

# Position on International Adoptions after a Disaster



In an emergency, orphans and vulnerable children should be cared for in their country of origin, if at all possible, and every effort should be made to reunite them with their families or relatives.

ChildFund International does not believe that international adoption should be the first response to helping protect and care for vulnerable children in the aftermath of a disaster. It is difficult to determine whether children are truly orphaned in the wake of natural disasters or conflicts.

“Whenever possible every effort should be made to reunite the child with his or her extended family,” said Anne Lynam Goddard, president and CEO of ChildFund International. “We believe the best thing is for children to stay rooted in their family, their community and their culture. If children are adopted out of country they would be separated from their families, further compounding the trauma they already are suffering. Adoption should be a last resort.”

ChildFund International’s position is in alignment with that of InterAction, the largest membership organization of U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGOs). InterAction stresses that in the aftermath of humanitarian crises, international adoption should not be the first response to helping protect and care for vulnerable children. International adoption is a closely regulated system, with standards and safeguards in place designed to ensure the protection of children in need.

“Emergencies, including the earthquake in Haiti, have the potential to rapidly drop children from a pathway to positive growth, significantly increasing their vulnerability,” said Goddard. “So ChildFund intervenes to keep them strong, resilient and on track. We are committed to bringing positive outcomes and lasting change – even in the aftermath of natural disasters.”

The numbers of children who are being helped by humanitarian assistance is far greater than the numbers that can be adopted. Those who wish to assist should donate directly to organizations that provide child protection services and/or child sponsorship programs. These organizations ensure that vulnerable children have access to the basic essential services needed for survival.