Joint Appeal for Most Vulnerable Children of India, Amid COVID-19

Date: 15th May 2020

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


Respected Hon’ble Shri Narendra Modi Ji,

We highly appreciate the Government of India’s announcement to pledge the Self-Reliant India Economic Package “Aatma Nirbhar Bharat” of Rs.20 Lakh Crore. The announcement comes very timely as a stimulus to curb the downturn economy caused by the nation-wide lockdown for the prevention and control of the Coronavirus pandemic. We highly commend your leadership and the timely decision to strength the Economy, Infrastructure, System, Demography and Demand which are the five pillars to drive India to be resilient and self-reliant.

The Joining Forces for Children India is a partnership of six Child Development Agencies in India actively involved in COVID-19 response by catering to the needs of the most vulnerable population including children.

Hon’ble Prime Minister, as you are aware that, the COVID-19 pandemic is severely impacting the lives and well-being of the most vulnerable population especially the daily wage earners and migrant workers including women, children those who are stranded in different city location. In the absence of any alternative livelihood source they are risking their lives to walk down miles together to their native places along with their family including small children. Apart from this, there are multiple factors contributing to this adverse situation of children caused by the pandemic e.g. disruption of emergency services, public/child health services, nutrition, education, child protection, livelihood support and other essential services. The current situation has posed multi-dimensional challenges for the survival, wellbeing and sustenance of Children, which requires urgent attention.

The Lancet Global Health Journal published on 12th May 2020 estimates increased maternal and under-5 mortality rates for low and middle-income countries including India. This increase is being linked to the impact that COVID 19 will have on health systems and decreased access to food. The report estimates 598,196 under-5 deaths and 28,777 maternal deaths in India in coming 12 months due to potential disruption of the health system and decreased access to food. While the COVID-19 pandemic will increase mortality due to the virus, it is also likely to increase mortality indirectly due to malnutrition and preventable diseases. As per the estimation additional 1600 children could die every day due to malnutrition and other preventable diseases. The estimate is based on an analysis by researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
The analysis estimates that globally an additional 1.2 million under 5 children could die in just six months, which is in addition to the existing mortality rates for under 5 children.

It is presumed that hunger and malnutrition is going to be the biggest challenge in the coming days which will further affect the situation of vulnerable children and this will require strengthened nutrition security measures through caregivers livelihood support or direct cash transfer to the vulnerable families to ensure minimum nutritional needs of the under-5 children and lactating and pregnant mothers. It may also entail a well-coordinated PDS systems to ensure food security for all the needy families, specially the migrant families & children who may be on the verge of hunger/starvation. Since schools are closed, millions of our children are deprived from the one quality meal under the Mid Day Meal programme that they were receiving, hence there may be nutritional allowances (in the form of cash or dry ration) provided to the children.

Therefore, we request you to kindly consider a special package for Child Nutrition and Child Protection under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat flagship economic package or under the PM Cares fund. A substantial portion of the fund could be allocated under the Government of India’s Poshan Abhiyan (campaign) with implementation support from NGOs.

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:
- Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India.
- Hon’ble Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India
- CEO, NITI Aayog, Government of India.
- Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.