



Save the Children®

THE REFUGEE CHILDREN'S PROGRESS REPORT

Grading U.S. Refugee Policy From 2015-2017

Khaled Is from Syria and now lives in an informal tented settlement in Bekaa valley in Lebanon.*





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Every child has the right to a future. Save the Children works around the world to give children a healthy start in life, and the chance to learn and to be safe. We do whatever it takes to get children the things they need – every day and in times of crisis.

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Acknowledgment: We would like to thank the following experts, who provided guidance on the direction of the report, reviewed drafts or did both: Bernice Romero, Michael Klosson, Greg Hill, Greg Ramm, Erin Taylor, Suzanne Amari, Rachel McKinney, Amy Richmond and Elizabeth Ferris.

Published by Save the Children
savethechildren.org
First published 2017
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Cover photo: Venetia, 9, is an unaccompanied child refugee from South Sudan trying on a uniform in her classroom in Impevi, Uganda. Photo: Juozas Cernius/Save the Children; Design: Alison Wilkes; Copy editing: Cindy Wolfe Boynton*

Naihiki, 14, came to Uganda alone after fleeing violence near her home in Northern Democratic Republic of Congo. Shortly after arriving at the camp of Rwanwanja, she was attacked by three men and became pregnant with John*, now 8 months old.*



Photo: Rebecca Vassie



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Executive Summary

Approximately one year ago, the United States of America, together with 192 other countries, endorsed the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* in a high-level meeting at the 2016 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The Declaration expressed the determination of all U.N. member states to save the lives, protect the rights and share the responsibility for refugees and migrants around the globe. In it, the United States and partner nations committed to work together to find solutions to what then – as now – was a global refugee crisis.

At this same UNGA, U.S. President Barack Obama, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and leaders from Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, Jordan, Mexico and Sweden hosted a Leaders' Summit on Refugees. At the summit, refugee hosting countries committed to enacting policy changes designed to increase refugees' access to education and better livelihoods. Donor countries pledged funds and promised more resettlement opportunities.

The *New York Declaration* and Leaders' Summit outcomes captured, in writing, the unimaginable scope of suffering and needs being experienced by millions of refugees around the world. Save the Children wanted to understand which of these needs were high priorities for refugee children. We also wanted to examine how the United States – the largest donor and provider of resettlement opportunities – was making policy and financing decisions that would ensure refugee children's most essential needs were met.

To do this, we reviewed the findings of more than a dozen published surveys that looked at what needs were most commonly, and specifically, expressed by forcibly displaced children (See Annex A). We then examined whole-of-government U.S. policymaking, including funding decisions relative to refugees, between January 2015 and August 15, 2017. This included time periods immediately before and after the *New York Declaration* and Leaders' Summit. The result of that research is *The Refugee Children's Progress Report: Grading U.S. Refugee Policy from 2015-17*. Education, child protection, food security and resettlement are the focus areas.¹

Among other findings, this progress report shows the U.S. is a long-time leader in caring for refugee children and their families, providing a major share of international refugee settlement opportunities and making important new financial commitments for refugee children. Yet U.S. leadership has also been uneven in several critical areas. An example: In 2016, the U.S. convened the Leaders' Summit to rally world leaders to make policy and financial commitments on refugee education, livelihoods and resettlement, but then suspended U.S. resettlement opportunities in 2017.

As the number of refugees around the world continues to increase, and the world contemplates the negotiation and signing of a global compact on refugees in 2018, continued U.S. policy leadership at both the global and domestic level is critical to ensuring not just that refugee needs are met, but that other countries fulfill their obligations. The U.S. is the largest donor to international refugee assistance and, historically, the largest provider of resettlement opportunities. Without its sustained and visible leadership, it may be impossible for global policy advances made over the last several years to take

root and grow into much-needed change for refugee children. Indeed, a U.S. retreat from responsibility sharing could prompt other refugee host countries and donor governments to do the same. Such a result would be catastrophic.

In addition to grading U.S. policy progress in meeting the needs of refugee children, our report recommends a course of action the U.S. government can – and should – take. These actions include short-, medium- and long-term steps, some for specific departments and others for our government as a whole. Because there is as much a worldwide need for ongoing U.S. leadership as there is a worldwide refugee crisis, we also include recommendations for where the U.S. has made progress in policymaking and must continue.

THE REFUGEE CHILDREN’S PROGRESS REPORT

Grading U.S. Refugee Policy Progress from 2015-17

NEED	LEVEL OF PROGRESS	COMMENTS	GRADE
Education	Very good/ good	Ensuring a return to learning for refugee children became a high policy priority for the U.S. over the last three years, and the U.S. effectively used global engagement to prompt others to make it a priority as well. U.S. support for research on refugee education was minimal, and it could do more to help fill research gaps.	A-
Child Protection	Good/Fair	Despite significant policymaking on child protection (e.g. forced recruitment) and refugee protection (e.g. Safe from the Start program), more could be done to ensure a specific focus on child protection in refugee settings. Sector-specific funding levels are difficult to assess, but refugee protection funding appears to have decreased over the past three years.	B-
Food and Nutrition	Good	The U.S. has a strong history of investing in food security and livelihoods to help refugees meet food needs. A current administration proposal to reduce U.S. support for food security marginally hurt performance in this area.	B
Safe Homes	Poor	Although historically a world leader in refugee resettlement, the U.S. recently suspended its resettlement program. This has denied refugee children an important opportunity to find what they want most, according to surveys: a safe and permanent home.	D



Four children sit outside their family home in the Domiz refugee camp in Kurdistan. The camp is run by UNHCR.



**“Humanity owes the child
the best it has to give.”**

Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children

I. Introduction

For well over a decade, the number of people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution has steadily increased. In 2012, these numbers spiked, resulting in what is now recognized as a global refugee crisis. There are currently 17.2 million refugees under the care of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners.² Half of them are children and without coordinated international assistance, many of these will not reach adulthood.³

There are currently enough forcibly displaced people to create not just a new country, but what would be the 21st largest country in the world. A report released by Save the Children last year showed that children living in this new “country” were found to have the fourth-highest lost education rates in the world. Only Liberia, South Sudan and Eritrea had higher rates. Incidents of early marriage among refugee children was also alarmingly high. Studies among Syrian refugees in Jordan found that rates of early marriage rose by over 160 percent between 2011 and 2014.⁴

Refugee children are among the most vulnerable in the world. Every day, they risk loss of some kind, including the loss of the future that every child deserves. To create this report, we analyzed interviews conducted by Save the Children and other child-focused organizations with more than 1,000 current and former child refugees. These children were able to bravely self-identify, and voice, their greatest fears and needs. Their words provide a map for how the U.S. must focus its resources and remain a humanitarian leader for refugees and host countries around the world.

II. Grading Method

Identifying Children’s Needs

To identify the major categories of need for refugee children, Save the Children reviewed 12 published surveys conducted by our own organization and other child-focused agencies with forcibly displaced children around the world. (A summary of the review is available in Annex A at the end of this report.) We grouped areas of commonly expressed need into categories and then cross-referenced those categories against areas in which there was sufficient public information to reliably assess U.S. government policymaking efforts over the last three years. This resulted in the following four areas of need selected for inclusion in this progress report:⁵

- Education
- Child protection
- Food security
- Safe homes

Identifying Indicators

To assess the U.S. government’s 2015-17 policy toward refugees in these categories, Save the Children identified a series of relevant indicators that could be used to analyze each category. Created on the basis of available data, these indicators were:

1. Legislation and policy promulgation
2. Quantity and quality of funding
3. Investments in research and learning

All three indicators were used to assess education, child protection and food safety. Because of the lack of a readily identifiable centralized data source, only the first two indicators (and not “investments in research and learning”) were used to analyze safe homes.⁶

Evaluating Indicators and Assigning Grades

To assess how U.S. policy was affecting children’s needs in each category area, we used the following five-point scale:

- A high score of 5 reflected vigorous and sustained U.S. government policy efforts across all three years to help meet refugee children’s needs.
- A score of 4 indicated the U.S. made good progress, but there were also other, readily identifiable actions it could take to improve those efforts
- A score of 3 meant the U.S. had made progress, but that there were also major and obvious deficits to its approach.
- A score of 2 indicated no, or very minimal, action toward realizing a need.
- A score of 1 indicated that major policy or funding decisions had substantially moved the U.S. farther away from helping meet the need in question.

