## Contents

1. Introduction........................................................................................................... 3
2. Forum in numbers.................................................................................................... 4
3. Evaluation objectives................................................................................................. 4
4. Methods ..................................................................................................................... 5
5. Evaluation findings .................................................................................................... 5
   5.1. Overall conference organisation ....................................................................... 5
   5.2. Structure and design of the programme ............................................................. 6
   5.3. Networking ........................................................................................................... 8
   5.4. Wellbeing, self and collective care ................................................................. 9
   5.5. Diversity ............................................................................................................. 10
   5.6. Funding for bursaries ....................................................................................... 11
6. Strengthening the Forum .......................................................................................... 11
   6.1. Visa justice ........................................................................................................ 11
   6.2. Providing more time for in-depth discussion .................................................. 11
   6.3. Accessibility and gender inclusivity ................................................................. 12
7. Forum 2024 themes and topics ............................................................................... 13
8. Next steps ................................................................................................................. 13
1. Introduction

With over 8,500 members, the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) is the world’s largest network on research on violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC). It provides a space for global role players in the field to connect with one another, share and promote their research. Members also work to influence policies, all in an effort to improve the lives of those who have experienced violence driven by gender inequality. To accomplish this, we fund research for evidence building and to strengthen research capacity, promote partnerships, and influence change.

To strengthen capacity and promote partnerships in the field of VAW and VAC, the SVRI hosts the world’s largest abstract driven conference, the SVRI Forum. Every two to three years, through the Forum, we host researchers, practitioners, funders, policymakers, activists, and survivors to connect, share and learn. The Forum offers a unique opportunity to find out what’s new, what’s working and what isn’t, and to identify priorities for the VAW and VAC field moving forward.

SVRI Forum 2022, SVRI’s 7th global conference, was held in Cancun, Mexico from September 19-23, 2022. The Forum has grown substantially since our inaugural event in 2009 and has unquestionably become the heart of field building and connection.
2. Forum in numbers

Forum 2022 provided 1,021 delegates from 99 countries with the opportunity to meet face to face after almost three years of isolation, lockdowns and travel bans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1,021 attendees
- 99 countries
- 65 bursaries awarded
- 9 Young Professionals Programme participants
- 341 presentations
- 18 workshops
- 42 participant-driven events
- 26 exhibition stands
- 33 sponsors and partners

3. Evaluation objectives

The SVRI assesses every Forum. The objectives of the evaluation are to inform and strengthen future forums through the assessment of the:

- overall success of the conference through its planning and organisation;
- quality of the abstract driven programme;
- relevance of the abstract driven programme and its topics to the work of attendees;
- impact of the conference on networking and professional development of attendees;
- quality of support provided to attendee wellbeing;
- gaps in representation and diversity.

We are extremely appreciative of the time attendees invested in completing this survey, contributing their knowledge, insights, and recommendations for future Forums.
4. Methods

Google forms were used to collect the data, with survey questions based on previous Forum evaluation surveys. The Forum evaluation survey was shared with delegates at the end of the Forum, in person, via the app and email.

One hundred and ninety-nine (199) attendees completed the survey - in both English (n=170) and Spanish (n=29). Completed surveys were received both electronically and in paper form.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered on delegates’ experience of the event in terms of:

- the structure and design of the programme and its contents;
- organisation of the event;
- well-being, self and collective care and kindness;
- networking;
- future themes and topics;
- overall suggestions to improve the conference.

Data was coded and analysed in Atlas.ti.

5. Evaluation findings

5.1 Overall conference organisation

Since there are a number of logistical issues and many partners to organise, the SVRI Forum requires an intensive effort over at least two years. The SVRI team may be small, but with the help of our board, leadership council, co-hosts, consultants, partners, and funders we are able to create this wonderfully unique event. 98% of respondents in this survey felt that SVRI Forum staff were welcoming and friendly and 91% felt that the Forum was well organised.

