



**Forward Strong:**

# ChildFund's COVID-19 Response Plan

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ChildFund®

# We must act now — together.

## ChildFund's Global Response



The COVID-19 pandemic is an undeniable reminder of how connected all people are around the globe. The new coronavirus knows no boundaries, reaching all ethnicities, social strata and ages. COVID-19 is a health crisis that is causing an economic catastrophe that will trigger further health crises, especially for children and families living in fragile economies like those in ChildFund's 61 program countries. Child hunger is one resulting crisis, and when accompanied by other stressors, it can lead to violence against children. **These two major threats to children — hunger and violence — form the heart of ChildFund's COVID-19 response.**

About 2 billion of the world's population, most of them people living in low-income countries, scrape out their living in the informal sector. Their families are already suffering enormous economic deprivation due to the restrictions that governments needed to put in place to stop COVID-19. They live close to the edge, with little or no national safety net or savings to fall back on, and very little food in reserve to see them through in times of emergency. Now, with their livelihoods gone, parents have no way to pay for food, rent, health care or other basics. With schools closed, children are going without the daily nutritious meal they depended on, and they lack a safe place to go while their caregivers search for food or work. With families confined together, often in just one or two rooms, rising stress means that children face a greater risk of abuse or being forced into child labor, early marriage or other desperate coping tactics.

### There is no time to lose.

We must act now — globally, boldly and creatively — to ensure that children and families not only survive this crisis but come through it on a solid footing to face the post-COVID-19 world.

COVID-19, with its repercussions, is bigger than all of us, and it demands transcendent action. To that end, ChildFund is launching a \$56 million plan, our first-ever global emergency response, reaching 6.3 million children and family members to ensure that children remain healthy, educated and safe throughout the pandemic. This initiative, our most ambitious yet, aims the full power of our funding and expertise at children's immediate needs, including health, food, safety and stability. What we describe here is our COVID-19 emergency response. When the global pandemic ends — and it will end — planning for recovery and helping children and communities along the way will also need our collective efforts.

In this moment that calls on the people of the world to stay apart, we invite you to come together with us in the fight to keep the most vulnerable — children — from paying COVID-19's terrible price.

**Martina Hibell**  
Secretary General, Barnfonden / ChildFund Sweden

# The Priorities

For children in poor countries, the primary risk is less COVID-19 itself than it is the collateral damage it brings, and this damage is manifold.

Whether families lose their income sources due to parents' illness or collapsed livelihoods, the inability to afford food and other basic needs means that children's health and development suffer. Stress levels rise, increasing the risk of abuse and domestic violence, which also harms children's development. Interruptions to education make it hard for children to go back to class; coping mechanisms like child labor or early marriage may keep children from ever returning to school at all.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its destructive reverberations stand to multiply these risks to children, with far-reaching and long-lasting impacts. The four priorities of our response intersect to help stop the spread of the virus as well as mitigate its potential harm, whether direct or indirect, to children:

## **1. Stop COVID-19 from infecting children and families.**

To help children and families protect themselves from COVID-19, we are installing community handwashing stands; educating communities about symptoms, hygiene measures and where to get tested or treatment; and distributing soap, hand sanitizer, gloves and masks to families and frontline health workers. For children who are being treated for COVID-19 or are subject to quarantine measures, we are creating child-friendly spaces with age-appropriate toys and reading matter.

## **2. Ensure that children get the food they need.**

To ensure that the most vulnerable families can keep food on the table, pay rent and cover other basic needs, we are providing cash for those families most needing this support, such as those who have lost their income because of COVID-19, child or elder-headed households, and/or households affected by disability or chronic illness. Where possible, we are distributing food and basic household items directly, carefully abiding by COVID-19 protection measures.

## **3. Keep children safe from violence — physically and emotionally.**

We are supporting community-based child protection systems that identify, respond to and refer cases of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation. We are also providing virtual, online psychological first aid and counseling, and supporting temporary shelters for children who live on the street, providing hygiene supplies, food and other basics. We are also arranging safe and appropriate care for children who are separated from their caregivers due to treatment or prevention measures.

## **4. Help children continue learning.**

While schools remain closed, we are supporting children's learning through activities and tutoring sessions online or by radio. We remain vigilant and prepared to address the increased risk of online sexual abuse that accompanies children's greater exposure to the internet. For students in places where internet access is unavailable or unreliable, we are distributing home learning kits with materials and guidelines for their use.