Indicator scores for each category of need were then averaged to produce a letter grade for that category. Letter grades were determined as follows:

INDICATOR AVERAGE	PROGRESS MADE	COMMENTS	LETTER GRADE
4.2– 5	Very good	The U.S. government vigorously pursued policymaking and increased financial commitments intended to help meet children’s needs. Future recommended actions largely built on previous efforts.	A
3.2 – 4.1	Good	U.S. policy or financing decisions constituted significant steps forward in terms of meeting children’s needs, though there are some areas for improvement.	B
2.2 – 3.1	Fair	U.S. policy or financing decisions demonstrated progress toward meeting need, but showed obvious gaps or significant room for improvement.	C
1.2– 2.1	Poor	U.S. policy activity in this area was minimal or non-existent.	D
0 – 1.1	Failing	U.S. policy or financing decisions in this area made it substantially less likely that children’s needs would be met.	F

III. Specific Areas of Need

A. Education

INDICATOR	SCORE	SUMMARY OF PROGRESS SHOWN
Legislation and Policy Promulgation	5	U.S. policymakers increased focus on refugee education over the last three years, which helped galvanize the policymaking of other governments.
Quantity and Quality of Funding	5	The U.S. increased its own investments in refugee education throughout the time covered in this report. It used its investments to leverage investments from other governments, which among other benefits led to \$93 million contributed to the Education Cannot Wait fund.
Investments in Research and Learning	3	The State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) research and evaluation program supported just one child refugee education study over a three-year period.
Average	4.3	Grade: A-

Background

Save the Children’s survey review showed that children frequently identified education as one of their priority needs after displacement (See Annex A). During crisis and conflict, refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children. Exacerbating this disparity, refugees now spend an average of 20 years in exile.⁷

If education is not provided to refugee children, or provided to only a few, too many will miss out on the opportunity to achieve their full potential and pursue their dreams. Ensuring access to quality education as soon as possible after displacement will help reduce the high out-of-school rates currently experienced by refugee children. Save the Children has called on host countries to commit to return refugee children to learning within 30 days of their arrival.

Beyond enabling refugee children to maintain previous learning, education increases their physical and psychosocial protection, continues their social and emotional development, and provides them access to additional services. Refugee children in safe schools are less likely to be exposed to violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, child marriage, recruitment into armed groups or child labor.⁸ Higher education can also shelter and protect refugee youth by providing hope, promoting inclusion, and speeding recovery and rebuilding efforts in home countries.⁹



Photo: Jonathan Hyams

Sawda, 13, is enrolled in an Alternative Basic Education program for Somali refugees in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia.*

- Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children.
- Of the 6 million primary and secondary school-age refugees under UNHCR's mandate, 3.7 million have no school to attend.
- Only 50 percent of refugee children have access to primary education, compared with 90 percent of children globally.
- More than 84 percent of non-refugee adolescents attend lower secondary school, compared to just 22 percent of refugee adolescents.
- At the higher education level, just 1 percent of refugees attend university, compared to 34 percent globally.¹⁰

Source: UNHCR

An historical lack of funding for education in the humanitarian sector is likely one reason why refugee education is limited. Another contributing factor, however, is that many refugee children cannot integrate into local education systems. Successfully educating refugee children is often best achieved by integrating refugee students into local schools, experts say, but host country governments and donors need to do more to facilitate and support these efforts.¹¹

Fortunately, support for refugee education, including local integration, is gaining global momentum. Educating refugee children was a major theme at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, where the first global fund aimed at prioritizing education in humanitarian action was launched.¹² Known as Education Cannot Wait (ECW), this fund will create new approaches to funding and delivering education in emergencies and protracted crises.¹³

The primary way the U.S. government provides financial support for international refugee education is through the Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration (PRM) and the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account. It also provides funding through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that may reach refugee children. However, MRA is the only government account specifically designated for refugee assistance.

Indicators

To assess U.S. government policy efforts on refugee education, our indicators focused on the following:

- **LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION:** Policy initiatives in the form of administration statements, executive action, legislation and participation in international agreements or processes. Where funding announcements were made at international meetings or summits, the announcement was included in this section.
- **QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF FUNDING:** Public records of MRA-funded projects, as well as publicly available contributions to multilateral education efforts.
- **INVESTMENTS IN RESEARCH AND LEARNING:** Public records of State/PRM-funded research and evaluation.

Data related to indicators

LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION

FY15

- The U.S. announces a \$100 million contribution to Jordan's education sector for the creation of schools to accommodate the influx of refugees and remedial education for refugee children.¹⁴

FY16

- During the "Supporting Syria and the Region" conference, No Lost Generation partners, including the U.S. government, set an ambitious goal of ensuring access to education for all out-of-school children and youth inside Syria, as well as for all Syrian refugee children.¹⁵
- The U.S. government pledges \$20 million at the World Humanitarian Summit to help establish ECW.¹⁶
- The U.S. convenes the Leaders' Summit on Refugees, which includes a specific focus on education.¹⁷
- As part of the Leaders' Summit, the U.S. pledges \$37 million to UNHCR, specifically for refugee education.¹⁸
- The U.S. convenes a private sector Call to Action that produces commitments to educational opportunities for more than 80,000 refugees through digital content, mentorship, and classroom support.¹⁹
- The U.S. signs the *New York Declaration*, which includes a commitment to returning refugee children to school "within a few months" of displacement.²⁰

FY17

- The President's budget request for FY18 includes a 30 percent reduction to the MRA account. The U.S. Congress has yet to finalize the FY18 budget.²¹
- State/ PRM withdraws its annual call for proposals for research and evaluation.²²
- U.S. government officials participate in an expert meeting on refugee education, convened by Canada.²³
- The Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act (H.R. 601/S. 623) passes the House of Representatives and the Senate.²⁴

FUNDING

	FY14 ²⁵	FY15	FY16	FY17
MRA (total account levels)²⁶	\$3.06 billion	3.06 billion	3.06 billion	\$3.36 billion ²⁷
Refugee education initiatives within MRA and other accounts				
Education Cannot Wait	—	—	\$20 million	None announced
UNHCR (education pledge)	—	—	\$37 million	None announced
Funding for refugee education across initiatives and programs, as reported through the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) ²⁸	\$17.6 million	\$18.9 million	\$26.8 million ²⁹	Not yet available

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

	FY15	FY16	FY17
State/PRM-funded research and evaluation³⁰	One education study funded ³¹	None	None

Analysis

Over the last three years, the U.S. government helped champion refugee education both through its own funding and policy efforts and by creating opportunities and incentives for other governments to make financial and policy commitments.

In 2015 and 2016, U.S. funding for general refugee education increased. Also in 2016, as part of the Leaders' Summit, the U.S. provided a special contribution of \$37 million to UNHCR to increase the number of refugee children able to attend school and receive a quality education. Additionally, the U.S. contributed \$20 million to the ECW platform and garnered private sector commitments to provide educational opportunities for refugees.

As important as the U.S. providing funds to increase access to education for refugees was it deciding to publicly announce those pledges at major international meetings, including the World Humanitarian Summit and 2016 UNGA. Making the U.S.'s funding decisions widely known helped galvanize other nations to take similar actions, such as contributing to ECW. As of June 2017, ECW mobilized additional pledges of approximately \$93.7 million from other governments, including the United Arab

Emirates (UAE), Canada and the European Union.³² In Ethiopia, the fifth-largest refugee hosting country in the world, ECW is now supporting a gradual integration of refugees into the national education system.³³

As of the writing of this report, however, the U.S. had not made a 2017 financial pledge to ECW commensurate with the support provided in 2016.