Some reflections include:

“*You all are amazing! The grace with which you pulled this off is humbling.*”

“I really want to celebrate and name the *VERY* massive task of organising the Forum in Mexico 2022. The challenges were many - from the venue to the visas, to COVID etc.- you really made it happen, and it was such a vibrant and positive space. Huge congratulations and gratitude to all of you."

“I have no idea [how you can improve], it’s almost perfect!”

“The [Forum] formula works really well.”
5.2. Structure and design of the programme

i. Comprehensive overview of key issues in the field
Respondents were asked whether the Forum programme gave them a comprehensive overview of key issues in the field. 86% of respondents agreed, with the following sentiments expressed:

“SVRI Forum serves as an opportunity to catch up in the field, across topics.”

“What I like most was the research results and adaptation of different approaches to end VAW.”

“I very much appreciate the growth in the focus on interventions and different types of research and learning methods.”

“I liked the research...from various areas covering multiple relevant and applicable topics...”

ii. Well-structured, informative panels
The Forum programme takes months to develop and requires significant collaboration with the Forum’s scientific committee and co-hosts. The SVRI tries to build panels for optimal learning based on the abstracts we receive. 78% of respondents believed panels were well-structured and informative.

“I liked the scientific programme - the presentations were very interesting.”

“Me encantó la organización, puntualidad con la que empezaban las actividades y la cantidad de organizaciones que estuvieron presentes [I loved the organisation, the punctuality with which the activities started and the number of organisations that were present].”

A few respondents noted that some sessions contained broad themes that did not always coherently fit together. This is a recognised challenge given that we try to frame sessions to fit diverse presentations. As we work on this monumental task to bring delegates the latest evidence in the field, we continue to strive to improve the way we present panels at the Forum.

iii. Quality of presentations and relevant topics
SVRI Forum 2022 provided space for 342 presentations - 225 oral presentations and 116 five-minute presentations. Selection for presentations was no small feat and this year’s Forum received 1,081 abstract submissions reviewed by 132 abstract reviewers from across the globe. The restrictions and budget cuts encountered by researchers and practitioners during the COVID lockdowns led many to re-evaluate their approaches and innovations. Despite this, the quality of Forum presentations was of a high standard with a diversity of themes. 84% of respondents felt that topics presented were relevant and useful to their work. Respondents expressed their appreciation of the quality of presentations and the variety of topics they contained:
iv. Innovations in the programme

The SVRI Forum 2022 programme was structured similarly to previous years, bringing rich knowledge around a variety of topics. 78% of respondents felt that the conference programme brought new perspectives and innovations, with many participants offering detailed insights into aspects of the programme they appreciated most:

“Me gusto pantallazo sobre diferentes enfoques - salud, trauma, intersección colonialismo y genero, evaluación de programas de prevención, herramientas, metodologías, teorías de cambio, educación y prevención, community approach, survivor centered approach... - diferentes problemáticas, historias de pioneras en el área

[I like the overview of different approaches - health, trauma, intersection of colonialism and gender, evaluation of prevention programs, tools, methodologies, theories of change, education and prevention, community approach, survivor-centred approach.... - different issues, and stories of pioneers in the field].”

“The feminist sessions on Thursday morning were the best ones of the week, also heavily attended and there was a lot of engagement from the audience - it would be great to see a lot more of this in future SVRI forums, and many other attendees mentioned the same to me, as well.”

Forum 2022 integrated new and innovative developments throughout the programme. The addition of dialogic panels and the bringing together of attendees each morning into different plenaries were welcome additions.

The programme designed two sessions that offered an opportunity for discussants to contribute to the global discourse on 1) practice-based knowledge; and 2) decolonising research on sexual violence and how shifting the balance of power and control will impact research.

Attendees clearly recognised and valued the newness and benefits of these panels:

“I was impressed by many of the panels, especially the dialogic panel on decolonising research - which I felt should really have been a plenary session.”

