



**Categories of Invisible Children Served by  
The Global Fund for Children's Grantee Partners**

**2011-2012**

# Invisible Children

## Overview: GFC's Role

The Global Fund for Children (GFC) envisions a world where all children grow up to be productive and caring citizens of a global society. GFC pursues its mission by making small grants to innovative community-based organizations working with many of the world's most vulnerable children, including "invisible children." Invisible children lack societal recognition and protection and may be physically removed from public view. Those who remain in the public sphere are viewed as irrelevant to their communities and are missing from public-policy initiatives. Although these children are in dire need of support, the circumstances of their vulnerability make them particularly difficult to find, identify, and serve.

GFC believes that the best way to reach invisible children is through the programs and services of grassroots community-based organizations. Given their position on the ground, embedded in local communities, these organizations are well positioned to reach invisible children where they live, play, and work—in remote areas, on the streets, in prisons—and to provide opportunities for them to grow, learn, and thrive. GFC's grantee partners have direct knowledge of the issues that children and youth face within their communities, which coupled with their ability to strategically engage their communities as a whole, means that these organizations are able to bring about social change, to reach the children of the last mile, and to encourage behavior that promotes children's best interests.

## Categories: GFC's Focus

Around the world, millions of children live their lives virtually invisible to those around them and absent from national policies and programs. These are children who are:

- *Associated with or affected by conflict* and unprotected from abuse, exploitation, and violence—child soldiers, displaced children, and unaccompanied minors living outside refugee camps
- Subject to exclusion, neglect, and stigmatization due to their *physical or mental disabilities*
- Hidden behind the doors of their employers as *domestic laborers* who are excluded, neglected, and exploited
- Subject to marginalization due to their *ethnic or indigenous background*
- *In the prison system* as inmates or living with a parent in prison, where they lack protection and access to essential services such as education and healthcare
- *Living and/or working on the streets* without adult supervision, where they are neglected, vulnerable, and stigmatized
- *Working in hazardous labor*, where they experience abuse, neglect, and physical and sexual exploitation

Whether they live in urban slums or in rural communities, are in communication with their families or are alone, all of these children lack protection, do not have access to essential services, and are subject to abuse, discrimination, exploitation, and violence. They are denied their rights because they are physically, culturally, socially, or historically unseen, either literally or figuratively. They are underserved and, all too often, forgotten.

## Impact: GFC's Grantee Partners

GFC works to advance the dignity of children and youth worldwide, particularly those who are the most underserved, by supporting the programs of grassroots community-based organizations. All of GFC's grantee partners serve vulnerable children, and over 100 partners currently work in innovative ways with the following categories of invisible children: associated with or affected by conflict, disabled and stigmatized, domestic laborers, ethnic minorities and/or indigenous communities, in the prison system, street-based, and working in hazardous labor.

# Associated with or Affected by Conflict: Children Unprotected

GFC believes that children's futures can be secure only when they are protected from abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence. In supporting the protection of children—from internally displaced children and youth in Mexico's conflict-ridden southeastern state of Chiapas to the estimated 3,000 unaccompanied minors annually seeking refuge in Kenya from embattled neighboring countries—GFC grantee partners provide children associated with or affected by conflict with safe environments in which to learn, play, and grow.

## Context

Lacking protection and care, children associated with or affected by conflict are exposed to the worst forms of human violence. Conflict is also an immense barrier for children seeking access to essential services. For example, Liberia is emerging from a long period of civil crisis that frayed the very fabric of its society, most notably the well-being and security of its children and youth. Many children were either conscripted into fighting forces or subjected to abuse, exploitation, and violence during the country's 14-year civil war, and because of that, they were unable to access education and healthcare services and had little adult protection, supervision, or care.

### Definition

A child associated with an armed force or armed group is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity – including, but not limited to, combatants, cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. *As stated during the "Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa."* (UNICEF, [http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_childsoldiers.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_childsoldiers.html))

## Issue and Response

Many children associated with or affected by conflict face considerable abuse, exploitation, and violence. Internal and regional displacement, sometimes across national borders, contributes to children's separation from both family and community protection and greatly increases these risks.

