



More than 100 grassroots and philanthropic leaders meet at US-Mexico border to support migrant children's rights

Tijuana hosts 2020's first transnational conference to discuss the region's migration crisis and its impact on youth

February 20, 2020 – TIJUANA, Mexico – Standing in solidarity with the migrant and refugee community, over 75 civil society organizations convened in Tijuana, Mexico today to participate in “Gender, Childhood, and Youth on the Move.” This three-day, transnational conference brings grassroots and philanthropic leaders together across borders to advocate for the rights of migrant children and youth.

[Thousands of migrants have died](#) along the US-Mexico border over the past five years, including dozens of children, according to conservative estimates by the UN Migration Agency. Many thousands more have experienced the trauma of violence, detention, and deportation along their journey, as well as discrimination and sexual abuse in custody.

“Gender, Childhood, and Youth on the Move” provides a unique opportunity for civil society to design strategies to strengthen justice with and for migrant children, including some of the most invisible and vulnerable: girls and young women, unaccompanied children, Afro-descendent children, and children who identify as LGBTQI.

“It’s important for young people from our region to come together now, and have these conversations about the human rights abuses that affect our communities. We are coming together here, in Tijuana, to show the reality of the border, to stand up against racist policies, and to hold our governments accountable. We are here to build community and keep fighting together,” said Paulina Olvera Cárdenas, Director of Espacio Migrante, the local shelter and community center in Tijuana hosting the conference.

Grassroots leaders and youth activists from Central America, Mexico, and the United States have gathered in the city with the world’s busiest border crossing to call for increased protection and justice for young people. Participants bring together diverse expertise in shelter, legal services, psychosocial support, and community advocacy across migratory points of origin, transit, destination, and return.

“Stories like the ones we are hearing during this event demonstrate the humanitarian crisis we are experiencing, and the urgency with which Fondo Semillas continues to support organizations that are defending the human rights of thousands of girls and women, forced to flee their places of origin because of violence and poverty,” said Tania Turner, Executive Director of Fondo Semillas, the only women’s fund in Mexico.

“We stand with our partners to call upon regional governments to recognize that children, especially girls, migrate to escape social inequality, gender-based violence, and institutional abandonment. We



must do more not only to address the reasons why children are forced to leave their homes, but also to secure their safe transit and family reunification when they must leave,” said Miriam Alejandra Camas, Program Manager of the Central American Women’s Fund, based in Nicaragua.

“Government policies that separate children from families and cause young people to be detained indefinitely and inhumanely further traumatize young people already fleeing violence in search of safety. We are proud to support and convene courageous community leaders fighting for children and families fleeing violence, poverty, and injustice. We have a responsibility to stand up for children’s rights and to protect all children from adversity and trauma,” said John Hecklinger, President and CEO of Global Fund for Children, based in Washington, DC.

“Gender, Childhood, and Youth on the Move” is co-hosted by Global Fund for Children, Fondo Semillas, the Central American Women's Fund, the Seattle International Foundation, and the International Community Foundation.

“It is essential that any approach to migration has a gender and youth perspective as a cross-cutting theme; otherwise, we will repeat the discrimination and exclusion that motivated migration in the first place. Spaces such as this meeting also help generate reflection and collaboration between organized civil society and donors in order to listen to and respond to the needs of migrants, from their contexts,” said Perla Vázquez, Program Director of the CAMY Fund, Seattle International Foundation.

“Given our location in the San Diego-Tijuana region, ICF has witnessed the profound impact that immigration policies and geo-political factors have had on our border community over the past 30 years. Often, these decisions and events occur thousands of miles away, yet the negative physical, financial, and emotional impact on our neighbors, colleagues, and children and youth are long-lasting. However, these events have also demonstrated the incredible agility and dynamism of our border community and local leaders – many of whom were migrants to the region themselves. Through grants and capacity-building efforts, ICF seeks to uplift the dynamic, vibrant people and initiatives that make our border community so unique and rich. We are so grateful to our co-hosts for their presence and investments here,” said Anne McEnany, President & CEO of the International Community Foundation, based in San Diego.

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About Espacio Migrante:

Espacio Migrante is a binational community organization that works in the area of Tijuana and San Diego, focusing on supporting migrants and refugees. The organization works directly with diverse migrant communities, including migrants from Haiti, Central America, and other regions of Mexico; migrants of the LGBTQ community; and women and youth. Espacio Migrante believes it is important to raise awareness on the issue of migration, as well as to empower migrants through activism and community organizing. For more information, visit www.espaciomigrante.org.

About Global Fund for Children:

Global Fund for Children (GFC) partners to build a world where all children and youth enjoy equal resources and opportunities in society and live free from violence, discrimination, and exploitation. To that end, GFC invests in innovative local organizations, helping them deepen their impact and build their capacity for social change. Together, GFC and its partners advance the rights of children and youth facing poverty and injustice and equip them with the tools and skills to reach their full potential. Since 1997, Global Fund for Children has invested \$43 million in nearly 700 organizations, reaching more than 10 million children and youth worldwide. For more information, visit www.globalfundforchildren.org.

About Fondo Semillas:

Fondo Semillas is a nonprofit organization focused on improving women's lives in Mexico. It dreams of a country where all women – indigenous, mestiza, black, young, migrant, heterosexual, lesbian, mothers, and students alike – can make their own decisions and have access to health services, a decent job, justice, and happiness. To achieve this, Fondo Semillas supports groups and organizations working for gender equality. Throughout the past 30 years, Fondo Semillas has funded 466 organizations, directly benefited more than 733,000 women, and indirectly benefitted 2.7 million more women, girls, boys, and men. For more information, visit www.semillas.org.mx.

About Central American Women's Fund:

As of 2003, the Central American Women's Fund (Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, FCAM) is the first and only feminist fund in Central America to raise funds in support of the financial, political, fiscal, and emotional sustainability of groups, organizations, human-rights defenders, networks, and movements that work for the human rights of women and their communities. FCAM works to build a world in which Central American women, in all their diversity, have their rights guaranteed. FCAM also actively fosters women's participation as leaders in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and their communities. For more information, visit www.fc mujeres.org.

About Seattle International Foundation:

Over the past ten 10 years, the Seattle International Foundation (SIF) has supported 243 organizations in 81 countries and has contributed to the growth of 650 high-impact social-change leaders. In addition to its grants portfolio, SIF implements key initiatives in the region, including the Central America Donors



Forum, the Central America and Mexico Youth Fund, Centroamérica Adelante, and the Independent Journalism Fund. For more information, visit www.seaif.org.

About International Community Foundation:

For over 30 years, the International Community Foundation (ICF) has inspired and facilitated international charitable giving by US donors to improve the quality of life for the communities they care about, particularly in northwest Mexico. Since 1990, ICF has granted nearly \$100 million to carefully vetted education, health, environmental, and other cross-cutting initiatives throughout Mexico and Latin America. For more information, visit www.icfdn.org.

