
The Weekly Pulse

NEWS FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS IN GLOBAL CHILD ADVOCACY



Vol. 56: Whole of Government Children and Youth Brief, Gender Community's OMB Letter, Child Rights Affected by Climate Change, UNICEF State of the World's Children Event

Oct 18, 2021

Quick Summary

ChildFund released a Whole of Government Children and Youth [Brief](#) describing what is needed for the U.S. government to address the needs of children and youth globally throughout their life course and include them in key conversations. The brief highlights current challenges, noting that “tracking funding outside of these earmarks and child-focused accounts is not possible. Areas such as education, maternal and child health and protection and care for children in adversity are often easier to trace from appropriated funding to specific outcomes than other issue areas, as is the case with U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR’s authorizing legislation mandated that no less than 10% of funding should go towards orphans and vulnerable children.” Tracking funds benefiting children is impossible, hurting efforts to

help children worldwide. The brief has five important recommendations. First, it recommends that “No less than 25% of all new COVID-19 response funding for international assistance should reach children and youth ages 0-24.” Second, it calls for White House Leadership, which includes an executive order, senior leadership, and a White House Children and Youth Commission and Summit that focuses on needs globally. Third, it recommends that the USG enhance mechanisms for a whole-of-government coordination, including intra- and cross-governmental coordination, clear indicators for children and youth, and requirement of a Whole-of-Child impact statements. Fourth, it calls for “No less than 25% of all U.S. foreign assistance funding should have, as its primary or secondary focus, an intention to improve children’s and youth’s lives, with no less than 10% having, as its primary objective, a focus on improving outcomes for those ages 0-24.” Lastly, it calls for meaningful child and youth participation and engagement to better inform policies and programs affecting them. The brief also recommends creation of youth advisory councils, youth consultations, and platforms for youth activism, leadership and government engagement. Without this whole-of-government approach, efforts to end violence and other severe harm and to improve outcomes the U.S. government’s disjointed activities will remain less effective, placing millions of young people and future generations around the world at great risk.

The Gender Community is finalizing its annual letter to the White House Office of Management & Budget (OMB). The letter, signed by multiple organizations, calls for “2.25 billion to integrate gender equality into U.S. foreign assistance and advance gender equality globally;” “no less than **\$250,000,000** dollars for the coordination and implementation of the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#), AND no less than **\$30,000,000** dollars to be dedicated to the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child marriage and meet the needs of married girls globally in alignment with the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#).” You can view the letter [here](#) and sign onto the letter [here](#).

ICAN and Afghan partners developed a [framework](#) for gender-sensitive humanitarian action in Afghanistan. The framework includes practical recommendations for action from the international community and demands that for the Taliban to “ensure Afghan women and girls across all ethnic and religious communities, in urban and rural areas, feel safe and have equal rights and opportunities to a life of dignity, peace, safety and justice.” The framework outlines four desired outcomes addressing access to humanitarian aid for all Afghan women and girls across all communities and in urban and rural areas, ending all violence against the Afghan population, ensuring access to education and public life for women and girls, and allowing Afghan civil society

organizations to continue working safely and sustainably. Additionally, the framework You can sign onto the action points [here](#).

The United Nations [announced](#) this week that it cannot rule on the climate case that was brought by climate youth activists, including Greta Thurnberg. The climate youth activists argued that countries' lack of action on climate change violates their children's rights and specifically the inaction of France, Turkey, Brazil, Germany, and Argentina. However, the UN argued that this cause should be brought up in national courts first before bringing it up with the UN. Even though the case was not heard, [Margaretha Wewerinke](#), an international lawyer focused on environmental justice, said the case had "broken new ground in climate litigation and will no doubt inform future efforts to protect rights against climate change".

Spotlight

The "UNICEF State of the World's Children Report 2021" launched this week and highlighted the crisis of mental health concerns affecting children globally, especially during the pandemic. This virtual event featured remarks by **U.S. Senator Bob Casey** (D-PA) and **NBA Champion and UNICEF Ambassador Jeremy Lin**. Senator Casey, lead sponsor of the **Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings Act or MINDS Act (S. 2105)**, emphasized: "We can't have a healthy world unless we have healthy children, and we can't have healthy children, unless they have the mental health supports and services they need." **You can view the webinar [here](#), password: &2l#=&Er**

Remarks by [Ayaan Siddiqui](#), a UNICEF USA National Youth Council Member, introduced the idea that mental health affects all of us, but highly affects children due to lack of school, social, and community interactions. He also highlighted that "mental health exists on a continuum" and can get better but can also get worse if not addressed appropriately.

[Zeinab Hijazi](#), UNICEF's Mental Health Lead for the State of the World Children Report 2021 emphasized that the "global burden on mental health problems in children and adolescents is still immense and serious." Children and adolescents were already experiencing mental health issues before the pandemic, citing that "10 to 20 percent of children and adolescents experience mental disorders" and "half of all mental disorders start before the age of 14." The pandemic was the tipping point for the current mental health crisis. The London School of Economics estimates the "cost of lost human potential arising from mental health conditions and suicide in children and adolescents is \$387 billion a year." Hijazi also highlighted the growing shift away from a biomedical

approach to mental health to a model where mental health is a continuum, stating that “the state of your mental health (or where you sit on the continuum) reflects the interplay of biology and social determinants.” These social determinants are affected by an enabling environment (culture, society, policy & systems), community, family/caregiver, and child experiences. Hijazi called for actions that include investing in whole-of-school approaches, integrating mental health services in social protection and other services and equipping workforces, strengthening research, improving monitoring and supporting implementation research, and increasing attention to humanitarian crises.

