



ADVANCING PROTECTION AND CARE FOR  
CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY

# THE PROVEN VALUE OF NURTURING CARE

ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS    DECEMBER 2022





**Working toward a world in which all children thrive  
within protective, loving families,  
free from deprivation, violence, and danger.**

*Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity (APCCA)*



Cover: Zhannat Akmat Kyzy is a mother to five children, including her newborn daughter. Photo: Maxime Fossat, USAID;  
Right: Parents spending quality time with their young child in Gicumbi District. UNICEF supports monthly nutrition screenings  
in this district, where parents gather to screen their children for malnutrition, listen to nutrition education talks, and  
participate in cooking demonstrations led by community health workers. Photo: ©UNICEF/UN0795718/Muellenmeister.



# U.S. GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCING PROTECTION AND CARE FOR CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY: A U.S. GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE (2019–2023)



Dear Colleagues,

Since 2019, the Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity (APCCA) Strategy has directed the U.S. government's commitment to the development, care, dignity, and safety of the world's most vulnerable children and their families. The breadth of this effort requires the collaboration of agencies across the U.S. government and is coordinated through an interagency working group comprised of five principal partners: the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor (DOL), State (DOS); the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Peace Corps.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic stripped millions of children and young people of the services they needed at critical times in their lives. The data show this will cause setbacks in human capital development that will impact countries for a generation or more, if we do not act. Furthermore, the impacts were largest for those who were most disadvantaged—the children and families that the APCCA Strategy targets. There is no denying that the scope of work that lies before us is profound, complex, and challenging. Yet, the achievements we see each year through these reports clearly illustrate that together we are making a measurable difference in the lives of children and families, one that bears iterating and scaling globally.

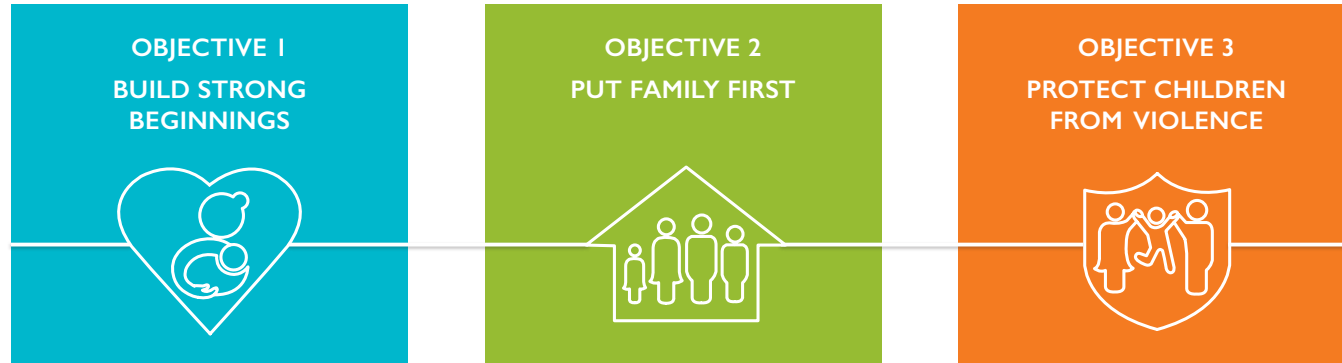
This report highlights APCCA achievements from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021, and other key achievements to date. Please note: this year, we've taken a slightly different approach to our reporting. We've integrated the data provided by our partners with personal stories from the field. We must evaluate the efficacy of our efforts through a data-driven lens, but we also need to view them in the context of their human impacts. Because every time we change a child's life through one of our programs, we are reminded of our capability and responsibility to build systems that shape a better future for all.

Thank you for your continued support of our efforts,

Rebecca Levy  
Special Advisor  
Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity

## ADVANCING PROTECTION AND CARE FOR CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The APCCA Strategy builds on three evidence-based objectives that inform the U.S. government’s policies and programs to benefit the world’s most-vulnerable children. These objectives are interrelated, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing. Success with each objective creates a multiplier effect by contributing to a solid foundation to protect children and adolescents from a wide array of risks and supporting their development, care, and safety.



