

Support Funding to End All Forms of Violence Against Children

March 13, 2023

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Ranking Member
State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Lee,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge you to fund important programs that support prevention of and response to violence against children in the FY2024 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

Half of the world's children – nearly [one billion](#) – are victims of violence annually. Violence against children includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. More than [8.2 million children](#) worldwide have lost a caregiver due to the pandemic. These children are at increased risk of child marriage, child labor, and other forms of online and offline violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. This is especially true for children with disabilities, who are more likely to experience severe physical punishment and may have an increased risk of sexual violence.

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. 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. foreign assistance plays a vital role in tackling issues like child trafficking, exploitative and forced child labor, and sexual exploitation of children. The U.S. has also been a leader in 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.

Over the last decade, U.S. government support has been critical to the reduction in global child labor and child marriage. However, UNICEF estimates that as a result of the pandemic, ten million additional child marriages may occur before the end of the decade. Similarly, global progress to end child labor has stalled, with the number of children who participate in forced labor rising to 160 million - nearly [1 in 10 children worldwide](#). 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:

- **\$35 million for the Vulnerable Children account**, which supports USAID's Children in Adversity office to coordinate assistance to orphans and other vulnerable children. Resources for the account help to implement the United States Government Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity (APCCA) whole-of-government strategy to build strong beginnings through early childhood development, support for children living outside family-based care, and protection for children from violence, abuse, and neglect.

Justification: A modest expansion of funding to \$35 million in FY24 would allow the Children in Adversity Office to bolster the integration of early childhood interventions into new and existing

foreign assistance programs serving vulnerable children and their families, per the direction of the Global Child Thrive Act. 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.

- **\$15 million for the Department of State Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership**, which are \$5 million multi-year commitments between the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (JTIP) and partner governments to bolster efforts to combat child labor and sex trafficking. The CPC Partnership supports the sustainable development of partner governments' capacity 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.

Justification: The Philippines, a global hotspot for online sexual exploitation and abuse of children, has participated in two CPC Partnerships, which have supported its capacity to improve prevention efforts, provide effective and appropriate child protective services to victims and identify perpetrators and bring them to justice. An FY24 allocation of at least \$15 million for CPC Partnerships will allow for three additional compacts to support governments around the world that currently lack the infrastructure and capacity to respond to similar forms of child trafficking.

- **\$30 million for the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child early and forced marriage.**

Justification: These increased funds include a new allotment of \$7,000,000 to the U.S. commitment to the [joint UN Global Program to End Child Marriage](#), which has generated remarkable results addressing child marriage in 12 of the highest prevalence or high-burden countries.

We urge the Subcommittee to fully fund these critical programs in the Fiscal Year 2024 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. We are also writing Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro 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,