

# CHILD FUND'S APPROACH



Nearly 30 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and youth around the world of all ages and backgrounds continue to experience abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. As well as being a direct violation of children's rights, violence often has a deeply harmful and long-lasting impact on children's well-being and development.

At ChildFund, we are committed to changing this. Having supported vulnerable families and communities for 80 years, we know that the positive changes we make in children's lives may be undone if they experience abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence. As a global child development agency, we are therefore giving greater attention to how we give focus to protecting children, from infancy through young adulthood, enabling them to grow up safe from harm and empowered to reach their full potential.

## The 2018 Impact Report

The 2018 Impact Report tells the story of how we have evolved in recent years to make the protection of children central to our work. It documents the strategies we are using to integrate **child protection** across ChildFund's programs, illustrates the kinds of initiatives we are supporting, and reflects upon what we are learning about our impact – and how we are influencing change.

### We define child protection as:

*"the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children in both humanitarian and development settings."* (Based on UNICEF's definition)

In this Impact Report we:

- Examine data from ChildFund's ambitious monitoring, evaluation, and learning system to understand the forms of violence which can derail children's development at different life stages and the ways that families and communities are responding to protect children.
- Explain how we are using our new data and knowledge to inform all of our programs, while also reflecting upon the internal organizational changes that aim to keep children safe.
- Highlight and share emerging learning from ChildFund research and interventions around the world which help to protect children and youth from violence.
- Explore how all of this is helping us to establish a broad, integrated approach to child development and protection across the organization with the potential for impacting children's lives.

We are already seeing meaningful change. As this Impact Report shows, innovative research and rigorous data collection are consolidating our understanding of the factors that perpetuate violence against children and youth. At the same time, we are learning about the kinds of interventions that protect girls and boys at different stages of childhood, while simultaneously continuing to promote their development and well-being.

## The urgency of child protection

Every day, millions of children and youth around the world experience one or more **forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence**. From extreme physical discipline and sexual abuse, to exploitative labor and forced marriage, harm is inflicted on children in homes, schools, institutions and communities, most commonly by adults who are responsible for their care and protection.

Our own data tell us that certain forms of violence, such as bullying and physical punishment are commonplace in the daily lives of children and youth. **In 2016, over half of the 18,626 children we surveyed in 13 countries reported exposure to violence at school.**<sup>i</sup>

While violence happens everywhere and at every stage of childhood, factors such as poverty, gender inequality, marginalization due to disability or harmful social and religious norms make some children and youth more vulnerable to harm.<sup>ii</sup> During times of conflict or humanitarian crisis, children's vulnerability to violence is exacerbated, through the breakdown of supportive structures, forced relocation, and emergence of new forms of risk.

## The impact on children and youth

The effects of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence can be devastating for children and youth. Exposure to trauma at a very young age can impair a child's developing brain, and affect physical, emotional, and social well-being at every stage of childhood.<sup>iii</sup>

This damage goes beyond the immediate physical pain and humiliation: It affects children's longer-term education, health and life opportunities.<sup>iv</sup> Research tells us that childhood violence is linked to a range of serious problems later in life, including physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, poor educational achievement and difficulties securing employment.<sup>v</sup> Children who grow up with violence may also be more likely to engage in violent behavior as they become adults, perpetuating a cycle of violence across generations.<sup>vi</sup>

### Forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence

- Physical violence, including shaking babies and corporal punishment
- Sexual abuse and violence, including rape
- Neglect and deliberate lack of care
- Child labor
- Sexual exploitation
- Early and forced marriage
- Forcing children to live on the streets and/or beg
- Recruitment of children into armed groups
- Child trafficking
- Female genital mutilation/cutting

In line with definitions widely used within the sector, we use the term 'violence' in this report as an overarching term to capture all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.



**“When children experience violence, the pain stays with them. When they grow up, they repeat the violence with others.”**

-Yeimi, Honduras

On a wider level, violence against children imposes a huge economic burden on societies. It is estimated that the annual costs of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children (due to spending on medical and social services and lost economic productivity) ranges between 3-8% of global GDP.<sup>vii</sup> This is many times higher than the investment required to prevent violence in the first place.

### **A long way to go...**

More than 1 billion children worldwide are exposed to violence:<sup>viii</sup>

**300 MILLION** children ages 2 to 4 years, experience psychological violence and/or physical punishment by their caregivers at home<sup>ix</sup>

**168 MILLION** children are involved in child labor, often in hazardous and exploitative situations<sup>x</sup>

**15 MILLION** adolescent girls ages 15 to 19 years have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts in their lifetime<sup>xi</sup>

**51,000** adolescents died as a result of homicide in 2015<sup>xii</sup>

**33%** of girls are married before their 18th birthday, with **11%** married before the age of 15 years<sup>xiii</sup>

Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children:  
*A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*, UNICEF, Nov. 2017

## **Our commitment to ending violence against children**

In 2017, ChildFund affirmed its commitment to ending violence against children by placing child protection at the heart of its new organizational strategy, **Destination 2020**.

