Collaborative Impact and Engagement

in the sector addressing Sexual
Violence Against Children

Inquiry report

Our inquiry participants

Acknowledgments

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About the Learning & Action Lab

[Ignite Philanthropy: Inspiring the End to Violence Against Girls and Boys](#) is a philanthropic fund that supports bold efforts to ensure every child lives a life free of violence.

Violence against children continues to escalate around the world, despite every country's commitment to end it. It is endemic, it is fixed to structural drivers, and individuals alone cannot resolve it.

It is power that keeps these structural drivers in place.

We believe that radically different approaches are necessary to achieve a world where this power is rebalanced, violence against children is eradicated and where children and youth exercise their rights, shape their futures, and live in peace.

Ignite Philanthropy hosts and supports a community of regional and global network organisations core to the field of preventing sexual violence against children, known as the Strategic Networks community. One of the activities offered to the community are 'Learning & Action Labs', which are spaces designed for cohort members to come together to engage around key questions they face in their individual organisations and across the cohort.

Following collective reflection in the summer of 2022, it was decided that one of the priority learning themes would be identifying how cohort members could work more collaboratively and engage external actors in such efforts. In October 2022, the 'Collaborative Impact and Engagement Inquiry' was launched, with the objective of identifying ways to work more equitably and collaboratively as a sector.

Visual Glossary

Some of the concepts we explore together to answer our question:

A System: an "interconnected set of elements that is coherently organised in a way that achieved something". A system must consist of three things: elements, interconnections and a purpose.[1]

Variables: variables are the elements or "nodes" within a system and the basic building blocks for every system map. They are the drivers that have a direct or indirect influence on each other.[2]

Feedback loops: Everything is interconnected in systems and no force exists in isolation. Feedback loops help us identify the cause-effect connections between the system's elements. There are different types of loops such as "Vicious loops" in which things are getting worse and worse; "Virtuous loops" in which things are getting better and better; "Stabilising loops" which keep things from getting worse; or "Stagnating loops" which are keeping things from getting better.[3]
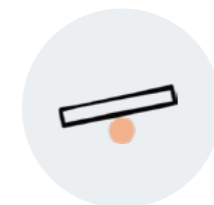
Leverage areas: leverage areas are places in a system where one could have a big impact on the system with comparatively modest efforts or investment[4].

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1 Meadows, Donella. (2008). *Thinking in Systems*, p.11

2 Systemic Design Group. (n.d.). *System Mapping Toolkit*.

3 Based on the definitions in *Systems Practice* (Omidyar Group, 2017, p. 39) and the *System Mapping Toolkit* (Systemic Design Group)

4 "Systemic Design Group. (n.d.). *System Mapping Toolkit*.

Mental models: Mental models are deeply held beliefs and assumptions, as well as taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do and how we talk.[5]

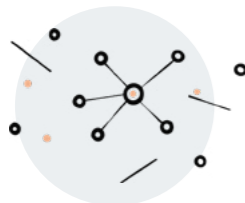**Power dynamics:** Power dynamics refer to the distribution of decision-making power and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organisations.[6]

An equitable system: The system redresses power imbalances, allowing for more and deeper inclusion of diverse perspectives. Oppression systems are recognised and addressed.[7]

A coordinated system: a system in which fragmentation is overcome and silos are broken at different levels (including global, regional, national, and local scales).[8]

Adultism: the combination of behaviours and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement. This mistreatment is reinforced by social institutions, laws, customs, and attitudes.[9]
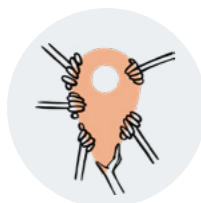
The Sexual Violence Against Children (SVAC) sector: during our inquiry, we adopted a broad definition, encompassing all stakeholders that have formal or informal influence in preventing and addressing sexual violence against children.

Meaningful child and youth participation: children and young people are engaged in a process through consultation, through shared decision-making, through co-designing programs, strategies, and initiatives and/or by having access to flexible resources to support their own child- and youth-led efforts. For this reason, mechanisms have to be in place for children and young people to have influence, to be respected, and to be included safely.[10]

Trauma-informed approaches: Trauma-informed practices account for the impact that traumatic events may have had on people's lives. These practices aim to raise awareness about the impact of trauma, prevent retraumatisation in settings that are meant to provide support, and develop policies and practices that assist in healing from trauma. At the centre of trauma-informed practice are five principles: safety, trust & transparency, collaboration, choice and voice.[11]

5 Kania, John, Kramer, Mark, Senge, Peter. (2018). _The Water of Systems Change_. FSG, p.4

6 Idem.

7 Based on the conversations during the first session of the inquiry.

8 Idem.

9 Bell, John (1995). _"Understanding Adultism. A Key to Developing positive Youth-Adult Relationships"_. The Freechild Project.

10 Booth, Georgia & Johnson, Ruby. (2022). _Weaving a Collective Tapestry: A Funders' Toolkit for Child and Youth Participation_. Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG).

11 Adapted from Dowding, Kerry. (2021). _Trauma-Informed Social Research: a Practical Guide_. Fulfilling Lives.

1. Our Collective Process

This Learning & Action Lab (or "Inquiry") consisted of eight 90-minute sessions online, in which cohort members engaged with the concepts of systems change and participated in practical exercises applied to their work.

As part of this process, 15 participants (representing 10 organisations) have engaged in a System Mapping exercise with the following goals:

- Understanding what are the broader, systemic challenges we are facing in our collective mission to end childhood violence, including power and leadership dynamics.

- Understanding how we can work more collaboratively as a cohort to achieve a broader systemic impact.

- Assessing where there may be opportunities and gaps in our own networks and engagement strategies.

- Identifying potential for collaboration with others, and how we can engage external actors and key stakeholders (children and youth, survivors, policymakers, activists, academics) to achieve systemic impact, moving towards more equity and representation.

The problem we identified

The Sexual Violence against Children sector is fragmented and mainly driven by a few stakeholders (big donors and international organizations). This leads to insufficient resourcing, duplication of efforts, disconnect between different levels (global, regional, national, local), the invisibility of crucial issues and the exclusion of diverse voices, especially those of children and youth.

Our research question

To address this problem, the group explored two the possibility of two research questions:

- What are the forces and drivers that perpetuate power imbalances and sustain silos in the SVAC sector?

- Which interventions would lead to a more equitable and coordinated SVAC sector?

Ultimately, the group chose to be guided by the second question, as they wanted the journey to be action-oriented.

To frame our problem statement, we took inspiration from the Systemic Design Group's "System Mapping Toolkit". Using the 1-2-4-All methodology helped us explore all the problems we identified in the system and agree on the problem we would focus on throughout our journey.

The "System Mapping Toolkit" provided us with guidelines on what a good research question should look like, helping us to decide between an explanatory question (Q1) and a prescriptive question (Q2).

