for Adolescents (AIDA). Strategy for the Prevention of Violence in Education, promoted together with the Ministries of Education, Justice and Government: https://www.minedu.gob.bo/files/publicaciones/unicom/publicaciones/2025/Estrategia_contra_la_Violencia_en_mbito_educativo_compressed.pdf . Model of Comprehensive Care for Victims of Sexual Violence (2015) https://www.minsalud.gob.bo/images/Documentacion/dgss/Area_Continuo/dgss_acon_n_p34_mod_aten_Integral_a_victimas_violencia_sexual.pdf

39 Attorney General's Office of the State of Bolivia (2023) Inter-institutional Action Route (RAI). National Inter-Institutional Roundtable to Combat Gender Violence. Retrieved from: https://sepmud.gob.bo/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/RAI_-FINAL-05-01-24-1.pdf

of violence, encompassing insecurity, forced recruitment, sexual violence, and digital violence. He questioned the gap between policies and the realities of young people, highlighting the need for empathetic care, safe spaces, and accessible language in health and protection services.

He raised the importance of including children and adolescents in the design of public policies and services, avoiding adult-centrism and concluded with a call to build a world in which no young person or child naturalizes violence, highlighting the collective responsibility to protect the present and the future.

> **"The great challenge is how to get attention to the most vulnerable people, because violence generates more violence."**
>
> *– Mackdiel Romero, Youth for Health Group (PYHG), PAHO.*

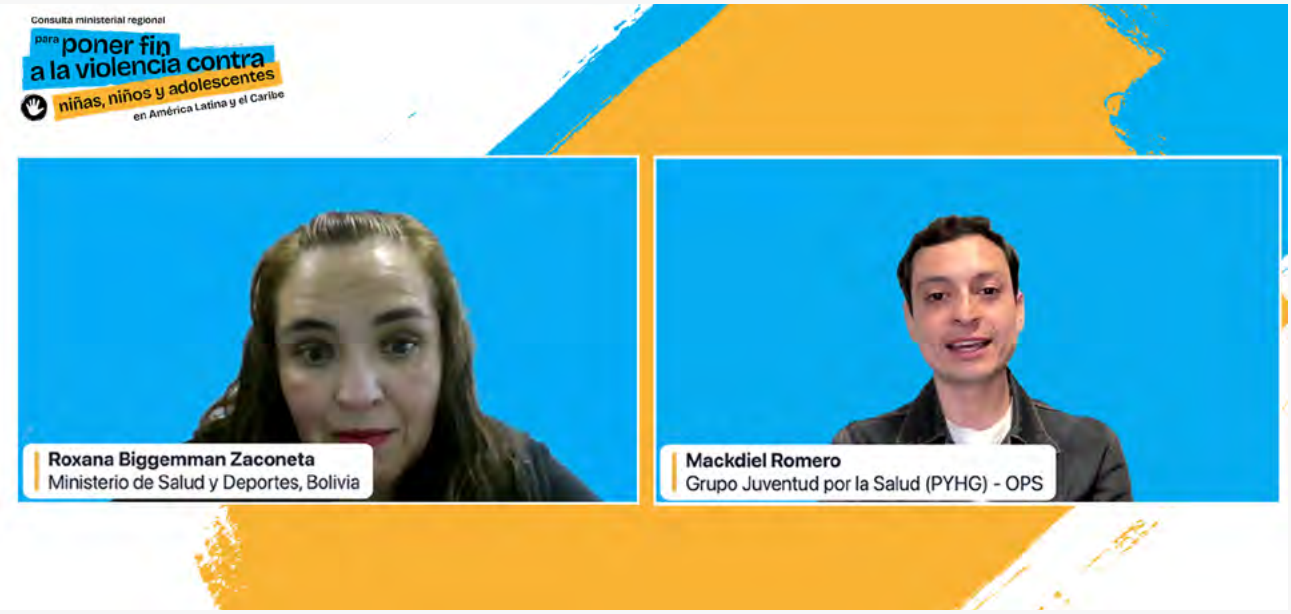
The central axis of the interventions was the need to build integrated and multisectoral systems that guarantee timely, empathetic, and continuous care for children who are survivors of violence. It was agreed that all points of contact (health, education, justice, community) must be prepared to detect and intervene, leaving no one behind. The health sector emerged as a key player, as it maintains a constant relationship with communities, although this link has not yet been sufficiently leveraged to detect and prevent violence. Speakers emphasized that violence against children and adolescents involves sensitive, articulated and transformative systems, in which each institutional actor (especially health and protection) is committed to responses that detect violence early and offer a quality response. Continuous training of personnel, supported by clinical policies and protocols, robust infrastructure, systematic documentation of cases of violence and the use of data to inform next steps are key to breaking cycles of violence and guaranteeing the right to a life free of violence.

