

**Statement of ChildFund Alliance
United Nation's Children Fund Executive Board
Second Regular Session
5-7 September 2023
Agenda item 2: General Statements**

Mr. President, Executive Director Catherine Russell, and distinguished members of the board, I would like to express ChildFund Alliance's appreciation for the opportunity to address the 2023 second regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board.

As Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance, I speak on behalf of 11 child-focused humanitarian and development organizations, reaching nearly 32 million children and their families in 70 countries. We are grateful for UNICEF's ongoing leadership to help affected children and families realize their rights.

On 26 July a coup d'état occurred in the Republic of the Niger. This latest coup in West Africa is a major blow to Niger, the Sahel region, and poses serious risks for West Africa as a whole, in particular the protection of children.

Three ChildFund Alliance members – **Children Believe (Canada)**, **EDUCO (Spain)**, and **WeWorld (Italy)** - operate in either **Niger** or the neighboring countries of **Burkina Faso** and **Mali** where they deliver programs for children in education, health and nutrition, protection, food security and livelihoods. In **Niger**, ChildFund Alliance's member **EDUCO**, has been supporting 600 children and refugees with socioeconomic recovery and protection, in addition to providing access to quality education to nearly 9,000 children.

EDUCO, a member of the Nigerien NGO [OIREN](#), is taking a leading role in the development and dissemination of a Policy Note co-signed by over 40 INGOs active in the country. It contains three concrete recommendations for how Member States must act now to ensure the population retains access to basic social services and humanitarian assistance following the imposition of sanctions by the international community:

1. **First**, humanitarian exemptions to all the sanctions imposed against Niger must be introduced to guarantee vulnerable populations continued access to humanitarian services, including access to quality education, which is critical to prevent child labor and child marriage.
2. **Second**, these sanctions must be subject to the principle of "Do No Harm" in order to guarantee the protection of the affected populations. If this does not happen, over one million people are likely to be deprived of access to protection services.
3. **Third**, the international community must demonstrate creativity, flexibility, and adaptation of financing mechanisms to maintain populations' access to basic social services, in particular education and health.

ChildFund Alliance members are also responding to the growing insecurity in Niger's tri-border area with Burkina Faso and Mali. In **Burkina Faso**, where **all three Alliance members** and their partners are operational, armed confrontations have already killed thousands of civilians, displaced over two million people, and made over 4.7 million people (60% of whom are children) dependent on humanitarian aid. ChildFund Alliance members are providing a range of services in Burkina Faso:

- **Children Believe** and partners are implementing child-centered, community development programs and humanitarian projects for close to half a million children their families and communities. Furthermore, 282,000 people have gained increased and sustained access to quality educational and vocational skills development. Child protection systems are benefitting 265,000 girls and women with capacity building to strengthen collective rights and prevent gender discrimination. Moreover, over 100,000 boys and girls have been meaningfully promoting their rights and amplifying their voices through their leadership of child and youth agencies. **Children Believe** has also created safe spaces for 164,000 children to protect them from violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- **WeWorld** is providing food security and nutrition for over 200,000 people, of which 25,000 are for children under the age of two, as well as child protection services for 15,400 Internally Displaced Persons and 3,850 community host households. In addition, the needs of 7,100 children and 2,260 women are addressed through feedback mechanisms, psychological support and awareness-raising and other trainings. **WeWorld** also provides cash & voucher assistance for 31,000 people.
- **EDUCO's work in Burkina Faso** includes programs reaching children and adolescents for education (7,070), capacity-building and community participation (1,620), as well as protection programs on gender and nutrition (610 and 3,120 respectively), and creating child-caretaker bonds (2,619).

In **Mali**, where children are among the most vulnerable victims of the protracted crisis, thousands of families have been displaced, forcing children to leave their homes, schools, communities, and disrupting their access to education and social support networks. In response:

- **WeWorld** works to promote the rights and well-being of children through child protection and quality education. This includes cash transfer programs for families in which they reach 6,900 children, provides monthly supplies for 50 schools, two Local Protection Committees and one child-friendly space. **WeWorld** has also created a database to provide identity documents to more than 600 displaced children.
- **EDUCO's** operations in Mali similarly include equitable, accountable and quality education for 13,537 children in emergency and crisis situations.

Despite implementation challenges, ChildFund Alliance members continue to deliver services for children and their families in the Sahel through strong partnerships with the government, UNICEF, and local organizations. Continued efforts as those outlined are of the utmost importance to guarantee the rights of children and their families.

I thank you.