

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Preventing further trauma in Haiti!

International community call for use of International Guidelines to ensure maximum protection of children

Just weeks after the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*, the international community is struggling to provide appropriate care and protection for children and families in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. The Guidelines are the first international document on the care of children without parental care in non-emergency and emergency situations.

Now is the time to apply the Guidelines within a coordinated international relief effort in Haiti.

The Guidelines stress that in emergency situations, the primary goal is to trace and reunify children with their families to the maximum extent possible prior to any other permanent solution being pursued. Even in the worst disasters, such as this, most children have extended family members willing and able to care for them. No relief effort should inadvertently promote the separation of children from their immediate and extended family. In particular, children in emergency situations should not be moved to another country for the purpose of alternative care except temporarily for compelling health, medical or safety reasons. If the latter is necessary, the Guidelines stress that children should be moved as close as possible to their home, they should be accompanied by a parent or caregiver known to the child, and a clear return plan should be established.

The Government of Haiti, as well as all local, national and international governmental and non-governmental agencies should comply with the principles of the Guidelines, which include:

- a register of unaccompanied and separated children
- need to develop temporary and long-term family-based care
- use of residential care only as a temporary measure
- prohibit new large-scale residential facilities as a permanent or long-term care solution
- prevention of the cross-border displacement of children

Members 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 (New York) call upon the international community to uphold the principles of the Guidelines, to prevent unnecessary separation of families, inept and potentially harmful evacuation efforts and to prevent the trafficking of children through inappropriate or unlawful inter-country adoptions in emergency situations.

Signed by:

Better Care Network, Better Care Network Netherlands, Defence for Children International, EveryChild, FICE International, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, International Council of Women, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Social Service, Intervida, PLAN International, Relaf-Latin American Foster Care Network, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International and World Vision.

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