



# Unaccompanied Migrant Children

## USCCB Advocacy Toolkit

July, 2014

# Papal Letter to the Mexican Government on Unaccompanied Migrant Children

July, 2014

*Papal message on the occasion of  
"Mexico/Holy See colloquium on human migration and development"*

Mexico City, 14 July 2014

I would like to extend my greetings to the organizers, speakers, and participants in the "Mexico Holy See colloquium on human migration and development". Globalization is a phenomenon that challenges us, especially in one of its principal manifestations which is emigration. It is one of the "signs" of this time that we live in and that brings us back to the words of Jesus, "Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?" (Lk 12,57). Despite the large influx of migrants present in all continents and in almost all countries, migration is still seen as an emergency, or as a circumstantial and sporadic fact, while instead it has now become a hallmark of our society and a challenge.

It is a phenomenon that carries with it great promise and many challenges. Many people forced to emigrate suffer, and often, die tragically; many of their rights are violated, they are obliged to separate from their families and, unfortunately, continue to be the subject of racist and xenophobic attitudes.

Faced with this situation, I repeat what I have affirmed in this year's Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees: "A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world".

I would also like to draw attention to the tens of thousands of children who migrate alone, unaccompanied, to escape poverty and violence: This is a category of migrants from Central America and Mexico itself who cross the border with the United States under extreme conditions and in pursuit of a hope that in most cases turns out to be vain. They are increasing day by day. This humanitarian emergency requires, as a first urgent measure, these children be welcomed and protected. These measures, however, will not be sufficient, unless they are accompanied by policies that inform people about the dangers of such a journey and, above all, that promote development in their countries of origin. Finally, this challenge demands the attention of the entire international community so that new forms of legal and secure migration may be adopted.

I wish every success to the laudable initiative of the Mexican government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in arranging a colloquium of study and reflection on the great challenge of migration and cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to all those present.



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# Church Leadership on the Unaccompanied Migrant Children Crisis

July, 2014

## [Pope Francis](#)

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## [Cardinal Sean O’Malley](#)

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Bishop Eusebio Elizondo

[1.](#) "This vulnerable group is fleeing violence from organized criminal networks. Many are likely to be eligible for a variety of forms of immigration relief, including asylum and various visas. Sending these vulnerable children back to their persecutors without a meaningful immigration hearing would severely decrease their opportunity for legal protection and possibly lead to their bodily harm or even death. We would oppose the repeal of key provisions of these laws in the supplemental appropriations bill or any other legislative vehicle."

[2.](#) “This is a very complicated problem, but its roots must be addressed, both by our government and governments in the region. These children are extremely vulnerable to human traffickers and unscrupulous smugglers and must be



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protected. Over the long term, the increasing violence from gangs and organized crime in their home countries must be addressed and controlled so they can be secure in their homes.”

#### [Bishop Kevin Farrell of Dallas](#)

“The cause of this flood of refugee children — the unstable and unsafe conditions of some Central American countries — must be addressed, but the immediate problem is the children who are being warehoused in overcrowded and unsafe temporary facilities by the government.”

#### [Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville](#)

“I think it's impossible for most people in the United States to imagine both the conditions that they're coming from in their country in terms of just the fear of a violent death, or the conditions that they experienced as they passed through the interior of Mexico, where there's a great deal of preying upon these youth. There are policy issues that have to be addressed, but the immediate need is to address what the children need and how to help them, because the church's first response has to be to the human person. We offer them a change of clothing, a shower, some baby clothes if that's needed ... a first pair of shoes that they've seen in a long time.”

#### [Bishop Michael Olson of Fort Worth](#)

“The urgency of the situation requires that we not only respond promptly but prudently---that is, in a measured, stable, collaborative and ordered manner that does not unintentionally or inadvertently do more harm to these already vulnerable minors. As Pope Francis recently stated, ‘Let us be close to refugees, sharing their fears and their uncertainty about the future and concretely alleviating their suffering.’ I encourage each of us to reach out to our elected officials to remind them that this crisis is of a humanitarian character. Please ask them to direct our nation to work with the leaders of other nations to promote sound and just policies that respond to the violence and injustice that is at the root of this crisis.”