“The dialogic sessions provided insightful information relevant to my work on sexual violence.”

“Dialogic panels was a new and exciting feature.”

“I would prefer more panel conversations [like] the dialogic panel on practice-based learning...”

“More of the dialogue-based panels would be amazing for the next conference(s).”
v. Informative and interesting five-minute presentations

The five-minute presentation session is a format that the SVRI adopted in 2019. This format allows for short, dynamic presentations of participant’s work and is a great way to incorporate and acknowledge important projects within the main Forum programme. Most respondents enjoyed the five-minute presentation format with 76% agreeing that they were interesting and informative.

“I particularly liked the short presentation format on the last day, and hope there can be more of these in future.”

“The mini-presentations (5 minute presentations) were excellent - keep these but make the session shorter and earlier in the program so the audience can follow up with presenters in the later days.”

Some delegates however, found these sessions too fast moving. They felt that more time dedicated to these sessions could have done them more justice:

“The five-minute sessions were too short; what about reducing the numbers of speakers or making those sessions longer?”

5.3. Networking

The SVRI Forum has established itself as the premier networking event in the field of research and knowledge generation on VAW and VAC. Spending time with like-minded people was a major highlight of the conference for many attendees, with some identifying it as the most memorable part of the conference. 86% of attendees agreed that SVRI Forum provided time and space(s) to network with others and share their work.

“It is the only conference that I have been to that brings together researchers and practitioners in a collaborative way. Amazing work!!”

“Después del COVID y la distancia social, el espacio de intercambio facilitado por SVRI ha sido increíble [After COVID and social distancing, the sharing space facilitated by SVRI has been incredible].”

“The networking was the best part.”

“It was a lifetime experience for me. I met so many people with the same interests as mine.”

“The side meetings/coffees were extra important this year after three years of not attending any meetings. This did mean that I attended formal sessions rarely, but it was well worth the trade off as the primary benefit this year was being in the same space as colleagues.”

The Forum is also well known for bringing together compassionate, caring people who share a same aim. One attendee stated emphatically:

“Lo q más me gustó fue reencontrarme con colegas y la camaradería y pasión por el tema [What I enjoyed most was meeting colleagues and the camaraderie and passion for the topic].”
This year, the SVRI Forum extended morning tea breaks for logistical reasons. This had the unexpected upside of networking, something the team will consider in future Forums.

“I Liked the chance to network especially at coffee breaks.”

“It was a great networking opportunity...I liked that the program was full but not packed, with long breaks between sessions, leaving time to reflect, connect, and rest.”

“This year I loved how much time there was built in for networking.”

“Beautiful scheduling that built in sufficient networking time - very much appreciated.”

The use of the Whova App as a networking tool this year was a resounding success. The app facilitated 14,619 delegate-to-delegate exchanges, 46 meet-ups were organised and 423 business cards exchanged.

“[What I like most was] the networking. The Whova app allowed me to meet people I would not otherwise have met.”

“I like the opportunity to meet others working in sexual violence...the use of the Whova app was sooo helpful.”

“The app was great and very helpful - I especially liked the meet-up option because I met some wonderful people that way. One of the biggest benefits of a conferences like this is the networking and connections...”

5.4. Wellbeing, self and collective care

Attendees mentioned their appreciation for the Forum’s care activities and expressed the impact of a Forum focused on well-being and kindness had on them. 91% of delegates who completed the evaluation felt that if they needed support, there were staff to provide assistance to them.

“The support I personally got is beyond my imagination. All has been well.”

“What I liked most was the love and joy.”

"I thought the whole event was so trauma informed and I think that is a huge strength. I really appreciated the support and focus on fun and joy as much as talking about difficult things."

“It was joy to see front line providers and activists relax in a beautiful setting.”

“I was initially skeptical about the location, but it turned out to be perfect - it allowed for some relaxation and healing after difficult years, as well as the opportunity to see and spend time with people.”

