



# Moving Forward Together

NNU L GLOB L PROGR MS ND POLICY REPORT | JULY 2023



# 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. We are grateful for the many opportunities to work with them to spur changes in their communities.

We deeply value our 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, ChildFund Korea, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), ChildFund Taiwan, the Taiwan Alliance in International Development (Taiwan AID), UNICEF and UNOCHA. Our gratitude also goes to our global strategic partners and alliances, including ChildFund Alliance, ChildFund International, Cooperation Canada, EDUCO, WeWorld, and our Pan-African partners, the Africa Child Policy Forum and the Graça Machel Trust.

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Cover: Children Believe empowers young individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to become active and open-minded global citizens and leaders.

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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

# FOREWORD

While the COVID-19 lockdowns have finally subsided, the global impact of the pandemic continues to linger. The fact is, Children Believe works in some of the most challenging places in the world to be a child. And recovery has been slow in these vulnerable areas, further compromised by conflict, climate change and the rising cost of living. These compounded threats create ongoing urgency because they put the lives and futures of children and their families at significant risk.

But as the title of this report so aptly puts, we are **“moving forward together”**, right alongside the communities we serve, despite these extremely challenging and difficult circumstances. As you’ll discover in this 2023 fiscal summary, Children Believe navigated these macro and local issues extremely well. Through the effectiveness of our holistic approach, adaptability of our models and the local “know how” of our partners, we were able to do more for more children, successfully reaching more than 1.3 million people in our areas of operation.

Together, despite violent conflict and forced displacement in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, economic and political instability in Ghana and Nicaragua, deep inequalities in India and domestic violence in Paraguay, we continued to batter away at the many barriers to education and we enabled wider access to an inclusive, quality education. We are proud to say that in our program areas, the opportunities, well-being and safety of children significantly exceeded national averages by almost every measure.

Collectively, we remain steadfast for the most vulnerable children and adolescents, especially girls, as they work to overcome challenges at each and every life stage. From early childhood care and development, to accessing a good primary education followed by technical, vocational or higher education opportunities, our programs support children through their full journey from healthy newborns to productive young adults.



All in all, the 2023 fiscal year was a strong success as we continue to bounce back from the global pandemic. From where I sit as the CEO, across every country office in our organization and through the extended reach of some incredible international and local partnerships, we will continue to build on these results and this momentum in the coming year and beyond. I’m excited to share that we are on the cusp of launching a new multi-year strategy and our bold new ambition promises accelerated reach both where we work now and through two new national offices opening in Mali and Honduras.

Big congratulations to all the dedicated staff at Children Believe for these results and a collective, most heartfelt gratitude to our local partners, our many donors and supporters who are making all of this possible.

Sincerely,

Fred Witteveen  
Chief Executive Officer, Children Believe



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report encompasses Children Believe's 2023 fiscal year (April 2022 to March 2023), during which we directly reached over 1,353,300 children, their families and community members through integrated child-centred, family-focused community development programs. We worked with 27 local partners in 466 targeted community groups across our six countries of operation (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay) to create more inclusive and thriving child-friendly communities.

Children Believe works in some difficult environments, including highly fragile contexts, but we were well-equipped to navigate these challenges and operate effectively to affect positive change. These included communities in Ethiopia affected by conflict and drought, terrorism and displacement in Burkina Faso, vulnerabilities in Nicaragua, an economic crisis in Ghana and domestic violence in Paraguay. We strengthened the capacity of our staff and partners, improved our security preparedness, embraced flexible work modalities, and built our resilience to effectively work 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 and promote gender equality and social inclusion in schools. As a result, our efforts resulted in little to no disparity between female and male student enrolment at the primary level across our communities in every country where we work.**

Additionally, we helped to integrate child safeguarding into teacher training and empowered children and communities to advocate for child rights and demand accountability from duty-bearers. Our inclusive, quality education-focused program interventions benefited over 503,500 boys and girls, teachers, caregivers and parents.

We recognize that in a fast-paced and ever-changing world, the digital divide in education threatens to leave marginalized children and their communities further and further behind. As such, we continue to explore

new technologies and private-sector partnerships to improve educational opportunities, learning outcomes and employment prospects, especially for girls and young women.

Healthy mothers and babies lead to healthy futures for all. In line with our commitment to reduce maternal, and child mortality and to improve nutrition, we supported over 263,800 children, women, and mothers to benefit from improved essential maternal and child health and nutrition services in their communities.

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**We conducted extensive awareness programs and empowered local community members, training more than 337,000 parents, caretakers, and community leaders on children's rights and keeping them safe. These efforts foster favorable attitudes toward the raising of their children, 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 discrimination.**

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We also 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 to participate in key community decision-making platforms to meaningfully engage in dialogues that affect their futures.

We identified and supported five local partners working in disaster-prone and fragile areas in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia helping them develop their capacity to respond to humanitarian crises while promoting peacebuilding and development. We also supported communities in their endeavours to adopt nature-based solutions to climate change.

As we reflect on our FY23 accomplishments, we remain committed to strengthening our local partnership and setting ambitious goals that impact the lives of more children, women and families in FY24.

# INTRODUCTION



Children Believe's associate country director promotes reading with young children in a classroom in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver - Children Believe

This annual report presents the key outcomes and achievements of our global program and policy influence work in the 2023 fiscal year (April 2022 to March 2023). It highlights the program performance results, lessons learned, and challenges encountered in supporting communities to address child poverty, injustice and inequality.

## OUR OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: THE CHALLENGES

During this reporting period, the countries where we operate (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay) experienced some unprecedented moments of fragility and uncertainty. Multiple crises driven by conflict, forced displacement, climate change, and economic turbulence negatively impacted the lives and livelihoods of children, their

families, and communities in some of these places. Table 1 lists our countries of operation based on their fragility index scores.

**TABLE 1:** Ranking of Children Believe's operational countries by Fragility Index Level -2023

COUNTRY	SCORE OF FRAGILITY <sup>1</sup>	RISK OF FRAGILITY- RANK <sup>2</sup>
Ethiopia	100.4	11th
Burkina Faso	94	21st
Nicaragua	77.7	62nd
India	74.1	73rd
Paraguay	63.7	105th
Ghana	62.3	107th

Source: FSI 2023. Adopted from <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The total countries which are covered by the fragility index assessment are 179.

## Ethiopia

Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa with a population of over 120 million people, ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 179 countries for its high risks of fragility context in 2023. The country has suffered consecutive years of drought, prolonged ethnic tensions and armed conflicts, displacement, long-term economic underdevelopment and political marginalization. Close to 24 million people facing food insecurity, disruption of access to social services, clean water, education etc now depend on humanitarian aid, and almost three-quarters of them are women and children. Over 4.5 million people were internally displaced largely due to ethnically targeted killings and dispossession of property. The war in Northern Ethiopia (Afar, Amhara, and Tigray) has claimed over 600,000 lives, damaged about 85 percent of the health and education facilities, and forced over 2.5 million children out of schools.

## Burkina Faso

With a population of 22.1 million people, Burkina Faso ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of 179 countries for its high level of fragility and vulnerability in 2023. Violence and conflict remained high in Burkina Faso; notably, in some of the East, Center-North and Center-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. Additionally, over two million people have been displaced from their homes



Village Savings and Loan (VSL) Group meeting in Burkina Faso. These groups play a crucial role in promoting economic and social empowerment for women in many communities. Photo Children Believe

and more than 4.7 million people (60 percent of whom are children and 23 percent women) are dependent on humanitarian aid for food, shelter, water, medicines, education and other basic social needs.

## Nicaragua

Nicaragua is a country in Central America with 6.5 million inhabitants, of which 35.5% are young people aged 15 to 34 (INIDE, 2022). Due to its location in the Central American Dry Corridor (CSC), it is vulnerable to extreme climate events like droughts, ranking sixth in the world (GERMANWATCH, 2017). This disproportionately affects the most marginalized groups, especially children and women, who suffer from food insecurity, water scarcity and violence. According to UNFPA (2023), 7.5% of Nicaraguan women aged 15 to 49 have experienced intimate partner violence, with a higher prevalence among younger women aged 15 to 19.



Promoting Maternal Health: Raising Awareness for Early Breast Cancer Detection in Paraguay. Photo: Children Believe Paraguay

## India

India stands as one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world with a population of 1.4 billion people. However, there are still challenges particularly when it comes to social and regional inequality. One in four Indians is considered multi-dimensionally poor, with the top 10% of the population earning 20 times as much as the bottom 50%, making India one

of the most unequal countries in the world (UNDP, 2023). Five out of every six poor people belong to disadvantaged social caste groups, which leads to further marginalization of caste groups. The country ranks 123 of 189 in the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2022). India is ranked 123 out of 189 on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2022), highlighting a need for improvement in this area. Furthermore, climate change poses a significant threat to India, with marginalized communities being particularly vulnerable to the impact of frequent extreme weather events.



Children Believe introduced the launch of Catalyzing Transformative Action- A toolkit on gender, intersectionality and social inclusion that fosters equal opportunity regardless of gender or caste. Photo: Children Believe India

## Paraguay

Paraguay has a young population, 56% of its 7.4 million people are under 30 years of age. Although the country has made substantial progress in improving child well-being over the past year, 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.



Adolescents in Paraguay learn about economic empowerment through participation in VSL sessions. Photo: Children Believe

## Ghana

Ghana, with a population of 33 million people, is comparably more stable, ranking 107th out of 179 countries. The country has made significant progress towards building a more democratic multi-party system, with a strong judiciary and freedom of the press. However, the unprecedented economic impact following the COVID-19 pandemic has left Ghana vulnerable to high inflation<sup>3</sup>, increased external financing and growing debt burdens creating a critical funding shortfall for the education system, particularly school infrastructure. Over 1 million primary- through secondary-aged children were out-of-school. Additionally, 33% of young women and 28% of young men were not participating in education, employment, or training. Nearly 28% of children aged 5-17 years were engaged in child labor, of which around 21% worked in hazardous conditions. These issues are deeply intertwined with poverty, lack of access to quality education, inadequate social protection, gender inequality and limited child protection systems (UNICEF, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> According to World Bank (2023), the country's currency Cedi lost over 40 % of its value against the US dollar in 2022. Growth is expected to slow further to 1.6 % in 2023 and remain muted in 2024, before returning toward its potential.

# DISMANTLING THE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION



School children reading in India. Children Believe continues to help more children access education. Photo: Children Believe

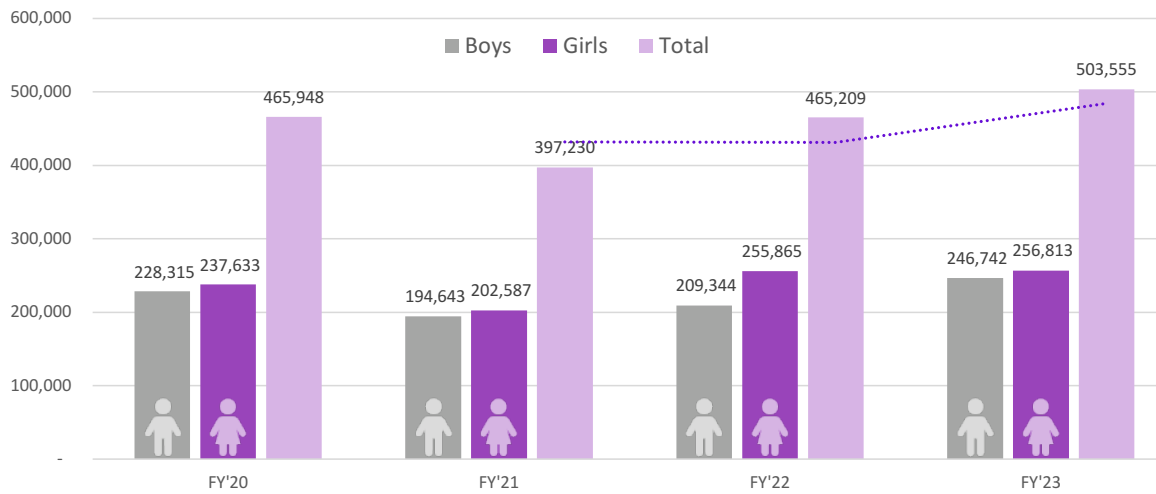
At Children Believe, we believe that education is a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for children to reach their potential. For children and young people to fully unlock opportunities for their futures, it is important for them to be supported throughout their young lives.

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 fiscal year 2023, we were able to help 503,555 children, young women, and men gain access to pre-school, primary education, vocational and life management skills. This achievement builds on our determined efforts in FY22 to support children's education throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftershocks which had forced at least 15% (69,000) of young students in and around our operational areas out of school in FY21.

**CHART 1:** Access to inclusive and quality education for boys and girls in Children Believe operational areas: FY20-23 trends analysis



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

## 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. The sensitive periods during early childhood are particularly critical for laying the foundation for cognitive, emotional, and social development.

