

WeWorld INDEX 2022



Women and Children
Breaking Barriers
to Build the Future

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Preface

Each year since 2015, ChildFund Alliance member WeWorld releases its WeWorld Index, which monitors the living conditions of women and children in approximately 170 countries. The annual Index identifies key building blocks for asserting and exercising the rights of women and children.

These fundamental building blocks—health, education, the economy, and society—are inextricably linked to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda—a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all.

Regrettably, as this report highlights, the world is not on target to achieve these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and progress toward improving the lives of the world's most vulnerable groups of people has slowed. New and evolving risks are currently affecting millions of women and children, and they inevitably will affect exponentially more, if left unaddressed.

These risks include global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine, increasing drought conditions affecting food production, and rising global temperatures that are making insufferable heat waves more the norm. Such events are resulting in surges in mass migration, school closures, poverty, food insecurity, death and illness. In addition, they are creating increased risks to children as millions more go online for learning and socialization. **The analysis in this WeWorld Index 2022 underscores why it is essential to give voice to the needs of women and children, who are among the most vulnerable populations to suffer from escalating global disasters.**

As a network of 11 child-focused development and humanitarian organizations, ChildFund Alliance is proud to collaborate with WeWorld on this timely and important report. **ChildFund members help 23 million children and their families in 70 countries overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that pre-**

vent children from reaching their full potential. Members work to end violence and exploitation against children; provide expertise in emergencies and disasters to ease the harmful impact on children and communities; and engage children, families and communities to create lasting change. Our advocacy, commitment, resources, innovation, and expertise serve as a powerful force to transform the lives of children around the world.

A member of the Alliance since 2020, WeWorld shares the ChildFund goal of creating a world where all children benefit from sustainable solutions that protect and advance their rights and well-being. The WeWorld Index 2022, through statistical data analysis, delves into the overlapping effects of the crises characterizing today's world and how they impact children's living conditions.

While not exhaustive, the Index identifies five key barriers that are great threats to children: poverty, conflicts, forced migration, climate change, and online risks. In this eighth edition of the Index, we explore how the effects of these five barriers intertwine with each other, creating a threatening combination that could potentially compromise the future of an entire generation and of those to come.

The Index includes all countries with a population of more than 200,000 with available data, and groups together 30 indicators related to the four building blocks that are essential for the implementation of women's and children's rights. What we have found through this year's analysis is that **in seven years' time, the world has improved by only 1.4 points on the WeWorld Index. This means, at this rate, it would take 182 years to achieve a level of adequate inclusion for women and children globally.**

Clearly, significant work remains ahead. However, I feel heartened by the extraordinary collaboration and partnerships of our ChildFund members who share a commitment to help vulnerable children and their families. I look forward to working

with WeWorld, and all of our members, to strengthen our shared resolve to ensure children are guaranteed their rights, achieve their full potential, and lead a life free from poverty and violence. Together, we can help many more children in need.

Simon Whyte

*Chairman, Board of Directors
ChildFund Alliance*



The WeWorld Index in brief

In 2015, when the 2030 Agenda was adopted by 193 countries, WeWorld launched the WeWorld Index series, which, we are proud to say, is now a flagship product of ChildFund Alliance. During these eight years, we have periodically monitored the living conditions of women and children in approximately 170 countries around the world, considering their inclusion from multiple points of view: social, economic, political, environmental, etc. **Unfortunately, over the course of nearly a decade, not much has changed, and the world has not experienced significant improvements.**

Our analysis finds confirmation in the United Nations 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report. The report highlights how cascading and interlinked global crises have slowed progress towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with the risk of leaving the most fragile behind.

The final ranking of the 2022 WeWorld Index is reflective of 166 countries. Since 2015, we have not observed significant changes in the countries at the top of the rank: Northern Europe and continental Europe are still the most inclusive areas for women and children. The same goes for the countries at the bottom of the ranking, which have not changed nor progressed. Sub-Saharan Africa is still the most exclusionary area, along with those countries affected by chronic poverty, political instability, armed conflict, and non-democratic governments (e.g., Afghanistan, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Burkina Faso, etc.).

In these areas, overlapping hazards, including those caused by climate change, are hard-hitting, especially on the most vulnerable groups of people, including women and children. However, even the progress experienced by the top-ranked geographical areas is not significant. Indeed, the risk is that once a certain level of development and progress has been achieved, and once the essential services and fundamental rights have been provided, countries tend to slow down, and the effort to guarantee inclusion becomes stationary. **If this level of development is not consolidated and maintained, the conditions of the most vulnerable**

could be quickly jeopardized by external shocks (e.g., pandemics, economic crises, wars, etc.).

The WeWorld Index, therefore, highlights the necessity to proceed on two fronts: **on the one hand, it is imperative to work on the context in which women and children live and make it as favorable as possible. On the other, one cannot think that a favorable context per se is sufficient to satisfy the needs of women and children, for whom targeted policies and measures are paramount.** To achieve the ultimate goal of the 2030 Agenda, for which no one should be left behind, it is now more important than ever to **adopt a gender and generational approach in public policies and interventions.** But that can be achieved if, and only if, we accept to take a new path and adopt new tools. It will be indispensable to give voice to the needs of women, children, and youth; accept a reading of social phenomena different from that of men; counter the prejudices and stereotypes discriminating against women and a vision paying little or no attention to the rights of children and adolescents.

In a word, **we must involve women and children in decision-making processes, encourage their participation, and let them become agents of change.** However, this last year has made it exceedingly difficult to achieve such conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down but still exists; extreme climatic events have escalated; the protracted crises (in Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, the Sahel area, etc.) did not subside, and a new conflict in Ukraine broke out, impacting the world with its multiplier effects.

This year's Focus precisely digs into the overlapping effects of the crises characterizing today's world and how these impact children's living conditions. Aware that the list is not exhaustive, we have identified five barriers that we believe to be the greatest threats to the present and future of children. **These are poverty, conflicts, forced migration, climate change, and online risks.**

In the 2022 Focus, we explore how the effects of these five barriers intertwine with

each other, creating a threatening combination that could potentially compromise the future of an entire generation and of those to come. Nevertheless, we also want to provide positive solutions to these problems, reporting examples of good practices implemented in the countries where ChildFund Alliance operates; interviews and testimonies of relevant stakeholders; and, finally, recommendations and calls to action. We believe that these examples are indicative of the new path we must take for a more inclusive world. **A world in which no one is left behind. A world in which we can break barriers to build the future.**

Dina Taddia

Managing Director, WeWorld Onlus

Marco Chiesara

President, WeWorld Onlus







CHAPTER 1

Making the connection. A shared vision for promoting women's and children's rights

1.1 From words to deeds: implementing women's and children's rights together

In a world where inequalities persist, and poverty is still a global problem, women and children are the most at risk of social exclusion.

One fundamental condition when carrying out actions and proposing social policies for women and children is to know as much as possible about their living conditions and their risk of social exclusion. **The WeWorld Index, published every year since 2015, arises from the need to illustrate the living conditions of women and children worldwide. The WeWorld Index is a composite index that measures women's and children's inclusion in key dimensions in approximately 170 countries around the world.** In this regard, inclusion is conceived as a multidimensional concept, going beyond an idea of progress limited to economic aspects, and opening to a **broad, multidimensional, intersectional, and positive, personal and social, universal vision of development** (in line with the 2030 Agenda and the so-called "5Ps": People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnership, and Peace).

Because of how the WeWorld Index is prepared, it allows for analyzing in which countries, and for which essential dimensions of life, women and children are most excluded and their rights withheld. Even if more than 70 years have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), human rights are still not always respected but "are still a mirage for a good part of humanity" (Amnesty International, 2018).

Since then, the international community has promoted laws, conventions, and treaties to boost global awareness and respect for human rights. Therefore, now the world is equipped with various fundamental legal tools to protect human rights. The latest to be globally promoted are called "third-generation rights", as they have followed the political and civil ones to protect the most vulnerable categories (women and children, but also LGBTQIA+ people, indigenous populations, refugees, and migrants). Despite that, many groups of people are still discriminated against, and their rights are violated. **Women and children are certainly among those most at risk of such violation, not because they are naturally more vulnerable, but mainly because they are hindered in developing and exercising their rights by a dominant male cultural context.** In said context, gender discrimination (often implicit and thus even more subtle) and tendencies not to consider children as subjects of law, persist.

To truly exercise their rights, women and children must be in the condition to implement and substantiate them. **Going from the simple assertion of a right to its exercise is not something to be taken for granted, and it requires having "capabilities"** (Sen, 2000). Capabilities represent the factual possibilities that people have for pursuing and achieving their own goals. The prerequisite to exercising capabilities is being free to choose according to one's aspirations and values.

Capabilities are to live a healthy life; to have access to knowledge, education, training, and information; to look after oneself (time, culture, sport, fun); to look after others; to live and work in healthy and safe places; to work and undertake business; to take part in public life and live together in an equal society; to have access to public services; to move in the territory (WeWorld, 2017).



TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IT IS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE PROCESS OF ACQUISITION OF CAPABILITIES



RIGHTS ARE COMPLETELY FULFILLED WHEN CAPABILITIES ARE PROMOTED WITHIN A SYSTEM OF REGULATIONS TO PROTECT THEM

The acquisition of capabilities does not depend exclusively on individuals but is affected by the specific environmental and cultural context where people live. Hence, some conditions must be in place (norms, social

An intersectional approach to inclusion

The term "intersectionality", coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, describes how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics may "intersect" with one another and overlap. Specifically, intersectionality indicates the overlapping of different social identities and different forms of discrimination, oppression, or domination against the most vulnerable groups of people. The notion starts from the assumption that the most vulnerable social groups (not only children and women, but also people below the poverty line, ethnic minorities, people of color, people from the LGBTQIA+ community, indigenous communities, refugees, and people with disabilities) are the most exposed to the violation of their rights. Consequently, they are also more at **risk of overlapping forms of discrimination** (gender, generational, ethnic, racial, etc.).

For women and children, the concept refers to the discrimination they are subject to not only as women and underage people but also as parts of other social groups (defined by ethnicity, social class and all those mentioned above) **subject to prejudice.** These multiple forms of discrimination create a cumulative disadvantage that is not addressed comprehensively within the current law and legal practice. At the same time, political interventions must employ an intersectional lens to tackle all the overlaid forms of discrimination and act on multiple fronts instead of identifying and dealing with single grounds.



and cultural factors, absence of gender and generational discriminations) to enable people to succeed.

THE ACQUISITION OF CAPABILITIES IS AFFECTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

FOR A REAL EXERCISE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, IT IS NECESSARY TO ACT ON BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LEVELS, PROMOTING CAPABILITIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND LEGAL NORMS

Supporting the acquisition of capabilities is not enough unless actions on the existing social and cultural norms are simultaneously carried out. Specifically, it is necessary to promote a culture of respect for gender distinctions and equalities and fight against discrimination, stereotypes, and the patriarchal culture.

Moreover, since children's rights and capabilities intertwine with women's rights and capabilities, for them to exercise their rights with mutual effects, it is necessary to support the capabilities of both social groups, jointly, interdependently, and simultaneously.

Therefore, a multifaceted approach is paramount. Such an approach – known as the “Human Rights-Based Approach” – sees the promotion, protection, and implementation of rights as a process to be put in motion by the entire society through a joint effort of right-holders and duty-bearers¹.



¹ The latter includes not only the State as the main duty-bearer that must respect, protect, and implement human rights but the whole community.

1.2 The four building blocks for asserting and exercising women's and children's rights together

In the WeWorld Index, four areas of action to assert and exercise women's and children's rights are taken into consideration. **To achieve full inclusion of women and children, they must be put in the condition to develop their capabilities, implement their rights, and experience the positive power of doing and being what they want to be in the following four areas, called the four building blocks:**

1. HEALTH
2. EDUCATION
3. ECONOMY
4. SOCIETY

In each of the building blocks, women and children may be hindered in the acquisition of their capabilities by specific and mutual

risk factors. The specific ones refer to their condition (being women and underage); the mutual ones refer to the fact that women's risk factors affect those of children and vice-versa (see the box "An intersectional approach to inclusion").

The actions carried out in the four building blocks – aimed at fostering their capabilities and the norms modification – affect the environmental and cultural setting too, which contributes in turn to asserting new rights for everybody, including men.

On the opposite page are some examples of joint actions in the four building blocks and the environmental and cultural setting, fostering women's and children's capabilities, jointly, interdependently, and simultaneously (see UNICEF, 2006; FAO, 2011; UNFPA, UNICEF, 2011a and b).



Connecting the dots between children's and women's rights



EDUCATION

- If children have access to quality education early in their lives, they will perform better at higher school levels, run fewer risks of dropping out of school and earn high qualifications. They will become more aware and educated adults, and pass on to their children the value of education.
- Educated women have access to better paid and more protected jobs and can get back (earlier) to the paid labor market, with positive consequences for themselves and their children.
- Daughters of educated mothers are more likely to attend school, perform better once there, and complete a higher number of school years than daughters of uneducated mothers.



ECONOMY

- Children living in a family in good economic conditions, where both parents work and the woman is equal to the man, enjoy good health and have proper nutrition.
- Parents in good economic conditions, especially mothers, invest more in their children's education, even in the long term. Hence, their children run fewer risks of dropping out of school to contribute to family income or being abducted into the child-labor exploitation circuits.
- A working mother is a model for her children – above all for girls – and will guide them in their future choices. Girls will be more inclined to study longer and, in the future, to enter the labor market.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

Where there is gender equality in public and private:

- Women have the same decision-making power in the family, an equal distribution of the time devoted to child and home care exists, and women are favored in their economic, political and social participation.
- Children can refer to parental models based on gender equality and internalize a culture of equality and non-discriminatory behavior.
- In their public and political life, women can stand up for claims inspired by gender equality, fostering the transmission and circulation of cultural values based on respect for diversity.

If biodiversity is protected and air pollution reduced:

- Female employment increases and/or is guaranteed, as, in many countries of the world, women work in small-scale fishing and aquaculture or agriculture. If women work, they can contribute to the sustenance of their families (firstly of their children) and the economy of their communities.
- Premature deaths will drop, and children, as adults, will run fewer risks of suffering from vascular or chronic diseases. Healthy children will be healthy adults with positive effects on other life dimensions.
- Premature pregnancies will drop, as well as the odds of delivering underweight babies (indeed, air pollution may cause problems to the fetus during pregnancy).



HEALTH

- Undernourished children experience growth issues and run a higher risk of being infected or dying, but also developing limited cognitive abilities, which will undermine their school performance.
- An undernourished woman will have perinatal complications and give birth to premature or underweight babies, running higher risks of being infected or dying during delivery.
- Overweight children develop cardiovascular problems, infections, and a lack of self-esteem; as age increases, they may become obese and get diabetes and other metabolic disorders. Overweight girls, as adults, may suffer from gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, obstetric complications, and their children from chronic disorders.



SOCIETY

- In a free and democratic country, women participate in public and political life, promoting gender and generational equality objectives.
- Women transmit to their children the value of honesty and democratic principles, fighting against corruption and practices damaging the collective well-being, and acting as a positive model that will accompany them in the future.
- If society recognizes children as legal entities, and their opinions are taken into consideration, they have negotiating power in the family, and their parents will be more likely to listen to them. Consequently, they will be more confident in themselves and their skills and will be able to defend their rights in the public sphere.

1.3 How the WeWorld Index is drawn up: the new methodology

For the 2022 edition, the WeWorld Index methodology has been revised and improved to provide a more robust cross-country and time-series analysis. The basic features underlining the WeWorld Index remain the same. The WeWorld Index measures the inclusion of children and women worldwide, considering inclusion as a multidimensional concept.

This multidimensionality is made explicit in the structure of the WeWorld Index.

The WeWorld Index 2022 is a composite index that groups together **30 indicators** referring to **15 dimensions** (two indicators per dimension) related to the four building blocks, which are essential for the implementation of women's and children's rights. These are health, education, economy, and society.

The indicators have been chosen according to distinct factors: their relevance to the phenomenon (the inclusion of women and children); the availability of data across countries and time; the quality and accuracy of the data sources; and the data accessibility². The selected data are retrieved from internationally accredited sources (WHO, UNESCO, World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.) or are widely used indexes (such as the Global Peace Index or the Global Democracy Index). See page 76 for a complete list of the 30 indicators and their definitions.

The WeWorld Index includes all the countries with a population of over 200,000 and with available data. In total, the final ranking includes 166 countries. Countries missing more than 25% of the required data have been excluded. North Korea, Turkmenistan, Libya, Somalia, Bahamas, Micronesia, Equatorial Guinea, Solomon Islands, Syria, and Yemen lacked the required data.

The new methodology of the WeWorld Index is based on a four-step process outlined below. Compared with the previous

editions, in this one the overall Index score, each sub-index (context, children and women), and dimension score are distributed on a more intuitive 0-100 scale, providing an absolute and relative benchmark for each country with clear best and worst scenarios.

1. Missing values

To guarantee statistical integrity, we ensure that the indicators that make up the WeWorld Index lack as few observations as possible. Then, we determine the data sample used to compute the Index for a given year as follows. For each country, we take the most recent value of the indicator, resorting to historical data in the time series for a maximum of seven years. When a country lacks some indicator data for the period under consideration, we impute the missing data based on the area average of that indicator for the selected time window.

2. Transformation

Some transformations were necessary before normalizing the indicators to the same scale. Some indicators needed either to be capped by setting a clear cut-off value or to be log-transformed when they exhibit a skewed distribution containing extreme values.

• Capped indicators

We impose a top cut-off on six indicators for varied reasons. On the one hand, we have three indicators regarding school enrollment (indicator 13 "primary completion rate", 14 "lower secondary completion rate", and 24 "female tertiary school enrollment") that are capped at 100%. On the other, there are three indicators concerning gender inequalities (indicator 26 "female to male ratio in gross national income per capita", 27 "percentage of women in national parliaments", and 28 "proportion of women in senior and middle management positions"), which are capped at parity value.

• Log-transformed indicators

The logarithm transformation reduces the right side of the distribution when the indicator's range of values is wide or positively skewed. We transformed according to the following function four indicators (indicator 2 "people dead or affected by natural and technological disasters", 6 "percentage of refugees per country of origin", 8

"intentional homicide rate", and 30 "female intentional homicide rate"):

$$x' = \log(x + \alpha)$$

where x is the raw data, a positive constant whose values are reported with the indicator's definition and x' is the transformed data.

The addition of a positive constant ensures that we can take the logarithm of all values within the distribution, including zeros, while preserving almost the same relative differences between countries.

3. Normalization

All indicators are normalized using the min-max transformation with boundaries set at the indicator level. These boundaries, reported with the indicator definition, are set based on theoretical best and worst values or on maximum and minimum values recorded across the time series of the indicator. This type of normalization, as opposed to the previously employed z-score, enables the tracking of absolute performance and comparing countries across time.

In this manner, we can translate each indicator on a positively oriented 0-100 scale, according to the following transformations:

$$x' = \begin{cases} 100 \cdot \frac{x - x_{\min}}{x_{\max} - x_{\min}} \\ 100 \cdot \left(1 - \frac{x - x_{\min}}{x_{\max} - x_{\min}}\right) \end{cases}$$

where x is the raw indicator, x_{\min} and x_{\max} are its normalization boundaries and x' is the normalized indicator score.

4. Aggregation

The WeWorld Index of each country is computed by aggregating the indicators' scores in a hybrid fashion, which consists of three sub-steps of aggregation. First, we calculate the dimensions' scores by taking the unweighted arithmetic mean of the two indicators within each dimension. Then, to avoid full compensability we employed the geometric mean across dimensions and sub-indexes. In this way, a deficiency in one feature cannot be fully or partially compensated for by surpluses in another.

Specifically, dimensions scores D_i , sub-indexes scores S_j and the final Index I are computed as follows:

² The data collection was concluded in June 2022.

$$D_i = \frac{x_1 + x_2}{2}$$

$$S_j = \sqrt[5]{D_1 \cdot D_2 \cdot D_3 \cdot D_4 \cdot D_5}$$

$$I = \sqrt[3]{S_1 \cdot S_2 \cdot S_3}$$

where x_1 and x_2 are the scores of the two indicators within each dimension, D_i is one of the five dimensions within each sub-index and S_j is one of the three sub-indexes that form the final Index I of a country.

• World score calculation

To assess the world performance on the WeWorld Index we treat the world as a country. Thus, first, we compute the population-weighted averages for each indicator; then, we aggregate these values with the same procedure outlined above for countries. To compute the indicators' values of the world, we consider all the countries for which data are available – even those excluded from the Index because of too many missing values. Therefore, we obtain world scores for the dimensions, sub-indexes, and the overall Index.

• Tiers

Finally, we divide countries into six tiers based on scores' values according to the following intervals:

Tier 1: Equal or more than 85

Tier 2: 75-84

Tier 3: 65-74

Tier 4: 55-64

Tier 5: 45-54

Tier 6: Equal or less than 44

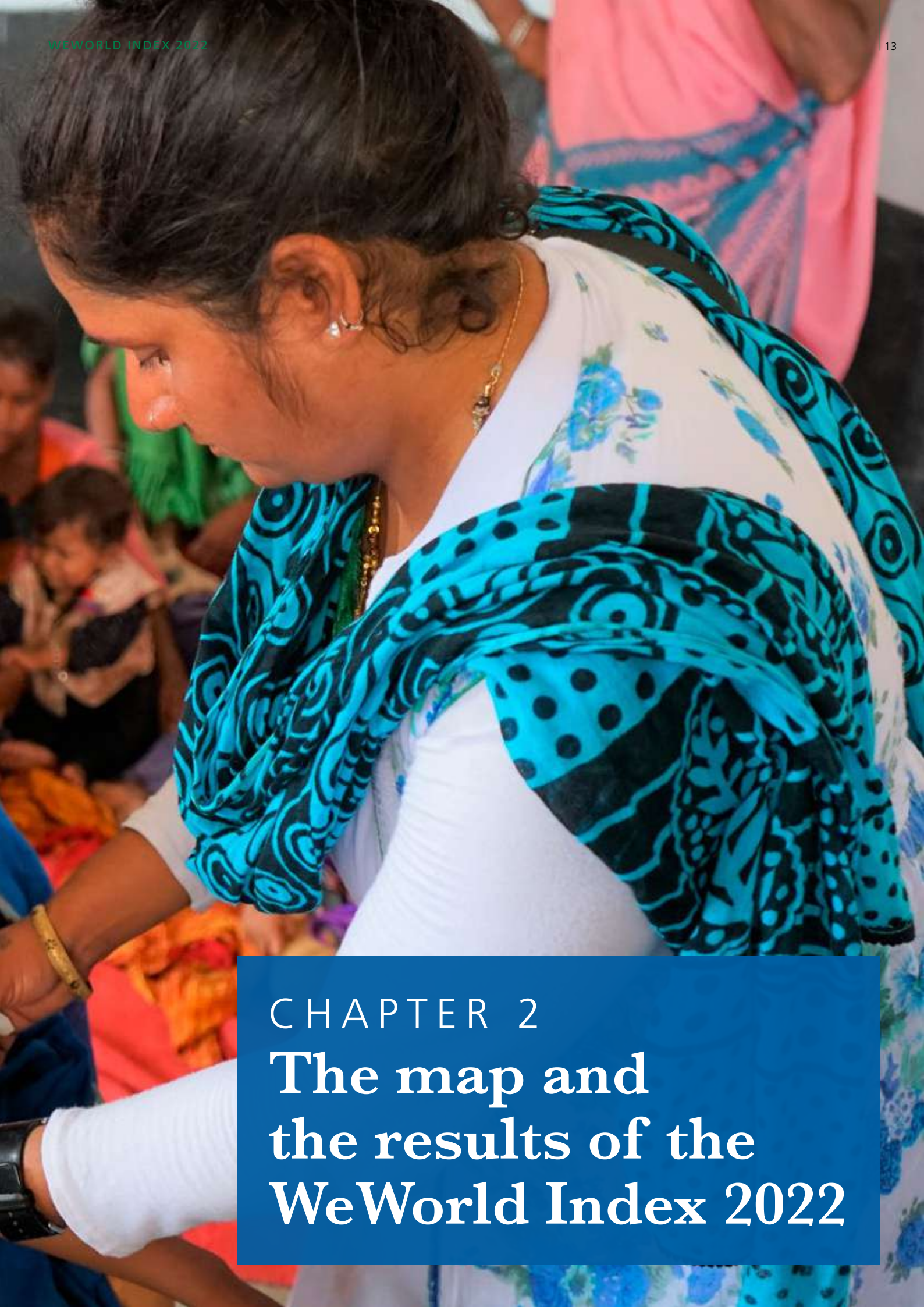
Tiers are provided for the overall Index and sub-indexes as well. As the underlying scale remains the same, this division allows us to compare groups among years.

• Years to inclusion

Comparing values calculated for the different time steps, we can assess a rough projection of the variation rate of the Index and sub-indexes. From the yearly variation rate, we compute the years' number still needed to reach adequate inclusion, namely a score of 100. It is important to note that this method assumes the variation rate as constant over time and cannot provide an estimate when the variation rate is negative.







