



PROTECTING CHILDREN AROUND THE GLOBE

One Billion Reasons: Protecting Children from Exploitation and Violence

QUICK FACTS

- » The global economic impact of violence against children is estimated to be as high as \$7 trillion.
- » Around the world, 85 million children perform hazardous work.
- » Children make up 28 percent of all detected trafficking victims.
- » Worldwide, one in seven girls ages 15 to 19 are currently married or in a union.

Introduction

Half the world's children—1 billion—experience violence annually. Violence against children includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence, as well as abuse, neglect, or exploitation. 168 million children are engaged in child labor. One in three girls in developing countries are married before they turn 18 years old. Over 28 million children are displaced by war and conflict, exposing them to increased risk of violence and exploitation. Violence against children occurs in every country, in homes, in schools, and in communities.

Why it matters

Violence against children affects a child's social, emotional, mental, and physical development and has far-reaching consequences for their future and their community. It can permanently impact the architecture of a child's brain and the immune system, leading to poor health over the course of their lifetime and a shorter lifespan.

Children who are exposed to domestic violence as a victim or a witness are more likely to become victims or perpetrators later in life. The cost of inaction is high.

Facts

- » We have solutions to end violence against children! INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children is a package of seven solutions identified by leading global experts as having the biggest impact on reducing incidents of violence, following extensive research across different contexts.
- » The root causes of violence are many and often interconnected. Poverty and economic distress, cultural norms, conflict and displacement, weak safety net services, and gender inequality are drivers of violence against children. At the household level, lack of education, history of abuse, and misuse of alcohol or drugs put children at risk.

IMPACT

Tackling trafficking in Southeast Asia

From 2011 to 2016 World Vision worked with communities, governments, the U.N., and other nongovernmental organizations in parts of Southeast Asia to end human trafficking. At the end of the project, the number of children and youth at high risk for trafficking was reduced by 17 percent.

IMPACT

Addressing child labor through education and livelihoods

In 2013, local communities, government agencies, the sugarcane industry, and through ILAB funding, World Vision worked to reduce child labor on sugarcane farms in the Philippines. As of October 2015, 85 percent of children who had been engaged in child labor were no longer working.

Preventing and responding to trafficking in persons

The **Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)** created the first comprehensive federal law addressing human trafficking in the U.S. and internationally. Over 20 million people are trafficked in the world today, including in the U.S. Because methods of traffickers are constantly evolving, the law must evolve with them. That is why the TVPA must be reauthorized every few years. Key provisions of the TVPA include:

- » The **Trafficking in Persons Report**, which holds over 180 governments around the world accountable to prevent trafficking, protects victims and survivors, and prosecutes traffickers
- » The **Child Protection Compact Act**, which allows the State Department to work with countries to measurably reduce child trafficking
- » Special provisions to protect **unaccompanied children** who arrive in the U.S. from countries not bordering the U.S.
- » The **Child Soldiers Prevention Act**, which directs the State Department to identify governments recruiting or using children in their armed forces and withhold key forms of military assistance

ASK

Congress must renew the TVPA when it expires at the end of FY2017 and protect key provisions.

Ending child labor

Around the world, 85 million children perform hazardous work that threatens their health and development. Since 2000, the global community has reduced the number of children in hazardous child labor by one-third. However, the global costs of child labor are still significant. Child labor can affect a child's health by exposing them to heavy loads, dangerous chemicals, heavy machinery, and poor working conditions. The global economic cost of child labor is between 2 and 7 percent of the world's gross national income annually.

The Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) at the Department of Labor has worked with partners since 1995 to reduce exploitative child labor through:

- » **Education-based programs** that have withdrawn close to 2 million children from the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking
- » A **holistic approach** involving communities and governments that increases access to education for children and supports livelihood opportunities for families

ASK

Congress should fund the Bureau of International Labor Affairs at \$103.5 million to ensure we continue to move forward with these critical programs.

Addressing root causes to end child marriage

Child marriage is a harmful practice that disproportionately affects girls. Girls who live in fragile contexts or humanitarian settings are among the most vulnerable. Child marriage can have devastating effects:

- » **Girls' health, access to education, future earnings, and communities** are negatively affected by child marriage
- » Babies born to adolescent mothers are **35 to 55 percent more likely to be born pre-term** or at a **low birth weight** than those born to mothers in their 20s

Child marriage is driven by poverty, gender inequality, lack of protective legal policies, and poor enforcement of existing policies. Limited access to and poor quality of schools, disasters, conflict, and political instability can also be contributing factors.

The U.S. government has a strong foundation for addressing child marriage. This includes annual reporting in the Human Rights Reports, and two strategies: Ending Child Marriage and Meeting the Needs of Married Children: The USAID Vision for Action, and The U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls.

ASK

Congress's continued support of overseas development assistance programs that seek to comprehensively address child marriage will be critical in maintaining current progress.

Protecting children in humanitarian settings

Conflict and disaster weaken critical support systems and diminish investments in child well-being. Children affected by conflict, violence, and natural disasters are exceptionally vulnerable to risks like:

- » Separation from their families
- » Physical or sexual abuse
- » Recruitment into armed groups
- » Child marriage
- » Exploitative child labor and trafficking
- » Injury and death

The U.S. government is one of the world's largest donors to child protection in humanitarian settings. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID supports programs around the world to ensure children are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. The Bureau of Populations, Refugees, and Migration at the Department of State helps address violence against children among refugees.

The benefit of U.S. programs cannot be denied; however, there is no comprehensive legislative mandate to prioritize child protection in these settings. Protection may not happen in every case, or as soon as it is needed. At the outset of disaster or conflict, funding goes first to life-saving interventions.

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IMPACT

Working with fathers to end child marriage

To engage men as partners in tackling gender inequality and gender-based violence, World Vision India and partner Promundo created the MenCare model. In these groups, men and their wives broke down the barriers that traditionally devalue daughters. The groups encouraged fathers' participation in girls' upbringing, helping to prevent child marriage.

IMPACT

Promoting protection and peace with faith leaders

In the Central African Republic, World Vision works to equip Christian and Muslim faith leaders to use their authority to help protect children. Since the conflict began in 2014, 1.2 million children have been affected by the crisis.



CHILD PROTECTION



Protecting children in humanitarian settings (cont.)

ASK

Congress should encourage the administration to reclassify child protection as life-saving so U.S. government funds protecting children from exploitation and violence can be released more quickly, mitigating the dire consequences of violence against children in humanitarian settings.

Why this is a good approach

The role of the U.S. government: sustain momentum and build a new vision

The U.S. government has made strong progress towards ending specific forms of violence against children, such as child labor, child trafficking, and child marriage. However, groups of vulnerable children are at risk of falling through the cracks if we focus only on the current issue-based solutions. We need an approach that continues current commitments, addresses root causes of violence against children, and focuses on solutions across U.S. federal departments and agencies with high-level leadership, appropriate funding, and measurable outcomes.

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