2.3 PART 3. STRENGTHENING THE WAY WE WORK TOGETHER

Moderator:

- Britta Monika Baer, Regional Advisor on Violence and Injury Prevention, PAHO.
- Cairn Verhulst, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF.

Part Three of the consultation had another exchange session. Participants identified the actions to eradicate violence against children and adolescents both at the institutional level and at the country and regional levels. Below is a summary of the contributions of the different countries, institutions, and delegations.



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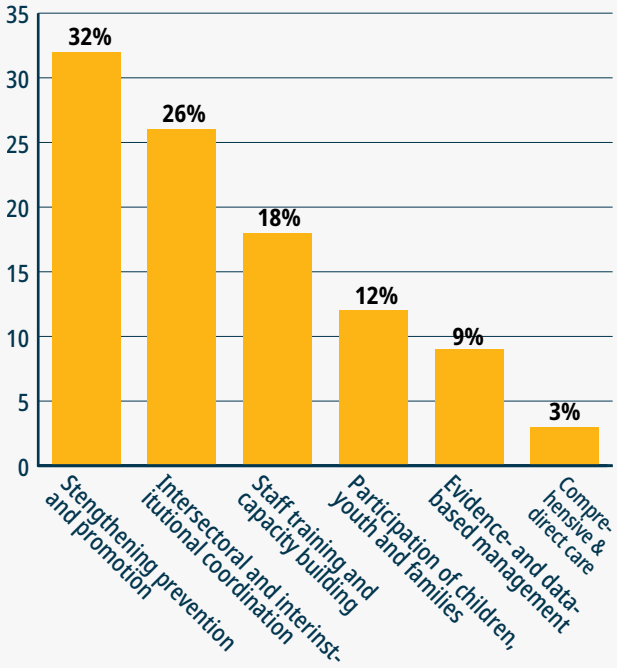
1. Graph 3: After participating in this consultation, what action do you plan to take in your country or in your organization?

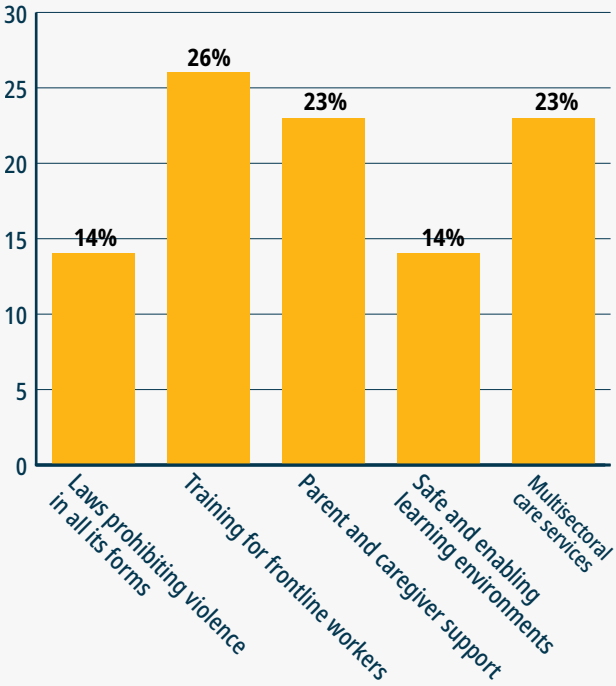


Source: Chat of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF/PAHO.

The proposed responses were grouped by common themes (see Graph 3). The most frequently mentioned action focused on preventing violence before it occurs and promoting protective environments through stronger prevention and promotion measures. Participants also emphasized the need for effective intersectoral and institutional coordination, followed by staff training to strengthen the skills of those working directly with children and adolescents. Active participation of children, adolescents, and families in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions was another key theme. Evidence-based management and data use to inform decision-making, as well as improved comprehensive and direct care for cases of violence, were also prioritized.

Overall, responses reflected a holistic approach that combines prevention, institutional strengthening, active participation, and enhanced technical capacity. Most proposals focused on strengthening coordination and prevention efforts rather than reactive responses.

