



Save the Children.

# COVID-19: ONE YEAR ON IMPACT REPORT



## IN THE WAR AGAINST THE PANDEMIC, CHILDREN MUST COME FIRST

The pandemic is the largest humanitarian crisis Save the Children has ever faced. In 2020 across 87 countries, including the United States, our teams launched and sustained an emergency response to contain the spread, protect communities, and support children and families affected by COVID-19. Today, we're still working together with children to beat the virus and the impact it has had on their lives, work made possible by our partners and supporters.

New hope can be found in vaccines as they are developed and rolled out. We are pressing leaders around the world and working with our partners to ensure the most vulnerable people will have access and are prioritized, as well as health workers, community leaders and teachers who are critical to keeping children safe and learning.

There is hope, but there is more work to do. The pandemic came at a time when millions were already going hungry and missing out on learning at school. We have to build a better, fairer world if we want to prevent the 2020's from becoming a "lost decade" of tragic reversals in newborn, child and maternal health; in lifting families out of poverty; in education for all; and inequality for girls and women.

We will win the battle against the virus but will lose the war against the pandemic for a generation if we do not ensure that children get back to school safely, have enough food to eat and are protected.

We owe it to children to get this right.

*Tala, 9, lives in a Syrian camp where she usually attends a Save the Children-supported school. She is now learning remotely and washes her hands whenever she can.*





## HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR RESPONSE

Since the earliest days of the pandemic, we've been there for families, currently reaching children and caregivers simultaneously in 87 countries, including the United States. We're adapting and expanding how we deliver our world-class programs and advocate for children, as well as launching new and innovative initiatives to prevent, mitigate and respond to the pandemic's devastating impacts. And, we're sharing lessons learned and best practices with all our country offices so we are better prepared for what lies ahead with COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks.



### Save the Children has so far changed the lives of **29.5M PEOPLE**

Save the Children has so far changed the lives of **29.5 million** coronavirus-affected people – including **11.8 million children around the world** and **1.1 million children here in the United States** – ensuring they grow up healthy, learning and safe. We are reaching millions more through our innovative COVID-19 information campaigns.

We're also listening to and involving children themselves – including conducting the largest-ever global survey of its kind, in which some 25,000 children, parents and caregivers shared their experiences, hopes and fears for the future during this crisis.

As always, we're doing whatever it takes for children – on the front lines, in the world's hardest-to-reach places, where it's toughest to be a child.

#### **SAVING LIVES**

With decades of experience in community-based health care, we know it's the first line of defense against this crisis. To prevent immediate and lasting harm, we're supporting lifesaving and life-sustaining services for children and families while also strengthening activities to prevent, detect and manage cases.

To keep children healthy, we have focused on providing them and their families with the knowledge and resources to slow the spread and keep them safe from the disease. Our teams continue to work alongside doctors and nurses to strengthen weak health systems. We know community health workers are also essential in the fight against COVID-19. They provide basic health care so children who can't get to health clinics don't miss out on crucial care. They also give children in the toughest places to grow up access to lifesaving treatment for malnutrition and other preventable childhood diseases. So far, **we've strengthened 117,000 community health workers' skills and knowledge to ensure children and families across the globe receive health care.**

Keeping communities healthy also requires educating people about how the virus is transmitted and giving them the resources to stay safe. To get the message out, we've been sharing information about COVID-19 and dispelling rumors through national radio programming, social media, TV, mass media and even with megaphones in remote locations. Through our efforts, **we've supported 64 countries in rolling out large-scale COVID-19 risk and safety communication campaigns.**

Teaching families how to properly wash their hands and ensuring they have access to soap and water are two basic, highly effective ways of preventing the virus from spreading. Globally, **we have provided over 762,000 households with access to safe water and soap for handwashing** and continue to reach more every day through our water sanitation and hygiene programs.

#### **LEARNING UNDER LOCKDOWN**

COVID-19 has created the biggest global education emergency of our lifetime, prompting us to launch an education response that reaches the world's most vulnerable children to ensure they can continue to learn and that their physical and psychosocial well-being is protected. Globally, **we have supported distance learning for 2.9 million children, helped 53 governments to adapt school curricula to address challenges brought on by the pandemic.** We have also launched a global campaign, Save Our



*Anna, 12, who lives in northeast Uganda, keeps learning from home using a radio with her father's help.*

Education, to mobilize the world to safeguard children's right to a quality education.

Where schools have remained in session, we have focused on supporting the safety of teachers and students at school during this crisis. In cases where online learning has become the norm, we have prioritized children's daily access to quality, inclusive interactive learning activities. And with the help of teachers and governments, we have created comprehensive distance learning materials to support parents who are educating their children at home.

School closures have meant that many children are going hungry because their families depend on school meal programs. To respond, we've adapted existing feeding programs, set up food distribution sites, and delivered food and vital messages about the virus to families in rural communities via bus, bicycle, rickshaws and pickup trucks.

We are particularly focused on girls' education, as we know they are especially vulnerable when it comes to education during emergencies. As more families are forced into poverty by the pandemic, many girls must find work to support their parents and siblings, go without food and become the main caregivers for sick family members. As a result, many of them drop out of school and are far less likely of returning than boys. That is why we've created accelerated distance-learning programs for girls and enhanced our gender-sensitive messaging to parents and teachers to emphasize the importance of girls' education and empowerment.

We have also pioneered new ways for children to stay safe while keeping up with their education, employing both high-tech and low-tech innovations. When the time comes, we're committed to ensuring all children can return to school safely.

## KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

For many children, their neighborhoods or homes are not safe places. As stress from lockdowns and secondary impacts of COVID-19 such as unemployment, hunger and social isolation have increased, so have the incidences of children experiencing violence, exploitation and abuse. To date, **we've helped 112,000 of the most at-risk children receive the support of case managers to ensure they are safe and protected.**



We have helped **112,000** of the most at-risk children receive the support of case managers to ensure they are safe and protected

Additionally, we are working hard to keep the most vulnerable children – including girls, child refugees, children living on the street and children with disabilities – physically safe from abuse and harm.

Reports of deteriorating mental health among children and adults continue to rise at alarming rates, leaving many families desperate for help on how to cope with stress and trauma. That is why **we've provided 626,000 children and caregivers with mental health and psychosocial support.**

Teaching families how to deal with the new stressors they are experiencing because of the pandemic is vital to keep children safe. Through child-friendly messages over radio, TV and social media, we've also been sharing resources and guidance on positive parenting.

Focusing on women and girls who face increased risks of gender-based violence, child marriage and teenage pregnancy is another high priority. The economic instability and lack of food, combined with a growing risk of violence and sexual exploitation, leaves many parents feeling as if they have little alternative but to force their girls to marry men who are often much older. These marriages violate girls' rights and leave them at increased risk of depression, lifelong violence, disabilities, and even death – including from childbirth, given their bodies simply aren't ready to bear children. We have integrated gender sensitive programming across our response to identify those at risk and provide support and care to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. We're also working hard to fill the gaps where women and children are not being prioritized in national response plans around the world.

## HELPING FAMILIES MAKE ENDS MEET

Lockdowns eliminated many jobs, and it may take years – if ever – for many people to recover. One of the most effective ways we help families is through cash assistance. Cash distributions are fast, efficient, contribute to local economies and empower people to make decisions based on what their families need most. Thus far, **we have provided cash and vouchers to 554,000 families.**

Our teams are scaling up, adapting and innovating cash assistance programs to reach those who need it most. We're providing cash transfers via mobile phones, with a focus on women and girls' economic empowerment and access to technology, information and services. In addition, we deliver essential items to families where markets are closed, and we're training young people to develop the skills they need for safe, meaningful employment after the pandemic is over. We have also supported 46 countries to protect, adapt and expand safety measures for the poorest families whose livelihoods have been hit the hardest by the pandemic.

## CONTINUING TO STAND SIDE BY SIDE WITH FAMILIES

Children have been through so much this year, yet they are incredibly resilient, as are their families. Since we began our COVID-19 work, you've helped make sure children around the world stay safe and healthy and keep learning.

Thanks to supporters like you, we will continue to respond to COVID-19 in 2021 to prevent the spread of coronavirus among the world's most vulnerable populations. We will also work tirelessly to ensure that our programs around the world continue so that children have the best chance of surviving, learning and staying safe.



A parent receives a box of food staples and cleaning products as part of our COVID-19 response in Mexico.



# HELPING U.S. CHILDREN LEARN AND GET NUTRITIOUS MEALS DURING THE PANDEMIC

In March, when 94% of America's schools shuttered their doors due to COVID-19 concerns, we ramped up our support of vulnerable children in some of rural America's poorest communities. Throughout the year, our efforts have been focused on making sure children can continue to learn and receive the nutritious meals they need while they're home from school.

In 2020, in over **200 communities in the 10 states where we have early childhood development and education programs, we have helped 1,123,893 children** through our U.S. COVID-19 response. And, we will continue to help address longer-term needs the pandemic is creating in 2021.

## CREATING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

It is clear that wide-scale learning loss is among the biggest impacts the pandemic is having on America's children. Our longstanding presence in isolated, underserved rural communities allowed us to swiftly adapt and deliver our early learning and school-age education programs while families sheltered in place at home.

**Coordinators of our Early Steps to School Success** program for families with children ages 0-5 have used phone calls, texts and videos to support parents so they can continue doing activities with their children to further their development even though social distancing makes home visits and group gatherings impossible.

To keep children learning over the summer, we distributed additional supplies and organized a reading challenge with local libraries and schools – resulting in children reading over 450,000 books. Our **SummerBoost** learning and enrichment camps – which were remote this year – served more than 3,500 children. In total, **49,500 kids received learning materials through our summer programs.**

Now that school has resumed again, we've continued adapting our school-based math and reading programs

to help children make up for lost learning, regardless of whether schools are operating on remote, hybrid or regular schedules.

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN NEED

From the beginning, we were concerned about the impact school closures had on children's nutrition, with more than 30 million kids relying on free or reduced price meals they received at school. Lockdowns have left many American families struggling to put food on the table, and no child can thrive – let alone learn – when he or she is hungry.

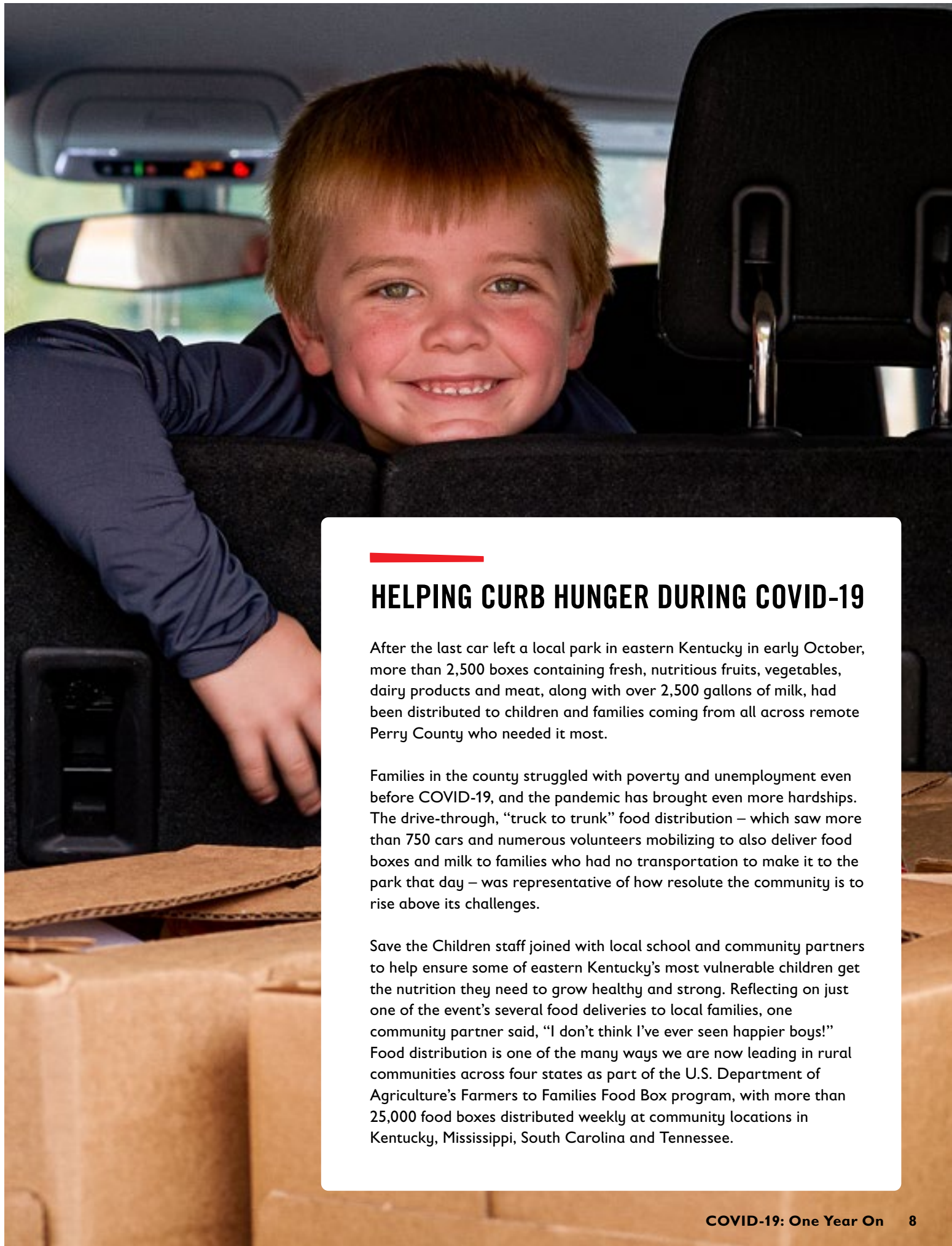
To ensure children are getting the nutrition they need to stay healthy, **we've helped prepare and deliver 18.4 million nourishing meals to children in rural communities.** In September, we began distributing fruits, vegetables, meat, milk and dairy products to families in rural Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers to Families Food Box program.

We've also provided grants to schools and local community-based organizations to get food to families in need. While practicing compassionate social distancing, many of our U.S. staff members made deliveries along district bus routes to remote areas of the country so they could get meals and educational materials to families with limited transportation.

To help families become self-sufficient again, we piloted a cash transfer project in two states and distributed care packages including essential items such as wipes, clothing, books, early learning tips, and fun, educational activities to make sure they have what they need. Since March, **we've provided struggling rural families with \$9.1 million in materials.**

**Through our efforts, we've delivered more nutritious meals combined with learning resources to children in rural America during this pandemic than any other nonprofit.**





---

## HELPING CURB HUNGER DURING COVID-19

After the last car left a local park in eastern Kentucky in early October, more than 2,500 boxes containing fresh, nutritious fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meat, along with over 2,500 gallons of milk, had been distributed to children and families coming from all across remote Perry County who needed it most.

Families in the county struggled with poverty and unemployment even before COVID-19, and the pandemic has brought even more hardships. The drive-through, “truck to trunk” food distribution – which saw more than 750 cars and numerous volunteers mobilizing to also deliver food boxes and milk to families who had no transportation to make it to the park that day – was representative of how resolute the community is to rise above its challenges.

Save the Children staff joined with local school and community partners to help ensure some of eastern Kentucky’s most vulnerable children get the nutrition they need to grow healthy and strong. Reflecting on just one of the event’s several food deliveries to local families, one community partner said, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen happier boys!” Food distribution is one of the many ways we are now leading in rural communities across four states as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farmers to Families Food Box program, with more than 25,000 food boxes distributed weekly at community locations in Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee.





## MAYA'S ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

Maya\*, 14, is a Syrian refugee who lives in the Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan. While she used to be very shy, taking part in Save the Children's Coaching for Life project helped her develop confidence and make new friends.

She is now an outspoken advocate for the rights of other children in the camp, especially girls. Determined to end child marriage and help girls finish their education, she runs awareness sessions for parents to help them understand why they shouldn't marry their daughters before they're 18.

Maya's efforts have become even more vital during the pandemic, as the lack of food and income has left many parents feeling as though they have little choice but to force their daughters to marry.

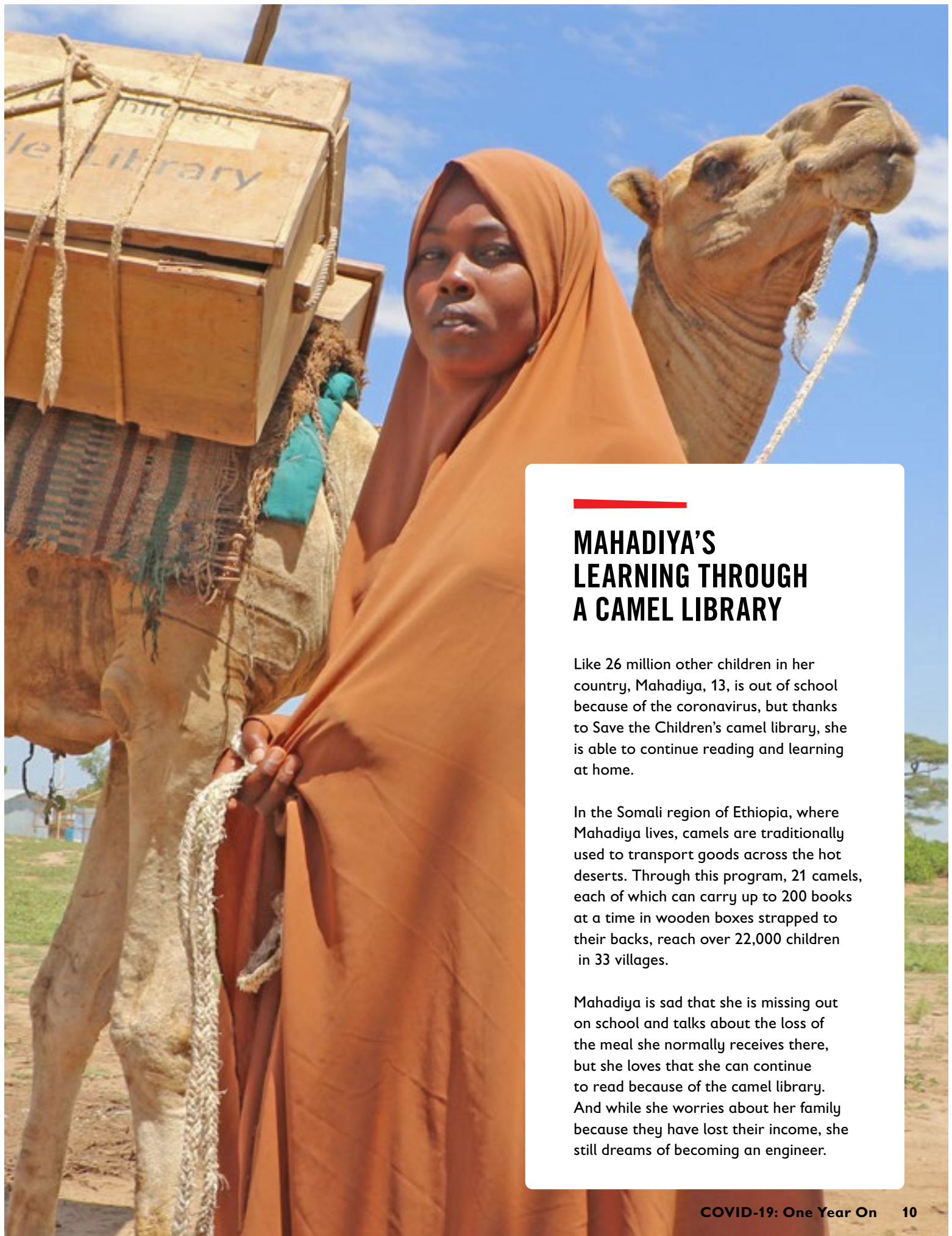
Although her school is now closed, she hasn't let that stop her from advocating for girls while raising awareness about the virus. Along with our health team members, who make daily visits to the camp,

she's delivering critical information about how the virus spreads, encouraging people in her community to wash their hands and stay safe, and urging women who are being abused to seek help.

Maya also continues her studies. "We don't go to school now, but I keep up with my lessons through TV, and I take pictures of my homework and send them to my teachers via WhatsApp. I miss my school so much because it is my second home, and I miss my teachers."

An aspiring pharmacist, Maya wants to continue standing up for women and girl's rights in the future by writing articles and through poetry. "I feel that poetry has an essence and can deliver a message to all people, regardless of who they are," she said. The young poet contributed "She Was" to our Global Girlhood report (see below).

**\*name changed to protect identity**



---

## MAHADIYA'S LEARNING THROUGH A CAMEL LIBRARY

Like 26 million other children in her country, Mahadiya, 13, is out of school because of the coronavirus, but thanks to Save the Children's camel library, she is able to continue reading and learning at home.

In the Somali region of Ethiopia, where Mahadiya lives, camels are traditionally used to transport goods across the hot deserts. Through this program, 21 camels, each of which can carry up to 200 books at a time in wooden boxes strapped to their backs, reach over 22,000 children in 33 villages.

Mahadiya is sad that she is missing out on school and talks about the loss of the meal she normally receives there, but she loves that she can continue to read because of the camel library. And while she worries about her family because they have lost their income, she still dreams of becoming an engineer.





## SOLEMA'S FIGHTING FOR HER FAMILY'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

When her son Sayeed\* was only six weeks old, Solema\*, now 22, and her family were forced to flee their home to escape the escalating violence in Myanmar. After many weeks in the jungle, they crossed the border into Bangladesh to join thousands of other Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, where they've lived for the past three years.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Solema and her husband have had to close their shop due to government restrictions, which means they don't have as much income to buy food and other items and now rely more heavily on Save the Children's food distributions. With the help of our community health workers, they've learned how to reduce the spread of the disease and how to protect vulnerable members of their family. They also continue to receive essential care from our primary health center, where Solema gave birth to her second son, Mohammed\*.

While life is still difficult for Solema and her family, they no longer live in fear of being killed. If they contract the virus, they can access the 60-bed COVID-19 isolation and treatment center we built for Rohingya refugees and host communities, which has a dedicated area where women with COVID-19 can safely give birth and take care of their babies.

COVID-19 has revealed and reinforced deep inequalities, where low-income and marginalized communities are paying the highest price. These are the places where millions of people can't afford to miss even a day of wages. Where people living in conflict zones with weak health systems are being hit hardest. And where displaced families and refugees live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions where social distancing is impossible.

**\*name changed to protect identity**

Front Cover:  
McClean, 10, and her young brother Eddie  
are among 650 children from their rural  
community in Zimbabwe who received  
hygiene kits from Save the Children.



**Save the Children®**

Thanks to supporters like you, our global response to this unprecedented crisis will continue in 2021 and beyond.

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. Since our founding over 100 years ago, we've changed the lives of over 1 billion children. In the United States and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

All photos © Save the Children

**Savethechildren.org**

