



OUTCOME REPORT OF THE 9TH ANNUAL LEARNING CONVENING ON PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN (VAC) IN EAST AFRICA

25th – 26th September 2025
Nairobi, Kenya

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Participants during an ongoing meeting.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ED	Executive Director
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance commitments
ICS- SP	Investing in Children and their Societies
IIDC	Impact and Innovations Development Centre
LI	Learning Initiative
LIPVAC	Learning Initiative for Preventing Violence Against Children
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PVAC	Preventing Violence Against Children
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Violence Against Children
WPF	Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Executive Summary

The 9th Annual Learning Convening of the Learning Initiative for Preventing Violence Against Children (LIPVAC), hosted by the Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC) with support from the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund (WPF), brought together 24 participants from 12 partner organisations across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Held under the theme “**Sustaining Gains in VAC Programming Amidst a Changing Operational Landscape,**” the convening provided an important platform for partners to reflect on nearly a decade of collaboration, share lessons, and explore strategies for sustaining progress beyond WPF’s support.

Partners viewed the donor transition as both a challenge and an opportunity to reimagine sustainability through stronger partnerships, diversified funding, and program integration.

Key Highlights and Outcomes

- **Strategic Direction:** The convening reaffirmed partners’ commitment to sustaining VAC programming and maintaining collaboration under the LIPVAC framework beyond the current funding phase.
- **Keynote Reflections:** Dr. Lina Digolo emphasised the urgency of funding diversification, coalition building, integration with government systems, and evidence-based advocacy as central to sustaining VAC gains.
- **Programming Pathways:** Partners explored three main options for program continuity:
 1. **Continuation** of PVAC work with improved cost efficiency and integration into broader organisational programs.
 2. **Scaling Down** by reducing coverage, staffing, and activity frequency while maintaining high-impact interventions.
 3. **Reallocation of Resources** towards organisational sustainability through income generation, digitalisation, and enhanced brand visibility.
- **Additional Strategies:** Partners highlighted collaboration with community-based organisations (CBOs), adoption of virtual learning and training platforms, and systematic documentation of program results as practical sustainability measures.
- **Emerging Priorities:** Five critical imperatives were identified—innovation in delivery, efficiency and accountability, stronger evidence and visibility, investment in income generation, and alignment of human resources to support adaptive growth.

Overall, the convening reaffirmed LIPVAC’s relevance as a collective learning and action platform. Partners demonstrated strong resolve to sustain the gains achieved in violence prevention programming and to build resilient, self-sustaining systems for protecting children across East Africa.

Ms. Agnes Wasike

Way Forward

The Learning Initiative was reaffirmed as a vital platform for peer exchange, advocacy, and collective resilience. Partners committed to advancing four core priorities for 2025–2028: resource mobilisation, documentation and dissemination, impact measurement, and scaling through government systems. IIDC will provide technical leadership in these areas.

The convening concluded with a unified commitment to sustain VAC gains through innovation, solidarity, and accountability to children.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Since 2016, the Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC), in partnership with the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund (WPF), has led the *Learning Initiative for Preventing Violence Against Children (LIPVAC)*, a regional platform that brings together child protection organisations across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Rooted in a partner-driven and evidence-based approach, the initiative seeks to strengthen the effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability of Violence Against Children (VAC) prevention programs. Through Annual Learning Convenings, LIPVAC has fostered collaboration, shared learning, documentation of best practices, and the use of evidence to inform programming and advocacy.

Following the announcement of WPF's wind-down, IIDC convened the 9th Annual Learning Convening on Preventing VAC on 25–26 September 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting served as a critical forum for partners to take stock of collective achievements, assess current program directions, and chart the future of the initiative in a changing operational landscape.

The objectives of the convening were to:

- Reaffirm partners' commitment to the continuation of LIPVAC beyond WPF's exit.
- Provide a platform for partners to discuss how to adapt VAC programming to a shifting funding environment.
- Identify feasible learning and technical assistance priorities for both individual organisations and the collective network.

Through these discussions, partners expressed a shared commitment to sustaining VAC prevention efforts across East Africa and to strengthening collaboration, innovation, and resource mobilisation for continued impact.



Ms. Agnes Wasike, Technical Advisor – Knowledge Management, IIDC, facilitating the opening session.

