



# ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN ON CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY

April 2017



**The Action Plan on Children in Adversity is the first ever whole-of-government strategic guidance for U.S. Government international assistance for children, with its stated goal to achieve a world in which all children grow up in protective family care and free from deprivation, exploitation, and danger.**

**Cover photo:**

*Tsovinar, 9, lives with her grandmother along with her two brothers, ages 11 and 12, in Armenia. Her mother abandoned the family, and her father is in a mental hospital.*

# Table of Contents

Foreword .....	3
Introduction .....	5
APCA: A Shared Commitment by U.S. Government Agencies.....	6
APCA: Joint Accomplishments and Progress to Date.....	7
Objective One: Build Strong Beginnings .....	7
Objective Two: Put Family Care First.....	9
Objective Three: Protect Children from Violence, Exploitation, Abuse, and Neglect.....	13
APCA Supporting Objectives Four, Five, and Six.....	18
APCA Priority Countries.....	20
U.S. Government Partnership: APCA 2012–2017 .....	21
Annex 1: Priority Country Overview.....	22
Annex 2: Mapping of Priority Country Activities.....	26
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Armenia.....	26
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Cambodia.....	30
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Colombia.....	36
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Moldova.....	38
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Rwanda.....	40
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Uganda.....	44
Annex 3: Mapping of NIH Research Activities.....	52
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Summary Table.....	52
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Cambodia.....	66
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Colombia.....	68
USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity Activity Chart 2016: Uganda.....	70



## Foreword

I am pleased to submit the Ninth Annual Report to Congress on Public Law 109-95, the Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005 and the U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity (APCA). Each year, the Report to Congress provides a summary of the contributions made by U.S. Government Agencies cooperating to assist countries around the globe to improve the lives of children living in adverse circumstances.

This year's report, jointly compiled by agencies collaborating on APCA, reflects the diversity of assistance provided by U.S. Government Agencies aimed at supporting vulnerable children to grow up in protective care and free from violence, deprivation, and exploitation. Interventions supported by U.S. Government Agencies over the past year, for example, included a strategic initiative to advance early child development by incorporating psychosocial stimulation and positive parenting into country level health and nutrition activities; focused research to identify evidence-based approaches to preventing abandonment or institutionalization of children; programs to combat exploitative child labor and reduce child trafficking; and targeted activities to enhance country leadership and capacity to advance care reform.

The report provides compelling evidence of the important contributions made by U.S. Government Agencies to address the needs of the world's most vulnerable children. While acknowledging these successes, however, we recognize the challenges that remain, along with the ongoing opportunities around which to catalyze partnership. To this end, as we enter the final year of the 2012–2017 Action Plan, U.S. Government Agencies remain committed, post-2017, to maintaining and invigorating interagency momentum on whole-of-government collaboration to address the needs of children in adversity.

Our sincere thanks to you for your continued leadership on children's issues and to the American people for their continued generosity and support for U.S. Government programs to assist vulnerable children around the globe.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Horvath  
U.S. Government Special Advisor on Children in Adversity



## »» Introduction

Millions of children in low and middle income countries around the world live in adverse environments and suffer from ill health and disease, chronic undernutrition, deprivation, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.<sup>1</sup> Many of these children are also excessively affected by violence; a study published in the February 2016 issue of *Pediatrics* revealed that more than half the world's children had experienced violence during the year prior to the study.<sup>2</sup> In the most severe circumstances, children live without permanent or protective care, in abusive living situations, on the streets or in inadequate institutional settings, or are subjected to sex trafficking, conscripted into armed groups, or exploited for labor. Children consistently exposed to cumulative, toxic stresses inherent to these circumstances, as well as children who live in environments in which they do not receive adequate nurturing and cognitive and psychosocial stimulation, can suffer from health difficulties and developmental delays and ultimately fail to achieve their full development potential. Sustained developmental deprivations and traumatic experiences can inhibit learning, constrain capacity to build relationships, and reduce a child's potential to mature into a productive adult member of society (Fergusson & Horwood, 2003). These challenges can also potentially compromise a country's social and economic progress.

This is the ninth annual report on Public Law (PL) 109-95, The Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act. Public Law (PL) 109-95 was signed into law in 2005 to promote a comprehensive, coordinated, and effective response by the U.S. Government to the urgent needs of the world's most vulnerable children. This report is submitted on behalf of U.S. Government Agencies involved in supporting the provision of assistance to vulnerable children around the globe, the implementation of research on how to improve the development outcomes and health status of this population, and the promotion of policies to sustain improvements in child welfare. It describes significant work undertaken by U.S. Government Agencies over the past year and outlines progress made to date under the Action Plan on Children in Adversity (APCA) through Calendar Year (CY) 2016, both by Objective as well as in the six priority countries of Armenia, Cambodia, Colombia, Moldova, Rwanda, and Uganda.