The U.S. decision to convene the first-ever Leaders' Summit for Refugees during the 2016 UNGA helped increase international attention to refugee education finance and policy needs. The summit resulted in 17 refugee host countries pledging to enact policy changes that would allow more than 1 million refugee children to enter school.

Our review of State/PRM's support to research and evaluate refugee education indicates that although it has been limited, there was at least one promising study funded in 2015 to look at the policies and practices of urban refugee education across several countries and regions. Although State/PRM's decision to withdraw its call for research and evaluation proposals reduced opportunities for it to invest in refugee education research, there are mechanisms to strengthen the program, and increase support, going forward. To meet the specific needs of refugee children and build better programming, more research is needed to understand the most effective approaches to providing rapid learning opportunities.

Recommendations

To sustain the good progress made on refugee education to date, the U.S. government should:

- Establish a publicly accessible accountability mechanism to ensure education commitments made by refugee host countries and donors at the 2016 Leaders' Summit are fulfilled, so that the summit's objective of getting 1 million additional refugee children in school is met.
- Ensure that the provision for timely and quality education is fully incorporated into any global compact on refugees signed in 2018. Additionally, champion a time-bound global commitment that ensures refugee children begin receiving a formal or non-formal education within 30 days of arriving to a host country.
- Provide at least \$3.06 billion for MRA in the 2018 budget and safeguard continued funding for the Education Cannot Wait fund, to ensure the timely delivery of education to refugee children.
- Increase research, learning and evaluation of aid programs that target refugee education, including those that focus on the different challenges and needs of boys and girls. The State Department's refugee research and evaluation program should include education as a major theme to investigate in upcoming calls for proposals. It should also partner with the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse to create a special collection on refugee education that is available to, and searchable by, the public.
- Enact the READ Act (H.R. 601/S. 623), which makes it U.S. government policy to work with a variety of actors to promote basic education through programs that will benefit individuals in developing countries, including refugees.

B. Child Protection

INDICATOR	SCORE	SUMMARY OF PROGRESS SHOWN
Legislation and Policy Promulgation	4	Of the wide range of policies that could have been evaluated in this category, we chose to focus on two protection needs that are inherently child-specific and frequently identified by refugee children: protection from early marriage and forced recruitment. U.S. policymaking in these areas showed significant forward progress, but also room for improvement to address refugee-specific needs.
Quantity and Quality of Funding	3	The U.S. government provided substantial financial support for refugee protection over the last three years. The limited public records available in this area, however, suggest some funding levels may be decreasing.
Investments in Research and Learning	3	State/PRM's research and evaluation program supported one protection study in FY16 related to protection of the elderly but did not support any child protection studies in the past three years.
Average	3.3	Grade: B-

Background

Refugee children are vulnerable to, and need protection from, a wide range of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. It is important to note that in some cases, increasing general refugee protection resources also increases protection resources for refugee children. Protection policies and resources aimed at helping all vulnerable children (regardless of immigration status), can also benefit refugee children. But there are harms to which refugee children are uniquely susceptible because of their dual minor and refugee status. In the children's surveys reviewed by Save the Children for this report, two child-specific protection risks emerged as priorities: protection from early marriage and forced recruitment into armed forces and groups.³⁴

Because there were few refugee-specific child protection policy efforts within the U.S. government during the time covered by this report, Save the Children chose to look more broadly at initiatives to address early marriage and forced military recruitment. Wanting to understand how these efforts were helping meet refugee children's needs, we also looked at refugee and humanitarian protection funding levels, along with U.S.-funded research on refugee protection.

Save the Children defines child protection as measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. Child protection means safeguarding children from harm.³⁵

a) Early and Forced Childhood Marriage

It is commonly understood that forced displacement can lead to increased rates of early childhood marriage. The reasons for this are many, but they include the desire to protect girls from rape, to decrease the risks of pregnancy outside of marriage and to improve a family's financial well-being when resources are scarce.³⁷ When resources are low, families may resort to child marriage and other forms of exploitation as negative coping mechanisms.

At the same time, the consequences of child marriage are often devastating for the girls involved. Though it may be legal with parental consent, or a coping mechanism for families plunged into crisis,

marriage under the age of 18 is widely considered a human rights violation.³⁸ Marriage isolates adolescent girls from their support systems, which can, in turn, limit their access to reproductive health resources. It also increases their risk of suffering domestic violence, reduces educational opportunities and limits vocational opportunities.³⁹

Families consistently identify poverty as a primary driver of child marriage during displacement. Research finds that improving a family's economic situation is often effective in reducing the likelihood of a child marriage occurring. The heads of a family must be able to feed, clothe, house, and protect their children in order for there not to be a perceived benefit in marrying out their daughters at early ages.⁴⁰

PROMISING PRACTICES TO PREVENT EARLY MARRIAGE

While research and findings regarding child marriage rates are limited in the refugee setting, USAID and leading child rights organizations have evaluated the practice across many different types of settings and have identified promising interventions. These include:

- **Ensure families' basic needs are met.** This is one of the most effective means to mitigate the risk of child marriage during emergencies.
- **Focus on ensuring girls' educations.** Children are less likely to marry early if they are kept in school.
- **Mobilize communities to shift attitudes.** The decision to marry girls early is generally in the hands of family and community leaders.

b) Forced Recruitment into Armed Forces and Armed Groups

Efforts to estimate the total number of children recruited into armed forces around the world have produced generally unreliable figures.⁴¹ We have even less insight into the overall numbers of refugee children recruited into armed forces, but it is widely accepted that all children living in regions experiencing armed conflict are at great risk of recruitment.⁴² Children on the move, like refugee children, are recognized as being particularly vulnerable to recruitment.⁴³

Many children are recruited or abducted into the military by use of force, or threat of force, while others purportedly "volunteer." Organizations like Save the Children have found that many child recruits decide that "taking their chances with an armed group is preferable to living in poverty or in a camp for refugees or displaced people, where they have no chance of getting an education or of earning a living."⁴⁴

Children recruited into armed groups are killed, maimed, abused and exploited with profoundly damaging physical and psychological consequences. They have no access to formal educations, lose



Child marriage is defined by UNICEF as “a formal marriage or informal union before age 18” and occurs throughout the world.



Wafaa was married at 16. Now at 19 she is widowed and living in Lebanon with her three-year-old daughter. She worries for her daughter's future and her ability to get an education.*

PROMISING PRACTICES TO PREVENT CHILD RECRUITMENT

Effective programmatic solutions to prevent the unlawful military recruitment, or use, of girls and boys, including refugees, include:

- Safe attendance at schools
- Prevention of family separation during the conflict
- Early identification, protection and reunification programs for separated children
- Educational and vocational programs
- Income generating activities
- Access to livelihood opportunities
- Raising awareness of children's rights
- Community-based child protection early warning and monitoring systems

Girls need additional support to ensure school attendance and information about the way certain domestic chores, such as walking long distances for water or firewood, can increase their vulnerability.



their childhoods, and are often rejected by their families and communities. In addition, girls are often raped, sometimes leading to reproductive health problems such as sexually transmitted disease.⁴⁵ In addition to children mobilized and armed as soldiers, boys and girls are forced into servitude, including being used as cooks, porters and sex slaves.

In 2008, the U.S. enacted the Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA), which requires the State Department to annually identify and list governments that recruit or deploy children in conflict situations. Countries included on the list are prohibited from receiving certain types of U.S. military assistance, although the Act also contains a provision allowing waivers to be granted on national security grounds.⁴⁶

The U.S. is also a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The treaty sets 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment, exhorts militaries not to recruit or use children under age 18 and requires signatories to take all feasible measures to criminalize such practices.



Children play in a Save the Children-run kindergarten in Za'atari camp in Jordan. In partnership with the World Food Programme, Save the Children organizes all food distribution in Za'atari.

