



Universal Children's Day

Statement by ChildFund Alliance Secretary General Meg Gardinier

November 20, 2019

"As we mark the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), there is no better time than now to listen to and engage children.

"By many measures, the lives of children today are dramatically better than 30 years ago when the UN General Assembly adopted the CRC, the most ratified treaty in history. In the three decades since, hundreds of millions of children have been vaccinated, eaten healthier foods, benefitted from education, and grown up in safer living environments.

"There are also more laws and policies recognizing the rights of children than ever before, particularly in areas where children are especially vulnerable, including labor exploitation, corporal punishment, alternative care, and forced and early marriage.

"While all of this is good news, it is no time to celebrate. Sadly, there are millions of children in communities, conflict zones, migrant centers and remote villages throughout the world whose lives have not improved. These children are not only hungry, sick and uneducated, but many are subjected to ongoing violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

"The statistics are alarming, with up to one billion children worldwide exposed to violence every year,¹ a child dying every five minutes due to violence,² and more than 6 million infants and young children dying each year due to preventable causes³. 150 million young children worldwide suffer from malnutrition, an estimated 260 million are not in school, an estimated 12 million girls under 18 are married each year, and of 152 million child laborers—half are estimated to be engaged in what the UN describes as hazardous work.⁴

"It is clear that even with all of the advances we have achieved since 1989, millions of children have been left behind. Their pain and suffering is a grave breach of the promises made to children 30 years ago and is why we must call on governments to intensify their efforts to accelerate progress in the realization of children's rights."

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ChildFund Alliance, a global network of 11 child rights and development organizations operating in more than 65 countries, works to help children, families and communities address threats of violence against children, assist during natural disasters, and partner with children and youth to influence change. In recognition of Universal Children's Day, which coincides this year with the 30th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Alliance reaffirms its commitment to ending violence against children, improving child welfare, and promoting and celebrating child rights. You can read about ChildFund's efforts around the world to end violence against children in our report, [Building Momentum: A call for action to end violence against children](#) and learn how ChildFund is helping to elevate the voices of children through our [Child-Friendly Accountability Initiative](#). For more on realizing children's rights, you can read the report, [A Second Revolution: Thirty years of child rights and the unfinished agenda](#), released by Joining Forces—a coalition of six leading child-focused NGOs, including ChildFund Alliance.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/vacs/onebillion-children.html>

² <https://www.end-violence.org/sites/default/files/paragraphs/download/Fund%20Report.pdf>

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/children-reducing-mortality>

⁴ <https://child-rights-now.org/>