
The Weekly Pulse

NEWS FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS IN GLOBAL CHILD ADVOCACY



Vol. 55: Updated Numbers on Orphanhood, Nomination Hearing for US Ambassador to ECOSOC, Girls LEAD Act, & OMB Sign-On Letter

11 October, 2021

Quick Summary

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a full committee [hearing](#) on three nominations. One to note in particular is [Lisa Carty](#) as Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. She has worked as the U.S. Agency for International Development in Moscow as senior women's health adviser, UN Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees as a health advisor, and the U.S. government's regional coordinator for refugee affairs. During her confirmation, Senator Shaheen asked for an example of a priory focus, where she stated "I feel that terribly important is the issue of education for women and girls. It's something, unfortunately, where there have been huge and significant setbacks in the context of the COVID epidemic. We know that there are tens of thousands, millions of girls out of school at this point who may never get back into school. And I think that

would be a really important area, actually, across the UN system for specific focus because we know that, without that kind of access to education, that it really imperils a young girl's future. So, I would encourage CSW to look at that set of issues.” A recording of the confirmation can be found [here](#).

ChildFund prepared a [sign-on letter](#) from organizations active in international development and humanitarian assistance to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The letter requests more priority funding for international children and youth in the FY 2023 President's Budget Request. This effort represents the first time that the international children's advocacy community prepares a joint letter outlining some of their combined funding requests. The letter states that “children and youth worldwide are facing increased violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, food insecurity, learning loss, and/or the losses of primary caregivers due to COVID-19” and that “based on current trajectories, the pandemic's impacts are anticipated to set progress on children's issues back by 20 years.” This letter includes specific funding requests to protect and increase current accounts affecting children and young people, while also flagging the urgency of a “robust approach that prioritizes children and youth.” **Click [here](#) to sign on your organization by October 14th, 2021.**

The Girls LEAD Act NGO Working Group held a [Girls LEAD Act Virtual Lobbying Day](#) on October 7th. [The Girls LEAD Act](#) focuses on the specific challenges facing girls and the importance of supporting their empowerment. The Act notes that “Every 10 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. A girl's risk of dying as a result of violence increases from early to late adolescence. Violence is the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls globally.” The bill “recognizes and promotes girls' civic and political leadership as a priority in U.S. foreign assistance, particularly in efforts to promote and build strong and inclusive democracies and good governance.” Lobby Day participants advocated for accelerating global girls' leadership to Congressional Staff.

Spotlight

The Thrive Coalition and InterAction Children and Youth Working Group held a webinar titled “**More than One Million Children Have Lost Parents to COVID-19: What's Next for the World's Vulnerable Children?**”. The panel of experts gave an overarching view of what the landscape of orphanhood looks like with two country-specific examples. They emphasized the importance of [Changing the Way We Care](#), which is a public-private partnership supported by USAID, GHR Foundation, and MacArthur Foundation.

The first presentation was given by [Philip Goldman](#) of Maestral who presented “COVID-19 Associated Loss of Parent or Caregiver: Implications for Pandemic Response,” providing updates on the estimated numbers of children now facing orphanhood since the Lancet report in April 2021. The analysis reflects the new “global minimum estimate of COVID-19 associated parent and caregiver deaths using data from 21 countries, representing 76% of COVID-19 deaths in 2020.” Since the Lancet report was published to September 30th 2021, the numbers have almost doubled, meaning that a child is now losing a caregiver every 6 seconds. He reported that child loss of a parent increased from 1.0 million to 1.5 million, loss of a primary caregiver increased from 1.1 million to 1.7 million, and loss of primary and secondary caregiver increased from 1.6 million to 2.3 million. These numbers are considered highly conservative. Until recently, updated data from India was not available. With the new data from India included in the global analysis, a conservative global estimate is that **3.1 children are experiencing orphanhood, 3.3 million children have lost a primary caregiver and 4.9 million children have lost a primary and secondary caregiver.** The increase in numbers is expected to accelerate over the next month and year.

The Imperial College of London has created a [widget](#) to see data across all three categories of orphanhood disaggregated by country. Goldman highlighted that pre-existing condition and COVID-19 shocks such as increase in child poverty, sexual violence, and child marriage have created greater challenges for resiliency. Goldman recommended a three-step approach to address the COVID-19 orphan crisis: prevent COVID-19 deaths of caregivers, prepare family-based services to avoid institutionalisation, and protect children from violence, poverty, and adversity.