**We invested significantly in early years' education because we believe that creating a solid foundation at an early age (3-5 years old) provides children with the greatest advantage and contributes significantly to their social skills and emotional development later in life.**



Children play with toys as a part of an early childhood development program at an ECD Centre in Ethiopia. Photo: Philip Maher

Additionally, we strengthened 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.

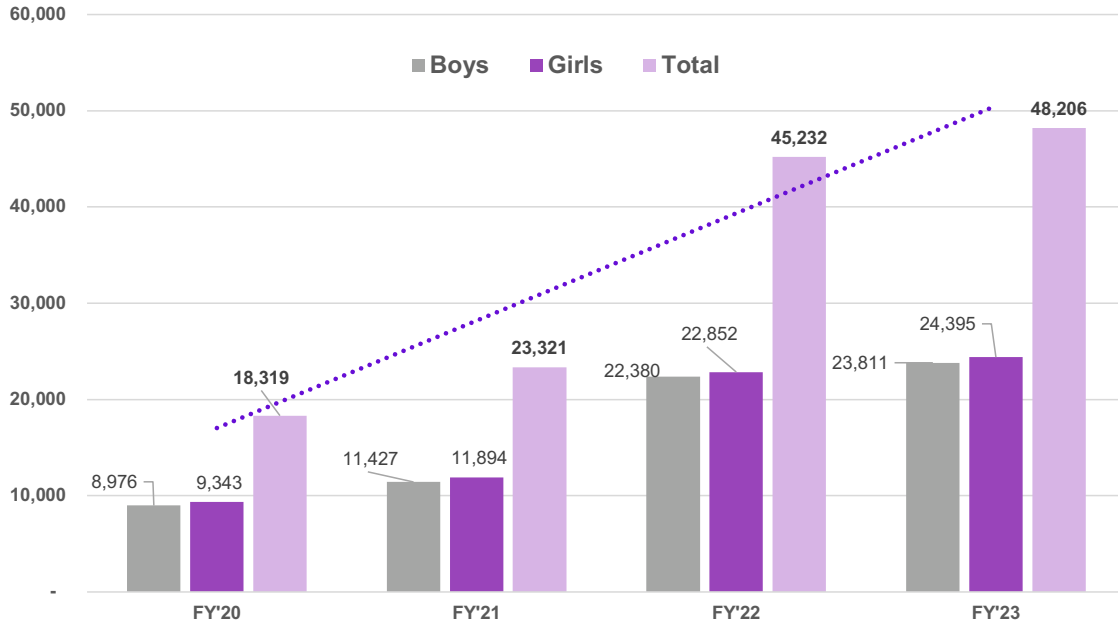
Our support for early childhood care and development (ECCD) is grounded in our commitment to uphold the right of every child to thrive and to promote social justice. We focus on supporting children and parents in vulnerable situations or those suffering systemic discrimination. Our ECCD strategy utilizes a holistic approach that includes learning through play training, positive parenting, and maternal and child well-being support. During this past year, we continued to build, renovate and equip early childhood education centers, promote child-friendly learning centres, offer high-quality training for preschool teachers, and strengthen curriculum development and support early childhood educational governance systems.

### PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Chart 2 shows that, in FY23, Children Believe and our partners collaborated to renovate, equip or construct 356 ECCD centres across our countries of operations which helped to provide early childhood development opportunities for 48,206 children (including 24,395 girls). The number of children impacted by our

support increased 2.6-fold in FY23 compared to when we started in FY 20, demonstrating our dedication to providing support for ECCD.

**CHART 2:** Number of boys and girls under age 5 with access to early childhood care and development in Children Believe-supported communities by fiscal year (2020-2023)

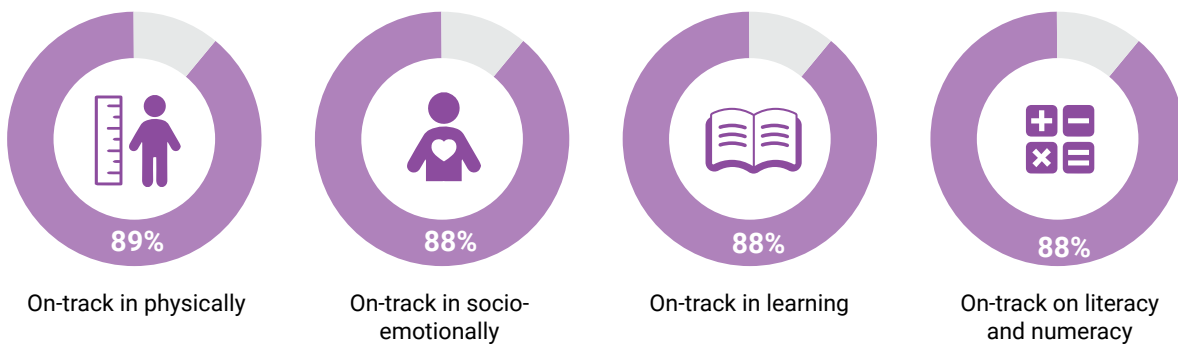


Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

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. Over the past four years, 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

health care, early care and education, and family support as part of a holistic approach to child well-being. Chart 3 illustrates these positive outcomes. Approximately 89 percent of the children enrolled in the ECCD centres showed appropriate progress in their physical development, while 88 percent displayed positive socio-emotional development and proficiency in literacy and numeracy skills.

**CHART 3:** Developmental performance of children under age 5 who attended early childhood care and development centres supported by Children Believe- FY23



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

## 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 disease and exploitation. 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<sup>4</sup>.



Girls learning in a school supported by Children Believe in Nicaragua. Photo: Juris Kornet

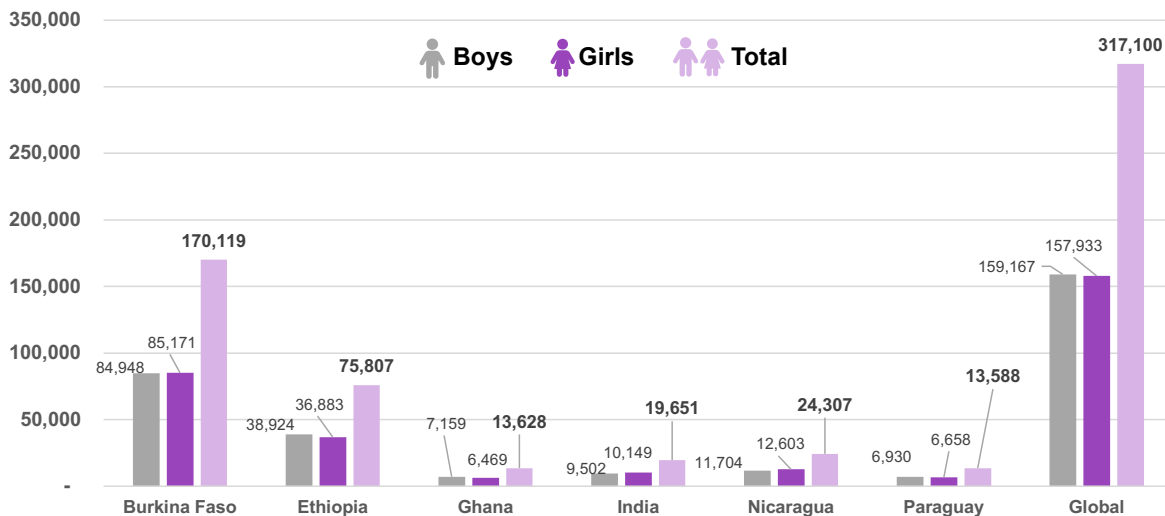
Children Believe and our implementing partners are committed to promoting inclusive education by identifying and dismantling discriminatory barriers. Our approach to inclusion is based on equity, recognizing that each child has unique needs and requires different types of support and resources to realize their education rights. In FY23, we worked with education departments to build the capacity of teachers, integrate child safeguarding into teachers' 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.

We also promote 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.

As shown in Chart 4, a total of 317,100 students (157,933 girls) were enrolled in 22,944 Children Believe-supported primary schools during the 2022/23 academic year.

**CHART 4:** Enrolment in primary school education for girls and boys in Children Believe- supported communities, disaggregated by country- FY22/23

Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023



<sup>4</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/>

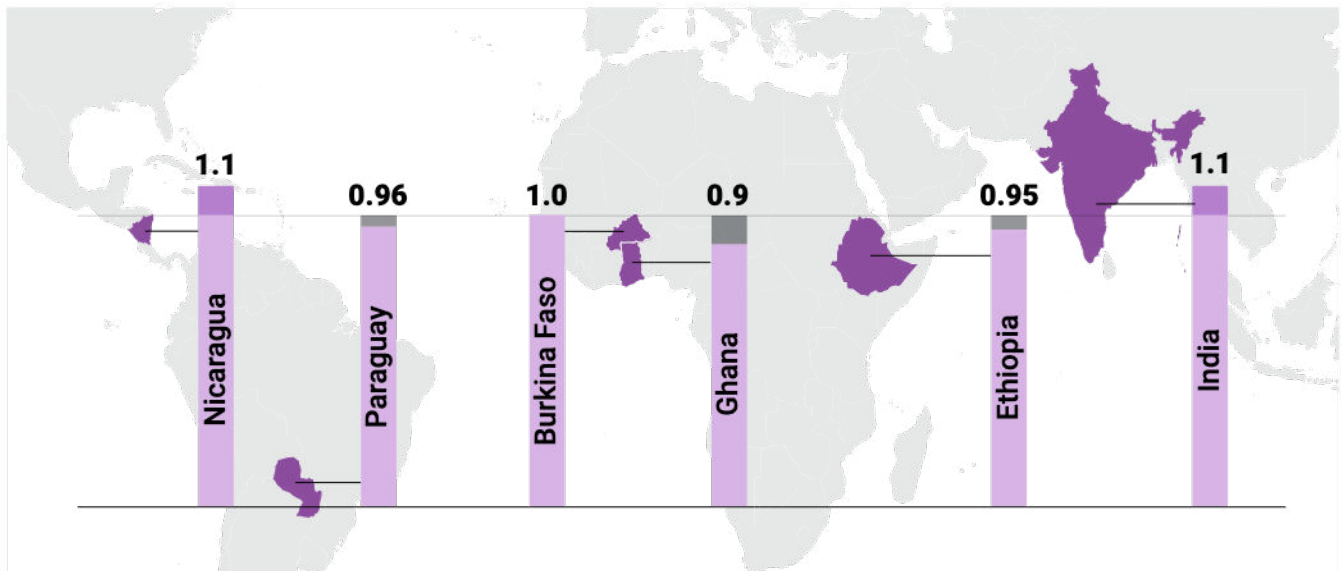


In FY23, Children Believe and our partners worked actively to close the gap in gender parity in the communities where our programs are implemented. This gap reflects the ratio of boys to girls enrolled at the primary school level. Our efforts yielded positive outcomes, enhancing the attendance of girls in schools. This year, gender parity at the primary education level across Children Believe’s operational areas showed favorable outcomes for girls in Nicaragua and India, achieving a ratio of 1.1 (girl to boy). While in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Paraguay, the ratios leaned slightly higher in favor of boys, with ratios of 0.95, 0.90, and 0.96, respectively (Chart 5).

## PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In addition, we supported the establishment of 180 Creative Learning Centres (CLCs) in India. These centres play key roles in creating supportive learning environments and expanding the reach of after-school programs for children, particularly those from marginalized tribal communities. The CLCs focused on building children’s confidence and motivation for education. A total of 4,354 children (2,220 girls), aged 6-14 years old, from many tribal communities were enrolled in the CLCs.

**CHART 5:** Gender parity index for primary school enrolment in Children Believe-supported communities, disaggregated by country<sup>5</sup>



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY 2023

## 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

<sup>5</sup> Gender parity index for primary schools’ enrolment is calculated based on primary source.

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 it enhances their overall well-being. We work with 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.

