

# SMASHING

## BOUNDARIES

In 2023, we used cricket to change the game for girls in Nepal. It was just one of the ways our innovative work helped millions of children around the world this year – with your support.

In the pages that follow you'll meet more children like Ria and learn more about how, together, we've been helping children win huge victories in 2023.



Save the  
Children



**A YEAR**

# TO BE PROUD OF

**The worst global food crisis in decades, skyrocketing prices, escalating conflicts and a deepening climate crisis - this has been an exceptionally tough year for children.**

**Problems on this scale demand new, innovative solutions - and that is what Save the Children has delivered in 2023. We've worked with partners, local communities and the real experts - children - to break down the boundaries holding children back and find innovative solutions to the problems they face. We've:**



found ways to make sure children can keep learning from a quality education even in the midst of disasters and war



deployed our Emergency Health Unit, putting teams of doctors and nurses - equipped from a global network of supply hubs - at an injured child's side



provided cash transfers for families facing extreme poverty, giving them the power to decide what their children most need and buy it, stimulating the local economy at the same time



set up child-friendly spaces where children have the chance to play, learn and just be kids again



trained farmers how to grow drought-resilient crops so they can withstand the worst effects of climate change



broken down cultural barriers so that children - and especially girls - can have a voice in their communities and be at the centre of everything we do.



given children the expert psychological support they need to begin to deal with their terrible experiences

This is long-term work that will let children take the future into their own hands. It's also work that needs to constantly evolve as we keep pace with a rapidly changing world.

This is why flexible funding has never been more important. It is the very bedrock of who we are – supporting children wherever they need it most. Funds that aren't tied to a specific programme or country mean we can create and pilot innovative programmes, respond rapidly to humanitarian crises, and share our skills, experience and resources to maximise our impact.

In this report, you'll read remarkable stories from 2023. You'll meet children who've transformed their lives for good and learn about programmes breaking new ground for millions of children across the world.



# TAKING THE FUTURE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS

**War in Syria took away the life Ghinwa should have had. At the age of five, she lost her home and her chance of going to school.**

**When she enrolled years later in Lebanon, economic turmoil saw her school hit by power cuts and teachers' strikes. Ghinwa was forced to drop out again.**

"When I stopped going to school it made me feel that I can't learn anymore, like I have lost a very precious thing."

Then she heard about an education centre Save the Children was running in the camp – she'd found herself in a place where she could grow, learn and make friends.

**“ Before I went to the centre I couldn't read or write, I had no hope for my future, I had no dreams. But now I believe in myself, anything is possible. If I study hard, I can achieve anything I want. ”**

Ghinwa

**READ MORE ABOUT GHINWA HERE**



## BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

Across the world, conflict, climate change and rising costs are making it harder for children like Ghinwa to go to school: right now, 244 million children are missing out on learning. In 2023, we pushed hard get them back in the classroom. For example:



Our Safe Back to School and Learning Fund supported the education of more than **118,000 children across 15 countries** in crisis in the first half of this year.



Our new **zero-out-of-school project** will identify and enrol **out-of-school children in 30 districts in Rwanda**, track their attendance, offer safe spaces for them to learn and provide specially designed materials for disabled children.



This includes our catch-up clubs which have **boosted the literacy, numeracy and the social-emotional skills of 30,000 children** in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and the Philippines.



# BITING BACK

## AGAINST HUNGER

**Aisha's mum rushed her to a hospital we support in Kenya when she became dangerously sick with malnutrition.**

**"In the middle of the night, I was scared... I held her hand," Saadia\* recalled. "I thought she would die." We gave Aisha the treatment she needed – which included a course of high-nutrient peanut paste – to make a full recovery.**

**"She has gained weight and is getting stronger," Saadia\* proudly reported. "She is happy and healthy! If she is healthy, I can be happy."**

Photo: Esther Mbabazi / Save the Children

## GLOBAL HUNGER CRISIS

**A deadly triple threat of conflict, climate change and the cost-of-living is driving the worst global food crisis in decades. Around 149 million children across the world can't get enough to eat, and 14 million children are already suffering severe acute malnutrition.**

There are reasons to hope. Globally, the number of people in famine-like conditions almost halved in 2023. Huge progress has been made but now the root drivers of this crisis are pushing some countries beyond breaking point. Decades of progress are at risk of reversal if we don't take more collective action in 2024.



Last year alone, Save the Children's work on hunger reached 35 million children.

**Treatment:** Last year, we treated more than 750,000 children for acute malnutrition. We provided them with life-saving antibiotics and high-energy peanut paste packed with all the vitamins, minerals and calories malnourished children need to survive and recover rapidly.

**Health workers:** We trained more than 21,000 health workers to screen and treat children for malnutrition in their communities, and refer more complicated cases to health centres.

**Nutrition advice:** Our nutrition counsellors gave more than 600,000 pregnant women and young mums advice on breastfeeding, diet and hygiene.

**Anticipating disaster:** We spot the early signs of drought and help families prepare for impending hunger. We provide them with cash transfers to buy food, medicines and other essentials and help communities set up savings groups where families can pool funds.

## NEW LOW-COST SOLUTIONS

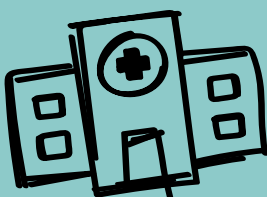
**Hunger isn't the only threat to children's health. Millions of children die every year from diseases we know how to treat and prevent.**

Our ground-breaking health programmes reached millions of children this year, and once again we found innovative low-cost solutions to take our work to the next level. Here are just a couple of examples.



**Diagnosing pneumonia:** An innovative bead necklace we've developed is revolutionising the detection and treatment of pneumonia for children in remote areas of Kenya, saving nearly 200 lives this year. Community health workers use the beads to count and detect the rapid breathing which is an early warning sign of the disease.

[FIND OUT MORE HERE](#)



**Safer childbirth:** Our revamped state-of-the-art medical centre in Rwanda's largest refugee camp now has the capacity to perform caesarean sections. It can carry out up to three C-sections a day, and an estimated 93 babies' lives were saved in the space of just three months last year as a result.

[FIND OUT MORE HERE](#)



# EMERGENCIES

## BY THEIR SIDE

**Umut\*, 10, ran from his home during the massive earthquake that hit Türkiye this year. Now, with the help of mental health and child protection staff like Arif, he's beginning to feel himself again. Watch a day in the life of Arif here.**

**WATCH A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ARIF HERE**

**In 2023, our Emergency Fund helped us to be by children's sides just when they needed us most. This pool of flexible funding means we can rapidly unlock critical aid as soon as it's needed. It helps us prepare better, respond faster, and protect longer.**

So far this year (from January –September), the Emergency Fund has supported **more than 16.8 million people** in 2023, including **more than 9.3 million children** caught up in multiple crises across the globe. And we've channelled £15 million (16% of funds) to local and national partners.

When earthquakes devastated Türkiye and Syria in February, our teams got vital supplies to children and families to help them survive the scariest moment of their lives. By September this year, we'd reached more than 800,000 people, including more than 425,000 children.

We worked hand in hand with local partners across northwest Syria and Türkiye, expert organisations we've supported for years, to:



**deliver the food, water, warm blankets, winter clothes and shelter materials** families needed to survive



**set up safe spaces** and give psychological support to children so they could start to process their terrible experiences



**distribute thousands of hygiene and dignity kits** to those without access to safe drinking water, toilets or washing facilities



**provide cash transfers** to families who'd lost everything to help them buy the basics.

## THERE WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

**The Türkiye-Syria earthquake was just one of the 80 emergencies we've responded to in 2023. They ranged from ongoing large-scale humanitarian responses to the world-changing conflicts in Ukraine; to responding to forgotten crises like the devastating earthquakes in Afghanistan, and brutal conflicts in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo; to continuing the painstaking work of helping to rebuild for the long-term in the aftermath of disasters like the floods in Pakistan.**

In these crises, we delivered the immediate relief families needed to survive. We kept children safe, reunited them with their families and provided the kind of psychological support children needed to cope with their trauma. And as soon as it was safe we made sure children could return to the classroom.

**BREAKING BARRIERS**

# FOR GIRLS

**Ria, 16, smashed boundaries on and off the pitch in 2023. She formed the first girls' cricket team in her part of Nepal – defying the traditional idea that girls should stay at home. And the side's success is having an incredible effect on some other deep-rooted attitudes.**

Ria and her friends started playing cricket at a Save the Children Child Club. There, they also learned about the issues affecting their lives, especially the dangers of child marriage.

Ria is just one of almost 10,000 children in Nepal who've joined our clubs. They hold rallies, street dramas, debates – and cricket matches – to get their message across. Their efforts have seen attitudes change radically and local rates of child marriage plunge.

**WATCH RIA'S STORY HERE**





Photo: Suzanne Lee / Save the Children

## GIRLS' IMPACT FUND

**Our Girls' Impact Fund marks a profound shift in how we're working together with girls to break down barriers, amplify their voices and advocate for lasting solutions.**

**This year it supported a nine-girl delegation to the Women Deliver Conference in Rwanda where they spoke out to decision-makers from government and the private sector about the issues affecting girls, including on how to better support girl-led movements.**

The Girls' Impact Fund also funded research published in our annual **Global Girlhood Report 2023: Girls at the Centre of the Storm - Her planet, her future, her solutions**. It explores the impact of the climate crisis on girls' rights, and shows that, while girls are at the centre of the storm, they are frequently left out of climate decision-making processes.

**In Sierra Leone**, we worked with communities to help girls to avoid forced marriages and return to school. In Kailahun District, home to 800,000 married girls, we engaged with Paramount Chiefs who passed a district-wide bylaw against child marriage. And our partnership with the Sierra Leone Parliament saw a revised Child Rights Bill that moved the country towards ending child marriage.

**In Uganda**, our programme Girls as Drivers of Change continued to make remarkable progress. We've developed a curriculum that teaches children about gender inequality, and how to design bold solutions – the course has now been completed by 290 children this year. And our Solutions Lab gives children the chance to work with inspiring local leaders and gender-based violence specialists to co-design ambitious, yet practical, solutions to the barriers they face.

# POTENTIAL

## NOT POVERTY IN THE UK



### Children take control of their story...

Maddy learned how to make short films at our creative project for disadvantaged teenagers. She teamed up with young people to make a movie inspired by their experiences of poverty.

Photo: Save the Children



**If you want to know what solutions children need, it's best to listen to the experts: children.**

**In 2023, a group of teenagers living in poverty in the UK came together to create a powerful short film [Potential Not Poverty](#). Made in collaboration with Save the Children and Creative Agency Effervescent, the film highlights how poverty can stifle children's potential.**

The film's power stems from the insights and voices of the children who made it. As 16-year-old Maddy explains. "You get that authenticity. Real people tell their stories."

Another of the child film-makers, Aisha, appeared on Sky News to promote the film. And it was shown to MPs and policy makers at a parliamentary event in October.

**[You can get a behind-the-scenes view of the film here.](#)**

## PARENT POWER!

**In 2023, we gave parents a platform to make their voice heard too.**

For five years, our parent campaigners have been pushing the UK government to allow childcare costs to be paid upfront for parents on Universal Credit. The breakthrough finally came early this year when Chancellor Jeremy Hunt, as part of his Spring budget announcements, made [the change we've been calling for](#).

One of our campaigners, mum-of-four Tasha Thomas, said: "A whole weight has been lifted...It means I will be able to pay my bills and increase my hours."

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES

**Across the UK, we're helping build communities of people who care about children, listen to what's important to them, and work together to make things better. From Manchester and Dundee, to Tower Hamlets and Margate, to Belfast and Bettws and more, we're using the latest findings from child-development experts to:**



explore new ways to close the early learning gap by supporting families and children to **play and learn together**



set up **community groups** for parents to meet and learn together, and give each other mutual support



work with service providers, such as Toy Libraries and the NHS, to increase **parents' engagement and confidence**



help to **join up services** so they are easier for parents to navigate.



collaborate with partners to strengthen families' **mental health**

So far in 2023, we've supported **more than 21,500 people** in the UK through our community events and projects. To-date we've worked with more than 270 organisations at local, regional and national level – working with communities in a way that supports the local environment, rather than a one size fits all approach.

# “IT WAS LIFE-CHANGING!”

**Lilly (pictured), baby Jack and mum Alice from Dundee received our emergency grant of £340 in supermarket vouchers in 2021, when life was really tough for the family.**

Today in 2023 things look very different. Alice is fulfilling her lifelong dream of studying Fashion & Textiles, Jack is at nursery, and Lilly is excelling at school, as well as at Karate.

“It was kind of life changing,” says Alice. “It was such a huge amount of money for me. It has a knock-on effect. Being able to save money on food then translates into more money on heating and then more treats for the kids. It just opens up a whole world of possibility. Those vouchers ended up meaning my daughter could get more Karate lessons... and now she’s four belts in.”

Since launching in 2021, our Early Years Grants have helped over 5,990 families in crisis and 12,056 children with day-to-day essentials and other basics like a cot, dining table or washing machine, as well as providing resources that support play and learning at home. The grants are a key part of our work to give children in the UK the best possible start in life.



# THE POWER OF PLAY

**Play is incredibly powerful. That's the principle behind our pioneering new Wonderpacks – five carefully crafted packs spanning newborn to primary.**

The packs – created in partnership by Save the Children and Boromi, a national network of non-profit Play Libraries – are based on the latest child-development research and behavioural science. They recognise the vital importance of play to children's early development, and inspire simple and playful home learning between parents and their children.

The packs were rolled out in the summer, as part of Save the Children's Early Years Grant to families experiencing financial hardship with children under six.



# TAKING ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

**Junior's home in the Solomon Islands is one of the most vulnerable in the world to climate change. Rising sea levels and ferocious storms have flattened homes and killed the crops that so many families here rely on.**



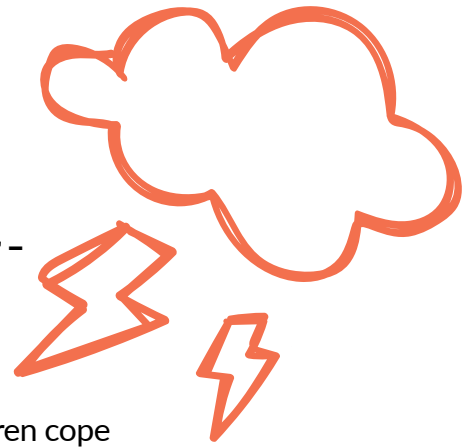
**"I have nothing to eat because the rising sea level has damaged our food," says Junior.**

That's why we support families like Junior's to grow food sustainably and for the long-term, running training sessions on climate-resilient farming, soil management, and on the crops that will grow best in extreme weather.

Junior loves the sessions. "I am happy during the training," he says. "I [have] learnt some things like mixing soil, how to make compost, how to plant plants." He's been putting what he's learned straight into practice. "After the training we planted taro, kumara, tomatoes, cabbage, and beans," he says.

# FACING A GROWING THREAT

**Around the world, children are facing more extreme weather – from harsher droughts in Somalia to heavy flooding in Pakistan. These climate shocks are destroying livelihoods, decimating farming, disrupting water sources.**



Our work with Junior is part of pioneering efforts to help children cope with the growing threat of climate change. We protect people's livelihoods by:



**providing families with drought-resistant seeds**



**protecting mangroves to prevent flooding**



**teaching flood-resilient farming practices**



**giving cash grants to families**

At COP28 this year, we announced the world's largest investment in green schools through our partnership with The Green Climate Fund and the Global Partnership for Education.

We've joined forces to launch a \$70 million programme called **Building the Climate Resilience of Children and Communities through the Education Sector (BRACE)**, which will build climate-resilient and green schools, integrate climate change in the curriculum and provide early warnings to schools. Starting in Cambodia, South Sudan and Tonga – BRACE is a major step in protecting the futures of children in communities most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis.



**THANK YOU**

**FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

**IN 2023**

The life-changing work you've read about in this report has happened every day all around the world in 2023, with thanks to your outstanding commitment to Save the Children.

With your continued partnership and support of our flexible funds, we can create many more moments to be proud of in the future.

Jhon, 11, surrounded by his family's potato harvest in the mountainous region of Potosí, Bolivia. We're working with local entrepreneurs like Jhno's mum, Nimia, to build sustainable incomes for their families.

\*Names changed to keep children and caregivers safe.