**Page 2 photo:** *Mother and daughter, Armenia.*

**Page 4 photo:** *Young girl in a refugee camp in Kodok, Upper Nile. An estimated 28,000 people sought refuge in Kodok in 2013 following the outbreak of fighting between government and anti-government forces in the city of Malakal. During the fighting, some children witnessed killings of loved ones and some got separated from their parents.*

## ➤➤ APCA: A Shared Commitment by U.S. Government Agencies

The U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity (APCA), collaboratively developed by U.S. Government Agencies involved in international assistance to vulnerable children, has as its stated goal to achieve a world in which all children grow up in protective family care and free from deprivation, exploitation, and danger. The whole-of-government plan serves as a strategic framework for international assistance, providing overarching guiding principles, goals, objectives, and outcomes to guide partnerships with countries around the world to improve child well-being and address the needs of the world's most vulnerable children. Built on the premise that child well-being, development, and safety are central to U.S. efforts around the world, APCA affirms that country level investments in children are essential to advancing enduring national growth and progress. In this, the Action Plan works to advance three principal objectives:

### **Objective One**

*Build strong beginnings:* The U.S. Government will help ensure that children under five not only survive, but also thrive by supporting comprehensive programs that promote sound development of children through the integration of health, nutrition, and family support.

### **Objective Two**

*Put family care first:* U.S. Government assistance will support and enable families to care for their children, prevent unnecessary family-child separation, and promote appropriate, protective, and permanent family care.

### **Objective Three**

*Protect children:* The U.S. Government will facilitate the efforts of national governments and partners to prevent, respond to, and protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

The Action Plan also has three supporting, or cross-cutting objectives:

### **Objective Four**

*Strengthen child welfare and protection systems:* The U.S. Government will support partners to build and strengthen holistic and integrated models to promote the best interests of the child.

### **Objective Five**

*Promote evidence-based policies and programs:* The U.S. Government will devote resources to building and maintaining a strong evidence base on which future activities to reach and assist the most vulnerable children can be effectively planned and implemented. This evidence base will assist in the cost-effective utilization of program funds as well as the monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness and long-term impact on children.

### **Objective Six**

*Integrate this Plan within U.S. Government departments and agencies:* The U.S. Government will institutionalize and integrate the components of this Plan as reflected in its diplomatic, development, and humanitarian efforts overseas.

Multiple offices across seven federal entities, including the Departments of State, Labor, Health and Human Services, Defense, Agriculture, the Peace Corps, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), collaborate on the implementation of APCA to respond to children facing adversity overseas. USAID, through the U.S. Government Special Advisor for Children in Adversity, supports efforts to coordinate the whole-of-government response, and U.S. Government Agencies cooperate to leverage resources and align approaches to multiply the impact of U.S. Government assistance for children. The U.S. Government Special Advisor for Children in Adversity is located in the USAID Center on Children in Adversity (CECA), which is housed in the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau within the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance.



*Members of a parent-child activity group learn how to use games to interact with children in Phnom Penh.*

## ➤➤ APCA: Joint Accomplishments and Progress to Date

*The following sections describe interagency accomplishments that can be attributed to the achievement of APCA objectives.*

### **OBJECTIVE ONE: BUILD STRONG BEGINNINGS**

**The U.S. Government will help ensure that children under five not only survive, but also thrive by supporting comprehensive programs that promote sound development of children through the integration of health, nutrition, and family support.**

The right nutrition early in life, particularly during the 1,000-day window from pregnancy to a child's second birthday, serves as an essential foundation for a child's growth and cognitive development. To this end, U.S. Government investments in health and nutrition over the past several years have strategically targeted the most vulnerable children with interventions to improve newborn and child health and nutrition during this critical period. Such investments generate important dividends in improving the health of children and contributing to reductions in preventable mortality.

As part of ongoing U.S. Government investments to improve the health and nutrition of children in countries around the world, USAID's Office of

Food for Peace (FFP) plays a vital role in the humanitarian assistance sphere, working not only to reduce hunger and malnutrition but to ensure sustained access to sufficient food for a healthy and productive life. With FY 2015 funds, USAID/FFP reached approximately 48.8 million beneficiaries in 61 countries, of whom approximately 20 million<sup>3</sup> were children. USAID/FFP's largest programs by total food assistance contributions were Syria, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia.

In supporting both emergency food assistance to those affected by conflict and natural disasters as well as development food assistance to address the underlying causes of hunger, USAID/FFP helps advance APCA's overall commitment to partner with nations

around the world to improve the well-being of their children. FFP programs integrate relief and development efforts to ensure that even as emergency interventions save lives in times of crises, humanitarian assistance programs also contribute to long-term improvements in the lives of local populations. Keeping strategic focus on monitoring regional food insecurity, FFP works closely with field-based partners using various program tools and approaches to save lives, tackle chronic undernutrition, and help the most vulnerable break the cycle of poverty and hunger. FFP's fundamental goal is two-pronged: to minimize hunger in vulnerable populations so that individuals can have more active and productive lives; and to help ensure that one day people will no longer need food assistance.