### OBJECTIVE 1: BUILD STRONG BEGINNINGS

The U.S. government will promote nurturing care for the most-vulnerable newborns and young children, starting before birth, by funding and supporting comprehensive and integrated programming in early-childhood development to provide for children’s health, nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving for social and emotional well-being, and opportunities for early learning.



### OBJECTIVE 2: PUT FAMILY FIRST

The U.S. government will support those most vulnerable children who are, or are at risk of, living outside of family care by promoting, funding, and supporting nurturing, loving, protective, and permanent family care.



### OBJECTIVE 3: PROTECT CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

The U.S. government will promote, fund, and support the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect by investing in preventative and responsive programming.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The U.S. government is committed to achieving these strategic objectives by adhering to a set of guiding principles that underscore each objective and are critical to their success.



### ADAPT APPROACHES

The U.S. government will adapt programs and policies to a child’s age, life stage, and gender, with attention to disabilities, to increase the effectiveness of the interventions it funds.



### STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS

The U.S. government will assist governments and civil society in partner countries to build and strengthen their capacities to support, manage, and finance their social-service and child-protection systems fully.



### GENERATE AND USE EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMATION

The U.S. government will use the best available data for decision-making and employ research, implementation science, and programmatic learning to design evidence-based and evidence-informed policies, programs, and practices and adapt them according to the findings.



### CREATE SYNERGIES

The U.S. government will work across Departments and Agencies to promote the best possible outcomes for children and families around the world by fostering synergies across sectors and breaking down silos where they exist.



### PROMOTE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The U.S. government will engage and mobilize a broad range of resources and stakeholders, including governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, and donors to increase the scale and effectiveness of the U.S. government’s international efforts.



# REPORT TO CONGRESS FY 2021

## THE PROVEN VALUE OF NURTURING CARE

### RESPONDING TO A CHILD MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

We see it in their smiles, in their eyes as they light up when a parent or caretaker coos and cuddles them. But we also see it as their brains develop. We know now that responsive care has impacts that reach far beyond those smiles.

Mother Zukhra Gadaeva feeds her baby after learning about best feeding practices from a USAID Advancing Nutrition community volunteer. In the Kyrgyz Republic, USAID Advancing Nutrition works to improve the nutritional status of women of reproductive age and children under 5, with a focus on the 1,000-day Window of Opportunity. Photo: Maxime Fossat, USAID.

When the Global Child Thrive Act was enacted into law in January 2021, it reinforced the U.S. government's commitment to ensuring that the youngest children—from age 0–8—are given a healthy head start in their development. The outcomes of that effort were evident this year, as the U.S. government (USG) saw results in our programs that point directly to the value we place on nurturing care and the dramatic impact it has on early childhood development (ECD).

The core principle behind nurturing care lies in addressing a child's most basic needs—responding to them when they cry, feeding them when they're hungry, playing with them, engaging them in communication, ensuring a safe and secure environment—and when we do, the reward is social, emotional, and cognitive development that significantly improves the odds of children forming healthy relationships, and becoming productive, contributing members of society. These are the essential building blocks that children need, not just in their early years, but all throughout childhood, to thrive.

### COVID-19: From Crisis to Healing

Perhaps there is no greater time for nurturing care initiatives to be implemented than in the aftermath of a crisis. The prevalence of children facing adversities has sharply increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. If FY 2020 taught us to be adaptable in the face of the global pandemic, FY 2021 required confronting the secondary impacts of the crisis head on: picking up the pieces of families splintered by the virus that left millions of children without a parent or primary caregiver. APCCA partners created a global network to disseminate critical information to prevent and respond to child protection risks, and distribute strategic guidelines to help surviving parents, caregivers, and community leaders navigate those uncharted waters as safely as possible.

*This report covers progress and results by USG partners from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021, and other key achievements to date.*

At the same time, we kept a laser focus on continuing to design and implement programs that would positively impact nurturing care for the long term by providing adequate protection and family-based care for children at risk of or experiencing abuse, exploitation, and/or severe neglect.

