



Meeting Report

Ending Violence Against Children During COVID-19 and Beyond: Second Regional Conference to Strengthen Implementation of the INSPIRE Strategies

East Asia and the Pacific
1–5 November 2021

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

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English only

MEETING REPORT

**ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND: SECOND REGIONAL
CONFERENCE TO STRENGTHEN IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE INSPIRE STRATEGIES**

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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NOTE

The views expressed in this report are those of the participants of the Ending Violence Against Children During Covid-19 And Beyond: Second Regional Conference to Strengthen Implementation of the INSPIRE Strategies and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the conveners.

This report has been prepared by UNICEF and the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific for Member States in the East Asia and the Pacific and for those who participated in the Ending Violence Against Children During Covid-19 And Beyond: Second Regional Conference to Strengthen Implementation of the INSPIRE Strategies (virtual) from 1 to 5 November 2021.

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KEYWORDS: Child abuse – prevention and control / Child health / COVID-19 / Domestic violence / Violence

Abbreviations

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
ALS	Alternative Learning System
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASWC	ASEAN Social Work Consortium
COVID-19	coronavirus disease
CPIMS+	Child Protection Information Management System+
CSO	civil society organization
EVAC	ending violence against children
FBO	faith-based organization
GBV	gender-based violence
GBVIMS +	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System+
GPEVAC	Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
LGBTQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer
MaPa	Masayang Pamilya
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCSEA	online child sexual exploitation and abuse
PLH	Parenting for Lifelong Health
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SSW	social service workforce
SSWS	social service workforce strengthening
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	violence against children
VAW	violence against women
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

At least 1 billion children (aged 2–17 years) globally experience some form of violence each year. In the East Asia and Pacific region,¹ physical, sexual and emotional violence, as well as neglect, is a daily reality for most children, causing them to feel unsafe in their own homes and communities.

Without addressing violence against children (VAC), national and global efforts and investments in education, health and early childhood development will be undermined, and we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There is a growing evidence base on what works to effectively prevent and respond to VAC in all settings, including the seven INSPIRE strategies to end VAC.

In October 2018, multisectoral delegations from the social welfare, health, education and justice sectors of 21 countries in East Asia and the Pacific came together for the First Regional Conference Towards the Implementation of INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children. The Conference was hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), to provide participants the opportunity to learn more about the INSPIRE strategies and to exchange evidence-based and promising practices from unique country contexts.

Three years later, there is even more country, regional and global evidence to share and experiences from which to learn. However, every country in the region has been impacted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. COVID-19 has heightened the risk of violence for children and young people. Survey data have consistently shown that prevalence of VAC in the home has significantly increased since the start of the pandemic as containment measures were imposed and schools were closed. Over 375 million children in East Asia and the Pacific faced school closures for longer than 30 days. Online learning became a critical component of education and essential to maintaining social connection for many children across the region. However, the increased exposure to digital technology has also led to a rise in online child exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the pandemic has taken a significant toll on the mental health of children, young people and their caregivers.

As countries ease pandemic control measures, the safety of children is not guaranteed – in fact, it is far from it. The socioeconomic fallout will continue to impact already vulnerable families and exacerbate risks of violence, abuse, harm and exploitation. As shrinking budgets come under the strain of competing priorities for pandemic recovery, cuts in public and donor financing of welfare and protection services are inevitable. Without urgent action, risks and vulnerabilities will increase.

Although countries in East Asia and the Pacific had made progress towards ending VAC prior to the onset of COVID-19, they were not on track to meet SDG target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. The impact of the pandemic threatens to not only slow, but also reverse, progress made on this SDG target. With over one quarter of the world's children in this region, failure to tackle VAC will impact whether the world achieves SDG target 16.2 on ending VAC by 2030. We cannot allow this to happen.

¹ The United Nations Children's Fund East Asia and Pacific region covers Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pacific Islands (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu), Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

UNICEF and WHO jointly organized Ending Violence Against Children During COVID-19 and Beyond: Second Regional Conference to Strengthen Implementation of the INSPIRE Strategies, held virtually on 1–5 November 2021. The Conference comes under the umbrella of the 2021 Solutions Summit series of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (GPEVAC).

Over 1700 delegates gathered for the Conference virtually, representing governments (including from the health, social welfare, education and justice sectors), youth groups, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs, faith-based organizations and religious leaders, academic institutions, private sector and development partners, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. The purpose of the Conference was to identify actions needed to ensure effective prevention and response to VAC during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery, utilizing the strategies outlined in *INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children*.

The INSPIRE package was launched in 2016 by 10 agencies, including WHO and UNICEF. It is an evidence-based resource of seven strategies to help countries and communities intensify their focus on the prevention programmes and services with greatest potential to reduce VAC.²

The objectives of the meeting were the following:

- Explore the impact of COVID-19 on preventing and responding to VAC.
- Consider the implications of the latest global, regional and country research and developments on what works in implementing the INSPIRE strategies during COVID-19 and beyond.
- Identify adaptations and innovative solutions to tackle VAC in the face of COVID-19 and the global economic downturn.
- Promote and share good and promising practices on sectoral and multisectoral actions to prevent and respond to VAC with a focus on the health, social welfare and education sectors.
- Promote and share good and promising practices on: ensuring linkages between mental health and VAC in prevention and response; ensuring the well-being and protection of children in the learning recovery agenda; promoting parenting for violence reduction; strengthening generation of data, research and evidence; and effectively addressing the intersections between VAC and violence against women (VAW), and more.

This report contains a summary of the proceedings of the conference sessions with an emphasis on key points, lessons and key takeaways.

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