



Kamila Montesinos

In her own words, GenNext Fellow, Kamila Montesinos shares her transformative journey to South Africa with her host organization, Save the Children, to attend the 2024 Sexual Violence Research Institute Forum in Cape Town.

In October, I had the incredible opportunity to join the Save the Children delegation in traveling to Cape Town, South Africa to attend the Sexual Violence Research Institute (SVRI) Forum, the world’s key research conference on violence against women, violence against children, and other forms of violence driven by gender inequality in low and middle-income countries.

This trip left a profound impact on me, as it allowed for me to learn directly from global experts about the critical



Kamila with her advisor, Yeva Avakyan, and fellow delegates Elizabeth Bolarinwa and Masturah Baba, make bracelets at the Save the Children booth

work being done to combat multiple forms of gender-based violence (GBV), to collaborate and connect with like-minded individuals and support my Save the Children International colleagues as they presented their work.

The conference featured a series of powerful sessions, where leading researchers and practitioners shared evidence-based findings and innovative solutions aimed at violence prevention and responses in humanitarian settings, addressing child, early and forced marriages and unions (CEFMU), associations between climate change and violence against women, pathways to improve support for boys affected by

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sexual violence and tackling other broader impacts of GBV worldwide. These sessions with heavy-hitting topics were immensely grounding for me. They clearly demonstrated the staggering scale of this issue—its pervasive presence across the globe—and how easily certain forms of violence can be overlooked or unrecognized.

Leading up to the conference, I took on a key role in organizing our delegation of 17 members, managing logistics, and overseeing the creation of our booth to ensure a meaningful presence at the event. This experience was a valuable application of my project management skills, as it required careful planning, attention to detail, and collaboration.

Along with my fellow GenNext colleague, Elizabeth Bolarinwa, we formatted a microsite that shared Save the Children resources related to GBV prevention and approaches, along with additional information about our delegation’s presentations and work.

This was the first time Save the Children served as an official partner and sponsor of the SVRI Forum. I took an active role in planning our booth at the exhibition hall, where we hosted two key activities throughout the week: a mural wall and a bracelet-making station. We received wonderful feedback from visitors who described these activities as a

therapeutic pause in between heavy sessions.

The mural wall became a collective space for the community's thoughts and aspirations on advancing the movement to end violence. By the final day, the wall was covered from top to bottom with messages of resilience, solidarity, and determination.



Kamila takes notes during group discussion in the "Feminist approaches to engage men and boys on GBV prevention" session

The bracelet station allowed visitors to express their creativity by designing bracelets with messages like 'End GBV' while featuring a Save the Children charm with a QR code linking to our microsite. Our booth quickly became a hub for attendees, offering a space to reflect, connect, and engage outside of the sessions.

Personally, this was one of the highlights of my week—to chat with such passionate, amazing people in a relaxed setting, while creating something that we would both take with us as a reminder of the importance of this work.

A leading theme that stuck with me throughout the week was the importance of fostering a culture of respect and accountability for all individuals, regardless of gender identity, at individual, societal, and systemic levels. It is this approach that will bring us closer to ending gender-based violence for everyone, everywhere. Engaging with such pressing, deep-rooted issues not only deepened my understanding of gender-based violence but also reinforced my commitment to this cause.



The Save the Children delegation pose for a group photo.

It served as a powerful reminder of why this work matters and has truly connected me to the broader, ongoing global efforts surrounding it. I am so grateful to have attended this conference and to everyone who shared their stories, work and dedication in this incredible space. I look forward to the future opportunities this fellowship and Save the Children has to offer!