### Moving Forward: Nurturing Care + Inclusive Development = EXPONENTIAL IMPACT

From its inception, we've seen how the APCCA Strategy's three main objectives: Build Strong Beginnings, Put Families First, and Protect Children from Violence form the foundation of a healthy childhood. In FY 2021, we built on that foundation by expanding on the essential interrelated components of nurturing care: Adequate Nutrition, Opportunities for Early Learning, Responsive Caregiving, Safety and Security, and Good Health with a keen eye on planning for a healthier future.

Through programs that focus on responsive parenting like Sugira Muryango (Strong Families, Thriving Children) and Responsible, Engaged, and Loving (REAL) Fathers, our partners demonstrated quantifiable success in early trials that resulted in scaling those pilot programs to include more families in more countries—progress that is highlighted in these pages.

Another critical element that shined through APCCA reporting this year is that of inclusive development. Our partners continue to develop programs that expand equal opportunity to learn, work, heal, and grow to ALL of our citizens, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or physical ability. This report, divided into key data indicators and stories from the field, highlights those initiatives and their impacts, seen through both individual and collective lenses. By building upon the current trajectory we can ensure the world's children will have a bright, resilient tomorrow.



## ADVANCING PROTECTION AND CARE FOR CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY INDICATORS FOR FY 2021

The APCCA Interagency Working Group identified four categories that participating USG departments and agencies contribute to through their programs, projects, and activities. The following numbers reflect those results.

28,651,572

Children receiving services such as family tracing and reunification or other child development, protection, safety, and well-being support



1,531,513

Parents or caregivers receiving services such as psychosocial support and training in positive parenting practices

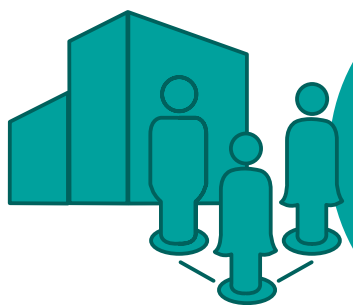
223,826

Service providers trained to deliver high-quality support to vulnerable children and their families



1,477

Governmental and nongovernmental organizations with strengthened capacity to provide services and support to children and their families

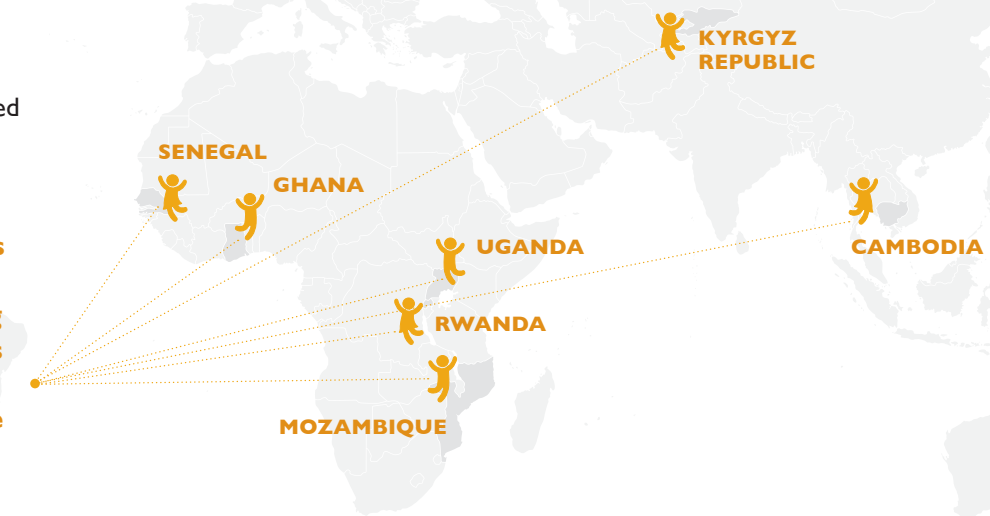


## GLOBAL CHILD THRIVE ACT HIGHLIGHTS

The following highlights illustrate APCCA's commitment to Build Strong Beginnings in alignment with the Global Child Thrive Act (GCTA)

### USAID CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY

The Children in Adversity team led USAID's efforts to **promote responsive care practices and create early learning opportunities for children under the age of 8 in seven countries.**



### DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION (PRM)

PRM implemented a program to **bolster positive parenting practices** among families of children on the move to improve early childhood development outcomes. The intervention **promoted early learning, responsive caregiving, and safety and security**, among other practices.

