**Introduction**

On October 1 and 2, leading advocates with expertise in a breadth of topics affecting children came together online for a workshop organized by the Children’s Policy and Funding Initiative. This initiative is made possible with the support of Oak Foundation, GHR Foundation, and an Anonymous Donor with Tides as the fiscal sponsor. This Initiative is designed to protect and improve U.S. government funding, policies, and programming to support the needs of children, girls, and adolescents globally.

Over two days, participants shared expertise, contributed to each other’s strategies, and offered recommendations to advance this Initiative. Below are key takeaway findings and recommendations, which were largely focused on three areas:

* What it would take to make children (internationally) a true priority in the U.S. government.
* How to support advocates on key policy and legislative proposals, enhance strategies, and strengthen an inter-sectoral, whole child approach that also emphasizes violence, care, well-being, and rights.
* What recommendations are critical to support advocates, be inclusive, and build inter-sectoral efforts.

**Key Takeaways and Recommendations, Grouped by Topic Area**

1. How to make children (internationally) a truly integrated and elevated priority in **U.S. government** policy, funding and programming. What to learn from past success and failures and find effective ways to elevate and institutionalize an issue as a priority.
* Establish an empowered U.S. government lead with direct access to the highest officials in government, clear authority, and strong credibility. Provide authority to develop and enforce implementation of a cohesive, inter-sectoral plan that requires participation and implementation across all U.S. government agencies. Create an all-of-government plan that is comprehensive and inter-sectoral, with clear leads (ownership), measurements, and resources attached. Build a consistent approach and address inconsistencies (family separation along the border). Dedicate attention to issues of intersectionality affecting children, recognizing the compounded marginalization that young people face from identity factors such as disability, displacement, sexual orientation, and gender.
* Call for a WH Office on Children, preferably placed at the National Security Council (NSC) to ensure critical attention to international children’s issues. Establish an inter-agency process with cabinet-level or senior-level participation, convened by the NSC and co-chaired with the U.S. government lead. Create an inter-agency tracking system.
* Recruit and strengthen congressional champions to lead and focus attention. Children are a sympathetic (generally uncontroversial) topic. Congressional candidates ‘get’ this issue and present an opportunity. Enable targeted congressional travel abroad. Brief congressional staff (turnover). Prepare to relinquish some control with lawmakers. Actively pursue legislation, in addition to Executive branch actions, for a whole-of-government, inter-sectoral plan to prioritize children internationally and require robust resources. Legislation creates mandated and lasting priorities and involves congressional oversight of implementation.
* Secure funds for a robust approach (PEPFAR, Global Fragility Act) and to have authority across agencies, enable effective inter-sectoral programming, incentivize foreign governments to buy into key reforms, persuade other donors to change their funding priorities, and leverage contributions from business or international organizations. Ensure funding makes it to end goal and population.
* Make it a priority to institutionalize and integrate the issue across government, requiring actions to show how the issue is being addressed systematically. Examples: impact statements, report guidance, budget proposals, more. Simultaneously, advance specific projects designed to demonstrate an inter-sectoral, whole child approach, including specific areas of emphasis. Assign focal points across agencies, bureaus, and missions who report to the USG lead (and their direct supervisor - dual reporting). Target resources to enable their success (training, programs, more). Engage mid-level USG officials by providing briefs and training, and by incentivizing actions through awards and performance reviews.
* In legislation and executive branch plans, require a consultation process with local actors (nothing about us without us); and a consultation process that brings in (taps expertise from) leading experts, NGOs, scientists, researchers, learning institutions, host governments, business community, international donors, etc. Build a shared knowledge base and align actions to strengthen concerted approaches in diplomatic and development settings.
1. How to support the **advocacy community** to advance the Initiative’s objectives and goal.
* Provide small grants to incentivize groups to work together, meet periodically, share information and plans, and pilot new approaches. Many organizations are strained for resources and internal funds for advocacy are often cut first.
* Encourage collaboration across sectors, including leaders with very different but relevant areas of expertise to create robust partnerships and enable greater reach. Be prepared to look past differences and instead focus on similarities to create a large, inclusive circle of advocates. Plan on how to address “wedge” issues.
* Support efforts to achieve inclusive participation by youth leaders and members or representatives of marginalized communities.
* Create tools to enhance collaboration across sectors to share initiatives, information, and align actions when it’s advantageous. For example, create a listserv for sign-on letters, provide real time notices with updates, offer a system for a shared repository.
* Provide feedback on the Children’s Budget to make it even stronger and comprehensive, and to improve tracking and understanding.
* Encourage a shared understanding of a whole child approach. Begin by surveying organizations to collect existing definitions for comparison and consideration.
* Encourage shared messaging across sectors to emphasize children and young people, while allowing for distinct areas of work emphasis. Begin by surveying organizations that have professionally developed messaging that appeals to policymakers and to the general public and share the collection.
* Create a shared list of influential leaders (CEOs, others) who are able to contact key legislators and policymakers when needed.
* Share documents that distinct sectors have submitted to candidates and prepared for transition teams. Identify who has access to transition team members and consider a coordinated approach.
* Identify where there are research gaps that would help improve policymakers’ understanding and enable more effective policy and advocacy. Partner with allies at academic and research institutions to inform their projects designed to bridge research and advocacy.
1. Imperative to include participation by and representation of **marginalized and affected communities**.
* Survey InterAction members and other partners to know which groups have youth networks, adhere to youth engagement best practices, and facilitate their engagement and participation.
* Work actively to enable inclusive participation of individuals from marginalized communities, including young people with disabilities, LGBTQI children and adolescents, girls, minorities, and others who face persistent obstacles. Model “Nothing about us without us.”
* Prioritize the integration and elevation of issues affecting marginalized communities into all advocacy initiatives.

For more information, on the above or on the Initiative, contact Alex Arriaga (Alex@StrategyforHumanity.org) or Ariel Carroll (ACarroll@TidesCenter.org).

Sincerely,

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