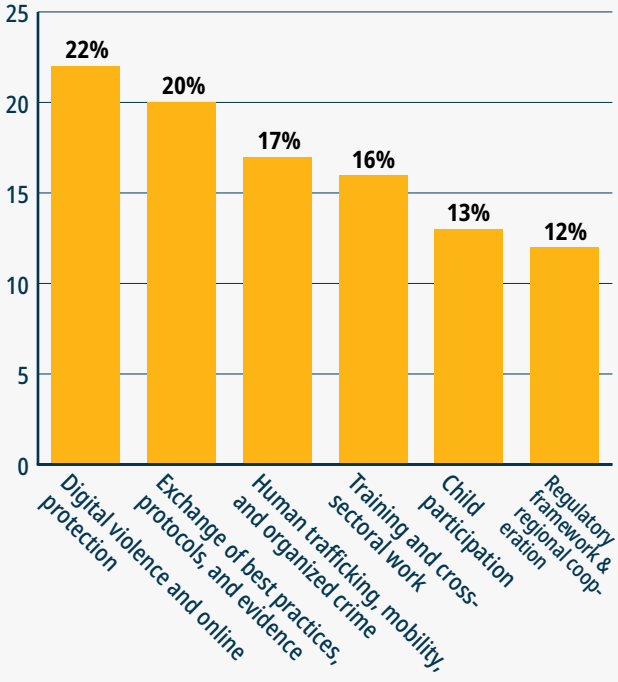
2. Graph 4: Which two of the following topics would you like to prioritize in the coming year (2026)?



Source: Chat of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF/PAHO

Participants selected frontline worker training as the top priority for 2026, followed by strengthening multisectoral response services and scaling up support for parents and caregivers. Responses indicated a strong regional commitment to practical implementation: building workforce capacity, improving coordination, and ensuring that services reach children, adolescents and families at all levels (see Graph 4).

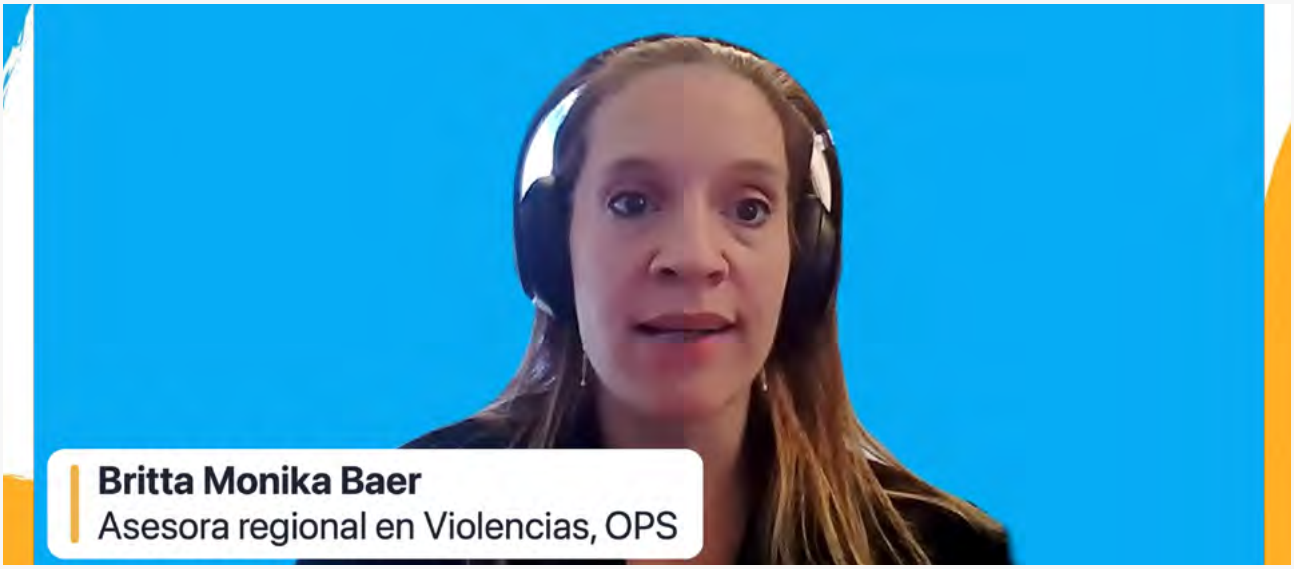
3. Graph 5: What activities or solutions go beyond a single country or organization and require regional or subregional collaboration?



