



Save the Children urges Congress to approve no less than \$12 billion in flexible funding for the international response to COVID-19 to address the needs of the world's most vulnerable and marginalized – those living in poverty, girls, refugees, displaced children and families, and communities in conflict and crisis, and children with disabilities.

We are already seeing the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and their families. Over 1.5 billion children are out of school due to closures, critical routine immunization services are being disrupted, gender-based violence is on the rise – especially among girls – and the number of people facing severe food insecurity is expected to double this year. Moreover, COVID-19 has revealed and reinforced deep inequalities, where low-income and marginalized communities are paying the highest price.



The nearly \$2 billion that Congress has appropriated thus far is an important step in the right direction, but additional flexible funding is needed to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. **An additional \$12 billion in international assistance would:**

Ensure access to lifesaving health services by:

- Supporting countries with limited capacity or those in fragile contexts to mitigate transmission of the virus.
- Strengthening weak health systems by training, equipping, and protecting health workers – including community health workers – and expanding the reach of the health workforce to assist marginalized communities.
- Ensuring that existing programs for providing lifesaving, routine health services such as immunization, nutrition interventions, detecting and treating common childhood illnesses, gender-based violence services, and access to family planning are not compromised.
- Supporting multilateral organizations at the forefront of confronting the spread of the global pandemic.

Support a child-focused response in existing humanitarian crises by:

- Containing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impacts on the nearly 168 million vulnerable people around the world who are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, especially the 13 million refugee children and 17 million children internally displaced by conflict and violence globally.
 - 12.3 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen alone. With only half of the country's healthcare facilities functional after more than five years of conflict, the health system is woefully unprepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. Quick action and flexibility from donors are needed to prevent widespread COVID-19 transmission and protect millions of Yemeni children.
 - In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the location of the largest refugee camps in the world and home to nearly 855,000 Rohingya refugees, projections for the impact of COVID-19 are dire. Over the next year, the camp could see 500,000 infections according to one estimate from Johns Hopkins University. Assistance to help prevent the spread of the virus in this complex setting is paramount.
- Providing the resources needed to ensure the continuation of vital protection services in humanitarian crises, including the provision of mental health and psycho-social support, especially for children.
- Supporting the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which aims to coordinate the international community to allow frontline health workers the speed and flexibility needed to fight the spread of COVID-19 in the poorest countries and reach the most vulnerable.





Ensure quality education for all children by:

- Supporting governments to ensure the continuity of learning – including a safe return to school – to reach every last child with a focus on the most marginalized children, including children in poverty, children in the earliest years, girls, children with disabilities, and displaced children.
- Supporting the development of a wide variety of distance learning tools such as interactive radio and television instruction, take-home or web-based materials, resources for caregivers and peer-to-peer learning, as well as tools to help children and families access information about distance learning.
- Contributing to Education Cannot Wait, which is working to close the learning gap for crisis-affected children globally.

Address the needs of girls and women, and protect them from gender-based violence by:

- Supporting a gender-sensitive response to the COVID-19 pandemic that addresses the immediate and long-term impacts on the health, safety, and education of girls and young women globally.
- Addressing the increased risk of gender-based violence. Emerging data shows that since the outbreak of COVID-19, violence against women and girls – particularly domestic violence – has intensified.
 - In China, for example, the number of domestic violence cases reported to the local police tripled in February compared to the previous year. Evidence from past humanitarian crises also indicates that rates of child marriage will increase during this pandemic.
- Ensuring girls' access to education. The global digital gender gap shows that girls have less access to technology, particularly in lower-income countries. As under-resourced households shift to remote learning, sons' education may be prioritized over daughters', and girls are more likely to take on domestic or caregiving duties, decreasing the time they can dedicate to distance learning and increasing their risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Ensuring girls' access to health services, including equal access to testing and treatment of COVID-19, as well as basic health services like menstrual hygiene management and family planning.

Combat food insecurity and malnutrition by:

- Providing critical food assistance and targeted, cash payments for vulnerable families and strengthening social safety nets to stave off the devastating economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are expected to result in the first increase in extreme poverty since 1998, with 42 to 66 million children projected to fall into this state this year.
 - According to the World Food Program, secondary impacts of the crisis are creating a “hunger pandemic” that could result in 300,000 deaths per day.
- Supporting the integration of nutrition interventions in the immediate COVID-19 global health response, particularly during the critical 1,000-day window between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday, to ensure healthy cognitive and physical development and prevent against susceptibility to infection. A malnourished child is nine times more likely to die than a healthy child.
 - The secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are causing malnutrition to rise, with over 368 million children losing access to nutritious school meals and food supply chains facing disruptions globally.
 - Early estimates suggest that the number of under-5 children who are stunted may increase by 7 million.

Support an effective operational response by:

- Providing additional resources for State and USAID's Operating Expenses to ensure an effective USG international response to the crisis that is evidence-driven and has robust and well-trained technical staff, including for gender mainstreaming, in Washington, D.C. and in missions around the world.
- Supporting the U.S. development and diplomatic corps, who are on the frontline of this response, working closely with local partners, governments, and multilateral institutions to ensure the global response to COVID-19 is swift, impactful, and well-coordinated.

