

Ending Violence Against Children Taskforce

Support Funding to End All Forms of Violence Against Children

Dear Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Graham,

Half the world's children – nearly one billion– are victims of violence annually.¹ Violence against children includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. COVID-19 has only exacerbated these issues. World Vision estimates that as a result of the secondary impacts of the pandemic, an additional 85 million children worldwide may be exposed to violence.² Around the world, 152 million children are engaged in child labor, and nearly one in three adolescent girls has been a victim of emotional, physical, or sexual violence. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are about 10.1 million children who are victims of human trafficking globally.³ Children with disabilities are three to four times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence. There are 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, forty percent of whom are children.⁴

These vulnerable children need protection and access to essential services that keep them safe now and sustain them long-term. A growing body of research has shown that adverse childhood experiences impact the healthy brain development of children, affecting their lifelong health, well-being, and future education and employment opportunities. Repeated exposure to violence in childhood can impede a child's ability to succeed in school and increase the likelihood that they become a victim or perpetrator. Cultivating future prosperity in any society is dependent on investing in and ensuring the healthy development of the next generation.

The U.S. has established itself as a global leader in protecting children from exploitation and violence. Working alongside other nations and civil society organizations, U.S. diplomatic and programmatic assistance plays a vital role in tackling issues like child trafficking, exploitative and forced child labor, sexual exploitation of boys and girls, as well as protecting children and youth in situations of armed conflict, preventing child, early, and forced marriage, and ending harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C).

Historically, the U.S. Government has achieved important results for children through foreign assistance funding. During the past decade, the proportion of young women who were married as children decreased by 15 percent. The number of children subjected to hazardous child labor has been cut in half since 2000. However, the rate of reduction in child labor has slowed significantly in the last four years and fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has put millions more children at risk of child labor due to school closures and rising poverty. On a global scale, violence against children is estimated to cost as much as \$7 trillion annually, yet the US only spends about half a percent of overseas development assistance (ODA) on programs that focus on ending violence against children.⁵

In order to ensure the continued leadership and influence of the U.S. in the protection of children from violence globally we request the following:

¹ Hillis, Susan. *Global Prevalence of Past-year Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review and Minimum Estimates*. January 2016.

² <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/coronavirus-health-crisis/covid-19-aftershocks-perfect-storm>

³ <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm>

⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

⁵ https://www.childfund.org/uploadedFiles/public_site/media/ODI%20Report%20The%20cost%20and%20economic%20impact%20of%20violence%20against%20children.pdf

- **\$35 million** for the vulnerable children account, which is provided via the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) to support the care and protection of vulnerable children around the globe. USAID has given particular attention to children who are living outside of family care; have been trafficked; are experiencing violence; are affected by, or are emerging from, armed conflict or humanitarian crises; have disabilities; are orphans; or are otherwise vulnerable. A higher level of investment would allow USAID to fully fund monitoring and evaluation efforts to identify effective and efficient interventions outlined in the implementation plan of the interagency 2019-2023 Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy (APCCA). This level of investment would also further programming focused on child-safeguarding initiatives, both online and offline, among U.S. government personnel and partners and strengthening social service workforce capacity.
- **\$5 million** for the Department of State Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership, which is a jointly developed, multi-year plan aimed at bolstering efforts to combat child labor and sex trafficking. The CPC Partnership, with support from the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) office, seeks to hold perpetrators of child sex and labor trafficking accountable under the law, provide comprehensive services for child trafficking survivors, and expand child trafficking prevention and awareness.
- **\$30 million** for the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child marriage and meet the needs of married girls, in fulfillment of the mandated child marriage strategy provision of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.

We value the impact made by global efforts to end all forms of violence against children and urge your Subcommittee to fully fund these critical programs in the Fiscal Year 2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. We are also writing Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee in support of the Violence against Children Surveys conducted through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the child labor prevention work conducted through the Bureau of International Labor Affairs.

We also urge the U.S. Government to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated strategy built upon evidence-based practices and adopt common metrics and indicators to monitor progress to prevent, address, and end violence against children and youth across the various agencies and accounts contributing funds to this work. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

The Ending Violence Against Children Taskforce:

American Academy of Pediatrics
ChildFund International
Futures Without Violence
Save the Children
UNICEF USA
World Vision