Many of GFC's grantee partners work to prevent and respond to the abuse and violence experienced by children associated with or affected by conflict. Heshima Kenya, based in Nairobi, Kenya, protects unaccompanied minors, particularly girls, who have been separated from or abandoned by their families during their journey to safety. Unaccompanied minors face a hostile environment and have limited access to educational and economic opportunities. Without family support and protection, they often experience violence and harassment from the local population and the police. Because Kenyan law restricts refugees to camps, minors outside the camps also have limited legal protection. Unaccompanied refugee girls are particularly vulnerable, as they must contend with sexual violence and abuse in addition to the perils faced by the general refugee population.

## GFC Partner Profile

*Bureau pour le Volontariat au Service de l'Enfance et de la Santé, Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Armed conflict in eastern Congo has fractured thousands of families and led to the use of 30,000 children as combatants, porters, and sex slaves. Ten thousand of these children are in the province of South Kivu, where nearly every armed group in the region—including government forces—has recruited and forcibly conscripted children. Both boys and girls, as young as 6 years old, have been used as combatants or sex slaves—an experience fraught with psychological and physical trauma. When these children are released and return to their villages, they find that they have little or no access to healthcare or quality education and no means of sustaining themselves. Having missed their formative years of schooling and development, these children also encounter great difficulties when reintegrating into society and demonstrate extreme behavioral problems. Girls, who often return as new mothers, find acceptance from their families particularly difficult, since rape and forced sexual servitude are perceived as a dishonor to the family. Accordingly, Bureau pour le Volontariat au Service de l'Enfance et de la Santé (BVES), created in 1992, works to promote the rights of marginalized children, particularly displaced or exploited children and former child soldiers. GFC supports BVES's Reintegration Program for Displaced Children, which serves hundreds of children who have been released by the fighting forces in South Kivu.

### Facts

In the last decade:  
An estimated 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict.

More than 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed conflict, and 6 million children have been permanently disabled or seriously injured.

More than 1 million children have been orphaned or separated from their families due to conflict.  
(UNICEF, [http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_displacedchildren.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_displacedchildren.html))

### Spotlight: Colombia

Colombia has faced over 50 years of ongoing armed conflict, disproportionately affecting the lives of children.

Colombian law forbids the recruitment of children under 18 into armed forces; however the use of children by illegal armed forces is prevalent.

Armed groups and national forces have occupied schools, affecting children's inability to receive an education.

(*Watchlist on children and armed conflict*, [www.watchlist.org/the-countries/colombia](http://www.watchlist.org/the-countries/colombia))

# Disabled and Stigmatized: Children Left Behind

GFC believes that every child, regardless of his or her physical or mental ability, has equal rights. In supporting the rights and well-being of children with disabilities—from excluded children in Soviet-style education systems in Moldova to children in Haiti who have been further marginalized due to the 2010 earthquake—GFC grantee partners are continuing to enrich the lives of disabled children and their communities.

## Context

Exclusion at the community and institutional levels restricts the opportunities and development of children with disabilities. For example, in Nepal, many families view disabilities as a sign of bad luck, and therefore these families either abandon children with disabilities or keep them hidden from society. Accordingly, there are few governmental or nongovernmental programs available for children with disabilities in Nepal. Worldwide, many disabled children are denied a formal education and are without adequate care because current services do not accommodate their needs.

While some children are born with disabilities, others become disabled later in life. Children involved

**Definition**

Stigmatization is the act of “marking” a person that deviates from the norm. The mark must be linked to attributes to discredit the marked person in the eyes of others. (“Deconstructing Stigma” Susan Letteney. From the journal “Social work in Healthcare.”)

in hazardous labor or those living in conflict areas face greatly heightened risks of a disabling injury. For example, for 20 years the Lira district in northern Uganda was at the center of a civil conflict that pitted the national government against the Lord’s Resistance Army rebel movement. The conflict ended with a ceasefire in 2006, but the destruction it caused remains fresh and visible, and one of the most disheartening

legacies of the conflict is the large number of people with disabilities it left behind.