Source: Chat of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF/PAHO

Regarding this question, six main categories of regional or subregional collaboration were identified (see Graph 5, above).

The analysis of the contributions made during the exchange session shows a high collective awareness of the need for articulated, multisectoral, and regional responses to effectively address violence against children and adolescents in



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Latin America and the Caribbean. The commonalities identified reflect not only the diversity of challenges faced by countries but also a strong willingness to collaborate and learn from each other, which provided a solid basis for joint action.

Digital violence and online protection were positioned as one of the emerging priority areas, due to the widespread use of technologies and social networks among children. Likewise, human trafficking, organized crime, and human mobility are cross-cutting problems that require coordinated responses across borders. Continuous training, the strengthening of intersectoral work, and the active participation of children and adolescents are essential pillars to advance effectively and sustainably in these agendas.

Finally, the creation of spaces for exchanging good practices, protocols, and evidence was presented as a shared need, reinforcing the value of this regional consultation as a starting point for building a community of learning and joint action. Regional cooperation is not only desirable, but urgent, to ensure that no child or adolescent is left unprotected against violence, regardless of the country in which they are located.

4. What tools, evidence, or support would you need from other actors to advance this agenda?

The inputs gathered in this session reflected a shared vision on the need to strengthen systems for preventing and responding to violence against children and adolescents through articulated regional mechanisms, solid evidence, and adequate technical and financial resources. There is a high demand for standard tools, such as standardized inter-institutional protocols, interoperable information systems, and systematic impact evaluations, suggesting that the construction of a regional framework of reference would be welcome.

Additionally, specific budget allocation and coordinated efforts among key sectors (health, education, justice, and economy) were identified as crucial conditions for progress. Ongoing training, community involvement, and the establishment of spaces for multilateral cooperation also emerged as priority actions to ensure that protection strategies remain sustainable and culturally appropriate.

In sum, the inputs showed a strong willingness to collaborate regionally, focused on the exchange of good practices, data-driven investment, and joint action to create safe environments for children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Closing of the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean

Moderators:

- Britta Monika Baer, Regional Advisor on Violence and Injury Prevention, PAHO.
- Cairn Verhulst, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF.

Speakers:

- La Shawna Griffith, PoeTree Barbados Colective.
- Nahomy Acosta, survivor and human rights advocate, Valientes, Honduras.
- Dra. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children.
- Kendra Gregson, Regional Protection Advisor, UNICEF.

The poem ´Comment Section´ by **La Shawna Griffith (Barbados)** is a deeply critical, heartbreaking, and courageous piece that denounces the social normalization of pedophilia and sexual violence against children and adolescents in Caribbean communities and, by extension, in many societies around the world. Griffith managed to articulate the voice of invisible survivors, dismantle the masks of respectability of the aggressors and challenge social and institutional complicity. It was an urgent invitation to collective action: name the abuse, break the silence and demand justice.

> **“I’m not here for comfort; I’m here for truth”**
>
> *– La Shawna Griffith (full poem transcription on last page of this report).*

The testimony of **Nahomy Acosta**, survivor and activist of the organization *Valientes* in Honduras, was a powerful, raw and deeply empathetic denunciation of the reality that thousands of child survivors of violence live. It was a call to regional awareness that challenges both the authorities and civil society. It called for structural reform, dignified treatment, real investment and healing justice.

> **“Only the person who has gone through this can understand how difficult it is then it is very necessary to have dignified care, empathetic care ...”**
>
> *– Nahomy Acosta.*

Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, provided closing remarks, celebrating the vitality, diversity and commitment of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the fight against violence against children and adolescents. She underscored the value of peer-to-peer learning and the concrete implementation of the commitments made at the Bogota Conference in November 2024. She recognized that, despite progress, common structural challenges remain:

- Structural and community violence: adolescent homicides, femicides, sexual violence and gang recruitment.
- Insecure digital environments: growing risks for children and adolescents.
- Institutional fragmentation: deficits in multi-sectoral coordination and lack of resources.
- Harmful social norms: reproduced in families, communities and protection systems.

Further, she emphasized that countries must move from commitments to effective policy implementation, with:

- Comprehensive and accessible services duly strengthened with the necessary human resources for children, adolescents, parents and caregivers.
- Clarity in roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms.
- Concrete intersectoral coordination, with strengthened and clear referral protocols and mechanisms for both professionals and the general population.
- Proactive prevention and early detection not just delayed responses.
- Restorative justice and access to health as central components.
- Systematic participation of survivors, children, and adolescents, ensuring gender-sensitive and survivor-centred approaches.

