
The Weekly Pulse

NEWS FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS IN GLOBAL CHILD ADVOCACY



Vol. 58: ChildFund Biden-Harris Progress Report, First Focus Letter to Administration, Tigray, and Implementation of Global Child Thrive Act

Nov 1, 2021

Quick Summary

ChildFund released a new [report](#) “**Missing the Mark? A Six Month Progress Report of the Biden-Harris Administration’s Focus on Children.**” The report recognizes the important role of U.S. foreign assistance to encourage positive outcomes globally, while also noting that “one of the worst parts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the unrelenting onslaught of bad news for children and youth around the world.” This report “details efforts conducted by the Biden-Harris administration to respond to children and youth through foreign policy and foreign assistance from January 20, 2021 through July 20, 2021, in an effort to quantify the efforts undertaken and the stated priorities of President Biden, Vice President Harris, and the White House. This has been done in an effort to better understand priority issues and to identify where specific gaps may lie, if any.” The first recommendation focuses on strengthening U.S. leadership and includes

a call for a presidential executive order,, appointment of a senior official, convening a White House Council on Children and Youth, and greater emphasis on the needs and voices of children and youth. The second recommendation is on funding, calling for “The president’s budget request should include a recommendation of no less than 25% of all funding for international assistance to reach children and youth ages 0-24.” The third recommendation emphasizes ways to improve government-wide coordination and accountability, including by requiring children and youth impact statements. The fourth recommendation provides guidance for meaningful child and youth engagement, including creation of youth advisory councils, youth consultations, and platforms for youth activism, leadership and government engagement.

First Focus on Children sent a [letter](#) to President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, USAID Administrator Power, and the White House COVID-19 Response Team urging them to “create a plan for getting children of all ages around the globe to receive the vaccine as equitably and effectively as possible.” Currently “3.3 billion COVID-19 vaccines doses have been administered globally, but disproportionately in high income countries. While 51% of adults receiving at least one dose are in high income countries, only 15% of adults in middle-and low-income countries have received at least one dose.” There is a large child and youth population in many middle- and low-income countries. First Focus cites that “There are more than 2.2 billion children in the world, and nearly 2 billion of them live in a developing country. On the African continent, children under 18 make up half of the population, and that ratio is growing—it is estimated that 40% of the world’s children will live on the continent by 2050. Similarly, South Asia is home to 627 million children under 18, or 36 percent of its population.” Among the key recommendations are that the United States increase its distribution of surplus vaccines while supporting the production of vaccines in other countries; ramp up its partnerships to address vaccine hesitancy; and develop its own and encourage countries to come up with a child-specific COVID vaccine distribution plan.

The American Public Health Association prepared a [call to action](#) asking public health professionals to “urge expedited advocacy action to end the Ethiopian war and the war crimes and crimes against humanity underway since November 2020 leading to numerous deaths, internal and external displacement, gender violence, and dire famine.” Currently, over 10,000 people in Tigray have been killed, including children. Additionally, there are over 2.3 million children in the Tigray region who are desperately in need of humanitarian assistance. The APHA is mobilizing its members to ask their Members of Congress to “1) support and take action to move forward President Biden’s Executive Order threatening US government’s sanctions against Ethiopian war crime perpetrators, 2) vote for House Resolution 445 and support House Amendment 555

attached to the National Defense Authorization Act under review in the Senate urging investigations into war crimes and cessation of the conflict, and 3) expedite the U.S. Secretary of State's approval of classification of the Ethiopia government's war-related events perpetrated against Tigrayans as the crime of '*genocide*' with international legal implications."

Spotlight

The Thrive Coalition hosted an event entitled "**Implementing the Global Child Thrive Act: Integrating ECD Interventions to Improve Child Health and Well-Being.**" The event included presentations from several USAID officials who spoke about the importance of and progress towards the implementation of the Global Child Thrive Act. Click [here](#) to view the recording of this event using the password GCTA2021!.

[Rebecca Levy](#), Acting U.S. Government Special Advisor on Children in Adversity, spoke about the science and economics of investing early, the significance of the Global Child Thrive Act, and the potential impact of early childhood development as a component of U.S. foreign assistance. She explained that understanding how a child's brain develops is really important because early childhood is a critical window of opportunity exists to shape development. After birth, neuron cells connect through electoral circuits (synapses) in increasing complexity. From birth to age two, approximately 500,000 neurons grow per minute. After age two, 144,633,600,000,000 new synapses have been developed. Children can lose up to 20 billion synapses per day between early childhood and adolescence if they are not being stimulated. . As a child grows up, the brain's ability to change in response to experiences decreases, whereas the amount of effort required to stimulate such change increases.