## Issue and Response

In addition to lacking appropriate support, children with disabilities in the developing world face considerable stigmatization. Social services for disabled people remain insufficient, and negative perceptions continue to be pervasive. Many of GFC’s grantee partners work to alleviate exclusion, neglect, and stigmatization of children with disabilities. One of these is Baoji QingQingCao Rehabilitation and Education Center for Handicapped Children, an organization in Baoji, China, that encourages children with disabilities to achieve their full potential and seeks to improve their lives through education, therapy, and advocacy for the rights of disabled children. In China, and all across the world, stigma, abuse, discrimination, and a lack of trained special-education teachers prevent many disabled children from attending school or receiving therapy. Children with disabilities, especially those in the world’s most vulnerable communities, require special attention. And yet they are all too often forgotten in national policies and statistics, making it difficult for them to become productive, contributing, and thriving adults.

## GFC Partner Profile

*Pravo Vibora, Kharkiv, Ukraine*

Approximately 166,000 children with disabilities are living in Ukraine, about 2 percent of the country’s total population of children. While Ukraine has been independent for 20 years, many practices that were common in the Soviet Union, such as the treatment of and attitude toward people with disabilities, remain. Founded in 2002 by socially active youth with visual impairments, Pravo Vibora works with children and youth with disabilities, providing medical rehabilitation for infants and children from birth to age 8 and educational and employment support for youth aged 16 to 24. GFC supports Pravo Vibora’s Rehabilitation Center, which works to improve the mental and physical abilities of children with disabilities so that the children can be better prepared for instruction at special schools, at home, and when possible, at formal mainstream schools.

### Facts

Ninety percent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school.

(<http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/>)

Mortality for children with disabilities may be as high as 80 percent even in countries where under-five mortality as a whole has decreased below 20 percent.

(British Dept for International Development: <http://www.disabilityrightsintl.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/NCDforeignpolicy.pdf>, p. 11)

Violence against children with disabilities occurs at annual rates at least 1.7 times greater than for their peers without disabilities.

(<http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/>)

### Spotlight: India

In India, the share of disabled children who are out of school is dramatically higher than other major social categories, with the average out-of-school rate for children with disabilities five and a half times the rate for all children.

(<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INDIAEXTN/Resources/295583-1171456325808/DISABILITYREPORTFINALNOV2007.pdf>)

# Domestic Laborers: Children behind Doors

GFC envisions a world where all children grow up to be productive, caring citizens of a global society. In supporting safe and dignified livelihoods for child workers—from the approximately 340,000 children working in the domestic service industry in Kenya to girls working in slavery-like conditions as domestic servants in Peru—GFC grantee partners advance the dignity of child laborers worldwide, especially those who are hidden from public view.

## Context

### Definition

Child Labor consists of: Hazardous unpaid household services including household chores performed for long hours, in an unhealthy environment, in dangerous locations, or involving unsafe equipment or heavy loads. (According to the 2008 Resolution II adopted during the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians).

Children in domestic service are among the most invisible child laborers—their work is performed within individual homes, removed from public scrutiny, and their conditions of life and labor are entirely dependent upon the whims of their employers. Most of these children are girls because

domestic service, in most countries, is seen as female labor and as the only work option for girls and women. In addition to enduring hazardous labor and long hours, most domestic laborers lack access to healthcare, schooling, and protective adult care and supervision. For example, in Guatemala, the combined factors of age, gender, geography, and ethnicity make rural indigenous girls the most underserved group in the country. These girls are likely to be engaged in full-time unpaid labor and to have limited access to education, not only because of long distances between many villages and the nearest school but also because traditional norms and values dictate that a girl's duty is domestic work.

## Issue and Response

Child domestic laborers face considerable exploitation. Many are forced to undertake tasks that are completely inappropriate for their age and physical strength. The food they are given is often nutritionally inadequate and vastly inferior to the meals eaten by the employing family. They frequently suffer physical abuse and, in the most severe cases, endure sexual and physical abuse as punishment for an ill-performed task or simply as a means of ensuring obedience. Many of GFC's grantee partners work to alleviate the exploitation of child domestic laborers. A partner in India, Anandan, targets girls who are working and living in the slums of Kolkata, providing them with a holistic education as an alternative to domestic work and with the training to make positive decisions in life. Girls from migrant families who move to these slums face particular problems, as their native language of Bihari or Hindi makes it difficult for them to enter the government-run schools in Kolkata, where Bengali is the primary medium of instruction. While a large number of girls never enroll in school at all, even larger numbers start school and drop out before the age of 14, making it nearly impossible for them to gain economic independence and committing them to perpetual domestic servitude.