Indicators

To assess U.S. government policy efforts on refugee child protection, our indicators focused on the following:

- **LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION:** Policy initiatives in the form of administration statements, executive action, legislation and participation in international agreements or processes. Where funding announcements were made at international meetings or summits, the announcement was included in this section.
- **QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF FUNDING:** Lack of sector-specific reporting on U.S. or U.N. refugee spending resulted in the need to find other ways to measure funding progress in this area. We used State/PRM's Protection Priorities line item (which includes spending for protection, as well as other initiatives). We also examined U.S. funding for humanitarian protection generally, the Safe from the Start initiative on gender-based violence, and annual U.S. contributions to UNHCR, which is specifically charged by the U.N. to ensure international protection for refugees.⁴⁷
- **INVESTMENTS IN RESEARCH AND LEARNING:** Public records of State/PRM-funded research and evaluation.

Data related to Indicators

FUNDING

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
US contributions to UNHCR⁴⁸	\$1.28 billion	\$1.35 billion	\$1.51 billion	Not yet available
Refugee protection spending within MRA and other accounts				
State/PRM Protection Priorities line item ⁴⁹	\$419.2 million	\$396.5 million	\$326.2 million	Not yet available
US funding for Safe from the Start	\$23 million ⁵⁰	\$17 million ⁵¹	\$11.8 million ⁵²	Not yet available
US spending on humanitarian protection, as reported through OCHA ⁵³	\$104.83 million	\$127.2 million	\$87.2 million	Not yet available

LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION

FY15

- CSPA determination: Despite being previously identified by both the U.S. and U.N. as using child soldiers, the U.S. does not include Afghanistan on the 2015 CSPA list. It issues waivers to Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan.⁵⁴
- The U.S. provides leadership to the Call to Action on GBV and continues to implement its Safe from the Start initiative.⁵⁵
- State/PRM policy requires 2015 project proposals to include gender analysis.

FY16

- CSPA determination: Afghanistan not included in the list of countries using child soldiers. The U.S. grants waivers to Myanmar/Burma, Iraq, Nigeria, DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Rwanda.⁵⁶
- The U.S. government releases the *Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls*, which includes provisions on ending child marriage and identifies refugee girls as being particularly vulnerable to the practice.
- The U.S. government updates its *Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally*, which includes prevention of early marriage.
- State/PRM policy requires 2016 project proposals to include gender analysis. It continues to implement the Safe from the Start initiative.
- The U.S. signs the *New York Declaration*, committing to recognize and take steps to address the particular vulnerabilities of refugee women and children as they travel from their country of origin to their host country. These vulnerabilities include potential discrimination and exploitation, as well as sexual, physical and psychological abuse; violence; human trafficking; and contemporary slavery.

FY17

- CSPA determination: Afghanistan, Iraq and Myanmar/Burma not included in the list of countries using child soldiers.⁵⁷ The administration has until September 30, 2017 to offer waivers to countries on the FY17 CSPA list.
- State/PRM policy requires FY17 project proposals to include gender analysis. State/PRM continues to implement its *Safe from the Start* initiative.
- The U.S. submits its combined third and fourth periodic report on the Optional Protocol to the U.N., which includes reporting on its use of foreign assistance to eliminate unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including support for rehabilitation and social reintegration of child victims.⁵⁸

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

	FY15	FY16	FY17
State/PRM-funded research and evaluation on protection ⁵⁹	None	One protection study on old age and disability	None

Analysis

We found it difficult to analyze year-to-year U.S. refugee protection funding in a meaningful way. In the end, we identified four sources of publicly available U.S. refugee protection funding that could be compared across multiple years. While each of these sources significantly contributed to refugee protection, only one small fund was exclusively dedicated to refugee protection (and even then, to a subset of protection: gender-based violence). By using and comparing the full set of four, however, we believe the findings are sufficient to bring increased clarity to the overall state of U.S. refugee protection funding. Three of these sources showed decreases from 2015 to 2016.

Our research also found that despite strong U.S. leadership on generally preventing early marriage and forced recruitment among children, there was significant room to better link those efforts to preventing both in refugee settings. There is a need to develop more tailored approaches and better reporting.

In March 2016, the U.S. State Department adopted the *Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls*. That strategy included provisions intended to ensure U.S. development assistance helps reduce the prevalence of child marriage. It also recognized that refugee girls may be particularly vulnerable to the practice.⁶⁰ It did not, however, indicate how the U.S. will make preventing early marriage a key part of its overseas assistance for refugee girls, or how it would collect data and monitor trends.

Similarly, in January 2017, the U.S. submitted its third and fourth periodic reports on the Optional Protocol to the U.N. As part of those reports, the U.S. provided a detailed list of USAID-funded efforts to address the unlawful recruitment and use of all children in armed forces in development and emergency settings, but it did not report parallel efforts to address the recruitment and use of children in armed forces among refugee populations.⁶¹

Although the Child Soldier Prevention Act is widely regarded as a hallmark of U.S. policy leadership in the fight to end forced recruitment, we were struck by the number of refugee-sending countries that were granted waivers, or other favorable considerations, during the implementation of the act over the last three years. As the U.S. diplomatically encourages governments and armies in those countries to improve age vetting and otherwise implement U.N. action plans, granting waivers to countries identified on that list should not necessarily be viewed in a negative light. However, by excluding countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Myanmar/Burma on the list of countries using child soldiers, both the Obama and Trump administrations may have missed opportunities to use this tool to influence countries that are both allowing children to be recruited by militaries or law enforcement, and producing large numbers of refugees.⁶²

Despite these gaps, there were policy developments that addressed protection needs for child refugees. The Safe from the Start initiative was implemented to ensure GBV is addressed from the earliest stages of an emergency response. Since 2014, State/PRM has been requiring a gender analysis in all project proposals. This ensured its implementing partners were required to analyze gender inequalities and the unique risks faced by girls and boys as part of the project development process.⁶³ What remains unknown is the extent to which implementing partners included early marriage and forced recruitment analysis in their submissions, or whether State/PRM funded proposed interventions.⁶⁴

Investing in research and learning about refugee protection, however, appeared to be a missed opportunity. A review of State/PRM published research and evaluation studies indicated it had funded a protection-focused study looking at old age and disability during the time covered by this report, but had not funded child-protection research since 2012.⁶⁵

Recommendations

To sustain progress made to date and improve its score in this area in the future, the U.S. government should:

- Increase State/PRM protection spending commensurate with increases in the refugee population, as well as provide more transparency on protection funding levels and population-specific protection needs (e.g., child protection).
- Continue to provide consistent levels of funding to UNHCR, which has a special role to play in ensuring refugee protection. Also, to start working with UNHCR to provide more transparency on where and how future funds are spent, and who they reach.
- Build on the commitments made in the New York Declaration by ensuring that a global compact on refugees includes provisions to establish a specific duty to provide appropriate and integrated gender-sensitive child protection screenings, care, and prevention and response services for all at-risk refugee children, starting from their time of arrival at an international border.
- Support multi-country, multi-year pilot programs aimed at better understanding and preventing early marriage and forced recruitment among refugee children. These should include rigorous frameworks for monitoring and evaluation, and with published data and findings. They should ensure quality and age appropriate response serves to victims.





Jamila, 8, takes care of her brother Adib*, age 2, at a tented refugee settlement in Lebanon.*

- Request the Government Accountability Office to conduct a review of the implementation of the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008 and enact legislation to amend the current CSPA to include police and other law enforcement agencies in the list of government agencies prohibited from recruiting children.

C. Food Security

INDICATOR	SCORE	SUMMARY OF PROGRESS SHOWN
Legislation and Policy Promulgation	4	In the three-year period covered by this review, the U.S. passed the Global Food Security Act of 2016, signed the New York Declaration and hosted a Leaders' Summit that garnered new commitments to refugee livelihoods. However, the new administration recently proposed eliminating an important food security program that helps meet refugee food and nutrition needs.
Quantity and Quality of Funding	4	The U.S. government provided substantial financial support to the World Food Programme (WFP) to help meet refugee food and nutrition needs. WFP increased the number of refugees it served, but it also cut rations in some places.
Investments in Research and Learning	4	In 2015 and 2016, State/PRM funded significant research on private sector partnerships, economic integration and voucher-based assistance.
Average	4	Grade: B

Background

Enough food to eat was one of the most commonly expressed needs of refugee children in the surveys reviewed by Save the Children. Food insecurity, even famine, can result from mass displacement and refugee movements.

