

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ChildFund Releases COVID-19 Response Plan as Pandemic Causes Far-reaching and Long-lasting Harm to World's Most Vulnerable Children**

*Plan identifies four priorities to minimize risks to children and their families*

**Richmond, Va. (April 28, 2020)** ChildFund is launching a \$56 million-dollar plan to reach 6.3 million children and family members in 61 countries to ensure that they remain healthy, educated and safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The ambitious plan focuses on children's immediate needs, including health, food, safety and stability.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is a worldwide health crisis that is causing catastrophic economic hardships that will trigger additional crises, especially for children and families living in fragile economies like those in ChildFund's program countries," says Anne Lynam Goddard, ChildFund International President and CEO. "Two major threats to children—hunger and violence—form the heart of our COVID-19 response."

As families lose their income sources due to illness or collapsed livelihoods, the inability to afford food and other basic needs means that children's health and development suffer. As stressors brought about by the virus increase, the risks of abuse and domestic violence rise, causing great harm to children's development. Further, with schools closed, interruptions to education will make it harder for children to return to the classroom, and child labor or early marriage may keep them from ever resuming their education at all.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its extensive collateral damage stand to multiply these risks to children, with long-lasting impacts. ChildFund's COVID-19 Response Plan aims to stop the spread of the virus and mitigate its potential harms to vulnerable children.

ChildFund's plan identifies four priorities during this crisis:

- Stop COVID-19 from infecting children and families.
- Ensure that children get the food they need.
- Keep children safe from violence—physically and emotionally.
- Help children to continue learning.

To help children and families protect themselves, ChildFund is installing community handwashing stands; educating communities about symptoms, hygiene measures and locations for testing and treatment; distributing essentials such as soap, gloves and masks; and creating child-friendly spaces. To make sure children get food and other essentials, ChildFund is providing cash for families most in need and, where possible, distributing food and basic household items directly, while carefully abiding by COVID-19 protection measures.

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ChildFund is also supporting community-based child protection systems; providing virtual, online psychological first aid and counseling; and supporting temporary shelters for children who live on the street as part of its work to keep children safe from violence during these unprecedented times. We also are arranging safe and appropriate care for children separated from caregivers.

In addition, to ensure that children can continue with their education, ChildFund is supporting children's learning through activities and tutoring sessions online or by radio, and we are vigilant in addressing the increased risk of online sexual abuse that accompanies greater exposure to the internet. We are also distributing home learning kits for students where internet access is unavailable or unreliable.

“Even in times when we must maintain physical distance, there are ways to come together and show collective strength,” says ChildFund Alliance Secretary General Meg Gardinier. “With 80 years of experience and operations in 61 countries across 11 members, ChildFund is uniquely positioned to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the world's most vulnerable children both during and after this pandemic.”

For the next nine months, through December 2020, ChildFund is allocating \$30 million of our own program funds and all of our operational capacity toward the COVID-19 emergency response. In the plan, ChildFund also calls on governments, corporations, institutional foundations, peer organizations and individuals to play their part in ensuring that COVID-19 does not deny any child the right to be healthy, educated and safe. You can read or download the plan [here](#) (pdf) and learn how you can help by visiting [ChildFund's online COVID-19 emergency response site](#).

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#### **About ChildFund**

*Founded in 1938, ChildFund is a child-focused global development organization that helps nearly 16 million children and family members in more than 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. Our commitment, resources, innovation, knowledge and expertise serve as a powerful force to transform the lives of children.*