CHAPTER 2

The map and the results of the WeWorld Index 2022

2.1 WeWorld Index 2022: the map and the results

VERY GOOD INCLUSION

Ranking		Value
1	Norway	91.3
2	Iceland	90.6
3	★ Sweden	89.8
4	Denmark	89.6
5	Finland	89.5
6	Switzerland	88.9
7	★ Spain	88.3
8	Netherlands	87.9
9	Austria	87.7
9	★ New Zealand	87.7
11	United Kingdom	87.3
11	Ireland	87.3
11	Portugal	87.3
11	Singapore	87.3
15	Slovenia	87.1
16	★ Germany	86.8
16	★ France	86.8
18	Belgium	86.7
19	★ Australia	86.3
20	Poland	86.1
21	★ Canada	85.3
22	Lithuania	85.1
22	Latvia	85.1

GOOD INCLUSION

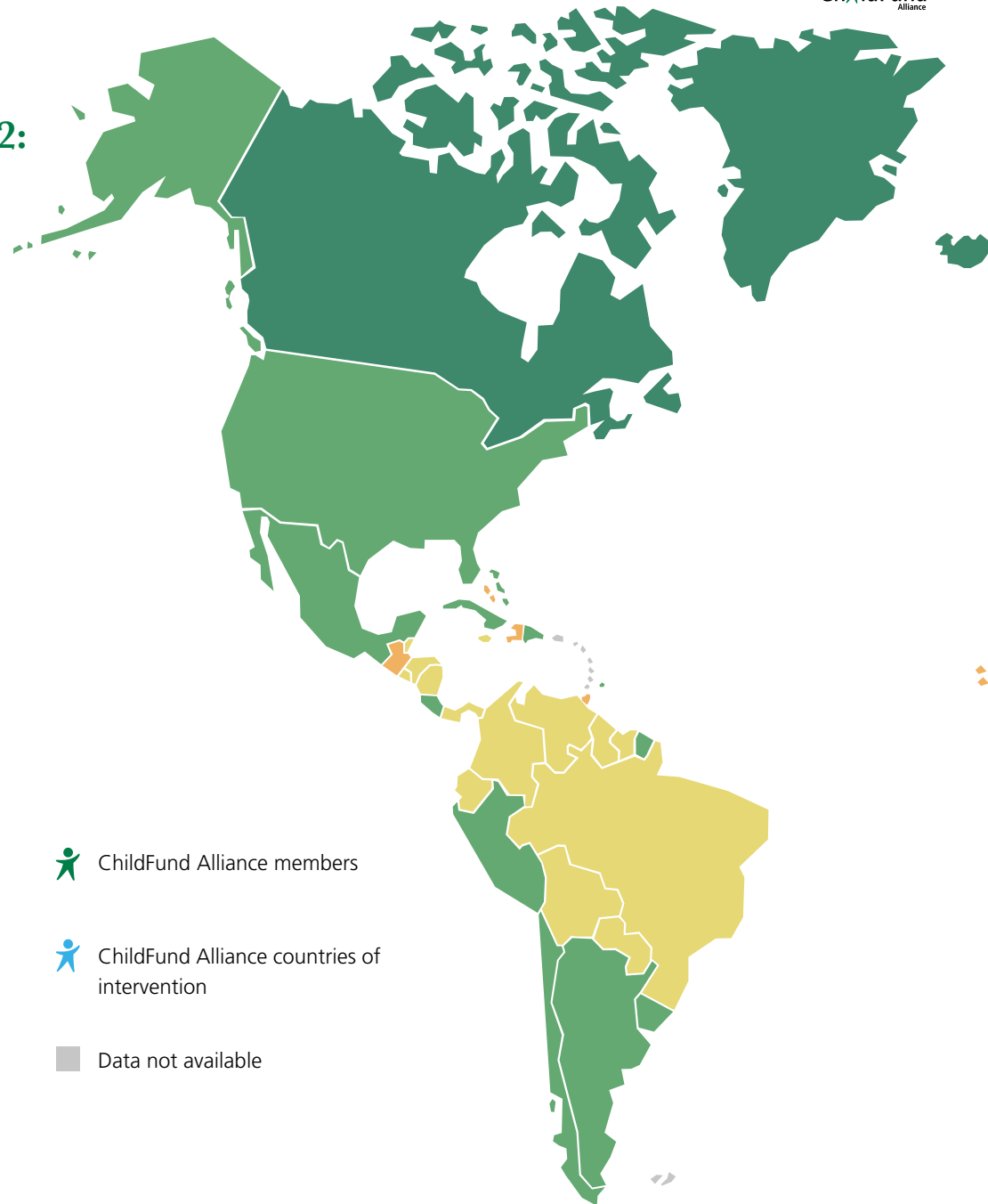
Ranking		Value
24	Estonia	84.9
25	Chile	84.6
26	Luxembourg	84.4
27	★ United States	84.3
28	Cyprus	83.9
28	Israel	83.9
28	★ Italy	83.9
28	Malta	83.9
32	Belarus	83.5
33	Czech Republic	83.2
34	Argentina	82.9
34	★ South Korea	82.9
34	Uruguay	82.9
37	Croatia	82.6
38	Serbia	82.2
39	Bulgaria	82.1
40	★ Moldova	82.0
40	Slovakia	82.0
42	Greece	81.9
43	Hungary	81.6

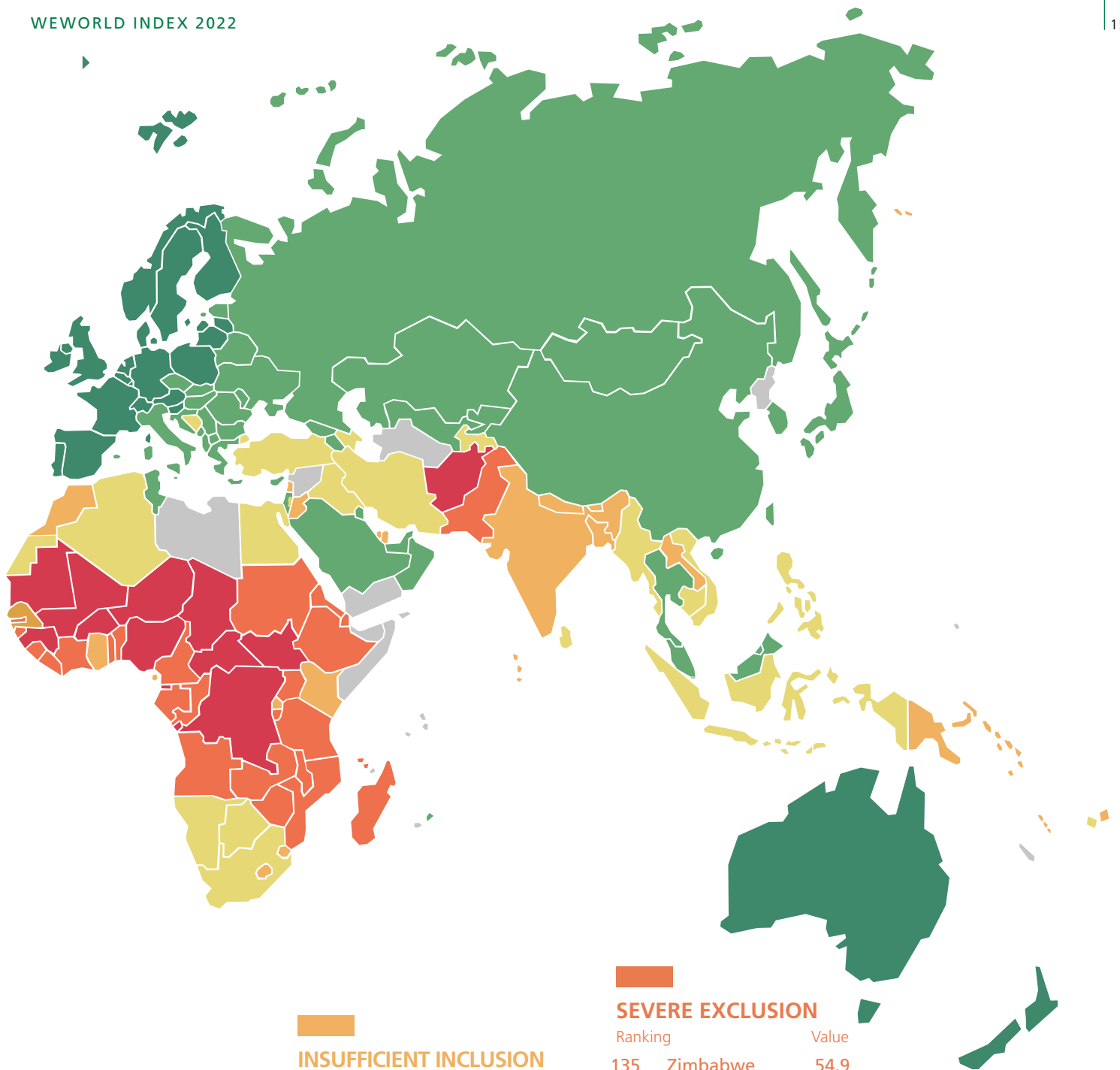
44	United Arab Emirates	81.0
45	Albania	80.2
46	Montenegro	80.0
46	Romania	80.0
48	Costa Rica	79.7
49	★ Cuba	79.3
50	Macedonia	78.8
51	Kyrgyz Republic	78.6
52	Saudi Arabia	78.5
53	Uzbekistan	78.4
54	Armenia	78.1
55	Dominican Republic	78.0
55	Mauritius	78.0
57	Brunei Darussalam	77.8
58	Malaysia	77.7
59	Kazakhstan	77.6

60	★ Peru	77.5
61	★ Japan	77.3
61	★ Thailand	77.3
63	★ Ukraine	77.2
64	Barbados	77.0
65	Russia	76.9
66	Bahrain	76.4
66	Maldives	76.4
68	★ Mongolia	76.2
69	★ Georgia	76.1
69	Qatar	76.1
71	★ Mexico	76.0
72	Kuwait	75.8
72	Oman	75.8
74	China	75.5
74	Trinidad and Tobago	75.5
76	★ Tunisia	75.3

SUFFICIENT INCLUSION

Ranking		Value
77	★ Paraguay	74.9
78	★ Brazil	74.7
79	★ Ecuador	74.6
80	★ Philippines	74.4
81	Jordan	74.3
81	Panama	74.3
83	Bosnia and Herzegovina	73.8
84	★ Vietnam	73.7
85	★ Fiji	73.5
86	Suriname	73.4
87	Turkey	73.2
88	Cabo Verde	73.1
89	Belize	73.0
89	★ Indonesia	73.0
91	Azerbaijan	72.8
91	★ Nicaragua	72.8
93	★ Lebanon	72.4
94	Jamaica	72.2
95	★ El Salvador	71.5





INSUFFICIENT INCLUSION

Ranking	Value
115	✦ Nepal 64.7
116	✦ Guatemala 64.6
117	Bhutan 64.2
117	✦ Ghana 64.2
119	✦ Laos 63.2
120	Djibouti 63.1
121	Gabon 62.3
122	✦ India 62.2
123	✦ Bangladesh 62.0
123	✦ Vanuatu 62.0
125	Eswatini 61.5
126	São Tomé and Príncipe 61.2
127	✦ Kenya 60.9
128	✦ Senegal 58.6
129	✦ Haiti 57.8
130	✦ Papua New Guinea 57.2
131	Cameroon 56.6
132	✦ Rwanda 56.3
133	Lesotho 55.3
134	Cote d'Ivoire 55.2

96	Colombia	71.4
97	Algeria	71.2
97	Tajikistan	71.2
99	✦ Palestine	70.7
100	✦ Bolivia	70.6
100	Morocco	70.6
102	Botswana	69.6
103	Egypt	69.3
103	Guyana	69.3
105	✦ Honduras	68.1
106	✦ Sri Lanka	67.9
107	Namibia	67.4
108	✦ Timor-Leste	66.9
109	Iraq	66.7
110	Iran	66.6
111	Venezuela	65.9
111	✦ South Africa	65.9
113	✦ Cambodia	65.7
114	✦ Myanmar	65.4

SEVERE EXCLUSION

Ranking	Value
135	Zimbabwe 54.9
136	✦ Zambia 54.7
137	✦ Togo 54.2
138	✦ Tanzania 54.0
139	Comoros 53.3
140	Sudan 52.5
141	Pakistan 52.2
142	Angola 51.9
143	✦ Gambia 51.2
144	Congo Republic 50.5
145	✦ Madagascar 50.0
146	Mauritania 49.2
147	✦ Uganda 48.7
148	✦ Mozambique 48.4
149	Guinea-Bissau 48.3
150	✦ Malawi 47.6
151	✦ Benin 47.1
152	Eritrea 46.4
152	✦ Sierra Leone 46.4
154	Nigeria 46.3
155	✦ Burundi 46.0
155	✦ Ethiopia 46.0
157	✦ Liberia 45.1

VERY SEVERE EXCLUSION

Ranking	Value
158	✦ Burkina Faso 43.5
159	✦ Guinea 43.2
160	✦ Mali 41.3
161	Democratic Republic of Congo 41.2
162	✦ Afghanistan 40.9
163	✦ Niger 32.0
164	Central African Republic 30.2
165	✦ South Sudan 29.3
166	Chad 28.4

2.2 Moving forward the 2030 Agenda: the condition of women and children is not improving as it should be

The WeWorld Index

The final ranking of the 2022 WeWorld Index is reflective of 166 countries. North Korea, Turkmenistan, Libya, Somalia, Bahamas, Micronesia, Syria, Equatorial Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Yemen have been excluded because they had an insufficient number of indicators³. Lacking data on children, women, and the contexts where they live is an alarming sign. This might signify that the implementation of children's and women's rights is very poor and that women and children – as well as most of the population – are severely at risk of poverty and abuse. **The three top ranked countries are Norway, Iceland, and Sweden.** Denmark and Finland closely follow⁴.

Since 2015, we have not observed significant changes in terms of countries at the top of the ranking: **Northern Europe and continental Europe are still the most inclusive areas for women and children.**

The top five countries in 2022 compared with 2015

COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Norway	1	91.3	2	90.7
Iceland	2	90.6	1	91
Sweden	3	89.8	3	90.3
Denmark	4	89.6	5	88.3
Finland	5	89.5	4	88.6

The bottom five countries in 2022 compared with 2015

COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Afghanistan	162	40.9	162	37
Niger	163	32	164	31.4
Central African Republic	164	30.2	165	28.5
South Sudan	165	29.3	166	24.5
Chad	166	28.4	163	32.1

The same goes for the countries at the bottom of the ranking. **In 2022, the three worst countries for the inclusion of women and children are the Central African Republic (164th), South Sudan (165th) and Chad (166th).**

Since 2015, when the first WeWorld Index was published, the countries at the bottom of the ranking have not changed nor progressed. Sub-Saharan Africa is still the most exclusionary area, along with those countries affected by chronic poverty, political insta-

bility, armed conflict, and non-democratic governments (e.g., Afghanistan, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Burkina Faso, etc.). In these areas, overlapping hazards, including those caused by climate change, are hard-hitting, especially on the most vulnerable groups of people and particularly women and children.

From this edition, the countries the WeWorld Index accounts for are divided into six groups according to the degree of inclusion/exclusion of women and children: very good in-

Number of countries and number of children and women by groups of inclusion/exclusion in 2022

GROUP OF INCLUSION/EXCLUSION	TIER	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	CHILDREN (0-14 YEARS OLD) POPULATION IN 2022	WOMEN POPULATION IN 2022
Very good inclusion	Equal or more than 85 points	23 countries	75,869,542	240,705,084
Good inclusion	Between 75 and 84 points	53 countries	507,534,668	1,380,576,342
Sufficient inclusion	Between 65 and 74 points	38 countries	381,171,705	729,590,792
Insufficient inclusion	Between 55 and 64 points	20 countries	496,441,941	880,164,881
Severe exclusion	Between 45 and 54 points	23 countries	373,117,382	457,733,914
Very severe exclusion	Equal or less than 44 points	9 countries	110,598,536	122,889,656

³ For a deeper insight on the WeWorld Index methodology, see Chapter 1.

⁴ If one wants to evaluate the progress of a country in the WeWorld Index, it is necessary to look both at the score and rank. Indeed, to understand a country's trend over time, it is not sufficient to only consider its position in the ranking. That is because significant changes in the final rank do not always correspond to notable changes in the score. For further details of how the WeWorld Index is constructed, see the methodology in Chapter 1.

Globally, 1 in 2 children and more than 1 woman out of 3 live in countries experiencing some form of exclusion



It will take 182 years to achieve a level of adequate inclusion for women and children globally



clusion, good inclusion, sufficient inclusion, insufficient inclusion, severe exclusion, and very severe exclusion.

In 2022, 50.4% of children and 38.3% of women worldwide live in countries experiencing some form of exclusion (insufficient, severe, or very severe exclusion).

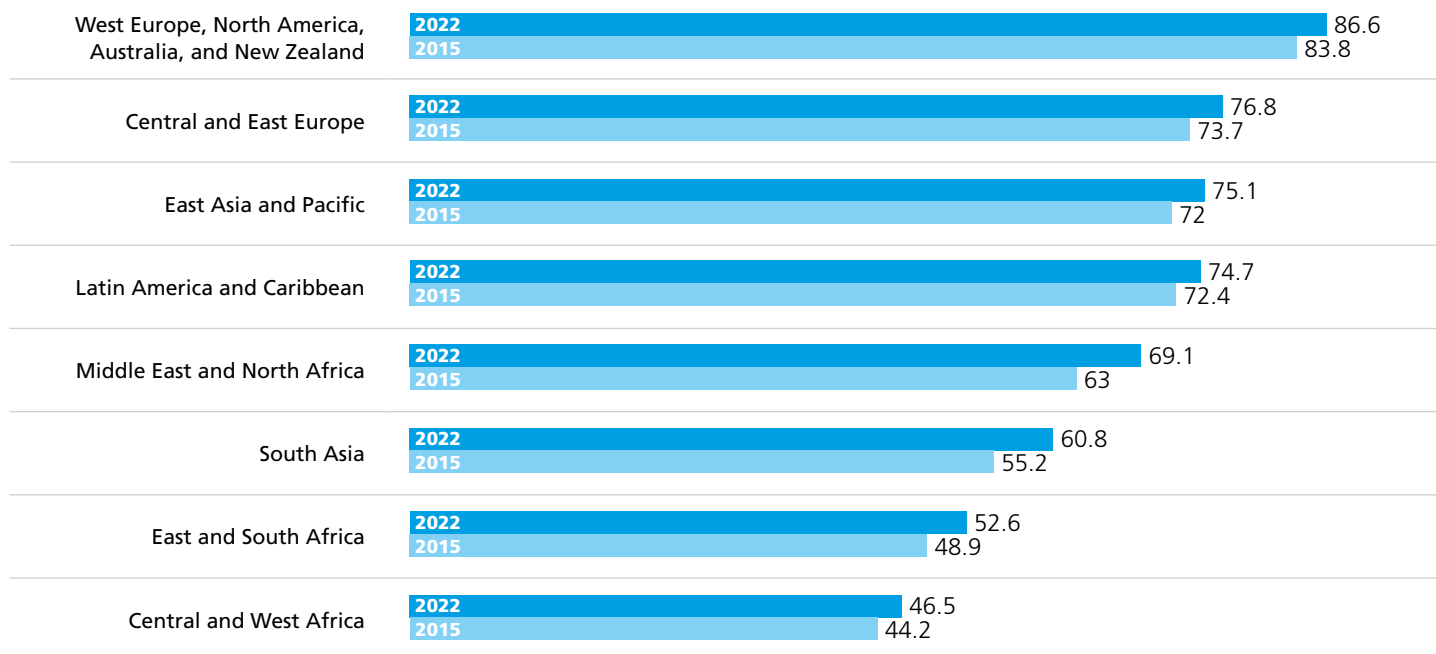
The new methodology allows for calculating the global average (a sort of thermometer of the level of inclusion/exclusion of women and children in the world) of the WeWorld Index and the averages of the geographical areas, which are weighted on the size of their population.

By considering the global average as the performance of the world, we can affirm that the world obtained a score of 62.2 in 2015 versus 63.6 in 2022. That indicates a slight improvement, which, nevertheless, does not seem to be sufficient to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda. **In seven years, the world has improved only by 1.4 points**

in the WeWorld Index. At this pace, it will take 182 years to achieve a level of adequate inclusion for women and children globally. By looking at the averages of the geographical areas, some regions of the world are experiencing faster changes and progress; usually, those regions start from the most precarious conditions in terms of inclusion of women and children (e.g., the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, etc.). West Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand remain the areas with the highest average WeWorld Index, while Central and West Africa are still the worst performers. That is also reflected in the countries' positions in the final ranking. However, it should be noted that the progress experienced by the top-ranked geographical areas is not incredibly significant. Indeed, **the risk is that once a certain level of development and progress has been achieved, and once the key essential services and**

basic rights have been provided, countries tend to slow down, and the effort to guarantee inclusion is reduced or becomes stationary. Furthermore, if this level of development is not consolidated and maintained, the conditions of the most vulnerable, including women and children, could be easily jeopardized by external shocks (e.g., pandemics, economic crises, etc.). In this scenario, we should question ourselves on the opportunity to shift from the dichotomy of a Global North vs a Global South to that of Center vs Periphery. **Center and Periphery are not spatial concepts but social concepts, meaning, in fact, that factors of exclusion persist also in the best performing countries.**

The geographical areas' scores in 2022 compared to 2015



The 15 Dimensions of the WeWorld Index

1. Environment 
2. Housing
3. Conflicts and wars
4. Democracy and safety
5. Access to information
6. Children's health 
7. Children's education
8. Children's human capital
9. Children's economic capital
10. Violence against children
11. Women's health 
12. Women's education
13. Women's economic opportunities
14. Women's decision-making participation
15. Violence against women

The methodology introduced in this new edition of the WeWorld Index allows for further processing: assessing whether and how the 15 dimensions that make up the Index are correlated⁵ with one another.

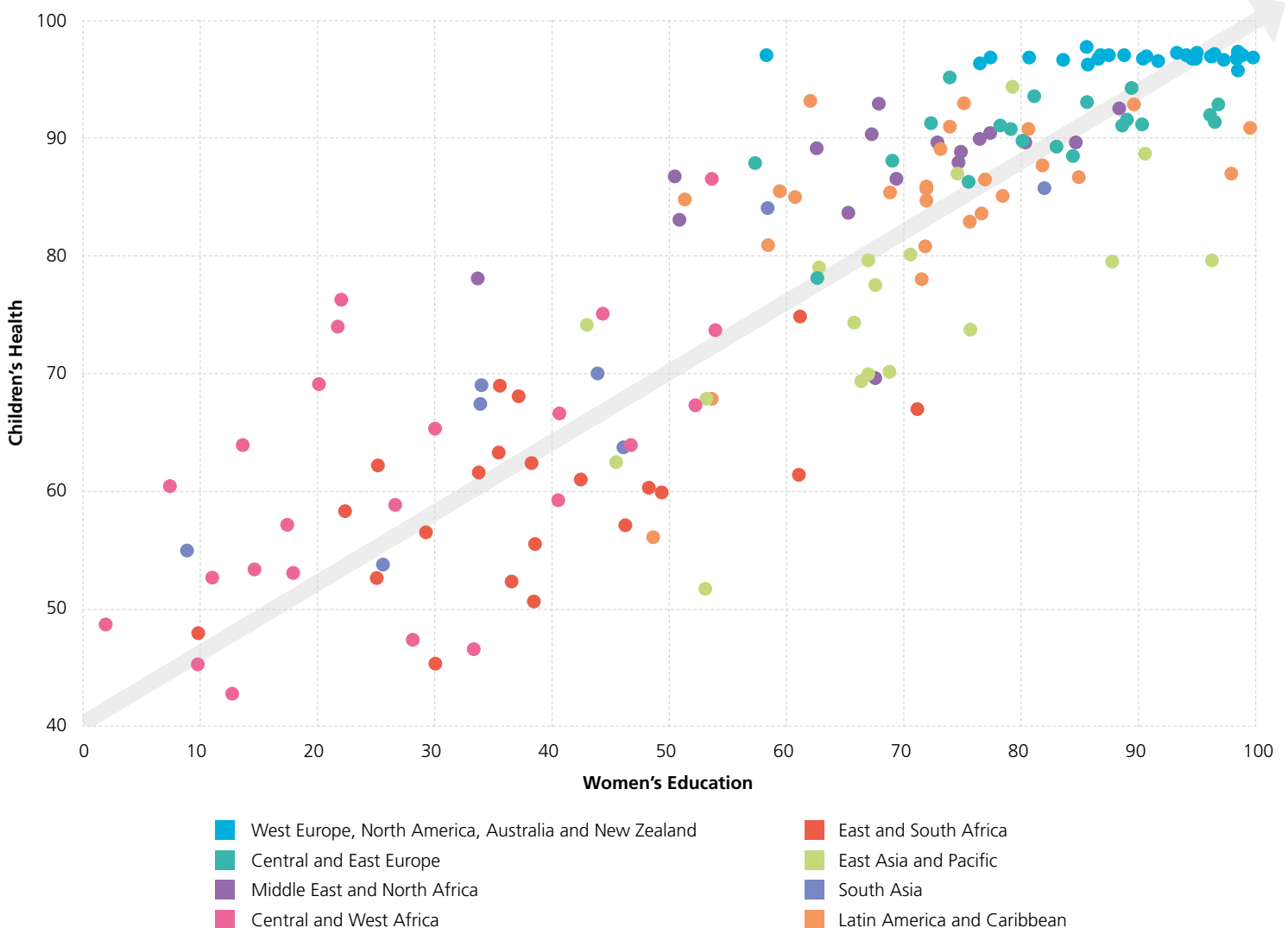
From the analysis, it is evident that the context in which one is born plays a key role in determining living conditions. Briefly, locality still matters. In particular, the "Housing" dimension has strong correlations not only with other context dimensions (such as "Access to information"), but also with women's and children's health and education, the violence perpetrated against them, and women's economic opportunities. The right to adequate housing is essen-

tial and a prerequisite to realizing the most fundamental human rights. If one thinks of all those situations in which the right to housing is denied – due to poverty, conflicts, migration driven by climate change, and extreme weather events – it is clear how risks can consequently increase, especially for the most vulnerable, including women and children (see the Focus).

As conceivable, the "Democracy and safety" dimension relates to "Conflicts and wars". In these times, it is good to remember that the state of health of a country, its social protection systems, and its citizens depend on its internal stability and institutions. Nowadays, monitoring the health of democracies is more important than ever. Another correlation that emerged is between the "Democracy and safety" dimension and the violence perpetrated against women and children. In

⁵ In statistics, correlation is defined as any statistical relationship, whether causal or not, between two variables or data. Correlation is not causation, though: just because two things correlate, it does not necessarily mean that one causes the other.

The correlation between the dimensions of "Children's health" and "Women's education"



undemocratic regimes, the most vulnerable groups of people tend to suffer the most. **It has been shown that in situations of internal conflict, instability and precarious living conditions, the mechanisms of patriarchal oppression tend to strengthen** (see WeWorld Index 2021). In these cases, violence against children and girls in particular increases, including using coping mechanisms such as forced marriages (see the section on Poverty in the Focus).

Access to information also reconfirms its decisive role in guaranteeing adequate living conditions and inclusion for women and children. In particular, the “Access to information” dimension relates to women’s and children’s health, but also with women’s education and economic opportunities. In this sense, accessing information is an essential form of empowerment. For instance, thinking about the economic opportunities of women employed in agriculture, accessing information on weather forecasts, crop trends, the use of resilient seeds, etc., can translate into a decisive improvement in the quality of their work. The same goes for children: as we witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, having access to a stable Internet connection made the differ-

ence between receiving an education or not receiving an education (see WeWorld Index 2020 and 2021).

Another point that was observed is the intertwining between the rights and the inclusion of women and children.

