THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

From Commitment to Action: Uganda's Journey to the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children

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List of Acronyms

AU	African Union
CAP-EVAC	Common Africa Position on Ending Violence Against Children
CSO	Civil society organization
EVAC	Ending violence against children
GoU	Government of Uganda
INSPIRE	Seven strategies for ending violence against children
MDA	Ministries, departments and agencies
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
NSTF	National Steering Task Force
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STC-SDLE	Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Violence against children
VACS	Violence Against Children Survey
VACW	Violence Against Children and Women (survey)
WHA	World Health Assembly

About this Brief

Uganda has long demonstrated the value of multisectoral collaboration, coordinated stakeholder engagement and collective ownership across Government and Civil Society in advancing the violence against children (VAC) prevention agenda. The Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), the Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES) and the Ministry of Health (MoH), worked collaboratively with civil society organisations (CSOs) and other development partners to develop a unified national commitment for Bogotá 2024.

This brief has been developed to share the benefits of multi-stakeholder and multi-agency collaboration in the ending violence against children (EVAC) agenda. It explores the foundations of national action that span over a decade and highlights key achievements, persistent challenges, emerging lessons and opportunities for accelerating progress that defined Uganda's preparation and the process of developing actionable pledges through the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children.

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1. Introduction

The global movement to end violence against children (VAC) is gathering pace. More governments are making commitments to end VAC in schools, in homes, in the community and online. There has been increased investment, and national, regional and global partnerships are continuing to build the field. Uganda has emerged as a leading national case study for effective collaboration, and its journey may illustrate to other countries how progress can be achieved, and what remains to be done.

This brief reflects on Uganda's path to the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, held in Bogotá, Colombia, in November 2024. It examines the foundations established before the conference, and the priorities and commitments emerging from Bogotá. It highlights key areas of progress, challenges, emerging lessons and opportunities for strengthening the agenda for ending violence against children (EVAC) and looks ahead to the Second Global Ministerial Conference in Manila, Philippines in November 2026.

2. Background and Context of VAC Prevention in Uganda

Uganda's commitment to preventing and responding to VAC is rooted in national priorities and reinforced by continental and global commitments. In 2016, Uganda joined the Pathfinding Initiative of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, publicly committing to deliberate, coordinated action to prevent and end VAC. This commitment aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 16.2, which calls for an end to abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children, as well as African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, which envisions an Africa where every child is protected from violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.

Over the past decade, Uganda has invested significantly in strengthening systems to prevent and respond to VAC, including but not limited to enhancing legal and policy frameworks, generating national evidence, expanding response interventions, and strengthening the social service workforce. School safety initiatives and national parenting standards have taken root alongside home-grown innovations, which are now being scaled across communities in close partnership with the government.

Uganda's success is hinged on building and sustaining strong partnerships and collaboration across government sectors, civil society organizations, development partners, researchers, academia and other stakeholders. Through these efforts, Uganda has become a proactive leader in the global movement to end VAC.

3. Uganda's journey to Bogotá 2024

The First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children marked a major milestone in the global effort to end VAC. For Uganda, Bogotá presented an opportunity to take stock, reaffirm commitments and translate accumulated evidence, policy experience and home-grown innovation into more coordinated and measurable national action. Uganda brought to Bogotá a decade of experience and five critical foundations for accelerated action on VAC:

1. **Evidence**. The 2018 Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) gave nationally representative data to guide policy and programmes.
2. **Political commitment.** Uganda's 2016 Pathfinding commitment positioned VAC prevention within national and global development priorities.
3. **Policy and legal frameworks.** The amended Children's Act and the National Child Policy 2020 strengthened the legal framework, especially the provisions specific to preventing and responding to VAC.
4. **Home-grown solutions.** Locally developed approaches such as the Good School Toolkit (GST) and Parenting for Respectability (PfR) have demonstrated the impact and potential of contextually grounded prevention models, co-led by civil society.
5. **Multisectoral collaboration.** Sustained collaboration among government, local authorities, civil society, academia, faith actors, development partners and children themselves further strengthened the national response.

3.1 Shaping Uganda's EVAC Agenda: A Decade of Partnership & Collaboration

Over the past decade, key partnerships and collaborations have been central to Uganda's EVAC movement. The government of Uganda built and sustained strategic partnerships with multiple stakeholders including; Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), Parliament, development partners, UNICEF, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), private sector, academia and local communities, in driving Uganda's EVAC agenda.

Below are just some of these transformative outcomes:

3.1.1 Strengthening the child protection system: the National Child Policy

In 2013 the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social development undertook a Child protection system mapping to facilitate the transition of Uganda's child protection efforts from a disjointed, issue-based and project-oriented approach to one that is more system-oriented. This would enable the country respond effectively to the multi-dimensional and complex nature of child protection needs of all children.

