

# ChildFund News

Year in Review - January 2025

**ChildFund**  
Australia

**BECAUSE  
EVERY CHILD  
NEEDS A  
CHILDHOOD**

## Your impact in FY24

**875,758**

individuals reached  
through ChildFund  
Australia funded  
programs

**473,923**

children supported  
to stay healthy and  
educated

**AU\$37.4 million**

raised by donors like you to  
invest in a healthier and safer  
childhood for all children

## Creating lasting change together

The impact we achieved in 2024 wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of supporters like you. In 2024, we reached 875,758 people, of which over 470,000 were children through our health, child protection, education, social and emotional learning and disaster risk management projects. Your commitment has enabled us to work alongside almost 70 local partners to deliver programs that drive positive change for children, families and communities in countries across the world.

In Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, we've championed child and maternal health by working with partners to support community access to essential healthcare services making sure mothers and children receive the care they need for a healthy childhood. In Cambodia and Kenya, we continue to create pathways for children to access quality education while breaking down the barriers that could keep children out of school.

I want to extend my genuine thanks to you for not only believing that every child needs a childhood, but ensuring children in the most difficult of circumstances in the poorest countries are heard, and their rights respected.

Thank you for thinking globally when people domestically are also facing challenges.

**Margaret Sheehan**

Chief Executive Officer



## Youth leading the way: Messages from ChildFund's changemakers

Children and young people are speaking out, demanding a future free from violence and a voice in the decisions that shape their lives. Last year, children around the world shared their ideas for a better world. Explore messages from young people who are raising their voices.

### Morrison, 16-year-old from Sierra Leone

"Violence has severe and lasting effects on a child's physical, social and mental wellbeing. That's why I wanted to become an advocate for my peers. We, as children, have plentiful ideas on how to address our own problems," Morrison says.

As Vice President of the Children's Forum Network, a national child-led organisation that works with the Sierra Leonean government to protect children, Morrison raised his voice to help draft policy legislation to end early marriage in Sierra Leone and is currently helping review draft legislation that would criminalise FGM (female genital mutilation) for children under 18.



### Silvania, 17-year-old from Timor-Leste

"Youth are the changemakers of a nation, they also have the right to exercise their rights as young people in their society. Young people have the power to bring change."

"I live in a rural area, and I would like to see many changes. The roads are bad, and we must travel long distances to the nearest health centre just to seek medical assistance. To improve the lives of children and young people, we need better roads, more health centres and better equipped schools."

Silvania participates in ChildFund's Youth Changemakers program, which brings together young people to learn leadership, economic empowerment and other vital life skills that they need to become positive agents of change in their community.



## Food, Family and Community: A visit to Timor-Leste



Even before he became known for his cooking as a contestant on MasterChef Australia, cooking had always been central to ChildFund Australia ambassador Juan De La Cruz's life. Growing up in a large family with eight siblings, food was the heartbeat of family life.

On a recent visit to Timor-Leste with the ChildFund Australia team, he witnessed firsthand the transformative power of food. After a two-hour drive from Dili along winding roads and culminating in a bumpy off-road ride across a vast, sun-burnt riverbed, we arrived at a remote community in Manatuto. Here, Juan saw how food is not just about filling stomachs; it's a vital resource that can break cycles of poverty, foster community and help build healthier futures for children.

In Timor-Leste, nearly half of all children under five are stunted, over eight percent suffer from acute malnutrition and 23 percent of women of reproductive age are anemic. In response to these challenges, ChildFund Timor-Leste and partners are working to improve nutrition and health for pregnant women, mothers and children, especially in the country's most isolated regions.



**Thanks to the support of generous donors like you, we raised \$251,000 through our Festive Season Appeal.**



“

When you support ChildFund, you're not just feeding a child for one day – you're investing in the future of families eager to change their lives but lacking the resources to do so.”

Juan

When we arrived at the community centre, it was humming with activity. Children were playing as their mums listened to a community health volunteer share tips on incorporating more nutrient-dense foods into their diets, safe childbirth, breast feeding and maintaining good hygiene. These Mother Support Groups are helping women in remote communities to navigate pregnancy and their infant children's health with confidence.

Many of the families we met face a daily struggle to put nutritious and affordable food on the table for their children. Mother Support Groups tackle this issue through running monthly 12-day community cooking programs that teach parents how to transform home-grown produce into nutritious meals.