U.S. Government health and nutrition programs play a fundamental role in improving the well-being of children. Research on child development, however, increasingly reveals that children also require nurturing care and supportive contact with parents or caregivers, as well as regular stimulation, to engender the psychosocial, emotional, and cognitive development needed to thrive and grow into productive adults. What is now recognized as seminal research on child development — a longitudinal study carried out in Jamaica over a period of 20 years — provided groundbreaking evidence demonstrating that nutrition programs combined with early childhood psychosocial stimulation and responsive parenting achieved greater immediate and long-term effects, including improved mental and motor development<sup>4</sup> as well as emotional development<sup>5</sup>. A 2016 Lancet series on Early Childhood Development reinforced this conclusion, indicating that integrating stimulation and nurturing care with sector-specific programs such as nutrition worked synergistically to improve developmental outcomes. There is also evidence that this combination of interventions contributed to positive outcomes later in life, such as better performance in school<sup>6</sup> and ultimately better economic outcomes in adulthood<sup>7</sup>.

Objective One of The Action Plan on Children in Adversity not only reinforces the importance of providing children with good health and nutrition early in life, but also underscores the need to invest in approaches which enable vulnerable children under five to reach their full development potential. In this, APCA promotes the implementation of more comprehensive strategies that leverage health and nutrition interventions with developmental activities to improve early childhood stimulation and strengthen positive parenting.

To this end, with FY 2015 funds, USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (USAID/DCOF) supported programming of activities to operationalize this approach in up to three countries during 2017 and 2018, beginning with Ghana. Through close collaboration with USAID Missions, the effort will assist countries to integrate early childhood stimulation and responsive parenting interventions into country level nutrition and health activities. Building its effort on broad-based evidence related to child development, USAID/DCOF expects that integrating psychosocial stimulation and parenting activities into nutrition and health services will enhance children's cognitive and socio-emotional development and contribute to positive development outcomes for children.

Using existing interventions as entry-points to promote positive stimulation and interaction between parents and their young children and with focus on country capacity strengthening and leadership, USAID/DCOF will provide countries with the tools and skills needed to establish, scale up, and sustain early childhood development interventions within country health and nutrition services. Activities will include the development, adaptation, and field-testing of training curricula and educational materials for providers; development of training cadres and cascade training of providers; integration of training into country training institutions and provider training programs; and development of policies, guidelines and plans to both build early childhood development approaches into routine service delivery and monitor the quality and effectiveness of these approaches at country level.



*Children in Moldova in foster care attend summer school.*

## **OBJECTIVE TWO: PUT FAMILY CARE FIRST**

**U.S. Government assistance will support and enable families to care for their children; prevent unnecessary family-child separation; and promote appropriate, protective, and permanent family care.**

Recognizing the critical role that families play in the development, well-being, and safeguarding of children, APCA's second objective promotes approaches that enable families to care for their children, prevent unnecessary family-child separation, and promote appropriate, protective, and permanent family care. During the past year, U.S. Government Agencies implemented a broad range of programs that provided families and governments with the skills, services, and resources needed to strengthen protective and permanent care for children and prevent the separation of children from their families.

With FY 2015 funds, USAID/DCOF supported care reform activities aimed at assisting children in residential care institutions and street children in 11 countries to return to family care when it was in the children's best interests. Where possible, the projects also helped prevent the initial, unnecessary separation of children from their families. In Cambodia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda, integrated household economic strengthening activities combined in-kind

support or cash resources to stabilize severely impoverished households with interventions to improve parenting skills and link caretakers to family support services; this package of resources enabled caretakers to provide children with essential care. Activities implemented under this objective increased family income to meet urgent material needs such as food, clothing, and shelter; improved access to essential health and education services; and enhanced caretaker knowledge and skills to support appropriate decision-making around the care of children.

USAID/DCOF programs also made important progress in APCA priority countries over the last year, increasing the number of children living within appropriate, permanent, and protective family care and reducing the number of children growing up in institutional care. In Uganda, USAID/DCOF partnered with the Government in 12 districts on activities that prevented family separation, supported the reintegration of 1,230 separated children into family care, and strengthened child protection. To improve community-

level child protection mechanisms, USAID/DCOF programs provided local government officials with the knowledge and skills needed to both identify families at high risk of child separation and monitor the well-being of children reunified with their families of origin. USAID/DCOF activities also blended positive parenting education with household economic strengthening; during FY 2016, 1,785 caregivers with children at risk of separation benefitted from both savings groups and interactive learning sessions on parenting skills.

During the past year, USAID/DCOF programs assisted the Royal Government of Cambodia to catalyze government-civil society collaboration to help reform the existing care system in Cambodia. Activities strengthened communication, coordination, and sharing of lessons learned among child protection and welfare organizations; developed strategies for measuring results and improved the collection and use of data to inform activities for vulnerable children and families; and increased focus on mobilizing communities and families



to promote safe, nurturing family-based care. The result is a common framework for action that will strengthen government attention to care reform; engender an improved social service workforce; enable families and communities to better care for vulnerable children; and help Cambodia transition from the prevailing, institution-focused care model to one focused on family-based care.