Dr. Najat called for the protection of children and adolescents to be recognized as a strategic investment and integrated into national and territorial development plans, with a dedicated budget.

She concluded by stressing that it is not just about documents or meetings, but about real lives: “children are tired and cannot wait any longer.” Therefore, it is urgent to move from intention to action, strengthen collaboration, standardize effective practices and ensure that no child is left unprotected.

> **“We are dealing with lives, we are dealing with children, we are dealing with communities. So, we need really to deliver, to deliver well, to deliver together.”**
>
> *– Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid.*

Britta Monika Baer, on behalf of PAHO, closed the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean with a call for sustained and collaborative action. She stressed that the event does not mark a closure, but the beginning of a continuous work of follow-up to the commitments made at the Bogotá Conference, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the policies already in force in the region.

She stressed that Latin America and the Caribbean have a solid framework of commitments, laws, and policies. Still, the real challenge is to translate them into concrete actions that transform the lives of children and adolescents in their communities. She invited countries, agencies, and social actors to reflect on what more can be done and how to strengthen cooperation between governments, international organizations (such as PAHO and UNICEF), and civil society to give greater visibility and effectiveness to the agenda for the prevention of violence against children and adolescents. She reiterated the importance of joint work and regional co-responsibility, inviting everyone to participate in the event commemorating the global anniversary of the Bogotá Conference (November 10, 2025) as a further step to keep this agenda alive. Together with UNICEF’s **Cairn Verhulst**, they expressed broad gratitude to the participating countries, civil society organizations, international agencies, and technical teams that made the consultation possible.

UNICEF’s Kendra Gregson highlighted that the regional consultation was a journey of reflection and commitment. She recalled that the consultation began by recognizing the power of laws and the institutional systems that make them a reality, but also “*hard truths*” were heard: millions of children and adolescents continue to suffer violence in their homes, schools, and communities.

She stressed that hope lies in proven solutions: positive parenting programmes, safe schools and the strengthening of specialized protection systems. She reiterated that these efforts are not optional, but essential and that prevention requires the coordinated participation of all sectors and social actors. She evoked the words of the poet Akeem Chandler-Prescod, recalling that “so many names disappear in the cell of a spreadsheet”, as a metaphor for the survivors of violence who become numbers. In response, she reaffirmed:

> **“These names will not be forgotten. Every child and adolescent matters. Let’s not look the other way.”**
>
> *– Akeem Chandler-Prescod.*

With this message, she closed the event by highlighting the shared responsibility of governments, civil society, international organizations and communities to turn commitments into concrete action, ensuring that no child or adolescent is left invisible in the face of violence.

III. CROSS-CUTTING SYNTHESIS OF THE VOICES OF SURVIVORS, ADVOCATES, AND ACTIVISTS

A recurring theme throughout the consultation was the call for recognition and meaningful participation of survivors as legitimate actors in the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies. Claudia Montes, Sebastián Cuattromo, and Nahomy Acosta emphasized that their experiences provide unique insights into gaps within the justice system, healing processes, and the need for comprehensive care. Their inclusion should go beyond sharing testimony to ensure genuine participation in decision-making spaces where their voices have long been marginalized.

Comprehensive and restorative justice. The testimonies coincided in redefining the notion of justice: it is not only a matter of punishing the aggressor, but of repairing the damage, guaranteeing psychosocial accompaniment and rebuilding the dignity of the survivors. Justice must be accessible, empathetic and non-judgmental. Both Claudia and Nahomy stressed that survivors should not be responsible for demonstrating their credibility or reliving the trauma in the face of insensitive institutions. It requires trauma-informed justice and a sustained long-term state response.

Education, prevention and accompaniment. Carolina Caballero and Mackdiel Romero offered perspectives from childhood, adolescence, and youth, highlighting the school and the community as key spaces to prevent violence. Verbal violence, bullying, digital violence and forced recruitment are distinct but interconnected phenomena. Both agreed that prevention, on its own, is not enough without healing processes and emotional support. The school must be a safe environment, with teachers and staff trained in active listening and emotional first aid.