We have adopted this approach because:

- **All forms of violence against children are preventable and unacceptable.** Children have a right to be protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- **Children's development at any life stage can be greatly compromised by violence.** Only when children are safe from harm will our educational, health and nutrition programs have optimal impact on their lives.

### **Destination 2020 — Our Overarching Aim for Children**

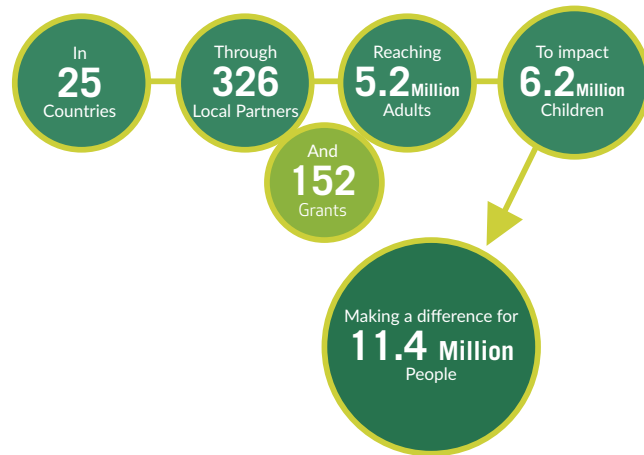
More children live in conditions that enable optimum development at each stage of their lives, including being protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

- **Children and youth have asked us to put their protection needs first.** We need to continue to directly support families and communities, while also advocating for the wider policy and social changes that will bring about a permanent end to violence against children and youth.

**“Children need more safety because they cannot defend themselves. I wish grown-ups understood that children are the priority.”**

-Nancy, Mexico

Since 1938, ChildFund has partnered with community-based organizations to enhance the care and well-being of children, creating opportunities for girls and boys to thrive and achieve their full potential. Today, ChildFund International has a presence in 25 countries. We currently implement programs through local partner organizations in 21 countries and support sponsorship in an additional 4 countries as a member of the ChildFund Alliance. This report focuses on the efforts of our staff and partners in those 21 countries, where we are building upon a solid foundation of programming to extend more targeted support to families and communities in the fight against child abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence.



Ultimately, our organizational mission to ***“help deprived, excluded and vulnerable children improve their lives and become adults who bring positive change to their communities, and to promote societies that value, protect, and advance the worth and rights of children,”*** will only be achieved if, individually and collectively, we are purposeful about strengthening protection outcomes across all of our programs.

## Creating a child-safe organization:

As our organization focuses more acutely on protection outcomes for children, we must always be mindful of the way we engage with children and communities. Aligned with other organizations in the sector, we strive to be a “child-safe organization,” and to ensure that our staff and partners apply an understanding of children’s vulnerability to violence to all of their interactions with program participants. To this end, we have strengthened the safeguarding policies that protect the children and youth we work with and have introduced an updated Code of Conduct.

As an organization, we are also changing the way that we *think* about children’s vulnerability so that we can systematically find ways to prevent and respond to violence throughout our work.

We are rolling out training to our staff and partners so that they better understand the risks children of different ages and genders face and feel confident applying child protection approaches to all interventions with children.

## Our approach to protecting children

Our work to protect children builds on established organizational principles and approaches:

### A life stage approach:

At ChildFund, we tailor our interventions to meet children’s evolving needs as they develop from infancy through young adulthood. Our Life Stage Approach guides our programs, ensuring that children are able to realize a series of core outcomes in each chapter of childhood. A theory of change in each life stage identifies the conditions that will enable children to reach these outcomes. This unique approach provides a framework for addressing the changing problems children face as they grow up – whether at home, school or in the community – including different forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

ChildFund’s Life Stages and Core Outcomes

Life Stage	Age Range	The Core Outcomes We Seek
1	0 to 5 years	Healthy and Secure Infants
2	6 to 14 years	Educated and Confident Children
3	15 to 24 years	Skilled and Involved Youth

