

STATEMENT

Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman on the situation of children in Haiti

NEW YORK, 19 January 2010 - We are extremely concerned about the situation of children in Haiti, many of whom have become separated from their families and caregivers. These children face increased risks of malnutrition and disease, trafficking, sexual exploitation and serious emotional trauma. The race to provide them with life-saving emergency food and medicine, safe shelter, protection, and care is underway.

UNICEF and its partners, including the Haitian Government, the Red Cross and Save the Children, are establishing safe spaces for children and the process of registering unaccompanied children has commenced.

UNICEF and partners are also providing food and supplies for orphanages in Port-au-Prince.

Every effort will be made to reunite children with their families. Only if that proves impossible, and after proper screening has been carried out, should permanent alternatives like adoption be considered by the relevant authorities. Screening for international adoption for some Haitian children had been completed prior to the earthquake. Where this is the case, there are clear benefits to speeding up their travel to their new homes.

UNICEF joins with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, International Social Service and other concerned groups in calling on all those involved in relief efforts to ensure that they act in the best interests of children. What is needed now is life saving support and care for children in Haiti.

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