

May 11, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leading organizations representing children, youth, and their families globally, we are grateful for your commitment to lift the voices of marginalized communities and tackle the difficult issues of our time. We recognize that your administration is tackling three of the most disruptive issues facing humankind, the global crises of COVID, conflict, and climate. We believe a fourth “c” exists and requires urgent action and attention: children. We are greatly concerned about the impact of the recent confluence of crises that is undermining decades of progress to improve the wellbeing of young people (children and youth). We write to request your leadership to launch a new initiative for lasting, positive impact on children and youth globally, which would contribute to a brighter future for everyone.

As demonstrated by the outpouring of support for young people and their families fleeing Ukraine, the American people care deeply about global issues and especially those affecting children and youth. The consequences of COVID, conflict, and climate are especially hard on children and youth, and even more so for those with underlying vulnerabilities due to their gender, disability, ethnicity, race, or socio-economic status. Young people are also some of the most inspiring and effective advocates, prompting positive change in their communities, engaging in democratic activities, and demanding action on global issues.

Children and youth represent a large percentage of the world’s population and constitute a majority in many countries. In fact, a quarter of the world’s population is under 14 years old and an estimated 1.8 billion are children and youth aged 10 to 24.<sup>1</sup> This is the largest generation of children and youth in human history. Recent world events and their impact on young generations concern us greatly:

- Conflicts have displaced more people than ever before and the majority of those displaced are children and youth. Major conflicts around the world have tripled since 2010 and at least one in five youth live in conflict zones.<sup>2</sup>
- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe backsliding in education, violence prevention, mental health, and well-being. An estimated 6.7 million children have lost a parent or caregiver<sup>3</sup>; 1.8 billion children live in 104 countries where violence prevention and response services have been disrupted; and as many as 9 million children could suffer from wasting, the most threatening form of malnutrition<sup>4</sup>. Mental health services have been disrupted or halted in 93% of countries, despite the burgeoning mental health crises affecting adolescents aged 10-19 worldwide.<sup>5</sup> The impact for girls is disproportionately high, with rising rates in education loss, caregiver duties, and forced and early child marriage. For children and youth with disabilities, the risks are multiplied and especially severe. UNICEF warns of a lost generation.
- Climate-related disasters and drought are compounding these crises. An estimated 85% of the world’s children live in places that are anticipated to be the most vulnerable to climate change’s worst impacts.

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations Population Fund, <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>. 03/28/2022.

<sup>2</sup> Save the Children, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/worst-conflict-affected-countries-to-be-a-child#:~:text=One%2DFifth%20of%20the%20World's,have%20been%20impacted%20the%20most>. 03/09/2022.

<sup>3</sup> Maestral, <https://maestral.org/save-lives-now-covid-19-associated-orphanhood-and-caregiver-death/>. 03/09/2022.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/joint-statement-child-wasting-and-launch-nutrition-match-fund>. 03/27/2022

<sup>5</sup> Maestral, [https://maestral.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Children-and-Youth-COVID-CEO-Sign-on-to-POTUS.final\\_.pdf](https://maestral.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Children-and-Youth-COVID-CEO-Sign-on-to-POTUS.final_.pdf).

Given the perilous, long-term consequences for individuals, societies, and nations, it is critical that the US act now to prioritize young people in policy, programming, and funding. Current US efforts are fragmented at best. What is needed is a robust approach that supports children across all their intersecting needs from early childhood, through adolescence, and into their youth. We respectfully ask you to announce a holistic, comprehensive White House initiative to support children and youth globally. Specifically:

- At the White House and at relevant agencies, establish or strengthen senior leadership with office resources to ensure high level attention and government-wide coordination to prioritize children and youth globally.<sup>6</sup>
- Elevate children and their interests in all policies and funding decisions and establish mechanisms to improve tracking and reporting on agency actions and expenditures, for example by requiring a child impact statement<sup>7</sup> and by establishing a cross-agency priority (CAP)<sup>8</sup> on child and youth well-being with data disaggregation for age, gender, disability, and other factors.
- Engage young people directly in consultations – especially those most marginalized – and ensure they are involved in decision-making processes and that their voices are supported, strengthened, and made central in decisions that affect their future.<sup>9</sup>

Building on your recent initiatives, we ask that at this historic time you provide strong US leadership globally to ensure a lasting positive impact and better outcomes for children and youth. We stand ready to partner with you to develop this critical initiative for making children and youth globally a top priority and building a better future for us all.

Respectfully,



<sup>6</sup> At the White House, the leadership structure could be modeled after other government priorities, such as the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate and the White House Gender Policy Council. At other agencies, current positions could be elevated to report directly to Cabinet officials, exert robust agency-wide authority including on policy proposals and funding decisions, and engage in inter- and intra- agency coordination and planning for a whole-government approach.

<sup>7</sup> The Child Impact Statement could resemble current impact statement requirements, for example on gender, environment, and economic growth. A Best Interest of the Child standard could provide the measurement guidance for the Child Impact Statement.

<sup>8</sup> A Cross Agency Priority for children and youth would be similar to existing CAPs, for example those listed [here](#) and [here](#).



Letter prepared by:

CC: The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Secretary of Labor  
The Secretary of Health and Human Services  
The Secretary of Transportation  
The Secretary of Education  
The Secretary of Homeland Security  
The Director of the Office of Management and Budget  
The Administrator of USAID  
The Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations  
The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
The Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy  
The Assistant to the President on COVID-19 Response  
The Co-Chairs of the White House Gender Policy Council  
The Senior Advisor to the President and Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement  
The Senior Director for Development, Global Health, and Humanitarian Response and Special Assistant to the President  
The Chief of Staff to the Vice President  
The Chief of Staff to the First Lady  
The Chief of Staff to the Second Gentleman  
The USAID Senior Advisor on Youth  
The USAID Senior Advisor on Children in Adversity

#### Signing Organizations

- Amal Alliance
- Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH)
- Association des Sourds du Togo (AST) /Fédération Togolaise des Associations de Personnes Handicapées (FETAPH)
- Association pour l'Intégration et le Développement Durable au Burundi, AIDB
- Center for Independent Living, Inc. (TheCIL)
- ChildFund International
- Children's Policy and Funding Initiative at Tides Center
- Concern Worldwide
- ConTextos
- The Delia Foundation
- Disability Rights International
- ECPAT USA
- Education for All Coalition
- Embrace Kulture
- First Focus on Children
- Futures Without Violence
- Georgian Academy of Childhood Disability
- GHR Foundation
- Global Campaign for Education
- Global Campaign for Education – US
- The Global Rainbow Foundation, serving people with disabilities
- GreeneWorks
- The Hunger Project
- iAct
- Indigenous Peoples Global Forum for Sustainable Development, IPGFforSD (International Indigenous Platform)
- InterAction
- International Association for Political Science Students
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

- International Youth Foundation
- Just Like My Child Foundation
- KIOO Project
- Maestral International
- MENA Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security
- Network of Former Youth Delegates to the United Nations
- NewGen Peacebuilders
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Our Climate
- Partnership for Early Childhood Development & Disability Rights (PECDDR)
- PDRC International
- Peace Direct
- Restless Development
- Rights for Disability Development Foundation (RDDF)
- RISE Institute
- Rukmini Foundation
- Sage Perspectives
- Search for Common Ground
- Seeds to Sew International
- SPOON Foundation
- Together for Girls
- Friends of UNFPA
- UNICEF USA
- United States International Council on Disabilities
- Women Pillar Alliance (WOPA)
- Women’s Campaign International
- Women’s Refugee Commission
- World Vision US
- Yemeni Youth Forum for Peace
- The Youth Café