## GFC Partner Profile

*Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Infancia, Panama City, Panama*

In Panama, 40 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line, with 26 percent living in extreme poverty. Roughly 15 percent of all children are undernourished and have not received their basic immunizations. Rural indigenous poverty is particularly widespread. It is common for poor children from rural areas to immigrate to the cities to work as domestic servants in return for room and board. Unfortunately, many of these children end up in slavery-like conditions, working seven days a week from morning to night, sleeping on the floor, suffering physical and often sexual abuse, and being denied the opportunity to attend school. Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Infancia (IDEMI) protects the rights of women, children, and adolescents and promotes their full participation in the construction of a just and equitable society. IDEMI works in four primary areas: education, child labor, sexual exploitation, and HIV/AIDS. IDEMI's target population within its child labor program is girls aged 9 to 18 who work as domestic servants in non-relative households, where they are frequently subjected to exploitation and abuse.

### Facts

In many countries, child domestic labor is not only socially and culturally accepted but is regarded positively as a protected and non-stigmatized type of work that is therefore preferable to other forms of work, especially for girls. However, around the world, about 250 million children under 18 work full-time, and this continues to harm the physical and mental development of children and adolescents and interferes with their education.

(UNICEF 2011 State of the World's Children [http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report\\_EN\\_02092011.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report_EN_02092011.pdf))

Given domestic servitude's hidden nature, it is impossible to gather reliable figures on how many children are globally exploited as domestic workers. However, according to the ILO, more girl children under 16 are in domestic service than in any other category of child labor.

(ILO, *Domestic Labour*, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org))

### Spotlight: *Rèstaveks*

In Haiti, there is a long tradition of children being sold into servitude by family members who believe that sending their children from economically depressed rural areas to live with extended family or distant relatives in Port-au-Prince will guarantee a brighter future. The *rèstavek* system, as this practice is called, has resulted in the sexual and psychological abuse of hundreds of children in recent decades. The Haitian government has acknowledged that the *Rèstavek* system is a form of modern child slavery and has made the ownership of *Rèstaveks* illegal.

(*Restavek Freedom Alliance*, <http://www.rfahaiti.org/>)

# Ethnic Minorities/Indigenous Communities: Children Socially Marginalized

Children from ethnic minorities and indigenous communities are among the most vulnerable and marginalized children worldwide. In supporting the well-being and development of these children—from marginalized Roma children in Eastern Europe to Burmese refugee children in Thailand—GFC grantee partners serve children who are pushed aside and forgotten.

## Context

Exclusion at the community and institutional levels can restrict opportunities for members of an ethnic group or indigenous community. For example, despite rapid urbanization and economic growth in China, rural regions continue to be neglected by the country's public services, and the challenges of rural life are exacerbated by increasing poverty and economic disparity. Ethnic minorities and indigenous communities in these areas are often routinely excluded from learning opportunities, as they tend to live in the most impoverished and remote areas. Minority and indigenous children remain at risk of continuing the cycle of poverty that prevents them from receiving a basic education. For children who are excluded on the basis of ethnicity or because they are indigenous, such exclusion can reduce their access to social care, protection, and services; deprive them of educational opportunities for growth and development; and erode their self-worth and confidence.

### Definition

Ethnicity signifies a group in which membership is dependent upon “myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity.” (*“What is ethnic identity and does it matter?” Kanchan Chandra*)

## Issue and Response

Ethnic minority groups and indigenous communities face considerable marginalization—an embedded and systematic form of exclusion. Children belonging to ethnic minorities and indigenous communities can suffer cultural, economic, and social marginalization. Many of GFC's grantee partners work to alleviate ethnic and indigenous exclusion. One such grantee is Ograda Noastra in Cahul, Moldova, whose work facilitates development in disadvantaged and marginalized communities, specifically Roma communities, in order to ensure community members' equitable inclusion in society. In Moldova, and all across Europe, Roma have historically been stigmatized and treated as second-class citizens because of their ethnicity.