[Ana de Mendoza](#), a UNICEF Representative in Peru, provided a case study focusing on why youth in Peru are experiencing mental health issues. She explained that problems have always been present, but COVID made them more visible. Children have faced the most restrictions during the pandemic in Peru due to changes in or no schooling, loss of social interaction, and lack of access to public spaces. Currently, schools remain closed in Peru, prolonging the impact of these issues. Additionally, violence against women and children have increased, also impacting children’s and families’ mental health. UNICEF is working with the government of Peru to make mental health services a priority, including supporting policies, increasing the number of mental health centers, and supporting research. However, Peru faces a lot of challenges, including taboos around mental health and lack of community safe spaces. She calls for expanding community-based services, making services culturally sensitive, and more investments in human resources.

[Allison Barlow](#) and [Victoria O’Keefe](#) from John Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, described how COVID-19 has exacerbated the already-existing inequalities in the American Indian community. For generations, many members of the American Indian community have suffered from an underfunded healthcare system, historical trauma and exposure to violence, high rates of mental health disorders, lack of running water, electricity, and broadband access, overcrowded housing with multigenerational homes, food and water insecurity and school closures. Barlow and O’Keefe shared five programs to combat these issues. First is [Culture Forward](#), a tool to help American Indians address mental health in their communities. Second is a [Psychological First Aid for COVID-19 handbook](#) for frontline workers in American Indian communities. Third is a children’s book series titled “[Our Smallest Warriors, Our Strongest Medicine](#)” to help children in American Indian communities understand what COVID-19 is and how to prevent getting sick. Fourth is an Indigenous Stories of Strength project, which aims to “feature the leadership and resilience of American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian communities and peoples in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.” Lastly, they shared [Project Safe Schools](#) and [Family Spirit](#), which “is an evidence-based, culturally tailored

home-visiting program of the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health to promote optimal health and wellbeing for parents and their children.”

Virtual Events

- **UNICEF, End Violence Against Children & WHO [virtual panel](#) “Intersections between Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women”** October 19, 2021 at 9am EST.
- **Participatory Grantmaking Community of Practice and Elevate Children Funders group [virtual event](#) “Practice-based lessons from girls- and youth-led participatory grantmaking”** October 19, 2021 at 10am EST.
- **Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) [virtual launch](#) of “Applying a Feminist Lens to Grantmaking for Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls: Funding for Transformative Change”** October 21, 2021 at 9am EST.
- **Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security [virtual event](#) “A New Chapter in Afghanistan: Ensuring Support of Afghan Women & Girls”** October 21, 2021 at 3pm EST.
- **Keep Children Safe [virtual workshop](#) “Introduction to Child Safeguarding”** October 25, 2021 at 1:30am EST.
- **Thrive Coalition [virtual event](#) “Implementing the Global Child Thrive Act: Integrating Early Childhood Development Interventions to Improve Child Health and Well-Being”** October 26, 2021 at 10am EST.
- **Keep Children Safe [virtual discussion](#) “Child to Child Safeguarding in the safety of a Faith Based Network of Practice”** November 10, 2021 at 2am EST.
- **Keep Children Safe [virtual discussion](#) “Enhancing Child Safeguarding in Faith Communities through Child Participation: Multi-faith Perspective Across Regions”** November 11, 2021 at 8am EST.

Reports, Articles & Resources

- Ms. Magazine [Op-Ed](#) “Walk the Walk, Talk the Talk: How to Strengthen U.S. Foreign Policy Commitments for Girls” by Rachel Clement
- Ms. Magazine [Op-Ed](#) “To Protect Afghan Girls, the Biden Administration Must Take Real Action: ‘No More Empty Promises’” by Gayatri Patel
- End Violence Against Children [Newsletter](#)
- Plos Medicine [research article](#) on “Gender-equitable caregiver attitudes and education and safety of adolescent girls in South Kivu, DRC: A secondary analysis from a randomized controlled trial”
- Girls’ Education Challenge & UK Aid [report titled](#) “Protection is possible: How an innovative operating model strengthened safeguarding for the Girls’ Education Challenge”

- Together for Girls, AfriChild & End Violence Against Children [policy brief](#) “Investment in nationally representative data on violence against children in low- and middle-income countries”
- Better Care Network [resource initiative](#) on “Country Care Snapshots”
- Youth at the Forefront of Resistance Shimmering Solidarity Summit 2021 [Report](#)
- End Violence Against Children [policy proposal](#) “Six game-changing actions to end violence against children”
- American Academy for Pediatrics [virtual course](#) “2021 Global Health Education Course”
- Plan International UK, SDDirect & CHILDWISE [report](#) “What Works for Ending Public Sexual Harassment”
- Science Direct [article](#) “COVID-19 and violence against children: A review of early studies”



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