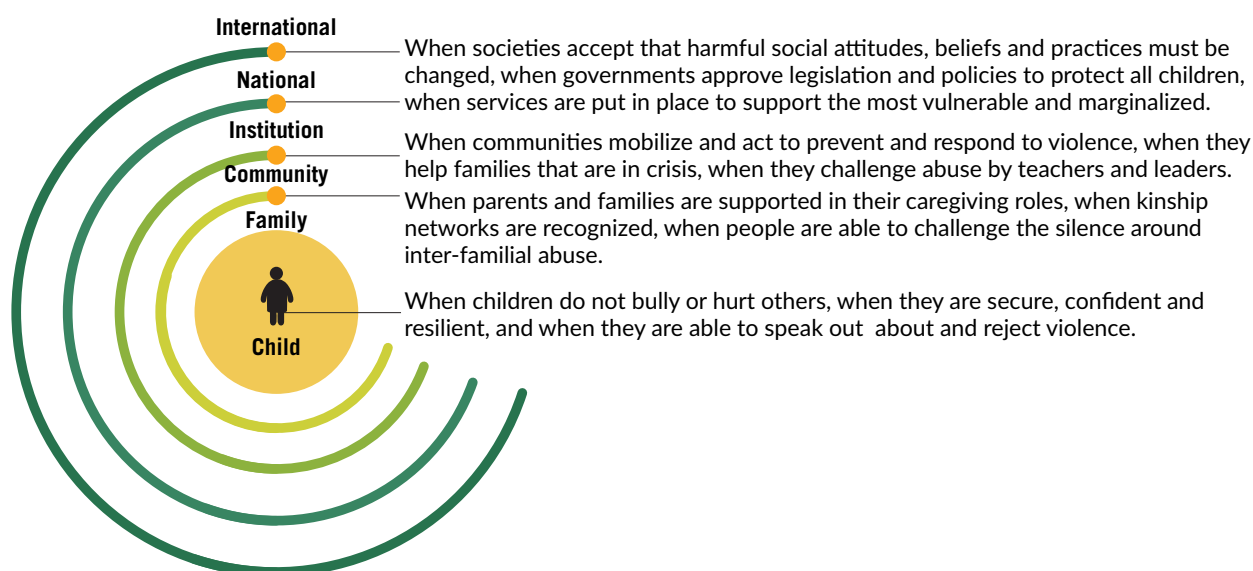
### A systems approach:

Our approach puts the child at the center of all we do and considers the different “layers” of potential support and risk to children. In our work, we are conscious of how these different layers impact a child’s life, and how they impact or interact with each other – either strengthening a system of support or fragmenting it. Understanding this helps to direct our work and engage with children, families, and communities to prevent violence, strengthen institutions, and advocate for broader reform and social change with high-level government actors and decision-makers.

**“Most of the time, leaders prioritize politics over children’s welfare. Despite young people being regarded as the hope of the nation, leaders don’t take issues that affect children seriously.”**

-Karen, Phillippines

Our experience tells us that a protective environment for children is created at multiple levels:



## A community-based approach:

We know that families and communities have their own ways of protecting children from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence in the home, school or community. ChildFund and its partners support community practices that are protective of children and strengthen community groups that informally work to prevent and respond to incidents of violence against children. We link these informal **community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs)** with formal child protection services to ensure that children have access to social workers, police, health care and other agencies responsible for protecting children.

**“Everyone in society has a responsibility to protect children.”**

-Najiya, Sri Lanka

## A child-centered approach:

We put children’s voices and experiences at the center of our work. When we empower children and youth to claim their rights, they become agents of change in their own lives and mobilize their peers to action. We actively engage children and youth in defining both problems and solutions.

### Community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs)

Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs) are groups or networks of community members who work together to address abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. A CBCPM can take the form of a formal committee that addresses multiple types of harm, or a less formal group that works on one particular aspect of child protection. Their focus is on strengthening child protection, responding to incidents of harm against children, and referring cases to social services where necessary.

Children and youth are key partners in research and advocacy. For example:

- They guide us about the issues we need to research and advise us how to best collect information about children.
- They conduct focus groups, interviews, and creative research exercises.
- They help us to understand their reality, often highlighting types of abuse and exploitation of which adults are unaware.
- They raise their voices in communities and on a national stage.

**“After getting associated with ChildFund, I am trying to do something to bring about changes in my community, so all the people can feel safe. I provide information about the help the organization imparts to children and adolescent girls, and about the available laws and rights to support and protect them. I motivate them to raise their voices against the atrocities happening to them. I have learned from my experience that the more you allow others to pull you down, the more they will try to pull you down further. If we must prevent violence against us, we will have to muster courage against it.”**

–Shobhawati, India

## **Change through advocacy:**

We are not alone in this effort. As part of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, ChildFund joins a growing global movement of governments, UN agencies, international organizations, civil society and other actors working to protect and advocate with and for children and youth around the world. At a national level, ChildFund country offices and our partners are actively advocating for policy change and improvements in government budgeting and implementation so that the effects of positive policies are felt by vulnerable children in all communities.

**“As a young person with a disability, I now feel safer because there are laws that protect people like me. In our community, there is also a council for the protection of children in the community they serve. They are champions of children’s rights and allies in our fight to end violence against children.”**

–Antonio, Philippines



## Our program principles:

Our principles call for us to uphold children's **right to protection** from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Moreover, we know that our efforts will only be sustainable if we address the **root causes** of violence against children, such as social inequality, chronic poverty, and harmful social norms.