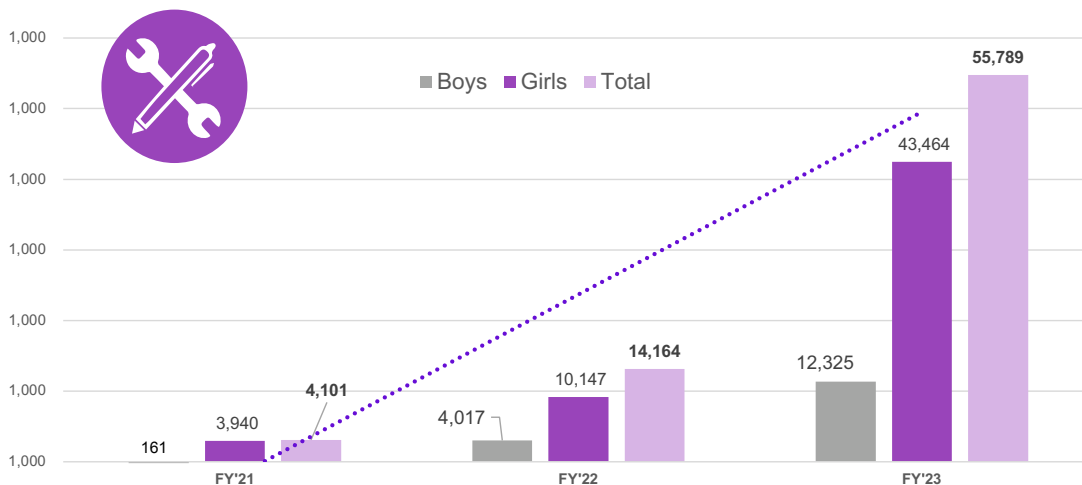
**PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS**

In this reporting period, we collaborated with local and international organizations, and the technical departments of host governments to empower to 55,789 young people (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 for self-employment (Chart 6).



A young woman trained by Children Believe to install solar panels in Burkina Faso. Vocational training equips adolescents and young adults with the skills required to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and secure stable jobs. Photo: Children Believe Burkina Faso

**CHART 6:** Number of young women and men who received vocational/life skills training and had access to employment opportunities, disaggregated by year (FY 2021-2023)



Our dedication and efforts to promote vocational and life management skills (including financial literacy, business communication, teamwork and problem-solving) to enhance the employability of young women and men (15-24 years old) increased significantly, growing 13.5 times over the past three years from 4,101 individuals trained in FY 21 to 55,789 in FY23 (Chart 6).

A noteworthy achievement is our gender-transformative approach to skills development and economic opportunities in Nicaragua through the GAC-funded EMPUJE project.

The EMPUJE project worked to address the challenge of limited access to skills development, employment opportunities, and financial services, particularly for women and girls in Nicaragua, bringing together players from the private, government, and public sectors, 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 approach and provided access to credit for income-generating activities to disadvantaged communities and economically active poor who were excluded from the conventional banking system.

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.

## BOX 1

### Weaving for Greater Hope

By Children Believe Burkina Faso

The story of Adjaratou's (not real name) is one of strength and hope amidst adversity. Originally from Kougrou village, Arbinda in Burkina Faso, 15-year-old Adjaratou and her family fled their village due to the ongoing conflict between the state and non-state armed groups. As they ran to find safety, Adjaratou and her two siblings got lost in the bush and were separated from their parents for three agonizing days. When they eventually reunited with their parents, they were forced to return to their village, by the insurgent group. Her family tried to run away a second time, but they were captured, detained and forcibly returned. Undeterred in their determination, on their third attempt, Adjaratou and her family managed to escape, leaving behind their belongings, most of which had already been stolen by looters.



Adjaratou benefiting from vocational training in one of Children Believe's emergency in emergencies projects funded by UNICEF. Photo: Children Believe

According to [Human Rights Watch](#) (2023), escalating attacks on civilians by armed groups intensified the humanitarian crisis, resulting in nearly 2 million internally displaced people.

When Adjaratou and her family finally arrived in Kaya, a host community in central Burkina Faso, they found support from Children Believe and local partners who assist internally displaced individuals.

According to Adjaratou,

“

Children Believe helped me and made a significant difference in my life. I was lucky to be selected for vocational training. In just a few months, I have learned a lot about weaving, I am happy I can now weave, it's a job that requires patience and attention.”

Weaving is deeply rooted in Burkina Faso's culture. Cotton production, often referred to as “white gold,” provides employment for about 20% of the population and has contributed to the country's rich culture. Adjaratou, like many others, who benefit from our vocational training acquire skills that increase their employment prospects. She continues to hone her craft as a weaver, with the hope of establishing her own business in the near future. While she understands the path ahead requires time, her determination remains unshaken, and she faces the future with unwavering hope.

# IMPROVING MATERNAL, CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION



Mothers pictured with their children receiving counselling from the health worker during immunization at a health facility in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver - 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 1000 days<sup>6</sup> 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 rise out of poverty. Providing adequate nutrition and healthcare during the 1000-day window is vital. It

helps the child grow, stay well, and have a better future, benefiting not only the child but also their families and communities.

In FY23, our focus was on increasing access to and improving the delivery of essential maternal and child healthcare services to improve 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.

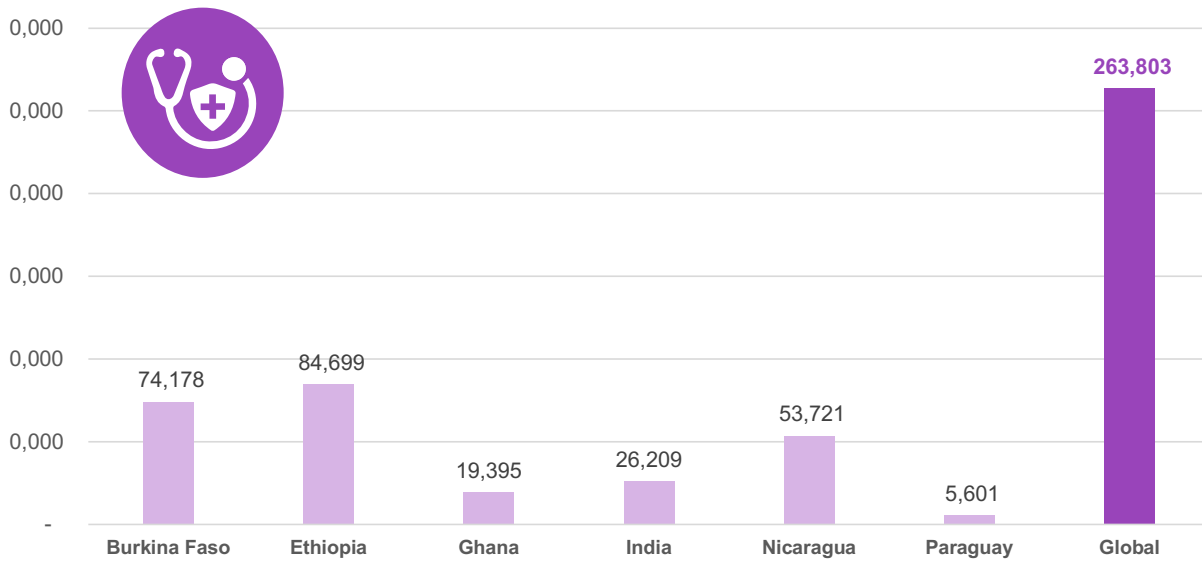
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**Across our implementation communities, we reached a total of 263, 803 people directly, most of whom were pregnant women, lactating mothers, newborn children, and infants, enabling them access to essential maternity and basic healthcare services.**

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<sup>6</sup> 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)

**CHART 7:** Distribution of pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children served by improved health care services in Children Believe operational communities by country-FY23



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

## A) Improved delivery and use of essential maternal and child health care 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

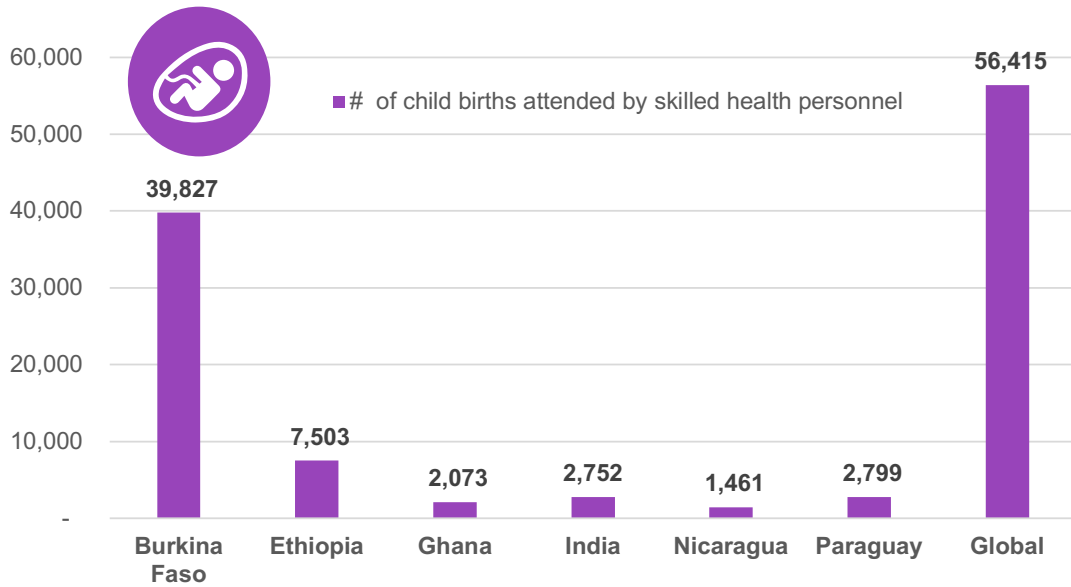
In this reporting period, Children Believe renovated and equipped 11 existing health facilities (4 in Ethiopia and 7 in Ghana) in underserved areas with medicines and essential equipment to strengthen their capacities to deliver regular health services. We also built the capacity of 635 healthcare workers via training and orientations, equipping them to provide quality preventative and/or curative healthcare services in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, and Nicaragua.

As a result of our efforts, the number of childbirths attended by trained health workers across our operational communities reached 56,415 in FY23 (See Chart 8). Notably, the highest numbers of skilled childbirth attendance were recorded in Burkina Faso (39,827), followed by Ethiopia (7,503), and Paraguay (2,799).



A Newborn receives essential newborn care from health care workers in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver - Children Believe

**CHART 8:** Number of childbirths attended by skilled health personnel-FY23

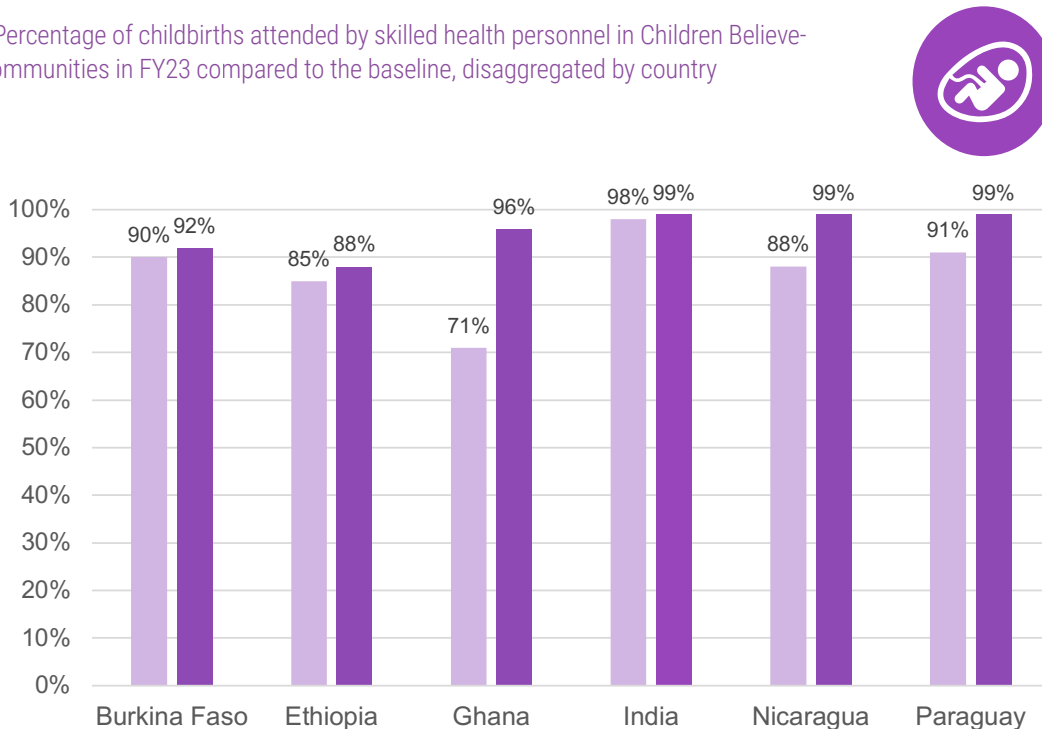


Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

We conducted a baseline assessment in 2019 to understand the maternal and child landscape before we commenced our interventions. The impact of our support on community-based healthcare services is evident from Chart 9, which indicates that 99% of childbirths in our supported areas were attended by skilled personnel in India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay

respectively, surpassing their respective baseline values of 98%, 88%, and 91%. Additionally, our health work in Northern Ghana, showed significant improvement, with 96% of childbirths attended by skilled personnel in FY23 compared to 71% recorded during the baseline in 2019.