### USAID CENTER FOR EDUCATION

USAID's Center for Education provides Missions with technical support in the design and implementation of pre-primary programming for children ages 3–8. Five additional Missions supported pre-primary programming in 2021 and **the number of learners in pre-primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached 337,595—a 15-fold increase from 2020.**



### USAID OFFICE OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION



Nurturing care is a key component of USAID's flagship nutrition project. In 2021, the **number of children under 2 reached with community-level nutrition interventions** through U.S. government-supported programs **amounted to more than 8 million.**

### MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION (MCC) AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

Two new USG actors, **MCC and USDA, joined the APCCA interagency working group** in support of the GCTA and APCCA.



## PROJECT SNAPSHOT

# POSITIVE PARENTING BEGINS WITH RESPONSIBLE, ENGAGED, AND LOVING (REAL) FATHERS

Samuel\* helps his wife clean up after the evening meal and bathes his two-year-old daughter before putting her to bed. The scene would not be unusual in many countries, but in Samuel's community in Uganda, men have largely been disconnected from rearing their children or helping with domestic chores, tasks they looked at as belonging strictly to their female partners and weakening their role as the head of household. But that mentality has been shifting since the Responsible, Engaged, and Loving (REAL) Fathers program was implemented here, a program that has shown promise, not only in changing parental roles, but in reducing violence in the home.

\*Name has been changed to protect his identity.

The primary objective of the REAL Fathers Initiative was to develop and test a set of interventions to reduce intimate partner violence and violence against children among fathers (ages 16–35).

Particularly noteworthy is how eye opening it has been for participants. The young fathers described the experience as “opening their hearts and minds,” or “being awakened,” and consequently were able to shift their thinking to imagining a vastly different role for themselves in relation to their wives and children.

Key Takeaways from the pilot program included:

- Fathers have taken on more responsibility for child rearing as a result of the program and improved their relationships with their partners and children.
- Couples have engaged in shared decision-making and responsibilities, leading to more mutual respect and understanding in their marriage.
- Parents' use of positive discipline with their children and the elimination or reduction of corporal punishment has made children less afraid of their parents and more likely to spend time with them.

Given the program's success in shifting men's perceptions and reducing violence in the home in Uganda, further funding was provided in FY 2021 to adapt, implement, and evaluate the REAL Fathers approach in two new contexts: Rwanda and Senegal.

At baseline in both countries, more than half of fathers used violent discipline toward their children, and intimate partner violence was perceived as normal and acceptable in their communities in the three months before the study, clearly demonstrating the need for positive parenting guidance in families with men in the targeted age range.

The results were equally promising across the board in the new programs. Among these was the reduction or elimination of alcohol use by some fathers, which allowed them to save money, spend more time with their children, and reduce intimate partner violence, a benefit to both mothers and fathers, and ultimately to the children in their care.

Samuel sums up the progress he has made with pride.

“There's no more fighting or misunderstandings in the home. This project has taught us a lot on how to live with our women and children. It has really made us responsible parents.”

—Samuel, REAL Fathers program participant



Photos: Institute for Reproductive Health.



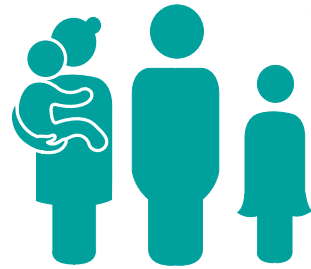
## AGENCY SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

AAPCA partners shared accomplishments specific to their agencies or departments. Below are highlights of those achievements.