#### [Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso](#)

1. “I note that the protection of migrant children is an especially important issue for the Catholic Church, as one of Jesus’ first experiences as an infant was to flee for his life from King Herod with his family to Egypt. Indeed, Jesus Himself was a child migrant fleeing violence. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were asylum-seekers and faced the same choice as the one facing thousands of children fleeing to the United States each year.”

2. “Too often, and especially recently in the media, these children are being looked at with distrust and as capable adult actors, instead of as vulnerable and frightened children who have been introduced to the injustice and horror of the world at an early age. Anyone who hears the stories of these children would be moved, as they are victims fleeing violence and terror, not perpetrators.”

#### [Bishop John Wester of Salt Lake City](#)

“These children haven’t left their homes and traveled hundreds of miles on a lark. They fled seeking hope. In their home countries they live in fear of violent gangs that operate almost with impunity. Drug trafficking and the sex trade have made kidnapping and extortion part of everyday life. Many parents feel that the best way to protect their children is to send them to the U.S. What except desperation would cause parents to send their sons and daughters away on what they know will be a perilous journey, one that costs more than a year of wages to pay for, one that puts their children at the risk of being abused, abandoned or killed?”

[Bishop David Zubik of Pittsburgh](#)

“There have been questions as to why Catholics are involved. The Catholic Church responds to humanitarian crises here at home and all across the world because we are pro-life. Being pro-life requires we protect and care for vulnerable persons from conception to natural death. It has been reported that some of these children are fleeing violence. The current law requires that they receive a hearing to determine if in fact they are refugees fleeing grave danger.

# Building Capacity to Protect Unaccompanied and Separated Refugee Children

July 2014

*Building U.S. and UNHCR Capacity to Protect and Pursue Durable Solutions for Unaccompanied and Separated Refugee Children  
By the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

**Introduction.** At the periodic Policy and Resources Meeting with nongovernmental organizations on March 4, 2014, Ms. Kelly Clemens, Deputy Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration (DOS/PRM), noted that DOS/PRM provides funds for child welfare expertise to facilitate resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children. She said that DOS/PRM would welcome recommendations from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for strengthening protection of unaccompanied and separated refugee minors (URMs). We are responding to that welcome offer with the following analysis and recommendations.

**Background.** Almost half of the world's refugees are children, and 2-4 percent of refugees are unaccompanied children.<sup>1</sup> Currently, four of the world's large refugee populations have sizeable numbers of unaccompanied and separated children: Afghans, Congolese, Eritreans, and ethnic nationalities from Burma.<sup>2</sup> People of these nationalities are also (in varying numbers) included in the U.S. Resettlement program. Of additional concern are unaccompanied and separated children from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador who are arriving to the United States in record numbers seeking protection. UNHCR, in a study of 404 of these children, showed that "58 percent ... were forcibly displaced because they suffered or faced harms that indicated a potential or actual need for international protection."<sup>3</sup>

Syrians, a population for whom resettlement is just beginning, have perhaps the largest number of unaccompanied and separated children. Since more than 1.3 million of the 2.7 million Syrians seeking refuge in neighboring host countries are children,<sup>4</sup> and some 800,000 of them are under the age of 12, it is not surprising that UNHCR has already identified 3,760 of the Syrian children in Lebanon and Jordan as unaccompanied and separated children.<sup>5</sup> Also, 83 percent of Syrian refugees are urban refugees, that is, they live scattered throughout host countries among the local communities instead of being concentrated in a few traditional refugee camps. Given the outreach challenges inherent in this urban refugee situation, it is probable that a significant number of additional unaccompanied minors have yet to be identified.

In its Framework for the Protection of Children, UNHCR includes as one of the outcome measures for its goal five that "children at heightened risk or victims of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation are identified and assisted, and their



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situation is monitored.”<sup>6</sup> Its goal six is that “girls and boys achieve durable solutions in their best interests.”<sup>7</sup> These goals are consistent with U.S. domestic child welfare goals of safety, permanency, and well-being for all youth. The activities necessary to achieve these goals include early identification of unaccompanied or separated children; assessment of their refugee status, called a refugee status determination (RSD); a best interest assessment (BIA) to develop an interim protection and care plan; and a best interest determination (BID) to decide which durable solutions—local integration, voluntary repatriation, or third country resettlement—would be in the child’s best interest. UNHCR, in cooperation with the host country and the international community, pursues the durable solution.

