

Investing in Action to End Childhood Sexual Violence

Overview of the Safe Childhoods Initiative

Introduction

Childhood sexual violence is widespread and deeply consequential. Philanthropic investment is limited and fragmented, and has not kept pace with advances in understanding what effective, sustained intervention can achieve. Over time, this has limited the field's ability to translate evidence, leadership, and lived experience into durable reductions in harm. Progress has been made, but it has too often depended on isolated efforts rather than coordinated, long-term investment. The Safe Childhoods Initiative was established in response to this gap, with the aim of strengthening how philanthropy engages with the issue and supporting a more confident, aligned, and sustained approach from funders.

The scale and nature of the issue

Childhood sexual violence remains one of the most preventable forms of harm affecting children globally. Current estimates suggest that one in five girls and one in seven boys experience sexual violence before the age of 18 (UNICEF 2025). Childhood sexual violence encompasses abuse perpetrated by adults or peers, sexual exploitation and trafficking, adolescent sexual assault, and online abuse and exploitation. It occurs across families, schools, faith settings, sports, and youth programs.

The consequences extend far beyond childhood. Survivors face increased risks to mental and physical health, disrupted education, reduced economic participation, and long-term social harm. Despite such lasting impacts, the issue has remained chronically underfunded. Global private philanthropic investment directed specifically toward preventing childhood sexual violence is estimated at \$150–200 million annually, reflecting a persistent mismatch between the scale of harm and the resources devoted to addressing it.

Why this moment matters

There is now strong evidence that childhood sexual violence is not inevitable. Over many years, practitioners, researchers, and survivor leaders have demonstrated that prevalence can be reduced and harm can be prevented through well-designed, sustained approaches. This issue has reached a new level of momentum – public awareness is growing, survivor leadership is increasingly visible, media narratives and stigma are beginning to shift, and political will is expanding.

In 2025, a collective of hundreds of stakeholders developed a [shared global roadmap](#) outlining what is required to address childhood sexual violence more effectively. At the same time, a substantial body of evidence-informed solutions now exists across prevention, healing, and accountability. The field is ready for increased and more strategic investment. What has been missing is sustained, confident philanthropic engagement at the level required to support progress at scale.

The role of the Safe Childhoods Initiative

The Safe Childhoods Initiative exists to drive a step change in philanthropic investment to prevent childhood sexual violence. Its purpose is to enable an order-of-magnitude increase in sustained, strategic funding, aligned with field expertise and survivor leadership, and deployed with the confidence and long-term ambition required to reduce harm at scale.

Safe Childhoods works as a field-wide resource for philanthropy. It supports donors—particularly those prepared to play a leadership role—to understand the landscape, identify where their resources can have the greatest effect, and engage with peers and field leaders in a coordinated way. Acting as an impartial advisor, an honest broker, and convenor, the Initiative helps donors navigate a complex field and sensitive issue while maintaining independence and discretion.

Through tailored advice, curated giving pathways, strategic learning opportunities, and access to global expertise and peer networks, Safe Childhoods seeks to change the conditions under which philanthropy operates in this area—aiming to significantly increase the volume of capital entering the field, improving its strategic coherence, and supporting investment at a scale capable of delivering durable reductions in harm.

Founding donors, team and governance

The Safe Childhoods Initiative was created in 2025 by a small group of experienced private donors who recognised both the seriousness of childhood sexual violence and a structural gap in the funding ecosystem. The founding donors—Carlson Family Foundation, Indigo Trust, Oak Foundation, Phillips Foundation, Porticus, Segal Philanthropies, and World Childhood Foundation—are among the most established and knowledgeable funders globally in this area, each with a long track record of supporting the field.

The Initiative is guided by the principals, trustees, and senior staff of these founding donors, ensuring close alignment with philanthropic leadership and a long-term perspective. The Safe Childhoods Initiative is supported by a small dedicated team based in the United States and Europe, bringing experience across philanthropy, field-building, systems change, and child protection.

Looking ahead

Safe Childhoods seeks to contribute to a stronger, more effective funding environment for addressing childhood sexual violence—one that supports prevention at scale, strengthens responses for survivors, and improves accountability. By improving how philanthropy engages with the issue, the Initiative aims to support meaningful and lasting reductions in harm, so that children everywhere can grow up safe, free from violence, and able to thrive.

For further information, please visit SafeChildhoods.org or contact info@safechildhoods.org