

INVESTING IN CHILDREN FOR A BETTER FUTURE

ANNUAL GLOBAL PROGRAMS AND POLICY REPORT | AUGUST 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our deepest appreciation to the children, youth, families and community members in the areas where we work in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua and Paraguay, as well as our growing networks in Honduras and Mali where we are developing new program partnership opportunities. We are grateful to be able to work with them to help build sustained, positive change in their communities.

We deeply value our 27 local implementing partners and their strong community connections in our countries of operation. Their successful front-line work and principled partnership is often carried out under difficult circumstances (see Annex I for a complete list of our implementing partners). We extend our thanks to our generous Canadian supporters and our development partners, including Global Affairs Canada, the European Union, Gildan, ChildFund Korea, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Nestle, ChildFund Taiwan, the Taiwan Alliance in International Development (Taiwan AID), UNICEF, UNOCHA and WFP. Our gratitude also goes to our global strategic partners and alliances, including ChildFund Alliance, ChildFund International, Cooperation Canada, EDUCO, WeWorld, and our Pan-African partner, the Africa Child Policy Forum.

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Cover: Children Believe supports school children in Ghana to break barriers to education. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CLCS	Creative Learning Centers
CLPC	Children’s Legal Protection Center
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CRC	Child Rights Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FY	Fiscal Year
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
LTP	Learning Through Play
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

FOREWARD

It is truly an exciting time for Children Believe. This annual report for fiscal year 2024 is both the culmination of a five-year plan and our foundation as we transition into a new strategy that will see us double our reach over the next seven years. We are proud of the impact of our programs for this reporting period, which saw us improve the lives of more than 1,456,000 people in hundreds of communities across our six countries of operation.

But we know the global challenges continue to be daunting. Billions of people globally face a devastating poly-crisis manifested through combinations of conflict, political instability, economic uncertainty, and climate shocks which perpetuate the cycles of poverty and humanitarian disasters. We continue to face the many barriers to education which rob children of their choices one by one until they have none.

But as you will see in this report, Children Believe, working closely with partners, navigated these macro and local issues with holistic approaches that effectively protected the choices of children, youth, and women and empowered them to break those barriers to education. The title of this report, “Investing in Children for a Better Future” is aptly named because we believe that education means a lifetime of choices and is the most powerful tool they can use to improve their lives for the better. Collectively, we remain committed to the well-being of the most vulnerable children and

adolescents, especially girls, as they work to overcome challenges at each and every life stage across numerous contexts. From early childhood care and development, to accessing a good primary education, followed by technical, vocational or higher education opportunities, our programs will keep growing with these children as they progress through their full journey, from healthy newborns to productive young adults.

Our most sincere congratulations and acknowledgement to all of our dedicated staff at Children Believe for these results and a collective, most heartfelt gratitude to our local partners and program participants. And of course special thank you to our many donors and supporters who make all of this possible.

Sincerely,



Fred Witteveen
Chief Executive Officer
Children Believe



Dr. Belinda Bennet
Chief Program Officer
Children Believe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The details of this report encompasses Children Believe's program and policy results for the 2024 fiscal year, (April 2023 to March 2024). During this reporting period, we directly reached over 1,456,000 children, their families and other vulnerable members of their communities through integrated child-centred, family-focused community development programs. To achieve these results, Children Believe worked with 27 local partners, in over 762 targeted community groups across our six countries of operation (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay). We have also identified two additional local partners in Honduras and Mali, our recently approved countries of operation. Working alongside these invaluable partnerships we will continue to strive for more inclusive and thriving child-friendly communities.

1,456,000

children, families, and other vulnerable members of their communities were reached through child-centred, family-focused community development programs.

Children Believe has been working in some of the world's most difficult environments, including those with highly fragile contexts, where people and circumstances rob children of their choices one by one until they have none. But we were well-equipped to navigate the many barriers to education to operate effectively and influence lasting, positive change. Our work included communities in Ethiopia affected by armed conflict and drought; instances of terrorism and displacement in Burkina Faso and Mali; limited civic space in Nicaragua; social and economic inequalities in Honduras and India; economic crisis in Ghana and

domestic violence in Paraguay. To fulfill our mandate, we continued to strengthen the capacity of our staff and partners, improved our security preparedness, embraced flexible operational modalities, and built our resilience to setbacks in order to achieve success under difficult circumstances.

Providing access to an inclusive and quality education remains our top priority. We worked with education departments to build the capacity of teachers while promoting gender equality and social inclusion in schools. As a result, our efforts resulted in little to no disparity between female and male student enrollment at the primary level across the communities in every country where we work. Additionally, we helped to integrate child safeguarding into teacher training, and we empowered children and communities to advocate for child rights while demanding accountability from duty-bearers.

589,699

boys and girls, teachers, parents and caregivers benefited from our inclusive, high quality, education-focused program interventions.

Children must be well-equipped to succeed in school. We recognize that in a fast-paced and ever-changing world, the digital divide in education threatens to leave marginalized children and their communities far behind. As such, we continued to explore new technologies and private-sector partnerships to improve educational opportunities, learning outcomes and employment prospects, especially for girls and young women in India and Nicaragua.

Healthy mothers and babies lead to healthy futures for everyone. In line with our commitment to reduce maternal and child mortality, and to improve nutrition, we supported:

509,910

children, young women, and mothers to access and benefit from improved essential maternal and child health nutrition services in their communities.

Ensuring child rights and protection is critical, particularly for girls and women. We conducted extensive awareness programs that empowered local community members, training:

417,028

parents, caregivers and community leaders to promote children's rights and keep them safe.

These efforts continue to foster favourable attitudes towards their children's well-being and upbringing, including positive parenting, violence prevention, and gender equality. We continued to promote the rights of girls and women in order to stop child marriage and other forms of gender violence and discrimination.

Crises disrupt children's lives with consequences that can last a lifetime. Children Believe supported families, particularly internally displaced children, to get support from community-based child protection systems and to access better birth registration. As part of our humanitarian and emergency work, we helped over:

160,100

children and youth participate in key community decision-making platforms to meaningfully engage in dialogues that affect their futures.

Helping to strengthen local capacity and expertise serves the greater good. As a catalyst for like-minded child-focused organizations, we continued to enhance the capacities of five local partners working in disaster-prone and fragile-operating areas in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. We helped them enhance their institutional capacity to respond to humanitarian crises while promoting peace building and development. We also worked to adopt nature-based solutions to climate change, and support communities in their endeavors to become greener and more sustainable.

As we reflect on the outcomes of our work and celebrate our FY24 accomplishments, we remain committed to strengthening our relationships with our local partners and to continue to implement our ambitious new strategic plan (FY25-31) setting double reach, double influence and double brand recognition over the next seven years to do more for more children, youth, and women in the years to come.

1 INTRODUCTION



Children at an early childhood education centre in Ethiopia. Photo: Children Believe

This annual report presents the key outcomes and achievements of our global program and policy influence work in the 2024 fiscal year (April 2023 to March 2024). It highlights the program performance results, lessons learned, and challenges overcome as we support communities to address child poverty, injustice and inequality.

OUR OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: THE CHALLENGES

The countries where we operate (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay) experienced some unprecedented moments

of fragility and uncertainty during this reporting period. We decided to extend our field operations into Honduras and Mali, which created additional complexity in our scope of operations. We worked to address multiple crises over the past year which were driven by a combination of conflict, forced displacement, unsafe migration, climate change, and economic turbulence. These factors negatively impacted the lives and livelihoods of children, their families, and communities in most of the countries that we serve. Chart 1 lists our countries of operation based on their fragility and vulnerabilities index scores.

CHART 1: Ranking of Children Believe's operational countries by Global Poverty Rate and Fragility Index level - 2024

Country	Total Population (est 24) ¹	International poverty rate (\$2.15) ²	School enrollment, primary (% gross) ³	Score of Fragility ⁴	Risk of Fragility-Rank ⁵
Ethiopia	>129M	27	85.5	98.1	12 th
Mali	>24M	20.2	72.6	97.3	14 th
Burkina Faso	>23.8M	25.3	82.4	94.2	21 st
Honduras	>10.7M	12.7	83.8	78.1	56 th
Nicaragua	>7M	3.9	107.2	76.7	60 th
India	>1.4B	n.a.	108.1	72.3	75 th
Paraguay	7M	1.3	93.2	61.5	105 th
Ghana	>34.7M	25.2	97.9	60.8	106 th

Sources: FSI 2024. Adopted from <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>; World Population Review <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries>; World Bank (2024) . National Macro-Poverty Outlook

Ethiopia

Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa with a population of over 129 million people, ranked 12th out of 179 countries for its high risks of fragility context in 2024. The country has suffered consecutive years of drought, prolonged ethnic tensions and armed conflicts, displacement, long-term economic underdevelopment and political marginalization. As a result, over 21 million people (12 million of which are children) were affected by food insecurity, disruption of access to social services, lack of clean water, or interruption of education. Of these, 4.4 million people were internally displaced largely due to ethnically motivated evictions and dispossession of property. The

recent unrest, notably in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray resulted in damaged, inaccessible schools and unsafe learning environments, forcing over 2.5 million children out of schools. Gender Based Violence (GBV) including sexual assault, physical violence, abduction, rape, child marriage, and other harmful traditional practices continues to be a concern in communities affected by conflict and climate shocks.

Mali

Children Believe has just completed its registration process to officially operate in this country and has identified an established local partner to initiate program

¹ This data is generated from the World Population Review (2024) data source.

² World Bank (2024) macro-poverty outlook. https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/macro-poverty-outlook/mpo_ssa#sec3

³ Ibid

⁴ The maximum score for the fragility index is 120. The assessment and the country's ranking for fragility covers issues related to the situation of peace, security, social cohesion, economic development, political governance and social development.

⁵ The total countries which are covered by the fragility index assessment are 179.

interventions. Mali, with a population of over 24 million people, ranks 14th out of 179 countries for its fragilities and vulnerability in 2024. The country has been affected by a complex humanitarian crisis that derives from a volatile security situation, exacerbated by structural vulnerabilities, socio-economic challenges, as well as climate change. About 32 percent of the current population are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. The situation is particularly dire in conflict-affected areas in northern and central Mali, where access constraints and multiple displacements exacerbate vulnerability (UNOCHA, 2023).



A Children Believe child-friendly space for displaced children in Burkina Faso. Photo: Children Believe

Burkina Faso

With a population of 23.8 million people, Burkina Faso continued to rank 21st out of 179 countries for its high level of fragility and vulnerability in 2024. Violence and conflict remained high in Burkina Faso. Notably these conditions persist in some of the East, Centre-North and Centre-East regions where Children Believe and our implementing partners operate. Armed confrontations between Islamist militants and the military forces or Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP) have resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians. A total of 6.3 million people were estimated to be in need of humanitarian aid, of which an estimated 10 percent of the total population - or more than 2.3 million people - have become internally displaced people. Of those displaced, 60 percent are children and 23 percent women whom are dependent on humanitarian assistance for food,

shelter, water, medicines, education, and other basic social needs.

Honduras

Children Believe began the process of opening a new country office in Honduras during this reporting period and is currently exploring opportunities to work with and through local partners as it completes the formal requirements for operating in the country. Honduras, with a population of over 10.7 million, ranked 56th out of 179 countries for its level of fragility and vulnerability in 2024. Honduras faces growing vulnerabilities, including political and social conflicts, rising inflation, climate change, forced displacement and unsafe migration, as well as a high rate of homicide and femicide. At least 4.9 million people were estimated to live in poverty, with 500,000 children stunted due to food insecurity in 2024, (UNOCHA, 2023).



Ledy, a youth entrepreneur in Nicaragua, who is supported by Children Believe programs. Photo: Children Believe

Nicaragua

Nicaragua, with an estimated 7.1 million people, ranks 60th out of 179 countries for its fragility and vulnerabilities in 2024. The country faces a multi-dimensional crisis including regular climate shocks like hurricanes Eta, Iota and Julia, as well as the El Niño climate phenomenon. This, combined with global challenges including the rising costs of food, agricultural inputs and fuel, has resulted in approximately 18 percent of the total population being unable to meet their food needs. The country's NGO bill has been labelled as restrictive by human rights groups and organizations primarily involved in human rights work.



A young woman from Ghana who was sponsored by Children Believe and has now fulfilled her dream of becoming a teacher. Photo: Children Believe

India

India, the largest country in the world with a population of over 1.4 billion people, stands 75th out of 179 countries for its fragility and vulnerabilities in 2024. While it is one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world and a member of the G20, it faces both social and regional inequalities. One in four Indians is considered multi-dimensionally poor, with the top 10 percent of the population earning 20 times as much as the bottom 50 percent (UNDP, 2024). Five out of every six poor people belong to disadvantaged social caste groups, which leads to further marginalization.

Furthermore, India is highly susceptible to climate change and frequent extreme weather events which disproportionately affect marginalized communities (International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2023; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, 2023).

Paraguay

Paraguay, with an estimated population of 7 million people, is a relatively more stable and less fragile country, ranking 105th out of 179 countries for its

vulnerabilities. Paraguay has a very large population of children and young people with 45 percent under the age of 30. Although the country has made substantial progress in improving child well-being over the past years, especially in health coverage, access to education, and child protection, there are still gaps that continue to impact the rights of children and families, specifically among the poorest and those living in rural areas and indigenous communities.

Ghana

Ghana, with a population of 34.7 million people, is comparably more stable, ranking 106th out of 179 countries for its fragilities and vulnerabilities in 2024. The country has made significant progress towards building a more democratic multi-party system, with a strong judiciary and freedom of the press. Despite these gains, the unprecedented economic impact in post COVID-19 context, has made Ghana vulnerable to high financial inflation (23.2 percent) in early 2024. Increased external financing and growing debt burdens have created a critical funding shortfall for the education system, particularly school infrastructure, social protection, and health services, (UNICEF, 2024).

II REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION



School children in India have access to education that empowers them to realize a lifetime full of choices. Photo: Children Believe

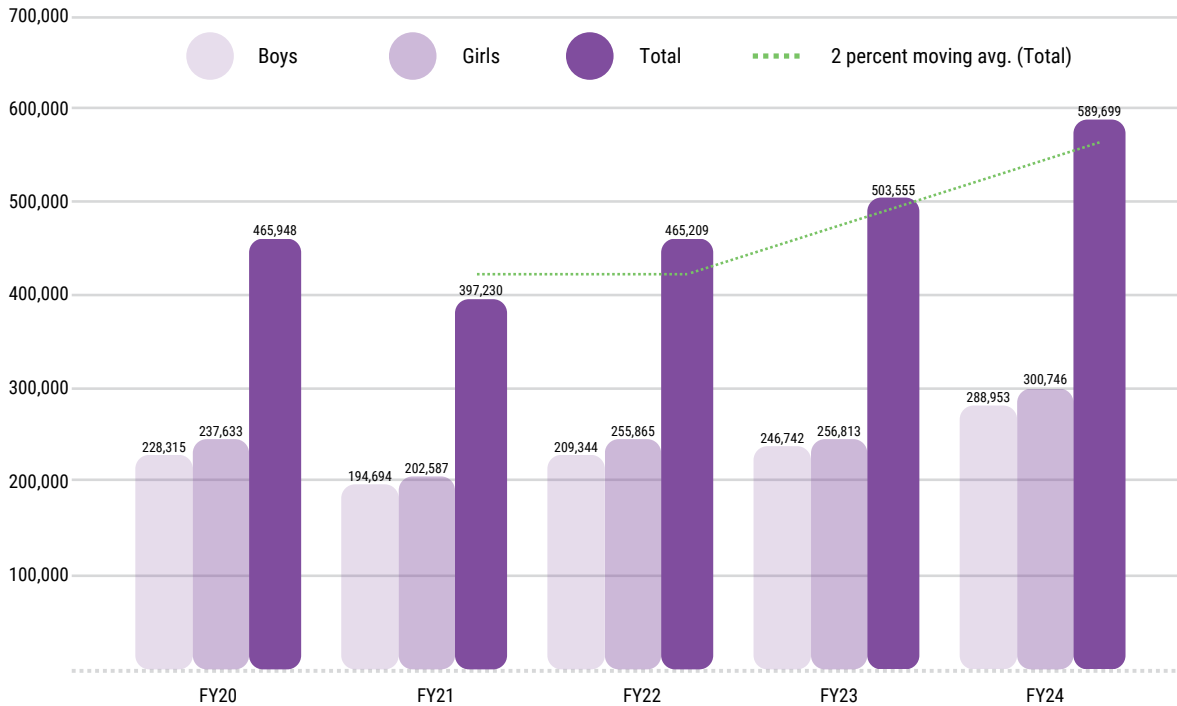
At Children Believe, we believe that education is a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for children to reach their potential. To protect the choices of children and young people so they can fully unlock opportunities for their futures, it is important for them to be supported throughout their young lives. Working in partnership with local organizations, we remove the barriers to education and provide access to inclusive, high-quality learning opportunities at each life stage from early childhood care and development to primary education, followed by technical, vocational and/or higher education. Our focus on each life stage varies in each country where we work, according to where the need is greatest.

In the 2024 fiscal year, we enabled 589,699 children, young women, and men to gain access to preschool, primary education, vocational and life management skills, and development opportunities, representing

a 15 percent increase from FY23. This achievement builds on our sustained efforts to support children who were affected by multiple barriers to education, including the COVID-19 health pandemic, conflict and forced displacement and bring them back to school.

589,699
children, young women, and men gained access to preschool, primary education, vocational and life management skills, and development opportunities.

CHART 2: Access to inclusive and quality education for boys and girls in Children Believe operational areas: FY20-24 trend analysis



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY20-24

Increased access to quality, inclusive early childhood care and development

The first few years of life are critical for brain development. Research has shown that eighty percent of brain development is completed by age three, and ninety percent, by age five. Early childhood is a critical window of time to lay a strong foundation for cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Our priority focus is on investing significantly in early education for children aged 3-5 years old and providing them with the greatest advantages that will contribute significantly to their social skills and emotional development later in life. Additionally, we endeavour to strengthen existing networks and institutions by sharing best practices and introducing new models for early childhood development at the local, country and regional levels where we work.