We believe in building **collaborative relationships** among the people and institutions engaged in protecting children. We know that when children and youth are inspired to become **agents of change** in their own protection, they can find their own solutions.

Embedding these principles in all that we do provides a strong foundation for achieving **sustainable impact** for children. We also seek to ensure sustainability through our advocacy efforts, changing laws and garnering government commitments to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Target 16.2: "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children."

### ChildFund Program Principles

#### Child Rights

Advance and protect the rights of children

#### Root Causes

Address the root causes of deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability

#### Partnerships

Build collaborative relationships

#### Change Agents

Engage and inspire children as agents of change

#### Sustainability

Embrace community-based strategies and then scale-up for impact

#### Evidence Based

Advance relevant evidence-based research and best practice

## Building evidence and documenting impact through systematic monitoring, evaluation, and learning:

Guided by our organizational strategy, we have refined our global monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to capture new child protection data across all life stages. We now systematically:

- Ask children and youth, their caregivers, and community representatives in all of our program countries, about their exposure to and experience of violence in different settings and stages of childhood.
- Explore whether community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) have been established to prevent and respond to harm against children and, if so, how well they actually function.
- Examine how families and communities care for and protect children as well as the circumstances in which children are referred to formal service providers.

These data add a child protection layer to our global M&E system, which captures data from all of the countries and communities in which we work. By collecting information on a set of indicators

aligned to our Life Stage Theories of Change, we are able to measure how we are progressing toward the outcomes we seek for children and learn about the role that protective environments play in achieving these outcomes.

We have used our M&E system as the basis for developing a range of **different methods for evaluating our programs** and for systematically collecting information about protection risks to children. We use these results to understand the impact of our work, inform our programs and advocate for systemic social change.

We are being more deliberate about the way that we capture learning about children's lives and experiences of violence. From research into child discipline in schools in **Sri Lanka**<sup>xiv</sup> and child detention in **Uganda**<sup>xv</sup> to pioneering studies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) youth in the **Philippines**,<sup>xvi</sup> we are learning more about some of the most marginalized groups of children in society. This research helps us to understand the protection challenges that children and youth face around the world, share emerging knowledge, and tailor our programs accordingly.

In all our program countries, we have also launched an exciting initiative to explore the ways that violence impacts children in selected communities: our **Community-Based Child Protection (CBCP) Mapping Initiative**. To standardize and ensure the quality of these data, we have introduced a global toolkit and trained our staff and partners to conduct participatory research with communities, families and children. This CBCP mapping process aims to identify:

- Forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence that children experience in each life stage.
- Immediate and root causes of violence against children, including positive and harmful social norms.
- How child protection systems function. This includes identifying the individuals and organizations that are responsible for protecting children at family, community, institutional and national levels; the legal and policy framework in place to protect children; how children experience these systems of support; and the extent to which community

## Evaluation and Research Methods

**Mappings** to compile our evidence and learning for specific domains and to identify areas for future research and programming

**Systematic literature reviews** to explore existing research (published and unpublished) on particular topics

**Situation/environmental analyses** to provide information about specific contexts and to identify the priority issue(s) to be addressed

**Case studies** to help us understand the role that context plays in influencing our interventions and the factors underlying program outcomes.

**Observational studies** to monitor changes in our core outcomes and other indicators over time, and within and across different contexts.

protection efforts are linked to formal child services (social welfare, police, health, education).

We share our findings with communities and work together to develop action plans that address their protection concerns for children.

Ultimately, our data and research findings help us to understand the types of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence that children and youth experience at different life stages. Our information sheds light on the drivers of violence and the factors that perpetuate risk, while also highlighting the positive practices, social norms and actors that we can build on to keep children safe. This knowledge helps us to find appropriate strategies to prevent harm against children and guides us toward effective programming that can make a real difference in children's lives.

## The 2018 Impact Report: A review of our progress

ChildFund is already learning valuable lessons as we strive to make children's protection integral to everything that we do. In the 2017-2018 Impact Report, we examine how we are progressing on the journey to deepen our work with and for children – and especially how we more purposefully work on child protection – across our programs and organization.

The following sections highlight a selection of studies and programs around the world that are helping us understand and respond to the risks of child abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence. Based upon our Life Stage Approach, each section explores:

- The changing forms of violence that children experience as they reach different developmental stages.
- The child protection programs we have developed in partnership with families and communities to prevent and respond to violence at home, school, and in the community.
- The ways in which our teams are integrating child protection learning and outcomes within our programs on early childhood development, education, and health, including within emergency contexts.
- Our efforts to advocate at local and national levels for improved laws and services to protect children.

## Endnotes

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