

January 19, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington D.C., 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

First and foremost, we would like to thank you for your outstanding leadership in coordinating the United States' humanitarian response to Tuesday's tragic earthquake in Haiti. This is one of the greatest human tragedies in recent history. We understand that the focus of immediate efforts is to ensure that all who survived this terrible disaster have access to life sustaining necessities such as health care, food, water and shelter.

As you begin to construct the next phase of the United States' and international response, we urge you to consider the needs of orphan children. As you well know, these children are already among the most vulnerable and in circumstances like these, are at even greater risk. Our experience has been that a natural disaster of this magnitude can not only have serious effects on children previously orphaned, but sadly, also be the cause for additional children to find themselves displaced or orphaned.

As we understand, there were approximately 20,000 children living in Haiti's 187 licensed orphanages prior to this disaster. The vast majority of these institutions are located in Port-Au-Prince and the surrounding region. In a small percentage of cases, the children are eligible for international adoption and have been matched with American families.

We appreciate the announcement by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that humanitarian parole will be offered to children who have been legally confirmed as orphans eligible for intercountry adoption by the Government of Haiti and are being adopted by U.S. citizens and to children who have been previously identified by an adoption service provider or facilitator as eligible for intercountry adoption and have been matched to U.S. citizen prospective adoptive parents.

With this in mind, we respectfully request that you give every consideration to employing some or all of the following options for assisting Haiti's orphaned children:

- Ensure that these children are a high priority in all U.S. evacuation and relief plans.
- Coordinate with U.S. based faith based and private relief partners to help channel appropriate levels of relief to orphan children.

- Identify opportunities for temporary care and shelter within Haiti or Haiti's border countries where these children could be safely evacuated.
- Develop a coordinated exit strategy that guarantees the safety and timely removal of these Haitian orphans and delivery to their adoptive families in the U.S. Specifically, your leadership is needed to authorize an authority to lead this effort and to ensure that security and support is provided for these children and for this coordinated effort.
- Identify opportunities for orphan children to receive temporary care and shelter within the U.S.

Attached please find a list of orphanages we know to be in the affected region, although this list is not exhaustive. We hope that this information and the above recommendations are useful as your team devises a course of action. If we can be of any further assistance to you on this or other matters of mutual concern, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,