# 180

## interventions

Working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Colombia National Action Plan to End Violence Against Children and Adolescents identified 180 interventions focused on preventing violence against children or improving responses for protection of children.



An innovative study funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development focuses on the reintegration of children from orphanages into families in Azerbaijan and includes mental health screening and referral for treatment, plus economic empowerment in the form of Child Savings Accounts.

The Department of State's Office of Children's Issues provided insight into U.S. Central Authority operations on the Hague Adoption Convention to governments from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Togo, and Zambia.



The Department of State's Trafficking in Persons office funded Child Protection Compact partnerships to combat child trafficking in Peru, Mongolia, Jamaica, and the Philippines, resulting in a substantial number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) supported nearly 700,000 children on lifesaving Antiretroviral Therapy and enabled more than 3 million babies to be born HIV-free to mothers living with HIV. They provided critical care and support for 7.1 million orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers.



USAID's Children, Youth, and Families Team formed a Care Leaders Council in 2021 comprised of global youth with personal and professional experience in alternative care (such as orphanages or foster care).



The Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance funded 224 awards of which 95 supported field-level child protection, prevention, and response activities. Collectively, these interventions supported over 1.6 million people in 41 countries.

# 95

## activities



The U.S. Department of Labor awarded over \$29 million in new grants to combat child labor and forced labor in over ten countries.



Following the evacuation of all Peace Corps volunteers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency maintained their commitment to support children, families, and communities by pivoting to virtual service in FY 2021. Throughout the year, participants spent 5-10 hours per week collaborating with host country counterparts through meaningful virtual engagement.







## PROJECT SNAPSHOT

# ENHANCE PROJECT: NURTURING DREAMS, PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY

High-quality vocational training is promoting the development of a skilled future workforce for Vietnam, and disrupting the generational cycle of child labor and poverty.

As a young child growing up in An Giang, a rural province of Vietnam, Ngân dreamed of helping her parents, who struggled financially. At 14, she dropped out of school and left home in search of a job that would allow her to contribute to the family's finances. But it wasn't as easy to find work as she'd hoped.

"I submitted my application to five or six companies, but they all refused me," she said. "After a while, I found a job at a wood processing company. I had to carry and press wood, which was very heavy." It was also unsafe.

Ngân became one of the estimated 519,805 children in Vietnam engaged in hazardous child labor, accounting for 50.4 percent of all children engaged in child labor across the country. That means that more than half of children in child labor in Vietnam are involved in work that poses significant risks to their health, safety, and morals.

Ngân's life turned a corner when she learned about a new vocational training program implemented with support from a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)-funded project called ENHANCE.

The goal of the project is to build a comprehensive, efficient, multi-stakeholder response for the prevention and reduction of child labor in the country. The project provides training for 14- to 17-year-olds in a range of sectors based on their needs, interests, and local market demands.

Through the program, Ngân completed a six-month course on nail and massage techniques and worked as an assistant for the beauty parlor of the vocational training institution to earn while she learned and further improve her skills. "I learned many things: how to do nails, give massages, and wash hair," she noted. "I also learned additional skills, like skin care."

After the training, Ngân finished a two-month apprenticeship, then received post-training support from the project to buy her own hairdressing and manicure tools, allowing her to set up her own business. Ngân's dream never wavered; she hoped to land a stable job so she could help provide for her family.



Now, through the program, she finally gained the skills she needed to do so.

Her mother, who has watched Ngân learn and grow over the past few years, is proud of her daughter's accomplishments. "Since Ngân completed that course, she has become more mature," she said. "Now, she can take care of her own beauty parlor, her own family."

Today, at 21, life looks very different for Ngân. She recently married, had a child, and is a budding entrepreneur with her own hair and nail salon in her house.



**My husband and child are my motivation. I want to work hard so my child has good care and has whatever other kids have. I want to ensure a better life for my child. My life has become more stable. I can make contributions to my family. I feel so lucky.**

—Ngân, ENHANCE Project Participant

Photos: Department of Labor-funded International Labour Organization.



