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Puerto Rico's children mired in poverty

Alarming conditions may get worse by impact of Hurricane Maria

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (June 27, 2018) — Child poverty levels in Puerto Rico have remained alarmingly steady and a new report shows that there has been no improvement in the last 10 years. Fifty-six percent of children still live below the poverty line, with 84 percent living in high-poverty areas. These children are not only the poorest population group on the island, but the poorest compared to the American nation, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

These statistics are alarming considering the local situation after Hurricane Maria, which poses a great threat to the economic security of many families with children and has created conditions that can lead to an increase in child poverty rates.

According to the *Data Book*, Puerto Rico again presents the worst economic conditions for children in the United States, including having the highest rates of children below the poverty level (56 percent), children whose parents lack secure employment (53 percent) and young people not in school and not working (13 percent). The lack of access to opportunities for these children is worrying since studies show that there is a greater probability of having more serious health problems, lower academic achievement, and a potential to perpetuate the generational cycle of poverty, in comparison with kids who live in households with economic security.

In terms of the households they live in, the *Data Book* estimates that 368,000 children in Puerto Rico live with parents who do not have a secure job that allows their economic mobility. Similarly, the study shows that between 2010 and 2016 there was an increase in the number of children living in single-parent families, which totals 405,000 kids or 61 percent. On a positive note, the percent of children living in homes where the head of the household does not have a high school diploma is 15%, slightly lower than the national average.

While further investment is needed to achieve progress for kids, this year's report shows several improvements in the well-being of Puerto Rico's kids:

- **Children living in households with a high housing cost burden:** 27 percent or 189,000 (16 percent decrease since 2010)
- **Young children between 3 and 4 years not in school:** 35 percent or 27,000 (22 percent decrease since 2009-2011)
- **Children without health insurance:** Three percent or 20,000 (25 percent decrease since 2010. In this sense, Puerto Rico is performing better than the United States.
- **Child and Teen Deaths** (per 100,000): 23 (8 percent decrease since 2010)

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses data from the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Center for Health Statistics, among others sources of information; and focuses on presenting trends on the well-being

of children and youth in all states and jurisdictions of the United States in four categories: economy, education, health, and family.

"In addition to these data, we must consider that the population of children has been reduced by 29 percent during the last seven years. Given this reality, it is necessary to develop a coherent and child-centered public policy as a key component of the island's economic development in the short- and long-term. We must prioritize public investments in children at all costs, and see them as a necessary investment for the economic engine. This includes programs that simultaneously seek to eliminate barriers that parents face, mitigate the negative effects of poverty, and provide opportunities for their kids in their transition to a successful adulthood," said Amanda Rivera Flores, Executive Director of the Youth Development Institute (YDI).

The 2018 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* is available in June 27, 2018, at 12:01 a.m. (ET) at www.aecf.org. The Children and Youth Wellbeing Index, the Municipal Index, and more than 140 updated indicators of children and youth are available from the YDI at www.juventudpr.org. Journalists interested in creating maps and graphs for their stories can access the KIDS COUNT Data Center at: www.databook.kidscount.org.

About the Youth Development Institute

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting public policies, both at the federal and state levels, to improve the lives and development of children and youth in Puerto Rico. Our work includes research, compilation and dissemination of data, public policy recommendations; and advocacy efforts based on both data and the voice of youth and their families. For more information, you can visit www.juventudpr.org, call 787-728-3939 or through our social networks at www.facebook.com/idj.pr, at www.twitter.com/idj_pr, and under the "hashtag": #JuventudPrimero.

About The Annie E. Casey Foundation

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a better future for the nation's children by developing solutions that empower families, by creating pathways for economic opportunity and by transforming communities that go through difficult times in safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org *KIDS COUNT*[®] is a registered trademark of The Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

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