> **"Survivors must be part of the spaces of analysis and decision-making."**
> *– Claudia Montes.*

> **"Our knowledge and experiences have to be in every public policy."**
> *– Sebastián Cuattromo.*

> **"Justice should not be a space where victims have to prove that they are not lying."**
> *– Claudia Montes.*

> **"Investing in health and access to restorative justice."**
> *– Nahomy Acosta.*

> “It is not enough to sign pledges or hang posters if victims continue to feel alone.”
>
> *– Carolina Caballero.*

> “If services are not safe and comprehensible, young people will not ask for help.”
>
> *– Mackdiel Romero.*

Government responsibility and social collaboration. The interventions showed the limited structural protection offered by governments. Common patterns include bureaucracy, scarcity of resources, lack of adequate protocols, and lack of action on complaints. However, shared responsibility was also highlighted, underscoring the importance of creating alliances among government, civil society, and survivors to transform institutions. Achieving structural change requires political will, financing, and sustained ethical commitment.

> “States focus more on the aggressors than on the survivors; it’s time to invest in survivors.”
>
> *– Nahomy Acosta.*

Healing, empathy, and cultural transformation. Beyond policies and laws, the testimonies demanded a change in the social paradigm: moving from judgment and indifference to empathy and care. Violence leaves wounds that last and the response of the government must be constant and humanized. Healing is not only an individual process, but also a collective and cultural work. Emotional education, empathy in institutions, and survivor participation are key steps toward a culture free of violence.

> “Only those who have gone through this understand how difficult it is; that is why we must descend from reflection to empathy.”
>
> *– Nahomy Acosta.*

> “We dream of a world where no child sees violence as natural.”
>
> *– Mackdiel Romero.*

Together, the interventions articulated a powerful and coherent message: you will not succeed in eradicating violence without the active participation of those who have survived it. Justice and prevention must be addressed comprehensively, empathetically, and continuously, through specific mechanisms of support, accompaniment, and reparation. The testimonies revealed the current shortcomings of institutions and the transformative potential of survivors’ voices to create more humane, effective, and child-centered policies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

- The Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean evidenced a firm political and technical will of the countries of the region to move towards a region free of violence against children and adolescents. Through the exchange of experiences, commitments, and lessons learned around the four thematic axes, common principles were reaffirmed, structural challenges were recognized, and strategic lines of joint action were analysed.

  - **Multisectoral legal and policy frameworks:** Participating countries underscored the importance of establishing comprehensive normative and policy frameworks that explicitly recognize the right of children and adolescents to live free from violence. Participants stressed that having laws is not enough. Governments must implement intersectoral action plans with sustained funding, effective coordination, and the active participation of communities, children and adolescents. They also called for stronger institutional capacities at the local level and for ensuring that all actions are grounded in rights, equality, and shared social responsibility.

  - **Supporting parents and caregivers:** Positive parenting programmes play a vital role in breaking intergenerational cycles of violence. Country experiences showed that strengthening parental skills, promoting emotional education, and fostering positive relationships are key to preventing violence. Participants agreed that these programmes must extend beyond the family and evolve into inclusive, intersectoral, and culturally appropriate public policies with a community-based approach. Strong institutionalisation is essential to ensure their continuity regardless of political changes.

  - **Safe and enabling learning environments:** Schools were identified as key spaces for promoting violence prevention, peaceful coexistence, and socio-emotional development. The actions shared by the countries demonstrated a comprehensive approach encompassing physical security, risk

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Through the exchange of experiences, commitments, and lessons learned, common principles were reaffirmed, structural challenges were recognized, and strategic lines of joint action were analysed.

management, restorative justice, student leadership, and family engagement. The importance of transforming school culture was underlined, with a focus on leaving behind punitive practices and fostering educational communities based on respect, empathy, and inclusion. Technological innovation and inter-institutional collaboration were highlighted as essential to strengthening the education system's response capacity.

- **Comprehensive protection and health services to respond to violence:** Health services were identified as the first point of contact for children and adolescents who have experienced situations of violence, especially in contexts of vulnerability. The experiences of the countries showed that an effective response requires coordinated action between health, protection, justice and community, with clear protocols, trained personnel, intercultural care and the participation of children and adolescents. The importance of training frontline personnel, generating intersectoral routes, strengthening the approach to mental health and ensuring effective access to comprehensive services, from prevention to recovery, was also highlighted.

- Participants expressed strong interest in exchanging experiences and learning from successful interventions, reflecting shared concerns about policy implementation, intersectoral coordination, and programme impact evaluation. Many questions focused on how different sectors integrate within protection systems and on effective coordination models, formal protocols, and referral mechanisms across health, justice, protection, and education. Participants also highlighted the importance of creating protective environments at school and at home through active engagement of children, adolescents, families, and communities.