# WHERE WE WORK

Since the 2019 launch of the APCCA Strategy, the USG partners that contribute to the Strategy have continued to work together effectively to identify and achieve joint goals. The map below indicates where USG partners who contribute to the APCCA Strategy are working worldwide.



- Afghanistan
- Angola
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Bangladesh
- Belize
- Bolivia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Botswana
- Brazil
- Burkina Faso
- Burma
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Chile
- Colombia
- Congo
- Costa Rica
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Dominican Republic
- Eastern and Southern Caribbean
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Eswatini
- Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Georgia
- Ghana
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Honduras
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Kosovo
- Kyrgyz Republic
- Laos
- Lebanon
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Libya
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Malaysia
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mexico
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Nepal
- Nicaragua
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Republic of the Congo
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- South Africa
- South Sudan
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Suriname
- Syria
- Tajikistan
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Timor Leste
- Tunisia
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- Uruguay
- Uzbekistan
- Venezuela
- Vietnam
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

For a more detailed view of where APCCA partners work, please visit: <https://www.childreninadversity.gov/where-we-work>



## PROJECT SNAPSHOT

# WHEN A CHILD WANTS TO LEARN...

USAID-funded Gateway to Education Project takes a multi-pronged approach to ensuring ALL children have access to quality education.

“Ramez\* loves going to school, but because he can’t walk on his own, I used to carry him on my back every day,” said Abdulrahman,\* Ramez’ father. His son, now 12, was born with a physical disability that affected his hands and legs, making him dependent on his parents to move.

“I struggle to look after him and provide him with the medications and care he needs because of our financial situation,” his father lamented. “Lately I have been trying to spend all my time trying to make ends meet and provide food for the table. Ramez had to miss some weeks from school because there was no one to take him.”



That changed when Ramez was referred into the USAID-funded Gateway to Education project, implemented by Save the Children. Ramez was one of 741 children with mobility, visual, and/or hearing disabilities in the region who were referred through the program to centers or clinics in Aden specializing in diagnostic testing to provide assistive devices. There, Ramez received a USAID-sponsored wheelchair to help him move around, participate, and stay in school.

Over the next three years, the Gateway to Education project team plans to support up to 1,000 children with disabilities with access to quality basic education through referrals to medical and rehabilitation services, education placement, and counseling, a prime example of USAID’s expanded focus on disability inclusion.

Left: Samira\*, a student in remedial education writing at Ammar Al-Dobba School in Lahj Governorate, Yemen. USAID/Yemen Gateway to Education project. Photo: Saeed Saeed, Save the Children Yemen; Above: Ramez, accompanied by his father, receives a USAID-funded wheelchair at Habil Al Sabha Primary School in Habil Jabr District, Lahj Governorate. Photo: USAID/Gateway Project/Save the Children.

\*Names have been changed to protect their identities.



This wheelchair I received is strong and cool! It can take me to school. I like it, it is new and awesome. I am happy because I can now go to school and to the mosque by myself. I want to learn and do things by myself without help all the time.

—Ramez, Gateway to Education Project Participant

This is but one aspect of Gateway’s multi-pronged approach to educating Yemen’s children. The project also provides significant resources to enroll and keep girls in school, prevent recruitment of boys into armed groups, and prevent early marriage for girls while supporting families facing economic constraints.

As Ramez states unequivocally: “If I was the president of Yemen, I would help all the children. I will help them with their education and not forget about them.” Wise words from a child who is learning first hand the importance of an inclusive world.