To create these clusters, we were inspired by FSG's framework: The Water of Systems Change. This tool introduces these types of change as the Six Conditions of Systems Change.

The workbook "Systems Practice" by the Omydiar Group gave us guidance on the different types of feedback loops, as well as different steps to identify leverage.

Answering the research question

In the journey to answer the research question, participants went through several steps:

- First, we defined our main variable, that is, the level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector.

- We then identified which factors (variables) influenced the level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector.

- Then, we clustered the variables by type of change. This could be:

  - Structural Change (Policies, Practices, and Resources Flows)
  - Relational Change (Relationships and Connections, and Power Dynamics)
  - Transformative Change (Mental Models)

- We identified the effects that the different factors had on each other, identifying feedback loops (the cause-effect patterns connecting the variables).

- We explored which stakeholders had importance and influence within our clusters

- We explore which areas had the potential for change and defined leverage areas

- We started envisioning interventions to explore those leverage areas

- TSIC conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders identified with participants **and** with members to bring wider perspectives into the collective reflection.

1. Defining our **problem and research** question

2. Defining our **main variable**

3. Identifying the **variables in our system**

4. Clustering our variables

5. Finding cause-effect patterns to build our **feedback loops**

6. Exploring potential for change to define **leverage areas**

7. Start envisioning **interventions**

8. Getting feedback and perspectives
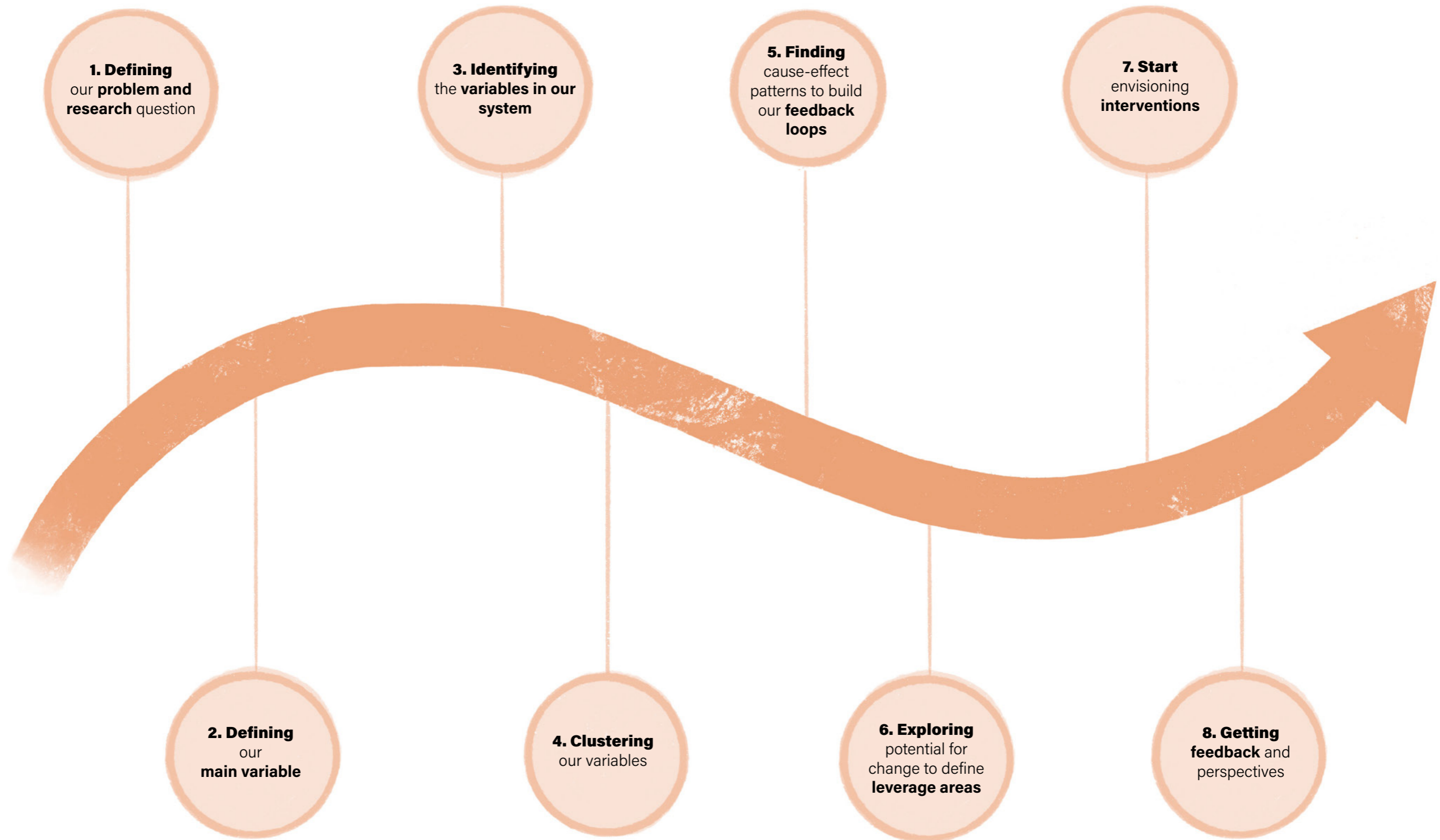
2. What We Uncovered

To better understand the different dynamics at play in the SVAC sector, we embraced a systems change approach, which recognises the complexity of change and that the different elements of the system influence each other in a non-linear linear way. In order to identify and capture some of the visible and hidden forces driving our system, we adopted a Systems map approach. This was intended to visually translate the complex dynamics that influence the SVAC sector.

Our map is composed of several pieces: variables and cause-effect connections that form feedback loops. Each loop tells a story for the system, which we have named and identified as '**virtuous**' (things keep getting better), '**vicious**' (things keep getting worse), '**stabilising**' (things are kept from getting worse); or '**stagnating loops**' (things are kept from getting). The arrows connecting the loops help us visualise how variables influence each other: continuous arrows show when variables work in the same direction (reinforcing each other) and dotted arrows show when they work in opposite directions.

The stories told by the feedback loops are clustered by 5 different types of change: (1) Resource flows, (2) Policies and practices, (3) Relationships and connections, (4) Power Dynamics and (5) Mental models.

The following pages present the dynamics that were collectively identified through our mapping process. The feedback loops are presented by clusters for easier reading. However, the different parts of maps are interconnected and form a whole. If you would like to access the entire map, you can view it here.

