

Localization

Ahead of the Curve: ChildFund's Decades of Investing in Locally Led Change

For ChildFund, localization is not a trend — it's our legacy.

In today's international development landscape, the call for localization has never been more urgent. But at ChildFund, localization isn't a new direction — it's a long-standing commitment. For decades, we've championed the power of local leadership to drive sustainable, community-rooted change for children.

Our approach is grounded in trust, partnership and the belief that those closest to the challenges are also closest to the solutions. For over four decades, we've practiced what is now being widely recognized: that the most enduring and impactful change begins within communities themselves.

Our Investment in Local Partners

\$708M
since 2015

Today, ChildFund partners with nearly 200 independent local organizations across Africa, Asia and the Americas. These partnerships are not transactional — they are transformational. Altogether in the last decade, we've invested over \$700 million in helping local organizations strengthen their capacity and deliver programs that help children grow up healthy, educated, skilled and safe.

Localization at ChildFund is an opportunity to join a proven movement, one that is agile in crisis, scalable across geographies, and deeply rooted in community wisdom. ChildFund's investments help unlock the full potential of local leadership and drive sustainable change for generations to come.

Our Approach: Partnership, Not Patronage

At ChildFund, we don't outsource impact, we co-create it. Our partners are not subcontractors executing a global agenda; they are mission-driven entities with their own boards, strategies and deep community roots. Each partnership is built on mutual respect, shared purpose and a commitment to long-term impact and collaboration. Along the way, we provide tailored, sustained support that blends global expertise with local insight.

ChildFund's decentralized structure, with 84% of staff based in-country, enables us to listen first, collaborate deeply, and respond swiftly to evolving needs. Every partnership begins with listening — to local leaders, to community members and, most importantly, to children and youth. This listening-first approach ensures that programs are not only contextually relevant but also community-owned and child-centered.

Investing in Local Capacity and Impact

ChildFund's localization model is anchored in two foundational pillars: strengthening local capacity and resourcing community-driven programs.

The first pillar is funded through our Partner Effectiveness Fund (PEF), \$100 million invested since 2015, to ensure that local partners are equipped to deliver high-quality, accountable and impactful programs. The PEF advances three strategic objectives:

- **Strengthening Basic Accountability** (over \$68 million invested): Strengthening financial systems, governance structures, and operational management to foster transparency and trust.
- **Bolstering Program Quality** (over \$27 million invested): Supporting evidence-based program design that aligns with local priorities and national development strategies.
- **Ensuring Program Effectiveness** (over \$4 million invested): Measuring outcomes and learning from results to continuously improve the impact of programs for children.

Investing in Localized Impact



The second pillar is supported through direct program funding, more than \$608 million invested over the past decade to local partners' implementation of child-focused initiatives. These programs span health, education, child protection and skills development, and are tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of each community.

ChildFund provides long-term, customized support — from technical tools and systems to fundraising mentorship — to help partners grow into self-sustaining, high-impact changemakers. These investments have enabled local partners to build strong governance, manage complex budgets, measure and communicate impact, and attract their own funding — all while delivering programs that meet global standards and remaining deeply rooted in local realities.

Varieties of Local Leadership

ChildFund recognizes that effective localization requires a nuanced, context-responsive approach to partnership. That's why we work with three distinct categories of local partners, each playing a vital role in advancing our shared mission to improve children's lives.

- **Core Partners** are community-based organizations and local NGOs that work directly with children and families at the grassroots level. These partners are deeply embedded in the communities they serve, bringing cultural fluency — including indigenous wisdom — as well as trust and long-standing relationships. They implement the programs they have co-created with ChildFund's support, ensuring that interventions are locally relevant, community-owned, and sustainable.
- **Allied Partners** may be local and national governments, government-supported groups, local NGOs, local academic institutions, companies in the private sector, service providers, faith-based groups, professional networks and others. Core partners may engage with any of these to inform, enhance or expand their programs.

- Country Partners are national-level organizations that represent ChildFund in countries such as Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, and India. These partners serve as the organization's primary interface with governments, donors, and other key stakeholders. They play a strategic role in shaping national policy dialogue, mobilizing resources, and ensuring alignment with national development priorities.

A fourth category, comprising local as well as global organizations, is **Technical Partners** — specialized entities that complement ChildFund primarily in the grant space. These organizations bring targeted expertise to complement ChildFund's approaches in health, education, livelihoods, child protection and sustainability to enhance program quality, foster innovation and strengthen the evidence base for what works. Their contributions help ensure that ChildFund's programs are not only grounded in local realities but also aligned with global best practices.

Impact in Action: Scaling What Works

ChildFund's localization model comes to life through the achievements of our partners—organizations that have grown from grassroots initiatives into nationally recognized leaders in child development, and multi-country collaborations that have scaled across borders.

In **Kenya**, the Emali Dedicated Children's Agency (EDCA) began as a small community-based group. With sustained support from ChildFund, EDCA strengthened its governance, financial systems, and strategic planning. Today, it serves more than 2,500 households and is on track to operate independently by 2026. Similarly, in the Philippines, a grassroots parent group evolved into an independent, nationally recognized NGO that attracts international donor support. This is the power of long-term, intentional capacity building.

In **Central America**, local partners led the Preventing Irregular Migration of Children and Youth initiative across Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. By offering education, protection, and economic opportunities, the program addressed root causes of child migration through locally led solutions to a complex regional challenge.

The Come Play With Me initiative began in **Guatemala** with multiple local partners promoting early childhood development through play. When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person programming, partners adapted the model for digital delivery, translating materials into 19 local languages. The initiative has since scaled across **multiple countries** and influenced national policy in Guatemala and Brazil—showcasing how local innovation can drive systemic change.

In **Brazil**, REJUDES (Youth Network in Defense of Social Rights) emerged in 2014 after ChildFund Brazil engaged youth in policy monitoring. Over a decade later, REJUDES continues to shape national programs and policies, led by young people who are now advocates for their own futures.

In **Zambia**, ChildFund partnered with Amref Africa and the country's largest nursing education institution to train over 2,500 nurses through e-learning — addressing youth unemployment and a national health worker shortage.

All of these illustrate the power of shifted power, where local leadership drives lasting change. This is why ChildFund's commitment to locally led development guides who we are and how we connect in partnership with local organizations. Together we make it ever more possible for children to thrive.