The session was facilitated by **Ms. Agnes Wasike** from IIDC, who opened the convening by outlining its objectives and agenda. She noted that the 2025 convening would adopt a new approach, shifting from the traditional practice of showcasing program work to focusing on validating partners' commitment to the Learning Initiative for Preventing Violence Against Children (LIPVAC). Ms. Wasike emphasized that, should partners affirm their continued engagement, it would be critical for them to collectively identify feasible learning and technical assistance activities to guide the initiative going forward.

The welcome remarks were delivered by **Ms. Beatrice Ogutu**, Executive Director of ICS-SP. She expressed appreciation to IIDC for their partnership in hosting the convening and underscored the timeliness and relevance of the meeting in light of the exit of the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund. Ms. Ogutu acknowledged and commended the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund for its technical and financial support over the years, noting that their withdrawal reflects broader shifts within the global funding landscape. She emphasized that this development presents a challenge to the movement to critically reflect on how to sustain collective progress, maximize impact with fewer resources, and continue working with greater intention, clarity, and courage.

In closing, she urged participants to engage in the discussions with open minds and to think broadly and strategically about the future of their work. She urged the participants to adapt and not to be discouraged by the changing landscape but to take it as a challenge to figure out how to transition and continue with the work because the magnitude of Violence against Children in Africa is still huge. She equally reminded the partners that IIDC has many learning platforms over and beyond the annual convening that they could plug in.

In conclusion, she invited participants to write two key words of appreciation to the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, in recognition of their network, financial, and technical support, and to post them on a gratitude board that would later be shared with the organization.



*Ms. Beatrice Ogutu
Executive Director - ICS-SP*



Prof. Paul Bukuluki, IIDC Board Member, delivering the opening remarks.

The Opening Remarks were delivered by **Prof. Paul Bukuluki**, a board member of IIDC, who welcomed participants and underscored the essence of the meeting. He highlighted that the convening offered an important opportunity for partners to advance the decolonization agenda and develop homegrown solutions for preventing violence against children (VAC) in the East Africa Region, while leveraging minimal resources to achieve greater and more sustainable impact within a changing operational landscape. Prof. Bukuluki further challenged participants to reflect on questions of accountability to the East African children whose aspirations remain the same and encouraged them to view the conclusion of funding from the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund not as an end, but as a catalyst for innovation, creativity, and reframing VAC work in new and transformative ways. Locally led partnerships, he added, will be key to furthering the work ahead.



Members of the ICS-SP team during the meeting.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE CHANGING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Dr. Lina Digolo, founder of Evidence and Beyond, delivered the keynote address. She commended the team for sustaining a learning space for over a decade, noting that many similar initiatives have collapsed due to lack of funding or weak partnerships. Unlike others, this initiative has created not just a community of practice, but a family of partners united by the vision of a world where children are free from violence and able to thrive. She congratulated the team for achieving a decade of change and urged them to sustain the momentum.



Dr. Lina Digolo, Founder of Evidence and Beyond, delivering the keynote address.

Dr. Digolo observed that the convening comes at a pivotal moment, with major shifts in the global funding landscape. She referenced the closure of the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund in late 2024, describing the deep sense of loss in East Africa where the fund had been a trusted, and flexible partner. While general operations support grants were awarded in 2025, she emphasized that they could not replace Wellspring's legacy of partnership. She encouraged participants to see this not as an end but as a turning point—an opportunity to reimagine sustainability, much like the re-thinking that followed COVID-19 pandemic.

Highlighting that these funding changes are global, Dr. Digolo pointed to reductions in PEPFAR, frozen USAID grants contracts, and cuts to development budgets by OECD countries as resources are redirected to domestic needs. Donors are consolidating, narrowing priorities, and focusing on areas such as climate change, humanitarian response, and catalytic investments. She cautioned that long-term flexible funding is shrinking, while expectations for cost-effectiveness and measurable impact are rising. Still, she urged partners to reject a scarcity mindset and instead use this moment to innovate, strengthen collaboration, and redefine the story of impact. She outlined four key strategies for moving forward:

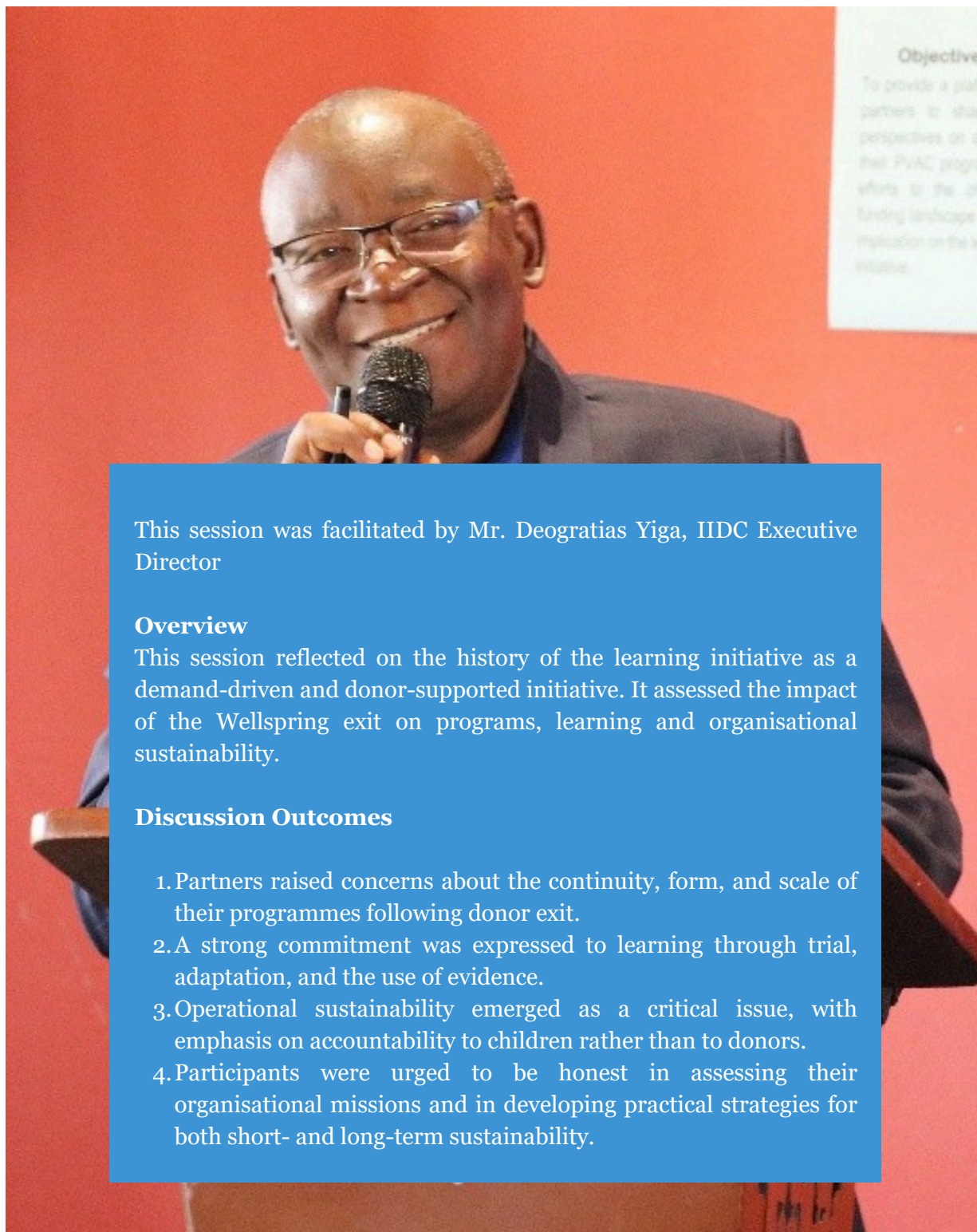
1. **Rethinking funding diversification** – looking beyond traditional donors to African philanthropists, regional high-net-worth individuals, private sector actors under ESG commitments, and, critically, national governments that must embed child protection in their budgets.
2. **Operational alignment** – designing cost-effective, scalable interventions that can be realistically integrated into government systems, while demonstrating clear value for money and linking programs to national development priorities.
3. **Evidence and learning** – treating evidence as currency by building robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, capturing both quantitative data and practice-based knowledge from frontline workers, teachers, and communities.
4. **Partnerships and collective power** – leveraging coalitions to pool evidence, share lessons, and strengthen joint advocacy, since collaboration is no longer optional but essential for survival and influence.

Finally, Dr. Digolo proposed four pathways for sustainability:

1. Embedding interventions into government budgets and frameworks to ensure child protection becomes a national responsibility rather than a temporary project.
2. Building organizational resilience by strengthening leadership, governance, transparency, and adaptive systems to withstand shocks.
3. Harnessing innovation and locally grounded practices, documenting successful models and adapting them across contexts.
4. Having a learning platform to capture and share the collective knowledge and successes of the past decade, positioning the region to teach others what works.