With FY 2015 funds, USAID/DCOF continued to support the Government of Cambodia (GOC) to reform and strengthen its system for children in need of family-based care. Building on a GOC decision to vest oversight of all residential care facilities in the country within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), USAID/DCOF partners assisted MoSVY to operationalize this mandate by mapping all residential care facilities for children in the country. Mapping data identified a total of 16,579 children living in 406 residential care institutions concentrated in nine of the country's 25 provinces. A troubling discovery is that the number of children in residential care institutions seems to have doubled since 2005, when USAID/DCOF supported the country's first such survey, identifying a total of 8,270 children in 204 facilities. That said, the findings of the mapping exercise will inform the roll out of systems to monitor care in these institutions and support the reintegration of children into family care.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has committed to a 30 percent reduction of children living in residential care in five provinces. During the past year, USAID/DCOF programs assisted each of these

provincial governments to develop plans to safely reintegrate 30 percent of the children in residential care institutions into family-based care. Since the large majority of Cambodian children in these institutions have families, USAID/DCOF support enabled 484 children outside of family care to transition into families; 378 of these children were reunited with their families, and 106 were placed with relatives. Since 2013, USAID/DCOF assistance facilitated the return of 1,484 children to family-based care. Reinforcing this effort, the Ministry of Justice issued guidance on domestic adoption to allow Cambodian families to adopt children. In addition, giving focus to increasing awareness of the importance of preserving family care, a national communications campaign titled "Keeping Children in Families" reached more than three million people.

Rwanda has also made substantial progress toward ensuring that every child can live in family care, building on its national strategy for child-care reform that emphasizes the importance of returning children from residential institutions to family-based care and ensuring that they have access to, and are supported by, a strengthened child protection system. With USAID/DCOF assistance over the past year, the Government of Rwanda continued to develop systems to help identify problems that could lead to children's separation from their families and to provide needed help to prevent separation. As a result of USAID/DCOF support, every village in the country now has two paraprofessional social workers who can identify families and children at high risk, intervene early, and refer more challenging cases to professional social workers and psychologists based in each

district. USAID/DCOF funding supported training of 18,656 of these "Friends of the Family" in 20 districts by the end of FY 2016. In addition, 68 social workers and psychologists supported by USAID/DCOF and employed by the country's National Commission for Children continued, during the past year, to place children in permanent family care and monitor and support the well-being of children who have been placed in care or returned to their families from residential care facilities.

Overall, progress has been significant. In late 2012, there were 3,323 children and young adults living in residential institutions in the country. As a result of USAID/DCOF support, by the end of September 2016, 1,095 children and young adults were living in institutional care. USAID/DCOF support also facilitated the placement into family care of 1,166 children and young adults; this included family reunification, kinship care, adoption, foster care, and independent living. USAID/DCOF programs continued, during the past year, to provide each of these families with reintegration resources and psychosocial support tailored to the needs of each household.

In Moldova, USAID/DCOF FY 2015 funds provided continued support to strengthen the national care reform process and advance the ongoing deinstitutionalization of children. During the past year, 15,078 children were supported to stay with their families, and 10,290 of the country's decision-makers and practitioners were trained to provide improved support to children and families to prevent unnecessary child-family separation.

Decisions on whether a child should be placed in alternative care or remain with the family, with adequate support and monitoring, is a critical function of a national care system. As a result of USAID/DCOF assistance, every district in Moldova now has a Gatekeeping Commission that makes such decisions. USAID/DCOF assistance supported the development, and January 2016 approval of, national Gatekeeping Regulations. Throughout 2016, USAID/DCOF partners trained Gatekeeping Commissions across the country to carry out their critically important responsibilities.

USAID/DCOF partners in Moldova developed, over the past year, an innovative approach to bringing children's particular perspectives into the review of the child care and protection system at local and national levels through the formation of district level Advisory Boards of Children (ABC). Each ABC consists of approximately 20 members between the ages of 12 and 17 selected through an application process. Because children in care often feel freer to discuss their concerns with other children, the ABCs have been able to identify problems that local social workers had not been aware of, including reported abuse by some foster and group care providers. With training by USAID/DCOF partners, ABCs play a key role in disseminating and soliciting information from peers on issues related to the safety and well-being of children. A national level ABC, with representation by ABC members from all 27 districts across the country, meets quarterly to review information from district level ABCs and convey critical issues to the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family.

During FY 2016, the State Department's Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator provided support for more than

6.2 million orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and their families through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) programs. PEPFAR focuses on family-centered, child-focused interventions aimed at reducing the risk and impact of HIV and AIDS on children and their families. PEPFAR supports family care first for OVC through interventions such as household economic strengthening, psychosocial and parenting support, and, by providing life-saving HIV treatment that keeps children, adolescents, and their caregivers alive and healthy.

The Department of State continues to promote intercountry adoption as one of a range of options to provide for the welfare and best interests of children in need of permanency in every country. The Department continues to serve as the U.S. Central Authority for The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention), as designated by the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000. The Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Children's Issues, carries out the Department's responsibilities as U.S. Central Authority, including the day-to-day oversight and implementation of the Convention in the United States, and assists countries, where possible, during their transition to the Convention.

During the past year, the Department continued to encourage member countries to fully implement the Convention's safeguards to ensure that when it is in a child's best interest, intercountry adoption is a safe option to provide a child with a permanent family placement. In Convention and non-Convention countries, the Department, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,

regularly interacts with foreign adoption authorities and accredited bodies involved in the processing of intercountry adoptions. Additionally, the Department promotes the goals of the Convention in its bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagements. Through these interactions, the U.S. Government supports policies that protect all parties in an adoption and have an impact on the lives of potential adoptees as well as the families that seek to provide them with loving homes in the United States or within the expatriate community overseas.

