

# Giving female rugby players from Asia's poorest communities a once in a lifetime opportunity

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BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND and SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, 8 JUNE 2017: Women's Rugby World Cup 2017 is set to inspire young girls in Asian communities as the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU), World Rugby, and 'ChildFund Pass It Back' bring girls from across the world's most populous continent to Ireland to take part in an international rugby competition.



*Girls play rugby in ChildFund Laos' innovative sports for development program in Nonghet.*

'Pass It Back' is an innovative Sport for Development programme led by ChildFund in partnership with World Rugby, Asia Rugby and Women Win that delivers an integrated life skills and rugby curriculum for children and young people in disadvantaged communities across Asia.

To date, more than 3,000 children and youth from Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam have benefitted from participation in the program, with girls making up over 50 per cent of the players and coaches.

Former British & Irish Lions Captain and Director of [ChildFund Ireland](#), Ciaran Fitzgerald, congratulated the ChildFund Pass it Back initiative, saying today, "bringing young woman and girls

from disadvantaged countries into the game of rugby is great in itself, but using the game as a development tool of their young lives is amazing and innovative."

"Being part of ChildFund I hope to meet the girls during their visit to Ireland in the autumn," Fitzgerald added.

Chris Mastaglio, Director of 'ChildFund Pass It Back', said: "Working in partnership with the IRFU and World Rugby, we decided to hold this event in the lead-up to the Women's Rugby Cup Final to show that women and girls' rugby is developing across the world – from international players at the event, to grassroots players from countries like Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines. In addition, ChildFund's Pass It Back program prioritises gender equity and the inclusion of girls, so we will have lots of female players from Asia taking part who can be inspired by their peers in Belfast.

"It's incredibly exciting – many of our young coaches and players have not left their province before, let alone flown on a plane to a different country. This is going to be such a great opportunity for them, and we thank IRFU for helping to make this happen."

Youths coming from Asia will play under the banner of the South-East Asian Dragons, and will compete with girls teams from across Belfast in a participation tag rugby event, the Pass It Back Cup 2017 Belfast, at Belfast Harlequins RFC, on 21st August, the day before the Women's Rugby World Cup Semi-Finals.

Nora Stapleton, Women's and Girls Development Manager of the IRFU, said: "We are delighted to include 'ChildFund Pass It Back' in our Impact Beyond programmes for Women's Rugby World Cup 2017, and we look forward to seeing girls from Belfast and surrounding areas welcoming girls from communities across Asia."

ChildFund Pass It Back was established for young people who face significant poverty, and have few, if any, opportunities to get involved in organised sport. For young girls, the obstacles are even greater.

"It is an absolute privilege for the IRFU to be able to support the development of new talent in these remote areas – by sharing our skills and knowledge we can get both young women and men excited about the game, and inspire a whole new generation of players in Asia," said Stapleton.

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### **About ChildFund Pass it Back**

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## **About ChildFund Australia**

[ChildFund Australia](#) is an independent and non-religious international development organisation that works to reduce poverty for children in the developing world. We work in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting change by supporting long-term community development, responding to humanitarian emergencies and promoting children's rights. ChildFund Australia is a member of the ChildFund Alliance – a global network of 11 organisations which assists more than 14 million children and families in 63 countries – and is also a registered charity, a member of the Australian Council for International Development, and fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which manages the Australian Government's overseas aid program.