Early childhood malnutrition can result in significant negative impacts into adulthood and potentially lead to death. Globally, 45 percent of all child deaths are linked to malnutrition.⁶⁶ According to UNHCR, malnutrition directly causes 10 percent of deaths among refugee children under five years old.⁶⁷

WFP supplies much of the food and nutrition assistance provided to refugees, especially for those in camps. It assists refugees to meet food and nutrition needs through general food distributions, complementary feeding programs for young children, treatment of acute and chronic malnutrition, school meals and other targeted interventions.

There are two primary modalities through which WFP provides food and nutrition assistance to refugees:

- **Delivery of commodities:** These include specially selected foods delivered to a target population to meet energy and nutritional needs.⁶⁸
- **Cash-based transfers:** Issued in the form of physical cash, electronic funds, or vouchers, cash transfers can be spent at the discretion of the recipient. Among refugee populations, cash transfers facilitate economic integration by enabling families to purchase food locally. Cash-based funding can also be more efficient and timely than in-kind food in alleviating hunger and preventing malnutrition.



Nadia, 1½ is carried by her mother outside their home in a tented refugee settlement in Lebanon. The family receives support to buy necessities like food and water through Save the Children programs.*

The World Food Program is currently using cash-based transfers in 60 countries to provide food assistance, with their largest program serving Syrian refugees.⁷⁰

Photo: Save the Children

Donation of U.S.-sourced commodities through the USDA and USAID allows WFP to deliver commodities to refugee families. Financial contributions to WFP from USAID and the State Department allow WFP to choose whether cash-based transfers or a commodity distribution are the most appropriate response to help meet refugees' needs.

Since food security is also closely linked to livelihood opportunities, a refugee child's ability to obtain food and nutrition is often dependent on her parents' ability to find jobs. Even when displaced, parents who can earn a living are better able to provide food and nutrition for their children. Pairing food

assistance programs with employment opportunities is considered a key means of ensuring resilience for vulnerable populations, including refugees.⁶⁹

The U.S. helps support the ability of refugee families to earn a living through grants to implement employment programs, as well as through research on refugee job creation and effective policies supported by the State/PRM. The U.S. has also been a long-time supporter of host country governments that increase formal work opportunities for refugees.

Indicators

To assess U.S. government policy efforts on refugee food and nutrition security, our indicators focused on the following:

- **LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION:** Policy initiatives in the form of administration statements, executive action, legislation and participation in international agreements or processes were looked at, as were funding announcements made at international meetings or summits.
- **QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF FUNDING:** Public records of the U.S. government’s annual contributions to the World Food program, as well as WFP annual program statements on refugee reach and cash programming.
- **INVESTMENTS IN RESEARCH AND EVALUATION:** Public records of State/PRM-funded research and evaluation.

Data on Indicators

FUNDING

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
US contributions to WFP⁷¹	\$2.2 billion	\$2 billion	\$2 billion	Not yet available
WFP cash-based transfers⁷²	\$843 million reaching 8.9 million people	\$680 million reaching 9.6 million people	\$880 million reaching 14 million people	Not yet available
Number of refugees served by WFP⁷³	6.7 million	6.1 million	6.9 million	Not yet available

LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION

FY15

- The Global Food Security Act is introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate (H.R. 1567/ S. 1252).⁷⁴

FY16

- The U.S. government enacts the Global Food Security Act, which authorizes the President to provide emergency food assistance (including funds, transfers, vouchers and agricultural commodities) to meet emergency food needs arising from manmade and natural disasters.⁷⁵
- The U.S. convenes a private sector “Call to Action” on the margins of UNGA that generates commitments from 51 U.S.-based companies to help provide employment opportunities for 220,000 refugees, including mentorships, training, internships and job placements.⁷⁶
- The U.S. convenes the Leaders’ Summit on the margins of UNGA, garnering 15 pledges from refugee host countries to provide expanded employment opportunities for refugees.⁷⁷
- The U.S. signs the *New York Declaration*, committing to providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in key, life-saving sectors, including food security.⁷⁸
- The U.S. Department of State, Department of the Treasury, USAID, and the World Bank design and launch a new financing platform to allow middle-income countries hosting large numbers of refugees to access cheaper financing for development projects. The U.S. pledges \$25 million in funding.⁷⁹

FY17

- The U.S. releases an updated *Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy*, acknowledging the critical role of both in-kind and cash-based food assistance in supporting areas of recurrent crisis, and in providing timely, effective humanitarian response.⁸⁰
- The President’s 2018 budget request proposes eliminating U.S. Title II food security programs and making sharp reductions in the International Disaster Assistance account. The U.S. Congress has yet to finalize the FY18 budget.⁸¹

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

	FY15	FY16	FY17
State/PRM-funded research and evaluation⁸²	One report on food security and livelihoods (FSL) + one evaluation	Two FSL reports	None

Analysis

Throughout the time period covered by this report, the U.S. government was the largest donor of food assistance in the world and the top financial contributor to WFP. While there is no data available on exactly how much WFP funding is spent on refugee populations, the number of refugees it reached increased by more than 300,000 between 2015 and 2016.⁸³ Similarly, WFP significantly expanded its cash-based programming over the same period.



Children wait in line for a daily distribution of food in Bosaso, Somalia at the reception center for Somali refugees fleeing conflict in Yemen.

This welcome news, however, was counteracted by numerous examples of WFP cuts to refugee food rations. In 2017, for example, WFP food rations were dramatically cut in large refugee operations in Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Mauritania, South Sudan and Uganda.⁸⁴ While U.S. funding to the WFP remained robust when compared across all three years, it was also clearly insufficient, on its own, to enable WFP to keep pace with growing needs.

In July 2016, Congress passed the Global Food Security Act. This legislation helped ensure an increasingly diverse set of options with which to combat hunger and malnutrition overseas, plus ensured the ability of the U.S. government to continue to be a food security leader.⁸⁵ Significantly for refugee food security, it authorized and embedded the use of emergency cash-based food assistance as a standing tool in the toolbox of U.S. foreign assistance. Cash-based food assistance can be more efficient in certain contexts, and increased efficiency is urgently needed as refugee numbers and food needs continue to increase.

The U.S. also demonstrated leadership in what can be a very difficult space: expanded formal work options for refugees. The U.S.-convened Leaders' Summit helped encourage refugee-hosting governments to provide opportunities for 1 million refugees to pursue legal work opportunities.

State/PRM also funded several promising food security and employment-related research and evaluation projects during the time covered in this report. A research project funded in 2016, as example, is examining how vouchers are used in refugee food security programs, while an evaluation funded in 2015 is analyzing refugee livelihood-enhancing programs in Ethiopia and Burundi.

In light of what was an otherwise strong performance by the U.S. government on refugee food security, one recent proposal by the new administration (formally submitted to Congress with the president's proposed budget), calls into doubt whether it will continue to be a leader in this space.⁸⁶ The proposal calls for the elimination of Title II food assistance that provides commodities to WFP, as well as a proposed \$300 million reduction to the International Disaster Assistance account, which provides flexible resources. If passed by Congress, these cuts would cause serious setbacks to refugee food security.

Recommendations

To continue to work toward alleviating hunger and providing adequate nutrition and livelihoods for refugees, the U.S. government should:

- Establish a publicly accessible accountability mechanism to ensure that the livelihoods commitments made by refugee host countries and donors at the 2016 Leaders' Summit are fulfilled. Once firmly in place, these programs and policies could be expanded, as needed, to meet the summit's original objective of assisting 1 million refugees.
- Ensure that a greater use of cash-based programming to meet hunger and nutritional needs is fully incorporated into the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework process. It should also continue global compact negotiations designed to further improve refugee-host community integration goals, including a more timely and efficient delivery of emergency food assistance.
- Provide \$3.410 billion for the International Disaster Assistance account and \$1.875 billion for Title II in 2018.
- Continue robust U.S. government contributions to WFP to help meet the needs of increasing numbers of refugees.