For instance, a strong correlation between children’s health and women’s education has been observed (see the chart on page 18): an educated woman has the capabilities to adequately feed her children, invest in their health and provide for them. **It has been demonstrated that guaranteeing the rights and promoting the skills of women also means guaranteeing them for children and vice-versa** (see Chapter 1). However, this intertwining between women’s and children’s rights and inclusion is not something to be taken for granted, but to be nurtured by adequate policies. **It is not enough to create conditions for inclusion per se, but these policies must have an approach that is, at the same time, multidimensional and targeted at the specific needs of women and children.** This is even truer in those countries that do not have a favorable context and are characterized by conditions of precariousness, instability, poverty, and lack of rights.

Ultimately, it is necessary to proceed on two fronts: on the one hand, **it is imperative to work on the context and make it as favorable as possible, on the other, one cannot think that the context is in itself sufficient to satisfy the needs of women and children, for whom targeted policies and measures are paramount.**

Precisely for these reasons, the new methodology introduces the possibility of separately monitoring the context in which women and children are born and live, and their individual conditions through the three sub-indexes (context, children, and women), which together constitute the final WeWorld Index (see the methodology in Chapter 1).



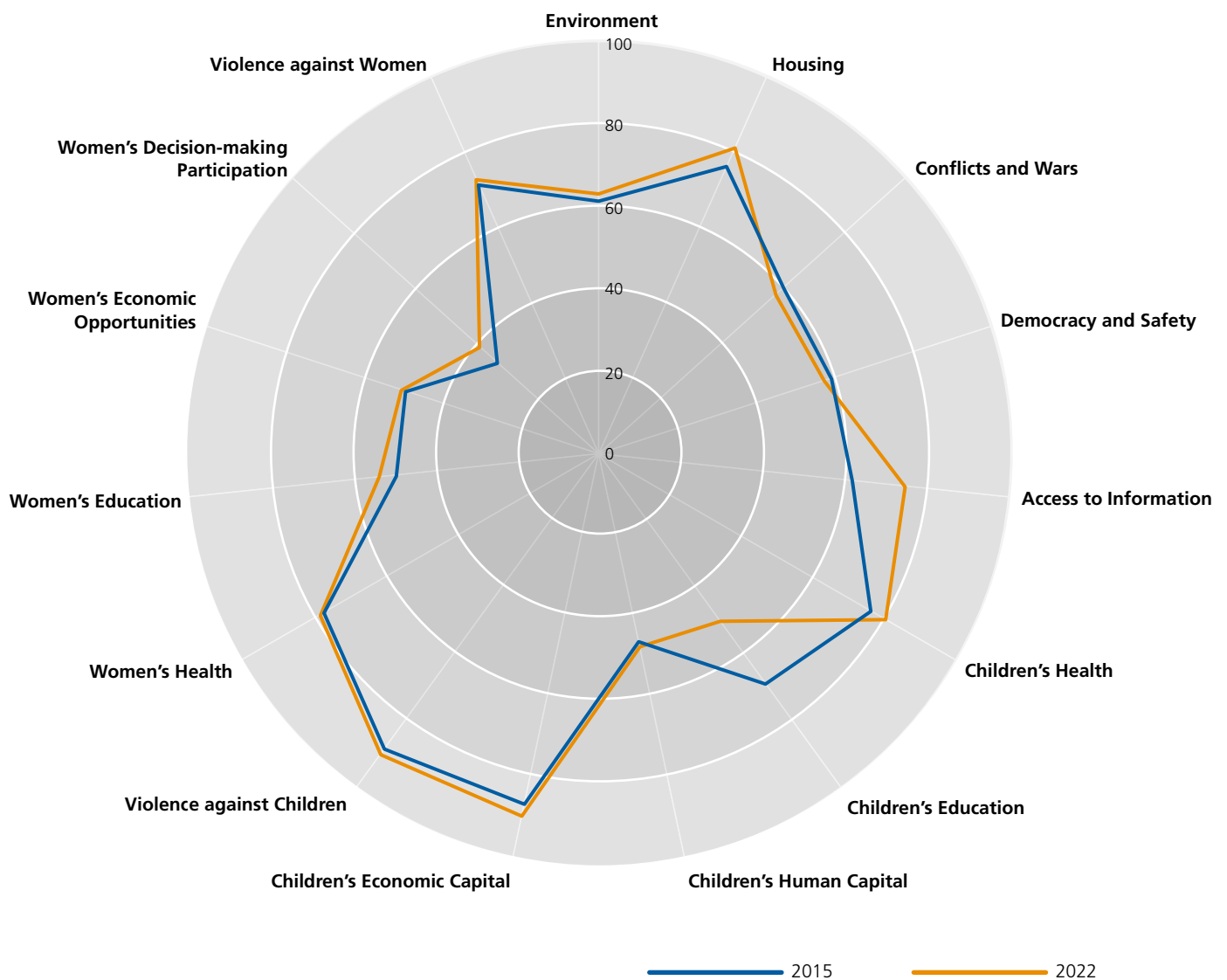
“I want to inspire and motivate other kids like me to write stories. I also wanted to share the message about the importance of family to other kids. Don’t waste your time doing something that is not that important, focus on your goal. If you have a goal don’t just say it but put it into action. Never give up hope and never be shy. Reading can teach us new things and learn something that is interesting and can keep us knowledgeable.”

Eunike, 12 years old, Timor-Leste
(testimony collected by ChildFund Australia)

The Three Sub-Indexes

The new methodology allows not only to look at the global average for the overall Index but also for the three sub-indexes⁶. The three sub-indexes each comprise the above-mentioned five dimensions relating to the context in which women and children live and their specific living conditions.

📊 How the 15 dimensions changed between 2015 and 2022



The radar chart allows us to understand if the dimensions relating to the context, women, and children have improved or worsened over time. To read it, one has to look at how the trajectories approach or move away from

zero. The closer the radar trajectory gets to zero, the worse that dimension gets; the closer it gets to 100, the better. The graph shows that almost all the dimensions have remained stationary. **Two of them have**

experienced significant improvements between 2015 and 2022: "Access to information" and "Democracy and safety". On the other hand, "Children's education" has deteriorated considerably.

⁶ To consult the rank and score of each country for the three sub-indexes see the Appendix.



The Context Sub-Index

In 2022, the global average of the Context sub-index is 66.1; in 2015, it was 63.4. That means that **the contexts in which women and children live are slowly improving, at least in some respects**. But looking more closely, some of these contexts are becoming less peaceful, less secure, and less democratic. The “Environment” dimension is improving, albeit only slightly: tackling the increasingly menacing climate crisis will require a major effort. Significant improvements are registered in the “Housing” dimension and, even more evidently, in the “Access to information”. However, greater access to information per se does not necessarily translate into higher well-being for women and children. It is necessary to acquire specific skills to learn how to effectively use digital tools and navigate the Internet. **Indeed, the Internet brings infinite opportunities, but also many risks: online grooming and violence, cyberbullying, identity theft, etc.** (see the section on Online Risks in the Focus section of the Index on ChildFund Alliance’s campaign WEB Safe & Wise and policy asks⁷).

The geographical areas that recorded the most considerable progress in the Context sub-index are, in order: South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, East and South Africa, Central and West Africa (which all started from very poor conditions). The remaining geographical areas recorded more moderate progress.

⁷ For further information, check <https://childfundalliance.org/web-safe-and-wise/policy-asks>

The score and rank of the 2022 top five countries in the Context sub-index



COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Norway	1	95.3	3	94.8
Iceland	4	94.8	1	95.7
Sweden	17	90.1	2	95.3
Denmark	2	95.1	5	94.5
Finland	5	93.2	9	92.4

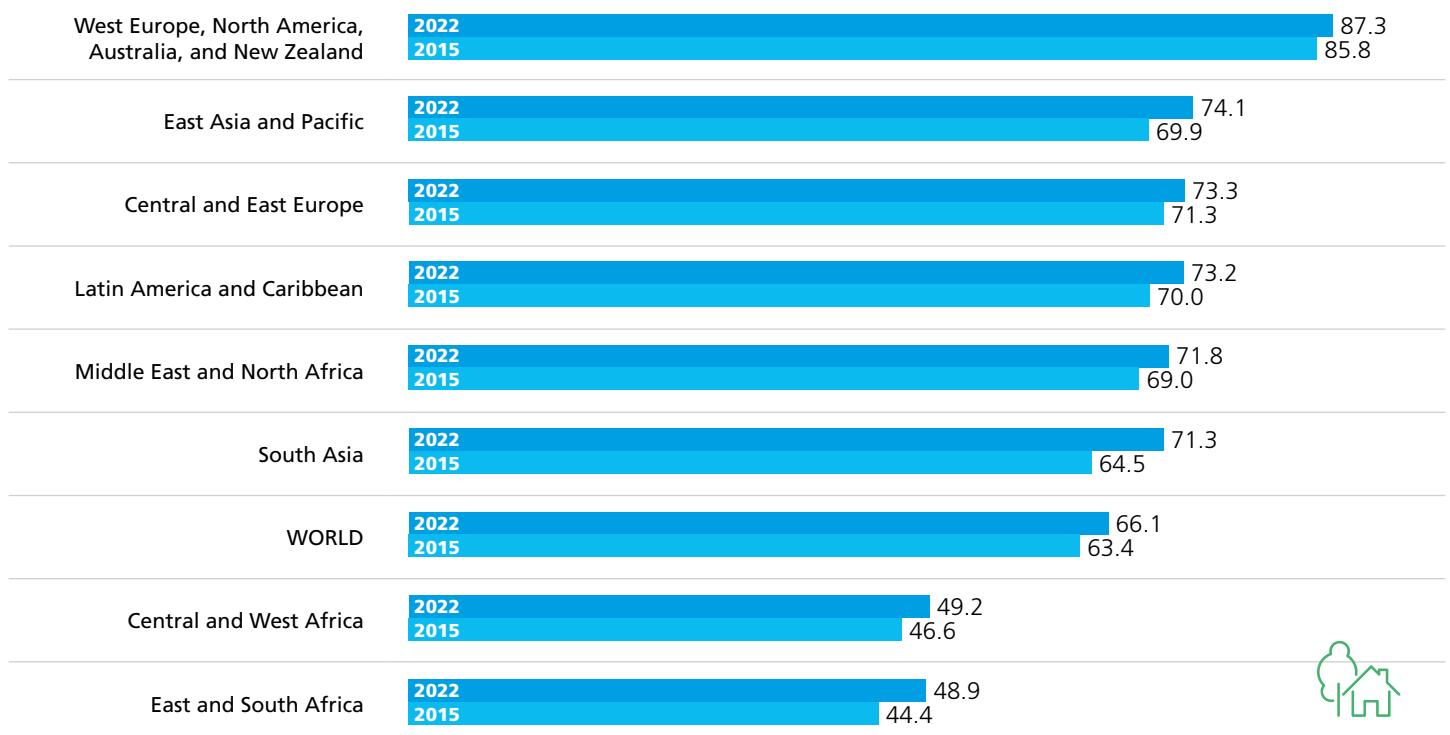
The score and rank of the 2022 bottom five countries in the Context sub-index



COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Afghanistan*	155	45.8	145	44.9
Niger	162	34.7	161	32.7
Central African Republic	165	23.8	165	26.5
South Sudan	166	23.3	166	21.5
Chad	164	30.1	164	27.8

*The data on Afghanistan collected in the 2022 WeWorld Index refers to the period before the takeover of the Taliban. In the twenty years before the Taliban resumed power in August 2021, Afghanistan had gone through a season of progress. The country had improved in various areas, especially in the supply of basic needs. Another point of improvement was access to the Internet, which was more widespread among the population. However, one of the first repressive measures implemented by the Taliban’s obscurantist regime was blocking the Internet. It is conceivable that the conditions of the population will worsen in the coming years.

The geographical areas’ averages for the Context sub-index in 2022 and 2015





The Children's Sub-Index

In 2022, the global average of the Children's sub-index is 68.5; in 2015, it was 71.1. **In 2015, the 2030 Agenda was launched. Ever since, the world has become less inclusive for children,** making it even harder to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this last Decade of Action. **The "Children's education" dimension has suffered the most serious deterioration.** Undoubtedly, **this is the consequence of two years of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns,** which have led to often-inadequate online classes and, in most serious cases, denied access to education. **Denying access to education means exposing children to a series of risks, including increased violence.** However, one must not think that the responsibility lies solely with COVID-19 or other external crises. Guaranteeing children their fundamental rights requires a programmatic and con-

tinuous effort, an effort able to build resilient social systems – including educational systems – that can resist and react to external shocks. Even those countries that are already guaranteeing satisfactory levels of inclusion to children have not been immune to the recent crises. Therefore, the nature of this effort and work must be preventive: **to safeguard the future and well-being of their societies, countries must invest in specific and targeted policies for children, youth, and their active involvement.**

Looking closer at geographical areas' performance, some regions have experienced some improvements. Among these, there are East and South Africa, Central and West Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa. That can also be explained because, as previously mentioned, in countries starting from conditions of great precari-

ousness, guaranteeing even the most basic rights and services automatically means taking steps forward. The challenge, however, lies in maintaining what has been achieved. As evidence of this, areas that started with better conditions have only improved slightly or have experienced negligible improvements, as in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean. The only area to experience a worsening in the conditions of children is East Asia and the Pacific.

The score and rank of the 2022 top five countries in the Children's sub-index



COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Norway	2	90.7	1	91.0
Iceland	1	90.8	2	90.4
Sweden	8	89.5	6	89.7
Denmark	5	89.6	9	88.9
Finland	23	88.2	14	88.1

The score and rank of the 2022 bottom five countries in the Children's sub-index



COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Afghanistan	145	57.8	137	56.6
Niger	165	33.5	163	35.9
Central African Republic	163	38.7	165	30.1
South Sudan	166	32.7	166	22.6
Chad	164	33.9	164	34.3

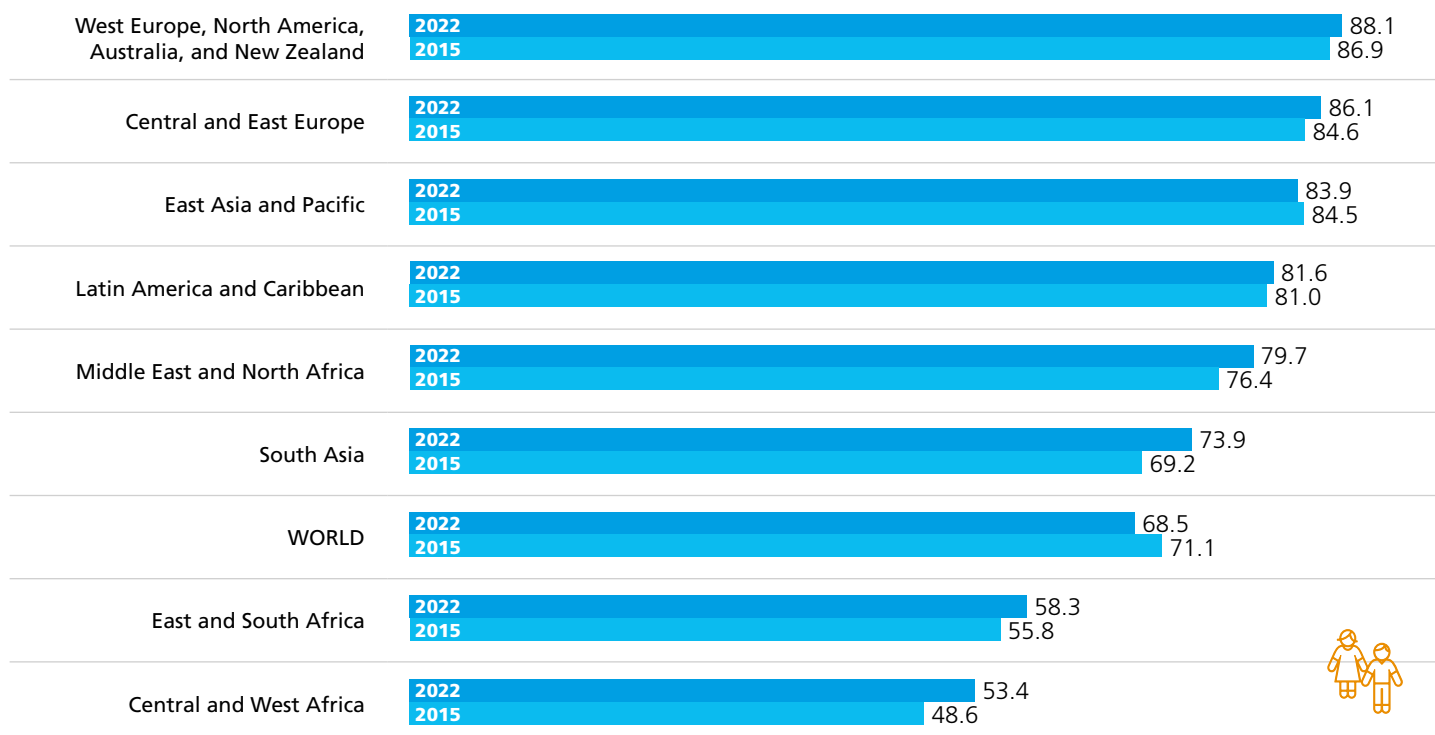


“I was chosen through a series of steps to take part in the training. I was so glad to be able to teach and earn money. I could make a living and care for my mother in my hometown. Previously, people did not appreciate preschool. With the help of ChildFund, we ran several campaigns to educate parents about the value of preschool for their children. You can’t underestimate your children, you have let them to fly like a bird. I never imagined I’d be able to achieve what I have.”

Samouen, 28 years old, Cambodia
(testimony collected by ChildFund Australia)



The geographical areas’ averages for the Children’s sub-index in 2022 and 2015





The Women's Sub-Index

In 2022, the global average of the Women's sub-index is 56.8; in 2015, it was 53.5. **The global average of the Women's sub-index recorded the most significant improvement** compared to the other sub-indices. However, we should notice that the medium score is the lowest of the three sub-indices. **Despite all that has been done, we are still living in a man's world.**

By taking a closer look at the single dimensions, the most considerable progress has been registered in the participation of women in decision-making processes. However, this dimension is highly volatile due to election cycles and executive appointments in companies (for the list of the indicators see the Appendix). **To add to this reasoning, the predominant forms of power still derive from a secular patriarchal matrix,**

to which also women themselves tend to resort. To ensure that the achieved progress becomes sustainable, renewed role and power models will be needed.

The dimension of women's education has also seen improvements, which, nevertheless, have not translated into significant economic opportunities.

In this case, too, the geographical areas that started from conditions of greater disadvantage have recorded the most noteworthy progress: the Middle East and North Africa (mainly due to an improvement in the dimension of the "Decision-making participation"), South Asia, and also Central and East Europe. All the remaining areas, including the Global North, improved, even though slightly.



📊 The score and rank of the 2022 top five countries in the Women's sub-index



COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Norway	2	88.1	2	86.6
Iceland	5	86.5	1	86.9
Sweden	1	90	3	86.2
Denmark	9	84.3	7	81.9
Finland	4	87.2	5	85.4

📊 The score and rank of the 2022 bottom five countries in the Women's sub-index



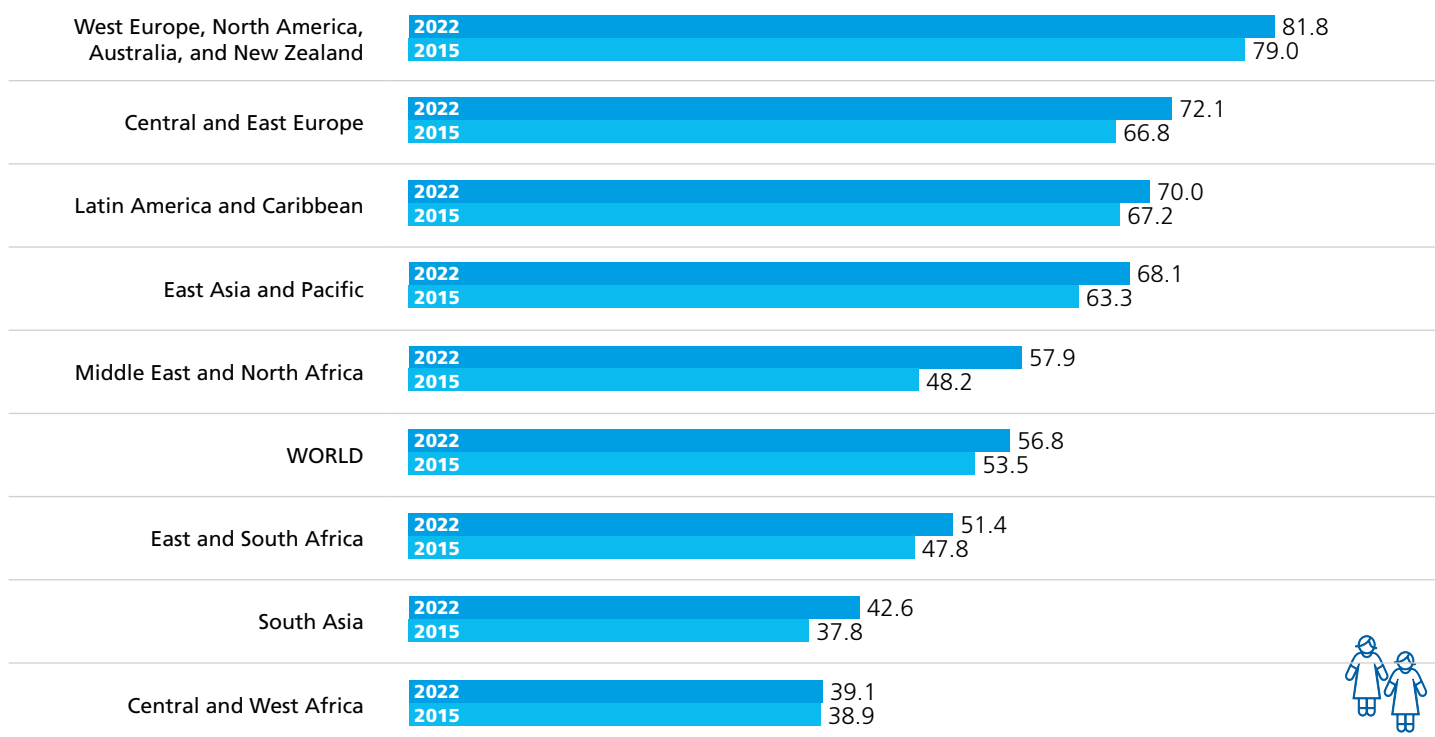
COUNTRY	2022		2015	
	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE
Afghanistan	165	25.8	166	19.9
Niger	164	28.2	165	26.4
Central African Republic	163	29.8	163	29.1
South Sudan	160	32.9	162	30.2
Chad	166	22.4	158	34.8



“At the beginning I wasn’t interested in playing rugby. But when I started playing, it was so much fun as well as challenging. Since then, I’ve been playing rugby seriously. One of my friends asked, ‘You are a girl and not as strong as boys, so how can you play rugby and coach others?’ This was an opportunity to explain that girls have the same rights to play sport, and the same abilities. I believe that everyone has unlimited ability. If we have a strong intention to develop ourselves, we can make it happen. Now, when my parents are not at home, I have the confidence to make decisions and face and solve problems by myself.”

Na, 17 years old, Vietnam
 (testimony collected by ChildFund Australia (Sport 4 Development))

The geographical areas’ averages for the Women’s sub-index in 2022 and 2015





FOCUS
**Five barriers
to children's
future**



POVERTY

CONFLICTS

FORCED MIGRATION

CLIMATE CHANGE

ONLINE RISKS



Introduction

A succession of different crises has characterized the last decades. From the economic shocks of 2008 and 2011 to the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area, the consequent migration flows, the rise of authoritarian regimes, the increasing extreme weather events (EWEs), Ebola, and eventually the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has been repeatedly shocked. Some of these crises have maintained a regional dimension, while others have extended to the entire world, highlighting the fragility of our global system.

The COVID-19 pandemic (the first of such large-scale since 1918) had (and is still having) consequences not only on our physical health but also on the supply of raw materials and global distribution chains, job loss, increasing poverty, worsening mental health, and access to safe quality education. Once again, the crisis has brought to light a profoundly unequal system: from vaccines, first distributed in the Global North, to online classes, which were not accessible to everyone. **The result has been a substantial retreat in progress toward the 2030 Agenda goals, which, even before the pandemic, seemed hard to achieve** (see WeWorld Index 2020 and 2021).

Against the background of the COVID-19 crisis, which occupied the international spotlight for almost two years, other emergencies continued or unfolded: conflicts that have been going on for years (such as those in Syria and Yemen), civil and social rights undermined in several countries of the world, deterioration of precarious balances (as in the case of Afghanistan), and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The latter has once again shown us that we live in a fragile context, which could be compromised at any given moment, with effects that can extend outside a single geographical area⁸.

Meanwhile, climate change continues to rage, and overlapping weather hazards are becoming more frequent and catastrophic. **Never before in history have crises occurred on multiple fronts (environmental, economic, social, educational, etc.) as they do today, and the feeling is that the times are not yet ripe for**

finding common and shared solutions at the international level. In all this, people already living in vulnerable conditions are still the most at risk. Women, children and youth are particularly sensitive and exposed to the overlapping of multiple crises. **In this sense, we must adopt an intersectional perspective to safeguard those who are the most exposed to the violation of their rights.** The global scenario that is taking shape before our eyes is that of a permanent, protracted and multi-faceted state of crisis. A crisis that will especially impact the younger generations. **In this framework, children and youth are denied not only their fundamental human rights, but also the possibility of exercising their capabilities and living life to the fullest in their present and future. Guaranteeing children and youth the right to their future is probably the greatest challenge of our time.**

This is why the Focus of the 2022 WeWorld Index addresses five interconnected barriers to children's future. These are poverty, conflicts, forced migration, climate change, and online risks. We are aware that this list is not exhaustive, but we believe that it is precisely from these five barriers that other effects stem, with the risk of compromising children's rights and future. The Focus is divided into five sections corresponding to the five barriers. Each section analyses the main effects each barrier has on children's future with a deepening of girls' situation and how COVID-19 has worsened said effects. Each section provides good practices, examples, testimonies and solutions from members of ChildFund Alliance and other relevant stakeholders. Each section closes with a series of recommendations and calls to action that ChildFund Alliance considers essential for breaking these barriers and building children's futures.

⁸ Just think how, due to the blockade of grain exports, the Russian war in Ukraine is impacting the food security of people living thousands of miles from where the war is being fought.



POVERTY

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS



Poverty is defined as the lack of income and resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods⁹. A person in poverty can suffer multiple disadvantages at the same time: health issues, malnutrition, lack of clean water or electricity, harsh working conditions, limited access to education, discrimination and exclusion, lack of effective participation in society, and susceptibility to violence.

In a word, it represents a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity (UN, 1998). That is why, focusing on one factor alone, such as income, is not enough to capture the real nature of poverty, which is multidimensional¹⁰.