Together we will fight to protect children from the direct impacts of COVID-19, and also from the cascade of effects caused by the virus, including the economic crisis that is unfolding throughout the world. Families are at the center of our efforts. The degree to which they can maintain their stability and sustain their children's development is the degree to which they will be able to move forward when COVID-19 has passed.

**Our goal is that they go forward strong.**

# Our Approach

We work locally, nationally and globally.

## Local

ChildFund provides financial and technical support for local partner organizations that implement our programs. The strong trust these partners have cultivated within the communities they serve positions us well to provide children and families the information, monitoring and support that they need. Local partners' strong connections in their communities also allow them to track which families are most at risk and in need of assistance.

## National

In all of our program countries, ChildFund is actively coordinating with national governments, ministries of health and education, and local civil society as well as other partners to support the dissemination of accurate information, strong community mobilization, community health efforts and the provision of learning materials for children.

## Global

ChildFund advocates worldwide to influence institutions as well as local and national leaders to prioritize the protection and well-being of children and youth. This is especially important now as the pandemic may drive governments to look to their own populations at the expense of other, more vulnerable neighbors.

ChildFund is uniquely positioned to make a meaningful difference everywhere we work, with:

- 80 years' experience.
- On-the-ground capacities in 60+ countries.
- 3,700 staff worldwide.
- 7,500 volunteers.
- 3,000 communities.
- A flexible, sponsorship-fueled funding model: 500,000 sponsorships.
- Our work through more than 1,300 strong local partner organizations staffed by people from the communities they serve.



# Our Calls to Action

ChildFund's \$56 million COVID-19 response plan aims to reach 6.3 million children and family members in its initial phase. We have launched this global plan to ensure that COVID-19 does not deny any child the right to be healthy, educated and safe.

To that end, ChildFund is making a massive pivot: For the next nine months, through December 2020, we are allocating \$30 million of our own program funds and all of our operational capacity toward the COVID-19 emergency response. **We ask you all to join us.**



## For Governments

During this unprecedented pandemic, a government has a critical role to play in protecting its citizens. ChildFund calls on every government to focus on the most vulnerable children, families and communities. As policies and plans are created and adapted to respond to this pandemic, we urge governments to place child protection at the center of their responses and to be vigilant about the increasing risks of food insecurity and malnutrition among children. We also call upon governments to listen to and engage children and youth in their response and recovery efforts.



## For Corporations

ChildFund calls on corporations and their foundations to help the world's most vulnerable children, families and communities to survive and overcome the pandemic's harsh impacts. Through funding, in-kind resources and awareness-raising among both employees and consumers, ChildFund and its corporate partners will work together to answer immediate and emerging needs of communities, from response to recovery.



## For Institutional Foundations

Beyond addressing the immediate health risks of COVID-19, ChildFund also urges donors to prioritize other critical harms from the pandemic to vulnerable children and youth as they direct their funding. These harms include increased violence against children, food insecurity and interrupted learning, all of which will have long-lasting effects even after the virus is contained.



## For Peer Organizations

Because we are all in this together, we call on our peers to prioritize vulnerable children and youth in their response plans, ensuring that child protection risks and the needs of children and their families are considered. We will collaborate and share our expertise and resources to ensure that we reach the most vulnerable populations.



## For Individuals

ChildFund asks every individual as well as every community foundation and family foundation to support the world's most vulnerable children and communities during this devastating pandemic. With a gift to support our global COVID-19 response, anyone can help children survive and overcome the pandemic's harsh impacts.



***“Thankfully, children have so far been largely spared from the most severe symptoms of the disease. But their lives are being totally upended. I appeal to families everywhere, and leaders at all levels: protect our children.”***

**— António Guterres  
United Nations  
Secretary-General**



## Looking Ahead

As the pandemic subsides, we will begin planning for recovery efforts tailored to local needs. What we accomplish together now will be a huge determinant in the shape and size of this recovery. Please join us in this extraordinary time to make a world of difference for the most vulnerable children.





ChildFund is a child-focused global development organization that helps nearly 16 million children and family members in over 60 countries. We work to end violence and exploitation against children and to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential. We work in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting change, and the participation of children themselves is a key component of our approach.

Kontakt:  
[info@barnfonden.se](mailto:info@barnfonden.se)  
040 - 12 18 85  
[www.barnfonden.se](http://www.barnfonden.se)

**barnfonden**  
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