D. Safe Homes

INDICATOR	SCORE	SUMMARY OF PROGRESS SHOWN
Legislation and Policy Promulgation	1	The U.S. increased the annual number of refugees it would resettle to 110,000 for 2017, but then suspended the resettlement program part-way through the year. The White House has formally backed pending legislation to permanently reduce resettlement targets.
Quantity and Quality of Funding	3	Despite annual increases in relevant accounts, funding levels have not kept pace with the cost of inflation. In 2016, insufficient funding was provided to cover the costs of U.S. resettlement targets.
Average	2	Grade: D

Background

The desire for safe, permanent homes – ones from which they will not be forced to flee – was a need frequently cited by children in the surveys we reviewed. The vast majority of refugee children that eventually find permanent homes will do so through integrating into host communities or because they are able to return to their home of origin. Resettlement is available to less than 1 percent of all refugees. But resettlement also plays an important role in the provision of safe homes to particularly vulnerable children, more than 8 percent of whom require resettlement.⁸⁷

The U.S. has long been a leader in providing safe homes through resettlement. More than 3 million refugees have resettled in the U.S. since 1975. In 2016, it provided more than half of all resettlement spaces available worldwide.⁸⁸ Because of the unique role played by the U.S. in this space, and because resettlement (as opposed to integration or return) is within its direct purview to provide, Save the Children chose to focus on resettlement policy and funding for its review of U.S. policy efforts to provide safe homes to refugee children.

The overall number of refugees resettled each year through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is set through presidential determination, which is a consultative process between the president and Congress.⁸⁹ In addition to resettlement with their families through USRAP, refugee children can be resettled to the U.S. through two programs specifically aimed at children, the Central American Minors (CAM) program and the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program.⁹⁰

USRAP funding comes primarily from two sources, one within the Department of State and one within the Department of Health and Human Service:

THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINOR PROGRAM

Operating in the United States since the mid-1970s, URM is the only program of its kind in the world. Through the URM program, unaccompanied minors are resettled to the United States and provided with benefits similar to children in state foster care. Most often, children referred to the program have parents who are deceased, untraceable, or for whom family reunification is not an option.⁹²



Photo: Jonathan Hyams

CENTRAL AMERICAN MINOR'S PROGRAM

For children fleeing violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras), the journey to the United States is incredibly long and dangerous, placing young children at high risk of being trafficked, brutally mistreated or even killed. Providing minors trying to reunite with their parents in the United States “a safe, legal and orderly alternative to the dangerous journey,” CAM was introduced by the U.S. government under the USRAP program in December 2014.³¹

Rodrigo, 9,
with his sister in
Coatecas Atlas,
Mexico.*

- The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) Account, administered by State/PRM. It includes funding for refugees to pursue one of three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation back to their home country, integration into a host country of asylum, or third-country resettlement when the first two options are not viable.
- The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement. It provides critical, initial investments in the long-term integration and economic success of certain new Americans, including people who are building new lives after surviving persecution, torture, trauma and human trafficking.

Indicators

To assess U.S. government policy efforts on refugee resettlement, our indicators focused on the following:

- **LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION:** Policy initiatives in the form of administration statements, executive action, legislation and participation in international agreements or processes, as well as funding announcements made at international meetings or summits.
- **QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF FUNDING:** Public records of the actual amount appropriated for the REA account. (MRA is also used to provide funds for resettlement. But because it was



Rami, 6, in a one-room building he shares with his family of seven in Lebanon, near the border with Syria.*

included previously, it has not been included again here). It also includes the U.S. contribution to the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism (ERCM), a platform established to help new countries create robust and sustainable refugee resettlement programs.

Data for Indicators

FUNDING

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
REA	\$1.486 billion	\$1.560 billion	\$1.675 billion	\$2.175 billion
ERCM	Not relevant	Not relevant	\$11 million	None announced

LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROMULGATION

FY15

- By presidential determination, the U.S. sets annual refugee admissions at 70,000.⁹⁴
- The U.S. introduces the Central American Minors program to provide certain qualified children in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras with a safe, legal and orderly alternative route to the U.S.⁹⁵

FY16

- By presidential determination, the U.S. sets annual refugee admissions at 85,000.⁹⁶
- The U.S. announces plans to expand the Central American Minors program to allow additional categories of applicants to apply for admission as refugees.⁹⁷
- At the Leaders' Summit, the U.S. pledges to increase its refugee admissions in FY17 to 110,000.⁹⁸
- The U.S. signs the New York Declaration, committing to provide resettlement places, and other legal pathways for admission, on a scale that would meet annual resettlement needs identified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.⁹⁹
- The U.S. pledges \$11 million to the Emergency Resettlement Country Joint Support Mechanism (ERCM) and publicly calls on other donors to support it.¹⁰⁰

FY17

- By presidential determination, the U.S. sets annual refugee admissions at 110,000.¹⁰¹
- President Trump signs an executive order banning the arrival of Syrian refugees, as well as suspending the entire USRAP for 120 days and effectively reducing the overall number of refugees who will enter the United States in 2017 by more than half.¹⁰²
- On June 29, the Supreme Court of the United States allows the administration to enact the executive order.¹⁰³
- On August 2, the White House formally backs introduction of the RAISE Act (S. 354), which would permanently reduce annual U.S. refugee admissions to 50,000.¹⁰⁴

Analysis

The U.S. government's commitment to resettlement was inconsistent across all three years covered by this report. Between 2015 and 2017, presidential determination led to an increase in the number of refugees allowed to resettle in the U.S., from 70,000 to 110,000. But the U.S. was much less receptive to the entrance of refugee children, particularly unaccompanied minors fleeing conflict and violence in Latin America.

Both the Obama and Trump administrations were candid about their desire to limit the flow of refugees arriving spontaneously at the United States' southern border. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the use of family detention facilities, increased enforcement at the border, a promise of a physical border wall, and assistance to Mexico and other countries to prevent immigrants' northern travel.¹⁰⁵ While the still-nascent CAM program was a step in the right direction, relatively few children qualify for its protection.¹⁰⁶

The U.S. convened the Leaders' Summit in 2016 and included increased resettlement as one of its objectives. It also endorsed the New York Declaration, calling on other countries to initiate resettlement programs and committing itself to increasing resettlement opportunities. It even provided \$11 million toward helping new countries establish resettlement programs. At the same time, however, for its own refugee resettlement program, it continued to provide funding levels insufficient to keep pace with inflation, or cover the costs associated with its resettlement goals.

In January 2017, the Trump administration retreated from the U.S.'s very visible commitment to 110,000 refugee admissions, suspending the entire resettlement program for at least six months. Based on the fact that, historically, 33 percent of admissions have been children, we estimate the number of children who will receive safe homes in the U.S. through resettlement in 2017 will only be approximately 17,500 – a drastic reduction from the estimated 38,500 originally promised homes.¹⁰⁷ This means as many as 21,000 children will miss out on the chance to rebuild their lives through resettlement in the U.S.

The White House has also backed legislation introduced to permanently reduce the number of annual resettlements in the U.S. to 50,000. Especially concerning, this move would eliminate discretion for future presidents to set annual admissions goals, thereby limiting the U.S.'s ability to quickly respond to changing global conditions and effectively share responsibility for refugee movements.

Recommendations

To recapture the United States' long tradition as a world leader in refugee resettlement, the U.S. government should:

- Continue to resettle the most vulnerable refugees from all geographic regions, ethnicities and religions.
- Ensure annual refugee admissions are in step with the growth of the global refugee population, beginning with the welcoming of 110,000 refugees in 2018.
- Designate a specific number of refugee children to be resettled through the URM and CAM program each year, ensuring that it is commensurate with these populations, and that the programs receive increased funding.
- Continue to request and support robust funding for USRAP, which accounts for cost of living adjustments and the increasingly diverse refugee population. Fund the REA account with \$3.027 billion in 2018.
- Through example and diplomacy, encourage other countries to provide permanent resettlement options to refugee children, both who arrive as unaccompanied minors and as part of families. If needed, provide additional funding to the ERCM, so it can meet its goal of helping 10 new countries resettle 30,000 refugees over the next three years.