**Today,
one billion children
are multidimensionally
poor**



(GCECP, 2020)

**45%
of deaths among children
under five years-old are
linked to undernutrition
and occur mostly in
low and middle-income
countries**

(WHO, 2021)

⁹ Poverty is absolute when a household income is insufficient to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, safe drinking water, education, healthcare, etc. It is relative when households receive 50% less than the average income, cannot afford anything above the basics, and do not enjoy the same standard of living as everyone else in the country. The people living with less than \$1.90 a day are in a condition of extreme poverty (World Bank, 2020).

¹⁰ Over a third of those experiencing multidimensional poverty are not captured by the monetary headcount ratio, reflecting the need to go beyond the dimension of income (World Bank, 2020). The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reflects the range of deprivations that poor people face in healthcare, education and living standards. For more information, see <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2021-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi#indicies/MPI>

How poverty jeopardizes children's future

Around 10% of the world population still lives in extreme poverty, and the most vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected (World Bank, 2020). Among them, children are more than twice as likely to be poor as adults. Today, one billion children are multidimensionally poor (GCECP, 2020). **Poverty is a violation of a child's rights: as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children have a right to adequate standards of living and to be free from deprivations in health, education, nutrition, care, and protection.** Poverty also threatens their future since it compromises their life prospects in many respects:

LIFE'S EARLY MOMENTS: Child mortality is higher in the poorest countries, where children under five-years-old die at twice the rate of their better-off peers (GCECP, 2020)¹¹. Life's early moments are crucial: in the first 1,000 days (between a woman's pregnancy and a child's second birthday) a child's brain grows faster and is more susceptible to external influences. Nutritious food, socio-sanitary support for mothers, and constant monitoring during this period are needed to allow children to develop their full potential¹².

QUALITY NUTRITION: 45% of deaths among children under five-years-old are linked to undernutrition and occur mostly in low and middle-income countries (WHO, 2021). The same countries have high childhood overweight rates due to the difficulties in purchasing the variety of food necessary for having a balanced diet. Quality nutrition is fundamental, especially in the first two years of life, when it fosters healthy growth

and cognitive development, reducing the chance of contracting diseases (ibid.).

LEARNING POVERTY: Economic and learning poverty are intricately linked and can persist among generations¹³. The poorest families often cannot afford essential goods, not to mention school-related costs (books, transport, meals, etc.). Consequently, parents might resort to coping mechanisms such as sending their children to work or marrying off their daughters. Children and youth who have not received an education can, in turn, become uneducated adults, perpetuating a vicious poverty cycle (see WeWorld Index 2018).

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY: Children are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of shocks such as conflicts, natural disasters, and epidemics, which can increase violence and abuse. Lacking coping resources, any impact on their precarious stability threatens their lives and long-term prospects, exposing them to a series of risks, such as child labor. Children's workforce exploitation is pushed by the need for additional income or constant care for family members, in the absence of welfare and safety nets¹⁴. Children are vulnerable to other perils: poverty can push them or their parents to produce and sell Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), freely or under coercion¹⁵ (ChildFund Alliance, 2020).

OBSTACLE TO CAPABILITIES: People in poverty lack not only an income but also the opportunity to access several needs. Poverty can be seen as a "capability failure" (Sen, 2000), limiting the freedom to enjoy pivotal aspects of a person's well-being and to live life to the fullest. Those freedoms differ from childhood to adulthood; therefore, it is important to address child poverty with a capability-based approach.

¹¹ In 2020, 13,800 under-five deaths occurred every day, the majority of which in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where children have the highest probability of contracting diseases due to poor hygienic conditions, access to nutritious food, clean water, and healthcare services (UNICEF, 2021a).

¹² Enhancing mothers' capabilities is fundamental in this matter; if a woman is aware of her own and her child's rights, and of the risks they can encounter during pregnancy and early childhood, she can start building a better future for her kid from the beginning (see WeWorld Index 2020, 2021, and Chapter 1 of this edition).

¹³ Learning poverty is understood as the impossibility for children and youth to get an education and freely develop capabilities, talents, and aspirations due to harsh economic conditions, which hinder children's ability to enjoy the same opportunities as their better-off peers (Save the Children, 2022).

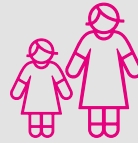
¹⁴ The poorest countries with high levels of institutional and social fragility tend to rely more on child labour, triple the global average (ILO/UNICEF, 2021).

¹⁵ See the "Online risks" barrier.



“After I finished primary school, I started secondary school. Only three months later, my father forced me to move again. He mistreated and raped me every day, so I ran away and entrusted myself to a family who offered to help me. Unfortunately, they just wanted a maid: they made me work hard, and I didn’t have time for anything else. I was often mistreated, but luckily, one day, I managed to escape from there too”.

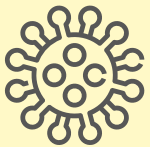
Annastazia, 16 years old, Tanzania
(testimony collected by WeWorld)



WHAT ABOUT GIRLS?

Girls, experiencing the intersectionality of being both young and female, are disproportionately affected by poverty. Disadvantaged families often force daughters to marry early to reduce the burden on the household’s expenditures. These coping mechanisms expose girls to a series of risks, such as school dropout¹⁶. Girls forced into early marriages can also be exposed to violence or abuse by their partners and to teenage pregnancies, which can be extremely dangerous for their health, as their body is not yet ready for childbearing and birth.

¹⁶ 127 million girls of primary and secondary school age are out of school, and three-quarters of all primary-age children who may never set foot in school are girls (9 million). Getting every girl into primary education will not happen until 2050 (UNESCO, 2022).



COVID-19 EFFECTS

The pandemic led to a serious job crisis¹⁷. Households’ economic insecurity impacts children’s well-being: 150 million have become multidimensionally poor (UNICEF, 2020). The pressures of protracted school closures coupled with job losses, especially in female-dominated sectors, resulted in fewer resources for women and an increased domestic burden (ILO/UNICEF, 2021). Mothers, who are usually the primary caregivers and tend to invest more money in their children’s needs, are unable to do so, limiting their kids’ opportunities (see WeWorld Index 2021). That had and will have consequences on children: the cuts on non-essential expenditures, such as day-care or extra-curricular activities, is a loss that affects their social life and health.

¹⁷ The global economy is undergoing the worst recession of the last 90 years: 114 million people have lost their job, and 120 million have dropped below the extreme poverty line (UN, 2021). The pandemic has most severely affected people who were already poor: their jobs, often low-skilled and less compatible with social distancing, have been eliminated during lockdowns. In addition, the poorest have access to fewer coping mechanisms, such as savings and social security systems (World Bank, 2020).





Good practices to address child poverty

WeWorld in Mozambique: strengthen the community resilience with a gender equality perspective in the province of Manica



In 2020, more than half of the population (63.3%) lived in extreme poverty, with 1.90\$ a day, with the majority not having access to clean water and sanitation nor to public ordinary and emergency health services. This already vulnerable situation is disrupted further by the frequent natural disasters hitting the country: cyclones are the most recurring and significant risks, along with droughts and floods. In 2019, Mozambique faced a severe drought wave in the southern region and two devastating cyclones in the North, Idai and Kenneth, which underlined the weakness of institutional and community preparedness and response capacity. **Three and a half years later, more than 100,000 displaced people still live in temporary housing with limited access to essential services, health, water and hygiene, social protection, and livelihood opportunities, especially for women and children.** This situation has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance to 7.9 million and exacerbating poverty and food insecurity.

Since 2000, WeWorld has been operating in different areas of the country¹⁸ to strengthen community resilience, maintaining its priority attention to the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as children. This need is even more compelling considering that the effects of climate change act as a catalyst for a population that already lives in poverty and extreme poverty. In 2019, WeWorld intervened to provide basic needs for the people affected by the two cyclones Idai and Kenneth. In the Province of Manica, **the organization installed emergency lavatories and distributed filters and buckets for collecting and purifying water, reaching over 4,000 families.** In 2021, WeWorld launched a project funded by the Italian Cooperation Agency to enhance the resilience of the most vulnerable social groups and improve food security, access to water and sanitation, and health services. Specifically, WeWorld implemented agro-transformation activities, sustainable production techniques, and improved access to ordinary and emergency health services for maternal and child health in safe and decent accommodation. The organization built six "Casas-mãe-Espera"¹⁹ increasing the assistance to mothers during childbirth and maternal-child health practices.

This achievement is fundamental not only for women's rights and health but also for their children's future development, considering the promotion of good nutrition, health, and sanitation it ensures in their first 1,000 days of life.



ChildFund International in Honduras



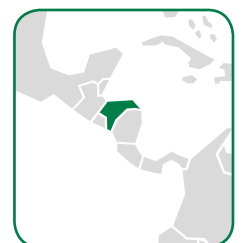
The Republic of Honduras is a Central American country with more than 9 million inhabitants, 39.4% of its population are under 18 years of age and 52.6 percent of children and adolescents live in urban areas, and 47.4% in rural areas.

Three out of five children and adolescents are multidimensionally poor and one in four face severe poverty. According to the Economic Commission of Latin America, it is considered one of the poorest countries on the continent and one that worsens in the face of disasters. 64.3% of households are in poverty and 40.7% are in extreme poverty. **Approximately 2.1 million children are in multidimensional poverty. In addition, 24.1% of children are below the threshold of severe deprivation.**

The greatest deprivation is housing with 38.2%, followed by education and sanitation with 26%. According to the EVCNNA (Encuesta de Violencia Contra Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes), more than one in five girls married before the age of 18. The percentage of rape victims who became pregnant was 15.8%. About 16.2% of girls and 9.9% of boys experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. Violence and economic instability have led to internal population and migration movements. According to DINAF (Dirección de Niñez Adolescencia y Familia), in 2022 there were 5,542 returned children, an increase of 60% over the previous year.

ChildFund, from its Central America office, has implemented actions and measures to protect children and their environment so that they live in conditions that allow optimal development at every stage of their lives. In 2017, ChildFund conducted a mapping of risk and protection factors in 12 communities, of which 11 were in rural and urban contexts: in 2018 with the support of 56 child protection mechanisms, each had an action plan.

The findings of the mappings have made it possible to address the challenges that arise in the communities regarding the protection and guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents. Despite this, not all of them have their basic rights covered or the necessary protection for the integral development of children. The advocacy of the bodies that make up the protection systems to eradicate violence against children and youth in each area has also been promoted. For the protection of children in emergency response to risk factors, and any type of violence where their rights may be violated, friendly spaces have been established to protect children from physical and psychological harm so that they continue to develop an integrated childhood and youth.



¹⁸ Specifically, in the provinces of Maputo, Manica, Cabo Delgado, Gaza, Zambézia and Inhambane.

¹⁹ Casas-mãe-espera are specific facilities within health centers that are designed for pregnant women and aimed at guaranteeing safe and dignified conditions for childbirth.

ChildFund International in Ecuador



Ecuador has a population of six million children and adolescents from 0 to 17 years old, in a context where the COVID-19 pandemic deepened the structural weaknesses to guarantee rights. The challenges currently faced by communities, especially in rural areas or city peripheries, focus on issues such as child nutrition, teenage pregnancy, gender violence, lack of access to education, and employability. By the end of 2020, 32.4% of the population was in income poverty. In the urban area, income poverty stands at 25.1% and in the rural area, it is 47.9% (INEC, 2021). **Due to the pandemic, about 90,000 students were left out of school. By 2020, around 420,000 children and adolescents were in a situation of child labor.** Another severe problem faced by children, adolescents, and young people (NNAJ) is linked to the lack of access to technology and connectivity to continue studying. According to the National Multipurpose Household Survey (2020), 43.92% of households nationwide have at least one computer; this figure increases in the urban area to 53.39% and is reduced in the rural areas to 23.28%, which shows a significant inequality between these sectors.

ChildFund International in Ecuador implemented the ProFuturo Program, an initiative of Fundación Telefónica and Fundación La Caixa, aimed at reducing the educational gap. **The program provides quality digital education, offering thousands of children from vulnerable environments the possibility of improving the way they learn and also helps them to develop digital skills that can transform their lives in both the short and long term.** The actions aim to transform the educational experience of teachers and students and improve the development of 21st-century competencies needed to meet the challenges of today's world.

Since March 2020, ChildFund International has reached more than 180 schools through a Digital Learning solution that adds technology and a platform with more than 1,600 digital educational resources that favor the development of digital competencies and an innovative teaching process. In addition, through the Massive Open Model, teaching skills focused on educational innovation, leadership, communication, and classroom planning are strengthened by offering online training spaces and educational resources, **reaching more than 85,000 teachers nationwide with an indirect impact on more than 2 million girls and boys in and out of the classroom.** As a result of this partnership, the adaptation to a virtual environment of the Safe and Protected Children Program took place, focused on helping children from 6 to 14 years old develop in safe and protective environments (e.g., family, school, community) that promote violence-free relationships developing a Digital Pedagogical Ecosystem that contains educational resources.



ChildFund International in India: program models to promote protection and child development



In India, three key issues are health, nutrition, and preschool education. More specifically **malnutrition, infant mortality, and poor access to early childhood care and services are issues that require urgent attention.** The latest survey conducted by the National Family Health Survey has shown that only 10.8% of children are receiving an adequate diet, 33.8 % are underweight, and the infant mortality rate is 34%. **About 1.83 million children die before their fifth birthday and most children who die in their first year die in the neonatal period, the first 27 days after birth.** Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) covers 38 million children through 1.4 million Anganwadi centers (preschool centers) but still, 27.1 % do not attend or have no access to these centers. Thirty-two million Indian children aged up to 13 years never attended any school, most of these children belong to the socially disadvantaged strata despite the Right to Education guaranteeing free and quality education to all children (aged between 6 and 14). Over 30% of youth between 15-29 years of age in India are not engaged in employment, education, or any kind of training. More than 110 million youth migrate to urban areas from villages in search of employment. According to UNICEF, more than 10 million children are still in some form of servitude. Children between the ages of 14-17 years engage in hazardous work and account for 62.8% of India's child labor workforce.

The focus areas with infants and caregivers are addressing malnutrition, infant mortality, and poor access to early childhood care and services. For children and adolescents, key issues are quality education, age-appropriate learning competency, socio-emotional skills, addressing the gap in learning levels, and safe environments to reduce dropouts in both elementary and secondary schools. Regarding adolescents and youth, we focus on access to higher education, skills, migration prevention, livelihood improvement, employment, child marriage, sexual and reproductive health, and nutrition. In addition to this, **as child protection is a cross-cutting theme across all ages, we will continue to focus on issues such as child labor (10.1 million), violence and trafficking, and disaster and climate change across all age groups.** For that, ChildFund India²⁰ has developed a program model that is implemented as a comprehensive approach to child development in strategically chosen contexts, using a systems approach across the life-cycle stages of a child.



20 ChildFund India is the operating local partner of ChildFund International in the country.



The role of the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty

The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty (GCECP) is a global initiative to raise awareness about children living in poverty across the world, with an emphasis on global and national action to alleviate it. **The members of the Coalition including ChildFund Alliance work together, as well as individually, to achieve a world where all children grow up free from poverty, deprivation, and exclusion.**

The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty supports the UN and aims to work with national, regional, and global decision-makers, global campaigners, international organizations, civil society, and other institutions to end child poverty as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ending poverty has become a defining goal for this generation, one that we all aspire to achieve and want to contribute to. Whilst poverty harms all human beings, it is more threatening to children who remain disproportionately affected. Millions of children around the world live in conditions of poverty and deprivation of the basic essentials needed to develop and thrive. Childhood is a time of unique opportunity and vulnerability and experiencing poverty in its various dimensions can be particularly damaging to a child's development. Children growing up in poverty are much more likely to die before their 5th birthday, and less likely to be well nourished, or receive a good education, basic healthcare, or clean water and decent sanitation.

Poverty denies children their right to grow up free from deprivation and develop healthily to their full potential. Child poverty is not just a problem in the "Global South". In every country with available data, children are most likely to be poor. Even in the world's richest countries, children remain mainly concentrated among the poor. **Child poverty is an issue that faces all societies, and must bind us, globally.**

Since 1990, extreme poverty has been cut by more than half, and the world has made crucial progress in reducing child malnutrition, expanding education, and providing many children with basic health care, safe drinking water, and basic sanitation. But this is not enough. Many children continue to be born and grow up in poverty in its different dimensions, whilst alarming disparities persist, with the poorest children furthest behind. We need to change this. Lifting children out of poverty will make an enormous difference to their lives, and those of the families, communities, and countries in which they live.

Support the fight to end child poverty: spread the word to help #ENDchildpoverty in all its forms! Learn more about the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty <http://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/>



**END CHILD
POVERTY**
GLOBAL COALITION

**1 in 2 people
living in extreme poverty
is a child**



(GCECP, 2022)

**250 million children
suffer from
2 or more
deprivations**

in Sub-Saharan Africa alone

(GCECP, 2022)



**75 million children
are living in relative
poverty in the world
richest countries**

(GCECP, 2022)



The voice of Silvia and Rosa, beneficiaries of Educo project



“Reduction of chronic malnutrition” in Guatemala

Rosa and Silvia stand out as producers of vegetables for family consumption and local commerce. They are sisters: Rosa has a three-year-old daughter, and Silvia is the mother of two girls – the first is four years old, and the youngest is two years old and accompanies her when they tend the garden.

Growing vegetables in their family garden have allowed them to have healthy food for their daughters, who see it as an essential practice, and a surplus that they sell to neighbouring families in the community.

The sisters have agreed on an alliance, establishing a shared space between them, and now do excellent teamwork to grow a variety of vegetables in their plot. In addition, they receive support from the project “Reduction of chronic malnutrition” that Educo and ASUVI are implementing in the Mayan region of El Quiché in Guatemala.

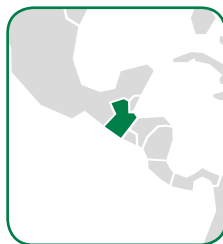
“In the project, we have improved our knowledge of planting vegetables. Educo has also provided us with different seeds”, says Silvia. Currently, they have a plot, which requires constant maintenance from the two sisters, who are applying the knowledge acquired in the training and accompaniment process they receive within the project.

By producing their own food, they contribute to the right to food and nutrition and to the promotion of a healthy upbringing for their children. “We know that having a good relationship with our daughters means taking care of them and guaranteeing them a good diet”, emphasizes Rosa while she walks through her garden with her three-year-old daughter.

Silvia and Rosa report that they have seen the benefits of having a vegetable garden, as they have food at hand to prepare different recipes, from soup to a salad to accompany the family meal. *“The girls have become accustomed to eating fresh vegetables; now it is their favourite food”,* adds Silvia.

“We are very grateful to the project because it has taught us to take better care of our daughters, and, through the vegetable garden, it helps us provide them with a good diet”, concludes Rosa.

As the first rains are just beginning to fall in the region, the sisters are looking forward to expanding their production because winter is a good time to plant.



Recommendations. What should we do to address child poverty?

Child poverty has devastating and often life-long effects, hindering children’s access to essential services, such as health care, adequate nutrition, and education. **When not reaching their full potential, children cannot fully contribute to social, political, and economic development and are more likely to become poor as adults, perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty.** The actions we take now to tackle child poverty should be multifaceted, determining the future of this generation of children while stopping the persistence of intergenerational poverty.

The international community should

- Promote coordinated action to achieve SDG 1 “Ending poverty in all its forms for everyone, including children”, abiding by the provided framework, especially in the aftermath of the socio-economic crisis and food security crisis respectively caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine²¹.
- Strengthen the implementation of all international and regional instruments to end the persistence of child poverty and the perpetration of children’s human rights violations. That includes devoting particular attention to the respect, promotion, and implementation of the right to benefit from social security and to an adequate standard of living, both indicated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Respect, promote, and realize the abolition of child labor, as stated by the ILO Convention on Child Labor. The international community should also remedy the lack of legal protection against child marriage (which is prohibited under the CRC, CEDAW and UDHR) by advocating for the national transposition of said documents.

- Make every possible effort to reach an agreement for restructuring the debt of those countries that have been seriously hit by recent crises, through a fundamental review of debt sustainability, and coordinated action covering all creditors to restructure and reduce debt. Relaxing the burden of debt financing allows countries to increase their efforts to tackle child poverty, malnutrition, preventable diseases, and educational disadvantage.

National governments should

- Reinforce and, if necessary, establish social protection systems and programs with an intergenerational perspective. These should include family-friendly policies aimed at reducing both monetary and multidimensional household poverty through child benefits, paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, childcare services, universal child grants²², decent work and minimum income, reductions in the cost of essential goods and services, etc. A holistic package of family-friendly policies should provide quality and accessible services in areas such as nutrition, education, and both physical and mental health²³. In designing, implementing, and evaluating said policies and measures, national governments should abide by the principles of child-sensitive social protection. Therefore, there should be a precise focus on considering the needs of children within the household to design and implement policies that maximize their benefits and avoid any unintended negative impacts. One fundamental programming principle is to create effective linkages with basic services, such as health and education, and social services, namely family support and social welfare services.

- Consider access to quality education as a fundamental empowerment tool to eradicate the persistence of intergenerational poverty. Reforms to strengthen and qualitatively improve education systems should prepare and motivate children to learn; make schools safe and inclusive spaces for all; ensure that teachers and teaching methods are effective and valued; guarantee that classrooms are adequately equipped with learning material, including technology, etc. To support children from the poorest households or discriminated against communities, targeted measures should be put in place (free places at pre-schools, free school meals, homework clubs etc.).
- Report SDG 1 by submitting their voluntary national reviews (VNR)²⁴ on the progress in tackling child poverty. To do so, countries should establish a baseline, monitor progress, and consequently guide policies. Effective tracking of the phenomenon should not just consider national averages, but disaggregate data where possible (for instance, by age, sex, disability status, subnational, urban, rural, intra-urban etc.). Non-state stakeholders, the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including children, must be involved in the VNR process in designing strategies and solutions, and monitoring progress²⁵.
- Strengthen, or if necessary, equip themselves with systems for data collection, monitoring, and evaluation of coping mechanisms that arise because of child poverty (child labor, sexual exploitation, early marriages etc.), and consequently develop effective policies and programs to reduce social vulnerability also by linking child protection and social protection systems.

The donor-community should

- Increase Official Development Aid (ODA) for countries with the most constrained resources to tackle child poverty²⁶. The donor community should also internationally agree on methods to track and record expenditures linked to investments in children, as well as establish a tracking and reporting mechanism to monitor the annual contribution of global development assistance to achieve the target outlined in SDG 1 of the 2030 Agenda.
- Respect the political commitment undertaken with the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027) and increase the support to developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty in all its forms, especially extreme poverty and child poverty.
- Invest more in fostering measures aimed at economically empowering children's families and the communities they live in to avoid their resorting to coping mechanisms such as child labor and early marriages and support their ability to invest in their education and health. Promote decent work and inclusive growth agenda to reach families and children in poverty. One fundamental tool is child and gender-sensitive cash assistance complemented by the access to services and interventions aimed at maximizing impacts on children²⁹. Access to an inclusive labor market and labor policies tailored to the needs of young people, young women and men are also key to ensuring that the poorest have access to a decent and reliable income to invest in their children's future.

22 Universal child grants are small cash grants provided on a regular basis to every child in a country to help parents and caregivers cover the costs of bringing up a child and ensuring they have access to all the things they need for a good start in life. For further information, see <https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/universal-child-grants-universal-solution-child-poverty>

23 An example of said policies can be found in the European Child Guarantee. The Council of the European Union unanimously adopted the Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee on 14 June 2021. Its objective is to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing effective access for children in need to a set of key services such as early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, healthy meal every school day, and healthcare. To test how the European Child Guarantee could work in practice, the European Commission has partnered with UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) to run, until July 2022, pilot projects in seven Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Spain. For further information see [https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/18576/file/Programmatic%20Update%20on%20the%20European%20Child%20Guarantee%20\(November%202021\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/18576/file/Programmatic%20Update%20on%20the%20European%20Child%20Guarantee%20(November%202021).pdf)

24 As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven". These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders. For further information see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

25 To check whether, and how much, countries are actually committing themselves to end child poverty, a review of VNR Reports from 2017 to 2021, carried out by the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, is available here <http://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/publications-feed/2021/10/15/briefing-paper>.

26 Since the 1970s, official development assistance has remained at roughly 0.3 per cent of donor GNI. In 2020, only seven countries exceeded the 0.7 per cent target (OECD, 2022).



CONFLICTS



Over the past decades, conflicts have become increasingly complex, internationalized, and multidimensional, involving both state and non-state actors (political militias, organized gangs, and international terrorist groups). Unresolved regional, ethnic, or religious tensions, economic interests connected with criminal organizations, and scarcity of resources due to climate change have become dominant drivers of conflicts. **The impacts of conflicts do not cease to exist when the attacks are over, but unfold themselves in their aftermath, with devastating consequences, especially for the most vulnerable people²⁷.**

In 2020, one in six children - 452 million globally - lived in a conflict zone



(Peace Research Institute of Oslo, 2021)

Between 2005 and 2020, more than 93,000 children were recruited and used by parties to conflict

(UNICEF, 2022a. The number of cases is believed to be much higher)

How conflicts jeopardize children's future

The deliberate use of violence against civilians (especially targeting of schools, homes and hospitals, deliberate starvation, and the use of rape as a weapon of war) puts children on the frontline of conflicts, subjecting them to grave human rights violations. Said violations produce not only immediate and direct effects, but also long-term impacts on their life and future, compromising their full development. Some of the most common threats are:

RECRUITMENT IN ARMED FORCES AND GROUPS: Children can be either coercively recruited or driven by socio-economic circumstances that leave them with no choice. Some of these push factors can be the need for protection experienced by them/their families, extreme poverty, and lack of access to education. For many of them, armed groups provide a ready-made identity, community, and sense of significance, as well as some semblance of order amid chaos (UN University, 2018). The recruitment of children, in any capacity, including as fighters, porters, messengers or spies, is a grave violation of their rights as such, as stated by the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION²⁸: Schools should represent a place where children feel safe and protected from threats and crises. Yet, just between 2020 and 2021, there were more than 5,000 reported attacks on education and incidents of military use of schools and universities in at least 85 countries (GCPEA, 2022). These attacks imperil children's physical and psychological protection and violate their right to quality education: they can cause mass displacement and drop-out (which may be permanent, es-

pecially for girls). When children are denied access to school, they are also denied a safe context and, in many cases, food and water.

DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS: Protracted and violent conflicts remain the key drivers of the need for humanitarian assistance for children: attacks on water and sanitation infrastructures, and communities' food insecurity put the lives of millions of children at risk. Achieving secured delivery of material and psychological aid for them is one of the major challenges posed by conflicts (UNICEF, 2022b). The denial of humanitarian access is increasingly being used as a tactic of war by parties to the conflict despite their obligation under international humanitarian law to protect civilians. That determines the worsening of health problems (increasing both malnutrition and the risk of death and disabilities) and jeopardizes their future development, preventing them from building the resilience that can reduce their needs in the future (UNICEF, 2019a).

PHYSICAL DAMAGE AND MENTAL HEALTH REPERCUSSIONS: Landmines and unexploded ordinances pose significant risks of physical damage for children that sometimes can be targeted directly. Since 2014, more than 69,000 children were verified as killed or maimed in armed conflict situations (UNICEF, 2022a). Besides the violation of their physical integrity, children affected by war also have an increased prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and behavioral and psychosomatic complaints (Kadir A., Shenoda S. et al., 2018).

27 According to the Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker, there are currently 27 ongoing conflicts worldwide. Among them: the conflict in Ukraine, the war in Afghanistan, political instability in Lebanon, the war in Yemen, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, the conflict in Ethiopia, instability in Mali, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria, Venezuela, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Civil War in South Sudan, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and so on.

28 Attacks on education are any intentional or indiscriminate threat or use of force against students, educators, and education institutions. Such attacks include school arson or bombings, targeted killings of education personnel, as well as abduction and forced recruitment of students and teachers, sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces or armed groups against students or teachers, repression of education-related protests as well as military use of schools and universities (GCPEA, 2020).

“I came from Ukraine with my 8-year-old son. The first days of school in Italy were difficult for him. He met so many new people. He had to cope with new rules, a new environment, and a new language. He cried. He often told me that he did not understand what they were saying to him and that he wanted to stay home. I explained that moving forward is crucial and that he has to study because we need to integrate here. After three months, things are better, and he is starting to fit in.”

Natalia, Reception operator and linguistic-cultural mediator for the Spazio Donna WeWorld Milano Corvetto (testimony collected by WeWorld)



WHAT ABOUT GIRLS?

In times of conflict, children are often victims of sexual violence used as a weapon of war²⁹. Girls and women can be sold in the markets, given as presents to fighters, or kept in “rest houses”. For girls who become pregnant due to rape, the perceived affiliation with the parties to the conflict may lead to stigma, abuse, infanticide, or abandonment. Furthermore, it often entails living in the bush or camps in isolated areas with limited access to water, toiletries, and sanitary items, which may lead girls to feel a sense of loss of dignity during their menstruation in an environment with poor conditions of hygiene (UNICEF and Plan International, 2020).

²⁹ Sexual violence includes not only rape but also sexual slavery and/or trafficking, enforced prostitution, forced marriage or pregnancy.





Good practices to protect children in conflicts

WeWorld in Afghanistan: cash for food program to tackle children malnutrition



Despite the decreasing media coverage, Afghanistan continues suffering from one of the gravest humanitarian crises in recent history. After more than 40 years of protracted crises and conflicts, the situation has worsened since August 2021, when the Afghan government collapsed, the NATO army left the country, and the Taliban seized power. **Half the population or 24.4 million people need humanitarian assistance - four times the people who were in need in 2019** (UN, March 2022). Among the more than 800,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), 60% are children. The ongoing conflict situation makes Afghanistan extremely vulnerable to further external shocks, limiting its coping mechanisms and risk reduction readiness. Climate change is threatening the country, causing food insecurity, water scarcity, and displacements. In June 2022, a violent earthquake caused more than 1,500 casualties, and the number is growing due to the collapsing health care system (Al Jazeera, 2022). Furthermore, the worst drought of the last three decades has primarily contributed to make Afghanistan the country with the highest number of food insecure people. At the end of 2021, UNDP estimated that **97% of individuals** would fall under the poverty line within the first six months of 2022 and this trend has been sadly confirmed in March 2022 (WeWorld, March 2022).

Women and children are disproportionately affected by the protracted conflict³⁰. Food insecurity places many children under five and pregnant and lactating women at risk of malnutrition. Ten million children are going hungry every day due to a dire combination of economic collapse, wars, and drought (Save the Children, 2022). As a consequence, two out of five families have been forced to involve their children in income generating activities (WeWorld, April 2022).



30 Under the Taliban regime women are the poorest among the poor, lacking education, jobs, free movement, and expression. Those who don't have a male relative to provide for the family income have to beg in the streets to survive. COVID-19 pandemic, in a country where only 2% of the population is vaccinated, exacerbated the situation, making Afghanistan a "factory of widows" (WeWorld, 2022).

Girls, being prevented from attending school beyond the primary level³¹, are often forced to work or are married off, perpetrating the vicious circle of intergenerational learning poverty, violence, abuse, and exploitation. Fights and displacements cause children to be separated from their families, increasing their risk of being recruited into armed groups.

Until 2017, WeWorld had been present in Afghanistan with projects aimed at reinforcing civil society and human rights in vulnerable communities. In the last years, and in the aftermath of the increasing denial of rights to women, we renewed our commitment to supporting local communities, in particular women-headed households, and their children in the Herat province³². Together with our partner RRAA (Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan) and other members of ChildFund Alliance³³, our Cash for Food Program granted access to food items to 420 widow-headed families, including over 1,900 children (WeWorld, March 2022). In line with the cash-based food basket recommended by Food Security Cluster³⁴, our food distribution amounts to \$80 monthly per household. After the success of the first set of six rounds of distribution, a second phase has just started. The response plan is still insufficient compared to the assessed needs. **WeWorld aims to enlarge the number of beneficiaries up to 1,000 households, including more than 4,000 children** (WeWorld, July 2022)³⁵.

31 The State had given assurance that girls would be able to receive secondary education by March 2022, but never kept the promise (UN, June 2022). Girls in Afghanistan are permitted to receive schooling up until 6th grade. They are allowed to attend university, albeit under strict gender segregation rules and dress code. High schools remain foreclosed (Arab news, April 2022).

32 In this area, an average family unit comprises 10 people, 10,000 women are heads of family, and 50,000 children need humanitarian aid (WeWorld, April 2022).

33 ChildFund Korea, ChildFund New Zealand, ChildFund Deutschland, ChildFund Australia, Barnfonden and Educo.

34 The Food Security Cluster works to ensure a coherent and integrated humanitarian response to assess and address the food security needs of populations affected by wars (see Food Security Cluster website at <https://fscluster.org/>).

35 Ideally, a further amount of 600,000 USD would be necessary to serve an additional 580 very vulnerable women-headed households during the next winter season (WeWorld July 2022).

Educo in Mali: Multi Year Resilience Program (MYRP)



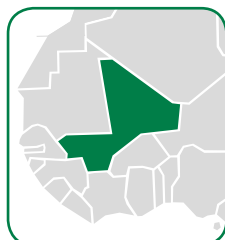
There are many factors causing crises in Mali, including a food and nutrition crisis coupled with armed conflicts in Mali and neighboring countries. Non-state armed groups are increasingly attacking regular armed forces and villages in the region and intercommunity violence is sharply rising. **Categorized as a forgotten humanitarian crisis, Mali is experiencing civilian casualties, forced displacement, and a lack of access to basic services.** Insecurity has disrupted the local economy, livelihoods, and basic social services (especially health and education). **There are 347,000 internally displaced persons and 1,051 schools that closed.**

As a direct response, Educo and partners are leading a multi-year resilience program. In general, the project aims to improve access to a quality education for vulnerable girls, boys, adolescents, and adolescent girls aged 3 to 18 years in five circles of the Mopti region: Mopti, Bandiagara, Douentza, Bankass and Koro.

The response focuses on providing equitable access to quality education in a safe and inclusive environment for 25,769 refugee or displaced students and those from host communities, 60% of whom are girls. They are reintegrated into existing schools or temporary school spaces and continue their schooling with less risk and with increased support.

At least 75% of refugee, displaced and non-displaced children in host populations are benefitting from innovative educational alternatives, such as distance education by radio. This will result in an increase in admission rates, success rates in the various examinations for primary and secondary education, and the development of practical life skills. Children aged 3 to 18 years within the program benefit from physical and psychological well-being through health, nutritional and psychosocial care activities.

Community members (hosts and displaced) are aware of the priority of education and protection of their children (especially girls) and advocate for their schooling through awareness-raising, engagement in dialogue around the need for peace, and advocacy activities with community and religious leaders. The community (including parents, teachers, children, social workers, health workers, etc.) manage their schools in crisis and strengthen the preparedness/response and resilience against attacks according to the Safe School and Conflict Sensitive Education approach.



ChildFund Australia and its representative office in Papua New Guinea: youth involvement in peacekeeping activities



Papua New Guinea experiences income inequity, high population growth and high rates of crime, conflict, and violence. ChildFund Australia's representative office in Papua New Guinea is supported by the European Union (EU) and Australian NGO Cooperation Partnership (ANCP) and works in partnership to implement the Youth Involvement project in four districts across Papua New Guinea. **The project will enable 240 young women and men from the target districts in Central and Morobe to be trained as Youth Peace and Protection Champions who are equipped with advocacy and lobbying skills.** The core resources in this program are a youth peace manual and a peace toolkit which are delivered based on a peer education approach and tools to promote peace, resolve conflict, and prevent future violence.

The Rights, Respect, Resilience is a five-year project implemented by the ChildFund Australia representative office in Papua New Guinea, in partnership with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) supported by ChildFund New Zealand, and with funding support from the Australian Government's Australian NGO Cooperation Partnership (ANCP) program. The Rights, Respect, Resilience component increases the social and emotional skills of young people in schools and communities in Central Province and National Capital District (NCD).

Violence against women and children is a significant public health issue in Papua New Guinea. Levels of gender-based violence (GBV) are estimated to be some of the highest in the world outside of a conflict zone. Generational cycles of violence are perpetuated by witnessing and experiencing violence, and harmful forms of masculinity.

The program is operating in 16 secondary schools in the Central Province and National Capital District to educate secondary students and out-of-school youth on child protection and the impacts of family and sexual violence. **After being a part of the program, students said that they had increased knowledge and skills to think about and address gender-based violence. They also knew where to seek support. The goal of the program is to challenge gender norms and promote gender equality to young people in schools.** This program is part of ChildFund's commitment to equip young people with the social and emotional skills to be resilient and to be able to achieve their full potential. As part of this program, they are offered leadership opportunities and can access systems and processes that are designed to be more inclusive of young people and enable the healthy development of their social and emotional skills.



ChildFund Alliance's joint effort in Ukraine and Moldova



Since February 2022, when Russia military attacked Ukraine, the fighting and brutality have not only progressed, but intensified³⁶. Over one-third of the population is food insecure, and the situation is aggravated by a wheat crisis. As of September 2022, there is a total number of 14,7 million refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country, many of whom escaped from cities to rural areas, with no access to water and electricity. According to UNHCR data, more than 7 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe (mainly Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova). As of October 2022, 654,357 people have crossed the Moldovan border and 94,252 are staying as refugees. Until June 2022, the country hosted 7,409 people in 89 refugees' accommodation centers (RACs)³⁷.



Ukraine, Giovanni D'Eridenti

Given that most Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 are prohibited from leaving the country in order to perform military service, the majority of fleeing people are women and children. **Forced to leave their homes, children are deprived of their childhood: not only are they exposed to conflict-related trauma, but they are also denied the possibility to go to school and receive an adequate education.** It is estimated that 2.1 million children need protection assistance (WeWorld, October 2022). Women and girls are at heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV), especially in informal shelters, reception and transit facilities, and private and refugees' accommodations³⁸.

Well before the outbreak of the conflict, ChildFund Deutschland, present in the area since 2003, was working to safeguard the rights of Ukrainian children. The organization has now devoted its intervention to emergency response and internally displaced people (IDPs) assistance, alongside local partners. **ChildFund Alliance members quickly committed to lend support during this crisis: the future of millions of children and families is at stake. Members are actively participating in the humanitarian coordination clusters system, as well as in providing necessary funds and resources both in the field and in recipient countries**³⁹. In Ukraine, WeWorld established a humanitarian coordination base, conducting need assessments in Lviv, Kyiv and in the region of Odesa⁴⁰.

At the same time, ChildFund Alliance promptly intervened in Moldova to provide non-food items (NFIs), WASH services, protection, cash provision, educational and psychological support, especially to women and children⁴¹. **ChildFund Alliance demonstrated its promptness of intervention and its cohesive force in acting synergically as a network. Households and children have been reached, evacuated, and provided with shelters, basic services, fresh food, educational and psychological support.** Every partner has fielded its fundamental contribution to the realization of the ChildFund Response Plan, through:

- Direct provision of food, medicine and non-food basic items (e.g., blankets, stoves, etc.) to displaced families and shelters.
- Creation of child-friendly spaces and psycho-social services (PSS) in internally displaced people (IDPs) accommodation centers, mobile teams for psycho-social services (PSS) and recreational activities for children.
- Financial transfers to Ukrainian supermarkets to distribute food and basic items for free;
- Education and psycho-social support to children, through the continuation of online educational services and support programs.
- Support to refugees who have reached Moldova by assisting partner organizations.
- Advocacy and lobbying through high-level political channels, both globally with commitments of the ChildFund Alliance and nationally in EU member states (Germany and Italy).



36 According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the civilian casualties amounted to 8,691, with 3,998 people killed, including 250 children, and 4,693 wounded, even though the actual figures are expected to be much higher.

37 Data from WeWorld Flash update, June 2022.

38 It is estimated that 3.3 million people need protection services due to Gender Based Violence (GBV) (WeWorld Flash updates, June 2022).

39 As many people escaping war establish in Italy, mainly in Milan, Bologna, Rome and Naples, WeWorld has opened its "Spazi Donna" to host fleeing women and their children, offering services of mediation and support (WeWorld, May 2022).

40 The action is targeted at internally displaced people (IDP) women and children. The main areas of intervention are the provision of NFIs, food, cash assistance and psychosocial support. WeWorld and ChildFund Deutschland, together with two local partners, Lviv Youth Center and Pravo & Demokratia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a joint project to cover emergency needs in food (mainly baby food), NFIs and protection sectors in Lviv. The two organizations share an office space in Lviv (ChildFund Alliance, June 2022).

41 With the local partner Katalyst, 3,500 bags of food and school material have been distributed and recreational activities have been organized. WeWorld strengthens the work of local partners, supporting two refugee accommodation centers (RACs) in Criuleni and Chisinau where 280 people (of which 110 are children) live.



The voice of Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait



Over the last few years, we have seen a dramatic rise in humanitarian education appeals. Protracted conflicts, climate change, and the lasting impact of COVID-19 are driving more people into the margins. Despite the best efforts of Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and its strategic partners, which have helped to increase humanitarian aid to education, the needs are growing so fast we are going backwards.



**EDUCATION
CANNOT
WAIT**

Another big challenge is the shockingly unequal allocation of funding. **In 2021, 65% of Education in Emergencies (EiE) funding went to the top-five appeals. Seven education appeals received no funding at all.** We can and must do more to support the dreams of children and youth in these 'forgotten crises.'

As the Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises sector, we must also work harder to mobilize, and align with the – much bigger – budgets of the development sector. **Education Cannot Wait's (ECW) new data shows that the number of crisis-impacted school-aged children requiring educational support has grown from an estimated 75 million in 2016 to 222 million today.** Unfortunately, development funding for education has fallen over the last decade.

To respond to these alarming trends, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) has launched the **#222MillionDreams** resource mobilization campaign⁴². The campaign calls on donors, the private sector, philanthropic foundations, and high-net-worth individuals to urgently mobilize more resources to scale up financing for Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) and ensure Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is fully funded between 2023-2026.

The campaign rallies together donors and other strategic partners in the lead up to the Education Cannot Wait High-Level Financing Conference, which will be co-hosted by Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and Switzerland, and co-convened by Germany, Niger, Norway, and South Sudan, on 16-17 February 2023 in Geneva. The Conference will inspire political commitments and financing to support #222MillionDreams.

⁴² For further information, visit <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/222-million-dreams#:~:text=222%20Million%20Children.,and%20a%20global%20education%20crisis.>



The voice of Christelle Kalhoule, Country Director, West Africa of Children Believe



Since January 2016, Burkina Faso has been facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis linked to a sudden increase in violence: abductions, ambushes, assassinations, and destruction of property. Armed groups are spreading terror in the Sahel, North, East, and North Center regions.

As a result of inter-communal crises, in addition to attacks by armed groups, thousands of people have moved to camps and host families in all 13 regions of Burkina Faso. As of April 30, 2022, Burkina Faso has registered, according to data from the National Committee for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONAS-UR), 1,850,293 internally displaced persons, 61.29% of whom are children. **Ninety-five percent of these internally displaced people (IDPs) are residing in host communities. This has also led to the closure of more than 3,664 schools, depriving 685,935 children of education.**



Christelle Kalhoule, Country Director West Africa of Children Believe, says *"Children Believe's interventions in the humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso date back to June 2019. These projects are implemented in partnership with UNICEF and World Vision International in the Eastern and Central North regions, mainly in the communes of Kaya, Barsalogho, Pensa, Namissigma, Kongoussi, Boalla, Tougouri, Pissila, Fada, Matiacoli, Kantchari, Namounou, Piela, Bilanga and Gayéri."*

Christelle has held various leadership roles at international organizations in Burkina Faso, where she honed her expertise in child protection, education, sustainable livelihood development and new business development.

The response objectives include education and protection, to restore inclusive, healthy, and protective access to quality education for children affected by the crisis. It includes children with disabilities receiving mental health services and psychosocial support for child-friendly spaces; communities informed and educated on the protection of children in emergencies; and education and cash transfers for families.

"We are also working with unaccompanied or separated children, with everything from family tracing and reunification services to family-based care or alternative community-based care," says Christelle. Children Believe has worked with local authorities to see regional civil registration systems are strengthened so that children displaced without birth certificates can be reunited with family. Work carried out in the regions also includes prevention or interventions to combat gender-based violence; response services for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse; as well as receiving learning materials.

Christelle outlines some of the difficulties that are faced, *"Growing insecurity is limiting humanitarian access in some areas, causing delays. There are insufficient resources to deal with the growing number of displaced persons due to the upsurge in terrorist attacks,"* she says. *"But we know that the better equipped and better trained we are, the better the response in the field. The community approach, involvement and accountability always ensure high engagement around the project."*



Recommendations.

What should we do to protect children in conflicts?

All forms of conflicts constitute a significant threat not only to children's present but to their future too. Their life, rights (especially the right to safe access to quality education), agency, and capabilities are put in danger while conflicts occur and in their aftermath. It is imperative for all actors, national and international, formal, and informal, to respect, promote and protect children's rights and their best interest above anything else. As Graça Machel said in 1996: **let us claim children as "zones of peace"**.

The international community should

- Advocate for global endorsement of all international commitments related to the protection of children⁴³, the restriction of weapons and ammunition⁴⁴, as well as work towards the universal ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- Increase international cooperation to protect children's right to safe access to quality education in emergencies and crises. Low and lower-middle-income countries must be supported to build safe, inclusive, resilient, quality education systems.
- Work towards major coordination of the nexus between humanitarian, development assistance, and peace to harmonize crisis response with long-term sustainable development, paying particular attention to education systems strengthening.

National governments should

- Develop and implement national plans to prevent all forms of violations against children in areas at risk of conflict or insecurity. Alongside these plans, prevention, reporting, and referral mechanisms (including the setting up of a national database recording the recruitment and disappearance of children) should be established, or if necessary, strengthened.
- Protect education from violence and attacks and allow children to learn in safety in any circumstance. To do so, they should invest

in adequate risk assessment for schools and education facilities in sensitive areas, as well as in rapid response, investigation, and fair prosecution of those responsible for attacks or forced occupations.

- Integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency preparedness measures into all education sector planning, with a whole child-life cycle perspective and in collaboration with children, youth, and communities so that said measures can meet their needs.
- Treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, primarily as victims, give child protection actors access to them, continue to search for solutions towards voluntary repatriation and reintegration of these children, and make every effort to help formerly associated children access education.

All parties involved in conflict should

- Implement or support existing Action Plans signed between parties to conflict and to end and prevent all forms of violations against children, as well as comply with their obligations under international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law.
- Increase efforts, especially concerning the respect of ceasefire agreements, to ensure that children receive humanitarian assistance without discrimination.
- Integrate child protection⁴⁵ issues (under child protection minimum standards – CPMS) in peace processes to prevent all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.

International criminal jurisdictions should

- Hold perpetrators of grave violations against children in conflict accountable by calling for prosecutions of alleged perpetrators and reparations for child victims without discrimination.
- Ensure that children victims of grave violations are always treated primarily as victims, including children allegedly associated with armed forces or groups.
- Uphold international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. They should also

put an end to the administrative detention of children involved in armed conflict, prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention, and cease any attempted recruitment of detained children as informants.

The donor-community should

- Increase Official Development Aid (ODA) to education. In particular, high-income countries must meet the target of at least 0.7% GNI while committing a minimum of 15% of it to education⁴⁶. The 2012 UN target of devoting at least 4% of humanitarian funding to education must also be met⁴⁷.
- G7 countries should close the financing gap in education in emergencies (EiE) and humanitarian response by improving the quality of financing data and evidence-based advocacy and by supporting the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Fund.
- Increase investments in protection of children in conflict, providing the space for monitoring, reporting, and engaging relevant actors to end child rights violations.
- Provide needed financial support for inclusive reintegration and assistance programs for children involved in conflicts, including survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as prioritizing actions in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

The media and each one of us should

- Dedicate an adequate amount of space to share news, information, and material (textual and visual) to all the "forgotten crises" that are currently happening around the world to ensure that every crisis and victim receives the necessary media coverage.
- Commit to media with an unbiased reading and with a focus on the human rights of people unjustly involved in the conflict. At the same time, the media should avoid biased storytelling and the spreading of fake news.
- Stay informed and share news about what is happening to children growing up in countries affected by conflict (by referring to fact-checked media) and support organizations providing services for child victims of grave violations.

43 Such as the Safe Schools Declaration, Paris Principles and Vancouver Principles (UNICEF, 2021b).

44 Such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V) (UNICEF, 2021b).

45 Child protection is understood as the 'prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children' (UNICEF, 2021b).

46 Since the 1970s, official development assistance has remained at roughly 0.3% of donor GNI. In 2020, only seven countries exceeded the 0.7% target (OECD, 2022).

47 In 2021, only 2.5% of global humanitarian funding was allocated to education (European Commission, 2022).

Italy, Michele Lapini

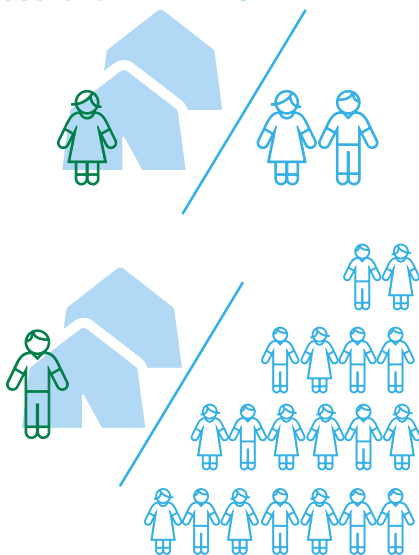


FORCED MIGRATION



Forced migration is defined as the movement of persons who have been obliged to flee, or to leave their homes due to armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights (such as torture, ethnic cleansing, or persecutions), natural or human-made disasters, also determined by progressive changes in the environment and climate conditions. Migrant people who have crossed an international border may be granted the status of refugees⁴⁸, whereas those who remain within their country's borders are referred to as internally displaced people.

Today, nearly 1 in 3 children living outside their countries of birth are child refugees; for adults, the proportion is less than 1 in 20



(UNICEF, 2021c)

How forced migration jeopardizes children's future

Along dangerous pathways, children are particularly exposed to risky travel conditions, especially when seeking irregular entry into a country. In destabilized fragile states where violence is prevalent and the rule of law non-existent, the vulnerability of migrant children rises exponentially, exposing them to violence, abuse, trafficking, and precarious living conditions. **Migratory paths are becoming less transitory and more rooted, developing over exceptionally extended periods.** That can produce severe consequences on children's present and future in aspects such as:

HOUSING CRISIS: One of the most immediate consequences of displacement is losing a home. Children forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict or persecution may find temporary accommodation in refugee camps. These are initially designed as a short-term solution to keep people safe during specific emergencies, but emergencies can become protracted, resulting in children and their families living in camps for years or even decades (UNHCR, 2021a)⁴⁹.

LACK OF RIGHTS: Access to basic services, such as healthcare, education, and legal assistance, is often limited or precluded to migrant children by a lack of official identity or travel documentation in the destination countries. Unaccompanied migrant children may need the support of a foster family, a legal guardian, or a responsible authority (e.g., social institutions or an orphanage) to access essential rights and services and start a process of integration into the host country (IOM, 2011).

EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION: Border crossing is perceived often as particularly dangerous due to the brutality and violence

of the police, border guards, and criminal entities at the borders. Once arrived in the transit or destination country, migrant children are often seen as outsiders and are pushed to the margins of society, depending on factors such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, disabilities, and economic status (UNICEF, 2022c). Many migrant children have to cope with a perceived lack of attention and care for their specific needs by local authorities, which further undermines their sense of safety and acceptance in the new country (ibid).

IMPEDIMENTS TO ACCESSING EDUCATION: Children on the move face multiple impediments to accessing education, from legal limitations (whereby their right to attend school may not be granted in the recipient country) to school cost, xenophobia, or discrimination and language barriers. Today almost half of the world's refugee children are still unable to attend school (UNHCR, 2021b). Children living in refugee camps are often obliged to attend lessons in makeshift classrooms characterized by a lack of learning materials and professionally trained teachers.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND DETENTION: Migrant children are often subject to limitations of their freedom, among which is child detention connected with a lack of proper documentation⁵⁰. Migrant children living in precarious conditions and settlements, such as refugee camps, can also become smuggling or human trafficking victims. That exposes them to the threats of sexual exploitation and forced labor in sectors such as agriculture, mining, factory work, and domestic servitude.

⁴⁸ This is defined by international law as the condition of people who are "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UN, 1951).

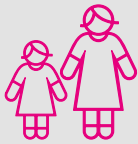
⁴⁹ Children and young people living in camps (often assumed as places with better availability of services for children on the move) may also report higher levels of unmet demand for a range of services than those living outside camps (with the possible exception of shelter/temporary accommodation) (UNHCR, 2021a).

⁵⁰ Children who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents or guardians are particularly at risk of detention, but many children are also being detained with their families, on the premise that it is not in their best interest to be separated from their relatives. Regardless of the conditions and duration of the restriction, child detention has detrimental effects on children's physical, developmental, emotional and psychological health, depriving them of their fundamental rights and their childhood (UN, 2020).