The Department was pleased to welcome four new Convention member countries in 2016 and will offer whatever assistance it can as those countries undertake intercountry adoption processing pursuant to the Convention.



*This mural in Iquitos, Peru, reads, “For a childhood without violence.”*

### **OBJECTIVE THREE: PROTECT CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION, ABUSE, AND NEGLECT**

**The U.S. Government will facilitate the efforts of national governments and partners to prevent, respond to, and protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.**

Millions of children around the world directly experience some form of violence each year such as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or neglect, or witness these types of violence. Others are victims of exploitation, including sexual trafficking, forced labor, or hazardous work. Still others are conscripted into armed forces or groups. A serious human rights, social, and public health issue in many parts of the world, violence and its consequences for children can be devastating. Violence erodes the strong foundation that children need to lead healthy and productive lives, and jeopardizes children’s ability to enjoy a safe and harmonious childhood. Children who experience or witness violence are at significantly greater risk for health problems, anxiety disorders, poor school performance, and violent behavior.

During the past year, U.S. Government Agencies collaborating on APCA supported a wide range of programs with governments and partners around the world aimed at preventing, addressing, and protecting children from violence.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Affairs (USDOL/ILAB) has been an acknowledged leader in protecting children from the worst forms of child labor for over 25 years. By working with governments, businesses, and civil society actors so that each can do their part to make exploitative child labor a relic of the past, USDOL/ILAB efforts have made a critical difference in helping reduce the number of child laborers worldwide by 78 million over the past two decades. In over 90 countries, USDOL/ILAB has worked with governments to make them more effective in protecting children and combatting child labor through efforts in areas such as data collection, monitoring, and enforcement. Collectively, USDOL/ILAB projects have rescued and provided education to close to two million children and helped nearly 170,000 families to meet basic needs without relying on child labor.

USDOL/ILAB awarded approximately \$54 million for 12 projects in FY 2015 and approximately \$47.5 million for 14 projects in FY 2016 to further support efforts to

combat exploitative child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking. Countries where these projects are operating include, Argentina, Costa Rica, Cote d’Ivoire, El Salvador, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Tunisia, Uzbekistan, and Zambia. Projects work to effect change in the lives of vulnerable children in a variety of ways, including by providing safe workplace-based training and promoting apprenticeships to protect youth from hazardous work; working with private sector partners to reduce exploitative child labor in supply chains; and strengthening the capacity of countries around the world to eradicate forced labor and human trafficking.

In FY 2016, USDOL/ILAB ongoing projects provided education or vocational services to approximately 35,000 children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor and assisted over 17,000 households-in-need with services to improve livelihoods. USDOL/ILAB projects succeeded in strengthening governments’ capacity to protect children

from labor exploitation in 26 countries, including through improved policy and legislation and more robust labor monitoring and enforcement. Over 8,400 teachers and school staff were trained on child labor issues so they could be more sensitized to children at risk of working. In addition, approximately 1,360 labor inspectors were trained to more effectively enforce child labor and forced labor laws and regulations.

USDOL/ILAB works to protect children in the APCA priority countries of Armenia, Cambodia, Colombia, Rwanda, and Uganda. From October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016, projects worked to reduce exploitative labor in areas with high prevalence of child labor, such as agriculture, fishing, and domestic service in Cambodia, mining in Colombia, and tea production in Rwanda. These projects improved and expanded education opportunities for 2,796 and 6,799 children in Cambodia and Colombia, respectively. In Rwanda, the USDOL/ILAB-funded project provided training on child labor issues for approximately 265 labor inspectors and 160 teachers, and supported tea companies and tea cooperatives in raising awareness about child labor. In Uganda, initiatives helped build knowledge and awareness of the negative impacts of child labor among Community Child Labor Committees, which play a key role in identifying and remediating cases of child labor at the local level.

Finally, in an effort to expand the global knowledge base on child labor and promote data-driven initiatives that better respond to the needs of children in adversity, USDOL/ILAB projects worked with governments to collect, analyze, and use national data on child labor to enhance policies and actions to address the problem. For example, with USDOL/ILAB funding, the International Labor Organization provided technical assistance to the Government of Armenia to implement a national child labor survey, the results of which the government intends to use to inform its strategies to address child labor.

From October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016, the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) supported at least 2,800 child victims of trafficking through grants to international and local non-governmental organizations, as well as UN bodies. Assistance included rescuing victims of trafficking; providing housing through shelter services; rehabilitation and reintegration assistance, including family reunification; psychosocial and health care services; teaching basic education; training child protection officers; as well as legal support to advance justice for victims. At least 260 child victims of trafficking were identified by grantees during the reporting period and referred for appropriate care. At least 800 children were provided shelter services

and at least 14 children were provided legal support. J/TIP grantees also indirectly served child victims of trafficking through strengthening legal and policy frameworks governing human trafficking and increasing the capacity of criminal justice actors to identify, investigate, and properly handle trafficking cases. Grantees worked with governments to develop and institutionalize standard operating procedures (SOPs) on victim assistance and worked to build cross-collaboration between criminal justice, government, and non-governmental actors to combat trafficking.