Cross-Cutting Recommendations

Earlier sections in this report contain specific policy recommendations that the Executive and Legislative branches of the U.S. government should immediately begin pursuing to improve assistance to child refugees for education, protection, food security and resettlement. But there are also three significant, cross-cutting necessities that emerged in all areas of our research. These three actions have the potential to significantly improve and sustain what have so far been best practices for assisting refugees. But for these necessities to become reality, sustained, high-level attention will be required from throughout the U.S. government. For the U.S. to continue its role as a leader in caring for refugees, particularly refugee children, we must:

1. Ensure increased transparency and accountability around U.S. assistance priorities
2. Invest more public resources in research and learning
3. Provide sustained global leadership.

Transparency and Accountability

For the purposes of this report, we specifically tried to rely on information that would be readily available to anyone interested in learning more about U.S. foreign assistance efforts to help refugee children. In a few instances, we reached out to the U.S. government or others to confirm information, or to seek assistance in identifying sources. However, we limited ourselves to publicly available data to the greatest extent possible.

At present, the U.S. provides publicly available information about its refugee assistance funding in four primary ways:

- Annual reports to Congress
- The president's annual budget request
- Year-end summaries of government spending, broken down by region and implementing partner
- Announcements of commitments to provide funding for specific crises, or as part of a global outreach, for high-level events

Yet even with these tools at our disposal, we found it difficult to reliably track U.S. investment levels in any sector, including those announced as specific priorities.

We can look at the education sector as an example. Public records gave us the chance to applaud the 2016 pledge of \$37 million to UNHCR for education, and affirm administration assurances that education would be a programming priority for bilateral assistance. However, we had a difficult time telling whether the commitments translated into across-the-board resource increases for education programming, compared to previous fiscal years. Even efforts to compare development education sector spending as a whole in top refugee hosting countries (rather than just for refugees) proved to be a challenge and, ultimately, of scant value.

The state of the U.S. government's internal information management and financial systems, and their ability to integrate with one another, are undoubtedly one of the factors limiting availability of

information. UNHCR's reporting ability may also be a factor. We know that the U.S. government and UNHCR are working to address these challenges, but time is of the essence.

Events like the 2016 Leaders' Summit can have a short-term galvanizing affect on other donors and host countries. But the long-term impact of these efforts will be weakened if the U.S. cannot readily, and reliably, demonstrate that it will back up public statements with sustained commitments in everyday operations. It quickly needs to find a way to provide more transparency to its global partners, as well as to the American people, about where and how U.S. foreign assistance for refugees is spent. At a minimum, we would like to be able to tell how many girls and boys are served by U.S. refugee assistance each year and gather reliable data around sector-specific funding levels that can be compared across fiscal years.

Research and Learning

Although the U.S. government currently invests in refugee policy and program research, and does a fair job of publishing the results of the studies it underwrites, it could do considerably more. In the main body of this report, we suggested specific research initiatives that should be pursued. But to do this without shortchanging other types of research and evaluation, funds for research and learning will need to be increased and more rigor applied to developing priorities.

In each of the years covered by this review, the MRA account received annual appropriations at, or around, the \$3 billion mark. Yet the U.S. invested only a tiny fraction of that in research. It attempted to set research priorities and delineate discrete areas of inquiry. However, much more could be done to align research priorities with stated policy and program funding priorities. Given the dearth of available research on refugee populations in almost every facet of assistance provision, the U.S. should consider a special initiative, like one of its Grand Challenges for Development, in this area. Ideally, such an initiative would leverage public-private partnerships among American academic institutions, think tanks, foundations and NGO implementing partners.

Sustained Global Leadership

Finally, although this report assigned relatively high marks based on progress seen in U.S. refugee policy over the last three years, we believe those marks might have looked quite different – and lower – had we examined only 2017, the year after the New York Declaration was signed and Leaders' Summit commitments were made. There are several available examples of where actions and initiatives identified as positives in previous years look as if they will not be sustained in 2017 or after.

Given the fact that many U.S. commitments are made toward the end of the fiscal year, often at UNGA, we chose not to speculate about what would happen between now and then for purposes of issuing progress report grades. However, unless new U.S. commitments are made at or around the UNGA in 2017, future reports of this type may look far less positive. For example, while the U.S. pledged start-up funds to the new ECW platform in 2016 (an action we rated very highly in helping to improve refugee access to education), it has so far not announced new allocations to the fund for 2017.

Although the Trump administration's policymaking on resettlement was identified as a specific setback that occurred in 2017 (and one that significantly depressed scores in that area), our review sparked



Judi, 6, at a tented refugee settlement in Lebanon, near the Syrian border. Thousands of children and their families continue to stream in from neighboring countries.*

Photo: Jonathan Hyams/Save the Children

concern there could be a broader retreat from global leadership on refugees that is taking place both generally and across the U.S. government. This is, perhaps, another unwelcome effect of the new administration's "America first" orientation. But it also may be the result of a new administration that, more understandably, is trying to get its house in order, appointees in place and priorities identified. Administration officials like U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Hayley have publicly stated that the U.S. will continue to help refugees. After a visit to a Syrian refugee camp in 2017, Ambassador Hayley reportedly stated, "We're [the U.S.] the number one donor here through this crisis. That's not going to stop. We're not going to stop funding this."¹⁰⁸

Time will tell whether the signs we're seeing are harbingers of a full-scale American retreat from global leadership on refugee rights and responsibility sharing, or a narrower (and hopefully temporary) pulling back on resettlement, coupled with the disruption associated with any change in administration.

Given the continued growth of the refugee crisis, and the on-going work to fashion a new global compact on refugees in 2018, there is great need for the U.S. to reassert itself on the world stage. Going forward, all parts of the U.S. government will need to ensure American global leadership. In addition to the new administration working out its priorities and increasing high-level diplomatic engagement on the refugee crisis, staff must charge ahead in pursuing the ground work needed to prepare for successful compact negotiations. Congress should take a more active role in providing oversight and policy direction.

Annex A

SAFETY AND A FUTURE

A review of the self-identified needs of refugee and forcibly displaced children

To better understand refugee children's expectations of host governments and international donors, Save the Children reviewed and compared a set of 12 published surveys and consultations with child refugees and Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs), representing more than 1,000 children.

Five major categories of need were identified.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the consultations and across all contexts, these needs were sometimes stated negatively. Children identified conditions that they wanted to see changed, such as fear and hunger. At other times, however, their needs were expressed as positive hopes for the future, very often including a chance to go to school or return home. Regardless of whether the children interviewed were consulted in the middle of a conflict, or years after they had fled one, their self-identified needs during displacement remained largely the same. As one young refugee now living in Europe summed up, echoing what so many of the children said: "I wish for safety, freedom, and good possibilities to develop."

What Refugee Children Said They Need

- 1) Freedom from fear:** Children expressed a diverse set of fears, ranging from the safety of loved ones to personal concerns about the threat of attack. The need for psychosocial support to address the effects of prolonged fear was prevalent in many of the consultations.
 - In a series of interviews carried out by War Child UK in the Central African Republic, 95 percent of girls and 75 percent of boys identified their need for support to deal with trauma.¹¹⁰
 - "My life was in great danger and I could no longer live in peace," said one child from East Africa.¹¹¹
 - "Every time I hear a loud noise, like a plate dropping, it grabs my heart. I am always scared because there is always conflict," said another from the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹¹²
- 2) A permanent home:** Closely related to the desire to recover from trauma and live without fear was the expressed need to find permanence, either by returning to their place of origin or resettling somewhere else. For children displaced by conflict, the characteristics typically associated with "home" – including family, familiarity, friends and safe places to play – were sorely missed.
 - In Sierra Leone, 94 percent of girls and 90 percent of boys had their homes looted during conflict.¹¹³ Children returned to find their possessions taken and surroundings altered.