Cluster 1
Resource Flows

Burn-out loop
(Stagnating loop)

Increased pace of work → Overburdened staff → Increased staff turnover → Reduced knowledge management and continuity → Increased efforts and resources on handovers → Increased workload → Reduced financial resources → Increased pace of work

Capacity-building
(Virtuous loop)

Improved network health (including performance) → Positive perception of the added value of networks → Improved member engagement → More amplification of reach and impact → More and better evidence of value of networks → More attention and investment in network capacity → More training (meaningful participation of young people and survivors, MEL, safety guidelines, management, trauma-informed approaches, mental health) → More and better technical capacities → Improved network health

Assumption: access to funders and structures to share the information risk: scarcity of resources

Trust-based funding loop
(Virtuous loop)

More relevant changes and impact → Positive perception of return on investment → More trust from funders in grantee partners → More unrestricted funding → Improved capacity to adapt to target audience's needs → More relevant changes and impact

staff capacity

Funder alignment loop
(Stabilising loop)

More relevant learnings from interventions → Better communication with funders about our work → More alignment and coordination among funders → Less diversity/disparity of accountability processes to funders → Less time spent reporting to funders/applying for funding

Risk: more funding wouldn't necessarily trickle down equitably

Our system's main variable:

The level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector

Cluster 2
Policies & Practices

Collective knowledge-building
(Virtuous loop)

More research and evidence from diverse types of expertise

More resources (financial and human) dedicated to knowledge building

More knowledge on SVAC and promising practices

Less duplication of efforts

More unified/ coherent demands/ recommendations from diverse groups

Clearer diagnosis and priorities for action

Assumption: there is trust and structures for sharing (link to loop on trust and transparency)

Increased interest and support/join for coalitions

More advocacy coalitions

More unified demands, recommendations and priorities from diverse groups

More evidence of the efficiency of coalitions

Advocacy Coalition-building
(Virtuous loop)

Decreased Incidence of sexual abuse

More visibility of the demands

Increased relevant policies for SVAC prevention and remediation (in National and international law)

More pressure on decision-makers to respond

More awareness of general public on SVAC and the coalitions' demands

Assumption: members of the coalition have knowledge of national and local contacts and leverage it for successful advocacy

Our system's main variable:

The level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector

Assumption: organisations partnering with survivors are experienced with trauma-informed approaches

Assumption: adequate spaces and mechanisms to learn from lived-experience, share stories and information. Survivors are treated first and foremost as experts and only share their stories if they wish to.

Reduced Taboo about SVAC

Increase of Trusting relationship and collaboration with survivors

More relevant conversations about SVAC

Campaign led by lived experience
(Virtuous loop)

More meaningful messages, stories and information about SVAC

Improved access to information about SVAC

More relevant survivor-centred campaigns

Cluster 3
Relationships & Connections

Identity

Surveillance

Trust and transparency between actors
(Virtuous loop)

Decreased burden in the system

Reduced incidence of sexual abuse

More trust between actors

Services are provided (including prevention services)

More transparent information sharing

More transparent collaboration across sectors

Increased use of appropriate evidence based approaches

Assumption: Awareness & engagement between institution services

Competition loop
(Stagnating loop)

Less identified synergies

Less dialogue

More siloed initiatives

More competition for resources

More duplication

More scarcity of resources

Higher number of initiatives to fund/resource

Assumption: currently aren't enough initiatives or structures to share for collaborative fundraising

Our system's main variable:

The level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector

Cluster 4
Power Dynamics

Supuesto: If there is tokenistic participation - nothing will shift

Increased interest in meaningful participation

More commitment to shifting power organisationally

More project attempts at meaningful participation

Increased need for resources of organisations

Increased need for fundraising

More fear of losing control & influence

More fear of responsibility or the unknown (from communities and/or power holders)

Mindsets (Vicious loop)

Perpetuated mindset-paternalism

Shifting power (Virtuous loop)

Improved power balances within organisations (networked structure)

More donor requirements

Increase meaningful participation of children

Tokenistic participation of children

Reduced agency of children

Increased presence of gatekeepers

Fewer experiences of children taking responsibilities

Less agency of children

More channels for widened participation

More agency of children

Assumption: partners have groundwork for safe and inclusive participation

Increased perception that adults have to "protect" children and YP, and that only they are legitimate to design and implement interventions

Adultism is strengthened

Assumption: young people's agency is not recognised and they are not involved as full constituents of the process

Limited evidence of successful practices influenced by children and YP

Adultism reinforcement (Stagnating loop)

Less confidence in children's and YP's understanding their issues

Our system's main variable:

The level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector

Fewer Official spaces/structures influenced by children and YP

Less trust in children and YP's insight to inform decision-making

Fewer meaningful efforts to involve children and YP in discussions about them

Cluster 5
Mental Models

systems of oppression and domination (racism, classism, patriarchy)

Less dominance of English language

More representation of non-English speakers in meaningful conversations

More diversity in who is seen as SVAC experts

Language justice (Stabilising loop)

More accurate language on the realities and needs of people closest to SVaC in non-English speaking contexts

Increased visibility and recognition of local solutions

More successful culturally-sensitive and context-relevant interventions

Fewer male survivors accessing mental health services

Reduced ability to process trauma and deal with external stressors

Manhood and normalisation of violence (Stagnating loop)

Replication of violent behaviour

Perpetuation of preconceptions of manhood, "toughness" and vulnerability

Increased normalisation of violent behaviour

Increased incidence of SVAC

More perceptions about manhood

More taboo on Sexual Violence against Boys

Less conversations about the experiences of male survivors

Patriarchy

Toxic masculinity is reproduced

Toxic masculinity (Stagnating loop)

Increased barriers to accurate and transparent information about enablers and barriers to SVaB

Less urgency to tackle Sexual Violence against boys

Increased Perception that boy and men are not affected by Sexual violence

Less Awareness about SvaB, its signs and enablers

Our system's main variable:

The level of equitable collaboration between stakeholders in the SVAC sector

3. Finding Leverage

Based on the dynamics mapped through our journey, the group identified leverage areas - that is areas in which we could focus and in which a (relatively) small effort could have a big impact on the whole system. We talked of leverage areas, as opposed to leverage points, as we recognise the need for multiple, interwoven solutions, rather than single interventions.

These leverage areas are offered as leads to explore collective action, based on the influence and capacity of stakeholders. The following ten dimensions emerged from our reflections:

Capacity-building to improve network health - including knowledge management, as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning.
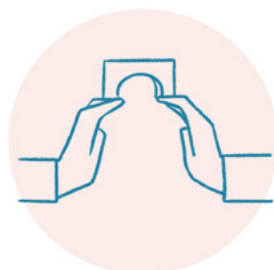
Promotion of trust-based philanthropy - including developing evidence of the benefits of this approach and nurturing an honest learning culture.

Funder alignment and coordination - including capturing learnings on the impact of funder fragmentation and organising spaces for dialogue and decision-making.
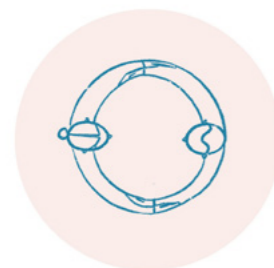
Trust and transparency among stakeholders - including nurturing safe spaces for transparent exchange and knowledge dissemination.