"I come from Nigeria, from the Biafra region. Like many, I arrived in Lampedusa by boat. I have been living in Italy for two and a half years now. I worked in Campomarino, a small town on the Molise coast. That's where my daughter Precious was born. I've been here in Ventimiglia for a few days, but I want to go to France to join Precious's dad, who lives in Marseille. I have tried to cross the border three times already, by train, but they have always rejected me. Once I wore a blonde wig to be less recognizable; another time, a cap that covered my curly African hair. When they found me, they took me to the French barracks in the containers: there was nothing there, just a chair to rest with the baby in your arms. Nothing more. My dream is to join my partner in France"

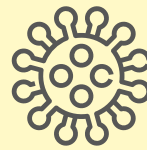
Ifeoma, 28 years old, Ventimiglia (IT)
(testimony collected by WeWorld)



WHAT ABOUT GIRLS?

Girls on the move are often exposed to multiple forms of violence along the migration journey and in the host countries. Displaced girls living in camp settings are particularly vulnerable to targeting by traffickers, besides being exposed to increased levels of domestic violence⁵¹ and having to face the risks of abuse or exploitation by camp officials or hosts. The loss of livelihood opportunities associated with displacement may also force girls to engage in transactional sex and other forms of exploitation to survive, with heightened risks of violence and abuse (Save The Children, 2020).

⁵¹ Which is potentially linked to higher levels of stress and trauma connected with displacement (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2020).



COVID-19 EFFECTS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee and migrant children experienced particular conditions of vulnerability and a heightened risk of contagion: the over-crowded settlements in which they had to live have made it particularly difficult to follow the basic rules for prevention – such as frequent handwashing and social distancing. They have often faced a 'double lockdown': people whose movements were already restricted have been further confined to their settlements and camps, adding to their stress and feelings of isolation (UNICEF, 2021c).





Good practices to protect children who have been forced to migrate

ChildFund Deutschland in Ukraine: emergency response



Ukraine, Giovanni DiFidenti

During the first month of the full-scale war, 3.6 million people left Ukraine. Another 6.5 million, according to estimates by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), left their place of permanent residence and moved within the country. Forced migration negatively affects the emotional state of adults and children due to possible difficulties in accepting and adapting to the new life reality. **Many social connections were destroyed, a substantial number of families have been separated, and there are challenges for mothers to find a job abroad and find education facilities for their children. In some cases, families lose breadwinners and are unable to feed themselves, children do not have enough food and live in poor conditions, and some children do not have access to medical and educational services.**

In the field of education, forced displacement creates several difficulties: lack of technical capabilities for children to access online classes; insufficient preparation of teachers for such an educational process (online education process with different children including refugees, internally displaced, locals, etc.); lack of knowledge regarding the educational process that takes into account the psychological state of students; as well as burnout and the severe psychological state of the teachers themselves.

In its projects with partners, ChildFund covers such activities as support for shelters and other places where displaced families with children live; providing humanitarian aid with food, hygiene products, medicines and medical equipment to children's hospitals and maternity hospitals; support in the organization of the educational

process and psychological support for children and teachers; educational and psychological measures for parents and the organization of rehabilitation programs for traumatized children.

The humanitarian component of the projects helps to ensure the basic needs of children and adults are met. **This will help them to survive in a crisis and adapt to new conditions, while minimizing interruptions to children's developmental process. Psychological support for children and parents, extra-curricular activities, and summer camps are aimed to make adjustment to a new place easier, to build new communities, form stable contacts and plans for their future.** The support of adults and a clear schedule in children's leisure time lend a sense of security and stability. Meetings with a psychologist can help with the anxiety they may have. Such activities also reduce inequality - migrant children begin to feel like they belong within their peers' community, which will make it easier to adjust at school.

In the projects for teachers, ChildFund and partners train them to support their internal resources and change their work so they can support families (parents and children), provide them with knowledge on how to give support to children and parents, identify children who have deep trauma and need special psychological support, and how to change the educational process to make it more comfortable for children.



ChildFund New Zealand in Bangladesh: Adolescent and Youth Club



In 2017, over one million people fled their homes in Myanmar, running for their lives as armed shooters chased them and set their houses on fire. They fled to the Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. Alongside this destruction, upheaval, and terror, many witnessed their loved ones being brutally murdered. ChildFund New Zealand is supporting ChildFund member Educo and SKUS—a social welfare non-profit—which have partnered to help vulnerable Rohingya refugees access education, life-saving devices, disaster preparedness, psychosocial counseling, and child protection programs.

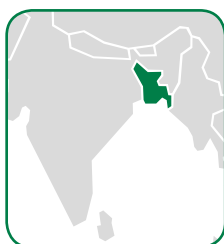
With funding from ChildFund New Zealand, the implementing partners have established adolescent and youth clubs in camps to teach life skills such as child protection, child labor, trafficking, child marriage, sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) and also to prepare disaster risk reduction action plans.

The Adolescent Youth Club meets at a multipurpose center, where activities include vocational training on trades such as tailoring, hairdressing, and sewing. Solar servicing and equipment are available for other trades, as are training materials. Life skills sessions are facilitated by trained staff and adolescent groups use the center as a meeting place to exchange views, interact with each other, and organize events. In addition, the center also provides a space for children and women to gather. The Adolescent Youth Club is a way to promote adolescents' resilience and cope positively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

The life skills curriculum covers the topics such as drug addiction and use, drug abuse, child marriage, peace building, positive parenting, gender, gender-based violence (GBV), child rights and protection, values and ethics, child labor, child trafficking, adolescent development, health and hygiene, and leadership.

Humanitarian assistance to the children, adolescents, youth, and their families of Rohingya and Host Communities in Cox's Bazar in 2022 includes:

- **600 hygiene kits distributed**
- **50 assistive devices distributed to children with disabilities**
- **600 solar lights distributed**
- **400 home visit assessments of children and youth in need of psychosocial support**
- **100 home visits of awareness raising for parents and community members on child protection, child marriage, and gender-based violence (GBV)**
- **1,500 trees planted in Rohingya by children and youth**⁵²



⁵² Data provided by Educo as a snapshot of a much larger assistance program including initiatives around education, life-saving devices, disaster preparedness, psychosocial counseling, and child protection programs.

Educo in El Salvador: Protection of children affected by forced displacement (internally displaced people -IDPs, returnees, etc.) and other forms of violence



El Salvador is a country threatened by various natural, but also human risks, such as violence and criminal activity. The annual homicide rate is around 60 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants and there were 2,270 homicides and femicides between January and November 2019 - figures that place the country among the most violent in the world. **Threats to life, extortion, and pressure on adolescents and young people to join criminal gangs end up causing the displacement of the entire family to other areas of the country as well as to other countries.**

These people belong to a considerable extent to vulnerable groups: unaccompanied children and adolescents and women with their young children. El Salvador is the focus of the "forgotten crises", where the population must flee situations of violence without the State providing them with effective responses.

Government institutions have little capacity to respond, overwhelmed by the phenomenon of violence. **Cases of people displaced by gang violence totaled 454,000 at the end of 2019.** To help mitigate the impact of this problem, the Humanitarian Action project began with the aim of protecting and providing assistance to people forced to migrate, with special attention to children, adolescents and their families. The project is carried out by Educo, Plan El Salvador and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in six departments of El Salvador: La Libertad, Chalatenango, Cabañas, Usulután, San Salvador, and Morazán.

In total, 1,500 children and their families are receiving food and other necessities such as laundry detergent and soaps for personal hygiene, toothpaste and toothbrushes, towels, diapers and toilet paper, school clothing and materials, access to water and sanitation systems, and support to access housing, as well as psychosocial assistance.

Psychology professionals from the Ministry of Health, Local Offices of Attention to Victims of the Ministry of Security, Attorney General's Office, Ciudad Mujer, University of El Salvador, among others, strengthen their capacities to provide psychosocial care to people in situations of internal forced displacement.

Displaced families receive advice to launch economic recovery initiatives, as well as advice on accessing justice. There is facilitation of empowerment among communities, so that people know and claim their rights and women and girls understand their rights and have knowledge on reporting mechanisms for sexual and/or gender-based violence (GBV).



WeWorld in Ventimiglia (Italy): migrants on the move



In recent years, strict controls on the Italian French border have prevented thousands of migrants in transit, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, from reaching their destination countries. Due to these rigid controls at the Italian French border, migrants are forced to wait much longer in Ventimiglia⁵³ and they risk being intercepted by criminal networks. The activities of these networks, which organize irregular border crossings and human trafficking for sexual or work exploitation, have intensified. **In recent years, the city has become a transit point for thousands of migrants' journeys and a place where criminal organizations can target new victims, deceiving them with the promise of a better life across the border.**

Within this context, WeWorld has been operating since 2016 to guarantee the protection of migrants' human rights and fundamental freedoms, with a specific focus on families and unaccompanied children. Several activities are being implemented: to identify the legal status and the primary needs of migrants, WeWorld offers legal support and information services, both outreach and with a front desk. **Between September 2020 and September 2022, we supported 6,494 migrants (1,100 of whom were unaccompanied children).** We also promote communication and advocacy activities, such as educational and recreational workshops with secondary schools, roundtables with humanitarian organizations, social services, local administrations, and health agencies.

During the last years, WeWorld strengthened the Italian French network with associations dealing with migration flows on both sides of the border by holding coordination meetings with French NGOs and participating in periodic monitoring of rejections and illegal practices. Through this, it is possible to inform French institutions about what takes place on their borders and to take legal actions against the unlawful practices implemented by the French police. **Among these are the rejection of unaccompanied children (after the falsification or denial of their minority status), the detention at the border police station for more than four hours, and the refusal to take charge of the asylum application.** Moreover, material support is provided through the distribution of first-aid kits, specifically designed for women and children, and through the provision of emergency shelters for families in transit. As of September 2022, our structure has hosted 2,146 migrants, of whom 885 are children whose average age is six years old.



⁵³ Ventimiglia is a small town in Liguria (Northern Italy), right on the Italian French border, which has become one of the most important places of transit in Europe.



The voice of Maurizio Martina, Assistant General Director Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



Migration is a growing phenomenon, with both challenges and opportunities for involved communities. But it can also be the result of food insecurity that leads to forced displacement. Sometimes, assessing the causes of migration reduces the complexity of migration processes. Focusing on causality may lead to considering in a deterministic mono-causal way the relationship between a driver and a migration pattern. For instance, the interplay of factors within the food security-migration nexus is often reduced to a proportional relationship that tends to be addressed only through agricultural and rural development policies. The risk is to focus on simplistic solutions. The challenge is to establish when and why some drivers (or their combinations) impact more than others, and how to intervene to support more inclusive societies.

More than 75% of the world's poor and food insecure live in rural areas, mostly depending on agriculture for their subsistence. The rural poor face considerable difficulties in accessing credit, services, technologies, and markets that would allow them to improve productivity. **Migration becomes part of the strategies of rural households for improving their livelihoods.** Food security and livelihoods of rural populations are also impacted by protracted crises, influencing people's decisions to migrate or not. Where conflict persists over extended periods, agri-food systems become dangerously undermined. Conflict-affected populations often have to choose between the risk of losing their means of subsistence and the risk of leaving what they have for an uncertain future. Both options entail high risks and may threaten their survival. Similarly, when natural disasters strike, smallholder farmers, small-scale fisheries, forest-dependent communities, and pastoralists are hit the hardest. **Weather-related disasters, which are increasing in frequency and intensity, increase poverty and hunger, forcing the most vulnerable to find viable options elsewhere.**

While the complexity of factors driving migration makes it impossible to predict future migration dynamics, we can monitor crucial variables - such as the size of rural populations; location and occurrence of extreme weather events; poverty and hunger levels; job opportunities; and quality of governance, including political stability - to identify migration scenarios for the future.

Managing the future of migration should involve safe, orderly, and regular migration channels and the development of rural habitats with the provision of quality services for decent rural employment and growth opportunities. The decision of a rural person to migrate should be inspired by a desire for new experiences and not dictated by survival. For that to happen, it is necessary to invest in peaceful and inclusive societies, support agriculture and rural development, and foster rural-urban linkages to transform rural areas into safe environments, not only ensuring food security but also better lives.



The voices of Long Phearun, Provincial Manager in Svay Rieng Province and In Davy, Eng Hok, Child Protection Specialist in Phnom Penh and Dara, Grants Coordinator from ChildFund representative office in Cambodia

barnfonden
Member of ChildFund



Cambodia: Barnfonden

Millions of children around the world are on the move, with the impacts of both slow onset environmental degradation and sudden onset disasters contributing to migration. In 2020 alone, there were an estimated 9.8 million weather-related internal displacements of children. In Svay Rieng, Cambodia, limited income opportunities and low production and yields linked to the effects of climate change directly impact families' livelihoods. This results in high rates of migration. In a project study conducted by Barnfonden and ChildFund representative office in Cambodia, it was found that a common situation is for parents to migrate for job opportunities and leave their children in the care of grandparents, aunts, or other extended families. This is not always ideal, or safe, as these families may themselves be under stress.

Barnfonden/ChildFund's Unsafe Migration project focused on capacity building around "safer options". This included providing education around legal procedures, establishing support 'hotlines', promoting the value of networks and check-ins with relatives, Child Friendly spaces offering psychosocial support for children, and guidance/referrals to community-based services, including child protection services.

ChildFund team members were keen to recount the project experience. Phearun Long, Provincial Manager in Svay Rieng Province said, **"A good practice from the Unsafe Migration project was to conduct house visits to share information on the issue and to demonstrate safe and legal migration alternatives. Youth were targeted and provided with legal knowledge and linked to networks to enable them to make more informed decisions"**.

Capacity building on safe and legal migration practices and how to access legal documentation to promote safe migration was recognized as a good practice among community members. Project Officer Davy explained, *"A mobile information/ "home visit" strategy led by trained community youth volunteers who were connected to child-friendly spaces was funded by the Commune budget. These home visits were also an opportunity for promoters to discuss how relatives/temporary caregivers could support vulnerable children and discuss child trafficking, gender-based violence, and other protection issues"*.

Hok Eng, Child Protection Specialist highlights, **"Information centers were also an opportunity to promote youth leadership by engaging youth in the management and further development of the center activities. The project evaluation confirmed that the youth volunteers became confident in raising awareness"**.

Dara Men, Grants Coordinator summarized the outcome as extremely positive. *"There was a strong and generally consistent belief that the project had achieved its objectives in that the rate of migration had significantly diminished"*.

Since the program's inception, commune financial support has seen the continuation of the information centers and child-friendly spaces. In the future, the model could be utilized more widely across the Svay Rieng province.





Recommendations.

What should we do to protect children during forced migration?

Protracted conflicts, persistent violence, climate emergencies and extreme poverty and disadvantage drive millions of children from their homes. **Children should be safe from violence and be able to grow up with their families.** To mitigate these issues, some key objectives include easing pressures on host countries; increasing refugee self-reliance; expanding access to resettlement and other solutions; and supporting conditions in countries of origin for refugees to return safely⁵⁴.

Origin countries should

- Provide safe migration and asylum information through trusted, official, and community-based channels.
- Map the gaps in the availability of safe migration information, including for internal migrants.
- Identify trusted sources of information; leverage community networks to disseminate child-friendly safe migration information.

Transit and destination countries should

- Establish mechanisms for the displaced to ensure protection and safeguarding. At the same time, they should support authorities in meeting reception and care standards to prevent exploitation and violence, including minimum standards in reception centers, and child safeguarding policies.
- Work with migration and child protection authorities to support an equal provision of care for children regardless of their or their parent's migratory status.
- Support counseling and legal assistance services for immigration and asylum-seeking proceedings, as well as providers of information and legal counseling services, such as NGOs, pro-bono legal firms and others.
- Build national data and evidence to inform and advocate against detention. Evidence includes public beliefs and attitudes, and consequences of immigration detention on children.
- Provide technical support to Governments based on best practices such as

group homes, foster care systems, guardianship⁵⁵.

- Origin, transit, and destination countries should strengthen services and systems for children and young people who are on the move, and ensure that safe migration is an option for children and young people affected by climate change. It is also critical that action is taken to minimize the risk of climate-related displacement, including by reducing global emissions and carbon footprint.

Overall

- Advocate for more safe and legal channels to migrate and to seek refuge: engage in national, regional, and international forums to advocate for diversified migration channels for all children; family reunification as a safe and legal pathway.
- Provide technical support to strengthen child-friendly law enforcement across all stages of the migration journey. Engage with authorities to address these gaps and provide technical support for establishing child-friendly law enforcement, including child-friendly border control procedures.
- Provide technical assistance for due process in all immigration and asylum-seeking proceedings, in accordance with the best interests of the child: Provide technical support on Best Interest Determination (BID)⁵⁶ and child-friendly processing of asylum claims.
- Support coalitions and campaigns to advocate for policy frameworks on ending child immigration detention.
- Build public support for political parties, stakeholders, and influencers accepting and supportive of child migrants and refugees: Design advocacy and Communication for Development (C4D) interventions to identify discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes and address behaviors and social norms.
- Identify financial and political drivers that support and reinforce xenophobia; assess political will and entry points to change.

Strengthen the C4D and advocacy capacities of youth and faith-based organizations and other relevant civil society partners engaged in non-discrimination initiatives.

- Promote social solidarity, trust and exchange between discriminated groups and host communities.
- Engage the media, including media organizations and networks: Organize ethical training and facilitate news coverage that promotes positive framing of child migrants and refugees and constructive public dialogue. Publicly and strongly condemn xenophobia and discrimination.

⁵⁵ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) November 2017.

⁵⁶ See 'Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Report of the Secretary General', A/71/413, 27 September 2016: "The CRC Committee has recommended that States set up a best interest determination procedure to consider and determine what constitutes the best interests of the child on an individual and case-by-case basis. This includes a clear and comprehensive assessment of the child's circumstances and should consider the child's views.

Kiribati, Blair Millar



CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate change is a natural process in which temperature, rainfall, wind, and other natural elements change over centuries. Over millions of years, the planet Earth has been much hotter and much colder than it is now, but nowadays, we are experiencing unprecedented rapid warming. This variation is mainly due to human activities: our societies have gradually adopted unsustainable practices for inhabiting the Earth, relying on extractivist economic systems. Today, when we speak of climate change, we refer to “any alteration of the global atmosphere directly or indirectly attributable to human action” (UN, 1992).

How climate change jeopardizes children’s future

Triggered mainly by high-income countries, climate change will have catastrophic effects⁵⁷, especially on low-income countries and the most vulnerable like women, children, adolescents, and indigenous communities⁵⁸. Children are most at risk: almost every child on Earth is exposed to at least one climate hazard (UNICEF, 2021d). Research shows that **children today will face around three times as many climate disasters as their grandparents did** (Thiery W. et al., 2021). Exposure to overlapping hazards is of particular concern to children’s future because slow-onset and extreme weather events (EWEs) can trigger, reinforce, and magnify each other and exacerbate inequalities, causing:

57 The effects of climate change refer to two macro-categories of events: slow-onset and sudden-onset. Slow-onset events are changes that take years to become visible and that we often notice when it is too late. Examples of slow-onset effects are rising temperatures and sea levels, progressive melting of glaciers, and periods of drought. Sudden-onset events are changes in the frequency, intensity, duration and timing typical of extreme weather events (EWEs), such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires and heat waves. These changes are exacerbated by climate change. For more information, see WeWorld Index 2021.

58 In this regard, an intersectional environmentalism movement has recently evolved as a more inclusive version of environmentalism, struggling simultaneously to protect people and the planet. This movement starts from the assumption that the most vulnerable and excluded categories (children, women, people below the poverty line, ethnic minorities, people of color, indigenous communities, refugees, and people with disabilities) are the most exposed to the collateral effects of climate change, mainly due to unfair and predatory economic systems. This point of view transforms the struggle for the environment into a great question of social justice (Haddock, 2020).

A VICIOUS CYCLE OF POVERTY: Children in poverty are more vulnerable to environmental shocks, as they have the least resources and capacities to adapt; their lack of access to essential services (such as water, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare, education, and social protection) increases their vulnerability to climate change. At the same time, protracted climate hazards make access to those essential services even more difficult for children who already are in distress, creating a vicious cycle (UNICEF, 2021d).

FOOD AND WATER SCARCITY: By 2040, one in four children will live in areas of extremely high-water stress due to climate change (UNICEF, 2017). A child who lacks access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services is more vulnerable to climate hazards, which can also destroy crops or lead to higher food prices, making it difficult for vulnerable families to maintain nutritious diets (UNICEF, 2021d). Children who lack adequate nutrition are more likely to face even more severe impacts because of EWEs, such as becoming stunted and wasted (ibid.)

DIRECT IMPACTS ON HEALTH: Children’s health is impacted directly by climate change since their immune systems and organs are still developing (Harvard SPH, 2022). Pollution is extremely dangerous: almost 2 billion children live in areas where air pollution levels exceed the standards fixed by the WHO (UNICEF, 2021e). They are also highly vulnerable to waterborne diseases and pathogens emerging because of floods and contamination of water supplies. Climate change also impacts children’s mental health: it may cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, panic attacks, anxiety and sleep disorders, cognitive deficit, etc. (Harvard SPH, 2022).

EDUCATION DISRUPTION: Climate hazards can interrupt children’s education by damaging or even destroying schools and relevant infrastructure, like bridges and roads connecting communities to schools. In those countries with limited alternative education modalities during disasters, this can lead to missed classes and lower academic performance (UNICEF, 2019b). Evidence also suggests that exposure

Approximately one billion children are at an “extremely substantial risk” of the impacts of climate change



(UNICEF, 2021d)

to higher-than-average temperatures during the prenatal and early-life periods is associated with fewer years of schooling⁵⁹ (Randell and Gray, 2019). Moreover, climate disasters can reduce household income and purchasing power, forcing parents to send their children off to work and drop out of school⁶⁰ (UNICEF, 2019b).

UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE: Children also undergo EWEs effects in the period following the catastrophe. Indeed, climate change acts as a “threat multiplier”, influencing factors that lead to or exacerbate conflicts over resources, household deprivation, forced migration and, consequently, violence against children (Child Protection Working Group, 2015). In conditions of social vulnerability, children and adolescents are more at risk of suffering physical and sexual violence, recruitment in armed groups, forced marriage, exploitation, and other forms of violation of their rights (Barnfonden, 2021)⁶¹.

59 Empirical research conducted in Southeast Asia highlighted this association. In this region, a child who experiences 2-Celsius degrees above average is predicted to attain 1.5 fewer years of schooling than one who experiences average temperatures (Randell and Gray, 2019).

60 In more extreme cases, households may even decide to migrate (see the barrier on Forced migration). Evidence suggests that relocation and attending classes in a different school generally translates to dropouts or lower academic performance (UNICEF, 2019b).

61 In 2021, Barnfonden (ChildFund Alliance Swedish member) conducted a literature review to investigate the link between climate change and violence against children. Barnfonden’s analysis shows that even if the literature indicates that climate change exacerbates the causal conditions by multiplying the risks of violence against children, there is a significant gap in evidence-based research on this subject. Now, the increasing effects of climate change are already affecting children’s safety and rights – thus providing proof of this link between climate change and increased violence against children – nevertheless, Barnfonden calls for more research on this topic. For more information, see Barnfonden (2021), *Exploring the link between climate change and violence against children*, https://barnfonden.se/app/uploads/2021/03/Investigating-climate-change-and-violence-against-children_FINAL-1.pdf. This analysis has been further deepened and enriched with proposals in the recently published *Strategies to end violence against children in a changing climate*. For more information, see <https://barnfonden.se/app/uploads/2022/08/Strategies-to-end-violence-against-children-in-a-changing-climate.pdf>

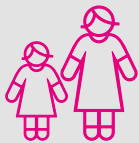


Good practices to protect children from climate change



“When the cyclone arrived, I was at home. As soon as I knew what had happened, I was upset because I love going to school. My favorite subject is maths because it allows me to make calculations and manage money. When I grow up and finish studying, I would love to become a teacher and teach others what I have learnt here”.

Maria Marcos, 9 years old,
Mozambique
(testimony collected by WeWorld)



WHAT ABOUT GIRLS?

The climate crisis is not “gender neutral”. Women and girls experience the most significant impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety. Women and girls, especially in developing countries, depend on climate-sensitive jobs that might be disrupted after extreme weather events (EWEs), pushing them into poverty (ILO, 2019). That can put added pressure on girls, who often must leave school to assist their mothers in managing the increased burden (UN Women, 2022). Due to patriarchal legacies, in many communities, women and girls, who take less part in social life, are less informed about the risks related to the onset of calamities and the emergency and response plans (UN Women, 2016).

ChildFund International in Ethiopia: Food Security and Environmental Protection Projects



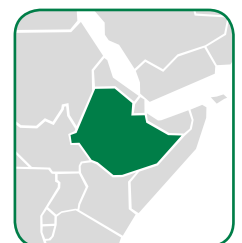
Climate change has significant impacts on Ethiopia’s economy, which is highly dependent on climate-sensitive activities such as rain-fed agriculture and livestock production. Agriculture contributes to about 44% of Ethiopia’s GDP, about 70% of the export earnings, and approximately 80% of all employment (FAO, 2014; Zerihun et al., 2016). Agriculture, livestock, human health, and water are the key areas impacted by climate change. **The impact of climate change in these sectors is the contamination of the homes and the environment, disruption of water and sanitation facilities, shortage of water for hygiene and food preparation; use of untreated water sources; inadequate sanitation, crop damage, and loss of subsistence food; disruption of food supplies; disruption of livelihood/income, loss of subsistence food or income; food shortages; and use of nutrient-deficient foods.**

To address the impact of climate change, ChildFund is implementing five Food Security and Environmental Protection Projects in Ethiopia. All the projects are focused on women, supporting them to learn the skills they need to respond to the impacts of climate change and to strengthen the many existing coping strategies of the local communities.

The project activities have a positive impact on those livelihood resources endangered by climatic risks. Among other things, **resilience is strengthened through community-level tree seedling production and tree plantations’ involvement of school children in their school environmental clubs for tree seedling production and tree plantation.** As a result of the project activities, family’s income is diversified, access to food is increased, and families are now able to send children to school, and receive better medical services for their children as they can pay for medication fees.

Through Natural Resources Management, the projects are also using energy-saving stoves and family-size biogas plants. The application of these appropriate technologies in a rural setting helps women to cook their food in a favorable situation, and get light for their children to study at night. Moreover, the produced organic fertilizers help grow vegetables around their home yard and on the farm. Families who started using biogas are happy and clearly understand that it saves time, firewood, and energy as well. It is also useful in minimizing health-related problems and women’s workloads accordingly.