As the cooking program got underway, Juan quickly jumped in to offer a helping hand to the community health volunteers who were preparing a nutrient-rich porridge. Chopping vegetables and peeling pumpkins with the volunteers, Juan reflected on how communities can come together to build healthier futures for children.

“Nutrition isn't just about food. It's about creating a foundation for change – helping families build healthier stronger futures.”

Education in nutrition can change lives, not just in Timor-Leste, but worldwide.

## Bring the world to your kitchen!



Download ChildFund Australia's free Recipe Book and discover simple, vibrant recipes that bring families together, including a foreword and treasured recipe from Juan himself! Download your copy and join us in celebrating the power of food to connect us all.



# From challenges to champion: Hatice's journey through rugby

In February 2023, two devastating earthquakes struck Türkiye and Northern Syria, killing over 50,000 people and leaving 2.3 million people displaced in Türkiye alone. For many children like Hatice, the trauma from the earthquakes and the challenges of displacement caused immense distress and disruption to their lives.

With her home destroyed, Hatice and her family were relocated to a temporary home in Adiyaman. Hatice's mother was worried as she saw her daughter struggling. "She became very quiet. She lost her usual spark."

In a place like the Adiyaman container city, the last thing anyone expected to find was a rugby ball. Kicking off in July 2023, ChildFund Rugby and the Türkiye Rugby Federation launched Pass It Back Recovery to support children and young people through the power of sport.

Initially hesitant and afraid to try as she thought rugby was a boy's sport, Hatice now hasn't missed a single session since Pass It Back started.

"In my community, sports like rugby are often seen as something for boys, and I used to believe that too. Plus, I wear a hijab, so I wasn't sure if rugby was for me. I was scared of being judged or discriminated against if I played," Hatice reflects. "Even my father had doubts about letting me join."

But with encouragement from her Coach, Hatice decided to take the leap.

"My Coach Gülsüm has been supportive and encouraging. She told us to stay strong and that we'll overcome this together, we'll get there and succeed together. She told us that anyone can play rugby."

Being part of a team has also been especially meaningful for Hatice, and she appreciates the impact it has had on her. "My self-esteem grew, and I wanted to push forward. The friendships I built, and the welcoming training atmosphere made me feel at ease. When I score a try, my friends cheer for me. That's the best feeling. They believe in me, and I believe in them. We push each other to do better, and that makes us stronger, together."

Besides participating in Pass It Back, Hatice is also a player of the Adiyaman Rugby Sport Club, the city's first-ever rugby club, built on the foundation laid by Pass It Back. She dreams of becoming a professional player, representing Adiyaman and playing for the National team one day.

"I am a girl. I wear a hijab. I play rugby. And I'm proud of it," Hatice said with determination.

“

If anyone tries to tell me I shouldn't play, I'd tell them to watch and see – see how I will succeed.”

Hatice

## Unlocking potential: Supporting children with learning difficulties in Cambodia

“

I am so happy to see  
my son's progress.  
He is more focused and  
eager to learn.

Piseth's mum



In a small rural community in Cambodia, a young boy named Piseth faced significant challenges in his education. Struggling with reading and writing, he had been transferred multiple times between schools, unable to keep up with his peers.

ChildFund supported Piseth to access additional support and tutoring at community-based learning classes. Here, in a familiar and nurturing environment, he connects with peers and dedicated youth volunteers like Kimsan.

“I enjoy studying with my teacher, Kimsan and friend, Vichra. They help me whenever I struggle with reading and encouraged me to repeat words I struggle with,” says Piseth.

Kimsan, a young volunteer with the program, sees firsthand the impact of these classes, “The additional classes are a game-changer. Piseth, for example, has made remarkable progress improving his reading and writing skills, and becoming an active student in his class.”

The program has sparked a newfound interest in learning in Piseth and his mum expressed her excitement in the positive change she has seen in her son, “I am so happy to see my son's progress. He is more focused and eager to learn. I believe that with continued support, he will have a bright future.”

Through our Easy to Learn Project Phase III in Battambang Province, we're supporting additional learning classes, often held in community spaces like homes and schools. These classes provide targeted support to children with learning difficulties, helping them to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills.



## Escaping from early marriage in Kenya

At just 12 years old, Nashipai (now 14), the oldest of her eight siblings, faced a devastating situation. Her father, struggling financially, decided to marry her off in exchange for a dowry, a common practice in her traditional Maasai community in Kenya.

