

Statement of ChildFund Alliance: UNICEF Executive Board Second Regular Session (11-14 June 2024)

Agenda Item 4: Annual Report on UNICEF Humanitarian Action (11 June 2024)

Mr. President, Executive Director Catherine Russell, and distinguished members of the board, I wish to express ChildFund Alliance's appreciation for the opportunity to address the Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board. As Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance, I speak on behalf of 11 child-focused development and humanitarian organizations, reaching nearly 36 million children and their families in more than 70 countries.

We commend the extensive efforts UNICEF is undertaking to guarantee children's access to education – even or especially in crisis contexts – as described in the “Annual Report on UNICEF Humanitarian Action”. A child's right to education must be guaranteed according to Art. 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. While ensuring a child's access to education in emergency situations is especially difficult, it demands heightened attention during times of increasing conflicts around the world.

In Gaza alone, 625,000 children do not have access to education. At least 61 schools have already been destroyed, while 307 out of a total of 563 have been directly hit – thus rendering teaching virtually impossible. Without a single Gazan school being operational, the education system has collapsed. Beyond Gaza, armed conflict, violence, forced migration, natural disasters, and climate-related emergencies have left an estimated 224 million crisis-affected children in urgent need of education support.

These alarming numbers illustrate the education emergency posed by humanitarian conflict – one that mandates immediate action to secure a dignified future for millions of children. For Educo, ChildFund Alliance's member in Spain, universal access to education is a priority to ensure that even in emergency contexts, children have the opportunity to receive a quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. Educo's Education in Emergencies (EiE) project has benefitted over 125,000 children with interventions across the Central Sahel, Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

ChildFund Alliance recognizes the urgency to enable funding for EiE to prevent the deprivation of learning opportunities for children. The challenges to funding EiE must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. In this regard, Educo has conducted an extensive funding analysis on EiE and proposes the following actions to increase investment in EiE across three principal actors:

- First, donors should commit to flexible, multi-year funding for EiE to guarantee that children and adolescents in protracted crises can continue their education. The percentage of humanitarian aid allocated to education is a mere 3%, while the demand is at 10%, illustrating the urgent need for increased funding for EiE;
- Second, governments battling humanitarian crises should promote synergies and coordination mechanisms with donor countries and entities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of resources in the education sector under the Triple Nexus approach; and
- Third, Civil Society Organizations and UN entities are encouraged to adopt localization by enabling direct funding to local organizations. This would facilitate the nexus approach in the implementation, intervention, and prevention efforts.

In our response to the unprecedented impact of natural disasters and climate-related emergencies on children, ChildFund Alliance recognizes education not simply as a fundamental right but an enabling right for children to contribute towards a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world for all. For instance, quality education can combat discrimination, including gender discrimination, and reduce societal inequalities that can limit the unequal effects of the climate crisis and reduce the likelihood of further conflict. Another example is that schools allow children to resume a routine – such as after having been geographically

displaced – that provides emotional stability for them to continue their learning and development. EiE is thus a crucial enabler for positive change even in times of crisis and thus requires additional funding.

Education must be a priority and reality for all children, not an unrealized right. Educo’s collaboration with international donors and within the Inter-Agency Network in Education Emergencies (INEE) has mobilized joint efforts to grant EiE the status of a recognized humanitarian sector. ChildFund Alliance and its members will continue to strive towards ensuring access to quality and protective education in humanitarian contexts through robust partnerships with governments, the UN system, including UNICEF, and local organizations. You can count on us.

I thank you.