

February 28, 2022

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders of organizations that support poverty-focused health, development, democracy and human rights, and humanitarian assistance, we commend the U.S. Government's leadership and generosity to the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **At the March COVID-19 Summit, we urge you to put children and young people at the center of global, national, and local COVID-19 response plans.**

Because of its impacts on systems, services, and families, COVID-19 threatens decades of progress for children and young people:

- An estimated **6.7 million children have lost a caregiver due to COVID-19** in the past two years. Children's lives are permanently changed by the loss of a mother, father, or other caregiver. The loss of a caregiver is linked to adverse outcomes related to health, education, and more.
- More than 616 million children are still affected by full or partial school closures, and education disruptions in low- and middle-income countries have left **up to 70% of 10-year-olds unable to read.**
- Shuttered schools, lockdowns and disruption to services that protect girls mean an additional **2 million could suffer from female genital mutilation** over the next decade. Similarly, **10 million additional child marriages** may occur before the end of the decade as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COVID-19 spurred a 50% increase in internet use among children aged 6-12 in the U.S. alone, which has led to a **rapid increase in the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC)**, among other negative impacts: the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received nearly 22 million reports to its CyberTipline in 2020, a 28% increase from 2019.
- **Mental health** conditions affect more than 13% of adolescents aged 10–19 worldwide; by October 2020, the pandemic had disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of countries globally.
- An additional 9 million children **are at risk of being pushed into child labor** by the end of 2022 as a result of the pandemic.
- An additional **9 million children could suffer from wasting**, the most life-threatening form of malnutrition, due to the pandemic's impact on children's diets, nutrition services and feeding practices.

We recognize that the equitable distribution and delivery of COVID vaccines, especially to vulnerable populations in low-income countries, are key to ending the pandemic. At the same time, children and young people cannot wait for the world to be fully vaccinated to focus on their other needs. We must address these needs NOW. At the summit, you have the opportunity put children and young people first: ensure that their voices are heard and included, and that their needs are at the center of the global response to COVID-19 and its impacts.

Again, we appreciate your leadership and look forward to our continued partnership with your Administration to protect lives and futures around the world.

Sincerely,

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1,000 Days, an initiative of FHI Solutions

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