Exclusion and marginalization of ethnic minorities and indigenous communities cause minority and indigenous children to be less likely to be registered at birth; to be more prone to poor health; to have low participation in education; and to be more susceptible to abuse, exploitation, and violence.

## GFC Partner Profile

*Monduli Pastoralist Development Initiative, Monduli, Tanzania*

Tanzania is home to approximately 650,000 Maasai, an indigenous ethnic group known for its rich cultural traditions and pastoralist lifestyle. In order to preserve their culture, the Maasai keep their children at home, where boys learn to manage the family's livestock and girls learn household management skills. With GFC's support, Monduli Pastoralist Development Initiative (MPDI) provides over 2,000 children with education, clean water, and proper nutrition through early childhood development (ECD) centers. MPDI has succeeded in gaining the support of the Maasai community largely because of the organization's innovative approach to ECD. Designed like *bomas*—traditional Maasai homes—MPDI's ECD centers provide both contemporary and traditional education.

### Facts

Globally, there are roughly 300 million indigenous peoples, one-third of them poor.

In Latin America, child nutrition deprivation rates are generally higher, especially among Mam speakers in Guatemala and Quechua in Peru.

*(The World Bank “Policy Brief: Indigenous Peoples, Still among the poorest of the poor”)*

### Spotlight: China

The lowest levels of human development in China are in the western regions, primarily in nomadic, ethnic Tibetan areas.

In Qinghai Province's Yushu Prefecture, where there is a large ethnic minority presence, the illiteracy rate is 25 percent.

*(www.asia-ngo.org, “Pastoral livelihoods on the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau” Michele Nori)*

# In the Prison System: Children Locked Up

GFC believes that every child has powerful potential and promise. In supporting the potential of children in the prison system—from excluded children living in prisons with their mothers in Rwanda to neglected children incarcerated in Cambodia for petty crimes—GFC grantee partners strive to provide all children with an opportunity to change the course of their lives.

## Context

Children in the prison system—whether they are innocent children living with a parent in jail or are incarcerated youth—effectively cease to be regarded as minors, often being treated in exactly the same way as adult offenders. Due to the lack of parental protection within the penitentiary system, they are often robbed of all their rights as children. For example, in Nepal, thousands of women prisoners are shunned by their families and live in deplorable conditions in overcrowded, unsanitary prisons that have limited provision of food and other basic supplies. Innocent children often end up in jail with their mothers and grow up in the same conditions, deprived of education and stigmatized by their parents' sentences.

## Issue and Response

### UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Summary of Article 37: No one is allowed to punish children in a cruel or harmful way. Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in prison with adults, should be able to keep in contact with their families, and should not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without possibility of release. (UNICEF, [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc))

Children in the prison system are underserved both while they are in jail and once they are released. Without protection and advocates, these children lack access to education and healthcare and suffer abuse, exploitation, and violence.

Many of GFC's grantee partners work to restore the rights of children in the prison system. In Ankara, Turkey, GFC partner Association for Solidarity with the Freedom-Deprived Juvenile, Özgeder, provides support and guidance to

children who are serving their sentences in closed or open confinement centers. In Turkey, and all across the world, millions of children live and work on the streets. Children on the streets are more likely to fall prey to violence and illegal behavior such as stealing, which puts many of these children in the prison system. Accordingly, Özgeder also works to increase public awareness about children living and working on the streets and about their high susceptibility to ending up incarcerated.

## GFC Partner Profile

*Asociación Civil Hamiraya, Cochabamba, Bolivia*

Coca leaf cultivation is a significant part of the economy of Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Yet Law 1008 is infamous for criminalizing a range of activities associated with coca leaf cultivation, and one of its immediate effects was a skyrocketing number of incarcerations. With the main income earner in jail, and facing loss of land and crops, many families were unable to survive on their own and moved into prison with their incarcerated family member. Under Bolivian law, children under the age of 6 are allowed to live in their parent's cell; in practice, however, with nowhere else to go, many stay well beyond that age. These children face tremendous psychological, social, and economic obstacles to completing their education and achieving a better life. Asociación Civil Hamiraya provides social services, including healthcare, nutritious meals, and academic tutoring, to families living in San Sebastian Prison. GFC supports the organization's Comprehensive Support Center for the Prison and the Community, which provides a safe space and recreational and educational programs for Bolivia's most marginalized children.