Nashipai's heart sank as she realised her chance at an education was slipping away. But Nashipai had learned about her rights at her school's Child Rights Club, supported by ChildFund, and she decided to confide in her principal, who offered her a safe haven in the school dormitory.

Her primary school in Kajiado County, Kenya has been supported by ChildFund through its local partner, Mount Kilimanjaro Child Development Programme, for more than two decades. ChildFund currently works in the school by facilitating the Child Rights Club, providing supplementary food for students and running tree planting and kitchen gardens programs.

The school dormitory, built by ChildFund, has become a sanctuary for girls like Nashipai, protecting them from early marriage and empowering them to pursue an education. Your generosity has provided Nashipai with a safe and supportive environment to learn and thrive.

“

I felt bad because the man was a stranger to me. I hated him. When he visited the house, I was always crying,”

Nashipai



Today, Nashipai is excelling in her studies and envisions a future as a doctor. “I have peace here,” she says. “I feel good because I just passed my exams.”

Thanks to your support, Nashipai's story is one of resilience, hope, and the transformative power of education.

## Turning Pledges into Progress: Ending Violence Against Children starts now



The statistics are staggering. Almost half the world's children – approximately one billion – experience violence each year. This distressing reality underscores the urgent need for immediate action to end violence against children.

In October 2024, ChildFund Australia CEO, Margaret Sheehan and ChildFund Cambodia Country Director, Boramey Hun joined 1,400 delegates from 119 countries at the first ever Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Bogotá, Colombia. Global leaders, governments, civil society organisations and youth advocates came together to take collective action towards ending violence against children.

Addressing government officials, policy makers and advocates at an official side event, ChildFund Australia CEO, Margaret Sheehan called for an end to the acceptance of corporal punishment at home and in schools.

“Violent physical punishment in the home, and in schools, can’t be assumed to be an ‘outdated’ practice when evidence shows it is in fact not just commonplace but widely accepted in many communities worldwide.”

“

**When our countries and communities accept corporal punishment, we normalise violence in childhood. We want to change that.”**

**Margaret Sheehan**

But change is happening! At the end of the two days, more than 100 countries made pledges to end violence against children, including seven countries committing to enacting legislation prohibiting corporal punishment and 23 government pledges on online safety, recognising this escalating crisis.

Now it's our turn. Together, it's time to break the cycle of violence, stand up for children's rights and build a world where all children are safe.

## Your support in action

We're so grateful for your commitment to creating lasting change for children and their communities. Here are just a few examples of how your support is building a world where children and young people can live free from all forms of violence.



### Swipe Safe

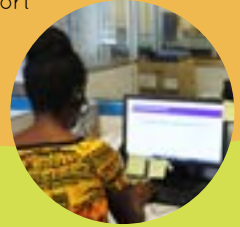
Our Swipe Safe program supports young people to safely navigate their online lives, balancing the benefits of being online with an awareness of the possible risks. Thanks to your generosity in FY24, we supported over 12,000 young people in Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Vietnam to attend Swipe Safe trainings. Parents and caregivers also have a vital role to play in supporting children to stay safe online, and this year with our partners, we delivered Swipe Safe training to 2,882 caregivers in Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

**BECAUSE EVERY CHILD NEEDS A CHILDHOOD**

## Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, where gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue, the 1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain provides a critical lifeline for survivors of violence and their families. Now in its ninth year of operation, this vital helpline offers a 24-hour toll-free service delivering confidential counselling, information and referrals to those in need.

In FY24, the 1-Tok Helpim Lain supported 16,024 people, including 6,971 women and girls and 3,891 children to access support services.



## Myanmar

Children in Myanmar are facing a child protection crisis, caught in the crossfire of conflict, poverty and exploitation. With your support, we're working with partners to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms, ensuring that children, parents and community leaders can identify risks, seek help, and access essential services. In FY24, we supported 180 child protection awareness sessions, reaching over 2,000 community members. This has resulted in a significant increase in community awareness, with 75% of participants reporting increased understanding of child protection, and 65% of families adopting more positive parenting practices.





ChildFund Australia recognises the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community.

We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.

### ChildFund Australia

Address: 162 Goulburn St, Surry Hills NSW 2010

Phone: 1800 023 600

Email: [info@childfund.org.au](mailto:info@childfund.org.au)

Website: [www.childfund.org.au](http://www.childfund.org.au)

ABN: 79 002 885 761



ACFID  
MEMBER



Front cover: Chenda (14) playing at school in Cambodia  
Back cover: Child in Uganda learning about child protection issues at school

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