All the above-mentioned activities are contributing to environmental protection and improving the living conditions of the families, which have a direct impact on children’s lives.



ChildFund Japan in Nepal: Education for Hope



As per its Country Strategic Plan (2021-2025), aiming to provide children with equal opportunities for learning for utilization of their full potential, one of the thematic areas of intervention is disaster risk reduction (DRR) with having schools and communities being disaster resilient as the major outcome.

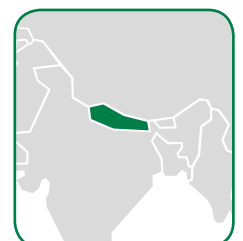
Drought and heavy rains are two of the major problems created by climate change. Dry and wet types of landslides and floods are major challenges to the stability of the infrastructures as well as land, especially in the hilly region. To reduce those effects, ChildFund Japan in Nepal is supporting the construction of disaster resilient facilities for community schools. In addition to the construction of earthquake-resilient buildings, ChildFund is supporting the development of school sites by providing retaining structures, a well-managed stormwater drainage system, and slope stabilization mechanisms like a plantation. To create a green school environment, ChildFund has established a flower garden on school premises.

Additionally, **ChildFund has considered creating a child-friendly environment in the schools. To address the issue of climate change, false ceilings have been installed in the schools with CGI sheet roofing which is highly effective to control the temperature inside the classrooms.** As a precautionary measure against the lightning hazard, ChildFund Japan has installed Light-

ning Arrestor with a proper earthing system in the schools. In some schools, where there is a scarcity of water, ChildFund has installed a rainwater collection system.

In addition, the following interventions are conducted in schools that aim to reduce the risk of climate disaster:

- **School Mapping:** To point out risk areas for schools from landslides and floods.
- **Hazard Calendar Preparation and Dissemination:** Supporting schools to prepare school-based hazard/weather calendars.
- **Hazard ranking:** Supporting schools to prepare hazard ranking based on the effect of hazard when it turns into a disaster.
- **Mitigation and preparedness plan:** Supporting the preparation of school-based mitigation and preparedness plans based on identified risks on school premises.
- **DRR education session and training:** Building capacity through conducting disaster risk reduction (DRR) education sessions as a knowledge building process of teachers and children through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials display, storytelling, games, story books on climate change and disaster, flyers, snacks and ladder games, etc.



Un Enfant Par La Main in Haiti: Climate change and children's rights



Haiti, WeWorld

Haiti is one of the countries most threatened by climate change: periods of drought are increasingly intense and long, and cyclones are more frequent and powerful (hurricanes Jeanne in 2004, Sandy in 2012 and Matthew in 2016). The lack of infrastructure and resources, along with logistical difficulties cause poor countries like Haiti to have more challenges than others in dealing with the impact of a hurricane or drought.

Un Enfant par la Main (UEPLM, the French member of ChildFund Alliance), which has been active in Haiti for over 40 years, is now taking action to combat the effects of climate change to improve the resilience of families and protect the rights of children.

The country is facing many challenges that Un Enfant Par La Main (UEPLM) is tackling with specific actions. Rising temperatures and increasingly atypical rainfall are leading to more intense and longer periods of drought, limiting access to water resources. **To address water scarcity Un Enfant Par La Main (UEPLM) builds structures to facilitate access to water in rural areas (community and family cisterns, ponds).** These rainwater harvesting structures have different impacts: the reduction of water stress (the water consumed is no longer taken from springs or pumped from underground water tables); the control of runoff and therefore erosion; the improvement of hygiene and health conditions for families; the release of children and women from daily water fetching, and therefore more broadly an impact on the economic development

of the communities (women can dedicate more time to economic activities and children can go to school more assiduously).

Climate change also threatens the food security of communities. Agricultural yields are declining, and families are facing prolonged periods of hunger and even starvation, with grave consequences for child malnutrition. **To tackle the aggravated food insecurity Un Enfant Par La Main (UEPLM) supports family farming, particularly after extreme climatic events, by distributing short-cycle seeds and agricultural tools, which allow affected families to quickly resume farming activities. At the same time, Un Enfant Par La Main (UEPLM) encourages initiatives to protect the environment and adapt to climate change: associated crops, agroecology, conservation of endemic species, watershed management, erosion control, revegetation, etc.**

Climate change has a direct impact on education too. Hurricanes and very heavy rains regularly damage or even destroy many schools, causing many children to lose their schooling and thus become vulnerable. To safeguard the right to access safe quality education, Un Enfant Par La Main (UEPLM) and its partners are reconstructing school buildings according to anti-cyclone and earthquake standards and distributing school furniture and equipment.



**ChildFund
New Zealand
and ChildFund
representative office in Kiribati:
Positive Places to Live**



Climate change is increasingly catastrophic for the people of Kiribati, a country of remote islands in the Pacific Ocean. Two islands have already disappeared under the rising seas, and erosion, storm surges, and high tides threaten food security and access to clean water.

Shallow groundwater is the main source of potable water, but it is threatened by rising sea levels and inundation by seawater. More people migrate inwards on the narrow coral atolls as the coast is eroded, making Betio, the largest township, one of the most densely populated areas worldwide. As water seeps through the land into groundwater it carries contamination from rubbish, graves, and human and livestock waste.

The health consequences of unsafe water include diarrhea, dysentery, and gastroenteritis, which are particularly dangerous for children. In 2017, ChildFund found that 29% of children in Kiribati experienced diarrhea in the previous two weeks. This is a significant contributor to Kiribati having the highest infant mortality rate in the Pacific.

ChildFund has tested drinking water quality for over 1,800 households in Betio for the past two years to keep families informed. In early 2021, only 47% of households provided a safe water sample. A year later, only 27% did. This information is disseminated to households, national stakeholders and the media for awareness and advocacy.

Water shortages are common, with 95% of households reporting insufficient drinking water. Households use public water tanks to supplement groundwater, which is only accessible for short periods on alternate days. Increasing the availability of tank water is challenging because houses do not have iron roofs and there are frequent droughts. ChildFund found that less than a quarter of public rainwater tanks contained safe water.

ChildFund has increased awareness of the importance of purifying water. Only half of the households in Betio report purifying their water. Women are primarily responsible for boiling water and wood is the most used fuel, but like many natural resources in Kiribati, it is increasingly scarce.

To prevent the further spread of waterborne diseases, **ChildFund representative office in Kiribati has installed handwashing stations at 19 community meeting places, where 700 children attend preschools.** Reducing groundwater contamination is another focus, with quarterly clean-up campaigns to collect rubbish and divert it to landfills.



**The voice
of Martina
Hibell,
Secretary General,
Barnfonden**



For 30 years Barnfonden (ChildFund Alliance's Swedish member) has been supporting children and their families to find pathways out of poverty. When we started, we had little idea of the impact of climate change and how quickly its repercussions would be felt by the communities that have the least ability to bounce back. **Over recent years, however, our program partners began to increasingly tell us stories about how children were being affected by climate change and its downstream effects – how, for instance, climate change affects rates of child labor, child marriage, sexual exploitation, and neglect.**

Two years ago, Barnfonden went through a strategic review process. These disturbing stories fed into our thinking: climate change is here and now; children are suffering here and now, and we need to do all we can, here and now. Of course, we questioned the evidence because published evidence was scant. But in the end, we felt we did not have time to wait. Sometimes it is necessary to build as you go, learn along the way, and adjust accordingly.

Integrating climate change so intrinsically into our strategy did not mean we were shifting from being a child rights to an environmental organization. Rather, **it was a recognition that climate change is one of the absolute biggest threats to child rights and children's safety. As we built this into our new strategy 2021-2025: Keeping Children Safe in a Changing Climate, we made sure to integrate the concept across all our work – from effective programming to communication and advocacy, to the choice of partners we engage with.**

Embedding 'climate' alongside child-rights and child-focused development has meant a change to the way we analyze the effectiveness of our work. All our teams (finance, fundraising, marketing, and programs) have climate-related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), some of which are more internally focused (the choices we make as an organization) and some of which focus on development outputs and outcomes.

In ChildFund Alliance, **a key aspect of our work together is to address SDG 16.2: Ending violence against children. We saw a gulf between 'climate' and 'violence' thinking, at the community level right up to the global policy level. We have been focused on trying to get others to realize that these two issues are connected.** This has influenced the research we have been publishing, the networks we engage in, the types of stories we tell supporters, and our advocacy focus (which has an emphasis on raising young people's voices on the issue of how climate is affecting their safety).

We have a new program's theory of change that recognizes climate's impacts on everything from health to education, child protection and livelihood choices for youth and families. Importantly, developing new climate-informed approaches requires high engagement with our local partners and communities, including children; ensuring they are involved, informed, and prepared for the climate-influenced decisions affecting them now, and in their future.



Haïti Un Enfant Par La Main

The #ClimateOfChange Petition

#ClimateOfChange is a European project coordinated by WeWorld⁶² and co-financed by The European Commission within the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Program. The project, which must be implemented between 2020 and 2023, stems from WeWorld's expertise in formal and informal youth education in local, national, and European advocacy actions, with climate change contrast and migrant protection activities in Italy and worldwide.

The main objectives of #ClimateofChange are raising awareness and critical understanding of the link between climate change and migrations among European youth and analyzing prevailing production and consumption models; and encouraging the establishment of a movement of informed people, ready to change their lifestyles and asking for innovative development policies at all levels, local, national, and European.

With the #ClimateofChange project, we have launched a petition throughout Europe which asks European and national institutions to act against climate change, change direction and reduce its negative consequences. The requests will be delivered to the President of the European Commission, Ms. Ursula Von Der Leyen, at the 27th Conference on Climate (COP27), in November 2022.

We specifically ask for:

1. **Global warming is to be kept below 1.5° C for EU climate neutrality within 2040, by promoting the use of renewable energies, energy efficiency, and the reduction of energy consumption.**
2. **The adoption of a socially and ecologically just, well-being economy, for which social interests count more than profits in the name of a revitalized, sustainable, democratic, fair and care-based economy.**
3. **The building and advancement of resilient communities and global justice, financially and technically supporting countries that are victim to climate change, and an international protection system for migration induced by climate change.**
4. **The establishment of Youth Councils to the European Union, putting youth at the center, in single States and local administrations, and meeting their requests through political decisions.**

These requests are to be put into practice through actions and investments. It involves immediately abolishing all economic aid to fossil sources, promoting sustainable transport including rail, promoting a circular, social and solidarity/supportive economy, and addressing the funds of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to agro-ecology and dignified agricultural work. It involves backing the forthcoming European law, which binds all businesses to respect human rights and the environment (mHREDD⁶³). These requests must result in help for the most fragile families to accompany them through this transition, and an increase in funding for Cooperation for Development and Aid (0.7% of GDP), to strengthen resilience, mitigation, and adaptation to climate change in vulnerable countries while protecting environmental migrants.



Let us get our voice heard - join the petition
<https://climateofchange.info/participate/petition/>



62 WeWorld coordinates a Consortium of 15 non-governmental organizations, universities, and local public entities from 13 European countries, together with ten associated partners and ten other European countries.
 63 Mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence.





Recommendations.

What should we do to protect children from climate change?

Climate change represents the major global challenge of the century. The climate crisis is also a social crisis and calls for a paradigm shift from an extractivist approach to a socially and ecologically just welfare. As happens with all crises, vulnerable groups of people are always the most affected. **Despite not being responsible for the current climate deterioration, children are paying, and will pay, the higher price.** The approaching COP27 cannot be a missed occasion. Time's up: let us give children the chance to live their future.

The international community should

- Advocate for global endorsement of all international climate-related commitments, policies, and frameworks with a specific focus on respecting, promoting and protecting the rights of children and young generations at all levels, especially those most impacted by discrimination and inequalities (indigenous communities, children with disabilities, etc.).
- Provide for the establishment of an international system of humanitarian protection for climate change-induced migration to acknowledge that climate-related events are determinant push factors of migration flows.

National governments should

- Ensure that children's best interests and their rights are explicitly included in all national climate plans, including the Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans as stated by the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action.
- Protect the right to a healthy environment and take effective measures to reduce the vulnerability of children exposed to climate hazards by accelerating the transition to clean and renewable energy technologies to replace fossil fuels, by ensuring systematic data collection systems and adequate climate financing.
- Give voice to, empower, and support children and youth (with particular attention to those from vulnerable groups and indigenous communities) to act on climate issues by creating child-friendly platforms

and direct participation mechanisms and enacting laws to facilitate their engagement in climate policymaking.

- Become aware of the link that exists between climate change and violence against children and take consequent and adequate measures. For example, adopt multidimensional and comprehensive approaches combining environment and climate-related departments, gender, and child protection units.
- Ensure that children are provided with effective remedies when they suffer harm from climate action and inaction, including the impact that climate change has on children's mental health (eco-anxiety).

Private and public companies need to

- Respect and enact all due diligence⁶⁴ obligations under environmental and human rights law by taking measures to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases from company operations (including those in the supply and subcontracting chains), invest in the transition to green business and circular economy models, and engage in informed, balanced, and meaningful consultation with potentially affected communities to ensure that any adverse impact on children's safety and rights is prevented and addressed.
- Interrupt all practices of unauthorized land expropriation and avoid or minimize displacement of communities affected by land acquisition and ensure that children's rights are considered when planning or executing resettlement as well as provide for adequate compensation.
- Support a child-friendly process to accredit remediation of any environmental damage or adverse impact whatsoever on children's rights that they might have caused or contributed to.

NGOs and other actors (including education systems) should

- Work towards child-centered resilience-building, engaging with families

and community structures, and involving children in risk assessments and in community-based risk reduction activities, planning, capacity-building, and advocacy.

- Establish partnerships with local actors, especially with education systems which could incorporate climate crisis, emergency response, and child protection learning into school curricula to improve children's adaptive capacity and agency in tackling climate change.
- Put in place, together with the community and the education system, preparedness plans to safeguard children's right to safe access to quality education through distance learning programs or other forms of education that can be implemented rapidly in the aftermath of an extreme weather event (EWE).
- Conduct research to generate evidence of the impact of climate change on children, including on the link existing between extreme weather events (EWEs) and violence against children.

Media should

- Help create environmental awareness and shape environment-friendly behavior by resorting to and promoting communication based on scientific evidence, as well as focusing on governments and corporate responsibility when addressing the issue.

Each one of us should

- Take active steps to reduce our carbon footprint by limiting consumption and adopting environment-friendly practices, and by holding our elected representatives accountable for climate inaction susceptible to harm both the planet and the people, especially children.
- Actively seek information and contribute to increasing awareness of the climate crisis and its effects among the population, including by using social media, participating in strikes and manifestations, organizing bottom-up campaigns, and exercising our right to vote.

⁶⁴ The European Union could pave the way for global promotion of its due diligence directive, which binds all businesses to respect human rights and the environment (mHREDD). For more information, see https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b-c4dcea4-9584-11ec-b4e4-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF



Cambodia, ChildFund Australia

ONLINE RISKS



As life becomes digitized, incidents of digital harm increase. Online risks are all the adverse situations one can encounter while navigating the virtual world: cyber-bullying, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, and exposure to illegal content (ChildFund Alliance, 2020). Children, often unaware of the dangers, are particularly vulnerable.

The Internet has been widespread for a relatively brief time, so its regulatory system still has significant room for improvement. Gaps in policy and legislation, lack of training of support workers, and a scarcity of knowledge amongst parents or caregivers deprive children of adequate support to deal with risks. **Online Safety is paramount to prevent and mitigate those dangers: one must be aware of the possible threats and act accordingly, protecting personal data and online reputation and avoiding harm**⁶⁵ (ChildFund Alliance, 2022).



Every day 7 victims of online child sexual exploitation are identified

(Interpol, 2022)



(Interpol, 2022)

How online risks jeopardize children's future

The Internet plays a fundamental role in children's upbringing, providing endless opportunities to learn, play, communicate and express opinions. With benefits, however, come hazards. Children are facing a "cyber-pandemic": 60% of the 8–12-year-olds online are exposed to the above-mentioned risks (DQ Institute, 2020)⁶⁶. The most vulnerable (poor, out of school, migrants, the LGBTQIA+ community, children with disabilities, etc.) are more frequently exposed to threats such as:

VIOLENCE AND ABUSE FROM ADULTS: Child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) and online grooming are among the most dangerous online risks⁶⁷. On average, every day seven victims of online child sexual exploitation are identified (Interpol, 2022). The younger the victim is, the more severe the abuse: more than 60% of unidentified victims of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) are prepubescent, including infants and toddlers, while online grooming prevails within the 13–17 age group (ibid.). Online abuse is difficult to tackle since a precise estimate of online offenders is unavailable. It is not difficult for abusers to gather material illegally since children unconsciously post sexualized content on social media, creating self-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

HEALTH ISSUES: Online abuse fosters anxiety, social isolation, depression, lower educational attainment, substance abuse, self-harm, or suicide. Victims of child abuse are more likely to repeat abusive behaviors in adulthood, developing issues with intimacy and relationships. In extreme cases, childhood trauma can result in dif-

ficulty in integrating into society, and result in homelessness and unemployment (UNICEF, 2021f).

CYBERBULLYING⁶⁸: More than a third of teenagers reveal being cyberbullied, with 1 in 5 skipping school because of it (UNICEF, 2019c). Almost three-quarters of them also said social networks are the most common place for online bullying (ibid.). 50% of young people have been exposed to cyberhate speech, in the sense that they read or wrote messages attacking groups or individuals⁶⁹ (ChildFund Alliance, 2020).

MIS/DISINFORMATION: Due to their inexperience, the amount of information circulating on the Internet, and the tendency to skip fact-checks, children are not always able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information. They can be targets, spreaders, or creators of mis/disinformation⁷⁰, but also, opponents of falsehoods. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to spot misleading content⁷¹. Parents are not always aware of privacy risks as well, allowing access to confidential information or pictures, or deliberately posting them (the so-called "sharenting"), exposing their kids to dangers (UNICEF, 2021g).

⁶⁸ Cyberbullying entails repeated series of aggressive, intentional acts, conducted through digital platforms and devices, that inflicts willful harm on an individual (ChildFund Alliance, 2020).

⁶⁹ Hate speech is the manifestation of hate expressions directed at individuals or groups via communication media (Openpolis, 2022). Children of migrant origins are particularly vulnerable to hate speech since they have to deal with a double level of integration, offline and online (ibid.).

⁷⁰ Misinformation refers to the unwittingly shared false or misleading information, while disinformation is false or misleading information that is deliberately created and distributed with an intent to deceive or harm (UNICEF, 2021g). 76% of 14–24-year-olds see online misinformation or disinformation at least once a week, and only 2% of children and young people have the critical skills to judge whether a piece of news is accountable (ibid.).

⁷¹ Living in conditions of poverty and deprivation affects children's education, which in turn undermines their capability to recognize appropriate content and information. For more information, see the "Poverty" section.

⁶⁶ As reported by UNICEF in a 2021 study, 80% of children interviewed in 25 countries report feeling in danger of sexual abuse or exploitation online. According to the study, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 13 boys have been exploited or abused before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2021f).

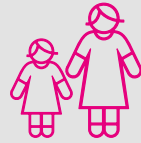
⁶⁷ This is a tactic used by perpetrators to establish and build a trusting relationship with a child using the Internet or other digital technologies to manipulate, exploit and abuse them online and/or offline (ChildFund Alliance, 2022).



“Social platforms should have clear security and privacy

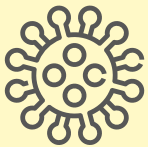
measures to protect everyone online, especially children and adolescents. Laws should be created that control people’s behavior and punish harm done to children on the Internet. There should be easy-to-use reporting channels to report harassment on the platforms we use, and games and other entertainment venues should also have security measures in place, so that the information of others cannot be divulged.”

Ale, 15 years old, from Limpio, Paraguay (testimony collected by ChildFund Alliance)



WHAT ABOUT GIRLS?

Social media such as Instagram and TikTok have amplified the pressures for teenagers to conform to the narrative that “girls should be pretty, not powerful; noticed, not respected” (AJPRJ, 2016). To comply with aesthetic models and compete with other girls to garner “likes”, they portray themselves in sexualized ways (ibid.). To avoid social media failure, girls expose themselves to body shaming, grooming and abuse with repercussions on their physical and mental health (e.g., eating disorders, low self-esteem, depression, reduced ability to concentrate, unrealistic expectations about sexuality) (APA, 2007). The sharing of sensitive personal content online or through sexting and the increasing phenomena of dating violence and revenge porn can cause serious reputational and mental health damage (UNICEF, 2021f).



COVID-19 EFFECTS

Lockdowns accelerated the shift to an online-based life, starting from children’s education. When the right to education appeared to be menaced, the world acknowledged the importance of the right to access the Internet: online classes, remote-working, online shopping, and social networks have become inherent parts of our lives and will be part of children’s future⁷². In the first period of the pandemic, children spent 6-7.5 hours online per day, dedicating half that time to schoolwork (ChildFund Alliance, 2020). More time spent online increases the chances of facing dangers: online grooming has more than doubled, and 8 in 10 police officers reported an increase in attempts to contact children, many of which occurred via streaming platforms used by schools (Interpol, 2022).

⁷² The importance of the right to access the Internet has been largely discussed, also by the EU Commission, stating that “today an Internet connection is as important as access to electricity, water, or healthcare”, it is a new human right that must be safely accessible to everyone (European Commission, 2020).



“Many of us do not have access to the Internet for online learning, therefore we would like to have a public place with Internet connection for our learning. Children in remote areas cannot afford safe smart devices, and many of our friends were injured due to explosions of cheap, old devices. At the same time, we also need guidance on safe smart device usage. Parents and adults usually get angry and blame children whenever they see inappropriate content on children’s devices. In many cases, children do not intentionally search for such content. Adults should understand more about issues on the Internet, trust us, and act as our companion in safe Internet use.”

Huong, from Hoa Binh Province, Vietnam (testimony collected by ChildFund Alliance)



Good practices to protect children from online risks

ChildFund Australia in Cambodia



Digital transformation has changed the way children access the Internet, but has also increased their exposure to risk, especially in South-east Asia and the Pacific.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a global increase of Internet/online platforms by children and youth globally, and Cambodia has proven no different. A 2022 study by the Cambodia National Council for Children (CNCC) showed that more than 80% of Cambodian children between 12 and 17 years old were Internet users⁷³, with Internet use being more prevalent among older children, living in urban areas (86%) compared with rural areas (80%). Of this age group, **11% of children were victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) with boys reporting experiences twice as often as girls.** The victims did not know their perpetrators and were lured through social media apps like Facebook and TikTok. The study also revealed that some Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) violations were undisclosed, with very few reported through official mechanisms to duty bearers⁷⁴. **These non-disclosures were due to an unawareness of where to go, whom to talk to, and other factors including fear, embarrassment, and unwillingness to expose the abuse to their families.** Despite having two main government departments responsible for investigating Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) crimes⁷⁵; specific responsibilities and rules of procedure for responding to these crimes were unclear and did not fit either department's mandate.

To help strengthen social work and case support services and close gaps between the national and sub-national level around the Child Protection System, **ChildFund Australia launched Swipe Safe. The project builds capacity of district and provincial level authorities of Women and Children's Consultation Committees (WCCCs) to support Commune Committees for Women and Children (CCWCs) to independently implement child protection services**

and includes primary prevention work, and capacity strengthening around responding to cases of severe abuse or neglect, exploitation, family violence, mental health, and more.

ChildFund also builds capacity of government duty bearers to enable them to execute their role in prevention and response to offline and online child protection risks throughout the community, including support services to children and their families who were victims to any form of abuse. We have found monthly meetings with children and parents helpful to learning and accommodating communities with low literacy levels. These meetings offer participants an opportunity to reflect and share what was learnt around child protection, positive parenting, and online safety.

A National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to OCSEA (2021-2025) was rolled out nationwide and includes stakeholders and multidisciplinary institutions responsible for online child protection. The Action Plan shows the willingness, effort and commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia to protect children from Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) and other harms. Related, ChildFund is presently designing a new regional project that follows the Swipe Safe model⁷⁶. It will provide key interventions on supporting government and key duty bearers with options on strengthening legal and policy frameworks, based on regional and international agreements. These include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration and Children's Convention; as well as training for judicial and law enforcement officers, and frontline child protection staff in child online protection and child-sensitive response mechanisms to OCSEA. Lastly, the Swipe Safe program will be contextualized, and its curriculum will be delivered to parents and young children in Cambodia, Timor-Leste, and Indonesia.



73 Working document: ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF, (2022). Disrupting Harm in Cambodia: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

74 Includes but not limited to judicial and law enforcement officers, frontline child protection staff, parents, and caregivers.

75 The Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department, and the Technology Crimes Division

76 ChildFund Swipe Safe is a project aimed at preventing online abuse and exploitation of children. Swipe Safe is working to enhance the skills and knowledge of teenagers to enable their access and use of the Internet in a safe and effective way. For further information, see <https://childfundalliance.org/resources/media-gallery/460-childfund-swipe-safe>

Children Believe Fund in Nicaragua: building the skills of youth in digital tools for the prevention of violence



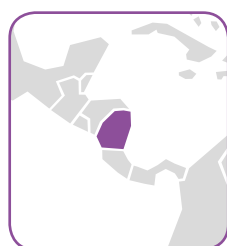
Despite being the second poorest country in the Americas, Nicaragua has a high access to mobile connection. It is estimated that there are 1.3 cell phones per capita and 80% of users spend their time on social networks, according to official figures. The increasing access to digital devices and Internet connection represents a growing challenge to ensure the protection of children and youth from online risks. Our response to this challenge is built on 28 years of experience in Nicaragua supporting community and youth-led networks and working in alliance with duty bearers and like-minded organizations. **Our activities have included improving digital competence of teachers, equipping schools with digital equipment, and developing campaigns to promote child safety online through our sponsorship programs and projects in Nicaragua.**

Children Believe Nicaragua⁷⁷ also has previous experience working with duty bearers to develop materials on child safety online. As part of the Global Movement for Children-chapter Nicaragua, **we provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education to prepare the booklet *Safe use of social networks and digital technology for school children and adolescents*. Duty bearers are currently working on a national strategy for the Responsible Use of Social Networks.**

Through our project “Building the skills of youth in digital tools for the prevention of violence”, Children Believe Nicaragua, in a joint effort with UNICEF and local partners, has contributed to building the skills of youth to actively participate in violence prevention and knowledge management activities on digital platforms.