### Facts

Many countries allow young children to reside in prison with their parents.

There are benefits to having young (pre-school-aged) children in prison with mothers; it can enhance bonding and avoid some of the negative impacts of separation for both mothers and children.

However, the negative effects of young children living in prison include: having to live in often unsuitable conditions, prisons may not allocate additional food for children, mothers are not able to access education or work resources offered in prison.

*(Quaker United Nations Office, "The Impact of Parental Imprisonment on Children" by Oliver Robertson)*

### Spotlight: Imprisoned girls in Ghana

Globally, access to education remains a challenge for most girls. In Ghana, only 45 percent of secondary-school-age girls are in school. Lack of access to education is especially detrimental for imprisoned girls.

*(UNESCO Institute for statistics)*

# Living and/or Working on the Streets: Children without Adult Supervision

GFC believes that for children to be healthy, they must not only be well nourished but must also be protected from harmful and hazardous substances and environments. In supporting the safety and livelihoods of street-based children—from the approximately 2 million children living on the streets in Bangladesh to the estimated 15,000 neglected children working on the streets in Kyrgyzstan—GFC’s grantee partners work to create safe environments to protect children from the dangers of the streets and to provide them with opportunities to participate fully in their communities, to exercise their skills and talents, and to pursue their dreams.

## Context

Children living and/or working on the streets are among the most forgotten and socially invisible children, and in many countries, it has become the norm to see these children line the streets and market squares of bustling cities. Street-based children are among the most physically visible of all invisible children, as they live, work, and interact with passersby and other members of society, but their needs are systematically ignored or neglected by the people around them. These children are deprived of the right to grow up in a productive and caring environment, face abuse and violence, and are all too often excluded from accessing vital services. For example, Dakar, as a regional economic hub, attracts individuals seeking better opportunities from all parts of Senegal and from neighboring West African countries. With meager livelihoods and facing recurring droughts, families in rural communities are increasingly sending their children

to Dakar to seek better educational and work opportunities. Unfortunately, once in Dakar, most of these children end up on the streets, where they are exploited; forced to beg; and exposed to violence, abuse, and exploitation.

### Definition

*Of the street* children are homeless children who live and sleep on the streets in urban areas. They are totally on their own, living with other street children or homeless adult street people. *On the street* children are those who earn their living or beg for money on the street and return home at night. (UNICEF, “Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children and Adolescents in Zimbabwe”)

## Issue and Response

Children living and/or working on the streets face considerable stigmatization from their communities and from society in general, and they are vulnerable to exploitation and violence. Once on the streets, these children have diminished access to essential services such as education and healthcare and are often considered a public nuisance. Many are also forced to take on adult roles in order to

survive.

Many of GFC’s grantee partners work to alleviate the vulnerability and stigmatization of street-based children. One partner, Ulybka Public Foundation, in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, runs an emergency shelter for children and youth who are living on the streets. Ulybka has a complementary outreach and information program that provides psychological assistance, promotes tolerance, and stresses the importance of staying in school. The program includes outreach to children living on the streets and offers one-on-one counseling with psychologists for children who have experienced trauma through vulnerability and stigmatization.

### Spotlight: Brazil

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, 4,520 children and youth circulate the streets during the day, and 895 sleep on the streets at night.

([www.streetchildren.org](http://www.streetchildren.org), “From Street Children to all Children” Irene Rizzini)

Many children who cannot readily change their reality on the streets resort to substance abuse, such as glue-sniffing, for a temporary escape.

