

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ChildFund Joins Diverse Coalition to Protect Poor People in Budget Debate
*NGO and Faith leaders agree that reducing deficits should not be at the expense of
poor people***

Washington, D.C. — June 30, 2011 – Over forty prominent international and domestic aid groups have joined with dozens of national faith leaders, calling on Congress and the Administration to not cut programs benefitting poor and hungry people.

"A hungry child should not become victim of budget politics," said Anne Lynam Goddard, president and CEO of ChildFund International, a global child development and protection agency. "In the loud budget debate, children's voices are small and can go unheard, but their needs are great. Effective long-term budgeting must preserve and prioritize the needs of children, particularly the most vulnerable," says Goddard.

In an open letter to policymakers involved in the current deficit reduction negotiations, leaders in a broad humanitarian and faith coalition expressed support for the following:

"...we believe the moral measure of the [budget] debate is how the most vulnerable among us fare. Poor and hungry people do not have powerful lobbies, but they do have the most compelling claim on our national conscience and common resources. As people of conscience we have an obligation to defend this claim in civic discourse, to join with others to insist that programs that serve the most vulnerable in our nation and around the world are protected.

We know from our diverse experiences—as program beneficiaries, social service providers, development workers, and community and faith leaders—that these programs meet basic human needs and protect the lives and dignity of people often relegated to the margins of the political process."

The full text of this letter, including the six principles, and a list of signatories is below.

"I've seen first hand the detrimental effects that rising food prices have on the children, and families, we serve across Africa, Asia and The Americas. The staff from our U.S. programs reports that low-income families throughout the U.S. are suffering more from obesity, which is a form of malnutrition, due to the inability to afford and access a variety of healthier foods. In remote locations grocery stores are hours away from their homes," said Goddard. "Our U.S. programs focus on feeding children healthier meals and teaching families how to grow vegetable gardens and create healthier meals on a budget."

ChildFund International joins this unprecedented coalition of aid and faith leaders who have joined together to defend the lives and dignity of poor and vulnerable children and their communities in the current budget debate.

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ChildFund International is a global child development and protection agency serving more than 15.2 million children and their family members in 31 countries. For more than 70 years, we have helped the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable children survive and thrive to reach their full potential and become leaders of enduring change. As a member of ChildFund Alliance we create supportive environments in which children can flourish. To [sponsor a child](#) in need, visit the ChildFund website.

President Barack Obama
Vice President Joe Biden
Speaker of the House John Boehner
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Dear Mr. President; Mr. Vice President; Speaker Boehner; Minority Leader Pelosi; Majority Leader Reid; Minority Leader McConnell:

In the face of historic deficits, the nation faces unavoidable choices about how to balance needs and resources and allocate burdens and sacrifices. These choices are economic, political—and moral.

To this end, we believe the moral measure of the debate is how the most vulnerable among us fare. Poor and hungry people do not have powerful lobbies, but they do have the most compelling claim on our national conscience and common resources. As people of conscience we have an obligation to defend this claim in civic discourse, to join with others to insist that programs that serve the most vulnerable in our nation and around the world are protected.

We know from our diverse experiences—as program beneficiaries, social service providers, development workers, and community and faith leaders—that these programs meet basic human needs and protect the lives and dignity of people often relegated to the margins of the political process.

Early in the current debate about the U.S. budget, a group of humanitarian, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders joined together in a campaign of fasting, prayer and action to form a circle of protection around programs for poor and vulnerable people.

As the fasting campaign came to a close, an unprecedented coalition of Evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, African-American, and Latino Christian leaders joined together to defend the lives and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in the current budget debate, signing a joint statement calling on people of faith and conscience to form a "circle of protection" around programs meeting the essential needs of vulnerable people at home and abroad.

Today, we the undersigned stand as an even broader coalition of people of conscience to commend the collective efforts of these organizations and express our support for the following principles, outlined in the original "circle of protection" statement:

- 1) The nation needs to substantially reduce future deficits, but not at the expense of hungry and poor people.
- 2) Funding focused on reducing poverty should not be cut. It should be made as effective as possible, but not cut.
- 3) We urge our leaders to protect and improve poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance, domestically and internationally, to promote a better, safer world.
- 4) National leaders must review and consider tax revenues, military spending, and entitlement reform in the search for ways to share sacrifice and cut deficits.

5) A fundamental task is to create jobs and spur economic growth. Decent jobs at decent wages are the best path out of poverty, and restoring growth is a powerful way to reduce deficits.

6) The budget debate has a central moral dimension. Budgets are moral documents, and how we reduce future deficits are historic and defining moral choices.

We urge Congress and the administration to give moral priority to programs that protect the life and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in these difficult times, our broken economy, and our wounded world. This is our common mission, and we will strive to hold our leaders accountable to these shared priorities and principles.

Sincerely,

William M. Abrams, President, Trickle Up

Umar al-Qadi, President and CEO, Mercy-USA for Aid and Development

Nancy A. Aosse, President and CEO, International Medical Corps

Rachel Audi, President, RISE, America!

Abed Ayoub, CEO, Islamic Relief USA

Melissa Boteach, Campaign Manager, Half in Ten

Jeff Bridges, National Spokesperson, No Kid Hungry

Joanne Carter, Executive Director, RESULTS

Edward Cooney, Executive Director, Congressional Hunger Center

Sheila Crowley, President and CEO, National Low Income Housing Coalition

Nan Dale, CEO, Action Against Hunger / ACF International

Susan Davis, President and CEO, BRAC USA

Joseph M. Donahue, CEO, iMMAP

Suzanne Ehlers, President and CEO, Population Action International

Dave Evans, U.S. President, Food for the Hungry

Pierre Ferrari, CEO, Heifer International

James P. Firman, President and CEO, National Council on Aging

Robert Gillespie, President, Population Communication

Anne Goddard, President and CEO, ChildFund International

Rev. Douglas Greenaway, President and CEO, National WIC Association

Amb. Tony P. Hall, Executive Director, Alliance to End Hunger

Susan Henderson, Executive Director, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Alan W. Houseman, Executive Director, Center for Law and Social Policy

Roger Johnson, President, National Farmers Union

Neal Keny-Guyer, CEO, Mercy Corps

Mary Ellen McNish, President and CEO, The Hunger Project

Ruth W. Messinger, President, American Jewish World Service

Jerry Michaud, Executive Director, End Hunger Network

Rev. Dr. Sid L. Mohn, President, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

Raymond Offenheiser, President, Oxfam America

Joan C. Parker, President and CEO, Counterpart International

Carol A. Peasley, President and CEO, The Center for Development and Population Activities

Linda Pfeiffer, President and CEO, INMED Partnerships for Children

Cris Revaz, Executive Director, Basic Education Coalition

George Rupp, President and CEO, International Rescue Committee

Ritu Sharma, Co-Founder and President, Women Thrive Worldwide

Kathy Spahn, President and CEO, Helen Keller International
Caryl M. Stern, President and CEO, U.S. Fund for UNICEF
Michael Thiedke, Interim Executive Director, ActionAid USA
Steve M. Waldmann, Executive Director, Society of St. Andrew
James D. Weill, President, Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director, Coalition on Human Needs
David Winder, CEO, WaterAid in America