The second speaker was [Vijayalakshmi Arora](#), the India Head of Program, Catholic Relief Services. She presented on the “Impact of COVID-19 on Children & Families in India,” describing how India has experienced negative impacts on health/death, poverty, mental health, and education. She explained that “Over 10 million Indians have lost their job” and “97% of households have faced income loss.” It is important to highlight that “around 37% [of students] have stopped studying altogether” and are unlikely to return to schooling. To give some context to care and COVID-19 in India, Arora explained that India has the highest number of children in residential care in the world, stating that the country has “9,000 institutions across the country, which house 400,000 children in institutions.” Poverty is the key driver for institutionalism for children, and COVID-19 has increased the child caregiver mortality rate, which increases institutionalism. The Indian government has subsidized food grains and provided financial assistance to children in care due to parental death, but Arora argues that little attention has gone to families also in crisis, who need equal attention. Right now, Changing the Way We Care India is

implementing multiple responses to combat these issues, which includes an “overarching approach is to prevent institutionalism.”

The third speaker was [Fredrick Mutinda](#), who is the Program Director for the Changing the Way We Care Initiative, Kenya. He presented the “Impact of COVID-19 on Children & Families in Kenya”. In Kenya, he stated that amongst other things “caregivers are unable to meet basic needs due to loss of formal employment or lack of informal employment”, “increased cases of gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and child marriage” and “increased food insecurity” noting the drought was declared a national disaster. These conditions have caused a multitude of problems in the country, such as an increase of orphanages due to COVID-19. Mutinda stated that, “over 29,000 children were in residential care before COVID-19;” bBecause of a government directive to contain COVID-19, “13,756 children (47%) were released” from residential care but “75% were released without any preparation,” such as connecting them to family and community support and therefore exposing them to further violence and insecurity.

A recording of this event can be found [here](#) and the passcode is: ?2FaRwF8.

Virtual Events

- **World Vision and the University of Edinburgh [webinar](#) “Day of the Girl Child Webinar on ‘Child activism to end child marriage’”** 11 October, 2021 at 9am EST.
- **Global Campaign for Education [Twitter Chat](#) on the Girls’ LEAD Act,** 12 October 2021 at 9am EST.
- **ChildFund, Futures Without Violence, GCE-US, & Save the Children [event](#) “Girls Take the LEAD: A High-Level Event in Celebration of International Day of the Girl 2021”** 12 October, 2021 at 4pm EST.
- **USAID’s YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE) Learning Network [launch](#) of the “MHPSS Toolkit”** 12 October, 2021 at 5am EST and 11am EST.
- **UNICEF [briefing](#) on “UNICEF State of the World's Children Report on Mental Health & Well-Being”** 13 October, 2021 at 11am EST.
- **The Inclusive Education & Early Childhood Education Community of Practice [meeting](#)** 13 October, 2021 at 9:30am EST.
- **GCE Youth Advocacy Month 3 part [dialogue series](#)** 14, 21, 28 October 2021 at 9am EST.
- **The Wilson Center [webinar](#) “Maternal Mental Health: Providing Care and Support in the Perinatal Period”** 14 October, 2021 at 9am EST.
- **Foreign Policy’s [summit](#) “Her Power 2021”** 26 October, 2021 from 9am-1pm EST.

Reports, Articles & Resources

- UNICEF [report](#) on the State of the World Children 2021
- Education Out Loud [article](#) on “Civil society’s role in education under displacement: Fostering a global discussion”
- World Vision International [report](#) titled “3.3 million children at risk of child marriage due to post pandemic hunger crisis”
- New Security Beat [article](#) on “Vaccines, Family Planning, and Freedom from Violence: Achieving Equity for All Women and Children”
- CDC [Report](#) on “Disparities in COVID-19 Vaccination Status, Intent, and Perceived Access for Noninstitutionalized Adults, by Disability Status — National Immunization Survey Adult COVID Module, United States, May 30–June 26, 2021”
- Together for Girls Policy [Brief](#) about “Investment in nationally representative data on violence against children in low- and middle-income countries”
- Plos Medicine [article](#) titled “Gender-equitable caregiver attitudes and education and safety of adolescent girls in South Kivu, DRC”
- Equality Now [report](#) on “Failure to Protect: How Discriminatory Sexual Violence Laws and Practices are Hurting Women, Girls, and Adolescents in the Americas”
- Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center [resource](#) on “Services for Infants with Significant Disabilities in Early Head Start Programs”



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