- Additional concerns centered on adapting methodologies, designing inclusive parenting programmes, involving diverse families, and ensuring rigorous monitoring. Participants sought insights into legislation on violence and ways to measure intervention effectiveness, underscoring the need for evidence to strengthen quality, relevance, and continuous improvement. These exchanges create valuable opportunities for mutual learning, institutional strengthening, and the development of shared regional standards.

- With less than five years to achieve SDG target 16.2, the conference made clear that ending violence against children and adolescents is an urgent and shared task. The progress presented shows that change is possible, but it also requires sustained political will, adequate resources, coherent policy frameworks, and effective participation by all sectors of society.

- The momentum generated by this conference must be harnessed to bring about real change, supported by accountable systems, by dedicated investment and by the conviction that a violence-free childhood is not an ideal, but a right.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the exchanges held during the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Ending Violence against Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, and recognizing the progress, challenges, and opportunities shared among the participating countries, the following recommendations are aimed at strengthening the regional and national response to all forms of violence against children and adolescents:

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Recommendations are aimed at strengthening the regional and national response to all forms of violence against children and adolescents.

Strengthening multisectoral legal, policy, and governance frameworks

- Ensure the existence and updating of specific laws that prohibit all forms of violence against children and adolescents in all settings, including corporal punishment, sexual abuse, trafficking, bullying, and digital violence.
- Promote policy and institutional coherence through multisectoral action frameworks that integrate health, education, protection, justice, and the participation of children and adolescents.
- Review and update the relevance of data exchange for optimal traceability of children and adolescents, and the prevention, care, and response interventions they require, to effectively "*arrive together and on time*".
- Strengthen institutional leadership, especially of the governing bodies for children and adolescents, to ensure effective coordination and intersectoral accountability.

Expand and sustain support programmes for parents and caregivers

- Institutionalize positive parenting programmes as permanent public policies, articulated between ministries, local governments, and community actors.
- Adapt implementation modalities to reach diverse contexts (rural, urban, indigenous, migrant), combining face-to-face, digital, community, and home-based formats.

- Develop cultural strategies to transform social norms that normalize punishment, promoting parenting based on care, empathy, and respect.

Promote safe and enabling learning environments.

- Promote national plans for safe schools, with components that address both infrastructure and socio-emotional well-being and peaceful coexistence.
- Invest in the continuous training of teachers and educational personnel in positive discipline, peaceful conflict resolution, and socio-emotional skills.
- Strengthen coordination between the education, health, and protection sectors to ensure comprehensive responses to situations of violence within and outside the school environment.

Consolidating comprehensive protection and health services to respond to violence

- Strengthen health systems as a key gateway for early detection and response to violence, especially at the primary level, by implementing standardized action protocols and ensuring sufficient human resources.
- Establish clear intersectoral routes of action that allow safe and timely referrals between health, protection, justice, and psychosocial support, enabling the exchange of data necessary to achieve the traceability of each child who is cared for.
- Ensure continuous training of frontline staff, including health, education and protection staff, on how to detect violence early, frontline support and a quality comprehensive response.

Mainstreaming participation and co-responsibility

- Guarantee real spaces for participation for children and adolescents in the designing, implementation, and monitoring of public policies.
- Implement social mobilization campaigns and strategies that promote a culture of protection and shared co-responsibility between government, family, community, and private sector.

Sustaining progress with political commitment, adequate financing, and regional cooperation

- Raise visibility to the urgency to act on violence against children and adolescents in the region and continue to mobilize all actors and countries around this agenda, including the fulfillment of the commitments made at the Bogotá Conference in 2024.
- Ensure stable, sufficient, and specific budget allocations for the prevention and treatment of violence against children and adolescents.
- Strengthen national and subnational technical capacities through regional cooperation, exchange of good practices, and ongoing technical assistance.
- Promote the exchange of experiences between countries, lessons learned, the improvement of evidence-based data to monitor results and ensure improvements in the quality of interventions.

