

Statement of ChildFund Alliance: UNICEF Executive Board First Regular Session (6-8 February 2024)
Agenda Item 6: Update on UNICEF Humanitarian Action (7 February 2024)

Mr. President, Executive Director Catherine Russel, and distinguished members of the board, I wish to express ChildFund Alliance's appreciation for the opportunity to address the First Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2024.

As Representative to the United Nations of ChildFund Alliance, I speak on behalf of 11 child-focused humanitarian and development organizations, reaching nearly 36 million children and their families in 70 countries.

In 2024, OCHA estimates nearly 300 million people globally will require humanitarian assistance and protection¹ primarily due to conflict and climate change. As is so often the case, children will be among those hardest hit. We must not forget them, their needs, or their rights.

In recent months, much of the world's attention has been focused on Gaza. After four months of crisis and mass displacement, thousands of children have been killed and hundreds of thousands more traumatized. As assessed by UNICEF, this is roughly half of Gaza's population. Since the start of the conflict, ChildFund Alliance's Italian member WeWorld has been delivering life-saving aid to the affected population, providing WASH services for which UNICEF is one of WeWorld's primary partners and funding agency. WeWorld's response has already reached over 200,000 people over the past three months in temporary designated shelters in the Governorate of Rafah, Khan Younis, Middle Area (Deir al-Balah), and Gaza. Its aim is to reduce health and risks hazards and enhance the affected population's dignity and protection.

The humanitarian needs of children and their families in Gaza are immense, as are other humanitarian crises that are not the focus of the world's attention. ChildFund is doing all it can to ensure that these so-called "forgotten crises" – which include, among so many others, **Ethiopia**, **Myanmar** and **Afghanistan** – continue to receive the attention, aid, and funds required to alleviate human suffering.

In **Ethiopia's** war-ravaged Tigray region, ChildFund Alliance members Children Believe of Canada and ChildFund International USA are implementing an Education in Emergency program in four schools. These interventions support over 3,300 children affected by war and displacement with scholastic materials, classroom rehabilitation, and school uniforms. Additional interventions include WASH, child protection, health and nutrition, and other non-food items (NFIs). In conflict-torn Amhara, Children Believe rehabilitated 26 classrooms that enabled over 4,000 children to return to school, while ChildFund International assisted more than 30,000 conflict-affected children with classroom rehabilitation and learning materials, and over 90,000 children with child protection interventions. In addition, more than 2,800 unaccompanied and separated children received psychosocial counseling and were reunified with their families. In the drought-affected Siraro district of the Oromia region, ChildFund International provided food security assistance to more than 25,000 children and family members.

In the face of escalating conflict in **Myanmar**, ChildFund Australia has been working closely with civil society organizations across various townships to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms. The projects not only address gaps in the formal child protection services through the establishment of Child Protection Groups, but also engage directly with children and young people to foster protective behaviours through capacity building, raising community awareness, and establishing child-safe environments. A total of 30 Child Projection Groups have been established, conducting over 135 awareness sessions on child protection reaching more than 1,400 participants. ChildFund is also working with 400 young people to enhance their resilience, self-care and to be peer educators sharing their knowledge and life skills with adolescents in their communities.

In **Afghanistan**, three powerful earthquakes struck Herat Province last October, resulting in wide-scale destruction across hundreds of villages and leaving over 40,000 Afghans, mostly already vulnerable children and their families, in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The earthquake exacerbated Afghanistan's existing severe humanitarian crisis and harsh winter conditions, which according to OCHA have left 28.3 million people in urgent need of

¹ [Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, OCHA](#)

humanitarian assistance. Our member WeWorld immediately responded with interventions to alleviate the suffering of children, women and their families, IDPs and returnees. This includes cash-for-food assistance, NFI distribution and winterization response for an estimated 4,000 Afghans. In addition, WeWorld is fighting child malnutrition by supporting an estimated 1,000 extremely vulnerable widow-headed households and their children with access to food. Many more require life-saving support.

Continued efforts by ChildFund, UNICEF, and other civil society organizations are of the utmost importance to address the urgent needs of these and other crises affecting millions of children and their families. We urge stakeholders to not forget about them.

I thank you.