“Me gustó el enfoque de atención integral que nos brindaron a todos [I liked the holistic care approach provided to all of us].”

“I liked the free spirited, no pressure attitude.”
5.5 Diversity

Ensuring diversity in terms of participation of delegates from low- and middle-income countries at SVRI Forum is a priority for the SVRI. Immense effort was put to regional outreach and fundraising for bursaries. As a result, an impressive 99 countries were represented at Forum 2022. 53% of attendees (n=542) were from low- and middle-income countries (70 countries), and 47% (n=479) were from high income countries (29 countries).

This was the first Forum to take place in a Spanish-speaking country - 121 attendees from Mexico and a total of 16 Spanish speaking countries were represented.

Delegates had the following to say about diversity at Forum 2022:

“What I liked most was the rich and diverse sessions, the increasing diversity in representation of young people, people with disabilities, and people from different geographic and ethnic backgrounds.”

“I liked how welcoming the Forum was and how global it was in its reach.”

“I liked most the breadth and diversity of participants who were able to make it.”

“I liked the array of participants - from scientists to community-level researchers, opinion leaders, advocates, policy makers, CSO, NGOs, UN Agencies, students, and others - and participation.”

“What I liked most was the variation of panels and topics; good representation from different parts of the world and [good representation] from women. Good effort.”
5.6. Funding for bursaries

To achieve our goal of bringing diversity in perspectives to the Forum and elevating the voices of young and emerging researchers, practitioners and activists, the SVRI actively raised funds for 65 bursaries. These supported those who would not be otherwise able to attend.

“I love the space given to the participants (through bursaries) to enable them bring their voices and engagement to the fore.”

The inclusion of more young researchers and practitioners caught the attention of many attendees and is an objective that the SVRI Forum continues to pursue.

“What I liked most was the inclusion of youth/young academics in SVRI conference. Excellent point.”  
“It was great to see more young people, [young] women in this SVRI.”

Forum 2022 was able to support 9 young researchers and practitioners into our Young Professionals Programme (YPP) where they received a full bursary to the conference. They were also mentored over the course of two months to develop and strengthen their conference presentations.

“The growth from discussions with my mentor was immense. I really learnt a lot on how to present information in a comprehensible way.”

6. Strengthening the Forum

The SVRI Forum strives to improve each year, and this cannot be done without feedback from our attendees. Areas for growth and improvement include:

6.1 Visa justice

Despite our initial exploration of location and ease to obtain visas, SVRI recognises that visas were an immense struggle for people from low- and middle-income countries. This is not unique to Mexico or the SVRI Forum.

“The visa challenges affected so many people - so many of us spent the leading weeks working furiously and desperately to get appointments and approvals for colleagues. It will be critical to consider passport privilege (in location and transit visas) for future locations and perhaps direct lines to consulates for attendees.”

The SVRI expresses gratitude to the co-hosts for their efforts in contacting numerous consulates and embassies to assist attendees with their visa applications.

6.2 Providing more time for in-depth discussion

The SVRI Forum 2022 had a full programme with many different events happening at the same time. It is not yet clear if the extraordinary interest in Forum 2022 was a result of its expansion or a natural consequence of the “post-COVID” years which provided guests with the opportunity to reconnect in person.
Respondents were asked whether they thought the programme offered enough time for questions and debate and 48% felt that there was room for improvement. A few respondents in the evaluation provided written feedback on the programme, specifically regarding the schedule's intensity and its limited time for in-depth discussion.

“The [abstract driven] programme should take 5 solid days.”

“The five-minute sessions were too short - reduce the numbers of speakers/make those sessions longer.”

“Perhaps we should have a daily panel discussion reflecting on findings and themes.”

“The conference is getting very large, with perhaps too much competition for presentation spots, leading to very limited time for both presentations and discussion. I wonder if starting to think about tracks, allowing panels again, and maybe even extending a day would be advisable. Thanks!”