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APPENDICES

Agenda of the Regional Ministerial Consultation to End Violence against Children and Adolescents (VAC) in Latin America and the Caribbean

DAY	TIME	SESSIONS
DAY 1	**PART 1 – SETTING THE SCENE**	
	9-9:30	Welcome and opening remarks
	9:30-10:00	Evidence to action SDG 16 in LAC and key accelerators to end VAC Bogota Conference
	10:00-10:10	Wellness break (5-10 minutes)
	PART 2 – TAKING ACTION	
	10:10-11:00	TOPIC 1 – Legal policy frameworks to prevent and respond to VAC Brief presentation of the evidence 2-3 Speakers from countries highlighting progress and lessons learnt
	11:00-11:45	TOPIC 2 – Parenting programmes to break cycles of violence against children and adolescents Brief presentation of the evidence 2-3 Speakers from countries highlighting progress and lessons learnt
	11:45-12:00 h.	Recap and conclusions of day 1
DAY 2	9:00-9:15	Welcome back and recap
	9:15-10:00	TOPIC 3 – Towards ensuring safe and enabling learning environments Brief presentation of the evidence 2-3 Speakers from countries highlighting progress and lessons learnt
	10:00-10:45	TOPIC 4 – Comprehensive protection and health services to respond to violence Brief presentation of the evidence 2-3 Speakers from countries highlighting progress and lessons learnt
	PART 3 – STRENGTHENING THE WAY WE WORK TOGETHER	
	10:45-10:55	Wellness break (5-10 minutes)
	10:55-11:25	Exchange session: identification of priorities and common actions
	11:25-11:50	Lessons learnt from working multi-sectorally towards violence prevention
	11:50-12:00	Conclusions, next steps and closing remarks

POEM: COMMENT SECTION

by La Shawna Griffith[40]

"I tired, I tired of us avoiding the conversation about these grown men that groom little girls to have sex with them.

Don't act so surprised, a lot of women know them. These old men that love children, that come over and want to play and talk with them. The men that are in high society, the ones you would never expect.

Yes, them. They are who we are discussing. Those men that are never in the comment section.

From the time a girl is placed missing, she is victim shamed, she forced raped, she's worthless and she's spreading her legs all around the place. But what if we heard her story about Uncle John that they molested she and swear to kill her if she tell anybody. See, I know a lot of young girls in these situations where they are the victim, but you don't hear their stories.

The media don't carry them. So, you just think that they are worthless and most of the time it's a big hard bottom line that harboring them, but they're never brought before the law court. But in the court of public opinion, he would never do that.

He chants; he waves. John is a pillar member of society, but I can't believe what I hear. But John is a pedophile who is charming and he knows the way to get the community to never suspect him with all the good deeds of financial donations he making.

Meanwhile, he making young bodies count defiling their temple and threatening them if they speak out. John is a known predator, just his business don't get air out. But let it be a little girl that missing, all she businesses be talked about.

We know where she lives and where she frequents, but we never learn the ages of these so-called men and why they're okay with having a child in their bed. When a man takes away a child's innocence, what should their punishment be? Should we make him beg for mercy and reflect on the way he has changed along a young way? When a man takes away a child's innocence, what should their punishment be? Should we make him beg for mercy and reflect on the way he has changed a young life so drastically? When a man of the cloth has multiple cases of accused rape with minors, do we call him a pastor or a pedophile? When we go to confession, should we say, father, please do not interfere with us because we are children? Should his sermons speak to resisting flesh? Should we say rest in peace when a pedophile dies or should we say good riddance? When children are being assaulted at schools, what should be our recourse? Cause I am tired. I am tired of us avoiding the conversation of pedophilia because a lot of them walk among us, but we're too blind to see.

And honestly, I believe we need to establish a sexual registry. What do you do when the ones serving and protecting have served themselves a handful of you? Badges turn blindfolds, justice turn joke and your screams disappear into a cloud of smoke. What do you do when your abuser is a politician and your name gets spread like a stain on the system that anyone wanted the courage it took to get here? The many nights of tears, the bloody garments soaked in fear.

What do you do when those parents who are supposed to love and protect you decide to hit you? Bruised faces and broken minds, tears, stained faces and hushed cries. What do you do when you're a young girl raped and murdered, and everyone turns a blind eye? What should your family do when their wills wake up an entire community at night? I am drained from hearing stories brushed off like rumors in the rain while survivors hold their silence wrapped tight in shame and predators sit at tables like nothing is wrong in churches and schools singing society's song. I am not here for comfort.

I am here for truth, for every stolen moment, every wounded youth. We cannot heal what we won't face or name. So let's drag this darkness into the flame, expose the sickness, burn down the lie, because silence is where innocence goes today."

40 Literal audio transcript.


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