The major findings from the mapping covered six key areas, including: the legal and policy framework; the child protection system structure, functions and capacities; the continuum of care; accountability mechanisms; resource mobilization and accountability; and the availability of data for decision-making.

One of the key recommendations that made a huge contribution to Uganda's child protection journey was responding to the need to update and enact a comprehensive child protection policy to redress the current dichotomization of child protection efforts. The strategic recommendations emerging from this landmark study led to the amendment of the Children's Act and the enactment of Uganda's National Child Policy (2020) as its accompanying Five-Year Implementation Plan. The Policy, intentionally structured around pillars aligned to the INSPIRE Strategies for ending VAC, has shaped the national EVAC discourse in line with – and allowing Uganda to influence – global agenda-setting.

3.1.2 Government – Civil Society Partnerships

Over the past decade, civil society actors have been instrumental in driving the EVAC movement in Uganda. Through strategic advocacy and policy influence, home-grown programme innovation like the Good School Toolkit (GST), evidence generation through proactive civil society and academic partnerships, and child-centered engagement, CSOs have galvanized national action from the initial adoption of the SDGs to the First Global Ministerial Conference in 2024. The following milestones highlight just a few outcomes of Government-CSO partnerships in Uganda:

- **Advocacy and lobbying for Pathfinding status:** In 2016, CSOs successfully lobbied the Government of Uganda to become a Pathfinding country under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. This milestone spurred a nationally driven process to craft a comprehensive, multisectoral action plan guided by evidence-based solutions like the INSPIRE strategies. Today, Uganda stands out as a leading pathfinding country translating global pledges into concrete national results.
- **Developing and scaling the National Child Helpline:** CSOs pioneered key protective mechanisms, most notably the Uganda Child Helpline (Sauti 116), which offers children a safe, confidential avenue to report abuse and access support services. To ensure long-term sustainability and national leadership, the helpline transitioned to a government-owned facility. Today, it operates through a collaborative partnership between the state, private sector, and civil society as a resilient, responsive cornerstone of child protection.
- **Scaling evidence-based prevention models:** Civil society spearheaded groundbreaking prevention models that now feature in global guidelines such as the INSPIRE framework. Notably, research by Raising Voices and Save the Children led to the creation of the Good School Toolkit, elements of which the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has since adapted nationwide. In Bogotá, the Government of Uganda further pledged to take the full, evidence-based intervention to every school in Uganda by 2030. Parallel efforts, including the Ministry's Life Skills Toolkit and community-based Parenting for Respectability (PfR) initiatives further reinforce this evidence-driven approach.
- **Creating platforms for child-led advocacy:** To center children's voices in policy decisions, CSOs organized a landmark dialogue in June 2017 connecting youth directly with legislators. This interactive exchange prompted a Special Session of Parliament, resulting in four key resolutions—including an explicit commitment to prioritize the prevention of VAC nationwide.
- **Advocating for legislative reform:** Sustained CSO advocacy was instrumental in revising national child protection laws, culminating in the successful amendment of the Children's Act. The updated Act embeds comprehensive safeguards against violence and explicitly recognizes the national child helpline as an essential protective structure.

3.1.3 Strengthening multi-stakeholder platforms for collaboration

Over the years, Uganda has intentionally established platforms that bring together government, civil society, development partners, and other stakeholders to exchange information, generate evidence, coordinate action, and influence policy and decision-making for children. These include:

- The National Child Protection Working Group provides a platform for information exchange and learning from research and practice for multiple stakeholders.
- The Multi-Sectoral Task Force on VAC oversaw the National Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), critical contributions to the evidence-base needed to inform VAC prevention efforts nationwide.
- The Gender in Education Technical Working Group coordinates stakeholders engaged in efforts to prevent VAC in and around schools.
- The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Child Wellbeing, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the MGLSD, guided the development and implementation of the National Child Policy 2020.

These platforms have been the foundation for collective action, enabling stakeholders to build consensus, share evidence, clarify roles, and coordinate national priorities around child wellbeing. Building on these existing coordination mechanisms, the MGLSD established a Multi-Stakeholder Technical Resource Group comprising government ministries, CSOs, and development partners. This platform provided a structured mechanism for coordinating Uganda's participation in the Global Ministerial Conference and preparing the country's pledges and commitments. Recognizing the opportunity the Ministerial Conference represented for action, specific features of Uganda's preparation for Bogotá included:

- Strengthening existing coordination mechanisms. Uganda leveraged established working groups and inter-ministerial platforms rather than creating parallel structures, enabling efficient coordination and access to diverse expertise.
- Establishing a National Steering Task Force (NSTF). The MGLSD mapped strategic stakeholders and invited them to join the NSTF. Members were drawn from government ministries and agencies, development partners, CSOs, academia, technical experts and national champions.
- Strong leadership. The MGLSD formed and convened the NSTF, which brought together government, CSOs and development partners, and strengthened ownership and coordination.
- Consolidating evidence. National data, research, lessons from implementation and stakeholder views were brought together to set priorities and shape the pledges presented at the conference.
- Fostering consensus through inclusive consultation. Consultations enabled partners to develop, refine and align the proposed pledges with the INSPIRE strategies, national priorities and existing policy commitments.
- Coordinating national representation. The Technical Resource Group helped organize and align Uganda's engagement in the Global Ministerial Conference, ensuring effective participation in strategic spaces at the conference specifically the Africa Region Satellite event.

4. Bogotá: Pledges and Commitments

In Bogotá, Uganda framed ambitious, multi-sectoral pledges aligned with the global INSPIRE strategies. These commitments target legislative reform, educational safety, parenting support, and emergency response capabilities, establishing measurable targets for national systems strengthening:

- **Prohibition of corporal punishment**: Pursue legislation to fully prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including homes and schools.
- **Global advocacy:** Alongside Benin, Kenya, and Nigeria, advocated for global action to end corporal punishment and pursue a new World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution on its elimination.
- **Education & Safe Learning Environments:** Scale up the full Good School Toolkit (GST) intervention nationwide by 2030, and promote positive discipline by disseminating the Alternatives to Corporal Punishment guide to schools across Uganda.
- **Parenting Guidelines:** Distribute Uganda's parenting manuals and facilitators' guides to at least 50 districts by 2030 to foster positive, non-violent upbringings at home.
- **Sauti 116 upgrade**: Strengthen the national child helpline, Sauti 116, into a One-Stop Centre providing medical care, legal aid, counselling, and psychosocial support, with the aim of integrating the service into mainstream public systems by 2030 and reducing donor dependency.
- **District Action Centres**: Establish operational District Action Centres across all local governments and cities to decentralize and strengthen emergency responses to child exploitation.
- **Evidence and accountability:** Conduct a second National Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) by 2030.

5. Progress Since Bogotá

Since the conference, Uganda has registered progress on several fronts at national, continental and global level:

- **Strengthened Framework for Social Care**: In January 2025, the MGLSD launched the Operational Framework for the Social Care and Support System and the National Strategy for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce. These frameworks will greatly enhance coordination for national level VAC prevention and response.
- **New national data**. The Government of Uganda, with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), UNICEF, UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), commissioned the first combined National Survey on Violence Against Children and Women (VACW). The VACW survey will generate nationally representative evidence on the prevalence, forms, and experiences of violence against women and children in Uganda and to inform policies, programmes, and interventions for preventing and responding to violence.
- **Expansion of national response services- Sauti 116**: Uganda has widened and strengthened its national child helpline to include a chatbot for adolescents that gives information and psychosocial support to children experiencing violence. In 2025, UNICEF reported stronger capacity among Sauti 116 caseworkers at national level and in District Action Centres. Efforts are under way to link the Sauti management information system to a wider child wellbeing information system.

- **Continental engagement.** Uganda advanced the implementation of the Bogotá commitments VAC through regional and continental engagements, including the Abuja meeting of African Pathfinding countries and the Rise Up Policy Forum in Lithuania, where it presented its whole-of-government approach to child well-being. In addition, Uganda participated in the consultative meeting with Regional Economic Communities, convened to develop a common African position ahead of the Second Global Ministerial Conference in Manila in November 2026. The Common Africa Position on Ending VAC (CAP-EVAC), was adopted by African Union Ministers at the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment (STC-SDLE 6) in Windhoek, Namibia. The position paper will guide Africa's collective action on ending VAC for years to come.

- **Global engagement.** Uganda joined 11 countries – including Ministerial Conference hosts Colombia – in forming the global Ministerial Taskforce on Ending Violence in and around Schools, co-chaired by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Government of Sierra Leone. This landmark global ministerial taskforce is dedicated to making violence prevention in schools a global priority and help consistently raise the profile of school violence at international events through a common narrative. By joining forces with other countries to promote education systems as a critical pathway for prevention at scale, is a demonstration of Uganda's leadership on EVAC.