In addition, in 2015, the United States and Ghana entered into the first Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership, a multi-year plan developed jointly by the two governments to reduce child trafficking by building effective systems of justice, child protection, and prevention. Through this Partnership, the J/TIP Office administers \$5 million in assistance to two grantees that implement projects aimed at helping Ghana to increase its capacity to identify child trafficking and respond effectively. This partnership achieved a number of significant results in its first year of implementation, including the: development of Standards of Practice for child victim identification and screening; delivery of investigation and prosecution training for 72 police officers, prosecutors, and immigration officers; development of a plan for refurbishment of a public shelter

**Page 15 photo:** *Aragash, an Ethiopian girl who has been weaving since she was young, used to work for a business owner. She recalls, "Often, I would eat only once a day and would regularly get punished. I also started work early in the morning at 6 a.m. and would work throughout the night." Through the help of a U.S. Government-funded program, Aragash began working in a government workspace and supporting herself to attend school in the evening.*



for children; procurement of vehicles and investigative equipment for the Ghana police; implementation of a community-level baseline prevalence study; coordination with local communities to remove 68 children from labor trafficking situations; training of 113 traditional authorities and district and community-level government officials in appropriate responses to child trafficking; and implementation of a national symposium attended by more than 100 stakeholders to develop strategies to combat trafficking.

The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Global Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development supported two research initiatives that helped build knowledge and support learning in areas related to APCA priorities and objectives. Information generated by these initiatives continued to help inform approaches that contributed to progress by U.S. Government Agencies toward the achievement of APCA Objectives. One study, *Biological Pathways of Risk and Resilience in Refugee Children*, investigates the biological underpinnings of individual differences in refugee children's response to acute war-related trauma exposure. The target population for this study is 1,000 8–16 year-old Syrian refugee children and their primary caregivers in Lebanon. A second initiative, CAPSTONE, which is largely U.S. based, is implemented through grants to multidisciplinary research centers. The initiative continued to support research and education in child maltreatment by: conducting trials to test the effectiveness of clinical interventions; undertaking longitudinal prospective studies to examine the long term impact of specific types of maltreatment including abusive head trauma, medical neglect, and sexual abuse; examining the neurobiology of abuse and neglect and implications

for health outcomes; and testing the development of screening tools and clinical assessment measures for early identification and treatment.

In FY 2015, the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) supported 44 child protection programs in 19 disaster affected countries, including Syria, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Iraq. Because conflicts and natural disasters often separate families and disrupt normal care-giving for children, USAID/OFDA programs established adequate protection measures for children in these circumstances, such as approaches to facilitate the reunification of separated and unaccompanied children with their families. USAID/OFDA addressed the needs of children in adversity through the mobilization and education of communities as well as psychosocial and other specialized support for at-risk children and their families. USAID/OFDA also worked to safeguard and restart children's education in emergency situations. Because children spend a large part of their daily lives in school, USAID/OFDA funding during the past year ensured that schools were able, in the event of a disaster, to keep children as safe and protected as possible. In addition, USAID/OFDA supported nine global programs designed to advance policies, practices, and research on effective child protection interventions in emergencies. The programs included support for: the roll-out of minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action; training and surge capacity for child protection; the development of technological innovations to improve child protection programming, monitoring, and reporting; research on the scale of and factors affecting family separation; and improvements to the quality of child protection case management.

With FY 2015 funds, USAID/OFDA also required humanitarian partners to adopt and operationalize codes of conduct that are consistent with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's six core principles for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Through USAID/OFDA field-level programming, investments in emergency child protection capacities at the global level, and efforts to strengthen the policy environment, USAID/OFDA made significant contributions to achieving APCA objectives, in line with USAID/OFDA's humanitarian mandate and commitments.

USAID/OFDA's partners typically implement child protection programs targeting multiple child protection needs at the individual, household, and community levels, and most programs support realization of multiple objectives under APCA. For example, at the field level, a partner may provide safe healing and learning spaces for children, parent support, and case management services. Similarly, a partner may help establish family tracing and reunification programs and child friendly spaces for children. These efforts support both Objectives Two and Three.

At the global level, USAID/OFDA strategic investments in the development of child protection knowledge, tools and capacities also support multiple objectives. For example, USAID/OFDA supported development of the "Safe Healing and Learning Spaces" tool kit. The open source tool kit enables humanitarian agencies to rapidly set up and start running a safe space for children that is based upon evidence and best practice. The research shows that regular access to caring and predictable learning spaces, combined with a safe and supportive home environment, can have a profound and lasting impact on children's learning and well-being. The

tool kit includes activities that touch on several critical areas for a child's well-being: curriculum for math and English skills, social-emotional learning activities, and parenting courses that help to improve the child-parent relationship during a time of hardship. The Safe Healing and Learning Spaces tool kit is an example of a USAID/OFDA supported project that responds to activities under Objective Two, Put Family Care First; Objective Three, Protect Children; and Objective Five, Promote Evidence-Based Programs and Policies.