[Mattito Watson](#), Senior Technical Advisor for Children in Adversity, spoke on the risks to child development. He explained that neglect and deprivation causes brains to become smaller than the average brain. Additionally, childhood poverty can have permanent negative effects. He cites that "cortical surface areas are 6% smaller in low-income households compared to high-income households." Watson described the effects of violence on the child's developing brain. Abuse can damage a child's brain in areas that respond to abstract thinking, control one's emotions, motivation to do tasks, trigger fear, form memories, recognize faces, and much more. can continue . Children exposed to violence are at greater risk of negative outcomes that can last a lifetime and affect their health, learning, social interactions, and economic productivity. When brains are stimulated through early interactions, abilities are developed through "serve and return" exchanges. This includes loving, responsive and stimulating interactions with

caregivers. Watson emphasized nurturing care as foundational for optimal child development. Components of nurturing care include good health, adequate nutrition, responsive caregiving, security and safety, and opportunities for early learning.

[Margaret Sullivan](#), a Senior Program Assistant at USAID, spoke on the economic case for investing early. She argued that the cost of inaction is high and cited the Heckman Curve on Return of Investment to demonstrate why more funding needs to go towards early education compared to later education. She also emphasized that early curtailing of capacity can cause epigenetic effects that have linkage with intergenerational transfer of poverty. Citing She encouraged every sector and all stakeholders to commit to action, including multilateral organizations, media, civil society, philanthropic organizations, bilateral organizations, governments, business community, and academic and research institutions.

The Global Child Thrive Act aims to address all of these issues. This act applies across multiple federal departments and agencies, including USAID, Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Education, Department of Defense, and many more. The Global Child Thrive Act authorizes the USAID Administrator, on behalf of the President of the United States, and in coordination with the Secretary of State, to direct relevant federal departments and agencies to incorporate early childhood development into foreign assistance programs and promote inclusive early childhood development in partner countries. USAID's responsibilities also include developing implementation guidance and offering inclusive ECD language in strategy and policy.

Children in adversity require particular attention. USAID's Inclusive Development Hub houses the U.S. Government Special Advisor on Children in Adversity. The Hub also manages the longstanding Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), which helps to promote early childhood development. The Hub is responsible for preparing and implementing the U.S. Strategy for [Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity \(APCCA\)](#), which aims to build strong beginnings, put family first, and protect children from violence.

Virtual Events

- First Focus [event](#) “**Children’s Budget Summit 2021**” November 3, 2021 at 12pm EST.
- Center for Global Development [webinar](#) “**In Conversation with Hana Brix and Ratna Sahay**” November 4, 2021 at 2pm EST.
- COP26 virtual [event](#) “**Global Youth Energy Outlook Launch: Effectively partnering with youth on climate action**” Nov 4, 2021 at 12pm GMT.

- COP26 virtual [event](#) “**Climate justice, education and gender equality: targeting the connections**” Nov 5, 2021 at 1pm GMT.
- COP26 virtual [event](#) “**Policymaking for Future Generations: A Blueprint For A Green Future**” November 5, 2021 at 1:30pm GMT.
- International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) [World Summit 2021](#) “**Facing our Post-COVID world with Resilience, Data and Effective Solutions in child protection**” November 4-5, 2021.
- End Violence Against Children & End Corporate Punishment [event](#) “**Laying the foundations for non-violent childhoods: putting prohibition of corporal punishment into practice**” November 5, 2021 at 3pm EST.
- ICOP26 virtual [event](#) “**The Political Participation of Young Migrant Women in the Pursuit of Climate Justice**” November 8, 2021 at 9am GMT.
- **U.S. YPS Coalition Quarterly Meeting.** Nov 10, 2021 at 12:00pm EST.
- Girls in the Lead [webinar](#) “**Sexual Health Education and Sport for Development**” November 11, 2021 at 9am EST.

Reports, Articles & Resources

- ChildFund [report](#) “Missing the Mark? A Six-Month Progress Report of the Biden-Harris Administration’s Focus on Children”
- Disability Rights International (DRI) [report](#) “Still at Risk – Death and Disappearance of Survivors of the fire at Hogar Seguro Virgen de la Asunción”
- UNICEF podcast [series](#) “Hidden Heroes Stories about the power of women and girls from UNICEF”
- COFEM [guide](#) “Applying a Feminist Lens to Grantmaking for Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls: Funding for Transformative Change”
- Assembly [article](#) “Six things you need to know about the ways climate change affects girls’ education”
- UNESCO [article](#) “When schools shut: gendered impacts of COVID-19 school closures”
- Girls’ Education Challenge and UKAID [report](#) “Protection is possible How an innovative operating model strengthened safeguarding for the Girls’ Education Challenge”

