

ChildFund responds to devastating mudslides in Sierra Leone

August 18, 2017

During the night of August 14, devastating mudslides swept down the steep hillsides and slopes of Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, engulfing the homes of thousands of families who live in these highly congested areas. The estimated death toll is around 400, with another 800 unaccounted for. About 20,000 people have been displaced from their homes across more than a dozen communities.

About 75 percent of the people affected are women and children, including 150 children who are enrolled with ChildFund. We are relieved to report that all the ChildFund-enrolled children who live near the areas affected by the mudslide are safe.



Hundreds died and hundreds more are missing after flooding and landslides devastated Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown.

Update: 23 August 2017

Amid continuing rainfall and growing concerns about the possibility of another, even larger mudslide in Freetown, ChildFund's role in the emergency response is taking shape. Although we do not operate programs in the affected communities, the area that suffered the greatest impact is near to our country office, and we will focus our efforts there.

In coordination with the Sierra Leonean government, ChildFund is working with other organizations to register disaster victims, prevent further family separations at the displacement shelters, set up child-centered spaces and assess needs and gaps.

One such gap is the need for greater attention to [Child Protection](#). When an emergency like this shatters families and communities, children are at much greater risk for neglect, abuse, exploitation and worse. Our colleagues in Freetown report that the overall response's focus on immediate

humanitarian needs — water, sanitation, shelter, food, warm clothing — leaves children's safety needs largely unaddressed. ChildFund's primary contributions will focus on this issue.

18 August 2017

This is the peak of Sierra Leone's rainy season, which runs through September, and more rain is expected.

ChildFund is coordinating with other humanitarian organizations on the ground to assess needs and identify gaps, with a particular focus on children's needs and protection. We are also working to ensure that no further family separations occur at the temporary displacement shelters, and we are collaborating with several organizations to set up child-centered spaces, where children can play, learn and stay safe while their parents clean up, work and access aid.

Meanwhile, as time passes, there is increasing concern that waterborne disease may become widespread in Freetown due to the destruction of the water and sanitation infrastructure as well as contamination from the bodies still lost under the mud. The growing risk of diarrhea, malaria and other diseases, compounded with poor access to adequate food, increases the potential for significant malnutrition, especially for the youngest children and lactating mothers.



Survivors of the mudslide receive assistance.

ChildFund has provided immediate support in the form of blankets, mosquito nets and water purification supplies. We continue to coordinate with the government and other organizations to determine how we can best contribute to children's well-being within the larger response.

Visit the website of your nearest [ChildFund Alliance member](#) to make a contribution.