



Joint Appeal for Most Vulnerable Children of India amid COVID-19

Date: 25th March 2020

To

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble. Prime Minister
Government of India
7, Lok Kalyan Marg
New Delhi 110 011 .

Sub: Joint Appeal for effective response and mitigation of impact of COVID-19 on the most Vulnerable Children of India

Respected Shri Narendra Modi ji,

The timely measures taken by the Government of India, under your leadership, to prevent the spread of the COVID 19 outbreak in India is highly commendable. Your March 24th announcement of complete lockdown of the whole country is a much needed action to prevent and control this outbreak. We, as *Joining Forces For Children – India*- an alliance of six leading child development organizations, appreciate the government's decision and commit our support to the Government of India in this time of national crisis.

Hon'ble Prime Minister, as you are aware the COVID-19 outbreak **will adversely impact the condition of children**, who constitute nearly 39% of our population. Of them, the most **vulnerable and marginalised girls and boys, and especially girls will be exposed to multi-dimensional risks**. This includes disruption to their healthcare, protection, education and overall wellbeing, including social interaction with friends, peers, family members, teachers and adult caregivers.

Joining Forces for Children – India is actively working towards the well-being and protection of vulnerable children and young people in India, and have stepped up our interventions to respond effectively to this global and national crisis. To ensure that the well-being of the most vulnerable children are not compromised, on behalf of the children, we appeal to Government of India to:

- **Prioritise and identify the most vulnerable and at risk children for prevention and response interventions:** These include children in street situations, homeless children, migrant and internally displaced children, children as domestic helps, refugee children, children in child care institutions, children with disabilities and special needs , children of daily wage workers. In all these situations special focus may be given to girl children.
- **Provide uninterrupted access to critical services for the most vulnerable children and their families:** To overcome the immediate & long-term impact of the crisis, Government to ensure, on priority basis: access to critical services such as healthcare, nutrition, food security, mental health & psychosocial support, protection against violence ; and ensure social protection and child-sensitive cash transfer initiatives to the most vulnerable children and poorest families.
- **Provide child-friendly outreach messages** and run child friendly public information campaigns, in collaboration with civil society organizations, to parents, caregivers, teachers and others who work directly with children, for effective prevention and psychosocial support. Ensure Childline



toll-free number 1098 which is declared as the COVID-19 emergency outreach number for children/parents/caregivers, is accessible for children in distress due to COVID-19

- **Protect children in child care institutions:** A separate policy guideline for child care during COVID-19 to be prepared for children's homes and care centers. This policy needs to ensure mechanisms for awareness, prevention, timely reporting and effective responses. Caregivers and staff of child care institutions should be placed under the category of 'essential services' to ensure continued care and protection during lockdown.
- **Prevent separation and stigma of child and caregiver** during any treatment and isolation, through development of appropriate care protocols.
- **Scale-up investment in child protection system strengthening** through Child Protection Services (CPS) and Juvenile Justice System structures, with particular support to states having child protection related vulnerability for large population.

We once again appreciate the efforts of Government of India and your leadership, and stand in solidarity to ensure the wellbeing and protection of the most vulnerable children under these challenging circumstances.

Thanking You,

Joining Forces for Children, India

Signatories:

- ChildFund India
- Plan India
- Save the Children, India
- SOS Children's Villages of India;
- Terre des hommes
- World Vision India

Copy to:

- Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, Udhog Bhawan, New Delhi-110011.
- Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani Hon'ble Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India ,Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001
- Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Hon'ble Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, Central Secretariat, New Delhi -110011
- Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Hon'ble Cabinet Minister , Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001
- Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001
- Shri Priyank Kanoongo, Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 5th Floor Chanderlok Building, 36, Janpath Road, New Delhi-110001

