



Partnering to Protect Children:

ChildFund's COVID-19 Response Plan

April 2020

ChildFund®

We must act now – together.

ChildFund's Global Response



COVID-19 is impacting vulnerable children around the globe.

The global health, social and economic impact of this pandemic cannot be underestimated.

Infection rates are rising, children are being prevented from going to school and business are being forced to close. Communities are kept apart by strict social isolation orders, and more families are finding themselves without work and income.

The virus knows no borders. We are deeply concerned about the impact this pandemic will have on the children and families with whom we work.

- People in remote and rural areas may not have access to nearby health facilities if they contract the virus.
- Children already have weakened immune systems due to malnutrition and diseases like tuberculosis, making them less able to fight a new infection.
- Lockdowns mean children are unable to attend school. Vocational training programs for youth are on hold. We know that access to education and learning opportunities is vital for young people if they are to break the cycle of disadvantage.
- A reduction in income can mean that families are forced to cut back on spending in essential areas such as education, food, and healthcare for their children.
- Increased financial pressures and psychological stressors are leading to increased cases of violence against women and children.

Families risk sliding back into extreme poverty.

Together, we will help the most vulnerable families through this crisis and our long-term development programs will be crucial in helping affected communities once the immediate danger of the virus has passed.

We are already working in close partnership with families who are struggling to provide the basic needs for their children. Now, our programs have been adapted to face this new challenge.

As you know, every preventive action helps. Every person can make a difference to stop the spread of this virus.

We are all in this together: every child, every adult and every community.

The Priorities

For children in poor communities, the collateral damage from COVID-19 is just as big a risk as the virus itself.

Schools have closed, and many children may never return. Food is scarce, due to disrupted supply chains and lockdown laws. Health clinics are struggling to cope, and many immunisation campaigns have been suspended. The psychological stress on families is enormous, with parents losing work and facing an uncertain future. Sadly, this has resulted in an increase in domestic violence, with children both experiencing or witnessing abuse in their homes.

The five priorities of our response intersect to help stop the spread of the virus and mitigate its potential harm, whether direct or indirect, to children and young people.

1. Stop COVID-19 from infecting children and communities

We are distributing soap, hand sanitiser, gloves and masks to families, and personal protective equipment to health workers. Community hand-washing stands are being constructed, and hygiene information is being provided. For children being treated for COVID-19 or subject to quarantine measures, we are creating child-friendly spaces with age-appropriate toys and books.

2. Help children continue learning

With schools closed, we are supporting children's education through learning programs delivered online or via radio. We remain vigilant and prepared to address the increased risk of online sexual abuse that accompanies children's greater exposure to the internet, and are focused on increasing the knowledge and self-protective behaviors of children and families who have been moved to rely on the online environment. For students without online access, we are distributing home learning kits with materials and guidelines for their use.

3. Keep children safe from harm

We are supporting community-based child protection systems that identify and respond to cases of child abuse or exploitation, and providing virtual, online and phone-based counselling and emergency safety planning for women and children experiencing violence. We are supporting national social and protective essential services so that they can continue operating, and delivering rapid training to their staff so that they can screen for and respond to vulnerabilities in families. Temporary shelters have been provided for young people who live on the street, and safe care arranged for children separated from their caregivers due to COVID-19 treatment or prevention measures.

4. Ensure that children get the food they need.

To help the most vulnerable families keep food on the table, pay rent and cover other basic household needs, we are providing cash transfers. Where possible, we are distributing food and basic household items directly to communities, carefully abiding by COVID-19 protection measures.

5. Supporting young people to play an active role in the response

We will be surveying children to understand their concerns, ideas and opinions. Their feedback will influence our program response. Young people are being given the tools to develop their own videos to share with their peers and the wider community. As we work with governments, local partners and communities to respond to the pandemic, we will ensure children's voices are heard.

Together we will fight to protect children from the direct impacts of COVID-19, and from the cascade of effects caused by the virus, including the economic crisis that is unfolding throughout the world.

Our Approach

We work locally, nationally and globally.

Local

ChildFund directly implements child-focused poverty alleviation programs in many countries, with the majority of our staff recruited from developing countries. We also work in partnership with community-based organisations to achieve improvements in the lives of children and their families. In some cases, our projects are conducted jointly with governments, other development or faith-based organisations, the private sector, sporting bodies, and community members (including children and youth).

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 mobilisation, 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 prioritise 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 neighbours.

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

- 80 years' experience.
- On-the-ground capacity in over 60 countries.
- 3,700 staff worldwide.
- 7,500 volunteers.
- 3,000 communities.
- A network of more than 1,300 strong local partner organisations staffed by people from the communities they serve.



How You Can Help

ChildFund's US\$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 prevent the worst impacts of the pandemic and ensure children can continue to say: "I am safe. I am educated. I am heard. I have a future."

From now until December 2020, we are allocating US\$30 million of our own program funds and all of our operational capacity toward the COVID-19 emergency response. **We ask you to join us.**

For Governments



During this 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. We urge them to place child protection at the centre of their responses; to recognise the essential need for social and protective services; and to ensure these services remain open, active and adequately resourced. We call on governments to continue implementing programs that targets the end of all forms of violence against children and women. 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 prioritise 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 Organisations



Because we are all in this together, we call on our peers to prioritise 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 help determine 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 organisation that supports almost 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.

For more information, contact:

ChildFund[®]

www.childfund.org.au

Vikram Chowdhary
Head of Marketing and Fundraising

vchowdhary@childfund.org.au | +61 2 8281 3127