In her call for action, she reminded the collective that a new chapter has opened. By working together, redefining funding approaches, aligning with government priorities, building evidence, and strengthening partnerships, the community can ensure that the progress of the last decade is not only sustained but expanded to greater heights.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF WELLSPRING WIND DOWN



This session was facilitated by Mr. Deogratias Yiga, IIDC Executive Director

Overview

This session reflected on the history of the learning initiative as a demand-driven and donor-supported initiative. It assessed the impact of the Wellspring exit on programs, learning and organisational sustainability.

Discussion Outcomes

1. Partners raised concerns about the continuity, form, and scale of their programmes following donor exit.
2. A strong commitment was expressed to learning through trial, adaptation, and the use of evidence.
3. Operational sustainability emerged as a critical issue, with emphasis on accountability to children rather than to donors.
4. Participants were urged to be honest in assessing their organisational missions and in developing practical strategies for both short- and long-term sustainability.

Mr. Deogratias Yiga, Executive Director, IIDC, facilitating the session.

JOINT REFLECTIONS ON KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND WELLSPRING WIND DOWN



Participants engaging in group discussions.

This session was facilitated by Mr. Moses Komagum, IIDC Head of Programmes

Overview

The discussion focused on philanthropy, accountability, and innovation as key elements for sustaining interventions. Participants reflected on ways to leverage evidence, resilience, and solidarity in the absence of Wellspring funding.

Discussion Outcomes

- Community and private sector engagement were identified as critical for sustaining interventions.
- Accountability was reframed as being primarily to children and communities rather than to funders.
- Sustainability was emphasized at both individual and organizational levels.
- Partners discussed the challenges of NGO investments within existing legal frameworks and proposed the creation of sister companies as a possible pathway to sustainability.
- Documentation and evidence sharing were recognized as essential tools for attracting funding and amplifying impact.

PARTNERS POSSIBLE LIKELY DIRECTIONS OF PVAC PROGRAMMING

The session, facilitated by Ms. Agnes Wasike (IICD Technical Advisor Knowledge Management), engaged participants in five small groups to discuss programming options for PVAC within their respective organizations. The four options considered were:

1. Continue PVAC work as initially planned
2. Scale down PVAC work
3. Re-allocate resources towards organizational sustainability
4. Explore alternative approaches

Discussion Outcomes

Option 1: Continue PVAC Work as Planned

Partners who selected this option emphasized that PVAC is already embedded within their programming and strategic priorities. Their proposed actions include:

1. Conducting research on the intersection between early childhood care and violence against children in the field.
2. Consolidating work within existing communities while also expanding into new areas to broaden reach.
3. Introducing cost-effective adjustments to current programmes, such as reducing staff numbers and eliminating per diems for government staff, to free up resources for evaluation and documentation while maintaining their theories of change.
4. Revising current policies to enhance sustainability.
5. Integrating VAC interventions into larger ongoing programmes and projects.

Option 3: Partners reallocating resources towards organizational sustainability will:

1. Strengthen internal systems to enhance efficiency.
2. Realign staff job descriptions for greater effectiveness.
3. Invest in and strengthen brand visibility and flagship programs to attract partnerships and funding.
4. Invest in low-risk ventures to generate additional revenue for programs.
5. Digitalize M&E, finance, and documentation systems.
6. Engage community volunteers to lead selected activities.
7. Leverage partnerships to implement or fund specific activities.
8. Seek alternative funding streams for targeted initiatives.

Option 2: Partners choosing to scale down will:

1. Continue VAC work with reduced targets.
2. Downsize staff while retaining core personnel.
3. Limit geographical coverage (e.g., reduce target schools from 80 to 20).
4. Reduce frequency of engagements (e.g., shift from monthly to quarterly).
5. Prioritize high-impact interventions aligned with their organizational brands.
6. Sustain community-level activities that demonstrate significant outcomes.
7. Realign budgets and workplans by reducing projects and target areas.

Option 4: Alternative approaches

1. Leverage technology to reduce costs (e.g., conducting virtual rather than physical training).
2. Document and build evidence on PVAC work to sustain engagement beyond the current funding.
3. Continue PVAC initiatives through collaborations with community-based organizations (CBOs).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FOUR OPTIONS

Option 1: Implications of continuing PVAC Work

- Strengthened systems through sustained engagement with governments and coalitions.
- Promote cost-sharing for future convenings among partners.
- Rethink and diversify resource mobilization strategies.
- Build internal capacity of institutions to reduce reliance on external support.

