



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity (APCCA) newsletter. It is a privilege to launch this valuable new platform about our interagency efforts to safeguard the world's most vulnerable children.

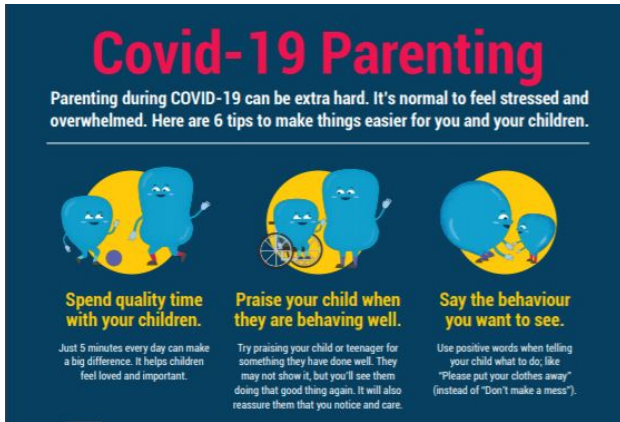
The year 2020 proved a difficult one to accomplish our goals, given the challenges we've experienced in the wake of a global pandemic. However, reflecting back on the accomplishments of 2020, we have much to report about the extraordinary achievements our partners realized in order to keep families safe. In addition, we are proud to share a wealth of new resources which further demonstrate the U.S. Government's commitment to prioritizing child protection throughout its COVID-19 response.

We also welcome the recent passage of the Global Child Thrive Act as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and congratulate all who championed this legislation over the course of the 116th Congress. The Global Child Thrive Act affirms U.S. Government investments in early childhood development (ECD) to ensure healthy and well-developed future generations, and recognizes that integration and cross-sector coordination of ECD programs such as those promoted in APCCA are critical to the efficiency, effectiveness, and continued implementation of such programs.

I invite you to take a few moments to learn more about our work. Thank you for all you do to advance the protection and care of children around the world.

Sincerely,

Sarah Gesiriech,
U.S. Government Special Advisor on Children in Adversity



Taking Stock of 2020: Unprecedented Challenges Impactful Solutions

When COVID-19 first began to spread, child protection leaders were concerned that, with 1.6 billion children in 184 countries out of school at the peak of the lockdowns, the pandemic would create serious risks to the safety and well-being of children, including increased risk of violence, child abuse, exploitation, and neglect; risk of inadequate care; and risk of psychosocial distress and trauma, with lifelong effects.

Evidence from past crises shows that child abuse is more difficult to detect when teachers, social workers, health care providers, relatives, and neighbors have diminished engagement with children during shelter-in-place orders.

In response to the pandemic APCCA Interagency Partners brought their collective experience to the fore, demonstrating a whole-of-government commitment to strengthening families. Throughout the year, they partnered with several countries and initiatives to intensify efforts around child protection.

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Interview with Phil Green: World Without Orphans

The task of disseminating an approved set of COVID-19 Parenting Tips to the broader international community required the assistance of a strong, community-based network. World Without Orphans (WWO), a global collaborative of faith-based organizations and faith community networks took a leading role in that effort.

In March 2020, as the virus was escalating around the world, Phil Green, one of WWO's leaders, was enroute from the UK to the United States to discuss the group's strategy for taking on the pandemic. He arrived in Atlanta just as the travel ban took hold. Getting a flight back home was challenging, but Phil's time in the United States was well spent.

There, he was tapped to serve as the organization's COVID-19 Crisis Response and Recovery Coordinator and asked to lead the effort to translate and disseminate the COVID-19 Parenting Tips throughout WWO's global network. In our interview, Phil candidly discussed the challenges inherent in accomplishing that task and the remarkable impact of the program to date.

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The Gift of a Family

On a chilly December morning in 2019, little Eyob was found on a busy street corner in downtown Addis Ababa. The infant was only one day old when a good Samaritan found him and brought him to Ethiopian authorities, who quickly transferred him to a government-run orphanage in the capital.



Eyob was provided basic care at the orphanage, but the lack of more comprehensive facilities and inconsistent caregiving by multiple staff members prevented him from thriving or developing a secure attachment with anyone. As a result, the staff found that he was delayed in his development and indiscriminately attached to anyone and was not showing any healthy fear of strangers.

Fortunately, when Eyob was six months old, the Government of Ethiopia referred him into Bethany's Foster-to-Adopt program. In September 2020, after a rigorous vetting process, he was placed with Muse and Hareg, a couple who lived with their family in Addis Ababa and was thrilled to welcome the baby boy into their home.

"We have two daughters, ages 15 and 11. We tried to have a baby boy and waited for years before exploring adoption. But after a lot of discussion and prayer, we decided we were ready," shared Muse and Hareg.

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Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity *Implementation Plan*

The APPCA Implementation Plan outlines the USG's initial collaborations areas for children in adversity, its monitoring and evaluation strategy, and its coordinated communication and engagement approach. It also identifies initial areas for collaboration among U.S. Government Partners:

- Increasing knowledge, capacity, and policies on child safeguarding and protection, including the Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Capacity Building Initiatives;
- Investing in strategies to support the social service workforce;
- Promoting positive parenting and family strengthening interventions and aligning resources and services.

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USAID Announces Partnerships Plus Sub-grantees

Partnerships Plus, implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, supports innovative community programs and improves organizations' capacity to meet the needs of children in adversity. Recently selected sub-awardees, include:

- Bethany Christian Services Global
- Better Care Network
- Boston Children's Hospital
- Boston College
- Brick by Brick
- Faith to Action Initiative
- Global Social Service Workforce Alliance
- Plan International

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USAID Center for Education: *Returning to Learning During Crises Toolkit*

This Toolkit is designed to help education planners strategize and make key decisions on the return to learning both during and after educational disruptions caused by crises such as COVID-19. These tools will be implemented in a way that promotes equitability, inclusion, and resilience within educational systems. Access the toolkit [here](#).

***Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) COVID-19 Research**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has worked to understand the virus's effects on populations central to the NICHD mission, including:

- **Pregnant and postpartum women**
- **Children and adolescents**
- **People with intellectual and developmental disabilities,**
- **People with physical disabilities or mobility impairments.**

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Studies on COVID-19 and children, including links with Multisystem Inflammatory System in children, can be found [here](#).

Protecting the Social Service Workforce: Best Practices Including Mental Health

This webinar, hosted by the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Task Force and interagency PEPFAR colleagues, featured a discussion on how OVC and Clinical implementing partners can apply lessons learned from efforts supporting social service workers during COVID-19. The webinar provided an overview of the daily challenges experienced by social service workers, country-level examples of what has been done to support them, and a discussion of how implementers can apply these best practices during COVID-19. View the recording and slide deck [here](#).