Meaningful participation of children and young people - including disseminating evidence on the positive impact of children and youth's agency, and the development of guidelines for meaningful participation that balance young people's rights and protection.
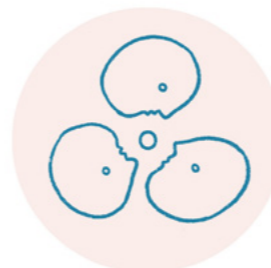
Advocacy coalitions - including building genuine partnerships with organisations led by survivors and local communities, amplifying their work through power-sharing and unified recommendations.
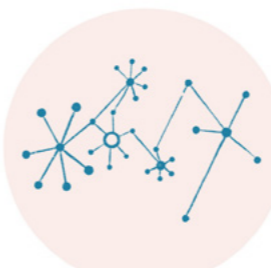
Building the case for networks - including developing engaging communications materials on the value of networks.
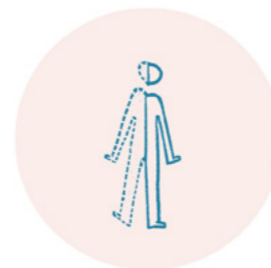
Addressing trauma and the stigma around Sexual Violence against Children - including nurturing trauma-informed spaces to address taboos, misconceptions and toxic masculinity.

Promoting language justice within the sector - including developing a case study on its benefits.

Exploring research opportunities - including on specific themes (e.g. root causes that perpetuate SVAC) and partnerships (co-lead with young people).
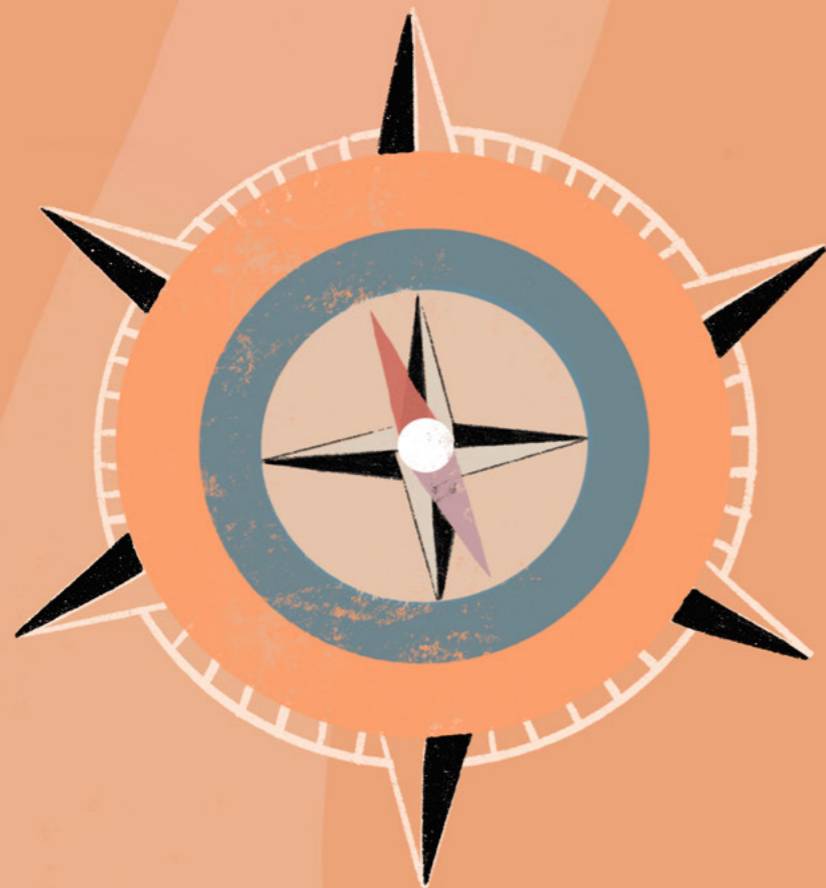
4. Our Recom- mendations

Through our collective reflection, we have identified a number of leads for collective action. These are connected to the different areas in our map and where participants identified opportunities for leverage and collaboration. These are presented as initial interventions to explore, to be taken forward in more detail as next steps.

They will inform the Strategic Networks community as they reflect on their next steps together, but also serve as an invitation for other actors in the sector to consider areas for potential collaboration.

RESOURCE FLOWS

On funder alignment

The issue

Sustainable resourcing is one of the key challenges for many networks and field partners working to tackle Sexual Violence Against Children. The struggle to secure resources is compounded by the disparity of requirements and accountability processes for different funders. This leads to organisations spending significant time reporting and applying for funding. There are spaces for funder alignment but practical coordination is not often achieved.

Where can we spark change?

- Organise spaces for funders to not only discuss and align but coordinate on their priorities, requirements and ways of working

Stepping away from the stagnating loop:

The following steps could be taken to put this area in motion:

Facilitating spaces and dialogues for funder coordination, enabling funders to share and align their priorities and set practical guidelines for their partnerships with networks and field partners. This would increase the capacity of these organisations, freeing resources to deliver interventions and capture relevant learnings from them.

Networks and field partners could **come together to develop a unified case and message** presenting a clear opportunity for impact, showcasing the repercussions of fragmentation and points for better coordination. This could serve as a tool for internal conversations among funders groups, facilitating decision-making on specific areas of investment.

It would also be important to **identify funders' barriers and drivers for misalignment** (e.g. board requirements, the drivers of strategic decision-making, geographical restrictions), addressing these as much as possible in the collective case for funding. These should take into consideration the different types of funders (e.g. individual, multilateral donors etc).

Networks and field partners could start by sharing their knowledge on their own funders, as well as having conversations with trusted funders. The emerging knowledge could be built into **funder education efforts, in collaboration with funders groups.**

How will we know if we are making progress?

● If a diverse group of networks and field partners succeed in putting together the case for funding.

● If different funders report using the case for decision-making.

● If concrete steps are taken among funders (such as joint statements, changes in grant terms, or of References or in funding strategies) to align on partnership conditions in the sector.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

On advocacy coalition building

The issue

The scarcity of resources available to fund interventions in the SVAC sector leads to competition for resources, creating barriers for dialogue and transparent information sharing. This is compounded by the lack of trust that exists between actors, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, who might be hesitant to engage with traditional systems to due disproportionate stigma, isolation, or lack of resources. Moreover, this fragmentation foments the duplication of efforts, intensifying the pressure on resource mobilisation.

Where can we spark change?

- Uplifting organisations with existing expertise in trauma-informed approaches and working with survivors

- Investing in bottom-up coalition building

- Putting pressure on decision-makers through advocacy led by those with lived experience

Nurturing the virtuous loops

Facilitate a space for dialogue and the **co-creation of collective frameworks**, in which local CSOs, survivors, young people, field practitioners have an equal say to traditional drivers of the SVAC sector.

Establish **equitable processes for partnership development**, in which the conditions and priorities are set through a bottom-up approach. More equitable partnerships, in which the work of practitioners with local and lived experience can be amplified will enable more relevant interventions tailored to the needs of children and youth.

Identify national/regional opportunities for advocacy, based on shared knowledge of public priorities, local needs, and resources available. The memberships of regional and global networks could be leveraged to achieve this, in alignment with the collective frameworks.

Document and share case studies of such partnerships and the impact on these interventions. This would contribute to building evidence on the efficiency of equitable coalitions and partnerships.
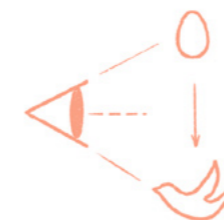
Disseminating this evidence, for example in global spaces or funders groups, can increase the interest in joining or supporting such coalitions and partnerships.

How will we know if we are making progress?

- If a concrete output, such as a joint statement or collective framework is published and used for decision-making.

- If the local and experience-led practitioners and activist report feeling able to influence spaces/stakeholders to which they didn't have access before.

- If stakeholders in the SVAC sector, report putting in place new partnerships informed by an equitable local-to-global approach.

RELATIONSHIPS
AND CONNECTIONS
On trust-building and transparent sharing

The issue

The scarcity of resources available to fund interventions in the SVAC sector leads to competition for resources, creating barriers for dialogue and transparent information sharing. This is compounded by the lack of trust that exists between actors, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, who might be hesitant to engage with traditional systems to due disproportionate stigma, isolation, or lack of resources. Moreover, this fragmentation foments the duplication of efforts, intensifying the pressure on resource mobilisation.

Where can we spark change?

- Nurturing trust among diverse actors working to address or prevent SVAC, especially those excluded from traditional platforms.

- Leverage knowledge-sharing platforms to enable more equitable access to resources

Stepping away from the stagnating loop

Nurture safe and inclusive spaces for dialogue, considering stakeholders that move outside of traditional systems. Consider the different styles of communication and engagement of organisations, survivors, families, and community leaders.

Redefine what is considered as expertise in the SVAC sector, fully recognising the value of lived experience, work experience, academic experience and more.

Provide shared platforms and resources for this diverse knowledge to be amplified.
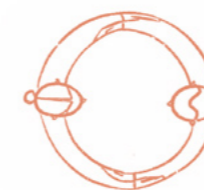
Reduce duplication by providing transparent and equitable access to such platforms. This should include taking measures for language justice, which will enable the advancement of culturally sensitive and context-relevant practices. In turn, this will foster more accurate diagnoses to support interventions.

Identify areas of duplication and complementarity, which can lead to knowledge-sharing partnerships (for example based on local knowledge, expertise working with specific stakeholders or access to specific infrastructure).

How will we know if we are making progress?

- If diverse actors in the sector can refer to common platforms that they use to exchange practices.

- If these platforms intentionally recognise and showcase diverse forms of knowledge and there are increased examples of stakeholders using them for their work.

- If partnerships are built to fill in data gaps (e.g. joint application to research funding).

- If traditionally marginalised actors report having improved access to opportunities to share their work and to enter partnerships on equitable terms.

POWER DYNAMICS

On youth's meaningful participation

The issue

Although young people are not always meaningfully involved in the development of interventions that affect them, there is an increased interest in youth participation. Adultism continues to shape the perception and engagement of children and youth. These processes also vary in practice, depending on the balance struck between a "protection" and a "children's rights" approach.

Where can we spark change?

- Develop guidelines for meaningful participation of children and youth

Setting the foundations for a virtuous loop

The following steps could be taken to put this area in motion:

Organise a **field-wide conversation** on child rights, child protection and child and youth participation.

Identify and rethink adult ways of working and define which processes and structures are conducive to meaningful participation, recognising and **empowering children and young people as full constituents,** not only stakeholders to engage. This would allow a transition from a perception of "victims" to "agents".

Reach out to actors outside the SVAC sector who have been successful **in recognising the political agency of children and young people** (for example members of the girls activist community).

Work on a set of principles or a toolkit **guiding the different stages of meaningful participation,** including the groundwork necessary to ensure safe and brave spaces, which are trauma-informed and conducive to healing. Existing resources, such as ECFG's Toolkit for Child and Youth participation, can provide a starting point for further conversation, incorporating perspectives and needs of other actors in the field.

Develop and disseminate a case on the value of young people's participation, including its therapeutic value, as well as the unique advantages of peer-to-peer support.

How will we know if we are making progress?

- If conversations are held with a diverse group of actors from the SVAC sector, including children and young people, local CSOs, survivors, INGOs, field practitioners, funders, policy-makers, and researchers.

- If young people report feeling listened to and that they have influence in decision-making.

MENTAL MODELS

On stigma and taboo surrounding sexual violence against children

The issue

The stigma around sexual violence against children persists and precludes open dialogues about this issue. This limits the conversations about the experiences of survivors, especially those of male survivors. As such, there are increased barriers to accurate and transparent information about the enablers and barriers to sexual violence against children. This not only impacts general awareness of invisible issues (such as sexual violence against boys), but it also limits the visibility to define priorities for interventions and resource allocation.

Where can we spark change?

- Develop a better, honest understanding of how Sexual Violence Against Children happens

Stepping out of the stagnating loops

Create opportunities for restorative dialogue, opening spaces for perpetrators, survivors and families to talk about how this type of violence happens.

Facilitate spaces to address trauma, for example through artistic expression, that combine a narrative and therapeutic approach (such as psychodrama, drawing, singing, and photovoice).

Develop and disseminate evidence on the impact of such approaches, building a stronger case for such interventions.

Dedicate time and resources to build trusting relationships. This will have implications on funder education as well as programme design.

How will we know if we are making progress?

- If practitioners experienced in these healing practices are involved in research to understand the patterns and enablers of sexual violence against children.

- If there are examples of increased support for these practices (for example through increased funding, longer timelines in funding agreements, the inclusion of trust-building in programmes' desired changes).

- If the learnings from restorative dialogues are taken into consideration in collective frameworks at the sector-level

Further reading
from our community

Weaving a Collective Tapestry:
A Funders' Toolkit for Child and Youth Participation.
Booth, Georgia, & Johnson, Ruby. (2022). Weaving a Collective Tapestry: A Funders'
Toolkit for Child and Youth Participation. Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG).

Seeing things from both sides: A comic to help young people and professionals
understand each other's views about young survivors' participation in efforts to
address child sexual abuse and exploitation
Cody, C. and Soares, C. (2023). Seeing things from both sides: A comic to help young
people and professionals understand each other's views about young survivors'
participation in efforts to address child sexual abuse and exploitation. Luton: Safer
Young Lives Research Centre, University of Bedfordshire.

Understanding Sexual Violence Against Children as a Rights Violation:
engaging with the challenges
Veitch, H. and Cody, C. (2023) 'Understanding Sexual Violence Against Children as a
Rights Violation: engaging with the challenges', Children Unite.

5. Visionary Stories

These stories are a glimpse into what the SVAC sector could look like if we were to implement the recommendations above.

ADRESSING ADULTISM IN EVIDENCE DEVELOPMENT

(Linked to adultism reinforcement loop)

Once upon a time adultism was very present in the sexual violence against children (SVAC) sector. The voices of young people and survivors were not taken seriously and there were not many established spaces in which children and young people held power.

Every day... the evidence of successful practices influenced by children and young people remained limited. Decisions were made based on evidence that did not reflect their views. Or when they did participate, the evidence was not considered rigorous enough.

But one day... a coalition of actors in the SVAC sector decided to tackle adultism in the area of knowledge development. In partnership with young people and children, universities, research institutions and local organisations with expertise in trauma-informed approaches created spaces to co-write academic articles.

Because of that... the evidence produced by young people and children (in safe spaces) was included in peer-reviewed journals
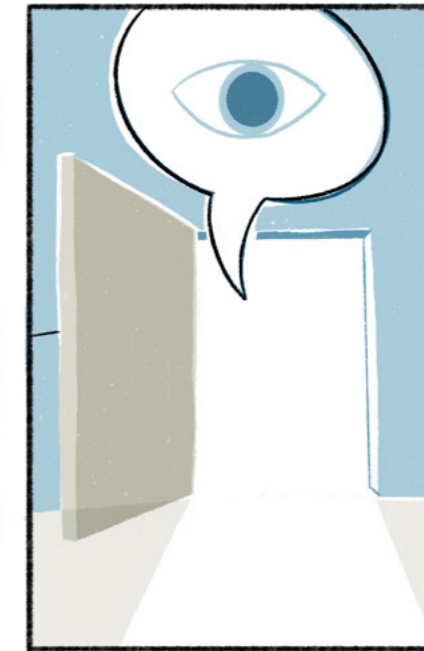
Because of that... it was taken more seriously and was used to inform policies, which in turn ensured their expertise was given recognition.
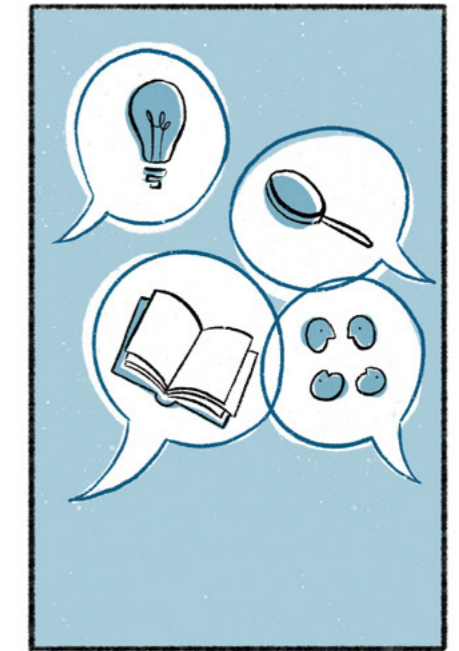
Until finally, the policies built on this evidence were more relevant to children and young people, which led to reduced cases of SVAC.

And ever since then there was an increase in confidence in the expertise of young people and children and it became the norm to include them in decision-making spaces

And the moral of the story is... by explicitly sharing power when developing evidence that will be considered rigorous and serious, we can reframe the idea that children and young people need only to be protected and can also not play an active role in advocating for their rights.

Sharing Platforms for Knowledge Sharing

(Linked to Collective knowledge-building loop)
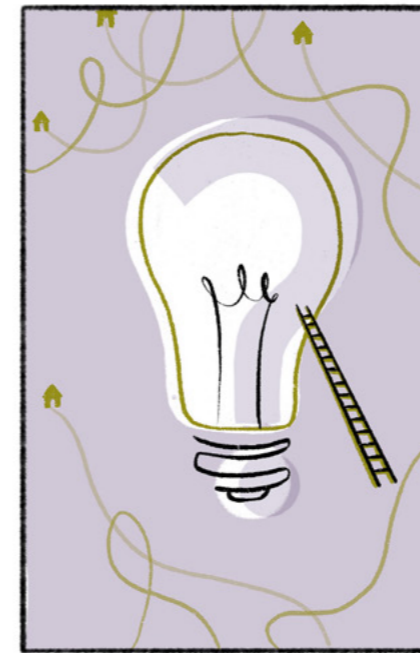
Youth and young survivors, researchers, funders, and other types of SVAC practitioners came together in this effort.
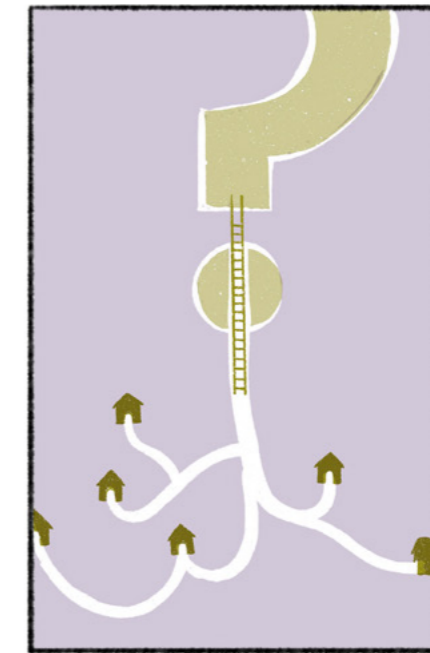
Because of that… different perspectives were represented, and structural drivers were identified. A lot of cross-learning took place, ideas were ignited and new strategies to address common issues were put forth.
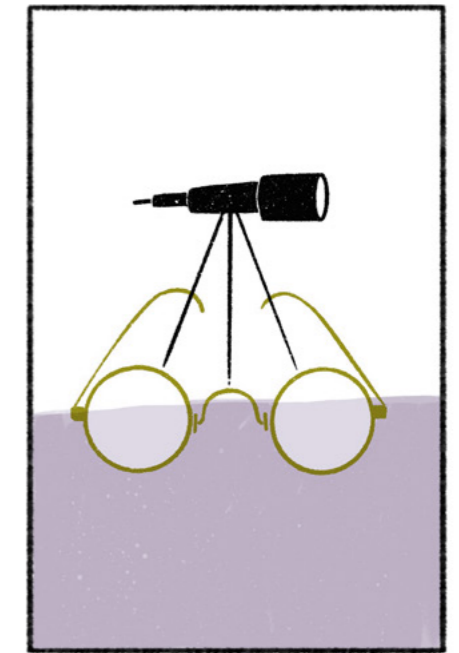
Because of that… there was a clearer sense of priorities for action in the sector. This resulted in a collective, more efficient distribution of work, reducing duplication, and making the most of scarce resources.
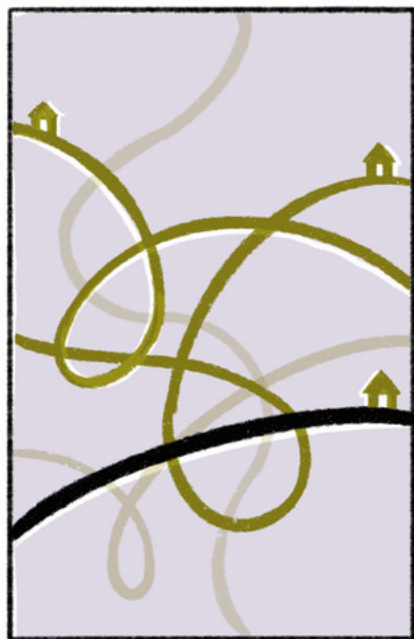
Once upon a time there were several stakeholders addressing sexual violence against children (SVAC), each with its own version of how to bring about impact.