However, currently, the most common circumstances under which URM’s receive the UNHCR prescribed screening and protection interventions is when UNHCR is referring the children for resettlement. Those URM’s admitted as resettled refugees to the United States enter the URM foster care program. In FY2013, PRM admitted 153 URM’s.

**Obstacles to Child Protection.** Child protection depends first and foremost on the ability to identify children in need of protection. As noted above, predominantly the only unaccompanied children who have access to formal BIA and BID processes are those being considered for resettlement to the United States or other countries. This is often times woefully too late for many children because resettlement too often occurs only at the end of a protracted refugee situation during which time two to three generations of children’s futures have been lost waiting for their home countries’ conflicts to end. URM’s receive such delayed attention because the outreach and registration processes for UNHCR and PRM do not currently incorporate a mission commitment and systematic operational capacity to identify unaccompanied refugee children early in the process, across the whole refugee population, and across the full continuum of humanitarian and protection services. Nor do these processes normally facilitate access for unaccompanied children to timely and necessary interim protection and durable solutions.

Even within the resettlement context there are obstacles impeding UNHCR’s and PRM’s efforts to protect unaccompanied and separated children. The threshold obstacle, especially in urban refugee situations, is that many unaccompanied and separated children are never identified as refugees and as children in need of protection. Even if UNHCR identifies them as possible refugees and grants them RSDs, UNHCR may not identify and refer them for resettlement as URM’s. Also, children who receive BIAs or BIDs rarely receive more than one, even though, over time, multiple assessments and determinations may be needed to monitor and adjust to changing circumstances, new opportunities, or new risks. Often the current practice is simply to arrange for interim care such as a “foster care” arrangement by placing the child with a family in the refugee situation. The child’s durable solution is not investigated unless and until UNHCR is pursuing a durable solution for the “foster family” itself. Also, even when the child is recognized as a URM, the process should not (but often does) end prematurely with the completion of the BID. Knowing which durable solution is in the best interest of the child is not enough. There is a need to actually actively and expeditiously pursue the durable solution. Otherwise the child is like a patient to whom the doctor prescribes a cure but never gives the medicine or does the operation.

PRM’s Priority 2 and 3 (P-2, P-3) processing presents some operational protection obstacles to URM’s. PRM does sometimes directly interview unaccompanied and separated children as part of the P-2 and P-3 refugee processing, but this happens only if the children happen to fit into one of the P-2 or P-3 categories. In other words, though they are in the resettlement process, they are never provided BIDs as unaccompanied refugee children, nor are they screened for potential trafficking risks. One reason there are no BIDs is because P-2 and P-3 processing is carried out strictly by PRM, and the BID process is carried out strictly by UNHCR. PRM currently has no capacity to conduct BIAs and BIDs.

It is important to underscore the extensive trafficking risks alluded to above that unaccompanied and separated children face. Unaccompanied Eritrean children and Central American children are among those fleeing

violence in their countries who are victimized a second time by human traffickers in countries of transit. An obstacle to them not receiving protection is that trafficking screening for unaccompanied children is not always integrated into the international protection systems outside the United States that are supported by UNHCR and the U.S. government.

The NGO referral process also has some obstacles to protection for URM. Implementing NGO partners for UNHCR and PRM refugee and humanitarian programs refer refugees for resettlement, but NGOs are not funded for playing this role. Often times they do not have child welfare expertise and receive no guidance or training on how to refer URM for resettlement.