Option 2: Implications of scaling down

- Potential loss of staff livelihoods, leading to stress and loss of talent.
- Increased workload for remaining staff, risking burnout.
- Slower progress in advancing PVAC initiatives.
- Strained relationships with governments due to reduced financial support.
- Fewer services available to beneficiaries.

- Reduced funding for high-level government engagements.
- Increased expectations placed on organizations as their brand visibility grows.
- Potential legal and financial implications of investing in low-risk ventures, including taxation and reduced funds for program activities.

SYNTHESIS OF EMERGING DIRECTIONS



The synthesis of the implications above was presented by Mr. Deogratias Yiga, the Executive Director of IICD

Key Takeaways

1. The need for innovation in delivery approaches to achieve impactful solutions.
2. Maximizing efficiency and effectiveness in PVAC work — every resource counts.
3. Prioritizing measurement, documentation, communication, and visibility as critical for sustaining interventions.
4. Investment in income-generating ventures to support long-term sustainability.
5. Alignment of staffing and human resources to organizational priorities.

FUTURE OF THE LEARNING INITIATIVE



Ms. Beatrice Ogutu, Director, Africa ICS-SP, facilitating the session.

This session was facilitated by Ms. Beatrice Ogutu (ICS-SP Director) and Ms. Agnes Wasike, IIDC, with contributions from partners.

Overview

This session examined the relevance, necessity, and feasibility of the Learning Initiative. Partners reflected on possible programming directions, synthesized emerging themes, and revisited progress made to date. Group work highlighted perspectives on both the relevance and feasibility of the initiative.

Discussion Outcomes

- **Relevance and Necessity:** The initiative remains critical for adaptation, coordination, peer learning, advocacy, and knowledge sharing. It is especially relevant for programming on male engagement, tackling harmful social norms, and exploring alternative funding approaches.
- **Feasibility:** Partners proposed rotating hosting, establishing a steering committee, adopting hybrid learning platforms, pooling resources, and leveraging pro bono expertise.
- **Emerging Priorities:** Key priorities include documentation, impact measurement, resource mobilisation, and joint fundraising.
- **Recap of Gains (2016–2025):** Achievements include growth in partner organisations from 8 to 12, advancement of locally led VAC prevention, deeper understanding of harmful social norms, data-driven evaluations, peer-to-peer learning alliances that elevated local solutions to regional and international forums, and stronger influence in policy and in global spaces.

RESILIENT LEARNING SYSTEMS IN THE FACE OF FUNDING SHIFTS

This session was facilitated by Ms. Hope Wambi, VAC Coordinator at Raising Voices Uganda,

Overview

The session emphasized practice-based learning as a cornerstone of program resilience. It highlighted the impact of global funding shifts, evolving donor priorities, and localization trends, while underscoring the critical importance of organisational agility in navigating these changes

Discussion Outcomes

- Learning was recognized as an essential component of programming, with risks identified for initiatives lacking a learning dimension.
- Crises were reframed as opportunities for growth and innovation.
- Agility and adaptability to shifting contexts were highlighted as critical for organisational resilience.
- Participants stressed the importance of organisations setting their own agendas rather than being driven solely by donor priorities.
- Consensus was reached on the future direction of the initiative, with emphasis on sustaining collaboration, documenting impact, and influencing policy.



INDIVIDUAL PARTNER ACTIVITIES AND COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

This session was facilitated by Ms. Beatrice Ogutu, (Executive Director ICS-SP)

Overview

Partners shared plans for both individual institutional actions and collaborative activities aimed at sustaining the PVAC Learning Initiative over the next 12 months. The discussion consolidated emerging issues into broad themes and identified priority focus areas, narrowing the planning horizon to one year for the initial phase.

Discussion Outcomes

Six broad learning areas were identified: **Resource mobilisation, documentation and dissemination, impact measurement and evidence generation, scaling through government, programmatic learning, and leveraging technology.** From these, the following three priorities were agreed upon:

1. Resource Mobilisation

- Emphasis was placed on diversification, community philanthropy, and private sector engagement.
- Partners committed to collectively investing resources beyond 2026.
- IIDC was tasked with providing expert guidance on investment options and associated risks.
- Joint funding proposals and strategic partnerships with private sector actors were recommended.

2. Documentation and Dissemination

- Partners agreed to compile proven models into unedited book volumes, working with academic institutions to enhance credibility.
- Dissemination through digital hubs and regional platforms was recommended.
- Conference side events were highlighted as key opportunities for wider sharing.

