

SPECIAL EDITION LISTSERV ON CARE FOR CHILDREN IN HAITI

22 January 2010

To the Better Care Network:

Following last week's devastating events in Haiti, we anticipate large numbers of children have been separated from their families and caregivers. These children face extreme risks in terms of safety, health and protection and many will be vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation and secondary separation. In response to a call from members and partners, we dedicate this listserv specifically to the situation of children in Haiti and the needs of separated and unaccompanied children in emergencies.

The message below includes information on the situation in Haiti, reaction and responses from around the globe, discussion on best care options for children in emergencies, and resources for the care and protection of separated and unaccompanied children. If you're working in Haiti and are in need of further tools for interim care arrangements for children, we encourage you to be in touch with us.

BCN will continue to share information as it becomes available and we encourage our partners and members to do the same.

Visit our homepage (<http://www.bettercarenetwork.org>) now for the following new resources:

- **Child Protection Working Group Guiding Principles: Unaccompanied and Separated Children Following the Haiti Earthquake January 2010.** Even during emergencies, all children have a right to a family and families have a right to care for their children. To this end, the CPWG issues guiding principles to ensure unaccompanied and separated children be provided with services aimed at reuniting them with their parents or customary caregivers as quickly as possible. Further, they underscore that interim care should be consistent with the aim of family reunification, and should ensure children's protection and well-being. <http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=21563&themeID=1005&topicID=1033>

To learn more about the Child Protection Working Group, visit:

<http://www.humanitarianreform.org/Default.aspx?tabid=720>

- **Earthquake in Haiti: Intercountry Adoption Cases International Social Service** notes that, in general, international adoption should not take place in a situation of war or natural disaster, given that these events make it impossible to verify the personal and family situation of children. Any operation to adopt or to evacuate children that are victims of the earthquake to another country must be absolutely avoided, as was the case during the 2004 tsunami.

http://www.iss-ssi.org/2009/assets/files/news/haiti_position%20CIR_ENG.pdf

Additional Resources and International Guidance on Separated and Unaccompanied Children

- **Interagency Guidelines on Unaccompanied and Separated Children**

The Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated **Children** aims to promote and support preparedness, coordination and good practice based on lessons learnt.

Through this collaborative approach, the Guidelines from the IAWG provide some of the strongest direction for ensuring emergency efforts protect family unity and avoid child-family separation. Where family unity can not be preserved, these guidelines instruct on tracing and family reunification, care arrangements, durable arrangements, special issues related to refugee children, and promotion of children's rights.

<http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=21564&themeID=1005&topicID=1033>

- **Guidelines on Alternative Care:** Recently welcomed by the UN General Assembly, the Guidelines on Alternative Care include specific direction for appropriate care for children in emergencies. In particular they caution against any relief effort that inadvertently facilitates the separation of children from family or unnecessarily removes a child from their country to receive care.

<http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=13743&themeID=1001&topicID=1007>

- **Preventing further trauma in Haiti!: International community call for use of International Guidelines to ensure maximum protection of children:** Joint statement from member agencies of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child's Working Group on Children without Parental Care (Geneva) and the NGO Committee on UNICEF Working Group on Children without Parental Care. Statement stresses that, as stipulated by the Guidelines for Alternative Care, the primary goal in emergencies is to trace and reunify children with their families to the maximum extent possible prior to any other permanent solution being pursued.

http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details_news.asp?ID=21576&themeID=1001&topicID=1007

Intercountry Adoption in Haiti

- **Hague: Information Note to States and Central Authorities: Haiti Earthquake and Intercountry adoption of children.** The Hague Conference urges that a humanitarian disaster such as the earthquake should not be the reason for by-passing essential safeguards for safe adoption. In a situation where child care and protection services have broken down such as in Haiti, the risks are even greater that the adoption may be "unsafe". This is why in these tragic situations the emphasis should first be on child protection, rather than adoption. Premature and unregulated attempts to organise the adoption of such a child abroad should be avoided.