**CHART 9:** Percentage of childbirths attended by skilled health personnel in Children Believe-supported communities in FY23 compared to the baseline, disaggregated by country



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

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



Pregnant women being accessed by a skilled birth attendant. Photo: Children Believe

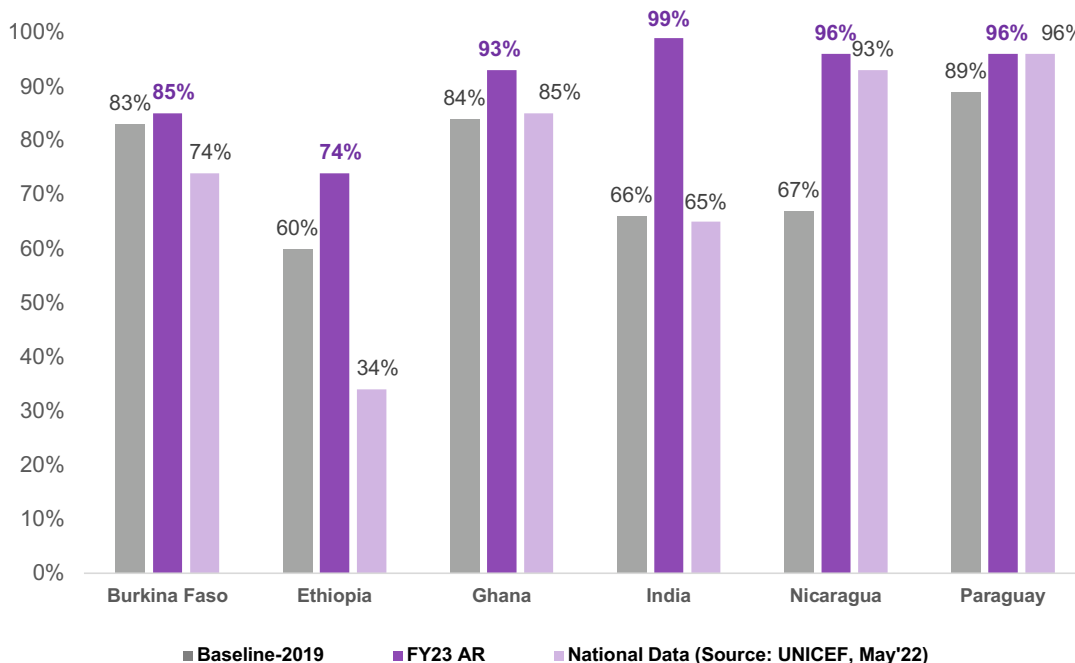
The proportion of women who have benefited from reproductive health and postpartum care within Children Believe’s operational communities underscores the effectiveness of our local partners.

As shown in Chart 10, in FY23, 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, especially in India when compared to the national average of 65 percent and the baseline of 66 percent in 2019 demonstrates over 20% increase in the number of women who have accessed reproductive health and postpartum care services, which in turn contributes to reductions in mortality of women and babies.

In Ethiopia, our contributions were equally significant, with 74 percent of women in our operational communities receiving reproductive health and postpartum care in FY23, compared to the national average of 34 percent and the 60 percent baseline in 2019. Likewise, In Ghana, our efforts resulted in a 93 percent outcome in FY23 compared to the national average of 85 percent and a baseline of 84 percent in 2019.

The percentage of women accessing postpartum care in Burkina Faso also showed an upward trend, with our contribution helping to reach 85 percent in FY23 against a national average of 74 percent and a baseline of 83 percent in 2019.

**CHART 10:** Percentage of Women who received reproductive health- and postpartum care in Children Believe-supported communities in FY23, compared to baseline (2019) and national averages, disaggregated by country.



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

## B) 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 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.

### PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In the reporting period, Children Believe sensitized and trained mothers, caregivers, and children on adequate nutrition. Topics covered include nutritious meal content, promoting balanced diets with fruits and vegetables, healthy eating routines and good hygiene practices for food handlers.

In Ethiopia, working through our local partners we provided practical training to pregnant women and lactating mothers on healthy eating habits and preparation of nutritious meals using locally available and affordable food items. We also supported school-feeding initiatives in collaboration with key stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education. To promote dietary diversity and food security, we supported the establishment of small farms and gardens within school premises. This initiative offered students a diverse range of food, helped generate income for schools through the sale of excess harvests, and raised awareness about the importance of sustainable food practices.

Similarly, in India, Children Believe through our implementing partners, launched the Nutri Gardens initiative, a cost-effective approach to cultivating nutrient-rich crops for families or community consumption, to promote good health and well-being. This initiative effectively targeted families dealing with under-nutrition, enabling them to cultivate

a variety of fruits and vegetables for inclusion in their daily diet. Additionally, mothers were guided in adopting and instilling healthier eating habits in their children from an early age.

In Paraguay, we extended support to families with malnourished children by providing food kits, alongside conducting informative sessions on cultivating healthy food habits and cooking balanced diets.



Women tending their crops in their farm. To promote dietary diversity and food security Children Believe through her partners supported the establishment of small farms in communities.  
Photo: Children Believe



## BOX 2

# The Case of Nutri Garden Initiative in Shuddhakurava Thanda

By Children Believe India

The Nutri Garden initiative, implemented by Children Believe partner SARDS across 40 Anganwadis in the remote area of Prakasam district in India has brought about positive change for pregnant women and children.

To promote nutritional well-being, the initiative provided nutritious green and vegetable seeds to the community, which were planted under the guidance of Anganwadi teachers. The initiative has had a significant impact by incorporating vegetables grown into recipes at the Anganwadi Centers, leading to improvements in their health.

“**The Nutri Garden initiative has transformed our lives. We can now access fresh vegetables that improve our health during pregnancy and lactation,**”

says Rani, a pregnant woman in the community.

*“Since the implementation of the Nutri Garden initiative, we have observed positive changes in the health of pregnant women and infants while reducing the risk of disease. They are healthier and more energetic,”* notes Priya, an Anganwadi teacher who has observed improved pregnancies and child development through the inclusion of nutritious vegetables in meals. Community members have also benefitted from a healthier diet, with a shift toward prioritizing fresh and healthy vegetables in their daily meals. *“Thanks to the Nutri Garden initiative, we have learned the importance of including nutritious vegetables in our meals. Our children*

*are growing healthier and stronger,”* shares Suresh, a community member.



Children and teacher in their school Nutri-Garden.  
Photo: Philip Maher

“**The Nutri Garden initiative has united our community in the pursuit of better health. We are grateful for the support and positive changes it has brought,**”

states Rajesh, a community leader. *“The Nutri Garden initiative has successfully addressed the nutritional needs of pregnant women and children in Shuddhakurava thanda. It has brought about positive changes and empowered the community by providing access to nutritious vegetables and raising awareness about optimal nutrition.”*

## Strengthening Humanitarian Response Capacities

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.

In FY23 we worked with children living through the humanitarian crises in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia to help them address their urgent need for educational support. In Burkina Faso, with support from UNICEF, we facilitated teacher training in education in emergencies, particularly on safe schools and psychosocial care to ensure children's education continues. Similarly, in Ethiopia, with support from the International Rescue Committee and the Lego Foundation, we provided access to education for about 13,800 children affected by conflict in the Amhara region.

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, climate disasters. Complex problems require complex solution.

We believe that the most effective approach in these difficult environments can be found at the intersection

of humanitarian, development, and peace-building efforts. This holistic approach is known as the **triple nexus**.

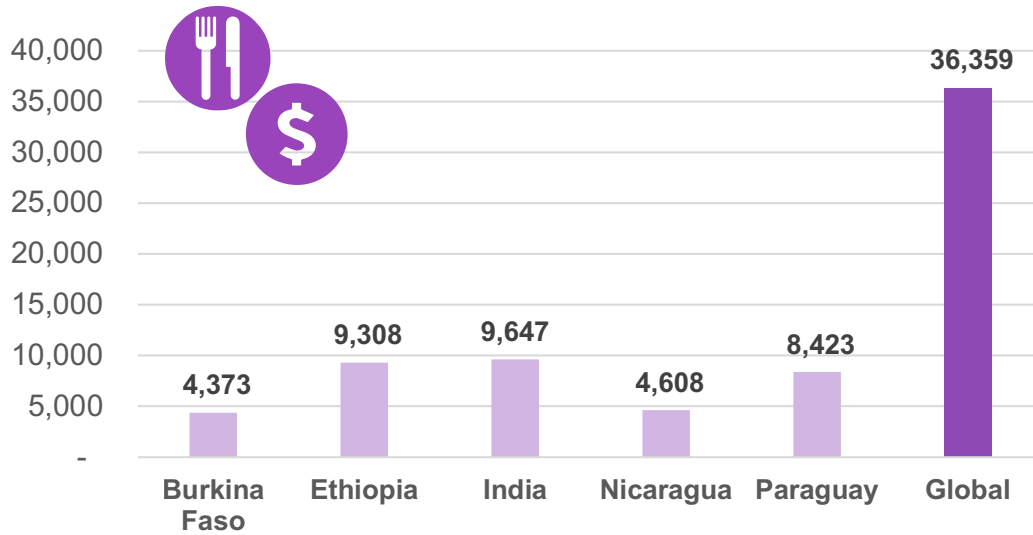
Children Believe has prioritized the training of country office humanitarian staff and five local partners from Burkina Faso and Ethiopia on the 'Triple Nexus' approach in humanitarian actions. Twenty local staff are now fully trained on this crisis response approach as part of the "new way of working" (NWOW) to improve aid effectiveness, humanitarian responses, and peace-building initiatives in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Additionally, we have worked with local partners across our operational countries to provide urgently needed food assistance, such as rice, wheat flour, oil, pasta, and other supplementary food supporting more than 36,359 people, (Chart 11).



Children Believe Burkina-Faso staff during the training on the Triple Nexus approach to humanitarian action. Photo: Children Believe

**CHART 11:** Number of people who benefited from emergency food, child nutritional support or cash for relief assistance in Children Believe-supported communities, disaggregated by country- FY23.



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY 2023

The triple Nexus approach also depends on close collaboration. Children Believe works with humanitarian, development, and peace actors to collaboratively address immediate needs while simultaneously reducing risks and vulnerabilities, ultimately aiming to end the cycle of need and improving livelihoods and education.

Children Believe partnered with Health Partners International of Canada, International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Convoy of Hope to provide medicines and medical supplies to vulnerable communities in our operational countries and other non-Children Believe operational countries affected by emergencies.

**We provided C\$5.6 million worth of medicines and medical supplies to Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Nicaragua and Nigeria.**

The medical supplies were provided to primary health care and specialized areas covering palliative care, preventive health and emergency healthcare needs, from which about 1.3 million emergency-affected and internally displaced persons benefited.

# PROTECTING CHILDREN AND WOMEN FROM VIOLENCE



Every child has a right to safety and access to safe spaces that prevent harm and contribute to their overall well-being and development.  
Photo: Children Believe Nicaragua

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 violence,<sup>7</sup> 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.

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

<sup>7</sup> 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](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Sexual_and_gender-based_violence.pdf)

children into our sponsorship program, enabling them to access quality and inclusive education, basic healthcare services and livelihood support.

In FY23, we activated and strengthened 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, early pregnancy, and sexual and labour exploitation were often perpetrated by family members or individuals known to the families.

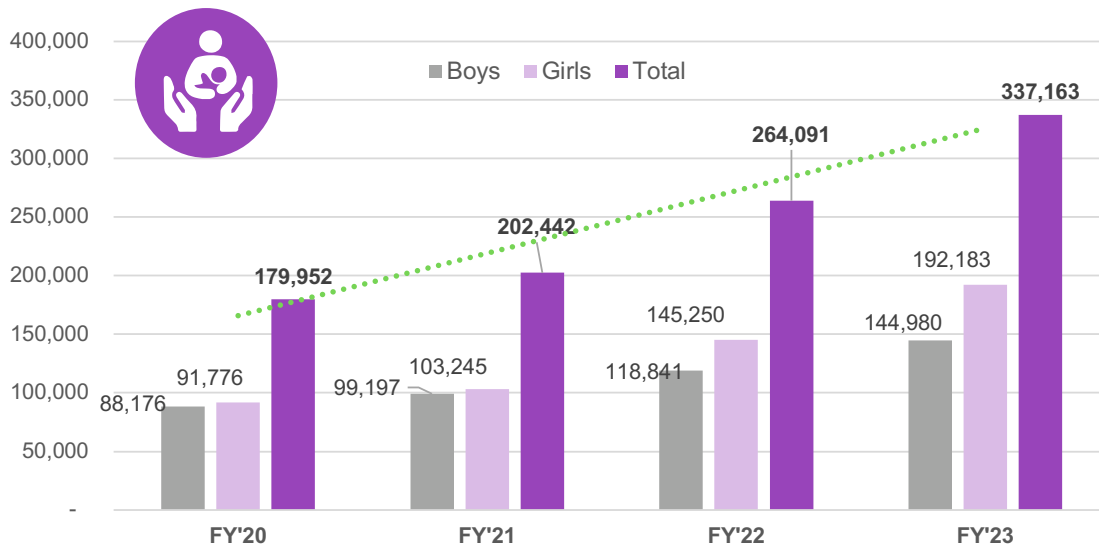
We implemented community education programs on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention to equip

community leaders, caregivers, and children to prevent and report GBV.

### PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

In FY23, over 337,000 children, youth, women, parents, and duty-bearers from 466 community groups across six countries of operation benefited from our work on the prevention of various forms of violence, neglect and abuse. Between FY'20 and FY23 there has been a significant increase in the number of people who have directly benefited from our protection efforts. (Chart 12)

**CHART 12:** Number of children, youth, women and parents who directly benefited from work on the protection of children and women from violence in CB communities-FY20-23 trend analysis



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

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.”*



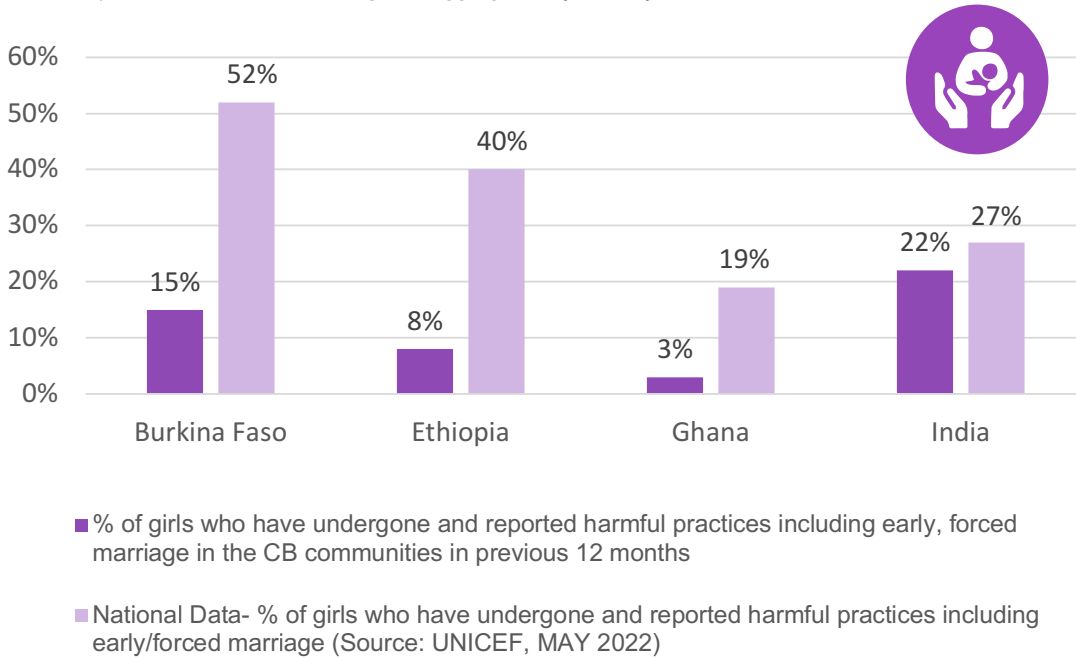
Children Believe collaborated with Tiruvallur District Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department to conduct a Workshop on ending child marriage in India. Photo: Children Believe

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 13, 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, 15 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 outcome in our communities against 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 (22 percent against a 27 percent national average).

**CHART 13:** Percentage of girls who have experienced and reported harmful practices in FY23 in Children Believe-supported communities compared to the national average, disaggregated by country.



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

We worked with stakeholders in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Ghana, and our strategic Pan-African partners, including the Africa Child Policy Forum and the Graça Machel Trust, 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.

Through our collective efforts, we have advanced the enforcement of these essential instruments, thereby advancing the protection of rights and well-being in these regions.

### BOX 3

## Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection Support to Medina

By Children Believe Ethiopia

In the Oromia Region, Ethiopia, where Children Believe partner BBBCC implements child rights programmes, 6-year-old Medina Gemedo was the victim of rape, assaulted by a close male relative.

After the horrific incident, she was found under a tree by Jama Abdosh in excruciating pain, crying. Jama, a member of the district child rights committee (CRC) rushed Medina to the nearby Arsi Negele Hospital, built by Children Believe and managed by the District Health Department, for her to receive the needed medical care and counselling. Taking immediate action, Jama, along with the chairperson of the district's CRC, Jalato, officially reported the incident to both the district police office and the Women, Children, and Social Affairs Office. In response, the police took the perpetrator into custody and initiated legal proceedings against him. The district Child Rights Committee and the Children Believe's Partner provided financial, medical and logistic support to Medina.

As a result, the rapist was sentenced to seven years in prison, providing Medina and her family with some consolation that justice was served thanks to the support they received from



The district Child rights Committee (CRC) having a meeting with their Chairperson Jalato. Photo: Children Believe

the members of their district child protection administrative bodies.

Children Believe and its partners continue to support community-based protection mechanisms to safeguard the rights of women and children in their communities.

## Promoting Birth Registration Practices

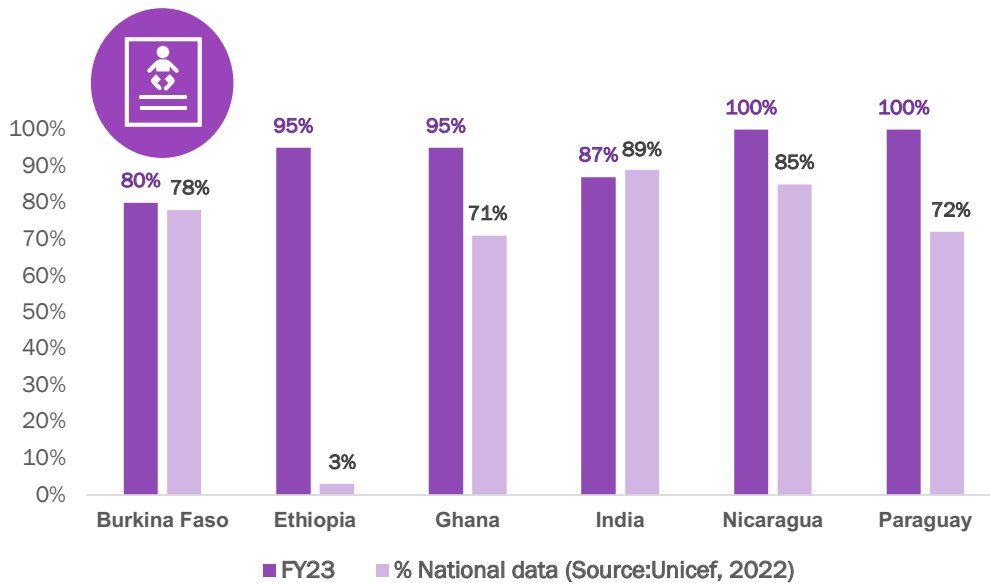
Children Believe and its partners remain committed to upholding the Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically Article 7.1, which emphasizes the importance of registering a child immediately after birth and ensuring their right to a name, nationality, and care by their parents. We understand 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 significance. While the birth of a child is traditionally celebrated with joyous celebration and religious customs, formal registration of births is not commonly practiced.

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.

**CHART 14:** Percentages of boys and girls under age 5 whose birth are registered with relevant authority- CB operational communities' vs national average- FY23



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

Chart 14 shows remarkable improvement in the percentage of childbirth registration in our operational communities in Ethiopia, with 95 percent of children under the age of 5 are now registered compared to the national average of only 3 percent during FY23.

Similarly, in Ghana, 95 percent of children under 5 were registered compared to the national average of 71 percent. These results underscore the importance of our ongoing efforts and the need to scale up these best practices.

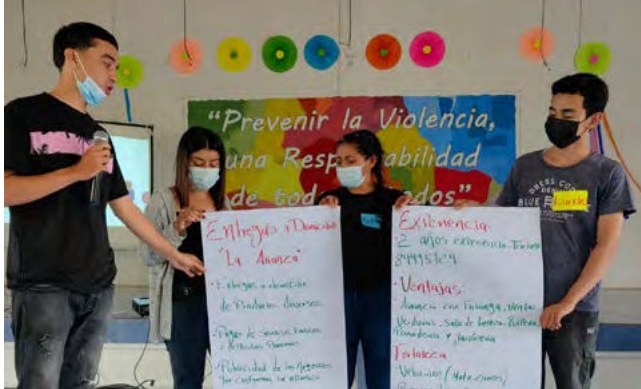
## Preventing Irregular Child Migration

Child migration refers to the movement of young people between the ages of three and 18 to another country or region, with or without their parents or a legal guardian. Irregular child migration is a complex global issue that affects the rights and well-being of children. It is one of the most pressing child-rights issues in Burkina Faso and Nicaragua. Driven by factors like domestic abuse, gang violence,

joblessness, climate change, and poverty, children and families are compelled to leave their homes and communities in pursuit of a better life. However, in their quest to improve their conditions, young migrants in particular face the risk of being exposed to trafficking, exploitation, kidnapping, violence and even death in their attempts to illegally cross international borders.



In FY23, Children Believe in Nicaragua worked with partners to protect the rights and safety of at-risk children. Our interventions included strengthening partnerships and improving the capacity of municipalities and city administrations to design and implement effective child protection systems and promote actions to prevent irregular migration.



Adolescents participating in child protection clubs in Nicaragua. Photo: Children Believe

Recognizing the power of knowledge, we equipped Youth associations with information about the negative consequences of irregular migration and the risks of child trafficking.

Also, to improve the conditions for youth locally and deter them from migrating, we supported them to increase their employment prospects by providing skills development training to over 8,200 young people so they could find jobs or start small businesses.

We facilitated linkages and strengthened opportunities for employment in their home communities. Additionally, we adopted digital technology platforms/services and increased the use of e-learning/employment infrastructures to sustain skills development.

We remain committed to implementing activities that deter at-risk children from irregular immigration. By imparting knowledge, nurturing skills, and creating employment opportunities, we nurture prosperity within the communities we serve.



Adolescents and Youths in Paraguay have the opportunity to participate in Youth Empowerment Forums to learn relevant skills to thrive. Photo: Children Believe

## 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.

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 FY23, with the involvement of 27 local CSOs across 466 communities in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay, 40,266 sponsored children and families benefited from our sponsorship program (Table 2), particularly those in greatest need of child-centred and family-focused community development interventions.

**TABLE 2:** Number of enrolled sponsored children who benefited from Children Believe’s child-focused, holistic community-based development programs, disaggregated by country

COUNTRY	ENROLLED SPONSORED CHILDREN
Burkina Faso	5,821
Ethiopia	7,183
Ghana	7,930
India	4,812
Nicaragua	7,592
Paraguay	6,928
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,266</b>

Source: Children Believe – Global Annual Data Report (as of March 31, 2023)

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.

By implementing these various programs and measures, we have positively impacted the lives of 21,095 boys and girls, helping them to overcome challenges and promoting their overall protection.

## WEB Safe and Wise Campaign: Online Safety for Children

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, Nicaragua, and Paraguay, Children Believe actively contributed to the “Web Safe and Wise” awareness campaign, recognizing the significance of online safety. In collaboration with other offices, they developed an impactful video aimed at educating individuals about safe online practices. The video was strategically released and promoted on multiple social media platforms to maximize its reach and impact, particularly on Online Safety Day. By leveraging the power of digital media, we engaged a wide range of

children and youth and fostered awareness about the importance of staying safe and wise while navigating the digital landscape benefitting 1,604 participants.



