



### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ChildFund responds to crisis on both sides of the border with dual approach**

**RICHMOND, Va.** – Following an assessment of the border crisis in McAllen, Texas, ChildFund International has developed a comprehensive plan to assist children on both sides of the southern border. Focused on child development and protection, ChildFund works in 30 countries, including Guatemala and Honduras, two of the Central American countries from which children are seeking refuge in the U.S., and both are countries where ChildFund works.

The assessment – available to the media – found that the majority of the children and families arriving in McAllen experienced violence during the journey or while in their native countries and 57 percent of respondents said that streets in Honduras and Guatemala are considered the most at-risk place for children, as communities are exposed to gang activities.

In response to those findings, ChildFund is working with agencies in Texas that are housing unaccompanied children to offer psychosocial and emotional support for children tailored to family separation and exposure to violence. Access to the unaccompanied children temporarily living in holding centers is limited to protect their safety, but ChildFund will provide support to help these children who are going through traumatic experiences.

“This is not a political issue for ChildFund,” said Paul Bode, regional director for ChildFund. “As always, our primary interest is the well-being of children. The most important thing is that children are safe, respected, that their rights are protected and that they are united with their families no matter where they are.”

In conjunction with offering psychosocial support, ChildFund is providing information on legal support, counseling and child protection available to families in their countries and is partnering with local organizations in McAllen to offer its *Just Read!* program, which provides books about resilience and courage that provide emotional support and a sense of normalcy for the children during this time.

In Guatemala and Honduras, ChildFund is sharing key findings specifically with community leaders to address the main issues underlying the mass immigration and improve children's and youth's well-being. Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents ChildFund has surveyed report that religious leaders and community leaders are the most supportive of children in their countries. ChildFund will develop an advocacy campaign on risks associated with violence and gang activity and enhance child protection training for ChildFund staff living and working in both countries.

“The reality is that any family will pursue the best opportunities for the development and protection of their children to give them a chance to thrive,” adds Bode. “ChildFund will do whatever it can to make sure that children and their families are respected and have a chance at a decent life, no matter where they live.”

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ChildFund International is a global child development and protection agency serving more than 18.1 million children and family members in 30 countries. For 75 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. For more information about ChildFund, visit [www.ChildFund.org](http://www.ChildFund.org).