Our support for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is grounded in our commitment to uphold the right of every child to thrive and to promote social

justice. We focus on supporting children and parents in vulnerable situations or those suffering systemic discrimination. Our ECCD strategy utilizes a holistic approach that includes learning through play training, positive parenting, and maternal and child well-being support.



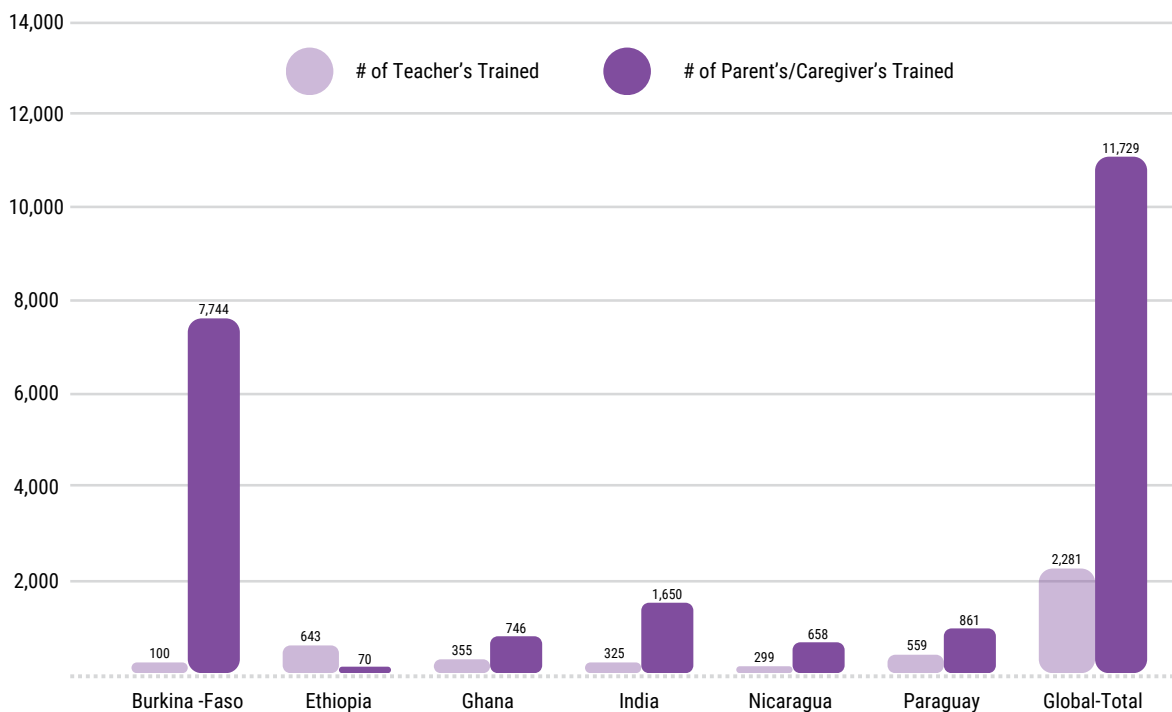
Children in an Early Childhood Care and Development Centre, Ethiopia. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2024 fiscal year, we built, renovated, equipped or supported 504 early childhood education centres. We also trained 11,729 teachers and parents/caregivers in inclusive education and appropriate teaching methodologies, including Learning Through Play (LTP), and Early Childhood Development (ECD) across the six countries.

504
early childhood education centres
were built, renovated, equipped or
supported in FY24.

CHART 3: Number of teachers and parents/caregivers trained in inclusive education and appropriate teaching methodologies, including LTP, and ECD by Country - FY24



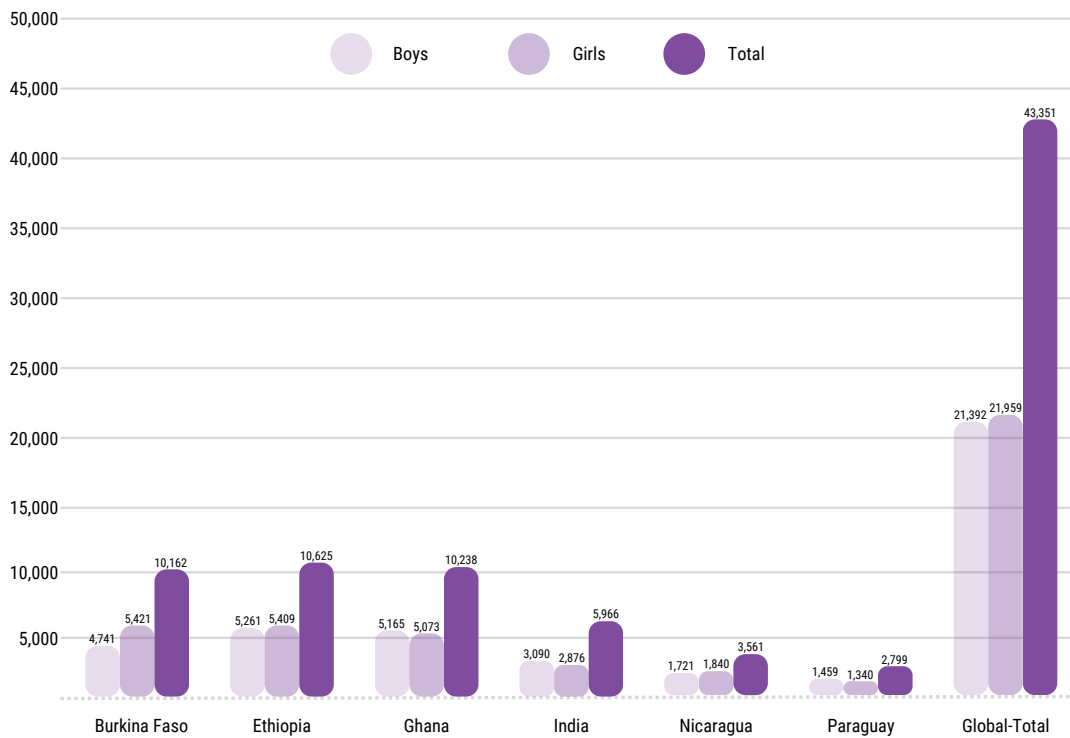
Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

Chart 4 shows that, in FY24, Children Believe and our partners collaborated to provide early childhood development opportunities for 43,351 children (including 21,959 girls).

The quality of early education provided by the ECCD centres in communities where Children Believe serves is reflected in the positive outcomes of children who

attend. During this reporting year, early childhood educators and other stakeholders across our operational areas have worked together to support community-based systems that prioritize the well-being of children by integrating healthcare, early care and education, and family support as part of a holistic approach to child well-being.

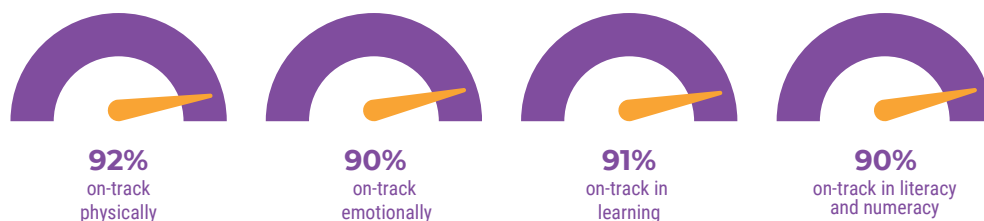
CHART 4: Number of boys and girls under age 5 with access to early childhood care and development in Children Believe-supported communities in the 2024 fiscal year



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

Chart 5 illustrates these positive outcomes. Approximately 92 percent of the children enrolled in the ECCD centres showed appropriate progress in their physical development, while they displayed positive socio-emotional development (92 percent), high proficiency in learning (91 percent), and literacy and numeracy skills (90 percent).

CHART 5: Developmental performance of children under 5 who attended early childhood care and development centres supported by Children Believe - FY24



Increased access to inclusive, equitable and quality primary education

Primary school education is crucial for the development of children, as it lays the foundation for their future academic and personal growth. Primary education provides a strong basis for children to become informed and responsible citizens, productive and skilled workers, and to protect themselves and their families against violence, disease and exploitation⁶. However, children of primary school age face numerous barriers such as poverty, child labour, abuse, disabilities, geographic isolation and social marginalization which prevents them from accessing quality education.

Children Believe and our implementing partners are committed to promoting inclusive education by identifying and dismantling discriminatory barriers. Our approach to inclusion is based both on equity as well as recognizing that each child has unique needs and requires different types of support and resources to realize their education rights. In FY24, we worked with education departments to build the capacity of teachers, integrate child safeguarding into teacher’s training curriculum and promote gender and social inclusion in schools. We also supported children and

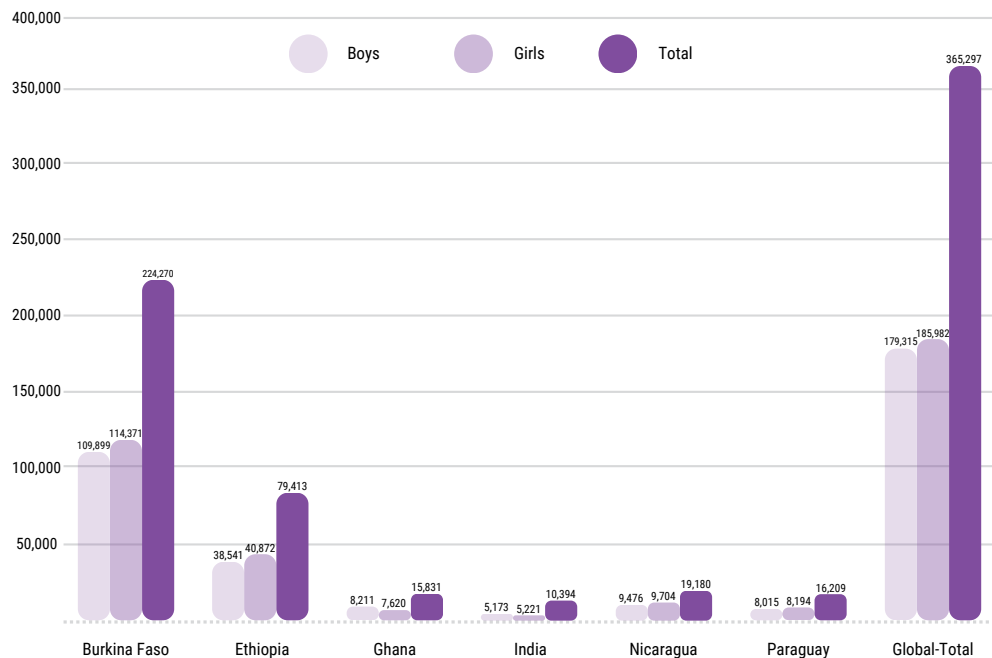
their communities to advocate and demand greater accountability from state duty-bearers.

In addition, we promoted inclusive education systems for all children regardless of gender, caste, race and ability. Our approach has empowered our supported schools to cultivate environments of fairness and justice, replacing discriminatory attitudes. These schools play pivotal roles in promoting equality by reshaping children’s perspectives and transforming the way children think, learn, and behave. As a result, our supported schools now provide access to all children, including those with disabilities, those from excluded social caste/ethnic minority groups, and those in difficult circumstances.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

As shown in Chart 6, a total of 365,297 students (185,982 girls) were enrolled in 395 Children Believe-supported primary schools during the 2023/24 academic year.

CHART 6: Enrollment in primary school education for girls and boys in Children Believe-supported communities, disaggregated by country - (2023/2024 academic year)



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

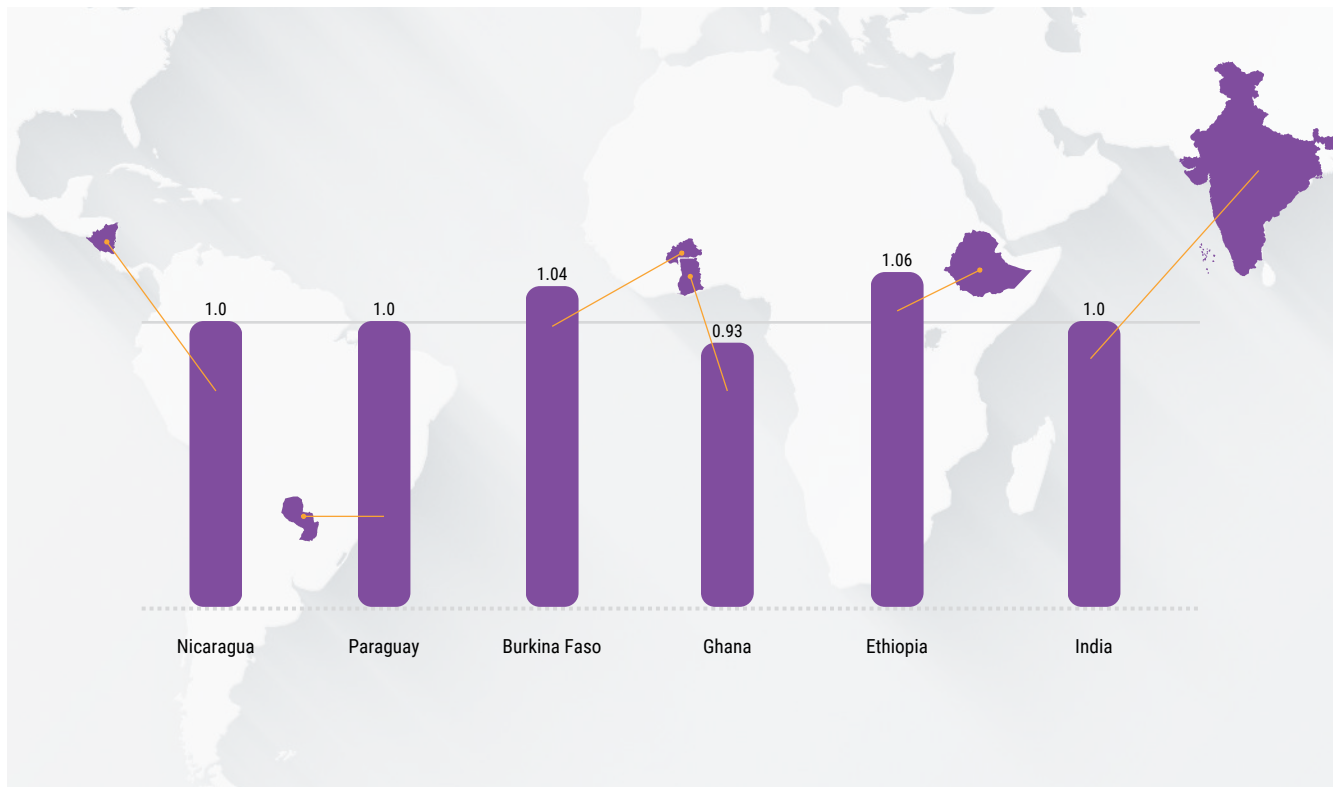
⁶ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/>

In the 2024 fiscal year, Children Believe and our partners worked actively to close the gap in gender parity in the communities where our programs are implemented. This gap reflects the ratio of boys to girls enrolled at the primary school level. Our efforts yielded positive outcomes, enhancing the attendance of girls in schools (Chart 7). This year, gender parity at the primary education level in Children Believe’s operational areas showed favorable outcomes for all the countries achieving a ratio (girl to boy) of 1.06 and 1.04 for Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, as well as equality (a ratio of 1 each) across India, Nicaragua and Paraguay. The ratio is slightly higher and in favor of boys, with a ratio of 0.93 in North Ghana.



Children Believe visiting school children in Ethiopia. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

CHART 7: Gender parity index for primary school enrollment in Children Believe-supported communities, disaggregated by country⁷



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

⁷ Gender parity index for primary school enrollment is calculated based on primary source.

BOX 1

Amdiatou: A Beam of Hope Through Education

By Children Believe Burkina Faso



Amdiatou, a 15-year-old girl from the province of Kompienga, Burkina Faso. Photo: Children Believe

Amdiatou, a 15-year-old girl, hails from the province of Kompienga, a region marked by economic hardship and constant security challenges. Before becoming an internally displaced person, she lived with her family in a village where limited access to education and healthcare hindered personal and community development. Amdiatou dreams of becoming a teacher, but her aspirations seem compromised by her circumstances.

Amdiatou's daily life was turned upside down when terrorists attacked her village, forcing her family to flee.

“

The day we left the village, many of us were arrested; they took all the strong men, killed some and took the others away, she recalls.

This instability not only hindered her education, but also instilled a constant fear that threatened to permanently limit her life choices.

Arriving in Fada N’Gourma, Amdiatou found refuge in a camp for displaced people. Children Believe, in collaboration with local partners, set up a child-friendly space where she was able to resume her studies. Thanks to their financial support and psychosocial accompaniment, she was able to enroll in grade 8 and continue pursuing her dreams in a safe and stimulating environment.

Since joining the Children Believe program, Amdiatou has found a rewarding daily routine and a fulfilling life.

”

I like school because we learn a lot and there are people who believe in us and support us, she shares.

This support has enabled her to look to the future again, and to hope for a better future for herself and her community.

Amdiatou's story is a testament to the transformative impact of education and psychosocial support for children affected by crisis. The ongoing support of Children Believe and its partners is crucial to maintaining these advances and ensuring the sustainability of interventions. By helping children like Amdiatou, we are working for lasting changes that foster greater autonomy and better prospects for future generations.

This story, illustrated in Amdiatou's own words and photos, represents her educational journey, and underlines the vital importance of an ongoing commitment to education in a crisis context.

Increased access to affordable, quality and inclusive technical, vocational, and higher education

Vocational and higher education equips young adults with advanced knowledge and skills in various fields, preparing them for leadership positions, and broadening their career prospects. Equitable access to vocational and higher education for adolescents fosters personal and societal development, and promotes economic growth and innovation. Unfortunately, many adolescents and young adults face barriers to education and employability such as skills gap, digital divide, financial constraints, gender bias, economic barriers, and high unemployment rates.

At Children Believe, we believe that providing access to technical and vocational training for adolescents and young adults (ages 15-24) creates opportunities for skill development, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment and it also allows them to fully participate in their development and to contribute to their communities and economies. It not only prepares them for employment, but also empowers them to become financially and socially stable, active contributors to their communities and enhances

their overall well-being. We work with and through key stakeholders, including local governments and vocational and technical training centres, to build technical skills and upgrade facilities, and to develop online platforms for vocational and soft skills training.