**Recommendations.** The Department of State is well-positioned to help remove the obstacles and achieve improve protection outcomes for URM as described above both within its own operations and those of UNHCR. We urge DOS to take the following actions:

1. Prioritize the protection of unaccompanied and separated refugee children within the mission and operations of PRM's admissions and assistance programs by

- Naming a PRM Deputy Assistant Secretary for Children to lead policy and programs on children for both PRM's admissions and assistance work;
- Adjusting priorities, programs, and operating instructions and other field guidance for outreach, referrals, registration, interim protection, pursuit of durable solutions, (including resettlement). and other activities relevant to URM to assure that obstacles to URM protection are removed and early identification, ongoing protection and timely durable solutions are achieved;
- Adding field personnel to carry out prescribed refugee and child welfare best practices from early identification to timely durable solutions across programming, including funding and filling PRM-funded child welfare positions at Refugee Service Centers (RSC) worldwide (we are aware of the good work that is occurring through such a staff person at the Africa RSC and encourage such positions at all RSCs);
- Establishing P-2 and P-3 designations for URM as URM, and otherwise integrate their processing into the PRM priority identification, screening, and resettlement, including developing PRM capacity to conduct BIAs and BIDs for P-2 and P-3 eligible unaccompanied and separated children and for such children referred directly to PRM by NGOs or others;
- Establishing anti-trafficking, screening mechanisms in appropriate locales for unaccompanied and separated children through Sec. 104 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 which amended Sec. 107 (a) of the Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA 2000) to require the "Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for international development" to "establish and carry out initiatives in foreign countries" that are "in cooperation and coordination with relevant organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, and private nongovernmental organizations... for-- '(i) increased protections for refugees and internally displaced persons, including outreach and education efforts to prevent such refugees and internally displaced persons from being exploited by traffickers; and '(ii) performance of best interest determinations for unaccompanied and separated children who come to the attention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, its partner organizations, or any organization that contracts with the Department of State in order to identify child trafficking victims and to assist their safe integration, reintegration, and resettlement."

2. Encouraging and funding UNHCR to likewise prioritize within their mission and operations the protection of unaccompanied and separated children by



- Designating a high level UNHCR policy and program person for vulnerable children to lead policy and programs for children in both UNHCR's protection/durable solutions and assistance programs;
- Adjusting priorities, programs, and operating instructions and other field guidance for outreach, referrals, registration, interim protection, and pursuit of durable solutions, including resettlement, and other activities relevant to URM, to assure that obstacles to protection are removed and early identification, ongoing protection and timely durable solutions are achieved, including by establishing comprehensive systems for unaccompanied and separated refugee minors that link registration with needs assessment of vulnerable children at risk, enabling UNHCR to identify these vulnerable children early, provide BIAs and pursue ongoing interim protection and care, provide BIDs and pursue timely durable solutions, and do periodic BIAs and BIDs to adjust the care and long-term solutions of the child as circumstances change, or new opportunities or new risks emerge (durable solutions include resettlement, local integration, and voluntary repatriation);
- Adding UNHCR field personnel to carry out prescribed refugee and child welfare best practices from early identification to timely durable solutions across programming.

3. Funding and training NGOs to identify and refer unaccompanied and separated children to UNHCR and to PRM.

4. Establishing an immediate initiative to identify and protect Syrian URM and to identify and protect Central American unaccompanied minors with international protection concerns, and also tailor initiatives scheduled over the next 12 months to identify and protect URM who are Congolese, Eritrean, Afghan and ethnic nationals from Burma.

Thank you for considering this analysis and these recommendations.

## Endnotes

1 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "A Framework for the Protection of Children," (2012): 7. <http://www.unhcr.org/50f6cf0b9.html> (Accessed April 8, 2014).

2 Ethiopia's Mai Aini Camp has some 1000 unaccompanied children, Kenya 1200, and Malaysia 755. See *Removing the Stumbling Blocks: Ways to Use Resettlement More Effectively to Protect Vulnerable Refugee Minors*, University of Sydney and Amnesty International Australia, pp. 15, 18..

3 UNHCR, "Children on the Run: Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection," (Washington, DC: UNHCR, 2014), 6.

4 UNHCR, "The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis," (November 2013): 5. <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/unhcr-campaigns/childrensreport/Future-of-Syria-UNHCR-v13.pdf> (Accessed April 8, 2014).

5 "The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis": 9.

6 "A Framework for the Protection of Children": 26.

7 "A Framework for the Protection of Children, 28.

# Unaccompanied Migrant Children Understood through a Catholic Social Teaching Context

July, 2014

## Background

Throughout Scripture the poor and the vulnerable hold a special place both in Scripture and in the Catholic moral tradition. Throughout his mission Jesus held children in particular in high regard, at one rebuking the disciples for not allowing the children to come to him and declaring that we must all become like children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (MK 10:14). At another point in his ministry, Jesus issued a much sharper word of warning that it would be better that a millstone be tied around a person's neck, than for that person to cause a child to sin. We have a special obligation to ensure that children are given the protection and support due to them.

Highlighting unaccompanied migrant children in particular, Pope Benedict XVI noted that “these boys and girls often end up on the street abandoned to themselves and prey to unscrupulous exploiters who often transform them into the object of physical, moral and sexual violence.” It is the responsibility of humanitarian organizations, public institutions, and the Church to dedicate resources to protect these young migrants. This call is of particular importance today, given the humanitarian situation that is taking place along the U.S./Mexico border.

Since 2011, the United States has seen an unprecedented increase in the number of unaccompanied migrating children arriving to the country, predominately at the U.S./Mexico border. Whereas the number of children apprehended averaged 6,800 between federal fiscal years (FY) 2004 and 2011, the U.S. government estimates that more than 70,000 unaccompanied minors could enter the United States during FY2014.

While a mix of factors contribute to this uptick in migration, a generalized violence at the state and local levels and a corresponding breakdown of the rule of law has threatened citizen security and created a culture of fear and hopelessness that has functioned as the primary cause. Violence and coercion—including extortion, kidnapping, threats, and coercive and forcible recruitment of children into criminal activity—are perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations and gangs, and have become part of everyday life in all of these countries, exerting control over communities. Under such circumstances children and their parents face a stark choice: Stay and become a likely victim of the violence or make a dangerous journey to a place of possible safety.

## Catholic Social Teaching

During the twentieth century, as international migration became a particularly



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acute phenomenon, papal teaching came to emphasize the Church's commitment to caring for pilgrims, aliens, exiles, and migrants of every kind, affirming that all peoples have the right to conditions worthy of human life and, if these conditions are not present, the right to migrate. Among conditions worthy of human life is the opportunity to live in a homeland where one is not in constant fear of losing his life or the lives of his loved ones. Where such conditions persist the Church, civil society, and local and state governments need to take the steps necessary to alleviate these dangers. Recently, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo highlighted this obligation when he noted that "over the long term, the increasing violence from gangs and organized crime in their home countries must be addressed and controlled so they (children and families) can be secure in their homes."

More recent still, Pope Francis specifically referred to the influx of unaccompanied migrant children across the U.S./Mexico border as a "humanitarian emergency" that "as a first urgent measure, these children be welcomed and protected." Reflecting the pope's concerns, the bishops have promoted a series of practical policy proposals that they believe will help to create a place of welcome and protection for these children. While important in their own right it is crucial to recall that these proposals are not merely asserted but are rooted in the Catholic moral tradition. A few principles related to this tradition are worth highlighting specifically:

- **Human Dignity:** The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The Church has an abiding concern human life from conception until natural death; the lives of migrant children do not somehow fall outside the Church's commitment to protect and nurture life at all its stages. Consequently, children who are fleeing violence and seeking safety should be given due process under the law and provided the necessary screenings to ensure that they will be given the help necessary to ensure their well-being.
- **Call to Family, Community, and Participation:** The person is not only sacred but also social. At the foundation of the social character of the person is the family—it is where we first learn how to interact with and engage the wider community. The violence and corruption present in the countries that many unaccompanied migrant children originate causes a great deal of stress on families that often lead to division and separation. Steps need to be taken to create the conditions so that families can remain in their homeland with one another, without having to constantly fear that violence will visit their doorstep and cause any one of them harm. Until that time, policies should be implemented to ensure that families are reunited here in the U.S. and provided some degree of protection for as long as it is too dangerous for them to return home.
- **Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:** A basic moral test for any society is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment—"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me"—and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first (MT 25:35). If there ever was a vulnerable person, a migrant child who is traveling alone would certainly seem to fit that definition. To turn our back on these populations, to demonize them, and to treat them as outcasts and unwelcome directly contravenes our obligation to approach vulnerable populations with particular care.