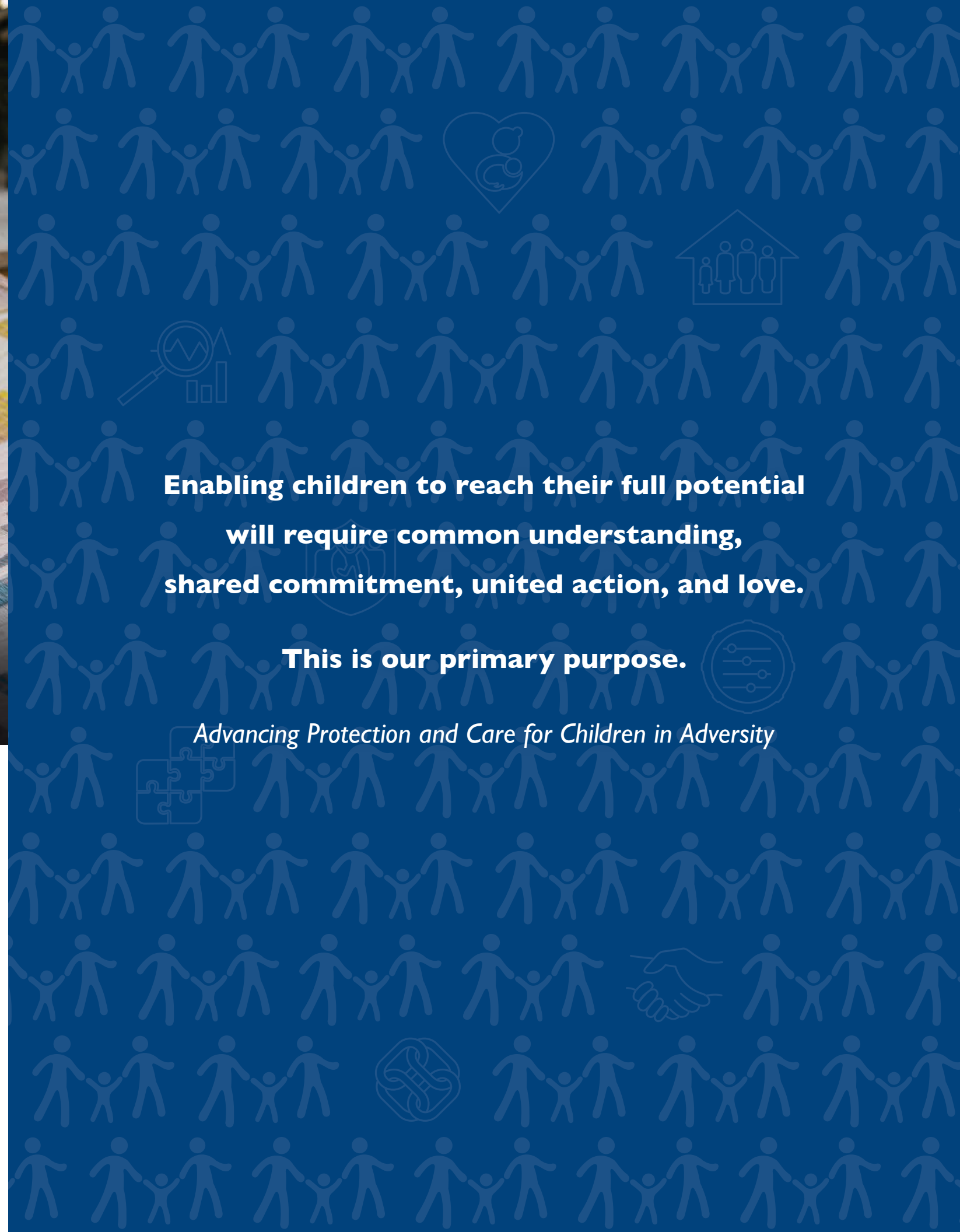






In Nepal, malnutrition is common among women and children, with more than 35 percent of children under 5 malnourished. USAID works to improve the health and nutrition of women and children and to motivate individuals like Bimala Chaudhary to become role models in their communities. Through efforts to support pregnant women and new mothers, USAID has increased the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in supported communities in Nepal from 45 percent to 71 percent in the past 5 years. Photo: Dave Cooper for USAID.

The monitoring and evaluating system for the APCCA Strategy, along with an Appendix with additional FY 2021 data and results from APCCA partners can be found on the Children in Adversity website: <https://www.childreninadversity.gov/resources>



**Enabling children to reach their full potential will require common understanding, shared commitment, united action, and love.**

**This is our primary purpose.**

*Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity*





[www.childreninadversity.gov](http://www.childreninadversity.gov)