Our approach focused on three program lines: **1) Build the skills on violence prevention (gender-based violence, sexual abuse, and psychosocial attention), 2) Strengthen abilities on safe digital tools to prevent grooming, cyberbullying, and promote the safe use of social networks, 3) Create youth-led knowledge spaces to promote peer-to-peer learning about child safety online.**

As a result of this approach, we have learned that working with youth networks ensures sustainability and deepens the impact as new generations of children and youth are getting involved and replicating learnings through our current programs. In addition, capitalizing on proven methodologies ensures an effective transfer of knowledge with curated information. Further, peer-to-peer education accelerates learning processes at the community level.



77 Children Believe Nicaragua is the local representative of Children Believe Fund (the Canadian ChildFund Alliance member) in the country.

Educo in Bolivia: strengthen comprehensive systems for the protection of children and adolescents from trafficking and smuggling for commercial sexual exploitation, contributing to the exercise of their right to a life free of violence



The globalization of the use of digital media has shaped a new form of social dynamics in the last 10 years. Children and adolescents have turned their social, play and learning relationships to spaces where the real and the virtual intermingle, creating a world of complex analysis, enormous potential, but also great risks. **The giant steps with which “the virtual world” has grown, have not been accompanied by equally agile processes of understanding, incursion, and approach of those responsible for the care and protection of children and adolescents, and Bolivia has not been the exception.**

In March 2020, Bolivia declared a State of National Emergency due to COVID-19, suspending all face-to-face activities, including school attendance. This initiated a process of migration to virtual and distance education of almost half of the population, causing a gap in learning between those who attend public schools, both rural and peri-urban, and those who attend private and urban schools.

After two years, only in March 2022, has there been a gradual return of children and adolescents to the classroom and a lengthy process of recovery of habits and social relations at the classroom level. However, this return does not mean a setback in the incursion into digital contexts, on the contrary, the age of initiation in the use of electronic devices is increasingly lower, either as a measure of distraction or to “calm” behaviors of the youngest. This in turn becomes a habit that, if not controlled, supervised, and accompanied, can become a door to the violation of rights. Online games, interaction platforms, instant messaging groups and social networks are used by adults with the intention of contacting, deceiving and seducing children and adolescents and then involving them in a system of exploitation and violence. This can be seen in the research on the recruitment and offer of commercial sexual violence in social networks and the deep Internet, of which Educo Bolivia was part, along with other organizations working on the issue. Within this framework, Educo Bolivia implements actions aimed at fulfilling four strategies for the prevention of situations of online sexual exploitation and other digital risks:

- 1. Visibility of the problem** to promote attention and organized response, through research and dialogue spaces oriented to authorities and frontline agents.
- 2. Information processes for parents.** In addition to knowing what to do, they need guidance on “how” to accompany, positively enter, and guide them in the safe use of the Internet.
- 3. Promote safe practices on the Internet for children and adolescents,** through simple and agile messages that allow knowledge, but above all the practice of self-protection measures and immediate identification of risk situations.
- 4. Advocacy in regulations and public policy** for a comprehensive response from the State, which involves and summons all those who have some responsibility in the issue, guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents and not restricting them in the name of protection.



ChildFund Korea in South Korea: Digital Education Citizenship



South Korea, ChildFund Korea

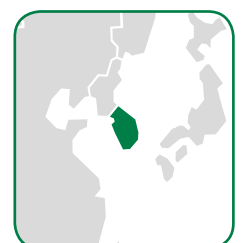
Children living in a highly connected online society in South Korea⁷⁸ are experiencing benefits and harm at the same time. According to the Summary of the #COVIDUnder19 survey⁷⁹, almost half of the children (46%) very often access the Internet when they need to, and about 40% of children go online or use the Internet through a smartphone all the time. This provides positive experiences like accessing e-learning services, socializing with friends, and expanding social participation in a virtual way even during the lockdown.

However, the dark side also still existed. As shown in the 2021 Child Indicator prepared by ChildFund Korea, cyberbullying took the third-largest share of the types of school violence in all school children. **The cyberbullying experience rate was 29.7%, and the perpetrator experience rate was 16.8% within the past year.** In addition, the so-called "Nth Room Case" in 2019, in which conspirators threatened and sexually assaulted women and children, and treated the sexual materials commercially on Telegram, had an enormous impact on society and revealed the vulnerable online environment⁸⁰. **At least 26 of the 103 victims were children, and they were lured through false advertisements and threatened with personal information and sexual photos.**

Although the criminals were punished in the case, child protection and meaningful participation in the online environment still demand public will to improve the existing system from various stakeholders, including the government, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Education,

the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the National Police Agency, the Supreme Prosecutors' Office, and the social media platforms.


Although adults have the primary responsibility for creating a safer and child-friendly online environment, **it is also important for children to develop their digital capabilities so that they can take full advantage of and avoid risks in the technologically advanced digital world.** Accordingly, **ChildFund Korea has developed a digital citizenship education curriculum for primary school and middle school-age children.** This program is designed to promote digital citizenship in terms of understanding knowledge, cultivating attitudes, and practicing values, and it is developed in the form of an offline workbook under an advisory group with 16 children so that even children who are disadvantaged in online connectivity can access it without discrimination. In 2021, the workbook, teaching materials and guidelines for instructors were distributed, and the teachers or instructors were able to carry out the program **with a total of 11,269 children in 114 organizations.** ChildFund Korea also collaborated with a famous content creator to produce a YouTube video focusing on cyberbullying issues with support from The Walt Disney Company Korea. Based on the program reflection and satisfaction survey results, ChildFund Korea plans to expand and implement the program in 2022. ChildFund Korea is also contributing to improving public awareness of online safety by initiating various advocacy activities, such as a video festival on cyberbullying prevention and a contest on creating desirable emoticons, at regional advocacy centers.



78 In 2018, the smartphone ownership rate of middle school students reached 95.9%, and the smartphone ownership rate of elementary school students and upper grades reached 81.2% (KOREA INFORMATION SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, 2019).

79 <https://www.tdh.ch/en/media-library/documents/covidunder19-south-korea-thematic-summary>

80 For further information, see <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/06/16/my-life-not-your-porn/digital-sex-crimes-south-korea>

The voice of Fiacre Akpoundehou,
 **Project Coordinator in Benin for the Educo Project for the development of digital training for the protection of children, adolescents and youth against violence on the Internet and on ICT tools (Class NumPro)**



Why was this project developed? What specific needs served as its motivation/basis?

With increased children having unsupervised access to smartphones and laptops, it was crucial to educate them on how to recognize the dangers lurking on the Internet and ways in which they can protect themselves.

What are some of the key elements of the digital training model that you are developing?

Training modules: introductory module, Children's rights and types of violence, E-reputation, Numeric identity, Online and social media risks and threats, iPad, and NumPro Application user guide, among others.

The development of an Application NumPro created to serve an administrative function and a mobile application function. The administrative section served multiple functions ranging from managing access to the app, to monitoring user's activity in an ethical manner, generating statistical data on user's activities, providing alternatives to restricted sites, and providing helplines. The mobile app contains different apps for educational, leisure, and awareness purposes.

How do you anticipate reaching youth and parents on a national, regional, and/or local level?

The capitalization of this pilot project is needed to identify what needs to be done to implement it on a wider scale.

How do you work with local and/or national organizations to implement this project?

The personal data protection authority from where we requested an authorization; the Ministry of Secondary Education, Technical and Professional Training from where we received authorization and support throughout the process; and the support of the Students Parents Association.

What progress have you observed so far?

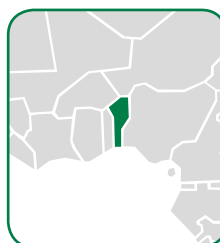
An exploratory study conducted revealed that about 80% of the participants did not know much about Internet violence and how to protect themselves. A post test revealed that 95% are now informed about Internet violence and can develop capacities to protect themselves.

Are there specific elements of the project that are particularly effective?

The distribution of Ipad to the participants; the support of the sectorial ministries, the commitment of participants' parents.

How are you measuring success within this project? What are some of the key performance indicators you are using to evaluate the reach and effectiveness of the program?

An exploratory study was conducted to analyze the attitudes and practices of children, adolescents, and young people in the use of the Internet and ICT materials. We also completed a final study to assess the relationship of children participating in the program with the Internet. Furthermore, indicators were formulated and are being monitored: percentage of children participating in the program who adopt a healthier relationship with the Internet; percentage of children admitted to the social laboratory who change their behavior regarding the use of ICT tools.





The voice of Issa Athuman Kipera - Programs & Sponsorship Director, ChildFund representative office in Kenya for the Tuchanuke Child Online Protection Project



ChildFund
International

Why was this project developed? What specific needs served as its basis?

In December 2016, the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) estimated that there were 39.6 million Internet users in Kenya, with 25% of them being unsupervised teenagers. We developed the Tuchanuke Child Online Protection Project to reduce sexual exploitation of children and youth through strengthening system capacity in child online protection, an emerging issue in urban areas of Kenya.

What are some of the key components of the project and the desired outcomes?

There are three components:

- Increased understanding of child online protection risks among caregivers
- Improved stakeholders' commitment in combatting online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC)
- Improved implementation of relevant policies and legislation on online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC)

What outcomes have you observed so far? What are some of the key successes that you have had with the project to date?

3,015 parents and caregivers in Kiambu and Nairobi were sensitized on child online protection. Post project surveys reveal a 20% increase in awareness by caregivers of the dangers of the Internet, while 84% of caregivers noted they could help children deal with anything they were bothered by online. Forty Community Resource Persons (CRPs) were trained to become community online safety champions using a Trainer of Trainers (TOTs) model and then they sensitized caregivers and youth at the community level.

Twenty primary school teachers across 20 schools throughout the Kiambu and Nairobi counties were given life and socio-emotional learning skills training. They then worked with 400 school club members to equip them with OSEAC skills. Externally, Community Resource Persons (CRPs) facilitated peer support forums for 807 youth. Two thirds of those interviewed felt extremely confident using the Internet, while 95% overall affirmed they had an individual responsibility to protect themselves from online sexual exploitation.

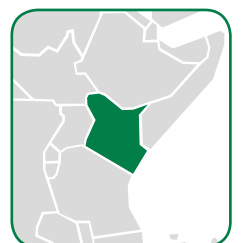
Two media campaigns were also conducted, one on the role of caregivers and the other on the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in combating OSEAC and protecting children from online exploitation.

Lastly, several State and Non-State Actors were engaged including, but not limited to, the Judiciary and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, who were able to demonstrate their commitment to building capacity and commitment towards improving OSEAC.

In your opinion, what work still needs to be done in the areas of online safety and online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC), both within the local communities you are working in, and on the national or global levels?

At the National level, an evaluation of the project showed a digital divide between parents, youth, and children. It limited the capacity of parents to support their children with online safety concerns. More awareness is needed that targets children on how to stay safe as they access the Internet, as well as caregivers on how to install controls to protect children from online exploitation.

At the Global level, online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC) remains a borderless crime. There needs to be multi-sectoral collaboration across global actors to identify current trends and manifestations to combat it. There is also a need for more funding opportunities to cover a wider area of this issue.





Recommendations.

What should we do to protect children from online risks?

Rapid expansions in digital technologies have radically changed childhood and adolescence in so many ways, including transforming the way young people learn and socialize. Digital connectivity expands opportunities for social and civic engagement, but conversely, it exposes children to an increasing range of threats to their safety and well-being. It is essential, therefore, that children learn to be effective digital citizens so they can fully benefit from the opportunities of an online world, while also being protected from online risks, including sexual exploitation and abuse. We do this by strengthening laws and policies to protect children from online threats; and by equipping them with the necessary tools so they can participate in online civic engagement safely, ethically, and responsibly as part of their healthy development. These are the two targeted outcomes identified by ChildFund Alliance's campaign, *WEB Safe & Wise, Creating a better digital world with children*⁸¹.

The international community should

- Advocate for strengthened laws and policies to prevent and protect children from online risks in accordance with international and regional conventions, general comments and guidelines of treaty bodies, model laws and good practices.
- Advocate for all children, especially those most impacted by discrimination and inequalities (indigenous communities, children with disabilities, and more), to have the right to affordable and reliable access to technology and the Internet, and consistent opportunities to develop their digital skills safely and healthily.

National governments should

- Allocate a mandated ministry and/or lead agency to lead cross-governmental coordination to prevent online harms against children through awareness raising, education, and regulation.
- Develop, strengthen, and enforce comprehensive laws that criminalize online sexual exploitation and abuse acts.
- Strengthen and resource existing child protection systems to incorporate online

elements of violence against children and ensure that adequate resources and end-to-end social support services are available for all children and young people who are survivors of online abuse.

- Allocate resources nationally during budget processes to develop training programs for parents and caregivers, frontline workers, and service providers, on how to identify, report and respond to child online risks.
- Prioritize resourcing for stable, wide-reaching, and affordable Internet connectivity and reliable electricity infrastructure, so that all children and young people have the access required to develop the necessary protective behaviors to stay safe online.
- Adopt quality curricula in formal and informal education settings and across urban and remote locations that develop core digital competencies (e.g., using privacy settings, understanding the permanency of online content) and good digital citizenship.
- Create more community-based mechanisms for child safe disclosure and reporting of online abuse, including parenting or youth groups linked to formal child protection systems
- Invest in dedicated development programs for children and young people that educate them about consent, healthy relationships and how to disclose abuse safely.

Private and public companies must

- Take measures to develop mandatory industry codes (standards) in consultation with young people to safeguard them online and protect them from age-inappropriate content across platforms and providers.
- Integrate child-friendly reporting mechanisms into their mandate, so child sexual abuse material and other forms of online risks are reported to law enforcement or other designated reporting agencies immediately.

NGOs, industry and academia should

- Conduct periodic research of children's online experiences to inform policy, programming, and resourcing decisions. At a minimum, such research should document children's levels of digital literacy and their family's access to and use of digital technology.
- Establish partnerships amongst themselves and with other actors for advocacy and related messaging strategies to raise awareness of online risks facilitated using technology, based on up-to-date research and information.
- Be involved in the development of legislation, regulation and government-led strategies and programming related to online child sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of online risks.

Media should

- Help raise awareness of online risks and change their narrative on the issue by examining how they report online risk violations and abuses as well as the terminology or language they employ to ensure it upholds child victims' and survivors' privacy and dignity.

Each one of us should

- Ensure children and young people's ideas and solutions are considered as a key element of designing responses to child protection around online risks.
- Actively seek information and support parents, caregivers, and educators in acquiring digital literacy and awareness of the risks and its effect among children and young people, to help them assist children in the full realization of their rights, especially the influence and risk posed to children through social media platforms and applications.



CONCLUSIONS



Since 2015, the WeWorld Index has been measuring the level of inclusion of women and children in approximately 170 countries around the world. Thanks to the new methodology introduced in this edition, the analysis is even more accurate, allowing us to grasp the nuances relating to the context in which women and children live and the specific conditions that shape their lives.

The picture that emerges from the 2022 WeWorld Index is of a **world experiencing progress that is far too slow to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030**. In 2021, we entered the Decade of Action, during which all actors (national and international, formal and informal) will have to multiply their efforts to ensure adequate levels of inclusion, especially for the most vulnerable, such as women, children and youth.

The 2022 WeWorld Index shows that **the world is recording some progress regarding women's conditions, but, nevertheless, various critical issues remain**.

The main improvements have occurred in particularly volatile dimensions – namely their election to national parliaments (indicator 27) or companies' management positions (indicator 28). By looking at other dimensions, such as their participation in the labor market, the situation is quite stationary, and women are still subject to clear discrimination. **What we are witnessing is, therefore, unconsolidated progress**.

Regarding children, a worsening in their living conditions has been registered, mostly in the educational sphere. That is a grave matter of concern because **education is the most fundamental factor for guaranteeing children's rights, empowerment, capabilities and right to the future**. Finally, the contexts (social, economic, environmental, etc.) in which women and children live saw very slight improvements, which are not yet sufficient to achieve their proper inclusion. That is especially true in all those countries where chronic poverty, protracted crises, the presence of authoritarian regimes, and extreme weather events remain frequent.

According to the 2022 WeWorld Index, **at the current pace, it will still take 182 years to reach levels of adequate in-**

clusion for women, children, and youth globally.

For all these reasons, **a global change of pace is needed**. To ensure the inclusion of women, children and youth, to allow them to fulfill themselves as individuals, benefit from not only basic needs, but live life to its fullest, **it will be necessary to intervene with policies and measures that are both targeted and multi-sectoral**. Any adopted **approach must consider the intersectionality of the discrimination to which women and children are subject and act accordingly, putting their right to the future at the very center**. This right is now being threatened by several overlapping menaces and crises, fueling their respective effects. This was confirmed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ever-more frequent economic turmoil and extreme weather events (EWEs), and the protracted and recent conflicts (e.g., the Russian invasion of Ukraine and restoration of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan).

The Focus of this edition of the WeWorld Index has highlighted the need for rapid advancements by showing how the five barriers to the inclusion and future of children – poverty, conflicts, forced migration, climate change, and online risks – intertwine and overlap. These generate multiple impacts that risk compromising not only children's present, but also their future, and consequently the future of each one of us.

ChildFund Alliance has been working for years to defend the right to the future for all of the world's children; listening to their requests, making them protagonists and agents of change, and helping them to break down barriers. We will continue to do so, as part of our commitment for a world in which no one is left behind.

ANNEXES





Acronyms

AECID	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional	ITU	International Telecommunication Union
AJPR	American Journal of Psychiatry Residents Journal	LDCs	Least Developed Countries
ANCP	Australian NGO Cooperation Partnership	MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
APA	American Psychological Association	MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
BID	Best Interest Determination	NCD	National Capital District
C4D	Communication for Development	NDIs	Non-Food Items
CAK	Communications Authority of Kenya	NNAJ	Niñas, niños, adolescentes y jóvenes
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy	OCSEA	Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CCWCs	Commune Committees for Women and Children	ODA	Official Development Aid
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women	OSEAC	Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children
CONASUR	National Committee for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation	PSS	Psycho-Social Services
CPMS	Child Protection Minimum Standards	PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	RACs	Refugee Accommodation Centers
CRPs	Community Resource Persons	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material	TOTs	Trainer of Trainers
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
DEAR	Development Education and Awareness Raising	UEPLM	Un Enfant Par La Main
DINAF	Dirección de Niñez Adolescencia y Familia	UNHCHR	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	UNICEF ECARO	UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council	VNR	Voluntary National Reviews
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism	WCCCs	Women and Children's Consultation Committees
ECW	Education Cannot Wait	YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
EiE	Education in Emergencies		
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crisis		
EM-DAT	Emergency Events Database		
EVCNNA	Encuesta de Violencia Contra Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes		
EWEs	Extreme Weather Events		
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization		
GBV	Gender-Based Violence		
GDP	Gross Domestic Product		
GCECP	Global Coalition to End Child Poverty		
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack		
GNI	Gross National Income		
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services		
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Center		
IDPs	Internally Displaced People		
ILO	International Labour Organization		
INEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos		
IOM	International Organization for Migration		
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union		

Geographical Areas*

West Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand

Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand.

Central and East Europe

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

Middle East and North Africa

Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Israel.

Central and West Africa

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

East and South Africa

Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoro Islands, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

East Asia and Pacific

Brunei, Cambodia, China, Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, East Timor, Vietnam, Japan, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands.

South Asia

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.

Latin America and Caribbean

Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela.



Papua New Guinea - Children Believe

* The geographical areas reported here have been established in the WeWorld Index to make estimates to fill in for missing data and do not necessarily correspond to commonly recognized areas.

WeWorld Index 2022 Indicators

DIMENSION	INDICATOR
ENVIRONMENT	1- CO2 emissions per capita
	2- People dead or affected by natural and technological disasters
HOUSING	3- People using at least basic drinking water services
	4- People using at least basic sanitation services
CONFLICTS AND WARS	5- Global Peace Index
	6- Percentage of refugees per country of origin
DEMOCRACY AND SAFETY	7- Global Democracy Index
	8- Intentional homicide rate
ACCESS TO INFORMATION	9- People with access to electricity
	10- Individuals using Internet
CHILDREN'S HEALTH	11- Under-five mortality rate
	12- Children under-five stunting
CHILDREN'S EDUCATION	13- Primary completion rate
	14- Lower secondary completion rate
CHILDREN'S HUMAN CAPITAL	15- Adult literacy rate
	16- Government expenditure on education
CHILDREN'S ECONOMIC CAPITAL	17- Unemployment rate
	18- Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP\$)
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN	19- Children out of school
	20- Adolescent fertility rate
WOMEN'S HEALTH	21- Maternal mortality ratio
	22- Life expectancy at birth, female
WOMEN'S EDUCATION	23- Adult literacy rate, female
	24- Tertiary school enrolment (gross), female
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES	25- Vulnerable employment, female
	26- Gross National Income per capita (2017 PPP\$)
WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING PARTICIPATION	27- Percentage of women in national parliaments
	28- Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	29- Intimate partner violence, female
	30- Intentional homicide rate, female



DEFINITION	SOURCE
Carbon dioxide emissions are those stemming from the burning of fossil fuels and the manufacture of cement. They include carbon dioxide produced during consumption of solid, liquid, and gas fuels and gas flaring. They are measured in metric tons per capita	World Bank, 2022
Percentage of people in a country that lose their lives or require immediate food, water, shelter or medical assistance due to natural or technological disaster. Natural disasters involve geophysical, meteorological, hydrological, climatological, biological and extra-terrestrial disasters; technological disasters include industrial, miscellaneous and transport incidents	EM-DAT, 2022
People using at least basic drinking water services on the percentage of the total population of a country	WHO/UNICEF, 2022
People using at least basic sanitation services on the percentage of the total population of a country	WHO/UNICEF, 2022
Country peace level on a scale 1 (most peaceful) to 5 (least peaceful), examining level of security, presence of internal or external conflicts, and level of militarization	Vision of Humanity, 2022
Percentage of people recognized as refugees under international law, people granted refugee-like humanitarian status, and people provided temporary protection. Asylum seekers -those who have applied for asylum or refugee status and who have not yet received a decision or who are registered as asylum seekers - are excluded	UNHCR, 2022
Country democracy state on a scale 0 (authoritarian regime) to 10 (full democracy), taking into account five aspects: electoral pluralism, respect of civil rights, efficacy of government activities, participation of citizens in politics, and political culture in general	Economist Intelligent Unit, 2021
Percentage per 100,000 inhabitants per country. Voluntary homicide is defined as the death intentionally caused by one person to another person	UNODC, 2022
People with access to electricity on the percentage of the total population of a country	World Bank, 2022
Individuals using Internet on the percentage of the total population of a country	ITU, 2021
Probability of dying by age 5 per 1,000 live births	UNICEF/WHO, 2021
Percentage of children aged 0–59 months who are below minus two standard deviations from median height-for-age of the WHO Child Growth Standards	UNICEF/WHO, 2022
Total number of new entrants (enrollments minus repeaters) in the last grade of primary education, expressed as a percentage of the total population at the entrance age for the last grade of primary education	UNESCO, 2022
Total number of new entrants in the last grade of lower secondary education, expressed as a percentage of the population at the entrance age for the last grade of lower secondary education	UNESCO, 2022
Percentage of population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his/her everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations	UNESCO, 2022
Percentage of GDP of a country	UNESCO, 2022
Percentage of total labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment	ILO, 2022
Percentage of the population of a country living on less than \$1.90 a day at 2011 international prices	World Bank, 2022
Number of primary-school-age children not enrolled in primary or secondary school, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group	UNESCO, 2022
Number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-19	United Nations Population Division, 2022
Number of women died per year during pregnancy, or within 42 days after the end of the pregnancy, per 100,000 live births. The death must be due to some causes related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or the relating treatment	WHO, 2019
Number of years a newborn would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of her birth were to stay the same throughout her lifetime	United Nations Population Division, 2020
Percentage of female ages 15 and above who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life	UNESCO, 2022
Ratio of total female enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of tertiary education, expressed as a percentage	UNESCO, 2022
Total number of women employed as contributing family workers and own-account workers as a percentage of total employment	World Bank/ILO, 2022
Estimated Gross Nation Income (in 2017 PPP terms) of female and male shares of the economically active population of a country and the ratio of female to male wages in all sectors. GNI is the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad	UNDP, 2020
Number of seats allocated to women in the lower or single House of Parliament, expressed as the percentage of the total number of Parliamentary seats	IPU, 2022
Proportion of females in the total number of persons employed in managerial and middle management positions, excluding junior management	ILO, 2022
Share of women, aged 15 years and older, who experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in the past year	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2020
Unlawful death inflicted upon a person with the intent to cause death or serious injury. Rates per 100,000 population. Inclusion: Murder; honor killing; serious assault leading to death; death as a result of terrorist activities; dowry-related killings; femicide; infanticide; voluntary manslaughter; extrajudicial killings; killings caused by excessive use of force by law enforcement/state officials	UNODC, 2022

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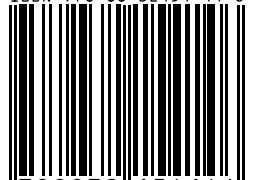
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ChildFund is a child-focused global development organization, founded in 1938, which helps nearly 23 million children and family members in more than 70 countries. Twelve child-focused development agencies are part of the global network ChildFund Alliance. The members work to end violence and exploitation against children and to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential.

MISSION

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. Annually, our investment in children is more than \$500M USD.

ChildFund's **VISION** is for a world in which all children enjoy their rights and achieve their full potential. Our mission focuses on working together with children to create sustainable solutions that protect and advance their rights and well-being. The collective strength of our members helps us serve as a global voice with and for children, to highlight the issues children care about, and to mobilize effectively to address threats to their lives, safety and well-being.



WeWorld is an Italian independent organization committed for nearly 50 years to guarantee the rights of women and children in 25 countries, including Italy.

WeWorld works in 129 projects reaching over 8,2 million direct beneficiaries and 55,7 million indirect beneficiaries. We operate in: Italy, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Benin, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Mali, Niger, Bolivia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, Cuba, Peru, India, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Afghanistan.

Children, women and youth, actors of change in every community, are the protagonists of WeWorld projects and campaigns in the following fields of intervention: human rights (gender equality, prevention and contrast of violence against women and children, migrations), humanitarian aid (prevention, aid and rehabilitation), food security, water and sanitation, health, education and learning, socio-economic development, environmental protection, global citizenship education and international volunteering.

MISSION

We work for girls, boys, women and youth, actors of change in every community for a fairer and more inclusive world.

We support people overcoming emergencies and we guarantee a life with dignity, opportunities and a better future through human and economic development programs (in the framework of the 2030 Agenda).

VISION

We strive for a better world where everyone, especially women and children, must have equal opportunities and rights, access to resources, to health, to education and to decent work.

A world in which the environment is a common good to be respected and preserved; in which war, violence and exploitation are banned. A world where nobody is left behind.