# Action Alert to Congress:

## Protect Vulnerable Unaccompanied Children and Restore Critical Funding for Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations

July, 2014

### Immediate Action Needed

Please urge your Senators and Representative to oppose legislative efforts to strip protections away from unaccompanied children who are fleeing from violence in Central America and seeking refuge in the United States. This includes, among others, efforts to reduce protections by changing the Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act (2008) or the Homeland Security Act (2002). Urge them to pass a supplemental that provides for the care and protection of vulnerable children, ensures that their due process rights are preserved, and addresses the root causes of their flight, particularly violence in their home countries. Also, use part of the supplemental to fully restore critical ORR FY2014 funding for refugees and all the other vulnerable populations under the care of ORR.

### Background

Central American children are continuing to flee the rampant violence in their countries. Some travel to the United States seeking refuge and are placed under ORR's care. With the fourth quarter just beginning, the number of arriving children has well-exceeded projections for the full fiscal year. ORR notified Congress that it will reprogram \$94 million to begin to meet the needs of the vulnerable children by taking funding from refugees and the other vulnerable populations under its care. These populations include refugees, unaccompanied refugee minors, asylees, Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrants, Cuban/Haitian entrants, and victims of torture, trafficking, and serious crime. Without critical supplemental funding in FY2014 and continued robust funding in FY2015, vital programs that assist refugees, unaccompanied children and other vulnerable populations and support communities that welcome them will continue facing the loss of significant funding and capacity. ORR is already chronically underfunded. These cuts would have devastating consequences for ORR's vulnerable populations and the communities that welcome them.



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The White House has asked Congress for more discretionary enforcement authority over the children. This would reduce the children's due process, refugee protections, child protections, and protection from human traffickers. The Administration also has asked Congress to pass an FY2014 emergency supplemental of \$3.7 billion to address the urgent humanitarian situation, including \$1.83 billion for ORR to assure proper care of the children and to assure proper funding for FY2014 for refugees and all other populations under ORR's care.

Please take the following actions and spread the word about this urgent alert: Call both your Senators and your Representative. You can call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or find their direct office lines on their websites at

[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). Tell them:

- I'm your constituent from [city, state] and I care about refugees, unaccompanied children, and other vulnerable populations.
- I urge you to oppose statutory changes that would strip protections from vulnerable, unaccompanied refugee children and send them back to danger in their home countries.
- The children deserve and need the protections as children seeking refuge from violence. The protections help keep them from harm in this country and their home countries.
- I urge you to support supplemental funding that provides for the care and protection of vulnerable unaccompanied children, ensures that their due process rights are preserved, and addresses the root causes of their flight, particularly violence in their home countries.
- Without these increases, ORR will not have sufficient funds to serve refugees, unaccompanied children, and other vulnerable groups under its care and will be forced to continue cutting services to refugees and other vulnerable populations.
- I urge that you also use part of the supplemental to fully restore critical ORR FY2014 funding for refugees and all vulnerable populations under ORR's care.
- These critical services help refugees and other vulnerable populations learn English and find jobs so they can support themselves and their families and better contribute to their new communities.
- Meet with your Senators and Representative or their staff members in your local home state and district. A toolkit for meeting with your Members of Congress can be found at [rcusa.org/wrd2014](http://rcusa.org/wrd2014). Use the above asks and messages.

**Action Alert to Congress:** Protect Vulnerable Unaccompanied Children and Restore Critical Funding for Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations

Write your Representative and Senators. Find their addresses on their websites at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). See accompanying sample letter.

Spread the word through social media. Find your Representative's and Senators' Twitter Handles at <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/members-of-congress> and urge them to increase ORR funding. See samples below:

- @[their twitter handle] Please stop all legislative efforts to strip protections from unaccomp children#UAC fleeing from Central American violence and seeking refuge in the United States.
- @[their twitter handle] Please support supplemental funding that provides for the care and protection of vulnerable Central American unaccomp children#UAC, ensures that their due process rights are preserved, and addresses the root causes of their flight, particularly violence in their home countries.
- @[their twitter handle] Please also use part of the supplemental to fully restore critical ORR FY2014 funding for refugees and all vulnerable populations under ORR's care.

**Contact:** Matthew Wilch, Refugee Policy Advisor, USCCB/MRS, [mwilch@usccb.org](mailto:mwilch@usccb.org) ; 202-541-3448.