Every day… stakeholders were asking themselves the same kind of question, contending with similar issues, and learning hard lessons. Because of this, it was easy to duplicate efforts and miss collective lessons.

But one day… a closed network of partners decided to be more inclusive and put in place a knowledge-sharing platform to disseminate the work of colleagues and partners.
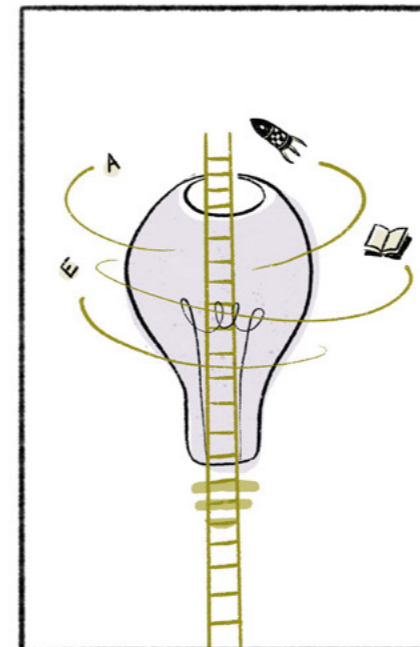
Until, finally, stakeholders in the SVAC sector were able to build richer, more relevant knowledge, which was equitably and transparently disseminated. The identified key issues were addressed, making a lasting impact.
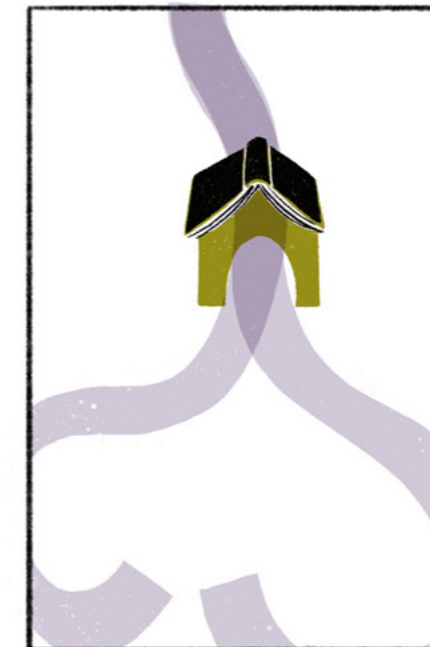

And, ever since then, stakeholders have been inspired to find opportunities to convene and in general prefer engaging diverse stakeholders in their communities of practice. They have more trust in each other and are better equipped with evidence and expertise to address SVAC.
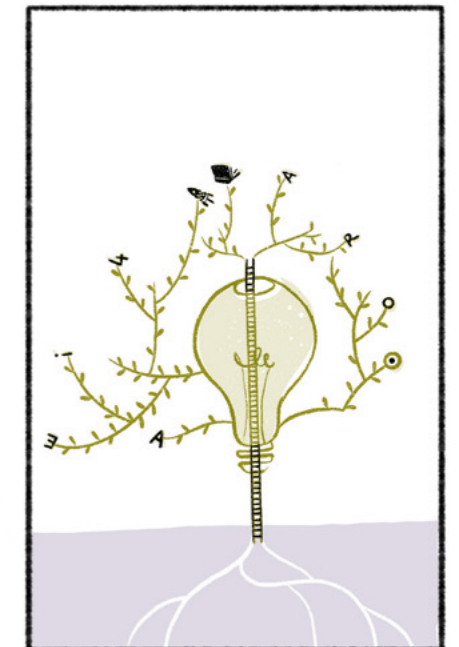

And the moral of the story is… when diverse types of stakeholders come together to share perspectives and areas of expertise, more efficient learnings and impact can take place.

LEVERAGING TRUST-BASED PhilANTropy

(Linked to Trust-based funding loop)
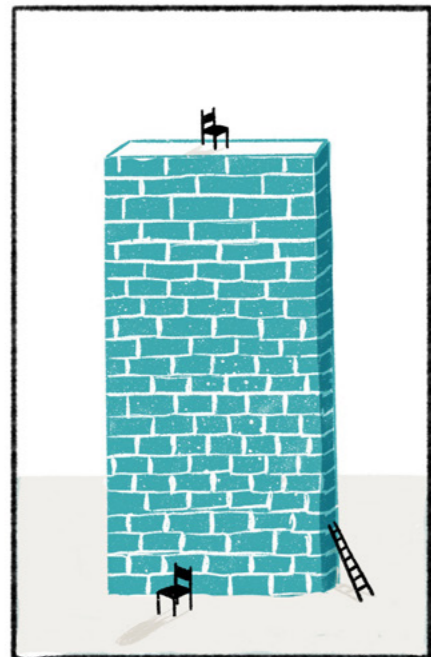
Once upon a time there was not enough trust between donors and field partners. This resulted in a focus on projects and increased accountability requirements.
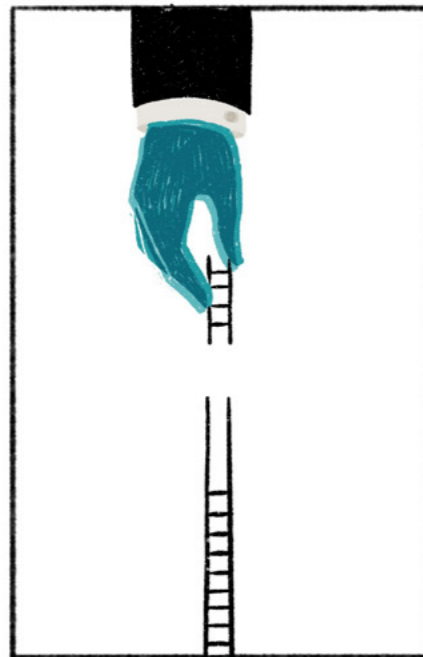
Every day… donors were asking for project proposals instead of supporting core funding. When they did offer core funding, it was mostly through invitation, reducing access to this type of support for a wider range of field partners.

