

Using Data to Support Families Facing Adversity

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A safe, stable, and nurturing family environment is integral to a child's healthy development. Parental responsiveness and sensitivity to a child's needs can help a child develop a strong sense of self-worth, and foster resilience. However, many families around the world are struggling to provide adequate care and protection for children and face increasing challenges considering political instability, climate change and the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effects of inadequate care and protection can be severe and long-lasting for children. Exposure to prolonged adversity or stress, such as parental depression, violence, or poverty, can have negative impacts on their development and well-being.

Families facing adversity require support to ensure the well-being of their children. There is a need for early identification, ensuring the correct services are provided, and follow-up, so any family or economic changes can be addressed immediately. These steps are essential and are accompanied by human resource and financial demands. A commitment to providing this support is critical, to protect children and provide the best long-term outcomes.

International Day of Families provides an important opportunity to reflect and promote awareness of issues that families face and the support needed in response. This day is a call to action, to ensure families are provided with the tools and resources they need, to provide safe, secure, and nurturing home environments that allow children to thrive.

How Can Data Improve Support to Families Facing Adversity?

Reliable data can help governments, communities, and organisations to identify families that are or at risk of experiencing difficulties, gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by families and apply the most effective evidence-based practices to ensure better outcomes for families and children.

Data can also help evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and services and identify areas for improvement. For instance, tracking the outcomes of families and children who participate in social programs, such as parenting or family violence prevention programs, can provide valuable insights into how these programs can be optimised to better support families in need.

In addition, data can be used to advocate for policy changes that address the root causes of adversity, such as poverty, and social exclusion. By using data to support families and children facing adversity, we can create more effective and equitable systems that promote child well-being and support families in providing a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

What is Palladium Doing to Strengthen Data Systems and Evidence-Informed Decision-Making?

Palladium recognises that the first step in improving outcomes for families is to understand their needs and the challenges they face. Over the last 15 years, Palladium, through USAID-funded [MEASURE Evaluation](#) and [Data for Impact \(D4I\)](#) has supported countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, Colombia, Armenia, and Moldova to review or develop tools and methodologies to assess child and family vulnerability and ascertain needs of vulnerable families— to ensure families receive the appropriate support and services they need. D4I is also supporting the development or strengthening of information systems to ensure data are available to inform decisions on resources to support families and help coordinate services across multiple providers, ensuring that families receive comprehensive and integrated support.

Tools to assess vulnerability

Through MEASURE Evaluation, Palladium supported Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) to assess the usefulness and feasibility of using the [Vulnerability Index \(VI\)](#), a tool to identify vulnerable households and the extent of their vulnerability; and developed the [Child Status Index \(CSI\)](#), which provides a



framework for identifying the needs of children, creating individualised goal-directed service plans for use in monitoring the well-being of children and households, and program-level monitoring and planning at the local level. The Household Vulnerability Assessment tool (HVA), which is an adaptation of the Vulnerability Index, initially developed by the MGLSD is widely used by agencies to inform decisions to enroll or graduate vulnerable families from support programs. The tool is designed to provide a standardised and objective way of measuring vulnerability, considering factors such as income, assets, access to services, and other socio-economic indicators.

Assessing family vulnerability is an important aspect of ensuring that vulnerable families receive the support they need to improve their living conditions. By using these tools, agencies can identify the families most in need of support and tailor their interventions accordingly.

Uganda District Local Government Staff, Buikwe district

Tracking progress and outcomes of family strengthening services

D4I has supported governments to identify and build consensus around a minimum set of indicators covering different aspects of care and protection, as well as supported the development of Monitoring and Evaluation plans to aid government-level tracking of progress in the implementation of plans to roll out and sustain family-support services. For example, in Uganda, D4I has supported the MGLSD to identify and build consensus on a core set of indicators to inform the development of a comprehensive and integrated Child Wellbeing Management Information System (CWMIS), in line with the National Child Policy, 2020. The CWMIS seeks to improve access to and availability of quality data, information-sharing and national tracking of outcomes.

Similarly, the D4I team worked alongside Moldovan authorities to create a list of 70 indicators to help monitor child protection policies and practices, including those aimed at monitoring violence against children, and how well cases are managed. This work has empowered government agencies and territorial social assistance structures to apply evidence when making critical decisions around child protection and care.

Strengthening case management information systems

Palladium is also working with governments to strengthen case management information systems (CMIS). A well-functioning CMIS can help caseworkers identify and prioritise the most pressing issues, develop individualised service plans, and track progress and outcomes. Alongside country-specific CMIS strengthening and development efforts in Moldova, Armenia, and Rwanda under D4I, a [Case Management Information Systems \(CMIS\) Assessment and Planning Toolkit](#) was developed to improve the capacity of governments to evaluate digital systems to support child protection and case management activities and assess the potential for scaling up and achieving long-term sustainability. It provides a thorough guide for government agencies to identify the gaps and needs of case management systems through an organisational self-assessment, followed by a set of questionnaires to evaluate solutions.

Case management is a collaborative process to identify individuals vulnerable to certain risks, assess their needs and strengths to ensure that their rights are being met, set goals in a participatory manner with the client, provide direct or referral services, follow up, evaluate progress, and terminate the case when the goals have been met.

Promoting evidence-based decision making

Palladium is promoting the use of data analytics and visualisations tools, training and capacity building on data visualisation and use, and supporting the governments to convene [data review meetings and data review rooms](#). The aim is to facilitate data use— to advance the care and protection of children, and ensure families receive the support they need to thrive.

The establishment of Data Review Rooms in Moldova was prompted by the growing number of Ukrainians crossing the border, as the refugee response developed, the understanding of the needs of those displaced by conflict grows accordingly. [The rooms have provided technology-enabled data analytics and visualization platforms](#) that integrate and triangulate data from multiple sources to facilitate stakeholder-led action planning. Data can demonstrate the number of families crossing the border from Ukraine, track if they reside in homes or in refugee accommodations centres, and ensure resources are available to meet their immediate and long-term health, education, and economic needs.

Prima Cameră de examinare a datelor din Moldova




“The Data Review Room provides a platform for more comprehensive, multi-sectoral analyses that will augment understanding of the challenges faced by refugees, hosts, and the rayon across different, though often intersecting, domains, such as social assistance, education, health care, and child protection.”

Scott Hocklander, USAID Moldova Mission Director

Without Data, We Lack Tools to Support Families

International Day of Families presents a valuable opportunity to reaffirm our dedication to supporting vulnerable families. It is a day to collectively reflect on the importance of families and ensure the most vulnerable have adequate resources and tools needed to provide a positive home environment for their children.

Leveraging high-quality data empowers both government and non-government agencies to gain a deeper understanding of the specific challenges faced by vulnerable families. Which in turn, facilitates the development of efficient support systems and the implementation of targeted, impactful interventions that are responsive to the diverse circumstances of these families. Palladium’s work in multiple countries enables government and non-government agencies to effectively harness this data-driven approach, to protect children, and ensure better outcomes. 



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