- **Teenage Pregnancy Surveillance Platform:** The Ministry of Health established a Teenage Pregnancy Surveillance Platform as part of efforts to strengthen the monitoring, reporting and response to teenage pregnancy in Uganda. The platform provides a mechanism for systematically capturing and tracking data on teenage pregnancies, enabling health authorities and other relevant stakeholders to better understand the magnitude, distribution and trends of teenage pregnancy across all districts in Uganda. By strengthening routine data collection, reporting and analysis, the platform has the potential to support evidence-informed planning, identify geographical hotspots and populations requiring targeted interventions, and facilitate timely responses by health facilities, districts and national stakeholders. Importantly, the availability of more reliable and disaggregated data can strengthen coordination across sectors, inform policy and programming, and support accountability for interventions aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy and improving the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls.

6. Lessons Learnt

- **Development of an implementation framework.** To ensure coordinated action, the National Technical Resource Committee translated high-level commitments from Bogotá into a concrete implementation framework featuring clear timelines and assigned lead agencies. Interventions are monitored continuously across all participating entities, feeding into a consolidated progress report informing preparations and pledges for Manila.

- **A 'Whole Government Approach'.** Preventing VAC at scale requires an integrated strategy, acknowledging that no single Ministry can succeed in isolation. By moving beyond basic committee structures, this approach fosters shared leadership, joint budgeting, seamless data sharing, and co-developed prevention initiatives across sectors.

- **Government is best placed to take interventions to scale.** Governments have a unique mandate and the institutional reach to safeguard children at scale. Uganda's integration of innovative interventions, such as the Good School Toolkit (GST), into mandatory teacher training curricula demonstrates how state infrastructure can effectively institutionalize evidence-based approaches, enabling them to reach more schools and achieve sustained impact.

- **Partnership between government, CSOs and development partners delivers results.** Uganda's success was not achieved by an individual entity but was rather a result of strong collaboration between multiple stakeholders. Under the leadership of the MGLSD, government ministries including the MoES, and Ministry of Health (MoH), UN agencies worked with civil society and development partners to develop Uganda's national pledges. The preparatory process – including participation at the conference and the final call to action –demonstrate the power of sustained, multi-sector collaboration.

- **Leadership from line ministries matters.** The MGLSD has led the national EVAC agenda with strong political and technical backing, from the Minister of State for Children and Youth Affairs to the Permanent Secretary, supported by senior technical teams in the Ministries of Education and Health.

- **Strong collaboration with research institutions and academia.** Researchers and civil society partners have piloted transformative models that have proven effective in addressing VAC. Scaling these models requires government infrastructure that draws learning directly from these collaborations and actively feeds into learning about how to directly implement these models at scale. Uganda's Bogotá commitments have built upon locally tested innovations, combining CSO research with public implementation channels to maximize impact.

- **VAC prevention requires financial investment.** Sustainable progress requires positioning violence prevention as a core development priority with increased, recurring financial investments and ring-fenced domestic budgets.

- **Accountability must be embedded.** Specific national plans overseen by the NSTF or related taskforce with annual reporting and learning requirements are necessary for the way forward. This includes government-led monitoring to track long-term reductions in violence.

7. Structural Bottlenecks & Implementation Gaps

Despite clear political will and ambitious commitments in Bogotá, policy gains have yet to yield a widespread, measurable reduction in violence at the population level. Key operational bottlenecks continue to hinder progress across communities:

- **Fragmented implementation and weak accountability.** Despite gains in coordination efforts, violence prevention work remains spread across multiple ministries, partners, programmes and projects, creating parallel plans, unclear roles and weak accountability for results.

- **Insufficient and unpredictable financing.** Prevention spending is spread across sector budgets and is hard to track. Heavy reliance on donor funding and short funding cycles makes it hard to keep services running and to scale them.

- **Uneven local capacity and weak measurement of outcomes**. National policies and programmes do not consistently translate into functional services at district level, while routine training, service-use and administrative data are insufficient to determine whether violence is actually declining.

8. Opportunities

To close the gap between national commitments and what happens on the ground, Uganda can act on three priorities:

1 Institutionalized Financing Architectures: Transition from donor-dependent project funding to ring-fenced domestic budget lines for VAC prevention across MGLSD, MoH, and MoES.

2 Strengthen capacity at district level. Operationalize District Action Centres, with dedicated social service staff, structured case management tools and direct links to community-based child protection structures.

3 Enforce the law and change social norms. Enforce the legal ban on corporal punishment, and back it with community-level work on social norms so that the law and everyday practice match.

9. The Road Ahead: Manila 2026

The Second Global Ministerial Conference in Manila in November 2026 is a chance for Uganda to move from high-level advocacy to results that can be checked. To make a strong and credible case, Uganda should base its national report on three things: verified progress, financed implementation models and rigorous administrative data.

Key to this will be intentional focus on addressing key structural gaps, securing sustainable domestic financing, and law enforcement. Uganda then demonstrate true leadership in translating global pledges into measurable, population-level safety and protection for every child.