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**From Violent Past to Youth Mentor: Dominican Youth to  
Tell His ChildFund Success Story at the U.N.**

***Denzel Matthew to speak of his transformation at two United Nations  
events on October 19, 2009***

**Richmond, Va.** – October 12, 2009 – A 16-year-old Dominican boy who overcame a violent and hopeless past through a program sponsored by ChildFund International will share his transformational story at the United Nations next week as part of the commemoration of the International Day to Eradicate Poverty and the world body's continuing observation of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Denzel Matthew, one of five children from an impoverished family in the Caribbean nation of Dominica whose troubled life centered on his involvement with a spate of violent activities until a photography course brought him purpose and direction, will take part in two U.N. events on Monday, October 19, 2009.

The first, "Children and Families Speak Out Against Poverty," takes place 1:15-2:30 p.m., in Conference Room 2, United Nations Secretariat Building. This commemoration is organized by the International Movement ATD Fourth World, the NGO Subcommittee for the Eradication of Poverty and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and cosponsored by the Missions of France and Burkina Faso to the United Nations.

The presentation will be followed by an interactive panel: "Children: The Future and the Present — Participation in Poverty Reduction and Accountability for Rights." This event takes place at UNICEF's Labouisse Hall, 3-5:30 p.m. The panel is organized in partnership with UNICEF by the NGO Subcommittee for the Eradication of Poverty and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the support of the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

**About Denzel**

Like so many youth in Dominica, Denzel faced a bleak future, having been involved in violent activities since a young age. "Every day was a struggle for me to survive, as I come from a poor family and community," he says. "I could not see my future. I had nowhere to go."

But last year, a photography course made possible by ChildFund International donors opened an unexpected doorway for Denzel. After years of despair, he discovered how to channel his energy in artistic rather than violent ways. In addition to providing him with new skills, the photography class introduced the teenager to others with



similar interests. When the program ended, Denzel wrote in his evaluation that he no longer felt like dropping out of school or hanging out with the local gang.

"For the first time in my life, I had a way to let out my emotions without being violent," he says.

As he shapes his own future, Denzel also wants to change the lives of those following in his footsteps. He has joined a youth group of about 20 peers who are committed to making a difference in their community. Denzel's latest effort is to create a mentoring program to assist children in his community with reading and writing skills.

The youth group also is developing a conservation program to help protect an area known as Nature Island, a popular tourist destination on Dominica.

"Today, I am a happier person and am happy to tell my story," Denzel says. "I hope I can change the future of others who may be in situations like me."

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*ChildFund International, formerly named Christian Children's Fund, is a global child development and protection agency, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable children survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, ChildFund International works in 31 countries and helps more than 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. ChildFund International is a member of the ChildFund Alliance. It has earned 4 stars from Charity Navigator.*