## GFC Partner Profile

*Centre Marembo, Kigali, Rwanda*

In Rwanda, there are more than 800,000 orphaned and vulnerable children. Extreme poverty forces many of these children onto the streets of Rwanda’s capital, Kigali. Treated as public nuisances, they survive through begging and petty theft. Often malnourished, uneducated, and subjected to various forms of abuse, these children cannot afford or do not have regular access to education or health services. Established in 2005, Centre Marembo works to reintegrate marginalized young people into society by empowering them to make decisions about their future. GFC supports the organization’s Umugongo House, a transitional home that provides shelter for boys who live on the streets and that promotes and teaches principles of education, good health, and life skills.

# Children Involved in the Worst Forms of Hazardous Labor: Children at Work

GFC believes that every child has equal rights and that children who are involved in the worst forms of hazardous labor are robbed of their rights. While child labor takes many forms, the worst forms of child labor are defined as (1) all forms of slavery; (2) child sexual exploitation; and (3) work that, by its nature or because of the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to endanger the health or safety of children (e.g., waste picking or working in mines, brick kilns, or factories). In supporting the rights of children working in the worst forms of hazardous labor—from children trafficked into slavery-like conditions in the fishing villages of Ghana’s Lake Volta region to the approximately 6,000 children and adolescent miners in Cerro Rico, Bolivia—GFC grantee partners work to protect the lives of all children.

## Context

### Definition

Child non-domestic labor is work that exceeds a minimum number of weekly hours, depending on the age of the child:

- Ages 5–11: > 1 hour
- Ages 12–14: > 14 hours
- Ages 15–17: > 43 hours<sup>5</sup>

Hazardous labor is labor that jeopardizes the physical, mental, or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out. (ILO, *Domestic Labour*, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org))

All forms of abuse and neglect can arise when children are working in hazardous labor. This can be work that exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, like child sexual exploitation. Or it can be work in confined

spaces; with dangerous machinery, equipment, or tools; or involving the manual handling or transporting of heavy loads, like work in brick kilns, factories, mines, and the like. Hazardous work can also be work in an unhealthy environment that, for example, exposes children to hazardous substances or temperatures, like waste picking. It is not only physical abuse or injury that these children risk; they also often miss out on an education, which would provide the foundation for future employment in less dangerous occupations when they become adults.

## Issue and Response

Children who are involved in the worst forms of hazardous labor face considerable exploitation. Many are forced to undertake tasks that are completely inappropriate for their age and physical strength. Working in hazardous environments for long hours without proper nutrition is only the beginning of the exploitation for many of these children. Through abuse and neglect, they are at high risk of violence, sexual exploitation, and death.

Many of GFC’s grantee partners work to alleviate exploitation of children involved in hazardous labor. One such partner, Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, located in Delhi, India, promotes social and environmental justice for waste-picking communities. Chintan currently operates four learning centers in and around New Delhi and runs a series of projects, including nonformal education for waste-picking children, legal protections for waste recyclers, right to citizenship, and waste resource centers. By engaging both the mothers of waste-picking children and the junk dealers in dialogue, Chintan involves the entire community in addressing the issue of child labor to ensure a community-based solution that is supported by all stakeholders.

## GFC Partner Profiles

### *Aziza’s Place, Phnom Penh, Cambodia*

Cambodia ranks among the poorest countries in the world. Rural migrants to Phnom Penh have few housing options and often gather in unsanitary, drug-infested squatter sites and slums, and many sort through garbage in peri-urban dumpsites or on city streets to make a living. This way of life exposes migrant families to hazardous and toxic chemicals and medicinal waste, domestic and street violence, and physical abuse. Children involved in picking waste face pressure to financially assist their families and have little or no opportunities for continuous education or gainful employment, contributing to a persistent cycle of generational poverty. Aziza’s Place targets the most vulnerable children from the Steung Meanchey municipal dumpsite and city slums around Phnom Penh. Supported by GFC, the organization promotes the holistic growth and positive development of these underprivileged children by providing a safe residential living environment, access to public schools and supplemental education, and programs that focus on healthy lifestyles.

### Facts

246 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are engaged in child labor.

171 million children work in hazardous situations or conditions, such as in mines, with chemicals and pesticides, or with dangerous machinery.

73 million of these children are less than 10 years old.  
(ILO, *Domestic Labour*, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org))

### Spotlight: Trafficking

Trafficking in persons is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

(The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime)