

# INSPIRE Evidence Update: A Decade of Progress to End Violence Against Children

## Executive Summary



A new, comprehensive global evidence review confirms what prevention leaders have long known: violence against children and adolescents is preventable, and we now have stronger proof than ever before of what works. The *INSPIRE Evidence Update*, published online in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, synthesizes findings from systematic reviews and primary studies, offering the most complete picture to date of effective interventions across countries and contexts. The analysis found that every INSPIRE strategy includes at least one intervention with consistent, high-quality evidence of effectiveness. This research solidifies the scientific foundation of INSPIRE for global action.

Through a collaboration between the University of Oxford, the INSPIRE Evidence Lab at Georgia State University, the World Health Organization, the CPC Learning Network at Columbia University, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the research reaffirms the power of evidence-based prevention. Together, these findings reinforce a clear message: violence against children is not inevitable and it can be stopped. With renewed scientific consensus and proven pathways for change, the INSPIRE Framework continues to guide governments, donors, and practitioners in building safer, healthier futures for all children.



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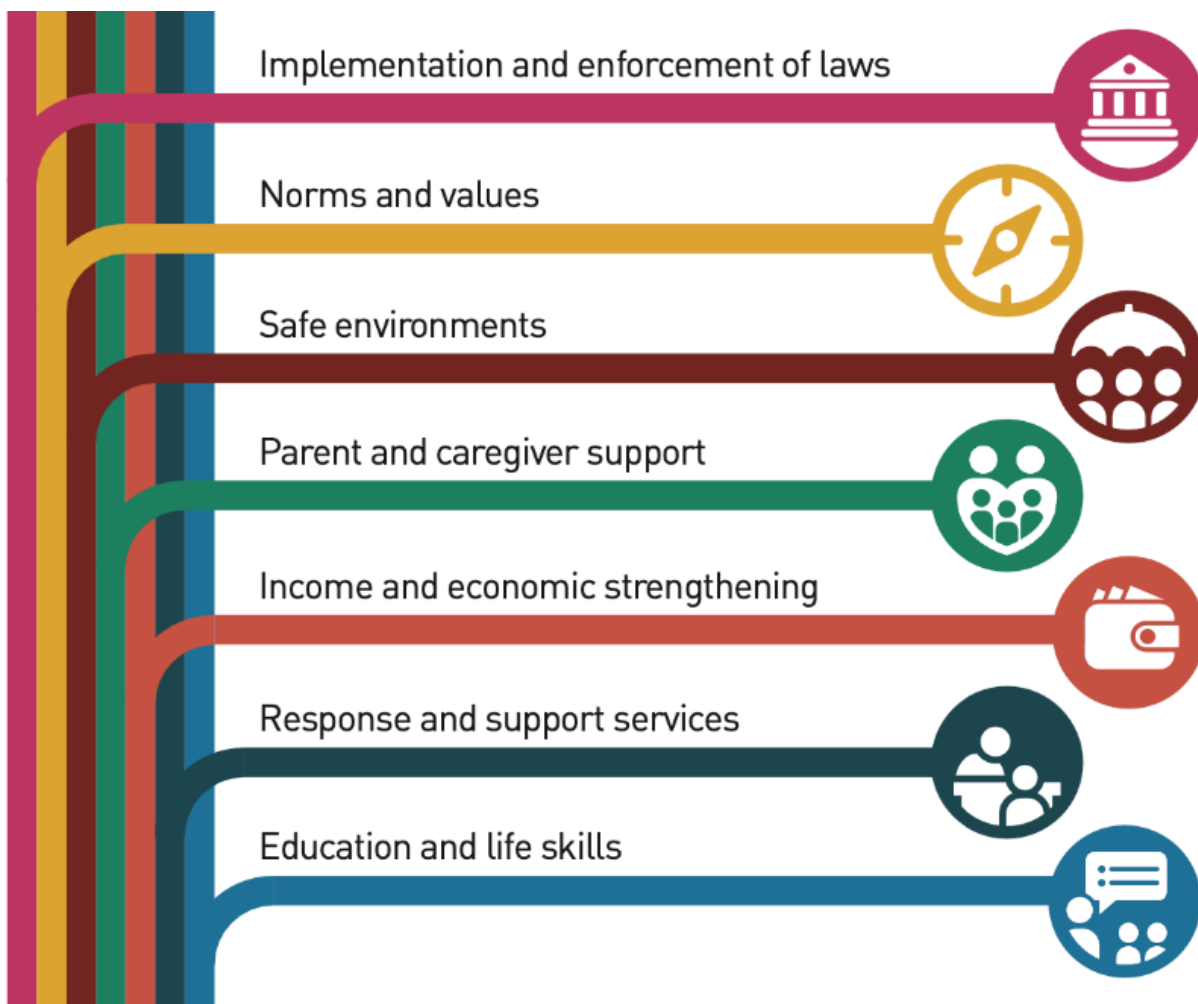
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## Background: The INSPIRE Framework

Violence against children remains one of the world’s most pervasive and costly public health and human rights challenges. Globally, one billion children – half of all children worldwide – experience violence each year. Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect not only cause immediate harm but also drive lifelong consequences for mental and physical health, educational attainment, and employment. Children who experience violence are at greater risk of depression, substance use, suicide, and perpetration of violence later in life, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of harm.

**Yet prevention works.** Ten years ago, the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and ten global partners launched *INSPIRE: Seven strategies to end violence against children*. It offered the world something that had been missing: a unified, evidence-based framework to prevent violence before it occurs and to identify and assist young survivors. A decade later, new evidence confirms that the INSPIRE approach works and that countries can scale up what we know protects children.

### The Seven INSPIRE Strategies



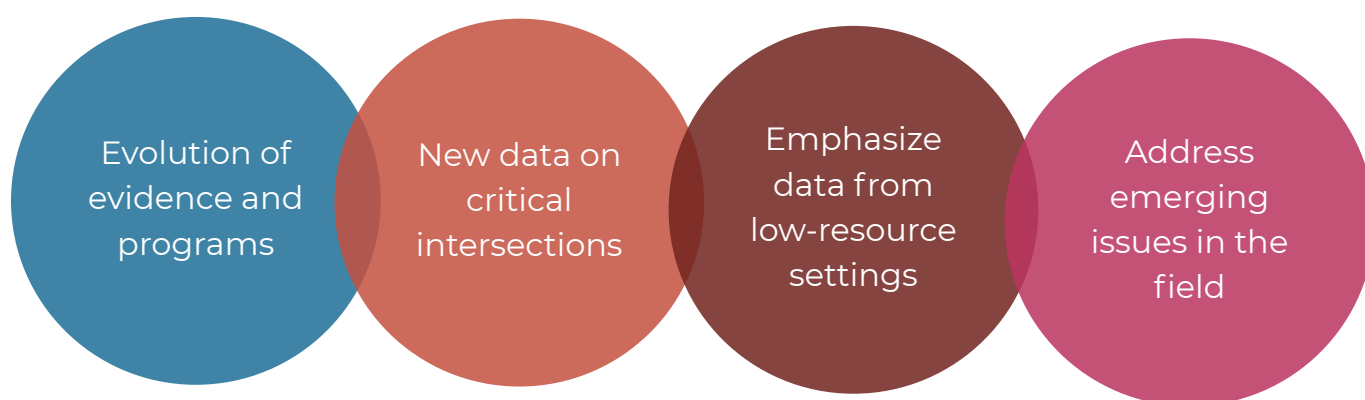
The INSPIRE Framework was built on three foundational pillars: efforts to address violence against children must be 1) driven by data, 2) based on evidence, and 3) focused on prevention. INSPIRE’s vision is a world where children grow up free from violence and reach their full potential.

## A Decade of Action – Updated with Recent Evidence

A new [comprehensive evidence review](#) in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* systematically synthesizes evidence from more than 200 systematic reviews and 3,000 studies, which is the most thorough analysis to date of what works to prevent, reduce, and respond to violence against children. The new *INSPIRE Evidence Update* marks a decade of progress and renewed purpose. The review draws on studies representing diverse contexts and populations, and applies a rigorous decision matrix to assess the quantity, quality, and consistency of effectiveness evidence across contexts for each of the programs and policies in INSPIRE’s seven strategies.

Since the launch of INSPIRE, the framework has become a cornerstone of global prevention efforts. Since 2016, INSPIRE has guided priorities and government commitments in more than 100 countries, and more than 60 have already integrated INSPIRE into their national policies, training, and action plans to make communities safer for children. As evidence grew and global implementation expanded, partners recognized the need to ensure that INSPIRE remained current and grounded in the best available science. Over the past decade, new research has emerged, particularly from low- and middle-income countries, showing how interventions can be adapted, scaled, and sustained.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR UPDATING INSPIRE



The field has evolved rapidly since INSPIRE was first released ten years ago. The INSPIRE Evidence Update was designed to ensure that the global framework continues to reflect the extensive, up-to-date science on what works to prevent and respond to violence against children. Its overarching goal was to synthesize and assess the global evidence base to determine which interventions show the strongest, most consistent effects and should therefore be prioritized for implementation.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1

Systematically identify evidence reviews on impacts of INSPIRE interventions.

2

Rank interventions based on the strength of their evidence base.

3

Identify key evidence gaps for future research.

### Specifically, the review sought to:

1. Provide a robust and transparent summary of the scientific evidence supporting each INSPIRE strategy, which integrates new findings since 2016 and highlights interventions with demonstrated effectiveness.
2. Assess gaps and emerging areas, such as the overlap between violence against children and violence against women, the high burden of violence in humanitarian settings, and the rise of online and technology-facilitated violence.
3. Ensure global relevance by reflecting evidence from low- and middle-income countries and documenting where evidence is strongest, limited, or uneven.