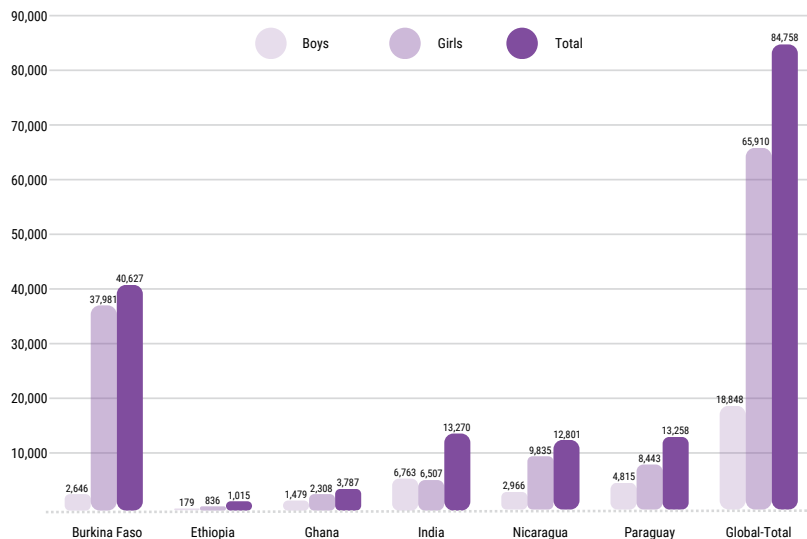


Vocational skills development for young women in India.
Photo: Children Believe

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

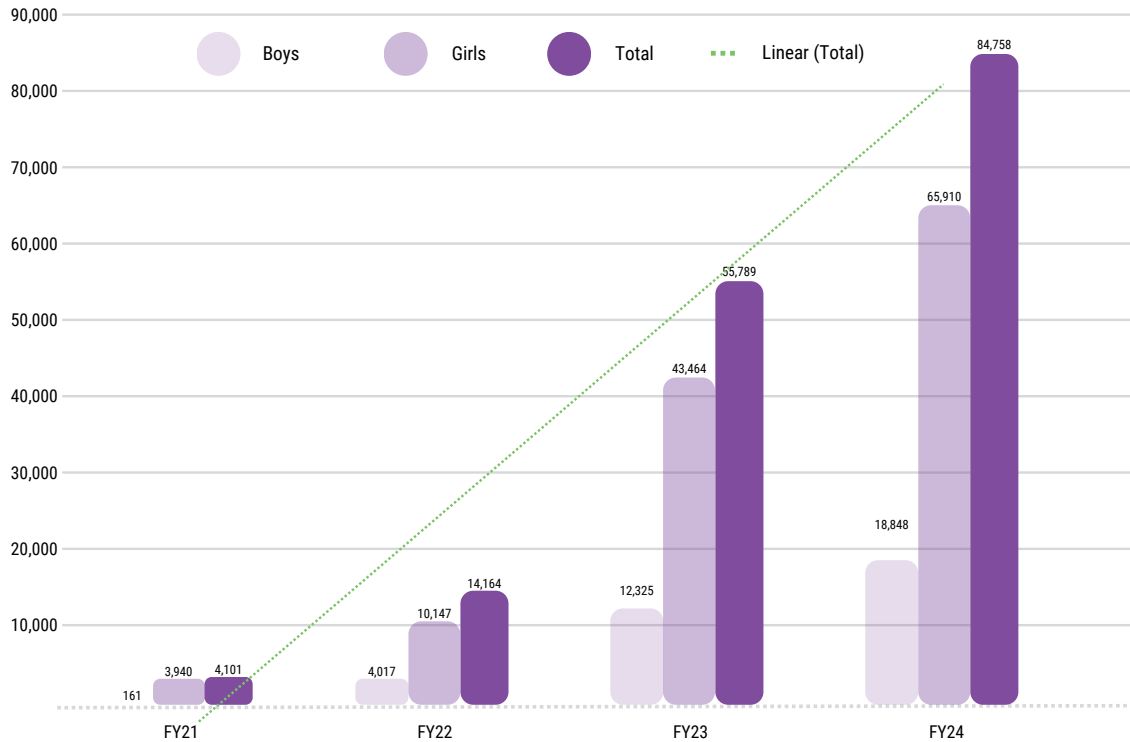
In this fiscal year, we collaborated with local and international organizations, and the technical departments of host governments to empower 84,758 young people (about 78 percent girls and young women) aged 15 to 24, from low-income and indigenous families with the necessary skills to find paid employment or self-employment (Chart 8).

CHART 8: Number of young women and men who received vocational/life skills management training and had access to employment opportunities, disaggregated by countries of operation - FY24



Our commitment to promoting vocational and 21st century life management skills (including financial literacy, business communication, teamwork and problem-solving) significantly enhanced the employability of young women and men (aged 15 to 24 years). Over the past four years, the number of youth trained grew from 4,101 in FY 21 to 84,758 in FY24, a 20.7 fold increase (Chart 9).

CHART 9: Number of young women and men who received vocational/life skills training and had access to employment opportunities, disaggregated by year (FY21-24)



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY21-24

A noteworthy achievement is the successful deliberation of our gender-transformative approach to skills development and economic opportunities in Nicaragua through the GAC-funded EMPUJE project. The EMPUJE project was successfully completed during the reporting period and it worked to address the challenge of limited access to skills development, employment opportunities, and financial services, particularly for women and girls in Nicaragua. It brought stakeholders from the private, government, and public sectors together to promote sustainable and inspiring employment prospects tailored to the needs of young women and men.

Likewise, our Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) support programs in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana and India fostered a self-sustaining micro-finance model. We provided disadvantaged communities and economically active poor, who were

excluded from conventional banking, with access to credit for income-generating activities

Furthermore, in India, Children Believe and our partners worked with universities and vocational training institutes to guide, counsel, coach, and prepare young people from marginalized communities to pursue higher education and reach their full potential.



Savings group meeting in Ethiopia. Photo: Children Believe

BOX 2

Dayana, A Partner in Youth Skills Development and Employability

By Children Believe Nicaragua



Dayana Mejía, a 26-year-old young entrepreneur from Managua, Nicaragua. Photo: Children Believe

Dayana Mejía is a 26-year-old young entrepreneur from Managua, Nicaragua.

Prior to Children Believe’s support project, Dayana was unemployed and dependent on her family. She was trying to seek employment, but she was not successful with her employment applications. She was shy to share her problems with other peers. As a result, she felt hopeless and uncertain about what she would do in her future life.

When she learned about the youth employability and entrepreneurship development support project of Children Believe and its partners, she felt motivated to get involved and meet other young people. The project gave her the tools to overcome such barriers through youth networking, life skills, and vocational training.

Dayana is now an empowered woman, who not only is employed, but became an entrepreneur where she is in control of her income. She had the

idea of establishing a garment and textile marketing business after she received training in small scale micro-enterprise accounting and management. Dayana also participated in a training course organized by the Children Believe project, focusing on life management skills and marketing for small entrepreneurship. This allowed her to acquire new knowledge and skills in business administration, marketing, and business promotion using digital e-commerce platforms. She mentioned that she liked the life skills management courses and the use of the virtual platform training session most.

She acknowledges that:

“

The lessons from the skills development sessions helped me understand how to start a business and more importantly, how to maintain it and make it grow ... it has not been easy, but the guidance received was essential because things have to be done in an orderly way with clear business vision.

After the completion of her training, Dayana decided to diversify her own business. She set the goal to grow her garment and textile business by increasing her financial investment and creating linkages for her products with recognized brands in the industry.

IMPROVING MATERNAL, CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION



Lactating mothers receiving post-natal services in a child waiting room constructed by Children Believe Ghana. Photo: Children Believe

Healthy mothers and babies lead to healthy futures for everyone. Children Believe promotes maternal and child health programs informed by human rights approaches and principles. Our goal is to reduce maternal and child mortality rates through comprehensive strategies that strengthen health systems, reduce the burden of diseases, and improve nutrition. We worked with regional and district-level departments of health, as well as local government administrative bodies to implement integrated, holistic healthcare approaches, primarily targeting mothers, pregnant women, newborns, and children under age five.

The first 1,000 days⁹ of a child's life, starting from conception and lasting until they are two years old, are absolutely critical for their well-being. What happens during this period not only determines whether the child will survive, but also his or her ability to grow, learn,

and strive to reach their potential. Providing adequate nutrition and healthcare during the 1,000-day window is vital and ensures that they will not be inhibited by their health. It helps the child grow, stay well, and have a better future, benefiting not only the child, but also their families and communities.

509,910

pregnant women, lactating mothers, newborn children, and infants gained access to essential maternity and basic healthcare services.

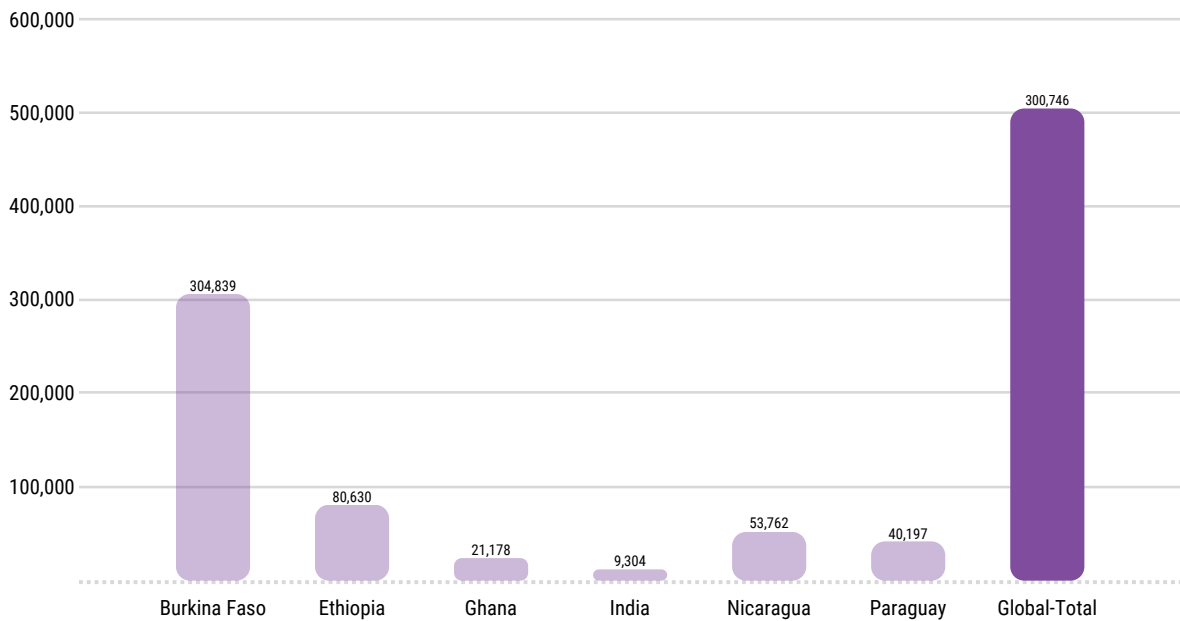
⁹ The first 1,000 days of life - the time spanning roughly between conception and a child's second birthday - is a unique period of opportunity when the foundations of optimum health, growth, and neurodevelopment across the lifespan are established ([UNICEF](#))

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

This fiscal year, our focus was on increasing access to, and improving the delivery of, essential maternal and child healthcare services and nutrition to enhance health outcomes. We supported our local partners, including government health offices, to enhance their technical capacity. By providing training and necessary resources, we empowered healthcare professionals to deliver effective maternal and child health services in the areas where we work.

Across our implementation communities (Chart 10), we reached a total of 509,910 people directly, most of whom were pregnant women, lactating mothers, newborn children, and infants, enabling them access to essential maternity and basic healthcare services.

CHART 10: Distribution of pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children served by improved healthcare services in Children Believe operational communities by country - FY24



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

Improved delivery and use of essential maternal and child healthcare services

Many maternal and child health complications can be prevented or managed with access to proper and functional healthcare facilities, equipped with life-saving medicines, resources, and trained personnel. Having skilled health personnel present during delivery reduces the risks associated with childbirth, ensures timely and appropriate medical interventions, and contributes

to better overall health outcomes for mothers and their babies. Yet in many rural areas, most health facilities are dilapidated, poorly equipped, and lack adequately trained personnel.

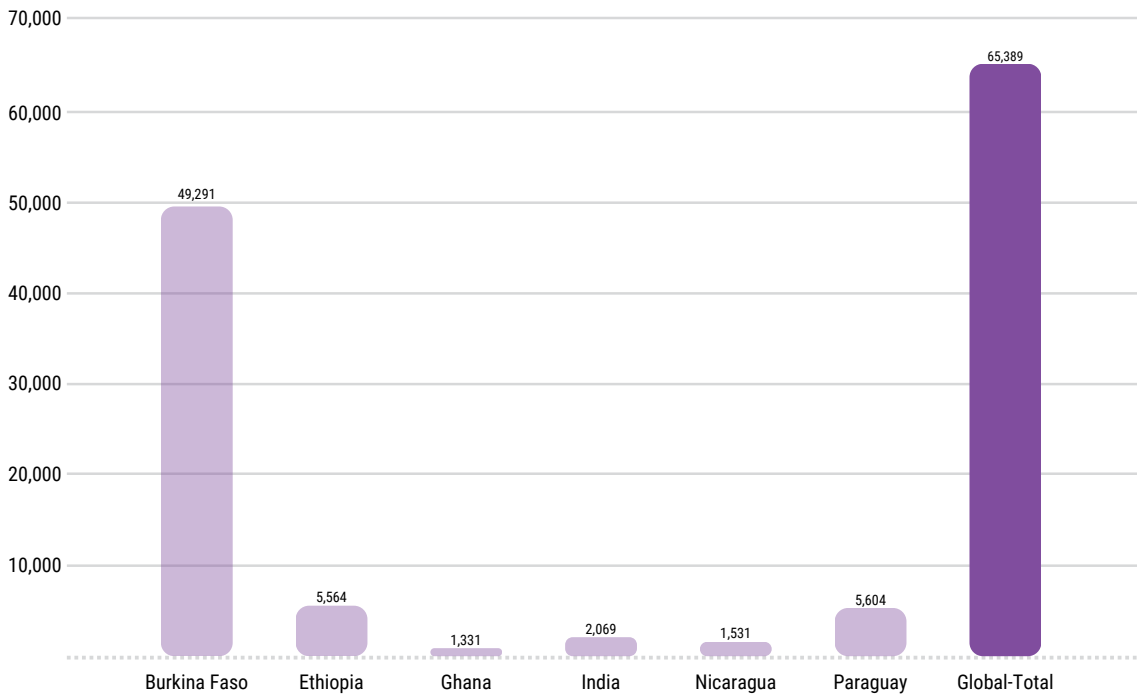
PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In this reporting period, Children Believe renovated and equipped 18 existing health facilities in underserved areas with medicines and essential equipment to strengthen their capacities to deliver regular health services. We also built the capacity of 541 healthcare workers, via training and orientations, equipping them to provide quality preventative and/or curative healthcare services in Burkina Faso, Ghana, India, and Nicaragua.

As a result of our efforts, the number of childbirths attended by trained health workers across our operational communities reached 65,389 in FY24 (See Chart 11). Notably, the highest numbers of skilled childbirth attendance were recorded in Burkina Faso (49,291), followed by Paraguay (5,604), and Ethiopia (5,564).

18
health facilities were
renovated and equipped
in underserved areas with
medicines and essential
equipment.

CHART 11: Number of childbirths attended by skilled health personnel - FY24



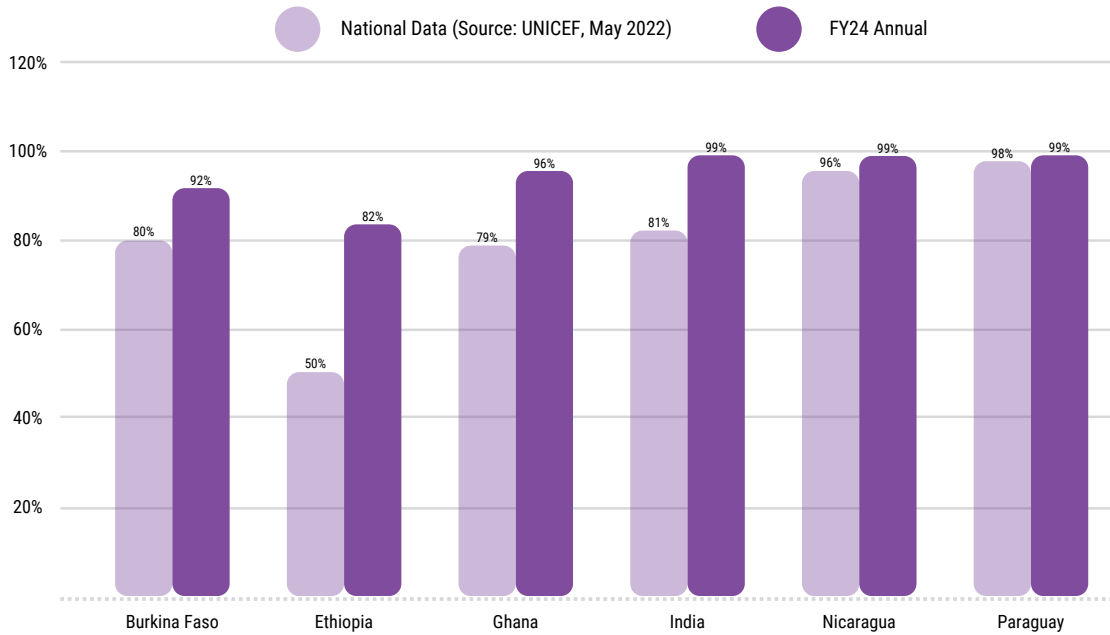
Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

65,389

childbirths were attended by
a skilled health professional
in FY24

The impact of our support to community-based healthcare services is evident from Chart 12, which indicates that 99 percent of childbirths in our supported areas were attended by skilled personnel in India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay, surpassing their national coverage of 81 percent, 96 percent, and 98 percent respectively in FY24. Additionally, our health work in Northern Ghana and Ethiopia showed significant improvement, with 96 percent and 82 percent of childbirths attended by skilled personnel respectively.

CHART 12: Percentage of childbirths attended by skilled health personnel in Children Believe-supported communities in FY24 compared to the national data, disaggregated by country.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

In collaboration with our partners in the six countries, Children Believe built the capacity of healthcare personnel to provide reproductive health and postpartum care services. A total of 75,899 mothers, young women and adolescent girls benefited from this care during the reporting period.

The proportion of women who have benefited from reproductive health and postpartum care within Children Believe’s operational communities underscores the effectiveness of our healthcare support through our local partners and government stakeholders. As shown in Chart 13, in FY24, our support for reproductive and postpartum care programs resulted in 99 percent coverage in India, and 96 percent in both Nicaragua and Paraguay. This improvement, particularly in India, shows a more than 33 percent increase in the number of women accessing reproductive health and postpartum care services since the 2019 baseline of 66 percent.

This increase contributes to reductions in mortality rates for both women and babies.

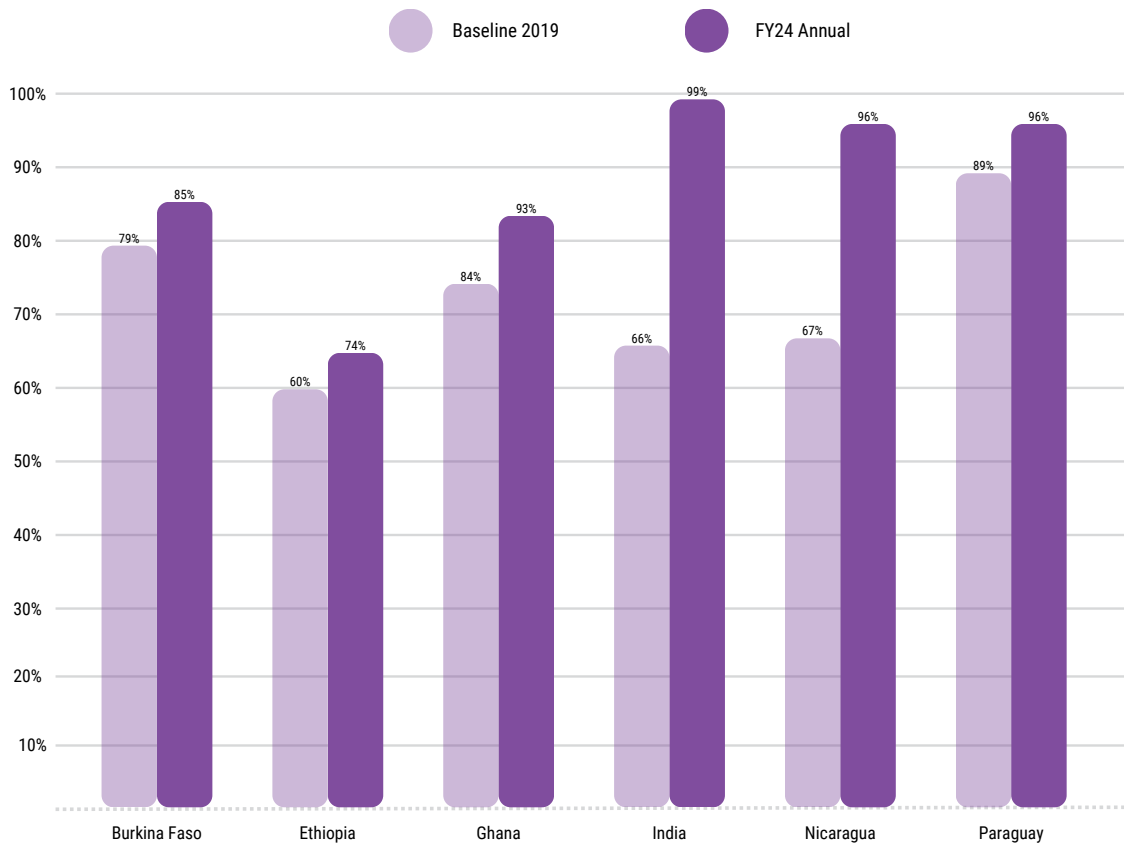


Mother and newborn child outside of a maternity ward in Ethiopia. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

In Ethiopia, our contributions were equally significant, with 74 percent of women in our operational communities receiving reproductive health and postpartum care in this reporting period, compared to the 60 percent baseline in 2019 (an average increase of 14 percent). Likewise, In North Ghana, our efforts resulted in a 93 percent outcome in this fiscal year, compared to the baseline of 84 percent in 2019 (a 9 percent increase).

The percentage of women accessing postpartum care in Burkina Faso also showed an upward trend, with our contribution helping to reach 85 percent in FY24, compared to the national average of 79 percent in 2022.

CHART 13: Percentage of women who received reproductive health and postpartum care in Children Believe-supported communities in FY24, compared to the baseline (2019), disaggregated by country



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

Enhancing maternal and child nutrition

Nutrition is an essential part of life and development, and it is linked to improved infant, child and maternal health, safer pregnancy and childbirth, and a lower risk of diseases. On average, children who consume nutritious food perform better at school, and live healthier lives.

At Children Believe, we recognize the critical role of nutrition in the well-being of children and their families, hence, our programs work to increase access to healthy diets and improve nutritional practices that prevent stunting, wasting, and other consequences of child malnutrition.

CHAMPIONING NUTRITION AND GENDER EQUALITY INITIATIVE

In the reporting period, Children Believe successfully launched the Championing Nutrition and Gender Equality (CHANGE) initiative funded by Global

Affairs Canada in Ethiopia and Ghana. We focused on improving nutrition for 17,945 of the poorest and most marginalized individuals, including over 10,400 women (especially pregnant and lactating women) and over 7,000 children. Our interventions have become pivotal to empowering women, households, and communities to increase capacity to produce, process, and store nutritious foods, increase community resiliency, and secure nutrition outcomes against the impacts of climate change. In India, we supported over 1,880 children and parents to participate in nutrition training sessions that enhanced their understanding of proper dietary practices, including early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and balanced diets. They also received training on establishing kitchen gardens, (462 male and 689 female) resulting in the creation of 1,130 new kitchen gardens at household and ECCD centres.



Launch of the CHANGE initiative in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

Addressing period poverty

Children Believe recognizes how period poverty, the lack of access to menstrual products, education and hygiene facilities, have become barriers to many girls and young women to regularly attend school in our operational countries. Period poverty deprives many girls of the chance to access their education one week each month,



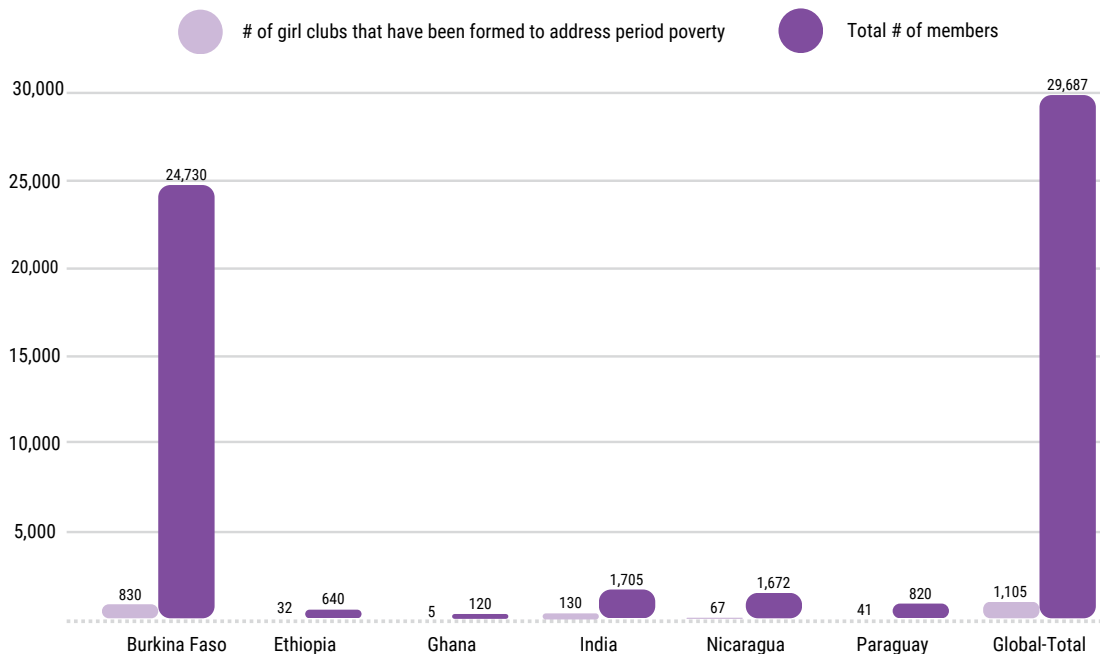
Members of a girls' club in Ethiopia making handmade pads.
Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

causing them to fall further behind in their studies. In some communities where we work, some girls can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation as they get trapped by boys who offer to buy girls hygiene products in exchange for sexual favours. This increases their risk of teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Our programs tackled menstrual health on two fronts: promotion of menstrual health education and increasing accessibility to sanitary pads. We supported a total of 29,687 girls through facilitating the formation of 1,105 girls' clubs across Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua and Paraguay (Chart 14). For instance, our focus group discussions in India showed a significant improvement in menstrual health practices, with 80 percent of girls using sanitary napkins. This achievement resulted from integrating sanitary napkin distribution with targeted menstrual health education programs that address puberty changes, hygiene practices, dispelling myths, and managing discomfort.

CHART 14: Distribution of girls' clubs and girls/young women, who benefited from our action against period poverty - FY24



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

BOX 3

Thirst Quenched, Futures Brightened: Clean Water for Pedda PRC and Beyond

By Children Believe India

The Chenchu tribal village of Pedda PRC was one of nine Chenchu and six Dalit marginalized communities facing a dire water crisis. In many rural and remote villages inhabited by Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (Dalit) communities, access to drinking water facilities was non-existent. This scarcity disproportionately impacted women and girls, who bore the burden of trekking long distances to fetch water, often enduring discrimination and limited access. This arduous task not only consumed valuable time but also exposed the community, particularly the 810 residents of Pedda PRC (132 boys, 136 girls, 258 men, and 284 women), to waterborne diseases and hindered educational opportunities for girls.

As a woman from Pedda PRC recounted, “Before, we spent hours every day walking to the distant well. It was tiring, dangerous, and often humiliating. We couldn’t focus on our families or our own well-being. My daughter was often sick and could not attend school.”

Recognizing the urgent need for change, Social Activities for Rural Development Society (SARDS), with the support of Children Believe, initiated a transformative WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) intervention. This plan installed pipelines and water taps, bringing clean water directly to Scheduled Tribe Chenchu and Scheduled Caste households and reducing the need for long, dangerous journeys. The community, especially women, was involved in the decision-making process to ensure culturally relevant and sustainable solutions.

The impact of this intervention was profound. In Pedda PRC alone, health improved significantly as waterborne diseases decreased. Women and girls were liberated from the time-consuming task of water collection, opening up new opportunities for education and income generation. School attendance, especially among girls, increased, as they were no longer burdened with the responsibility of fetching water.

“Now, water flows right outside our homes,” exclaimed a young girl from Pedda PRC. “I can spend more time studying and playing with my



A water tap was installed bringing clean water to Scheduled Tribe Chenchu and Scheduled Caste households.

Photo: Children Believe

friends. I haven’t been sick in a long time!” Her mother added, “This clean water has been a blessing. My daughter is healthier and happier. She can now focus on her studies and dream of a better future.”

Beyond Pedda PRC, the WASH intervention reached a total of 3,972 individuals directly, with an additional 4,659 benefiting indirectly across the nine Chenchu and six Dalit communities. The initiative also included the construction of 39 community water points, pipeline connections to 13 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres and two primary schools, and the addition of 15 single-sex sanitation facilities were constructed or renovated in schools, benefiting 560 children. These efforts provided accessible tap water to the broader community and significantly contributed to promoting gender equality by reducing the time women and girls spent collecting water, empowering them to pursue education and participate more actively in community life.

A village elder remarked,

“**The clean water has brought new life to our community. Our children are healthier, our women are empowered, and our future looks brighter than ever before.**”

Strengthening capacities for humanitarian responses



A Children Believe child-friendly space for displaced children and youth in Kaya, Burkina Faso. Photo: Children Believe

Children Believe is always ready to respond to humanitarian crises caused by violent conflict, natural disasters, and displacement in our operational areas. Working alongside local and international partners, we help protect vulnerable children by promoting emergency education to help get childhoods back on track. We recognize that crises not only disrupt children's learning, but can also reverse previous development gains. Access to education preserves their future potential and also helps children heal by addressing their emotional, social, and developmental needs.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In FY24, Children Believe has extended emergency food kits, child nutritional support, or cash for relief assistance to 41,458 malnourished children and their families in countries affected by disaster. In Burkina Faso, with support from UNICEF and UNOCHA, we provided teacher training on education in emergencies, focusing on safe schools and psychosocial care to ensure children's

education continues. We also extended emergency food support to over 12,400 people. Similarly, in Ethiopia, we responded to the humanitarian crisis in the Tigray Region. We collaborated with Child Fund International and supported over 2,370 (1,130 were girls) students in four schools with scholastic materials and provided non-food items to over 1,000 women and child-headed vulnerable families. Training on safer schools and implementation of a comprehensive school safety framework was also conducted for teachers, school supervisors, and local education workers in Kiltie Awlaelo district of Tigray Region. In India, we supported 200 families most affected by the Cyclone Michaag in targeted communities within our operational areas. In Ghana, Children Believe delivered food assistance to 150 Burkinabe asylum seekers at the Tarikom Refugee Centre in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region.

Furthermore, Children Believe partnered with Health Partners International of Canada to provide medicines and medical supplies to vulnerable communities in our



Women carry their supply of food in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

operational countries and other non-Children Believe operational countries affected by emergencies. We provided C\$3.7 million worth of medicines and medical supplies to Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Libya, Lebanon, Malawi, Nicaragua, and Ukraine. Over 700,000 war affected and displaced children, pregnant women, men and other vulnerable populations have benefited from this medical assistance.

Children Believe recognizes that communities often have to contend with multiple crises at the same time, which compounds the negative impacts on affected people. Progress towards resilience against community shocks is often hindered by the simultaneous challenges of political instability, and climate disasters. Complex problems require complex solutions. We believe that the most effective approach in these difficult environments can be found at the intersection of humanitarian, development, and peace-building efforts, which is otherwise known as the **triple nexus approach**. With this approach, we push for community based disaster prevention always, community led development intervention wherever possible, community-based humanitarian action, and peace building when and as necessary.

Children Believe has enhanced the capabilities of five local partners from Burkina Faso and Ethiopia and promoted a community of practice focused on education in emergencies and child protection in humanitarian actions, including the 'Triple Nexus' approach. Twenty local staff have been actively engaged and trained to collaboratively address immediate needs while reducing risks and vulnerabilities, with the ultimate goal of ending the cycle of need and improving livelihoods in their communities.

41,458
malnourished children
and their families received
emergency food kits, child
nutritional support or cash for
relief assistance in countries
affected by disaster.

IV PROTECTING CHILDREN AND WOMEN FROM VIOLENCE



Members of the Association for the Defense of Children and Adolescents (ADDNA) in Paraguay. Photo: Children Believe

Strengthening community-based child protection systems

Violence against children steals childhoods and is a major barrier to education. Children Believe works to prevent all forms of abuse and violence against children, including child abuse and neglect. We prioritize protecting children from sexual and gender-based violence¹⁰, which manifests as sexual abuse and harassment, verbal abuse, deprivation of resources, human trafficking, and harmful social practices, such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Our approach to child protection focuses on listening to both boys and girls about their lived experience and applying that knowledge by working with them to improve their safety and well-being. We also work with school systems to establish safe and violence-free environments for all children. Our teams collaborate with governments and community partners to implement progressive laws and policies, raise public awareness, and foster community-driven child protection systems.

¹⁰ Sexual and gender-based violence refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. Gender-based violence (GBV) is considered to be any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals based on their gender. It may include sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage and harmful traditional practices. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. It can be physical, emotional, psychological or sexual in nature, and can take the form of a denial of resources or access to services. It inflicts harm on women, girls, men and boys. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, retrieved August 28, 2020 from https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Sexual_and_gender-based_violence.pdf

We worked with local partners and government bodies to strengthen protection systems and increase their capacities. Our ultimate goal is to reduce the vulnerabilities of children facing discrimination, due to caste, gender, ethnic identity, disability, forced migration displacement, or other difficult circumstances, like homelessness.

Throughout this reporting period, communities actively helped us identify and enroll orphans and vulnerable children into our sponsorship program, enabling them to access quality and inclusive education, basic healthcare services, and livelihood support.

In FY24, we continued to activate and strengthen community-based protection mechanisms. These mechanisms are designed to safeguard children and women from violence within the home and community, because most of the reported incidents

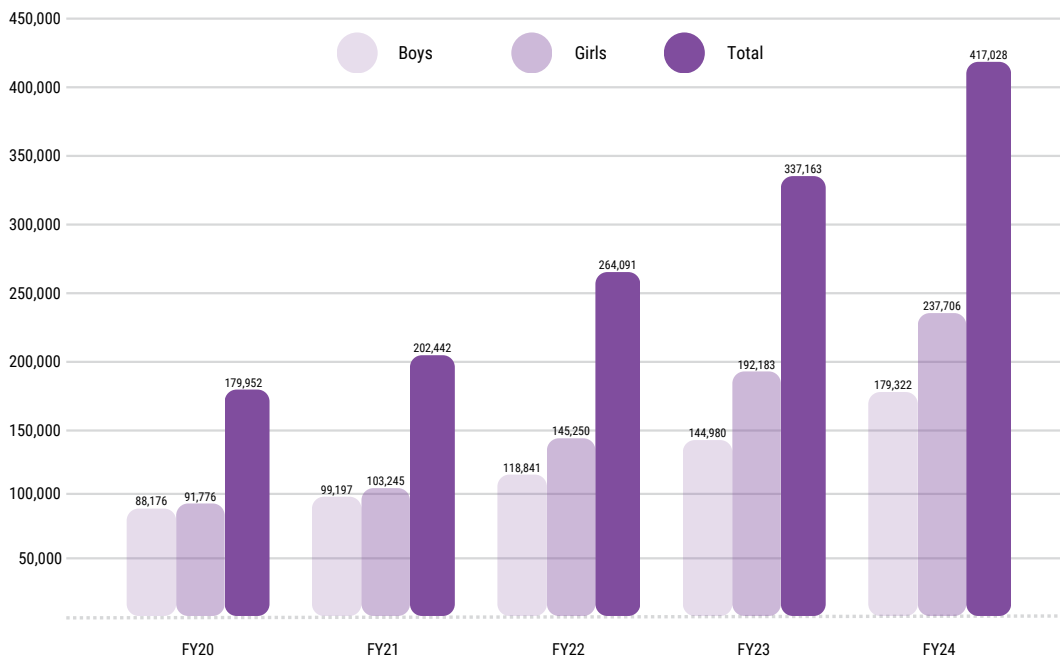
of violence occurred in early marriage, and early pregnancy, and sexual and labour exploitation were often perpetrated by family members or individuals known to the families.

We implemented community education programs on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention to equip community leaders, caregivers and children to prevent and report GBV.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In this reporting period, over 417,000 children, youth, women, parents, and duty-bearers, from 762 community groups across our six countries of operation, benefited from our work on the prevention of various forms of violence, neglect, and abuse. Between FY20 and FY24, there has been a 2.3-fold increase in the number of people who have directly benefited from our protection services. (Chart 15)

CHART 15: Number of children, youth, women and parents who directly benefited from our work on the protection of children and women from violence in Children Believe communities - FY20-24 trend analysis.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

417,028

children, youth, women, parents, and duty-bearers benefited from our work on the prevention of various forms of violence, neglect and abuse.

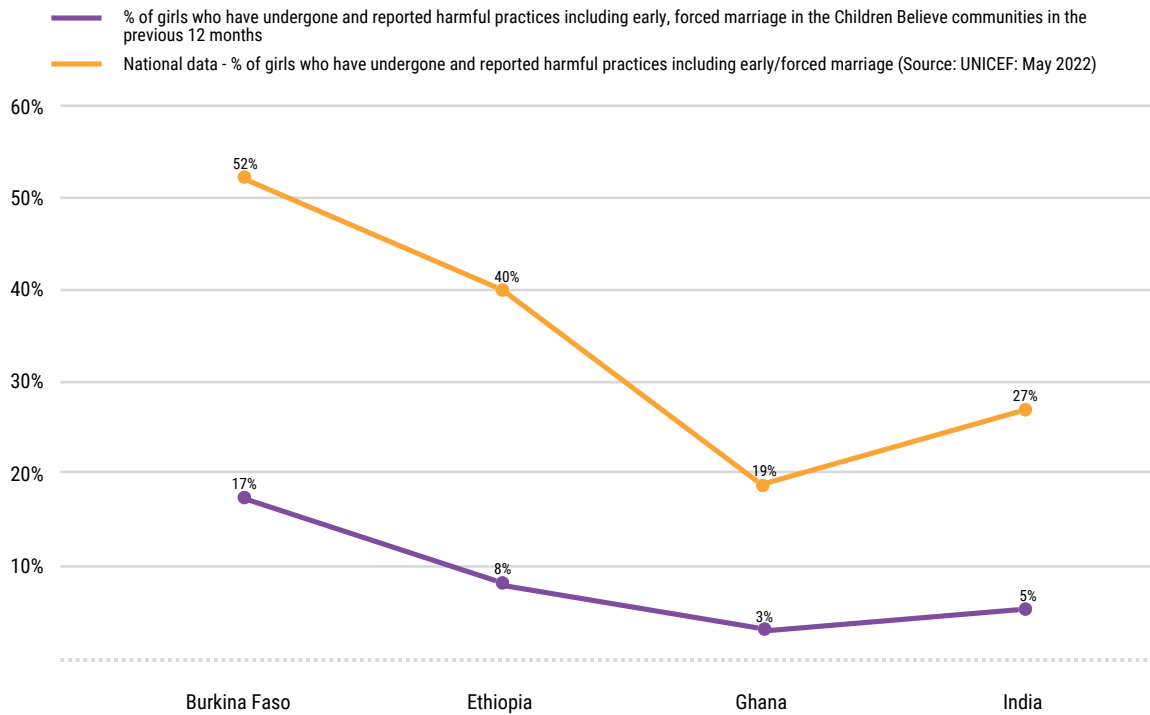
We strengthened the technical and institutional capacities of our local partners and other community-based organizations (CBOs) led by youth and women, preparing them to work with their government counterparts to enforce the full implementation of key international conventions and agreements. This includes Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which specifically states, “the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.”

Our local partners and CBOs in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana and India strongly advocated against child marriage, and advanced the recognition of it as a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As indicated in Chart 16, compared to national averages, our contributions in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana and India helped reduce the occurrences of harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage, and FGM.

In our operational communities in Burkina Faso, 17 percent of the girls reported experiencing harmful practices during the reporting period, which is significantly lower than the national average of 52 percent. Our work in Ethiopia was similarly notable, seeing an 8 percent achievement in our communities compared to a 40 percent national average. Positive achievements were also registered in Ghana (3 percent in our operational communities versus a 19 percent national average) and in India (5 percent compared to a 27 percent national average).

CHART 16: Percentage of girls who have experienced and reported harmful practices in FY24 in Children Believe-supported communities compared to the national average, disaggregated by county.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

We worked with stakeholders in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Ghana to establish robust technical and human resource capacities. These enhanced capabilities have been instrumental in enforcing the implementation of some international and continental legal instruments, including:

- The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Rights of Women.

Our partnership with the African Child Policy Forum was instrumental for the formation of the Children's Legal Protection Centre (CLPC) for highly vulnerable children and young people in Burkina Faso. The CLPC has reached over 300 child victims of violence and 200 child offenders through its legal and psychosocial services. It raised awareness among hundreds more children, religious and community leaders, teachers, and care providers across Burkina Faso. It also provided child-friendly training to government and court officials, police officers, prosecutors, judges, and prison administration staff.



Women and children in a village in India. Photo: Children Believe

BOX 4

Halimata Ouédraogo: Light of Hope in the Shadows of Despair

By Children Believe Burkina Faso

Halimata Ouédraogo, aged 15, comes from a village in the Centre-Nord region, an area marked by the challenges of poverty and economic insecurity. Formerly involved in traditional gold panning, her family was forced to flee because of the violence, losing their livelihood and becoming displaced. Halimata now lives with her grandmother, separated from her parents in the chaos.

The terrorist attacks in her area not only scattered her family, but also claimed the life of her little sister, adding immense pain to their already precarious daily lives.

Halimata confides,

“

During the attacks, my little sister was killed. I came to live with my grandmother without my parents.

This loss and instability threatened to limit her future, exposing her to an increased risk of early marriage, prostitution, or precarious work.

Children Believe, in partnership with local organizations, has played a crucial role in stabilizing Halimata's life by offering her access to education and psychological, financial, and material support.



Halimata Ouédraogo, surrounded by her classmates during a break, enjoying a moment of relaxation. Photo: Children Believe

Reintegrated into school and the 7th grade, she benefits from an environment that fosters her learning and well-being.



Halimata, dressed in her school uniform, in the courtyard of her high school. Photo: Children Believe

With the help she has received, Halimata has renewed her hopes and ambitions for the future. She aspires to become a midwife to support the women of her community during childbirth, stressing the crucial importance of education to escape the cycles of poverty and exploitation. “I’m happy because my situation is not like before, when I didn’t know much. I know that with God’s grace, the future will be good,” she shares optimistically.

Halimata's story is a poignant testimony to how education and psychosocial and community support can transform lives, even in the darkest of times. Children Believe and its partners continue to play a vital role in providing these essential services, offering a glimmer of hope and paving the way to a brighter future for Halimata and many other children in similar situations. Her journey illustrates the power of resilience, and the importance of sustained support for education and child protection interventions.

Promoting birth registration practices

Children Believe and its partners remain committed to upholding the Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically Article 7.1, which emphasizes the importance of registering a child immediately after birth and ensuring their right to a name, nationality, and care by their parents. We understand that official birth registration is the first step in recognizing and legally acknowledging a child's existence and identity and is absolutely critical for a child's lifelong protection and access to social services. When children's births remain unregistered, they are, in essence, unrecognized as legal entities. This lack of recognition jeopardizes their access to fundamental rights and freedom because they are not included in statistical information and thus are not accounted for in the provision of basic amenities.

It is concerning that globally, one in four children under the age of five has not been officially registered, and this situation is even worse in some of the countries where we operate, like Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Ghana. Birth registration is still a relatively new practice in some rural communities in these countries, despite its long-term significance for children. While the birth of a child is traditionally recognized with joyous celebration and religious customs, formal registration of births is not commonly practiced.



Mother and child receiving healthcare in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

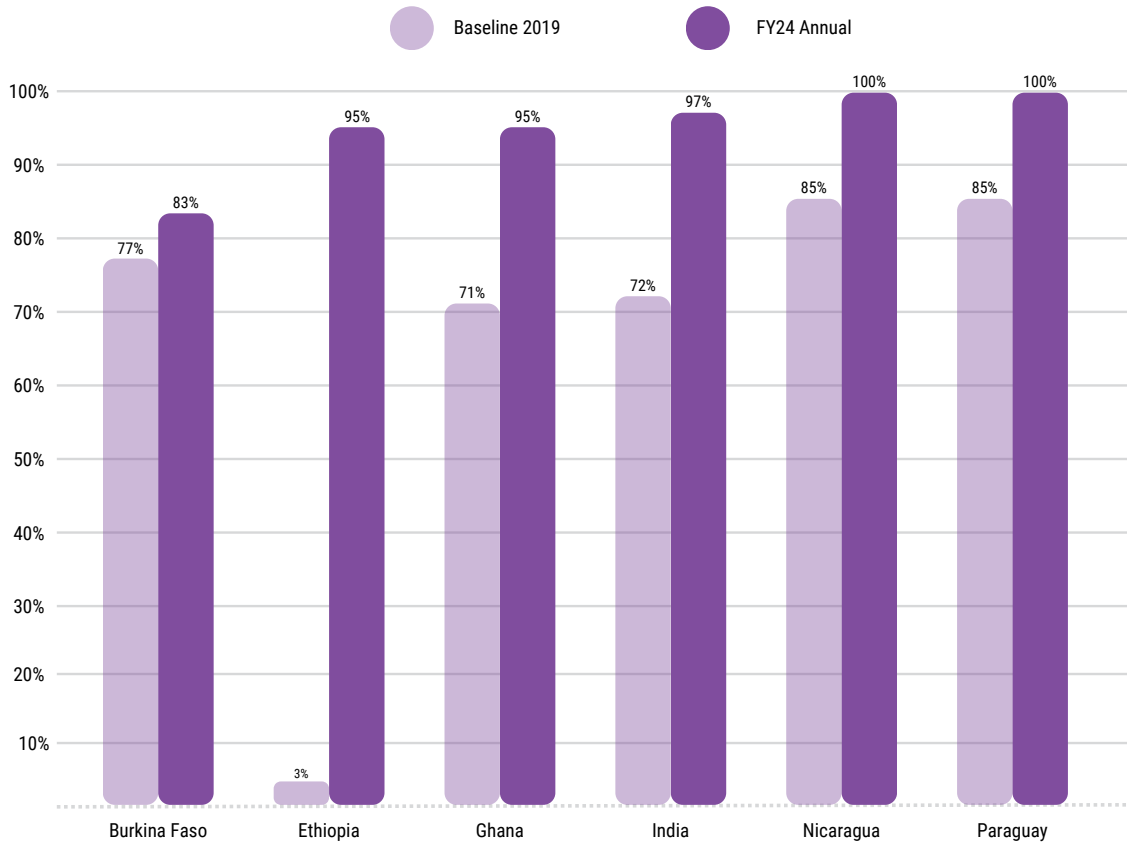
To improve this situation, Children Believe and its partners have been working with local vital statistics or district administration offices to create awareness of the importance of birth registration, facilitate birth registration systems, and ease the administrative fees for issuing birth certificates.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Chart 17 shows remarkable improvement in the percentage of childbirth registration in our operational communities in Ethiopia, where 95 percent of children under the age of 5 are registered in FY24, as compared to the baseline of only 3 percent in 2019. Similarly, in Ghana, 95 percent of children under age 5 were registered compared to the 2019 baseline (71 percent). These results underscore the importance of our ongoing efforts and the need to scale up these best practices.

95%
of children under the age of 5
in our operational communities
in Ethiopia had their births
registered in FY24. This
represents a remarkable
improvement from just
3% in 2019.

CHART 17: Percentage of boys and girls under age 5 whose births are registered with the relevant authority - Children Believe operational communities' vs. national average - FY24.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

Supporting orphans and other vulnerable children

Education and health services from the government are free in most of the countries where Children Believe works, however, they are not always of the required quality or near families in rural communities. Thousands of poor and socially excluded children, especially in many remote African villages, are unable to attend school because their families cannot afford the minimum costs for school supplies, books, and uniforms. Some children go to school hungry and are gradually forced to drop out to earn money for the family, or help around the house or farm. Girls often face even greater barriers that impact their attendance, including the lack of separate sanitation facilities in schools, the lack of feminine hygiene supplies, and the expectations to help with time-consuming domestic chores, such as fetching water and cooking. These barriers prevent many children from going to school.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

To address these challenges, Children Believe’s carefully designed child sponsorship program identifies and supports orphans and other vulnerable children so they can attend and stay in school. We do this by bringing together individual Canadian donors and children in need, working in partnership with local CSOs, school administrations, and community leaders. In FY24, with the involvement of 27 local CSOs across 726 communities in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay, 37,161 sponsored children and families directly benefited from our sponsorship program (Chart 18), particularly those in greatest need of child-centred and family-focused community development interventions.

CHART 18: Number of enrolled sponsored children who benefited from Children Believe’s child-focused, holistic, community-based development programs, disaggregated by county.

Country	Enrolled Sponsored Children
Burkina Faso	5,079
Ethiopia	6,763
Ghana	7,172
India	4,437
Nicaragua	6,825
Paraguay	6,885
TOTAL	37,161

Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, (as of March 31, 2024)

Sponsorship programs enable families to cover the basic costs of attending school, like school supplies and uniforms. The sponsorship model also funds wider community development, including improved education and health facilities, adequate water and sanitation infrastructure, and income-generating opportunities for their families.

Most of the children in our sponsorship program also experience regular health check-ups, participation in after-school activities, attending Creative Learning Centres, and receiving assisted study time to finish their homework or prepare for exams. After-school programs also help children develop life skills and gave them the space and time needed to play.

37,161
sponsored children and families directly benefited from our sponsorship program.

Promoting online safety for children



Children are given the tools to recognize and avoid dangers online through the WEB Safe & Wise initiative. Photo: Children Believe

WEB Safe & Wise is an initiative that focuses on addressing the emerging risks young people face online, while also supporting them to become effective digital citizens. Children Believe is a participant in the ChildFund Alliance members’ unified campaign: WEB Safe & Wise: Creating a better digital world with children. The aim of the campaign was to safeguard children from online threats, including sexual exploitation and abuse, while equipping them to safely navigate the digital space.

In Ethiopia, India, and Paraguay, Children Believe actively contributed to the “WEB Safe & Wise” awareness campaign, recognizing the significance of online safety. In India, this initiative has made significant strides reaching over 54,995 individuals, including 15,511 children, through direct engagement, training programs, and awareness campaigns. These efforts

focus on empowering children to become responsible and safe digital citizens, with accountable adults and stakeholders ensuring their online safety.

Beyond training and education, the “WEB Safe & Wise” campaign actively fosters open dialogue and addresses concerns related to children’s online activities, encouraging parents to actively participate in their digital lives. A parent from India shared, “I used to worry so much about my child being online, but now I feel more informed and equipped to guide them through potential dangers.

The campaign has also extended its reach to women’s self-help groups and village committees, emphasizing their role in empowering children and youth online, particularly in bridging the digital divide among tribal and Dalit communities.

In addition, two children from the Children Believe India and the Children Believe Paraguay programs participated in the Safe Internet Day event organized by ChildFund Alliance, in Manila, Philippines.



I used to worry so much about my child being online, but now I feel more informed and equipped to guide them through potential dangers.

BOX 5

Breaking Chains to End Child Marriage: The Case of Chittoor District, India

By Children Believe India

Child marriage, a persistent issue in Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, robs girls of their education, health, and overall well-being. The lack of robust government measures and limited community awareness perpetuated this practice. However, a transformative program spearheaded by a coalition of organizations emerged as a beacon of hope. Through a multi-pronged approach, the program not only rescued over 600 girls from child marriage, but also achieved a remarkable outcome - securing the government’s commitment to end this harmful practice. The program’s strategy combined media advocacy, featuring articles in national newspapers with community engagement, that reached the Chief Minister’s Office. Collaboration with local committees (CBOs and CFAMs) empowered villagers with knowledge about child marriage laws and the courage to speak out. Campaigning in schools and colleges, supported by Children Believe, further raised awareness. Partnering with Child Line India established a safety net for girls at risk, while advocating for education on child marriage prevention ensured long-term change. The program even addressed practical challenges like limited transportation and lack of girls’ hostels, highlighting

the need for improved infrastructure to support girls’ education. The most significant victory was the government’s shift in stance. The program’s relentless efforts resonated, leading to a comprehensive government plan. This plan includes integrating awareness programs into curriculums, providing transportation and accommodation for participants, and addressing the root causes of child marriage through policy reforms. The Chittoor program’s success serves as a model for Andhra Pradesh, demonstrating the power of collaboration between communities, NGOs, and the government to create a brighter future for girls.



Girls in India, empowered by education to unlock a lifetime of choices. Photo: Children Believe

V GENDER EQUALITY



Teenage girl on her way to school in Ghana. Photo: Children Believe

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and it is critical to advancing all areas of a healthy society, from poverty reduction to promoting the health, education, protection, and well-being of girls and boys. Children Believe works to ensure that women, men, girls, and boys enjoy the same rights, and equal access to resources, opportunities, and protections regardless of gender. Our programs identify opportunities and respond to the different needs and abilities of all stakeholders, particularly young girls and boys. When women's and girl's rights are respected, they are healthier, better educated, and better paid, which has a positive ripple effect that benefits everyone. Children thrive and so do communities, organizations, and societies, creating lasting change for generations to come.

Our programs are designed to address gender inequalities, such as a cultural preference for boys, stereotypes about gender roles, and control over productive resources that create barriers to

girls' education. Such barriers deny girls the same opportunities available to boys, and prevent them from contributing to and benefiting from sustainable development in their communities and countries.

Children Believe strives for transformative change, working with key stakeholders we identify to address the root causes of gender inequality in each local context. We address the social norms and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequalities. Likewise, we undertake innovative policy influence work to challenge the status quo, and enforce the implementation of legislation and policies that promote gender equality while addressing the gaps between policies and their implementations through evidence-based advocacy.

Gender equality strategies are implemented across all our programs, and we disaggregate and monitor data by gender. Thus, our programs contribute to Goal 5 of the SDGs (achieve gender equality and empower all women

and girls), with particular focus on Target 5.3 (eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation) and Target 5.5 (ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.)

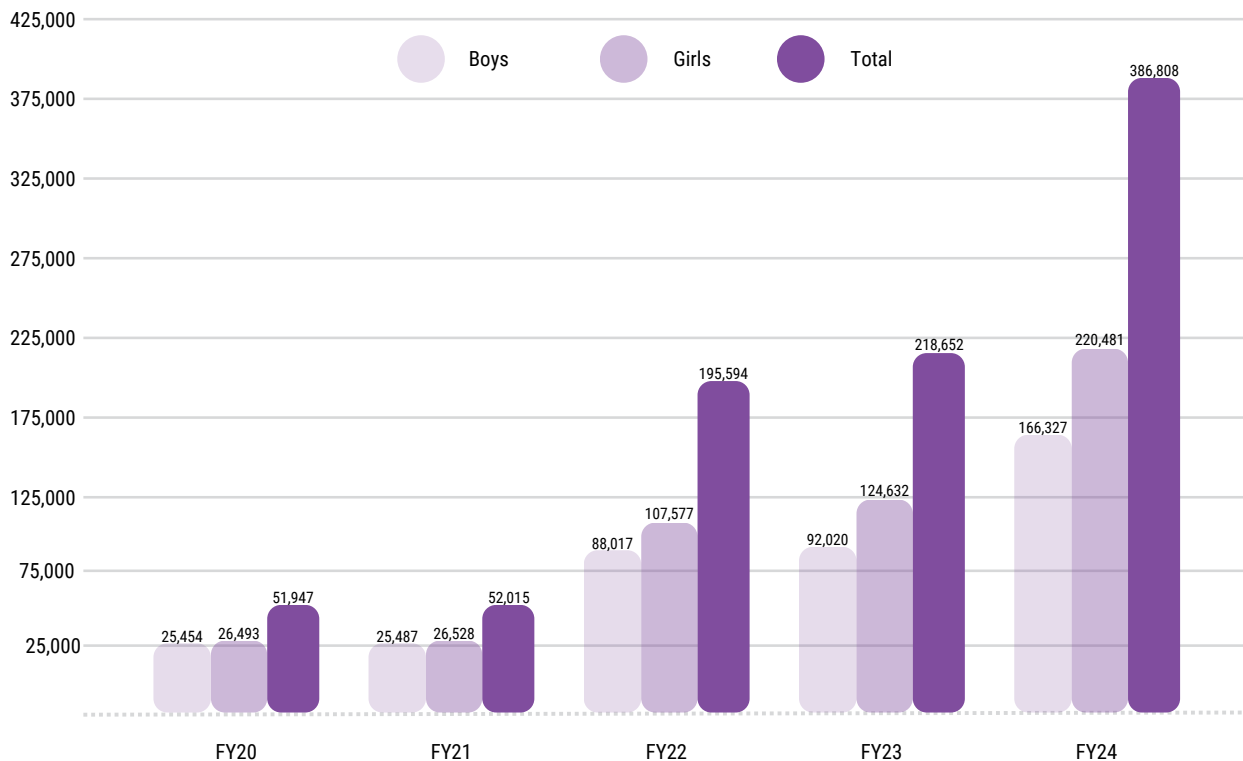
Our projects are also aligned with all three objectives of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy. These are to:

1. Enhance the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls.
2. Increase the participation of women and girls in equal decision-making; and
3. Give women and girls control over the resources they need to secure economic and social equality.

Promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls

In this reporting period, we conducted several capacity-building initiatives from which a total of 386,808 women and young girls directly benefited. These initiatives comprised awareness creation campaigns, training, improved adoption, and enforcement of gender-sensitive policies, legislations, strategies, and actions that promote equal rights for women and girls regarding economic resources, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources. Over the past four years, Children Believe and our partners have taken accelerated actions to challenge the status quo of norms and structures that perpetuate gender inequality across many communities (See Chart 19).

CHART 19: Number of women and girls who benefited from capacity-building support in favour of gender equality in Children Believe communities - FY20-24 trend analysis.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY20-24

BOX 6

From Despair to a New Dawn: Varalakshmi's Story of Hope and Resilience

By Children Believe India

For Varalakshmi, a young girl living in a remote village, the opportunity to pursue a better life was cut short when she was married at just 15 years old. And when her husband passed away, she was left to raise their three children, two daughters and a son, alone, bringing any feelings of financial security to an abrupt end. The burden of poverty settled heavily upon her. Providing meals was a daily battle and the dream of educating their children soon faded. The weight of loss, compounded by the harsh realities of their situation, pushed Varalakshmi into isolation. The judgmental stares from some in the community only deepened her despair.

Children Believe Partner-Integrated Rural Community Development Society's (IRCDS)'s intervention arrived like a lifeline. They understood poverty wasn't just about money; it was a tangled web of challenges that choked opportunity. They began by addressing Varalakshmi's emotional well-being. Through counseling sessions, they helped her navigate grief and rebuild her confidence. This emotional support was crucial. It allowed her to face the future not just with pragmatism, but also with a renewed sense of self-worth.

“

I used to believe women needed men to survive. Now, I'm filled with self-confidence, knowing women can achieve anything.

“Born a girl, I once struggled for food. Today, I stand as an example thanks to the achievers who empowered me through IRCDS/Children Believe. My deepest gratitude to them.”

Next, Children Believe partner-IRCDS ensured that Varalakshmi received a widow's pension from the government. This financial assistance provided a much-needed safety net, a foundation upon which she could rebuild her life. It meant less worry about immediate needs, allowing her to focus on long-term solutions.

Financial security alone was not enough, so IRCDS equipped Varalakshmi with skills that would empower her to generate immediate income. Skill development programs, designed with the specific needs of women in mind, provided her with the ability to work in a shop. This practical solution offered a tangible means to put food on the table, alleviating the constant pressure of daily survival.



Varalakshmi prepares bread batter for her new business venture. Photo: Children Believe

Empowered by this newfound confidence, and the knowledge gained from the IRCDS programs, Varalakshmi embarked on a bold venture – establishing a small-scale bread batter-making business. This new direction became a symbol of her newfound independence, and a testament to her determination to overcome her circumstances.

The impact of Children Believe and its local partner-IRCDS' intervention extended far beyond Varalakshmi's individual success. Her story became a beacon of hope for other women in the community. They saw how her self-belief, coupled with the support from the IRCDS, paved the way for her economic empowerment. Varalakshmi, once ostracized, became a role model, her story a call to action for breaking free from poverty. Today, Varalakshmi stands tall, a thriving entrepreneur earning a steady income. Her children are back in school. Varalakshmi's story is a powerful reminder that an intersectional approach and understanding multi-dimensional effects of poverty and gender is required to empower women in need.

Building on the foundations laid in our programs from previous years across our six operating countries, we continued to provide technical and financial support to women and adolescent girls who formed and organized self-help groups, savings and credit groups or credit cooperatives. We recognize that investing in income-generating activities for women provides long-term returns for not just the women, but their families and communities as well.

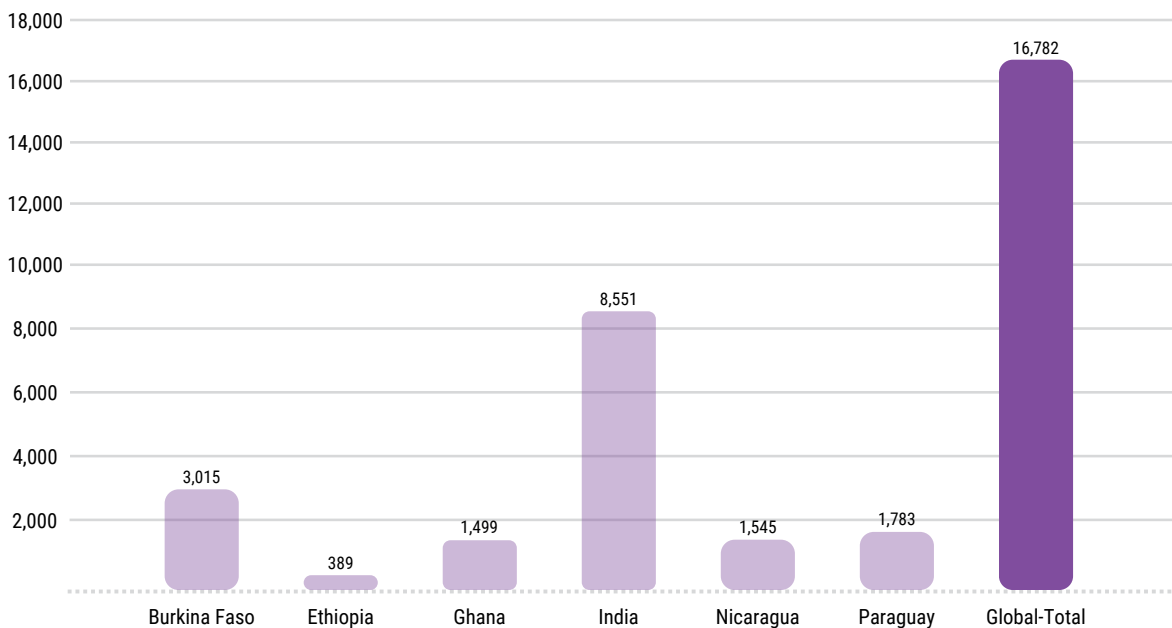
PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

During this fiscal year, a growing number of women participated in Community-Based Organization (CBO) activities as both members and leaders, creating increased space for women to exercise their social, economic, and political rights. Children Believe

proactively collaborated with some local NGO partners and government technical departments to develop or enforce new gender-friendly laws and guidelines that allow equal participation of female members and executives.

Through these efforts, 16,782 young women and mothers (Chart 20) actively participated in community forums or institutions as members and leaders, exercising their leadership and ensuring they have a say in societal decision-making processes. These spaces continue to inspire women to advocate for community-driven, and participatory development programs that cater to their specific needs.

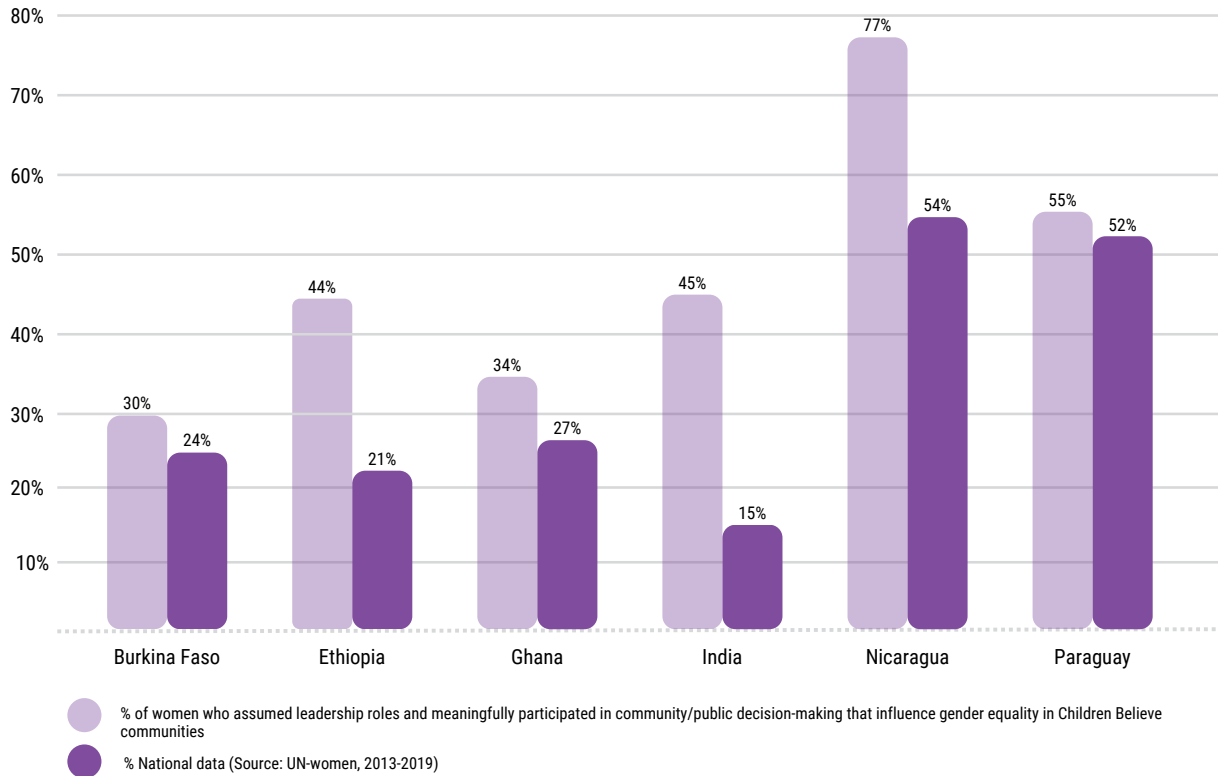
CHART 20: Number of women who assumed leadership roles and meaningfully participated in community/public decision-making in Children Believe-supported communities, disaggregated by country - FY24.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY20-24

Chart 21 illustrates the proportion of women within Children Believe’s operational areas who assumed leadership positions and engaged in decision-making within the community and public spheres, in comparison to national averages. Notably, there was a significant increase of 30 percent in India compared to the national average, followed by Ethiopia (a 23 percent increase) and Nicaragua (a 22 percent increase).

CHART 21: Percentage of women who assumed roles and meaningfully participated in community/public decision-making in Children Believe-supported communities compared to the national average, disaggregated by country - FY24.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY20-24

The observed increases reflect the positive impact of our program interventions to promote gender equality and women's participation at the grassroots level, particularly in India and Ethiopia, where historical gender imbalances have been a significant challenge.

30%
increase in the number of women in India taking on leadership positions and actively participating in community decision-making roles.

VI PARTNERING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH FOR CHANGE



Panel discussion led by child leaders and Deni Voice Web TV presenters on International Education Day, Burkina Faso. Photo: Children Believe

Partnering with youth for change is about engaging and listening to young people as decisions are made about things that affect them. It's about recognizing their unique contributions, valuing their perspectives, and empowering them to be active agents of change. Children Believe recognizes the importance of youth leaders, and believes in their ability to create positive change in their communities. We create opportunities and facilitate platforms for young people to share knowledge, experience meaningful exchanges, interconnectedness, intercultural dialogues, and participate in life skills- and vocational-training. Grounded in a child rights approach, Children Believe-supported programs help young leaders develop the capacity to lead social change and implement

community-driven actions towards a more just world. We work with children and youth to actively contribute to our programs and serve their best interests by enhancing their participation in the management of the entire program cycle.

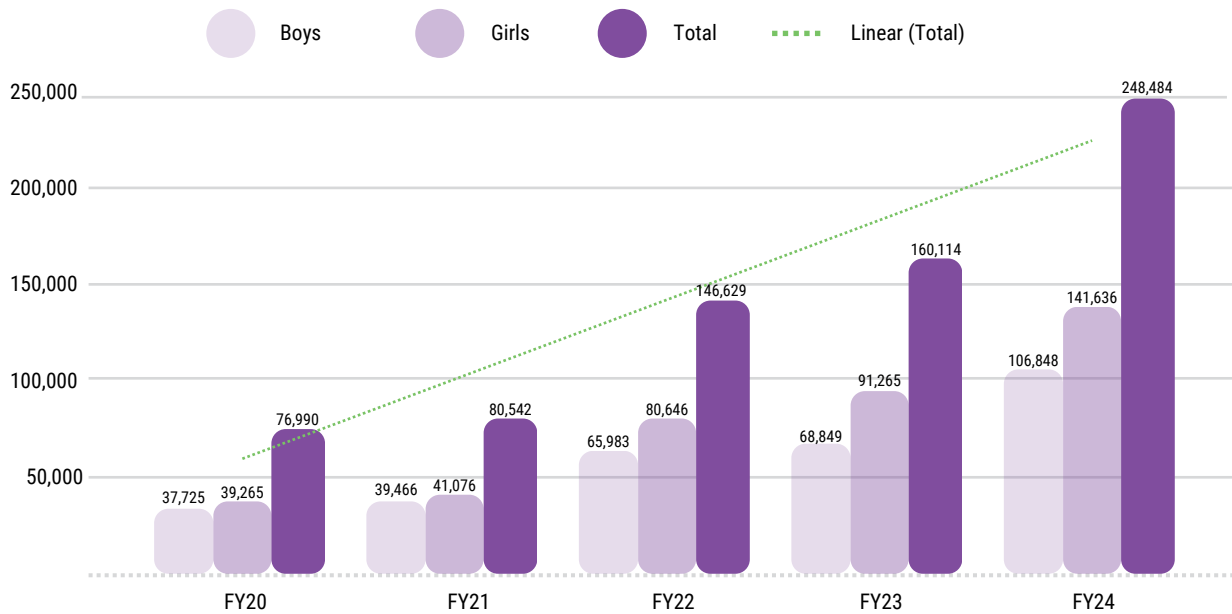
In addition, Children Believe's programs strive to break down social barriers and reach all children without discrimination. As appropriate, we make specific considerations and seek to include vulnerable and marginalized children. With our partners, we also support child- and youth-focused agencies to have the necessary institutional, technical, and financial capacities to influence the change that they want to see in their future and to promote sustainability.

Enhancing child participation through child-friendly accountability methodology

During this reporting period, we continued to advocate for improved social and legislative structures to promote child rights. This included supporting the implementation of the Child-Friendly Accountability Methodology to increase children’s participation in the protection of their rights and create favourable conditions for their voices to be heard. Chart 22 shows that a total of 248,484 children and youth from our operational communities engaged in various

programs that promoted their meaningful participation in community or public decision-making. The programs comprised children’s parliaments, issues-based youth clubs (climate change, prevention of violence), and youth scouts to amplify their voices and represent their best interests in local, provisional, or national public platforms.

CHART 22: Number of children and youth organized and involved in groups, clubs or associations that promote their meaningful participation in public decision-making in Children Believe-supported communities - FY20-24.



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY20-24

BOX 7

Tatiana, a Young Woman from Paraguay, Playing an Active Role in Her Community

By Children Believe Paraguay

Tatiana, a 15-year-old and Grade 9 student, lives with her parents, Fabian and Miriam, and her younger sister, Tania, who is nine years old. Her father, Fabian, works as a bricklayer, while her mother, Miriam, takes care of the household.

Like other communities in the area, Tatiana's community, Remansito, is characterized by having a large number of children who live in vulnerable conditions, such as flood-prone areas, precarious roads and housing. Children Believe supported the community by strengthening community-based organizations. This facilitated the participation of diverse community members to help transform their communities. To this end, Children Believe supported the establishment of an accessible and safe community centre that provides children a place to learn about their rights, improve their self-esteem, discover their skills and talents, and become more aware of the needs of their children. Families and communities can work at the centre on strategies to improve their living conditions, and have dialogue with their local authorities to discharge their responsibilities.

Tatiana, as a member of a child rights committee, has been able to actively get involved in her community by participating in forums, safaris, camps, and even in leading roles such as the organization of youth meetings and the directing of a program talent festival.

She remembers that when she was a child she was very shy, but thanks to the activities in which she participated, she developed the confidence to express her voice and mobilize her peers to promote their rights. Tatiana had the opportunity to meet the city mayor, taking her peer voices to this political leader who promised to work for children concerns, such as the activation of a children's council within the Community Centre, and the repair of an ambulance, among others things. Tatiana felt very proud for taking on this role and being the voice for her community.



Tatiana, a 15-year-old and active community member, from Paraguay. Photo: Children Believe

“

I had the opportunity to present awards to all the participants and was able to see such talented people who could draw, sing, and create works to showcase their skills! I loved it!

Building economic opportunities for young women and men

Unemployment among young people (aged 15-24) is a complex issue that poses significant challenges on both individual and societal levels. According to ILO (2024), youth unemployment rates are critically high in sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly three in four working young adults are in insecure forms of work; one in three paid workers earned less than the median wage; and more than one in two working youth eked out a living in subsistence agricultural sector. Similarly, with an average youth unemployment rate of 16 percent, the Latin America and Caribbean region grapples with the challenge which is compounded by the harsh reality of informal employment, where around 60 percent of young individuals find themselves trapped by structural barriers entrenched within the labour markets.

Similarly, generating viable employment for young people remains an acute problem across our countries of operation and communities. Many young people do not have access to quality and reliable economic opportunities, either through self or formal employment. The challenges of youth

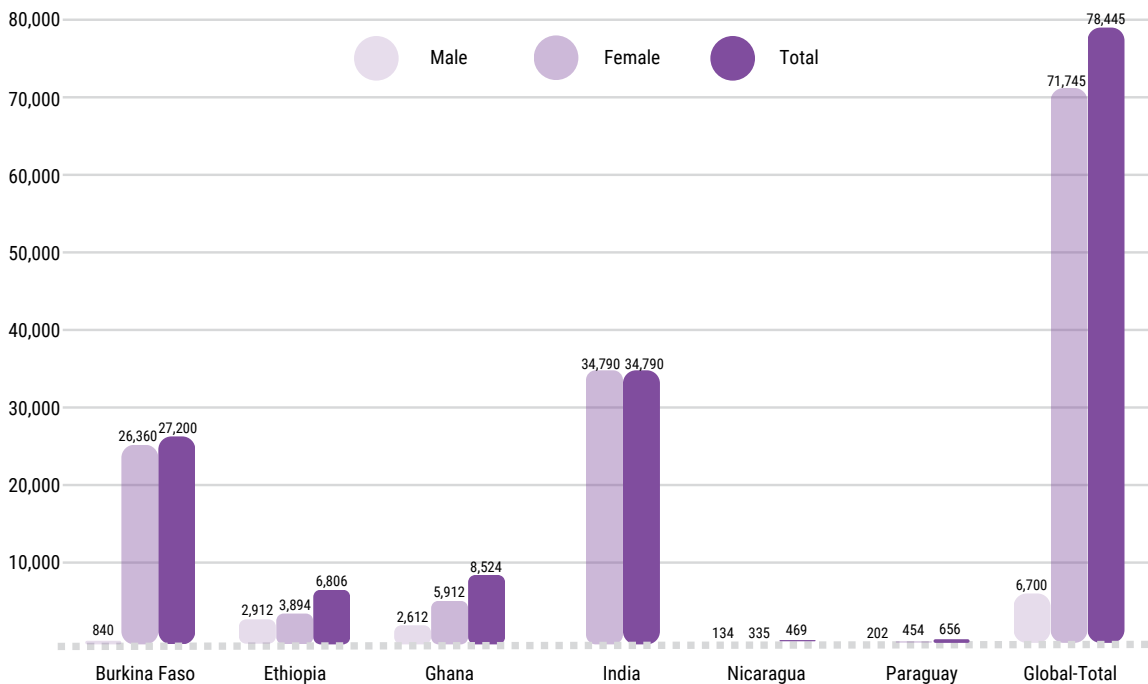
unemployment and underemployment are multifaceted and require comprehensive efforts at multiple levels that encompass education reform, skill development, job creation, policy changes, and fostering an enabling economic environment for youth to thrive.

Children Believe and our partners implement interventions that support skills development in young people to create better economic opportunities and prospects through gainful employment. In FY24, our youth and women’s economic-empowerment programs continued to build the skills of young women and men in leadership and advocacy, self-employment, and entrepreneurship.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In this reporting period, we sought to address other underlying issues affecting unemployment by conducting training programs that offer a combination of market-relevant skills, fundamental life skills, and financial education to proper participants for paid or self-employment opportunities.

CHART 23: Distribution of youth and women who benefited from economic empowerment programs - FY24



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

As indicated in Chart 23, we supported the formation or strengthening of 4,827 Village Savings and Loans Associations that constitute 78,445 economically disadvantaged young people (91 percent women) to improve their economic agency and start self-employment or micro-economic development opportunities across Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay.

Youth and climate change

Climate change poses an extreme threat to today's generation. People in the global south have contributed the least, but are paying the highest price. Globally, billions of people are affected by heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, floods, and other conditions caused by climate change. During the reporting period, Children Believe responded to the climate change effects of droughts and human-induced conflict in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia; hurricanes in Nicaragua and Paraguay; and floods, landslides, and cyclones in India. These climate change-induced catastrophes severely affected agriculture and livelihoods, leading to displacement, malnutrition, increased poverty, and the exacerbation of gender inequalities.

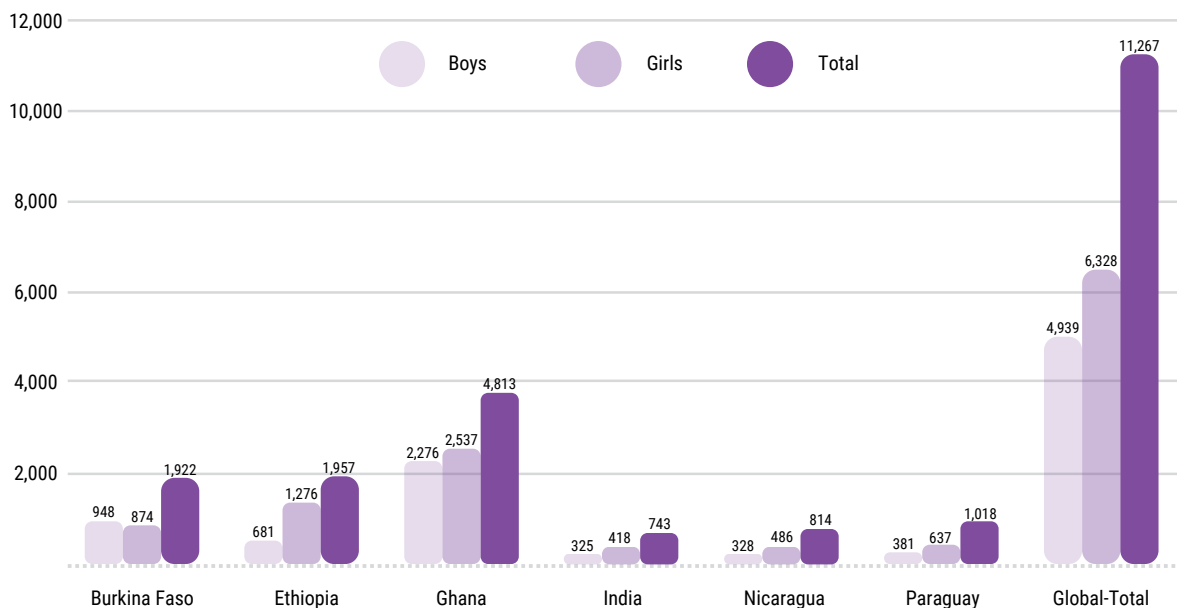
Despite these adversities, we recognize the incredible potential of young people and their role in shaping our collective future, hence, in collaboration with our local partners, we mobilized over 12,000 youth

and community members to engage proactively and responsibly in policies and actions that influence climate and sustainability outcomes.

PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In the 2024 fiscal year, over 11,260 young people across our communities of operation in Ghana, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Paraguay, India, and Nicaragua (Chart 24) were mobilized and took the initiative to advocate against unfair and misguided environmental policies that harm their communities. They also engaged in various eco-friendly community development projects. In addition, these young people have been actively mobilizing saplings and seeds and planting trees in schools and in communities. The tree plantation initiatives have yielded substantial results in improving the groundwater tables, enhancing soil fertility, and boosting biodiversity across the targeted communities.

CHART 24: Distribution of youth and other community members trained on climate change adaptation and mitigation - FY24



Source: Children Believe - Global Annual Data Report, FY24

VII CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE



Young people in a Children Believe-supported classroom, Ghana. Photo: Children Believe Ghana

In FY24, Children Believe continued to consolidate or scale up its Centres of Excellence (CoE) initiatives. These centres in our six operational countries serve as hubs to leverage innovation, share knowledge, promote networking, and advance thought leadership in various key areas of expertise.

Children Believe Centres of Excellence Initiatives:

- Early childhood care and development (co-led by Burkina Faso and Ghana)
- Education and child protection in emergencies (led by Ethiopia)
- Gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion (led by India)
- Gender equality and economic empowerment of youth and women (led by Nicaragua)
- Child rights and participation (led by Paraguay)

Early childhood care and development

The Burkina Faso and Ghana Centres of Excellence (CoE) strengthened the promotion of best practices derived from implementing Learning Through Play¹¹ (LTP) for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). We co-organized child-led dialogues focusing on the contribution of ECD to peace building. Over 120 key players (including 38 women) who were drawn from ministries of education, health, humanitarian action, as well as UN agencies and other INGOs, have attended the platform.

Similarly, we provided financial and technical support

to Ghana - Northern, Upper East, North East, Savanna and Upper West regions' Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) committees. These platforms served as a coordinating and advocacy forum for key government departments and other stakeholders, including the Head of ECE unit at the Ghana Education Service, the Principal Program Officer for ECE at the Ministry of Education, the Regional Education Directors from the five Northern regions, Civil Society Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Academia, and Chiefs from the Five Northern regions.

Education and child protection in emergencies

In Ethiopia, Children Believe, recognizing the disruption of education and the crucial need for social and emotional support in conflict-affected areas, promoted comprehensive child protection services that benefited over 800 children in difficult circumstances, including 322 Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), 49 internally displaced children, 273 children with disabilities, and 155 socially and economically vulnerable children.

over
800
children in difficult circumstances received
comprehensive child protection services in Ethiopia.

Gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion

In India, Children Believe worked to promote best practices on gender equality, intersectionality, and social inclusion, particularly addressing the unique circumstances of marginalized indigenous and caste groups in the lowest strata of society. We worked to foster new positive gender norms to end the practice of child marriage, provide inclusive education, and create a safe and dignified environment for girls and women from marginalized social backgrounds within schools. During this reporting period, our foundational activities in addressing child marriage paved the way for integrating a gender and intersectional lens into Andhra Pradesh's child marriage policy.



Child brides in India face many hardships due to inequality, poverty, and harmful traditional practices. Photo: Children Believe

¹¹ This innovative methodology was first developed by SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health (formerly The Hincks- Dellcrest Centre) and the City of Toronto Public Health Department. It was piloted and implemented by Children Believe since 2014 to deliver early childhood care, education and cognitive development, which are instrumental for healthy brains and lives, and lay the foundation for positive change in the lives of young children.

Gender equality and economic empowerment of youth and women

In Nicaragua, we scaled up capacity-building support to diverse stakeholders, focusing on building entrepreneurship development skills, and the promotion of employment opportunities for young women. We promoted public and private stakeholder engagement through KREZCO- an innovative virtual platform developed to link unemployed youth with

potential employing companies. We also developed and shared nine evidence-based knowledge products in Spanish and English languages to promote continuous learning on youth employability and women's economic empowerment among youth and women business networks in the central American region.

Child rights and participation

In Paraguay, we collaborated with key duty bearers—the Ministry of Childhood and Adolescents, the Ministry of Education, local authorities, and local civil society partners—to promote the nationwide campaign under the motto 'For a Childhood without Violence'. We also actively engaged in addressing mental health challenges, particularly concerning youth suicide rates

in the country. We contributed to the publication of 'Guidance on Socioemotional Risks in Adolescence', which played a facilitative role in promoting mental well-being among adolescents. Additionally, we supported the nationwide training for teachers and caregivers in mental health and child protection services.

VIII STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND HARNESSING POLICY INFLUENCE



Children Believe CEO and board members, with members of the senior program and policy team, Ghana. Photo: Children Believe

During the reporting period, Children Believe consolidated its strategic collaboration and partnerships with national, continental, and global organizations to enhance its reach, augment its expertise, increase its impact, and broaden its spheres of policy influence.

By partnering with like-minded organizations, we maximize our impact, leverage resources, and create sustainable change in the lives of children, families and the communities we serve.

In Burkina Faso, the Children Believe Regional Team was able to foster partnerships with UNICEF and UNOCHA. Particularly, it collaborated with the agencies to strengthen our work on education in emergencies/child protection in humanitarian actions in the Centre-North and Eastern part of the country. We also collaborated with our partner - Africa Child Policy Forum (ACPF), and implemented with the Ministry of Justice to establish Children's Legal Protection Centers (CLPC).

In Ethiopia, Children Believe collaborated with ChildFund International Ethiopia in the implementation of the GROW project, entitled "Reducing Women's

Care Burden and Improving Their Economic Well-being through the Establishment of Community-Based Childcare Centers.” We also responded to the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, where we jointly implemented education in emergency initiatives.

In Ghana, we continued to serve as a member of the Early Childhood Network of Ghana (ECNG), a coalition dedicated to advancing early childhood education and development (ECED). The Network produced a shadow report to the UN on the progress of early Childhood Education in Ghana in relation to the SDG 4.2.



Children Believe's CEO interacts with children in an ECD classroom in Ghana. Photo: Children Believe, Brett Tarver

Children Believe also continued to represent the ChildFund Alliance in the Technical Support Pool of the Joining Forces. We participated in the Canada High Commission Partners' Forum, where we exhibited the work of Children Believe in Ghana. We further facilitated the Ghana visits of the Director General, Canadian Partnerships for Health and Social Development, at Global Affairs Canada; the High Commissioner of the Canada High Commission in Ghana, Children Believe Board Members, Chief Executive Officer and executive/global leadership team members.

In Honduras, Children Believe in collaboration with local partner Sur en Acción, launched its inaugural project entitled: "Promoting the Socio-economic Entrepreneurship of Youth and Women in the Municipality of San Marcos de Colón Man and Biosphere Reserve". This initiative is hoped to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities in the dry corridor.

In India, our partnership with the Tony Blair Institute offered an exceptional opportunity for young people in our operational area to acquire essential skills, connect with global peers, and discuss pressing global issues. This has promoted a cross-cultural understanding, global citizenship, and empowers young individuals to break barriers such as gender and digital divides. The successful pilot testing allowed Children Believe to expand the program to Ghana. This sustained partnership and expansion will benefit more young people, and advance our purpose of creating positive change.

In Mali, Children Believe initiated key steps to establish a formal presence, marking the first step of our extension into West Africa. As the three bordering countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, face common issues endemic to the Central Sahel, Children Believe's regional programming will help to implement cross-country programs that have greater efficiency and impact.

In Nicaragua, Children Believe fostered a strategic partnership with the private sector. Specifically, the Krezco platform for youth employability, cultivated attractive relationships between employers and youth job candidates. Overall, a total of 124 enterprises registered and have shown interest in supporting youth employability and utilizing the Krezco platform.

In Paraguay, our partnership with the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families (TFCF) elevated our exchange of experiences and significantly improved our work on Learning Through Play (LTP) in early childhood education. Similarly, our partnership with Child Fund Korea led to a significant increase in funding for a 3-year Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) initiative aimed at improving educational access and creating violence-free environments for children in Caazapá, Paraguay.

In Canada, in partnership with Child Fund Alliance (CFA) Secretariat, Equipundo and ACEV (A Turkish Based Mother Child Education Foundation), we delivered a highly successful NGO side event to the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) titled 'The Importance of Care in Achieving Gender Equality'. Governments of Burkina Faso, Australia, and Poland sponsored and their Ministerial staff took part in the high-level panel, moderated by the CFA Secretary General. Our Children

Believe Regional Director delivered a speech on our Learning Through Play program impact, and one of our child program participants provided a fantastic video testimonial. The event attracted more than 400 attendees, in-person and on-line.

We completed the Education Up Front (EUF) field research initiative focusing on cross-comparative research on play and early childhood education in schools, which is grounded in our durable programming support for play and early childhood education across the six countries. The research explored the complexity of play meanings and contributed to the ongoing inquiry of play in early child development.

We also continued our engagement with sector networks in Canada, including Cooperation Canada (CC), Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH), and the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group (CIEPWG), in preparation for activities around Canada's Presidency of the G7 in 2025.



Children at play in an ECCD centre in Ghana. Photo: Children Believe

Overall, Children Believe cultivated successful strategic collaborations with diverse stakeholders across different country contexts throughout the year. These collaborations enabled us to maximize our program impact and positioned us to wield greater policy influence at various levels, serving our mission to create a future of hope for children, families and communities.

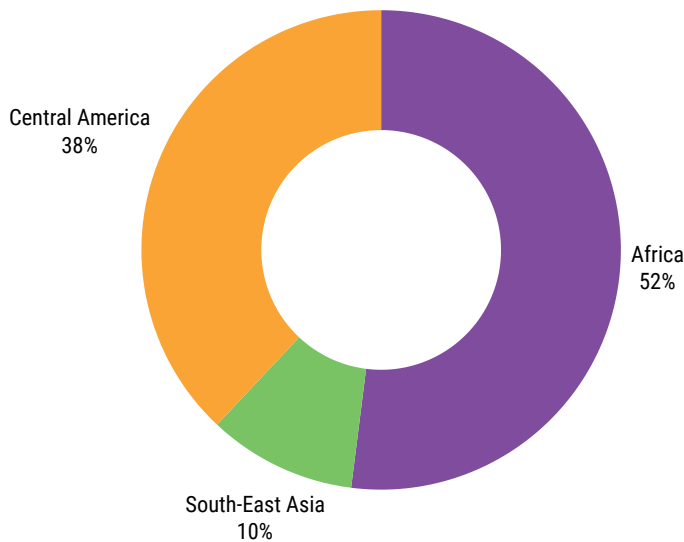
IX PROGRAMS SPENDING AND EFFECTIVENESS

Children Believe promotes child-oriented, family-focused and integrated community led programs. It believes in the power of local-led development, and over 80 percent of its core-program resources in FY24 were channeled through 27 inspiring local civil society partners in over 762 highly vulnerable communities found in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. We directly reached over 1,456,000 children, their families and other

vulnerable members, and effectively invested \$7.20 per direct beneficiary to bring positive impact.

During the reporting period, 52 percent of our program investments were allocated to sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Ghana), followed by 38 percent in poor and unstable communities in central America (Nicaragua and Paraguay) and 10 percent in South-East Asia (India), (Chart 25).

CHART 25: Spending by Program Region in FY24



During the reporting period, **52 percent** of our program investments were allocated to **sub-Saharan Africa** (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Ghana), followed by **38 percent** in **central America** (Nicaragua and Paraguay), and **10 percent** in **South-East Asia** (India).

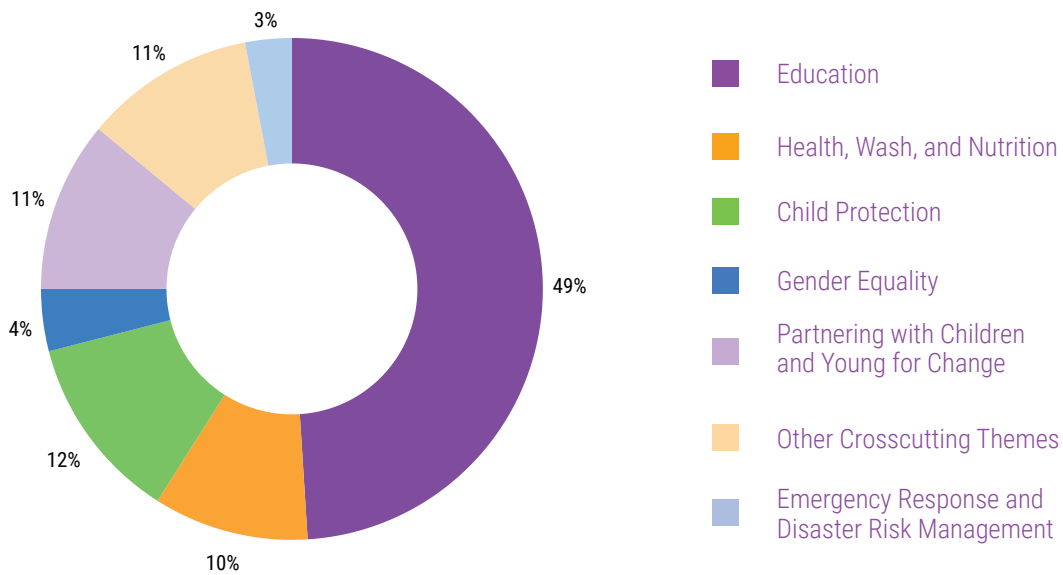
Our education program is Children Believe's largest portfolio, making up 49 percent of its program spending (chart 26). The program investment primarily goes to increase access to quality and inclusive education and skills development. We enabled over 589,700 children, young women, and men to have increased access to preschool and primary education, and vocational and life

management skills development opportunities through an investment of \$8.00 per beneficiary. Next, we promoted child protection programs which accounted for 12 percent of our program spending. In addition, we focused on improving maternal health and nutrition, which accounted for 10 percent of our program spending.

These programs improved the lives of children in targeted communities by establishing community-based child protection systems, providing psychosocial support to children, and working to ensure children get birth certificates amounting in an investment of \$1.80 per participant.

Children Believe has also continued to invest in early childhood education with the conviction that investing in the early years helps to break the cycle of poverty, addresses inequality, and boosts productivity. In FY24, we invested \$17.50 per child in early childhood education, which is estimated to yield a minimum five-fold return on investment¹².

CHART 26: Spending by Program Thematic Focus/Pathways of Change - FY24



¹² Many studies including the World Bank (2023), reveal that every USD\$1 spent on early childhood development interventions can yield a return investment as high as USD\$13.

X LOOKING FORWARD

Throughout the 2024 fiscal year, Children Believe has shaped tangible and meaningful change for children, their families, and their communities. Our integrated child-centred, family-focused community development programs reached over 1.45 million individuals, a testament to the success of our approach, and the dedication of our team. We continue to transform ourselves to remain relevant, resilient, and impactful into the future by being locally rooted, globally balanced, and achieving impactful programs. To this end, we developed our seven-year strategic plan (FY25-31), which guides our renewed commitment to the cause of humanity, and the service of children through doubling our reach, income and recognition. We will expand our operations, and strengthen our new presence in Honduras and Mali.

As we reflect on our progress towards overcoming child poverty, inequality and injustice, we will continue to strive to be more innovative in our program approaches, and ambitious in our goals of reaching more marginalized children including girls, children with disabilities, and those living in fragile contexts.

Going forward we remain committed to:

- deliver programming where the need is greatest, with excellence, while actively expanding our reach in existing and new countries of operation.
- effectively gather and share measures of impact to further demonstrate our leadership in the sector and to our supporters.
- strengthen humanitarian response (Child Protection in Education and Emergencies) through capacity building and the establishment of a community of practice with staff and partners in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Mali.

- enhance our academic, research, and technical partnerships.
- scale up the Centres of Excellence initiatives and utilize them as knowledge hubs for mutual learning with internal and external partners.
- develop strong and effective partnerships within the ChildFund Alliance with joint projects.

We are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead, and look forward to continuing to make a difference in the lives of the children and the communities we serve.



Children outside of their classroom in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver, Children Believe

ANNEX I: Children Believe’s Implementing Partners

Country of operation	Local implementing partners
Burkina Faso	Christian Organization for Relief and Development (formerly AOG)
	Christian Relief and Development Organization (CREDO)
	Evangelical Church of the International Missionary Society (EE/SIM)
	Catholic Organization for Development and Solidarity (OCADES) – FADA, East Region, KOUPELA, Centre-East Region
Ethiopia	Alem Children Support Organization (ACSO)
	Arat Kilo Child Care and Community Development Organization
	Bole Bible Baptist Church Child Care and Community Development (BBBC)
	Emmanuel Development Association (EDA)
	Professional Alliance for Development (PADet)
	Ratson – Women, Youth and Children Development Program
	WKHC – Terepeza Development Association (TDA)
Ghana	AG Care
	Baptist Relief and Development Agency (BREDA)
	Markaz Al Bishara
	Participatory Action for Rural Development Alternatives (PARDA)
	Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre (NORSAAC)
Honduras	Sur en Acción
India	Integrated Rural Community Development Society (IRCDS)
	Rural Organization for Poverty Eradication Services (ROPES)
	Society for People’s Education and Economic Change (SPEECH)
	Social Activities for Rural Development Society (SARDS)
	Child Rights Advocacy Foundation (CRAF)
Mali	Association of Women for the Initiative of Development in Kati (AFIDK)
Nicaragua	Instituto de Promocin Humana Managua-Masaya (INPRHU Managua-Masaya) - Spanish for Institute for Human Promotion Managua-Masaya; and Instituto de Promoción Humana Estelí (INPRHU Estelí) – Spanish for Institute for Human Promotion Estelí
	Centro de Apoyo a Programas y Proyectos (CAPRI) – Spanish for Program and Project Support Centre
	Movimiento infantil “Luis Alfonso Velásquez Flores” (MILAVF) – Spanish for Children’s Movement “Luis Alfonso Velásquez Flores”
	Instituto de Formación Permanente (INSFOP) – Spanish for Institute of Permanent Training
Paraguay	Fundación Alda – Spanish for Alda Foundation
	Organizacion No Gubernamental Crecer – Spanish for Non-Governmental Organization, Crecer
	Global Infancia – Spanish for Global Childhood

ANNEX II: Key Program Result Indicators by Countries of Operation, FY24

EDUCATION	BFA	ETH	GHA	IND	NIC	PAR	Total
# of educational facilities, classrooms, and child-friendly spaces built/restored	13	6	4	8	-	66	97
Built	13	6	3	-	-	-	22
Renovated / Restored	-	-	1	8	-	66	75
# of children receiving educational materials	6,344	8,747	4,513	360	6,251	6,850	33,065
0 to 5	570	1,252	1,455	144	658	1,417	5,496
6 to 14	4,329	4,627	2,518	216	3,682	4,479	19,851
15 to 24	1,445	2,868	540	-	1,911	954	7,718
# of schools who receive teaching aid materials/supplies (books, chalks, charts, maps, audio/video aids, flipcharts)	215	26	18	37	35	64	395
ECCD/E schools	69	10	8	4	29	11	131
Primary schools	145	14	2	33	4	53	251
Secondary schools	1	2	8	-	2	-	13
# of schools received fixed assets (furniture, computers, white /black boards, shelves,)	-	201	20	-	2	28	251
ECCD/E schools	-	59	9	-	-	11	79
Primary schools	-	142	10	-	2	17	171
Secondary schools	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
# of teachers trained in inclusive education and appropriate teaching methodologies, including LTP, and ECD	100	643	355	325	299	559	2,281
Male	53	247	207	29	67	74	677
female	47	396	148	296	232	485	1,604
# of children and youth participated in extra/co-curricular activities	5,319	9,215	5,230	7,872	3,134	10,836	41,606
6 to 14	3,052	4,835	2,485	7,095	2,688	8,760	28,915
15 to 24	2,267	4,380	2,745	777	446	2,076	12,691
# of parents/community members trained in inclusive education and ECCD /E, better parenting, and the importance of education	7,744	70	746	1,650	658	861	11,729
Male	921	20	418	777	93	113	2,342
female	6,823	50	328	873	565	748	9,387
# of youth/women trained in market-focused inclusive technical or vocational training for self/employment or IGA	60,032	502	107	2,186	136	942	63,905
Male	310	157	24	950	61	56	1,558
female	59,722	345	83	1,236	75	886	62,347

# of parents/community members trained on systemic barriers to education	2,448	210	314	684	658	256	4,570
Male	218	94	137	179	93	47	768
female	2,230	116	177	505	565	209	3,802
# of parents/community members, trained to advocate with government and other relevant actors for appropriate educational services for children/youth	97	135	132	4,273	-	952	5,589
Male	54	63	86	1,416	-	303	1,922
female	43	72	46	2,857	-	649	3,667
HEALTH & NUTRITION	BFA	ETH	GHA	IND	NIC	PAR	Total
# of children/community members received nutritional support (food or supplements)	8,397	662	-	100	1,670	4,637	15,466
0 to 5	4,290	276	-	100	251	965	5,882
6 to 14	3,347	243	-	-	812	1,881	6,283
15 to 24	590	20	-	-	88	944	1,642
25 and above	170	123	-	-	519	847	1,659
# of children and parents who participated in healthy eating habits (nutrition) training	4,442	261	51,921	1,881	2,042	2,586	63,133
6 to 14	2,043	5	30,114	1,092	594	1,198	35,046
15 to 24	228	28	11,423	281	396	230	12,586
25 and above	2,171	228	10,384	508	1,052	1,158	15,501
# of people trained on ANC/NC services	1,550	360	1,958	1,443	57	60	5,428
Male	180	30	50	64	-	2	326
female	1,370	330	1,908	1,379	57	58	5,102
# of children trained and practicing in producing vegetables and fruits for consumption or business	1,040	336	-	1,013	-	287	2,676
Male	535	184	-	349	-	153	1,221
female	505	152	-	664	-	134	1,455
# of mother clubs established to support health, nutrition, breastfeeding and other practices	24	124	10	132	1	9	300
# of people including adolescents received reproductive health or HIV/AIDS counselling or training	260	205	4,336	2,892	328	2,296	10,317
male	65	90	1,595	1,065	142	1,068	4,025
female	195	115	2,741	1,827	186	1,228	6,292
# of children receiving annual health care assessment, including growth monitoring	4,215	3,612	11	6,257	7,743	6,098	27,936
0 to 5	718	1,011	-	1,927	1,107	896	5,659
6 to 14	2,620	1,972	11	4,047	4,538	4,398	17,586
15 to 24	877	619	-	283	2,098	804	4,681

# of community members including children, school teachers trained on sanitation, water use and hygiene	1,889	40	-	1,484	772	-	4,185
0 to 5	1,136	-	-	-	472	-	1,608
6 to 14	568	8	-	1,117	196	-	1,889
15 to 24	185	12	-	367	44	-	608
25 and above	-	20	-	-	60	-	80
CHILD RIGHTS & PROTECTION	BFA	ETH	GHA	IND	NIC	PAR	Total
# of CBO members, government office workers or other child protection actors trained on how to advocate for children's rights, protections, participation	2,491	476	2,760	1,098	962	833	8,620
male	900	221	1,233	326	133	144	2,957
female	1,591	255	1,527	772	829	689	5,663
# of community members trained on Climate change mitigation, DRR and EPP including children during emergency	1,922	1,957	4,813	743	814	1,018	11,267
male	948	681	2,276	325	328	381	4,939
female	974	1,276	2,537	418	486	637	6,328
# of children trained in life skills and resilience to protect themselves	1,050	380	3,578	1,661	2,800	2,797	12,266
6 to 14	467	167	1,504	958	2,616	1,634	7,346
15 to 24	583	213	2,074	703	184	1,163	4,920
# Parents or caregivers trained in positive parenting and discipline	5,720	100	590	219	658	984	8,271
male	1,851	57	277	128	93	46	2,452
female	3,869	43	313	91	565	938	5,819
# of community-based groups or committees established and actively providing services for children and women to address abuse, exploitation, trafficking, early marriage or FGM	76	5	16	137	35	-	269
# of participants trained on harmful traditional practices including, early pregnancy, early marriage or female genital mutilation in schools	640	-	353	592	-	-	1,585
6 to 14	320	-	-	434	-	-	754
15 to 24	320	-	353	157	-	-	830
25 and above	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
GENDER EQUALITY	BFA	ETH	GHA	IND	NIC	PAR	Total
# Community members trained about gender and gender-based violence	1,325	2,290	38,664	2,518	592	3,492	48,881
male	371	510	18,027	862	183	1,621	21,574
female	954	1,780	20,637	1,656	409	1,871	27,307

# people trained in women's decision-making, civic participation, and leadership at the school, community, or national level	5,432	410	60	1,344	47	-	7,293
male	688	115	20	-	9	-	832
female	4,744	295	40	1,344	38	-	6,461
# of links created for equal employment opportunities or financial assistance	53	6	5	331	-	-	395
# of women referred for employment or other business start-up opportunities using an existing linkage scheme	5,470	103	22	759	-	-	6,354
PARTNERING WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH FOR CHANGE	BFA	ETH	GHA	IND	NIC	PAR	Total
# of youth groups formed for after-school activities or to promote their active/meaningful participation in decisions that concern them	76	92	71	223	61	41	564
# of children involved in youth groups, clubs, or after-school activities to promote their participation in decisions that concern them	1,468	920	3,300	6,940	3,026	1,091	16,745
6 to 14	962	690	1,545	3,826	2,474	934	10,431
15 to 24	506	230	1,755	3,114	552	157	6,314
# of joint sessions/workshops conducted between adults and children to understand and solve current issues related to children	12	18	18	14	34	87	183
# of participants in joint sessions/workshops conducted between adults and children to understand and solve current issues related to children	4,542	500	1,433	797	1,120	488	8,880
6 to 14	3,148	-	402	71	816	192	4,629
15 to 24	1,354	165	405	583	228	47	2,782
25 and above	40	335	626	143	76	249	1,469



Children Believe works globally to empower children to dream fearlessly, stand up for what they believe in – and be heard. For 60+ years, we've brought together brave young dreamers, caring supporters and partners, and unabashed idealists. Together, we're driven by a common belief: creating access to education – inside and outside of classrooms – is the most powerful tool children can use to change their world.

Children Believe is a member of ChildFund Alliance, a global network of 11 child-focused development organizations working to create opportunities for children and youth, their families and communities.

ChildFund helps nearly 36 million children and their families in more than 70 countries overcome poverty and underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential. We work to end violence against children; provide expertise in emergencies and disasters to ease the harmful impact on children and their communities; and engage children and youth to create lasting change and elevate their voices in decisions that affect their lives.

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