Kent R. Hill, Senior Vice President, International Programs

World Vision

Creating a Better World for Children in Adversity

Wilfredo, now 16, started working on his family's fishing boat in the Philippines in elementary school. He would attend school from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., and then immediately go to work until 3 a.m. Wilfredo remembers feeling too tired to concentrate and often skipped classes. As a result, he found himself further and further behind and increasingly separated both from his parents and his peers.
Christine is a 16-year-old girl from rural Zambia who cares for her three brothers following the death of both of her parents. As an orphan and head of a household, she was unable to attend school past 7th grade due to lack of financial support and overwhelming household responsibilities. A man took advantage of her vulnerability and she is now pregnant with her first child.

Wilfredo and Christine represent millions of "Children in Adversity," which refers to all children inside and outside of family care who are deprived, excluded, vulnerable, and at risk for violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Efforts to empower children, their parents, their communities, and their governments to take on this challenge need a bold vision that tackles the problem from multiple levels and angles. After years of experience, the US government's new Action Plan for Children in Adversity has taken the lessons learned from multi-sector approaches to protecting children and applied decades of research to formulate a much-need framework to promote collaboration between all US government programs around a common goal: to improve the lives of children in adversity around the world.

Through World Vision's experiences addressing the needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) affected by the AIDS pandemic, we know the importance of a multi-sector approach that builds strong beginnings, strengthens families, and protects children. In Zambia, World Vision is currently implementing the USAID-funded Sustainability Through Economic Strengthening, Prevention and Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (STEPS OVC) program which builds upon the achievements of the Reaching HIV/AIDS Affected People with Integrated Development (RAPIDS) program using community caregivers to deliver evidence-based, integrated and holistic care to communities. It provides support for HIV prevention and behavior change initiatives, reduces HIV transmission and simultaneously builds the capacity of Zambian communities to care for and support OVC, at-risk youth and adults, and the general population. STEPS OVC has trained over 24,000 community caregivers and serves over 300,000 vulnerable children in Zambia like Christine, and builds off the political motivation within that country to ensure vulnerable children are healthy, loved, and safe. Having benefited from the community schools and caregivers, Christine says, "If it had not been for the caregivers who visited us, we would still be sleeping on an empty stomach because we had run out of mealie meal and relish. The community caregivers bought food for us when they visited us. I am grateful for all that the caregivers are doing."

The Action Plan goes beyond health and OVC programming and builds off other agencies' work to protect children. For the past four years, Wilfredo has been involved in a child protection program in the Philippines funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and run by a partnership between World Vision, Child Fund, and Educational Research and Development Assistance Foundation, Inc. This program places a strong emphasis on multiple interventions to prevent and respond to child labor by combining formal and informal education programs, sustainable livelihood programs for parents and local government

engagement. In the past decade, this program has impacted over 61,000 children and worked to both prevent separation from families and enhance abilities for family care and protection, while also withdrawing children from harmful or potentially abusive situations. Wilfredo says that now his parents will not allow him to work because of community pressure, and instead he serves as a "Little Teacher" helping younger students who are struggling in school. His dream is to be an educator someday, and he is now one step closer to realizing that dream.

Wilfredo and Christine were thankfully pulled up in a safety net created by themselves, their parents, their communities, and their government. Their lives were changed through efforts to ensure they were in good health; received protective support from loving families; and were protected from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Every child deserves that safety net, and through the Action Plan for Children in Adversity, the U.S. can be a global leader that champions children to survive and thrive in their families and communities. However, the boldness of this vision must be matched by the bold action of the President and all the agencies responsible for its effective implementation. We stand ready to support increased and more productive collaboration among US government agencies in the pursuit of policies and programs on the ground that provide real protection for children around the world.

Kent R. Hill joined World Vision in February 2011, after more than three decades serving in U.S. Government, academic and non-profit leadership roles. As head of WVUS international programs, Kent collaborates with the international partnership of World Vision to help facilitate the overseas allocation of resources from government grants, corporate donated goods, and individual donors.

Kent served from 2001 to 2005 as U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator of Europe and Eurasia, and was responsible for U.S. foreign assistance to 26 countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Between 2005 and 2009, he was Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Global Health, heading up all USAID health programs and representing USAID in several interagency, global, and multilateral health initiatives. Kent has extensive experience with US Government departments and agencies, international assistance agencies from other countries, and hundreds of U.S. and international NGOs, including faith-based organizations. He received a Masters in Russian Studies and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Washington, and spent six years as an Associate Professor of History at Seattle Pacific University, was President of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (Washington, D.C.), and served as President of Eastern Nazarene College (Quincy, MA). Most recently, Kent spent two years as the Vice President for Character Development for the John Templeton Foundation.