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ChildFund International in Kenya wins Google Africa Online Safety grant to prevent online sexual exploitation of children

Richmond, Va. (February 10, 2021) – On February 9, this year’s global Safer Internet Day, Google announced ChildFund International in Kenya as one of eight organizations to be awarded grants of up to \$100,000 to support projects that promote digital literacy and online safety of children, young people and families.

In Kenya, sexual exploitation and abuse of children has worsened with the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies and the internet. ChildFund’s Tuchanuke (meaning “Let’s Wise Up”) Online Child Protection project will apply an ecosystem approach to prevent, address and respond to the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC) in several primarily urban sub-counties in Kenya.

Internet use among young people has burgeoned in recent years, especially in the global COVID-19 pandemic. Because the threat of OSEAC remains relatively unknown among children and caregivers, measures for protection are also unknown. Meanwhile, with the many online channels available to potential abusers for accessing children, it is often difficult for police and other officials to track illegal behaviors. This is especially apparent in low-income areas in Nairobi, considered the hub of online sexual exploitation of children in Kenya, and Kiambu County, which often serves as a supplier of trafficked children.

The Tuchanuke project will involve nationwide research on the scope of OSEAC; community-, school- and media-based training; and policy development to prevent online sex trafficking. Key participants will include 1,200 young people ages 15 to 24, who are at most risk but also have the greatest potential to become online safety champions; 6,000 parents and caregivers who, with increased awareness of child protection risks to youth, are positioned to keep children and youth safe from online harm; and 30 government officials from targeted sub-counties, to develop and strengthen strategies and policies to reduce online sexual exploitation.

“When we mobilize and sensitize caregivers and community groups, including youth, to prevent and respond to online sexual exploitation,” says Chege Ngugi, ChildFund’s country director for Kenya, “when we build awareness about positive online engagement, when we promote dialogue between government and internet service providers, and when we all collaborate

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toward strong strategies, policies and plans to address this issue – only then – children will be much, much safer.”

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About ChildFund

Founded in 1938, ChildFund works throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas — including the United States — to connect children with what they need to grow up healthy, educated, skilled and safe, no matter where they are. Last year, we reached 13.6 million children and family members in 24 countries. About 200,000 Americans support our work by sponsoring individual children or investing in ChildFund programs. Find out more at www.ChildFund.org.