### What this review did

Researchers from Oxford University, WHO, CDC, and global partners conducted the largest evidence review ever on preventing violence against children.

- Reviewed 216 systematic reviews covering more than 3,000 primary studies.
- Ranked 30+ intervention types across the seven INSPIRE strategies.
- Evaluated not just *how much* evidence exists, but also its *quality* and *consistency of effectiveness* across contexts.

### How the Review Was Conducted

The review, led by the University of Oxford with WHO, CDC, and global partners, was a systematic review of systematic reviews. This publication is the most complete synthesis of global evidence to date on preventing violence against children and responding to the needs of young survivors. This review compiled and synthesized all existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses relevant to the

seven INSPIRE strategies and applied a structured evidence-decision matrix to rank interventions according to the quantity, quality, and consistency of evidence across contexts. It aimed to identify interventions that can be prioritized for implementation based on rigorous and consistent evidence. This analytic process ensured that each INSPIRE strategy is supported by clear, evidence-informed recommendations, which provides governments, donors, and practitioners with an authoritative guide for action and investment over the coming decade.

**Scope and methods**

- Searched 152 data sources (academic, organizational, and grey literature)
- Screened over 22,000 records and included 216 systematic reviews
- Covered more than 3,000 primary studies across 30+ intervention categories
- Focused on four key violence outcomes: child maltreatment, youth violence, adolescent intimate partner violence, and sexual violence
- Applied a structured evidence-decision matrix assessing: (1) quantity, (2) quality, and (3) consistency of effectiveness across contexts
- Analyzed results separately for high-income and low- and middle-income countries

**EVIDENCE-DECISION MATRIX**

|                           |  | Quality and type of evidence                   |   |                                     |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
|                           |  | High-confidence or moderate-confidence reviews | Low-confidence or critically low-confidence reviews | Strong-quality primary studies      |
| Evidence of effectiveness | Consistently (all or nearly all) or largely effective (considerable number of studies) | Well supported by evidence                     | Supported by evidence                               | Promising evidence                  |
|                           | Consistently (all or nearly all) or largely effective (limited number of studies)      | Supported by evidence                          | Promising evidence                                  | Emerging evidence, or Prudent       |
|                           | Inconsistently effective (mixed beneficial and null findings)                          | Not currently supported by evidence            | Not currently supported by evidence                 | Not currently supported by evidence |
|                           | Consistently (all or nearly all) ineffective or harmful                                | Not supported by evidence                      | Not supported by evidence                           | Not supported by evidence           |

Interventions rated as *Well-supported by evidence*, *Supported by evidence*, *Promising evidence*, *Emerging evidence*, or *Prudent* can be considered part of the INSPIRE toolbox of effective interventions.

## Key findings

**1 Every INSPIRE strategy has proven interventions.** The evidence shows clear and compelling progress that each of the seven INSPIRE strategies now includes at least one intervention with consistent, high-quality evidence of effectiveness.

### **2 Three breakthrough areas show the strongest global evidence**

- **Parenting programs** reduce child maltreatment and may also lower intimate partner violence against mothers at home.
- **Whole-school approaches** create safe and supportive learning environments and reduce youth violence.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy** improves recovery and mental health for children exposed to violence.

**3 Additional recommended interventions with evidence of effectiveness** for addressing one or more violence outcomes:

- School-based bullying prevention programs
- Life and social skills training
- Healthy romantic relationships education
- Cash-plus parenting programs
- Cash-plus youth-focused life-skills training
- Kinship foster care placing children with relatives
- Community mobilization
- Universal mental health promotion
- Gay straight alliances
- Laws limiting youth access to firearms
- Tax credits or cash transfers
- Resettlement interventions
- Primary care screening and intervention
- Anti-bullying legislation
- School health services
- Laws banning corporal punishment or sexual abuse and exploitation
- Laws preventing problem alcohol use

### **4 Areas needing further evidence**

Evidence is uneven across strategies and regions. Most research investigates interventions on Parent and caregiver support, Response and support services, and Education and life skills, and most studies come from high-income countries, even though the highest burden is in low- and middle-income countries. Some popular programs (such as media campaigns, hotspot approaches, microfinance, and urban upgrading interventions) show mixed or insufficient results and should be further evaluated before scaling.

## STRONGEST EVIDENCE BY OUTCOME

### Child maltreatment



Parenting programs

### Youth violence



Whole-school approaches

### Children exposed to violence



Cognitive behavioral therapy

### Dating & intimate partner violence



Healthy romantic relationships education

### Youth violence (including sexual violence)



Cash-plus youth-focused life-skills training

**Violence against children is preventable, and we now know more than ever about what works to protect children.** Every INSPIRE strategy can drive real change when paired with data, commitment, and scale-up. The next decade is an opportunity to move from evidence to action and build a world where every child can grow up safe, healthy, and free from violence.