- A Syrian child resettled in Norway told an interviewer, “I have started to feel like I have a small family and friends here. But I miss my mum, my dad and my siblings.”¹¹⁴

3) Food and nutrition security: Hunger was one of the most common needs expressed by children throughout the consultations.

- In a joint consultation conducted in South Sudan by Save the Children and UNICEF, 68 percent of children interviewed listed hunger as their primary worry.^{cxv}
- In the words of one child: “I have been displaced all my life. It is to suffer every day without food.”^{cxvi}

4) Protection: Many children interviewed described feeling robbed of their childhoods and the need for immediate protection. Concerns of being forced into an early marriage, or to join armed groups, were expressed in several of the studies.

- **Early marriage:**

- Girls in South Sudan said education protected them from early marriage, but conflict often disrupted their formal schooling and limited their options for the future.^{cxvii}
- One 12-year-old girl said, “For us to be in school, it is safer than staying at home, because you cannot be forced to get married earlier.”^{cxviii}

- **Recruitment:**

Displaced and refugee children displayed complex feelings toward recruitment into local armed groups. Their desire was to live in a more peaceful world. But they struggled to imagine a life where they were safe and free from violence.

- One boy described feeling like he had no options, saying “Both of my parents and sisters were killed by rebels. I wasn’t even 10 years old, and I was all by myself. The rebels took me to their base... I was trained to fight.”^{cxix}
- Another young boy told interviewers, “I feel protected, and that is what I want to be in the future: protected. I want peace, security, and improvement.”^{cxx}

3) Education: In addition to identifying school as a place that provides protection, children expressed a desire to continue learning, so they could obtain a brighter future.

- A young refugee from Afghanistan stated, “I always wanted to be a doctor, but I was not allowed to go to school. ... We stayed as refugees, and our papers did not allow me to go.”^{cxxi}
- A girl from Cameroon asked to describe her life in a camp told interviewers, “School is the only good thing that comes to my mind. I entered secondary school and had a chance to learn.”^{cxvii}

Endnotes

¹ The report examines whole-of-government policy and budget development, it does not attempt to measure specific impacts of U.S.-funded refugee programming on the ground. For example, although we included the amount and type of U.S. budgetary and spending commitments in this review, we did not seek to assess where or how those commitments were operationalized.

² UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2016,” (2017), available at <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>. This number does not include 5.3 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA’s mandate.

³ UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2016,” (2017), available at <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>.

⁴ A 2016 analysis by Save the Children entitled “Forced to Flee: Inside the 21st largest country” compared available data on displaced children with country-level data for all children and found that displaced children are being left far behind their non-refugee peers, both in terms of their immediate circumstances and investments in their future. The report is available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FORCED_TO_FLEE.PDF.

⁵ Children expressed a wide range of needs and priorities and any attempt to distill them down into broad categories is, by its very nature, reductionist. These categories were chosen, however, based on the frequency with which they were expressed across different contexts; the severity of the children’s concerns and, given public information availability, our ability to adequately assess U.S. policy and practice in the area.

⁶ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources maintains a resource library that includes some research study but it is not clear how many of them were supported with U.S. government funds or other support.

⁷ UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” (2016), available at <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>.

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¹¹ Dryden-Peterson, Sarah. “A Future for Syrian Children: Integration in National Education Systems,” the Huffington Post, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-drydenpeterson/a-future-for-syrian-child_b_8631316.html.

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¹³ Nicolai, Susan, Romilly Greenhill, Maria Ana Jalles d’Orey, Arran Magee, Andrew Rogerson, Leni Wild, and Joseph Wales, Overseas Development Institute, “Education Cannot Wait: a fund for education in emergencies,” (May 2016), available at <https://www.odi.org/publications/10405-education-cannot-wait-fund-education-emergencies>.

¹⁴ Associated Press, “Jordan gets \$100 million for education of Syrian refugees,” (last updated August 22, 2016), available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2016/08/22/Jordan-gets-100-million-for-education-of-Syrian-refugees.html>

¹⁵ No Lost Generation, “No Lost Generation: January - December 2016,” (2016), available at <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/NLG%20end%20of%20year%20update%202016%281%29.pdf>.

¹⁶ Office of the Press Secretary, “Fact Sheet: World Humanitarian Summit - U.S. Government Priorities,” The White House, (May 24, 2016), available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/24/fact-sheet-world-humanitarian-summit-us-government-priorities>.

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²² Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “Cancellation of FY 2017 Request for PRM Humanitarian Research Concept Notes,” (March 6, 2017), <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/funding/fy2017/266911.htm>.

²³ Leaders’ Summit on Refugees Follow Up: An Expert Level Meeting on Improving Refugees Access to Education, hosted in Geneva on June 19, 2017.

²⁴ Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development Act of 2017, H.R. 601 / S. 623, 115th Congress, (2017), full text available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/601>.

²⁵ Provided for purposes of comparing to FY15 levels.

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²⁷ Includes \$300 million from the continuing resolution H.J. Res. 99, “Making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2017, and for other purposes.” (April 26, 2017), more information available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-joint-resolution/99>.

²⁸ These amounts were calculated from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking System (OCHA FTS), available at <https://fts.unocha.org/donors/2933/summary/2017>. They do not reflect multi-sectoral funding that may include education for refugees.

²⁹ As of August 2017. Funding levels reflected in the FTS database are retroactive and FY17 is not yet complete.

³⁰ Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “PRM-funded Research and Evaluation,” (as of July 23, 2017), data available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/prmfund/index.htm>.

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³⁴ In future work, Save the Children intends to expand this analysis to other protection threats experienced by refugee children (such as domestic violence and sexual abuse) and to focus on particularly vulnerable sub-groups (e.g. unaccompanied minors).

³⁵ Save the Children, “Save the Children’s Definition of Child Protection,” (Adopted on December 10, 2007), available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/save-childrens-definition-child-protection>.

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³⁷ Women’s Refugee Commission, “A Girl No More: The Changing Norms of Child Marriage in Conflict,” (March 2016), available at <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/girls/resources/1311-girl-no-more>.

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³⁹ Girls Not Brides, “What is the impact?” (last updated 2016), available at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/what-is-the-impact/>.

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⁴¹ Girls Not Brides, “What is the Theory of Change?” (last updated 2017), available at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-theory-of-change/>.

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⁴⁷ The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008, S. 2135, 110th Congress, (2008), full text available at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135981.pdf>.

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⁵² Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, "U.S. Funding for Safe from the Start Announced at the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies," (October 1, 2015), available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2015/247642.htm>.

⁵³ Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, "2016 Safe From the Start Funding and Projects," (March 21, 2017), available at <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/268581.htm>.

⁵⁴ Figures are based on filtered totals of protection funding information available through OCHA's financial tracking services. This information is accessible at <https://fts.unocha.org/donors/2933/flows/2016?f%5B0%5D=destinationGlobalClusterIdName%3A%2210%3AProtection%22>.

⁵⁵ The White House, "Memorandum for the Secretary of State: Determination with Respect to the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008," (September 29, 2015), available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/presidential-determination-and-memorandum-determination-respect-child>.

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⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, "United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls," (March 2016), available at

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Rami lives in an informal tented settlement in Bekaa valley, Lebanon.*



Nasim, 13, and his six-year-old brother Mahmud* in the one small room that is now their family's home in a camp in Northern Greece.*



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THE REFUGEE CHILDREN'S PROGRESS REPORT

Grading U.S. Refugee Policy From 2015-2017

The Refugee Children's Progress Report gives grades to U.S. policy progress on four issues central to the health and well-being of refugee children: **education, child protection, food security and resettlement.**

Nearly half of the world's 17.2 million refugees are under 18 years old. And refugees of all ages now spend an average of 20 years living in exile. This means millions of refugee children will spend their entire childhood, teen and young adult years living in refugee camps or other displacement settings. U.S. foreign assistance commitments to help meet essential refugee education, food and protection needs will mean the possibility of brighter futures for millions of these children. Continued U.S. resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable will also allow hundreds of thousands of young refugees to go to bed at night feeling safe and secure.