

## Children in Crisis Cannot Wait: Protecting Rights in a World of Escalating Emergencies

As the world marks World Children's Day — and with only five years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals — ChildFund Alliance urges renewed global attention to the rights and wellbeing of children living through today's most urgent humanitarian crises.

Across the globe, millions of children are growing up amid armed conflict, climate-driven disasters, political instability, and economic shocks — crises that increasingly overlap and reinforce one another. As global norms weaken and humanitarian space continues to shrink, the threats to children's safety, development, and dignity become both immediate and long-lasting.

The scale of the problem is stark:

- 1 in 4 children lives in a country affected by conflict or disaster
- children in crisis settings account for half of all under-five deaths
- 339,000 children are born into displacement every year.

Against this backdrop, ChildFund Alliance members are responding in thirty-six countries, delivering the following services to help children withstand these crises and rebuild their lives:

1. **Child protection** to safeguard children from violence, exploitation, and abuse
2. **Emergency education** to ensure learning continues even in displacement or disaster
3. **Psychosocial support** to help children heal from trauma and regain hope
4. **Health and nutrition assistance** to combat malnutrition and disease
5. **Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)** to prevent outbreaks and promote dignity
6. **Cash transfers** to empower families with choice and stability

### Children and armed conflict

Children living in conflict zones face some of the gravest violations of their rights. They endure displacement, family separation, disrupted education, exposure to violence, and long-term psychological harm.

In [Gaza](#), children continue to face extreme levels of danger and deprivation. Since the escalation of the conflict in late 2023, Alliance members have scaled up life-saving assistance amid unprecedented displacement and destruction. Recent ceasefire-related access has enabled assessments in newly reachable northern areas, where families are returning or relocating in acute need of protection, education, and essential services.

In [Ukraine](#), ongoing hostilities continue to erode children's access to basic services, livelihoods, and safety — particularly in frontline and recently de-occupied areas. The compounded effects of repeated trauma, disrupted schooling, and widespread displacement pose serious risks to children's recovery and long-term wellbeing.

### Children at the frontline of climate disasters

Climate-driven emergencies are intensifying at unprecedented speed. With 1.2 billion children living in high-risk climate zones, disasters are pushing families further into poverty, heightening protection risks, straining health systems, and interrupting education on a massive scale.

This year alone, Alliance members have responded to major typhoons in the Philippines, earthquakes in Myanmar and Ethiopia, droughts in Uganda and Zambia, and numerous other climate-related emergencies. Children are disproportionately affected by these shocks, facing loss of homes and caregivers, reduced access to food and healthcare, and the long-term consequences of disrupted learning and protection systems.

[Climate change](#) is not a future threat — it is a defining reality shaping children's lives today.

### Progress worth protecting

Even in the face of growing crises, the world has made meaningful progress in upholding children's rights — from expanded access to education and stronger protection systems to advances in gender equality and increased opportunities for children and youth to contribute to decisions that shape their lives.

These gains demonstrate what is possible when children's rights are prioritised. Yet they are not guaranteed. Without sustained political leadership, investment, and accountability, much of this progress could be put at risk.

### What must happen next?

Meeting the needs of children in crisis is a collective responsibility. Governments, humanitarian actors, multilateral organisations, and the private sector must:

- Uphold international human rights and humanitarian law
- Provide predictable, flexible, child-focused funding for crisis response
- Strengthen community-based protection systems
- Safeguard civic space so children and youth can participate meaningfully and safely in public life

Children in crisis situations demonstrate extraordinary courage, adaptability, and leadership. They are essential stakeholders whose perspectives must inform humanitarian response, climate action, digital governance, and peacebuilding.

On this World Children's Day, ChildFund Alliance calls for renewed commitment and decisive action. Children living through conflict, disaster, and displacement cannot wait. Their rights must be protected, their voices must be heard, and their future must remain at the centre of global decision-making.

A safer, more just world for children in crisis is possible — but only if we act with urgency and collective resolve.

[Learn more about our members programming for children in crisis.](#)

### About ChildFund Alliance

Eleven child-focused development and humanitarian agencies are part of the global ChildFund Alliance network, which helps children and their families overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from reaching their full potential. Together we reach nearly 36 million children and family members in 66 countries. Members work to end violence and exploitation against children; provide expertise in emergencies and disasters to ease the harmful impact on children and their communities; and engage children, families and communities to create lasting change. Our commitment, resources, innovation, and expertise serve as a powerful force to help children and their families around the world transform their lives.

[www.childfundalliance.org](http://www.childfundalliance.org)