We appreciate our attendees' thoughtful comments and suggestions to ensure more interactive and in-depth sessions in the future.

6.3. Accessibility and gender inclusivity

Suggestions on improving access and inclusion at Forum.

1. Accessibility: The SVRI and Destinos worked closely with the hotel to ensure that the venue was as accessible as possible for delegates with limited mobility. For example, the hotel built ramps and installed a wheelchair elevator to address our concerns over disability access at the venue. Such changes can only bring more diversity to future conferences at the Melia Paradisus Cancun. SVRI will continue to fundraise for future improvements around accessibility, especially for hearing impaired, neuro-divergent, and other forms of disability.

2. Gender inclusivity: Responses around gender inclusivity centred mainly around the gender-neutral bathroom. The SVRI will engage in broader consultation on issues of inclusion to build on gender inclusivity at Forum 2024.

3. Diversity: Whilst Forum 2022 was the most diverse Forum we have held, we can still do better. A few delegates commented that they would like to see more diversity in panels.

“[I would like to see] greater and more visible representation from transgender people, particularly trans women both in terms of panellists and guest speakers.”

“I would like increased engagement with indigenous communities and ways of sharing. A strong focus on accountability to the women/girls about whom this research was about would be good.”
7. Forum 2024 themes and topics

Respondents were asked to suggest topics/themes for SVRI Forum 2022.

The topics listed below were suggested by respondents and align with the present Forum 2022 themes.

- Intersectionality with specific reference to:
  - Work on disabilities
  - LGBTQI+ and VAW/VAC
  - Intersection of climate change and VAW/VAC
- Masculinities including:
  - Perpetration of VAW/VAC
  - Men and boys as survivors
  - Engaging men to prevent VAW/VAC
- Decolonising research and practice
- Multisectoral engagement to prevent and respond to VAW/VAC
- Research and programmes specific to children and young people
- Research methods
- Women’s rights organisations and movement building
- Practice-based knowledge
- Tech/online violence
- Funding for a growing field/competition for funds

Several respondents suggested that rather than introducing new topics for the next Forum, existing themes should be preserved and expanded upon.

8. Next steps

The evaluation findings will be used to inform the creation of Forum 2024, with a focus on the following themes:

1. Advancing knowledge: SVRI Forum is about advancing knowledge and science, sharing and learning for improved responses and ending VAW and VAC. We will continue to ensure a transparent and open abstract review process, and strengthen the curation of panels. We will consider the inclusion of more dialogic panels where key debates in the field open up space for deeper learning and discussion.

2. Continuing opportunities for networking and building partnerships: The Forum is an essential mechanism in our field for making new connections and partnerships. We will try to incorporate the many creative recommendations received through the evaluation regarding enhancing the Forum space for better networking opportunities. For example, co-hosting regional and global webinars and events based on abstracts and Forum learnings in non-Forum years, a way to link conversations between Forums.

3. Diversity and equity: The SVRI will continue to fundraise for Forum bursaries, and continue to work closely with partners to ensure that we create a space welcoming of all voices, especially those who are underrepresented or excluded from international events. We will also continue to actively fundraise for translation and interpretation services.
4. Centering well-being: Forum 2022 was the first time SVRI was able to employ a team to think through and integrate well-being and collective care more coherently. The feedback from this year’s conference reflects the positive impact of a holistic well-being programme on those attending. This confirms the need to fundraise so that a similar and/or even better intervention can be offered at Forum 2024.

5. Thoughtful growth: As SVRI Forum continues to expand, we take note of the concerns about the conference’s size as highlighted in the evaluation survey. SVRI will continue to discuss and debate the size of the Forum.

Join us in South Africa, October 2024!

Contact us for more at forums@svri.org.

Donate to the SVRI Forum Bursary Fund here.

SVRI Forum 2022 website.

SVRI Forum 2022 presentations.

SVRI Forum 2022 highlights video.