To address issues of violence against children in Cambodia, USAID/DCOF FY 2015 funds helped mobilize civil society, under the oversight of the Government, to provide numerous protection services to vulnerable children and their families. During the past year, a total of 22,475 children (43 percent female), 7,331 youth, and 14,577 families received basic and specialized social services. The civil society network also established different types of self-help groups focusing on issues such as alcohol abuse, domestic violence, violence against children, and skillful parenting, with over 2,179 calls received in seven target provinces.

USAID/DCOF FY 2015 funding to Uganda helped reduce children's exposure to domestic violence through support for 264 para-social workers who conducted regular group sessions and 3,091 home visits to provide psychosocial counseling and positive parenting education. Social workers also addressed factors such as alcohol abuse that contributed to domestic violence. Twelve Alcoholics Anonymous groups were established with 147 members; members worked over the past year to effectively reduce alcohol consumption and associated violence at the household level.

USAID/DCOF funding assisted the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family in Moldova to develop a national Vision for Specialized Child Protection Services. Building on ten years of reform in child protection, with the aim of continuing to improve the safety and well-being of children, the Vision outlines the system of specialized child protection services needed in Moldova to meet the complex needs of children who have suffered violence, abuse, or neglect. The Vision document supports the country's recently approved National Action Plan for Child Protection (2016–2020) and seeks to improve progress in child protection.

Finally, USAID/DCOF funds supported multi-sectoral planning for the implementation of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS) in Moldova and Colombia. These nationally representative household surveys will document the magnitude, nature and impact of all forms of violence against children, shed light on the factors that are associated with and influence violence against children in these countries, and inform the development and implementation of multi-sectoral plans to address abuse.

The Department of State's Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (S/GAC) also expanded prevention of and response to violence against children through PEPFAR funded activities. PEPFAR supports post-rape and violence care centers throughout the Sub Saharan African countries where it works as well as in Haiti. During FY 2016, over 47,000 girls and close to 10,000 boys received care for gender based violence via PEPFAR supported sites. Additionally, PEPFAR also continued to expand Violence Against Children Surveys through the CDC to several new and previous countries including

Botswana, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. PEPFAR, through USAID, also supported child helplines in Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia. In addition to responding to calls for help related to violence and abuse, child helplines provide children with access to counselors who listen to them, can link them with holistic services and/or resources, and in some cases can directly intervene with shelter, education, and/or legal support.

In Tanzania, PEPFAR, through USAID, collaborated with the Government of Tanzania's Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children to operationalize the National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (NPA). USAID helped to integrate NPA orientation and abuse response protocols into the training of community case managers who make routine home visits and strengthened the capacity of village and district protection committees to track NPA activities and progress in local communities.



*A child in Cambodia plays with her favorite toys as her foster father looks on.*

## ➤➤ APCA Supporting Objectives Four, Five, and Six

- **STRENGTHEN CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION SYSTEMS**
- **PROMOTE EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**
- **INTEGRATE THIS PLAN WITHIN U.S. GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES**

During the past year, USAID/DCOF continued to fund activities to strengthen child welfare and protection systems in all 11 countries in which it supports child welfare programs. These efforts advanced the development and implementation of national plans to reduce the number of children who are unnecessarily separated from their families and who live in institutions or residential care facilities. Country plans aim to improve specific elements of care reform including national policies, inter-ministerial coordination, social welfare workforce capacities, and monitoring and inspection of residential care facilities. Plans also seek to strengthen measures to ensure that children are not removed unnecessarily from their families and that those in need of alternative care are appropriately placed, and promote the reunification and/or placement and reintegration of children into family-based care.

For example, with FY 2016 funded support from USAID/DCOF, the Government of Armenia (GOAM) continued to make significant progress restructuring its national child care system, with the closing of one state-run residential care institution and transformation of three others to serve as community resource centers providing day services for children and their families. All children from these institutions were successfully placed into family care. Ongoing assistance to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science helped ensure that savings from institutional closures are invested in community-based services for children and families. During the past year, the Government of Armenia also adopted a Foster Care Policy and initiated planning to amend its Family Code to incorporate foster care provisions. This policy will ensure the provision

of family-based alternatives for children who would otherwise be deprived of family care.

In Uganda, USAID/DCOF implementing partners continued working with Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in 12 districts to establish panels mandated by national policy to assess cases of separated children and to make sure that they are placed in safe and nurturing environments. During the past year, four district panels were established. These panels, composed of social workers, government officials and civil society partners, reviewed 185 cases and made 53 family placements.

With FY 2015 funds, USAID/DCOF partners in Uganda also piloted an information management system known as ChildLinks, which uses mobile phone technology not only to help

government social workers and volunteer para-social workers to capture critical information on a child's health, safety, and well-being, but to enable workers to track and refer vulnerable children in a more timely manner. Implementation during the past year demonstrated that this initiative is improving real-time communication, information exchange, transparency, and accountability between district-level Government Agencies, civil society organizations, and community groups who are working to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are being identified and addressed.

For decades, donor-supported programs have facilitated family-based placements of separated children including institutionalized children, unaccompanied children in emergencies, former child soldiers, street children, and trafficked children. While a broad range of approaches has been used to provide families with the economic means or parenting capacities needed to enhance parental nurturing and strengthen families, prevent unnecessary parent-child separation, promote reintegration of children into households, and adequately care for such children over time, there is little clarity on how to effectively apply evidence-based, contextually appropriate interventions to specific households. To this end, USAID/DCOF supported two complementary activities over the past year. First, USAID/DCOF initiated support for applied research activities in Uganda and Cambodia to better understand how targeted interventions such as household economic strengthening or parenting education may improve family reintegration and reduce the risks of children separating from their families. In addition, USAID/DCOF funds were applied to

initiate the development of strategies, guidelines and tools to improve the well-being of vulnerable households and enable vulnerable families to provide ongoing care for children who are being reintegrated into, or who are at risk of separation from, the household.

APCA Objective Five highlights the importance of identifying and enumerating children living outside of family care. Accurately accounting for how many children are separated from their families is challenging, but it is key to establishing baselines, tracking trends over time, and using evidence to inform programming. With FY 2015 funds, USAID/DCOF supported applied research to field test a unique approach to generate nationally representative estimates of children outside of family care in Cambodia. During the next few years, USAID/DCOF plans to support additional enumeration work in other countries.

Finally, USAID/DCOF initiated a four-country activity with the overall goal of intensifying country leadership and strengthening the skills of government leaders in advancing national efforts to reform care for children without adequate family care. The two-year activity will use a learning-centered approach that builds the capacities of government partners to: lead implementation of an assessment of national child care reform systems and strategies using a standardized framework/tool; identify gaps and continuing needs in child care reform; develop country plans to address priority needs; establish monitoring indicators and systems for regular assessment of progress and monitoring of results against country plans; and promote ongoing cross-country learning and collaboration

through periodic workshops and virtual meetings. Through this work, USAID/DCOF hopes to further enhance the capacities of government counterparts to guide child care reform efforts through ongoing consultation with other country stakeholders.

During FY 2016, the Department of State's Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator continued to strengthen child welfare and protection systems throughout PEPFAR countries. In Uganda, for example, USAID continued to work with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to fill frontline child welfare positions at district level, to build capacity in case management, and to improve management information systems tracking maltreatment cases. To support stronger child welfare and protection systems, USAID worked with U.S. and African-based child welfare experts to develop child protection and welfare evaluation indicators that are being introduced with local adaptation in Tanzania and Kenya.



*Girls in Afghanistan participate in early childhood education classes adjoining a weaving center where their mothers learn to weave. Many of these social programs impact two generations at once—both parent and child—through employment and education respectively.*

## ➤➤ APCA Priority Countries

While the Action Plan serves as a strategic framework to guide U.S. Government international development assistance for vulnerable children in all collaborating countries, particular attention is given to advancing implementation in APCA's six priority countries. Priority countries were identified based on several criteria, including: magnitude and severity of the problems to be addressed; interest by the partner country government in participation, including commitments regarding monitoring and evaluation, as well as transparent reporting; potential to leverage bilateral, multilateral, and foundation investments; potential to leverage U.S. development investments; regional diversity among the countries selected, to maximize learning opportunities; and level of economic development, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries.

Programming in all six APCA priority countries — Cambodia, Uganda, Rwanda, Moldova, Armenia, and Colombia — continued to advance during 2016, with an interagency visit to Colombia in December 2016 to initiate joint planning for coordinated programming. U.S. Government Agencies will continue to work during the year ahead to strengthen coordination and improve impact of country programs.

This year's report includes three Annexes related to U.S. Government support for priority countries. Annex 1 provides summary background information on each of the six countries. Annex 2 is a matrix of U.S. Government interagency activities underway in each priority country. Finally, Annex 3 outlines research activities supported by NIH that have potential relevance for U.S. Government work in priority countries.



*A young boy in Thailand is part of a community outreach program which runs a comprehensive male sex trafficking victim service program for male sex trafficking victims that identifies at-risk communities, and conducts outreach at youth village centers to empower the community and raise awareness of human trafficking.*

## ➤➤ U.S. Government Partnership: APCA 2012–2017

With the 2017 end of the Action Plan period in sight, interagency members convened in early 2017 to reflect on the state of interagency collaboration; assess progress, challenges, ongoing and emerging opportunities; and consider the continued relevance of APCA objectives within the current assistance environment. Looking forward over the next several months, participants emphasized issues such as: the need to further strengthen the sharing of information on Agency programming to better facilitate collaboration; the importance of improving linkages between country-based programs and Washington-managed programs to enhance Agency leveraging of resources; and the value of identifying ways to apply research conducted through regionally-focused platforms to improve programming at the country level. Participants acknowledged successes achieved through APCA to date, but also recognized new and developing

opportunities around which to catalyze new areas of collaboration, such as with the Partnership to End Violence Against Children. In light of sector changes, interagency members articulated the need to consider, over the next months, ways to update and revitalize the recognized APCA brand, rebuild influence, and reinvigorate momentum under a continuing post-2017 partnership to address the needs of children in adversity.





**U.S. Agency for International Development**

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20523

Tel: (202) 712-0000

Fax: (202) 216-3524

**[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)**