3. Impact Measurement and Evidence Building

- Partners agreed that adopting practice-based learning and developing a regional research agenda should be a key priority.
- Field visits and central collation of evidence were proposed to strengthen learning.
- Technical teams will enhance monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Peer exchanges will be leveraged to build measurement capacity across organisations.
- IIDC will provide technical teams to support partner M&E forums.



Participants collaborating during group discussions.

In her closing remarks, Ms. Moureen Ochieng, Programme Coordinator, ICS-SP, reflected on the theme of the 9th Annual Learning Convening – “Sustaining Gains in Violence Against Children Programming Amid a Changing Operational Landscape.” She highlighted that the discussions had been candid and inspiring, echoing the opening reflections by Beatrice Ogutu, who reminded participants of Maya Angelou’s wisdom: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” Maureen emphasized that, despite winding down of long-term funding and transitions within organizations, the commitment to preventing violence against children remained unwavering. She noted that innovation, partnerships, resource diversification, and strengthening local ownership will be key to sustaining progress.

Appreciation was extended to facilitators, presenters, moderators, and keynote speaker Dr. Lina Digolo, whose powerful insights outlined four strategies for resilience: diversifying funding, aligning operations to context, strengthening evidence and accountability, and harnessing partnerships and coalitions. Recognition was also given to the Wellsprings Philanthropic Fund for its long-standing support, which laid the foundation for many of the initiatives showcased. IIC (host) and ICS-SP (co-host) were commended for their partnership and hospitality.

In his remarks, Professor Paul Bukuluki congratulated participants for turning theoretical hope into practical commitments through open and honest dialogue. He stressed the concept of collective agency—acknowledging that while achieving the agreed goals will present barriers as well as enablers, determination, creativity, and collaboration will drive success. The session closed with words of encouragement to sustain gains and remain united in the mission to protect children across East Africa.

Building on these insights, partners reaffirmed their collective resolve to translate the emerging directions into actionable strategies under the 2026–2028 phase of the Learning Initiative. This next phase will consolidate the progress achieved, embed innovation and efficiency in programming, and strengthen systems that ensure lasting impact for children across East Africa. The synthesis thus serves as a bridge between reflection and renewed action, anchoring the Initiative’s forward momentum toward a sustainable and collaborative future.

ANNEX – PARTICIPANTS

NO	NAME	Title	Institution	Country
1	Susan Opok Tumusiime	Executive Director	FAWE Uganda	Uganda
2	Joseph Adiamo	Head of programs	FAWE Uganda	Uganda
3	Mwemezi Makumba	Head of Program	Haki Elimu	Tanzania
4	Hope Wambi	Coordinator-VAC Prevention	Raising Voices	Uganda
5	Susan Kajura	Executive Director	Bantwana Initiative Uganda	Uganda
6	Eric Robert Kamunvi	Head of Programs	Bantwana Initiative Uganda	Uganda
7	Timothy Opobo	Executive Director	Africhild	Uganda
8	Clare Ahabwe Bangirana	Director Research and Knowledge Development	Africhild	Uganda
9	Albert Asiimwe	Regional Program Coordinator	CRVPF	Uganda
10	Jude Okeria	Head of Programs	TPO Uganda	Uganda
11	Beatrice Ogutu	Director, Africa	ICS-SP	Kenya

12	Kudely Sokoine	Country Director, Tanzania	ICS-SP	Tanzania
13	Jane Karonge Thiomi	Associate Director	LVCT Health	Kenya
14	Anne Ngunjiri	Senior Technical Advisor – GBV Program	LVCT Health	Kenya
15	Agripina John Lyangalo	Executive Director/ Chairperson	Amani Girls Organisation	Tanzania
16	Mang'olo Shoma	Head of Family & Development Programmes Development	Amani Girls Organisation	Tanzania
17	Lennyster Byalugaba	Head of programmes	Children's Dignity Forum	Tanzania
18	Catherine Mugabo	Programmes Manager	CivLegacy Foundation	Uganda
19	Deogratias Yiga	Executive Director	IIDC	Uganda
20	Moses Komagum	Head of Programmes	IIDC	Uganda
21	Agnes Mutonyi Wasike	Technical Advisor, Knowledge Management	IIDC	Uganda
22	Paul Bukuluki	IIDC Board	IIDC	Uganda



Get in touch

Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC) is a regional technical assistance organization that supports nonprofits to develop programmes that are effective and sustainable.

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