<http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=21565&themeID=1002&topicID=1014>

- **Save the Children UK and World Vision UK respond to Times UK Op-ed Urging Adoption as Blanket Response to Haiti**

Chief Executives of Save and World Vision highlight that “previous experience of disasters has led to heart-breaking cases where children have been adopted, even though later it emerges that surviving relatives have been desperate to care for them. In Haiti now, no matter how horrific the situation looks to concerned observers, the full process of reuniting children with parents and relatives must be completed.”

http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details_news.asp?ID=21574&themeID=1002&topicID=1014

- **US Department of State Warns Use of Adoption in an Emergency Context Such as Haiti Can Contribute to Further Family Separation.**

http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details_news.asp?ID=21575&themeID=1002&topicID=1014

- **Joint Council on International Children’s Services Warns that Adoption during Emergencies Can Open Door to Corruption and Abuse of Children.** “ All credible organizations recognize and agree that new adoption cases, including new referrals, are not appropriate in a time of crisis or national emergency. Initiating new adoptions at this time could open the door to corruption and abuse of children. Every effort must be made to identify and find family members for children who are separated or displaced as a result of the earthquake. Joint Council understands the natural tendency to offer a loving family for children who may be newly orphaned, however we urge all adoption service providers and potential adoptive families to refrain from inquiring or attempting to start a new adoption.”

<http://www.jcics.org/Haiti.htm>

Lessons Learned from Other Emergencies

- **Psychosocial Care and Protection of Tsunami Affected Children: Guiding Principles**

Exposure to natural disasters has a devastating impact on the psychological and social well-being of children, adolescent and adults. It is now widely accepted that early psychosocial interventions that help to mitigate the effect of trauma, alleviating psychological distress, and strengthen resiliency must be an integral part of humanitarian assistance. The following principles can be considered for any emergency setting to guide psychosocial programming.

<http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=21568&themeID=1005&topicID=1033>

- **Intercountry Adoption in Emergencies: The Tsunami Orphans**

The Adoption Institute offers this Policy Brief, with the purpose of examining the role of intercountry adoption in situations such as the one caused by the tsunami – that is, during natural disasters, armed conflicts, and other complex human emergencies. By outlining some of the unique threats posed to children during emergencies, and examining existing international conventions and the legal framework for intercountry adoption, it is the Institute’s intent to articulate best practices that incorporate both immediate and long-term needs of children left without parental care – including protection, family reunification,

community and family solutions, permanency, and respect of culture.

<http://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=21567&themeID=1002&topicID=1014>

- **How to Help Children in the Aftermath of Hurricane Mitch**

Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch in Central America, a consortium of NGOs issued a communiqué calling for all responses to ensure children were not separated from family or community and that unaccompanied children be reintegrated in their family, their community or substitute homes in their country.

<http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details.asp?id=21569&themeID=1002&topicID=1014>
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News Items

Miami Herald reports that Haitian community wants children to be cared for in Haiti

http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details_news.asp?id=21571&themeID=1002&topicID=1014

Disasters Emergency Committee member agencies call for halt to any new adoptions of children separated from their families after Haiti earthquake.

http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/details_news.asp?ID=21570&themeID=1002&topicID=1014

The Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses that safeguards are needed for children in Haiti

<http://reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/AZHU-7ZTMYW?OpenDocument>

General Information

The purpose of the listserve is to enable members to exchange information on matters of mutual concern. If you would like to share a document, raise a specific issue, or reach out in any other way to the Network, please send the information to us at kriordan@unicef.org. In the interest of keeping messages consolidated, we will manage announcements on the listserve and send out a few messages each month.

We would like to involve as many people as possible who are concerned with better care issues in the Network. Please advise anyone who would like to be added to the listserve to send us a message at kriordan@unicef.org with "listserve request" in the subject line.

Alternatively, visit the homepage of the Better Care Network website, and click on the upper right box where it says "click here to sign up for our email announcements".

<http://www.bettercarenetwork.org>

Best,

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Better Care Network Secretariat