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Survey of 5,000 Children Around the World Finds Children Want Better Schools, More Security, Time for Play

Richmond, Va. – Nov. 28, 2011 – A sweeping survey of 5,100 children throughout Africa, Asia and the Americas, as well as in selected developed nations, including the United States — reveals that 10- to 12-year-olds throughout the developing world put a high priority on their education, so much so that two in five aspire to be teachers or doctors. By comparison, American kids, especially boys, most want to be professional athletes.

The second annual Small Voices, Big Dreams global survey, commissioned by the ChildFund Alliance and compiled by Ipsos Observer, provides insights into the minds of some of the world's most vulnerable and overlooked children. The poll of children in 44 countries — from Afghanistan to Mexico to Zambia — finds children largely optimistic about their future and yet concerned about crime, disease, hunger and violence.

A random survey of 500 10- to 12-year-olds in the United States, also conducted by Ipsos Observer, was commissioned by ChildFund International for comparison purposes.

When asked what their top priority would be as president of their country to help improve the lives of children, half (49.3%) of all children in developing countries said they would improve their nation's schools. The response was four times higher than "provide more food," which placed second at 10.5%, followed by "improve healthcare" at 8.9%. In the United States, children's top priority was helping homeless children (22.4%), followed by improving schools (18.2%).

Almost one in two children in developing countries is focused on a future career requiring a college education. One-fifth (22.5%) of the respondents said they want to be teachers, while a comparable number (20.2%) are interested in becoming doctors.

The responses contrast strikingly with kids in the U.S., where just 13% and 10.8% aspire to be teachers and doctors, respectively. The top answer among American children was professional athlete (16.6% overall and 28.0% among boys). Just 4.7% of children in developing countries cite professional athlete as their career choice. Another 11.8% of U.S. kids want to pursue artistic careers, which include singing, acting and fashion design, while 9.6% are set on becoming veterinarians.

"American children have the luxury of setting their career hopes high, but those in developing countries are focused on the single best way to disrupt the cycle of poverty — education," says Anne Lynam Goddard, president and CEO of ChildFund International, the U.S. member of the global ChildFund Alliance. "What gives these children, as young as 10 years old, the

permission to dream is the recognition that improving their lives is tied closely to the opportunity to learn. Sadly, for too many of these children, that opportunity does not exist. That is why so many ChildFund Alliance member organizations focus so much of our efforts on education."

Children's Safety and Health

Reflecting the dangers of the world around them, 83.4% of children said they felt safest at home or with their parents or family. When asked how, as president, they would better protect children, 43.1% said they would improve their country's safety and security, mostly by doing a better job at arresting and prosecuting criminals and growing the size of the police force.

In comparison, almost one in three (32.8%) of U.S. children said they would create "safe places" for children. One in five (20.0%) said they would strengthen laws to better protect children, while a like number (19.8%) said they would increase the punishment for child-related crimes.

In developing countries, children's biggest health-related concern is getting sick or contracting a disease, which was cited by 22.9% of respondents. Another 14.4% are worried about poverty and hunger, while a similar number (14.0%) are concerned about war, terror or violence. Getting sick also was first among American children's biggest health-related worries, cited by 29.4%.

Let's Play

Given a free day to do whatever they wanted, 19% of children in developing countries said they would play with friends, with another 11.6% saying they would play football/soccer. Another 16.7% said they would spend their free day either studying or doing their homework, and 13.4% would do their chores or housework.

Play (27.4%) and play sports (19.0%) were the top answers among U.S. kids, with another 16.2% opting to watch television. Only 1% said they would do chores, with even fewer (0.8%) saying they would study.

"Play has universal appeal among children, and it's a critical part of their growth and development," Goddard says. "Many children in the developing world are focused on survival, and the opportunity to play can provide a healthy and beneficial outlet."

"The Small Voices, Big Dreams survey provides illuminating and instructive data on its face, especially when comparing the perspectives of children around the world with those living in the United States," Goddard says. "But on a deeper level, the findings give us sweeping insight into the opinions of some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable children. Although we work intimately with these children on a daily basis, the comprehensive nature of these findings is important for validating our priorities, shaping our programs and giving voice to so many children whose hopes and dreams are swept aside by the world around them."

- 1) For a copy of the 2011 Summary Data Report, summary results and other materials related to the Small Voices, Big Dreams survey, including photographs and video, visit <http://www.childfund.org/dreams>.
- 2) The Small Voices/Big Dreams Survey was undertaken by the ChildFund Alliance from July through September 2011. Identical six-question surveys were administered on a one-on-one basis by ChildFund staff to approximately 100 children, ages 10 to 12, in 36 developing nations in Africa, Asia and the Americas as well as eight developed nations that participate in ChildFund programs. A total of 4,592 children were surveyed, including 3,613 children in developing countries and 979 children in developed ones. (All six questions were open-ended, meaning the children were not given a list of answers from which to choose.) ChildFund translated and submitted the results to Ipsos Observer, a global research firm, which tabulated and compiled the results. The margins of error, at 95% confidence, are: total surveys (+/- 1.4%) and developing countries. The random sampling of 500 U.S. children has a confidence level of +/- 8.8%.

About the ChildFund Alliance

The ChildFund Alliance is a network of 12 child development organizations whose work encompasses more than 15 million children and their families in 56 countries. With a focus on child-centered development programs that are undertaken in partnership with more than 1,400 local communities, the Alliance puts more than \$503 million (USD) to work each year to help deprived, excluded and vulnerable children. The programs seek to bring positive outcomes for children in every stage of their lives, from infancy to adulthood. ChildFund also responds to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters with precise focus on the special needs of children in the midst of crisis.

About Ipsos Observer

Ipsos is the only independent, publicly listed research company that is controlled and managed by research professionals. Ipsos is the sixth-largest global research company.

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ChildFund International is a global child development and protection agency serving more than 13.5 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 the ChildFund Alliance, we create supportive environments in which children can flourish. To [sponsor a child](#) in need, visit www.ChildFund.org.