As a member of the ChildFund alliance, we are committed to ensuring that all children have a right to be safe online. Photo: Children Believe Nicaragua

# GENDER EQUALITY



Women holding hands in solidarity in India. 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 rights are respected, women are healthier, better educated and better paid, which has a ripple effect. Children thrive and so do communities, organizations, and societies, creating lasting benefits 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 to identify and address the root causes of gender inequality in the local context.**

We address 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 or address 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:

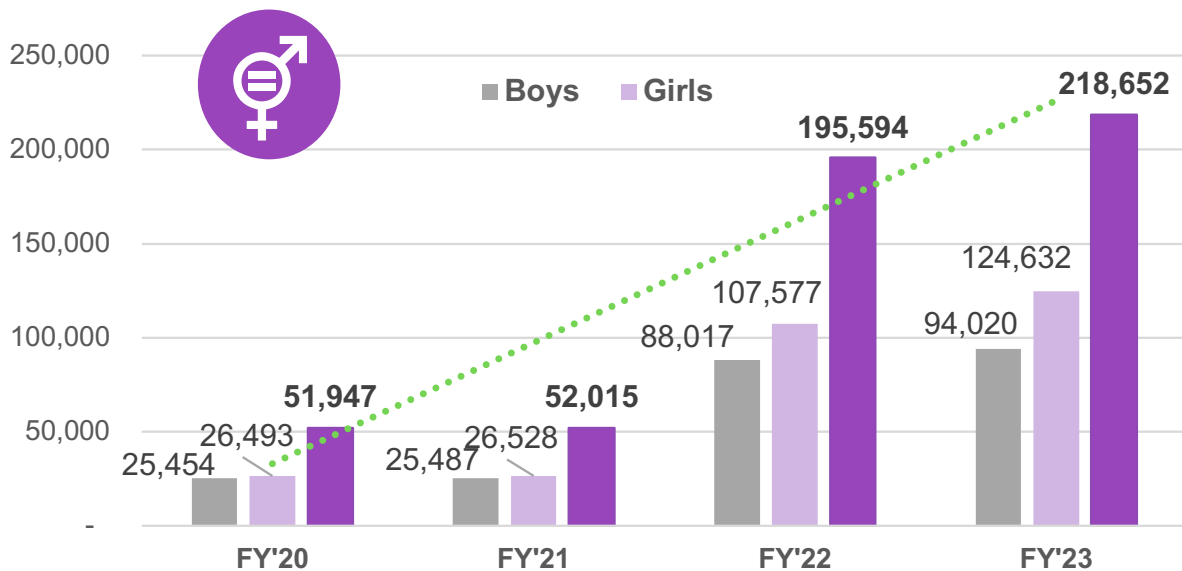
1. Enhance the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls.
2. Increase the participation of women and girls in equal decision-making; and
3. Give women and girls control over the resources they need to secure economic and social equality.

## Promoting the rights of women and girls

In this reporting period, we conducted several capacity-building initiatives from which a total of 218,652 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 15).

**CHART 15:** Number of women and girls benefited from capacity building support in favor of gender equality in CB communities-FY’ 20-23 trend analysis



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY’ 2023

## BOX 4

# Enhancing the Communal Roles of Young Women from Dalit and Tribal Villages

By Children Believe India

There is a tremendous untapped reservoir of talent and potential among young individuals, especially girls. Historically, various intersectional factors like gender and socio-economic status have prescribed certain roles and limited access to opportunities like education, extracurricular activities, and sports. Recognizing the potential of these young girls, the Rural Organization for Poverty Eradication Services (ROPES), in collaboration with Children Believe, saw an opportunity to empower the girls through sports – a universal platform that transcends boundaries. They curated exciting sports events that brought together various games such as Kabbaddi, Volleyball, Baseball, Coco Lemon, Spoon, Potato Gathering, and Sack Race. These were specially designed to inspire and empower school girls.

**The impact of events benefitted 1,377 enthusiastic girls aged 8-17 from 49 schools across 32 areas. They confidently showcased their skills, determination, and endless potential, reshaping perspectives and initiating fresh conversations around gender roles and community standings.**

Additionally, ROPES facilitated sessions centered around promoting gender equality and inclusion. These sessions, attended by parents, Village Development Committee members, and community leaders, revolved around shared experiences and discussions on how to support and nurture the aspirations of all young girls. The shared vision was to promote a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Both girls and boys, through these initiatives, began to experience sports as a great leveller, diminishing age-old gender and community

divides. Physical education teachers, recognizing the importance of inclusivity and encouraging participation from all, formed teams for girls in sports that once saw only boys. These girls' success surpassed expectations, as they competed at the local level and represented their district, bringing home gold and silver medals as symbols of their remarkable achievements.

Revathi shares with a smile:

“**Thanks to ROPES, I discovered strengths I never knew I had. For me it was much more than just sports; it was about proving to myself and others what we're capable of every medal, each gold and silver medal of other girls felt like a personal victory and a celebration of all of us coming together.**”

Amara Jyothi, speaking about her daughter's sports journey, says: *"Seeing my daughter play, I felt so proud. Through sports, she found her place and felt equal to everyone else. It was heartwarming to see her so included and happy."*



Revathi shows her medal from participating in the sport events. Photo: Children Believe



Revathi, her team mates and their coaches during the sport event. Photo: Children Believe

Beyond just breaking barriers, these programs instilled confidence, discipline, and a strong sense of self-worth among girls from all backgrounds. It's a reminder of the wonders that can be achieved when every child, irrespective of their gender or socio-economic status, is given an equal platform to shine. This initiative is a shining example of a society where dreams and passions are not bound by any limiting beliefs but are nurtured and celebrated.

Building on 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.

In FY 23, a growing number of women participated in 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.**



Women seen actively participating in a Community Dialogue Session in India. Photo: Children Believe

Through these efforts, 24,573 young women and mothers (Chart 16) 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 16:** Number of women who assumed leadership roles and meaningfully participated in community/public decision-making in Children Believe-supported communities, disaggregated by country

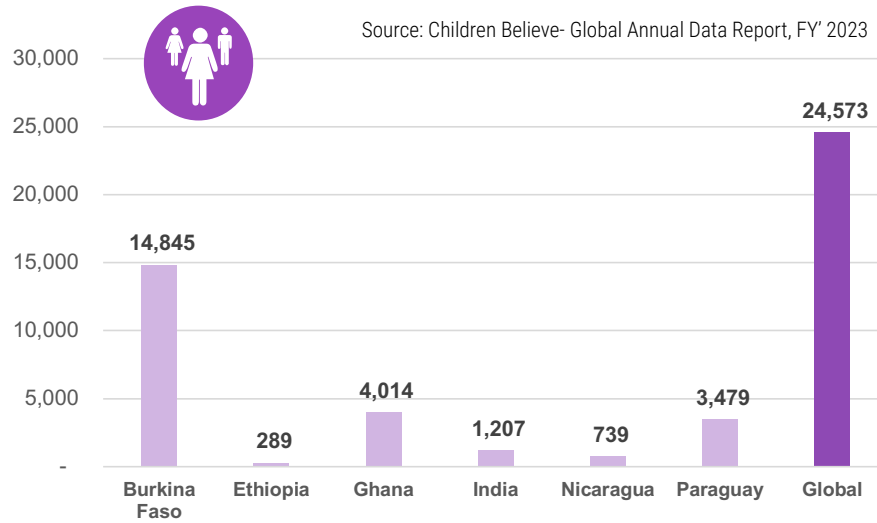


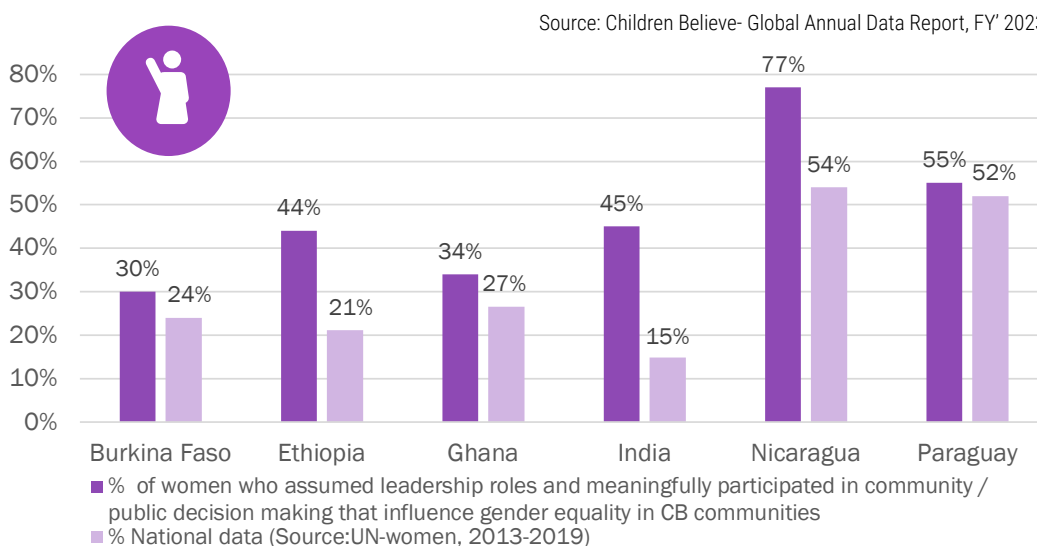
Chart 17 illustrates the proportion of women within Children Believe’s operational areas who assumed leadership positions and engaged in decision-making within the community and public spheres, in comparison to national averages. Notably, there was an increase of over 20% in Nicaragua, reaching 77%, surpassing the national average of 54% for women leaders actively participating in community decision-making.

The observed increase in Paraguay, (55% compared to the national average of 52%), India, (45% compared to 15% y), and Ethiopia (44% compared to 21%) reflects the positive impact of our efforts to promote gender

equality and female participation at the grassroots level, particularly in India and Ethiopia, where historical gender imbalances have been a significant challenge.

In Burkina Faso (30% compared to the national average of 24%), it’s important to acknowledge that this lag can be attributed to factors like insecurity within some of the communities where we operate, and the relatively short duration of our presence in newly targeted operational areas. Undeterred, we remain committed to promoting the full and equal participation of women and girls across our operational regions.

**CHART 17:** 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-FY23



# PARTNERING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH FOR CHANGE



Children participating in community skills club in 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 the 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 favorable conditions for their voices to be heard.

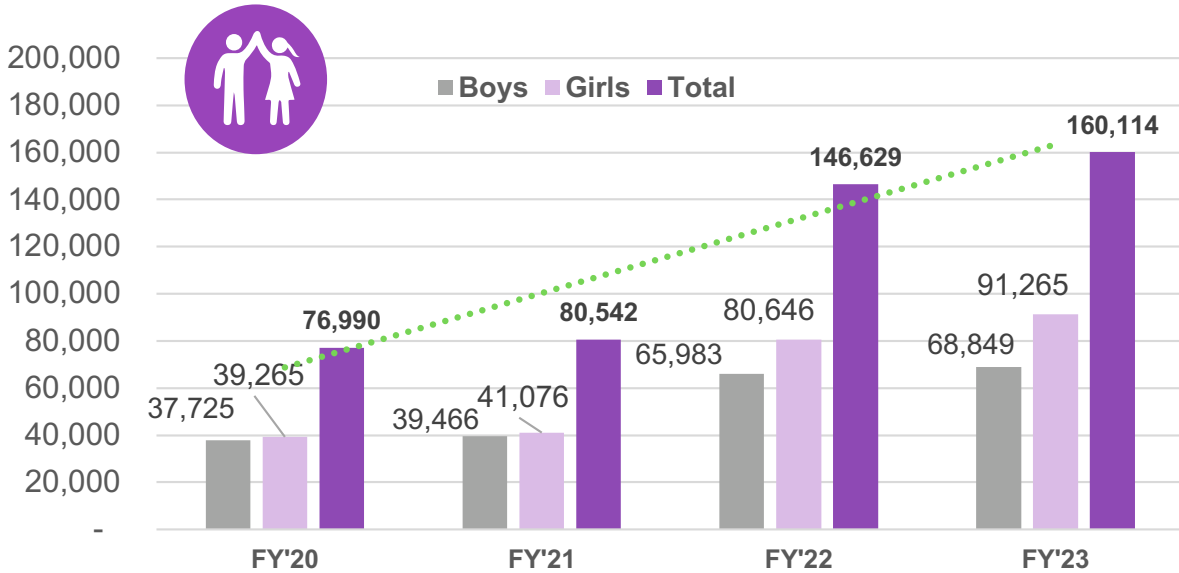
that promoted their meaningful participation in community or public decision-making.

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.

## PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 160,114 children and youth from our operational communities engaged in various programs

**CHART 18:** Percentage of children and youth organized and involved in groups, clubs or associations that promote their meaningful participation-making in public decision-making in Children Believe-supported communities: FY 20-23.



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

## BOX 5

# Ashly, a young woman playing active roles in the future of her community.

By Children Believe Nicaragua Staff

Meet Ashly, a determined teenager residing in Managua, Nicaragua. Her journey with change began when she was just seven years old after she was enrolled in Children Believe's sponsorship program. After her grandmother, who had been her maternal figure, passed away, her aunt took her in, and she continued her education through the sponsorship program.

With the support of Children Believe, Ashly's continued her education, which not only enabled her studies but also opened doors to a plethora of enriching experiences. She thrived as a member of various clubs both in and out of school, showcasing her zest for life.



Ashly doing her studies. Photo: Children Believe

Ashly's love for dance led her to become an active member of the dance interest group in her school. Beyond that, she displayed her athletic prowess and plays soccer in the neighborhood girls' soccer team. Showing her commitment to financial literacy and empowerment, she also joined her village savings and loan group for adolescents.

Ashly strongly believes the involvement of young women in community development would help them become more confident in themselves and enable them to contribute significantly to shaping their communities.

“

Participating in these community development programs has not only allowed me to pursue education, but has also helped me to develop multiple skills, explore new opportunities, and fully utilize my talents,”

says Ashly.

She has also learned the importance of working in teams with other fellow young community members for a brighter tomorrow.

*“I have high expectations for our savings and credit group. I have embraced the culture of saving, and when I get employed, I will certainly save more and buy my dream house”.*

# Building Economic Opportunities for Young Women and Men



Young woman empowered to start her business. Photo: Children Believe

Unemployment among young people is a complex issue that poses significant challenges on both individual and societal levels. 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 FY23, 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 FY23, 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. To this end, we supported 48,715 economically disadvantaged young people (88 percent women) to improve their economic agency and access to employment and entrepreneurship pathways.

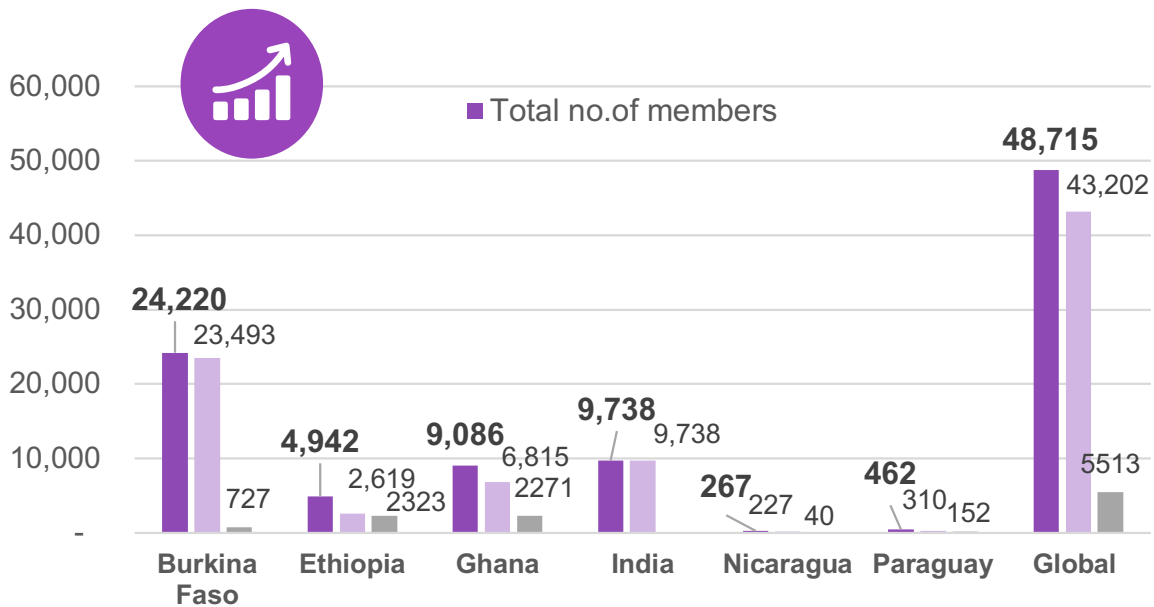
Through our help 2,461 Village Savings and Loans Associations were formed with 48,000 members across Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay.

## The Empuje Project

Our program aimed at supporting youth employment in Nicaragua was incredibly successful, as part of the Government of Canada-funded youth employability project (EMPUJE), we partnered with the National Institute of Technology (INATEC) to assess and enhance vocational training curriculums for 66 courses, including 51 courses in production sectors and 15 courses in information and computer technology.

**Our efforts resulted in the implementation of gender-sensitive technology and market-driven training courses in 22 technological centers across the 9 departments in the Pacific and Central regions of Nicaragua, providing opportunities for 3,621 young individuals to enroll and graduate from these training centers.**

**CHART 19:** Breakdown of youth and women who benefited from youth economic opportunities programmes- FY23



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

## Youth and climate change

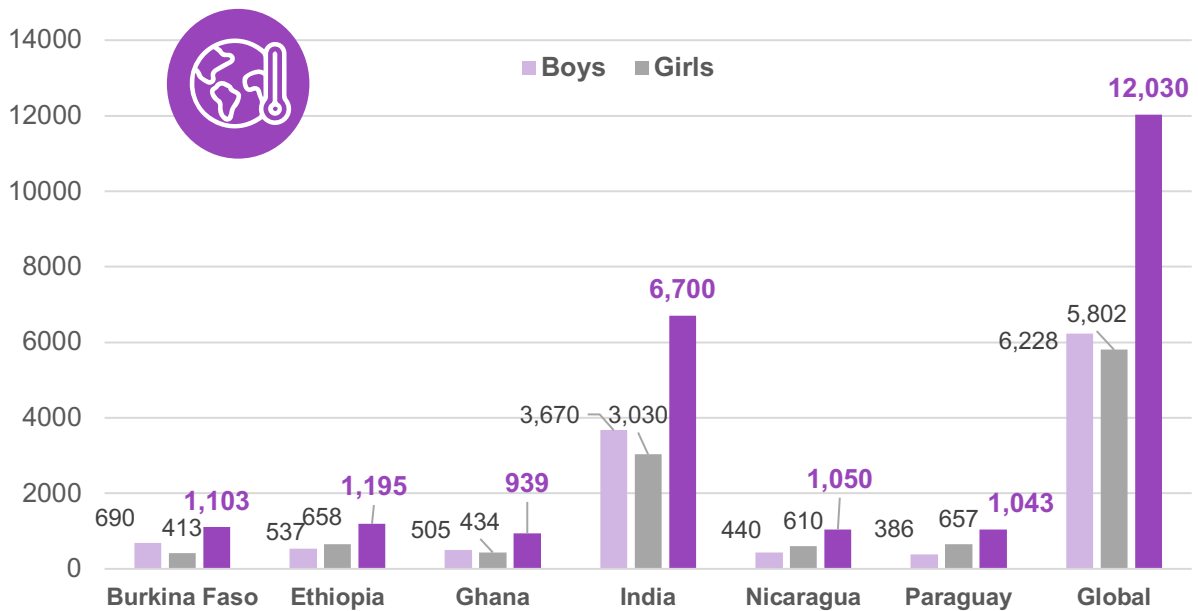
Climate change poses an extreme threat to today's generation. People in the global south have contributed the least but are paying the highest price. Globally billions of people are affected by heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, floods, and other conditions caused by climate change. During the reporting 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.

### PROGRAM IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

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.

**CHART 20:** Distribution of youth and other community members trained on climate change adaptation and mitigation- FY23



Source: Children Believe- Global Annual Data Report, FY' 2023

In FY 23, thousands of young people across our communities of operation in India, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Paraguay, and Ghana (Chart 20) mobilized themselves to take a stand against unfair and misguided environmental policies that harm their communities. They also engaged in various eco-friendly community development projects.

With a grant from Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, our partners made great strides in building youth leadership and developing climate-resilient practices aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Over 6,700 young people between the ages of 13 and 24 have come together to form action groups in 110 villages in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in India, embarking on a transformative journey that has equipped them with the tools to become knowledgeable climate advocates. They have established five oxy parks, each with 1,500 trees, and are actively maintaining these green spaces.

This initiative has also inspired positive change in many villages, resulting in the creation of plastic-free communities. Furthermore, the initiative intentionally



In partnership with the Tony Blair Institute, Children Believe facilitated more than 900 youth to engage in meaningful intercultural dialogues, exploring vital global issues such as climate change, gender rights, and combating hate speech. Photo: Children Believe

incorporated measures to safeguard girls from various climate change-induced events.

Also, YOU-CAN, a mobile application was developed to provide trained youth leaders with digital resources to track their education and engage in meaningful dialogues with their peers. By putting youth at the forefront of change, this initiative has harnessed the potential of youth to combat climate change by achieving carbon emission reduction targets and promoting sustainable practices in their communities.

# CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE



Child playing at a Community ECCD Center in Paraguay. Photo: Children Believe

This year, Children Believe continued to consolidate its Centres of Excellence (CoE) initiative. These centres in our six operational countries serve as hubs to leverage innovation, share knowledge, promote networking and advance thought leadership to maximize our impact.

## CHILDREN BELIEVE CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE:

- 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 Centers of Excellence (CoE) strengthened the promotion of best practices derived from implementing Learning Through Play<sup>8</sup> (LTP) for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). They also enhanced their collaborative efforts with key stakeholders.

In Burkina Faso, Children Believe partnered with Res Publica and the Ministry of Education to organize a national forum on early childhood development. 111 participants attended the forum from various departments of the Ministry of Education, United Nations bodies, and civil society organizations. The goal of the forum was to call action for renewed commitments and the delivery of the government's

commitment to advancing early childhood education, care, and development in Burkina Faso.

Similarly, in Ghana, Children Believe continued its active role as co-chair of the technical working group on early childhood development. These efforts led to the establishment of two new chapters of the working group in the Upper West and Northeast regions. These chapters fostered stronger coordination among government departments, NGOs, the media, and local and traditional leaders. Children Believe also actively participated in the Responsive Caregiving ECCD Policy review technical working group meetings and contributed to the production and submission of the final draft of the Policy for the cabinet's approval.

## 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 of Kobo Town and Gidan District in North Wollo Zone of Amhara Regional State, launched an education in emergencies project. This initiative delivers a coordinated, rapid, and effective humanitarian response to the needs of children by focusing on their educational well-being and safety. The response included promoting school feeding, rehabilitating schools, providing educational materials, ensuring access to safe water in schools, and creating secure spaces through community-based child protection measures.



Children need social and emotional support when their education is disrupted during emergencies. Photo: Children Believe

<sup>8</sup> This innovative methodology was first developed by SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health (formerly The Hincks- Delcrest 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, 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.

In FY23, Children Believe developed a toolkit titled, “Catalyzing Transformative Change: A Toolkit on Gender, Intersectionality, and Social Inclusion”.

The toolkit comprises analytical frameworks and tools for contextual analysis, monitoring and evaluation exercises, institutional capacity assessment, proposal writing, and policy influence, all through the lens of gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion. Additionally, the Children Believe’s India team hosted a global virtual webinar titled “Accelerating Global Practices: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” which attracted 408 participants from 28 countries. This platform served as an opportunity to launch and promote the use of the toolkit among diverse stakeholders worldwide.

## Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment of Youth and Women

In Nicaragua, we continued to facilitate capacity-building support to our local partners and other stakeholders on entrepreneurship development and the promotion of employment opportunities for young women. This led to the scale-up and sharing of best practices such as the VSLA (village, saving and loans associations) and virtual platforms among young entrepreneurs and businesswomen. Children Believe also developed and shared evidence-based knowledge products in local languages to ensure continuous learning among youth and women business networks.



Cross section of participants and facilitators at the capacity building session held to promote employment opportunities for women in Nicaragua. Photo: Children Believe Nicaragua

## Child Rights and Participation

In Paraguay, we worked with our local partners and participated in and led discussions in a national campaign on Child Protection against Violence to advocate for the safety and well-being of children.

The campaign complements Children Believe’s previous contribution in preparing Paraguay’s Government’s National Policy and Strategy for Child Participation.



# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND HARNESING POLICY INFLUENCE



Happy children in school. 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.

We partnered with the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change to implement Generation Global Initiative in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and India. The initiative creates opportunities for young people to connect with their peers worldwide to discuss pressing global issues like climate change and gender equality. It also equips them with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become active, and open-minded global citizens.

In Burkina Faso, we collaborated with our partner- Africa Child Policy Forum, ACPF, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, with the Ministry of Justice to establish Children's Legal Protection Centers (CLPC). To achieve this, we organized a consultative

workshop addressing the provision of free legal and psychosocial services for vulnerable children in Burkina Faso. This workshop was informed by the findings of a comprehensive study on service provision across the country. Through this effort, we garnered a broader consensus for the establishment of the CLPC.

In Burkina Faso, we consolidated our collaboration with UNICEF and UNOCHA, focused on building local capacities to safeguard the well-being of displaced children and their families affected by conflict in the Centre-North and Eastern regions of Burkina Faso.

In Ethiopia, Children Believe partnered with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to strengthen their efforts in education in emergencies. We continued to actively participate in the National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum, contributing to its agendas. Children Believe also continued to serve as the child protection advisory group member of the Federal Ministry of Women and Social Affairs.

In Ghana, we participated the Responsive Caregiving Technical Working Group under the Ministry of Gender,

Children and Social Protection. We also actively supported the review and updating of the existing ECCD policy of Ghana in collaboration with relevant government departments, NGOs, local child-rights associations, and private education service providers. Our collaboration with ChildFund Korea/ the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) empowered the Ghana country office to implement the “Quality Early Childhood Education Services for all Children (QAIECE)” in the North and North-East regions of Northern Ghana.

In India, we collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment of the Government of Tamil Nadu to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to ensure convergence among line departments at different levels. The aim of the SOP is to effectively implement the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) to ensure Tamil Nadu is a zero-child marriage state. Also, we continued to collaborate with Gooru<sup>9</sup> to pilot a web-based (on/offline) Navigator for Learners application to improve learning outcomes for young users.

In Nicaragua, Children Believe continued its strategic partnerships with Nestlé, the food and drink multi-national corporation; Gildan, a Canadian clothing manufacturer; and Olam Food Ingredients, an international food and agri-business company. In addition, we enjoyed our strategic collaboration with UNICEF, as well as the humanitarian organization, Convoy of Hope, and the tech hub, NUMU. These partnerships complement our work in supporting the development of soft and entrepreneurial skills in young people and the promotion of youth employment opportunities. Our collaboration with UNICEF was further strengthened with the implemented an initiative to prevent sexual violence against children and women while also mitigating irregular child migration in the Estelí and Madriz regions.

In Paraguay, we co-led the preparation and endorsement of the National Policy on Child Participation for the Ministry of Children and Adolescents. Children Believe also serves as the president of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education<sup>10</sup> in Paraguay promoting child participation in policy, institutional and community levels. Our relationships with the Ministry of Childhood &

Adolescents and the Ministry of Education and Science flourished as we continued to advocate for services that protect children and adolescents from violence and the creation of safe child-friendly environments at the community level.



Community members dancing in Ghana. Photo: Brett Tarver - Children Believe

In Canada, as part of International Development Week 2023, Children Believe hosted a virtual panel on “Young Stars: Canadian Contributions to Amplifying Youth Voices and Closing the Gender Gap on Youth Employability”. Distinguished panellists from UNICEF and Canadian Embassy in Nicaragua, Generation Unlimited, Gildan Active Wear Inc, and Children Believe shared insights on the topic. Over 150 attendees from 34 countries participated and engaged in discussions. Our involvement in the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group remains essential. We co-lead the technical sub-working group and contributed to the policy discussions, advocating for Canada’s global commitment to improving education for girls, adolescent girls, and women in developing countries, particularly those affected by conflict and humanitarian crises.

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.

<sup>9</sup> Gooru is a tech-oriented company that uses Navigator for Learners, a data-rich approach rooted in the learning sciences, utilizing real-time information about each user’s progress to construct personalized learning pathways. The company believes technology can be a catalyst to unite communities and a linchpin for creating collective impact. It promotes technology that can give learners, instructors and schools real-time analytic tools and unlimited access to engaging effective resources for anywhere, anytime learning. In pursuit of ensuring no learner is left behind, Gooru’s Navigator is inclusive by design for all learners across geographies, disciplines and abilities.

<sup>10</sup> The World Organization for Early Childhood Education (Organisation Mondiale pour l’Éducation Préscolaire, or the acronym OMEP) is an international, non-governmental non-profit organization, which has worked for all aspects of early childhood education and care since 1948. The organization is currently established in over 70 countries, has special consultative status with the UN and UNICEF, and is represented at meetings with other international organizations with similar aims. OMEP defends and promotes the rights of the child worldwide and supports activities, which improve accessibility to high-quality education and care.

# LOOKING FORWARD

Throughout the fiscal year 2023, Children Believe stayed committed to driving tangible and meaningful change for children, their families, and communities. Our integrated child-centred, family-focused community development programs reached over 1.3 million individuals, a testament to the success of our approach and the dedication of our team. We cherish the strong and diverse partnerships we have maintained with our target communities, local partners, and stakeholders at district, national, regional, and global levels, which have allowed us to make a scalable impact.

As we look towards the fiscal year 2024, it will be a transitional period as we conclude our five-year strategy period (FY20-24) and embark on the development of a new global strategy (FY25-29) and expand our efforts to Honduras and Mali. Our vision for the future is one that catalyzes transformative and systemic change. We are committed to deepening our global program impact while increasing our policy influence work.

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:

- Dismantling the barriers to education through all the stages of a young person's life from early childhood to primary school to adolescence and the beginning of adulthood
- Improving maternal, child health and nutrition because healthy mothers and babies lead to healthy families where children can start strong.
- Providing humanitarian assistance for children and families whose lives have been turned upside down due to conflict and disaster.

- Protecting children and women from violence which starts with registering their legal existence, offering support for people on the move, protecting orphans and other vulnerable children and promoting online safety.
- Promoting the rights of women and girls through our intersectional approach to gender inequality and discrimination to address underlying drivers of discrimination and transform structures and cultural norms.
- Partnering with children and youth for change so that every child is included without discrimination, has agency, opportunity and their rights fulfilled.
- Working closely with our local partners and vulnerable children and youth to meaningfully engage them in shaping our future work.

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 t communities we serve.



Photo: Bret Tarver - Children Believe

## ANNEX I: Children Believe's Implementing Partners

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

## ANNEX II: Key Program Result Indicators by Countries of Operations in FY23

EDUCATION	BFA	ETH	GHA	IND	NIC	PAR	Total
# of educational facilities, classrooms, and child-friendly spaces built/restored	4	4	2	-	-	47	57
Built	4	4	2	-	-	-	10
Renovated / Restored	-	-	-	-	-	47	47
# of children receiving educational materials	1,015	8,914	7,490	1,892	7,066	16,506	42,883
0 to 5	-	1,251	1,833	305	408	3,228	7,025
6 to 14	706	5,273	4,547	1,467	3,493	11,888	27,374
15 to 24	309	2,390	1,110	120	3,165	1,390	8,484
# of schools who receive teaching aid materials /supplies (books, chalks, charts, maps, audio/video aids, flipcharts)	11	28	17	52	-	69	177
ECCD/E schools	-	24	4	20	-	34	82
Primary schools	5	4	4	32	-	51	96
Secondary schools	6	-	9	-	-	26	41
# of schools received fixed assets (furniture, computers, white /black boards, shelves,)	1	34	38	47	6	45	171
ECCD/E schools	-	16	15	-	-	11	42
Primary schools	1	18	18	47	6	3	93
Secondary schools	-	-	4	-	-	7	11
# of teachers trained in inclusive education and appropriate teaching methodologies, including LTP, and ECD	204	919	236	390	918	675	3,342
Male	124	404	128	110	131	86	983
female	80	515	108	280	787	589	2,359
# of children and youth participated in extra/co-curricular activities	7,146	5,225	13,215	10,888	2,837	8750	48,061
6 to 14	3,394	3,135	8,673	8,828	2,640	7803	34,473
15 to 24	3,752	2,090	4,542	2,060	197	947	13,588
# of parents/community members trained in inclusive education and ECCD /E, better parenting, and the importance of education	3,409	138	341	714	575	969	6,146
Male	523	54	260	158	138	79	1,212
female	2,886	84	81	556	437	890	4,934
# of youth/women trained on market-focused inclusive technical or vocational training for self/ employment or IGA	35,620	285	25	2,021	16	803	38,770
Male	1,066	108	3	676	6	246	2,105
female	34,554	177	22	1,345	10	557	36,665

# of parents/community members trained on systemic barriers to education	3,803	900	88	1,973	5,100	229	12,093
Male	367	491	49	627	2,000	44	3,578
female	3,436	409	39	1,346	3,100	185	8,515
# of parents/community members, trained to advocate with to government and other relevant actors for appropriate educational services for children/youth	126	50	308	2,190	-	572	3,246
Male	72	30	186	541	-	124	953
female	54	20	122	1,649	-	448	2,293
<b>HEALTH &amp; NUTRITION</b>	<b>BFA</b>	<b>ETH</b>	<b>GHA</b>	<b>IND</b>	<b>NIC</b>	<b>PAR</b>	<b>Total</b>
# of children/community members received nutritional support (food or supplements)	3,548	648	-	-	4,572	3,382	12,150
0 to 5	2516	329	-	-	1,205	938	4,988
6 to 14	859	181	-	-	2,401	1659	5,100
15 to 24	100	12	-	-	331	142	585
25 and above	73	126	-	-	635	643	1,477
# of children and parents who participated in healthy eating habits (nutrition) training	4250	1,746	88,268	4,945	986	2,283	102,478
6 to 14	2120	165	-	630	366	696	3,977
15 to 24	680	548	-	689	49	192	2,158
25 and above	1450	1,033	88,268	3,626	571	1395	96,343
# of people trained on ANC / NC services	1,268	360	80,768	1,056	-	37	83,489
Male	-	100	28,313	362	-	-	28,775
female	1,268	260	52,455	694	-	37	54,714
# of children trained and practicing producing vegetables and fruits for consumption or business	-	230	-	3,151	30	1,114	4,525
Male	-	112	-	1,551	16	566	2,245
female	-	118	-	1,600	14	548	2,280
# of mother clubs established to support health, nutrition, breastfeeding and other practices	32	124	-	156	-	9	321
# of people including adolescents received reproductive health or HIV/AIDS counselling or training	828	180	12,017	1,244	642	3,002	17,913
male	417	80	5,045	-	181	1,177	6,900
female	411	100	6,972	1,244	461	1,825	11,013
# of children receiving annual health care assessment including growth monitoring	2,888	3,048	7,555	8,289	7,317	5,377	34,474
0 to 5	1,212	1,212	-	4,520	374	671	7,989
6 to 14	1,382	1,185	4,311	2,725	5,119	3,663	18,385
15 to 24	294	651	3,244	1,044	1,824	1043	8,100

# of community members including children, school teachers trained on sanitation, water use and hygiene	3,696	40	-	4,525	3,810		12,071
0 to 5	255	-	-	320	1,389		1,964
6 to 14	1,948	8	-	1,943	1,927		5,826
15 to 24	1,293	12	-	472	1		1,778
25 and above	200	20	-	1,790	493		2,503
<b>CHILD RIGHTS &amp; PROTECTION</b>	<b>BFA</b>	<b>ETH</b>	<b>GHA</b>	<b>IND</b>	<b>NIC</b>	<b>PAR</b>	<b>Total</b>
# of CBO members, government office workers or other child protection actors trained on how to advocate for children's rights, protections, participation	209	365	167	1,842	1,024	733	4,340
male	130	231	87	662	189	152	1,451
female	79	134	80	1,180	835	581	2,889
# of community members trained on Climate change mitigation, DRR and EPP including children during emergency	59	1,633	939	6,086	1,050	1,043	10,810
male	32	605	505	3,363	440	386	5,331
female	27	1,028	434	2,723	610	657	5,479
# of children trained in life skills and resilience to protect themselves	593	205	6,994	7,031	1,820	2,137	18,780
6 to 14	202	100	2,965	2,952	1,498	1,204	8,921
15 to 24	391	105	4,029	4,079	322	933	9,859
# Parents or caregivers trained in positive parenting and discipline	1,200	63	171	4,412	445	1,001	7,292
male	0	34	103	2,362	22	91	2,612
female	1,200	29	68	2,050	423	910	4,680
# of community-based groups or committees established and actively providing services for children and women to address abuse, exploitation, trafficking, early marriage or FGM	23	507	54	328	-		912
# of training participants on harmful traditional practices including, early pregnancy, early marriage or female genital mutilation in schools	401	36	5,725	647	-		6,809
6 to 14	149	13	2,816	200	-		3,178
15 to 24	252	23	2,909	300	-		3,484
25 and above	-	-	-	147	-		147
<b>GENDER EQUALITY</b>	<b>BFA</b>	<b>ETH</b>	<b>GHA</b>	<b>IND</b>	<b>NIC</b>	<b>PAR</b>	<b>Total</b>
# Community members trained about gender and gender-based violence	400	1,276	130	2,540	436	3,324	8,106
male	-	336	75	1,157	135	1,694	3,397
female	400	940	55	1,383	301	1,630	4,709

# people trained in women's decision making civic participation and leadership at the school, community, or national level	3,150	60	-	4,004	375	-	7,589
male	57	30	-	438	73	-	598
female	3,093	30	-	3,566	302	-	6,991
# Linkage created for equal employment opportunities or financial assistance	101	-	1	91	-		193
# of women referred for employment or other business start-up opportunities using an existing linkage scheme	571	12	25	947	-		1,555
<b>PARTNERING WITH CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH FOR CHANGE</b>	<b>BFA</b>	<b>ETH</b>	<b>GHA</b>	<b>IND</b>	<b>NIC</b>	<b>PAR</b>	<b>Total</b>
# of youth groups formed for after-school activities or promote their active/ meaningful participation in decisions that concern them	28	126	68	110	-	41	373
# of Children involved in youth groups or clubs for after-school activities or promote their participation in decisions that concern them	1820	985	2,812	3,489	2,941	877	12,924
6 to 14	640	613	1,185	1,767	2,045	722	6,972
15 to 24	1180	372	1,627	1,801	896	163	6,039
# of joint session /workshop conducted between adults and children to understand and solve current issues related to children	7	239	13	49	16	155	479
# of participants in joint session/ workshop conducted between adults and children to understand and solve current issues related to children	24140	270	5,566	2,443	485	533	33,437
6 to 14	1832	16	1,386	436	299	308	4,277
15 to 24	21620	130	1,629	1,596	135	92	25,202
25 and above	698	124	2,551	411	51	164	3,999





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 12 child-focused development organizations working to create opportunities for children and youth, their families and communities.

ChildFund helps nearly 23 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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