But one day… field partners and donors were brought together by a trusted convenor, in an environment for honest learning and open to discussing failure. Field partners were equipped with a good narrative and evidence of how trust-based philanthropy drives greater impact. Donors listened to field partners about the type of support they really needed.

Because of that… donor mindsets shifted. They started moving towards greater trust-based methods, and investing in core, long-term funding.
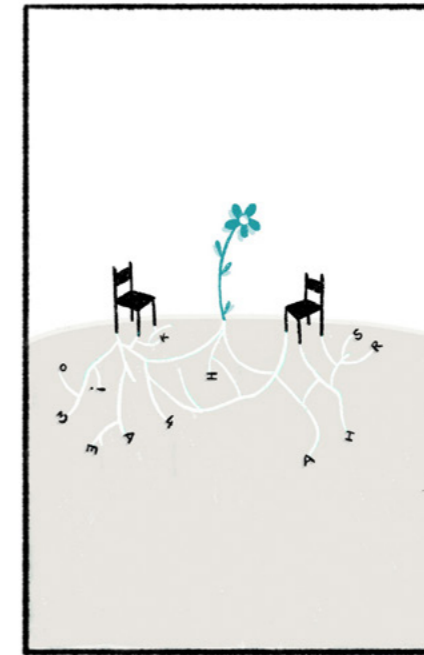
Because of that… field partners had more capacity and flexibility to be more collaborative in their approaches, embrace complexity, and be bolder in their visions for the future and how to get there.
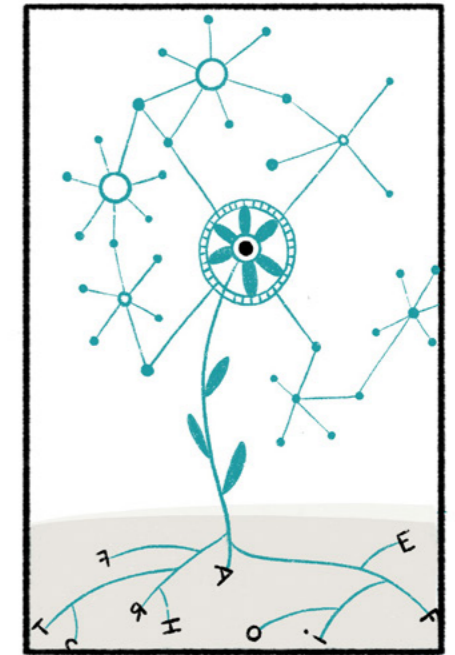
This flexibility enabled partners to bring about more relevant changes, responding to the needs of the communities and people they serve. This consolidated trust between donors and field partners. Thanks to this, donors reduced the rigidity of their reporting requirements, and it became easier and less of a burden on field partners.
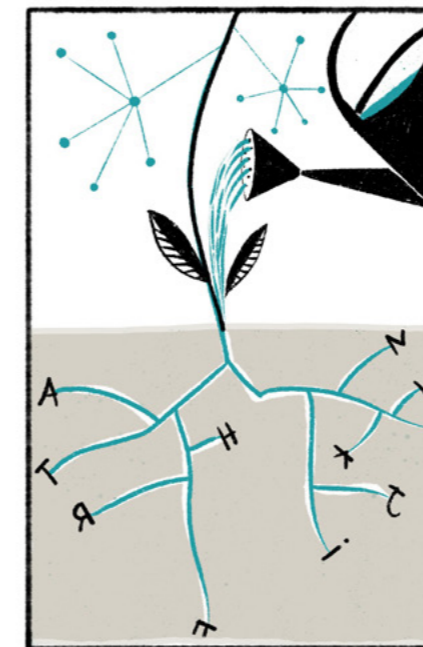
Ever since, the field made significant strides, shifting the needle on the issue of sexual violence against children. Donors felt more confident in this type of funding and started opening calls so more

types of field actors — including those adopting network or systems-change approaches — were able to access this support.
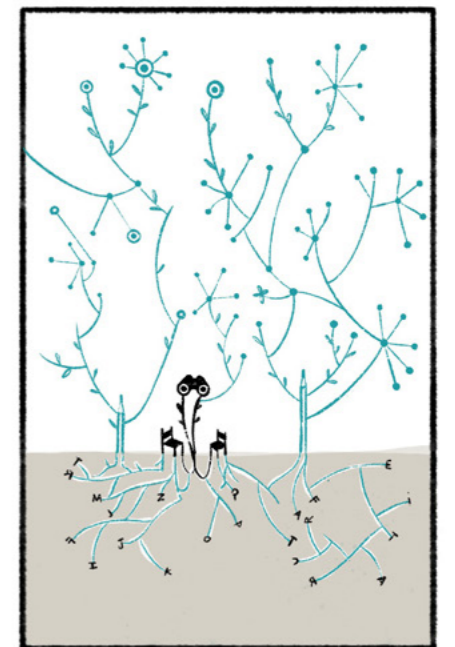
And the moral of the story is… funder restrictions hold partners and the field back. Long-term, core funding helps everyone to achieve their collective goals. It empowers field partners with the flexibility and agency they need to meet complex and interrelated needs.

Lessons from this collective process

This inquiry was set as a collaborative learning process, through which participants could expand their understanding and knowledge of systems, while applying systems practice to the SVAC sector. For example, concepts like feedback loops, or the conditions of systems change, were offered as a way to frame participants' work and context in a different way.

Participants shared:

> *" [It] helped me think 'outside the box' a bit and explore challenges from a different angle."*

> *" it helped me to better my understanding of the system's approach in collaborative impact."*

> *"[It was] interesting to get an insightful overview of the field as a whole and systems loops. [It] will inform our own knowledge of the field and work".*

> *"[it] reflected on issues of power, inequalities —[which] help[ed] inform our reflections in these areas as an organization"*

> *"Feedback loops were interesting aspects and trying to apply in our work when doing analysis of issues and challenges"*

Through the nine-months of implementation we also learnt several lessons we would like to share for anyone looking to implement similar exercises:

- Collective learning in virtual settings has constraints for full participation. On reflection, we needed to allocate more time to build trust among participants in this journey.

- Accessibility is fundamental and should be constantly assessed. Despite our efforts, language justice and accessibility for neurodiverse participants remained a challenge.

- Systems practice is often dominated by complex concepts and jargon. It is important to explore a diversity of tools to understand collective impact.

- The learning format and content must ultimately be practical and applicable to the participants' context.