

**“Haiti Relief and Recovery: Building a Better Future for Children”
Charles MacCormack, President and CEO, Save the Children
Before The
Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Development
and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs and International
Environmental Protection
February 4, 2010**

Mr. Chairman,

Save the Children welcomes this hearing by the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Haiti. It raises important issues that deserve full discussion because the choices will affect lives and the future of a nation.

I have traveled to Port-au-Prince twice since the January 12 earthquake and saw first-hand its catastrophic impact. The devastation of the capital, with its highly centralized government infrastructure and institutions, is reverberating across the entire country. No part of Haiti is unaffected, as thousands of displaced families and children leave the earthquake zone, and as insufficient government services and infrastructure falter or collapse.

Children are always among the most vulnerable during emergencies. Sadly, the damage wrought by this earthquake only compounds the challenges that Haiti’s children and families already faced each day. Their needs are enormous: medical care, food and water, shelter, basic supplies, protection and education. The threat of disease and illness is constant and cases of tetanus and suspected cases of measles have already been reported. Children are separated from their families, and are at risk for abuse and exploitation, as well as psychosocial distress. While the Haitian people are extremely resilient and have exhibited much patience, their challenges are daunting.

The earthquake caused severe damage, but also created the need for visionary thinking towards recovery and reconstruction so Haiti can start a new chapter and proceed on a new path forward. Save the Children hopes to work with Haitians to turn that page, based on our experience and expertise from over three decades in the country working in a complex environment characterized by frequent humanitarian crises. We have launched in Haiti one of our largest international responses ever. Save the Children is now engaged both in an immediate response to a disaster of unprecedented scale as well as in development of a bold and ambitious vision that is both long-term and comprehensive, incorporating principles of supporting Haitians “building back better for children” at every step.

Our goal is to provide emergency assistance to save lives, alleviate suffering and support the recovery of 800,000 people including 470,000 children. This effort is focused on the entire country. There are no unaffected areas, so we all need to develop solutions both for those in the earthquake zone as well as those elsewhere, such as enhancing secondary city habitability and improving rural agricultural zones. We are working together with the government of Haiti and other international and local organizations to assess and respond to the needs of children without parental care and to identify, register and reunite separated children with their families. We have also accepted the United Nation’s request to help coordinate efforts to reunite separated children and co-lead the international response on education. In addition, we are delivering medical supplies to hospitals, distributing food, opening mobile health clinics and creating child-friendly spaces for children.

Our vision is a Haiti where all children realize their rights every day to a basic education, a healthy life, freedom from abuse and benefit from the support of families who recognize the fundamental needs of their children. In order to make lasting, positive change in the lives of children, Save the Children calls on the U.S. Government to sustain robust

support for meeting Haiti's immediate and long-term development needs in cooperation with the Haitian government and a wide variety of partners, including local civil society and children themselves.

During all stages from early recovery through reconstruction, the international community and Haitian authorities must demonstrate a serious commitment to disaster risk reduction in all spheres of activity. Hurricane season is just around the corner and we know these kinds of investments up front can avoid much greater costs incurred later through humanitarian responses.

Haiti's rebuilding will require substantial investment. The international community must fulfill the United Nations flash appeal for \$576 million, and then sustain significant investments for the next ten years. We need to ensure the international community stays the course and that, unlike in past humanitarian crises, attention does not erode as other challenges arise. The government of President Preval has shown for the past two years that it is a government that the international community can work with – we must make our commitments long-term, predictable and transparent.

In 2008 Congress passed HOPE II (the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act), which extended trade preferences to Haiti for ten years. As others have recommended, Congress should consider broadening these preferences to include even more of Haiti's exports. Finally, instead of issuing new loans to the Haitian government, post-earthquake assistance should be in the form of grants. Outstanding bilateral and multilateral debt of nearly one billion dollars should be cancelled. Future funds must go to rebuild Haiti and ensure its children have a future to look forward to.

Haiti's rebuilding will take time. The recent Ministerial planning conference in Montreal should be the first step of a ten-year commitment by the international community to walk with Haitians toward a new future and to meet their immediate and long-term development needs in cooperation with a wide variety of partners, including local civil society and the government of Haiti. Save the Children has been in Haiti for over 30 years. Today when we start working with a community, we want to make a commitment to them – to work with them for ten years and build their capacity during that time to take over from us. We work with the government, with local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and with the community. We can only make such a commitment with support from our private donors because few institutional donors have a ten-year timeline. But Haiti needs such a long term commitment from all of us.

Enhanced coordination is also necessary. We all need to do better at coordinating our efforts, especially given the thinly stretched capacity of the Haitian government. Even before the earthquake, coordination among the major donors, NGOs and others was more a case of information sharing than thoughtful division of labor. With more to accomplish and more actors engaged, the importance of strategic coordination cannot be understated.

To do our part, Save the Children is playing a leading role in the UN cluster system, which seeks to coordinate the international humanitarian response by sector. Previous experience suggests, however, that in working alongside and through the UN system, the U.S. should empower one concerned agency to oversee the overall response. President Obama wisely empowered Dr. Rajiv Shah, the new Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), to oversee the U.S. relief response in Haiti. USAID should be empowered as well to lead the U.S. development effort, so that the dozens of U.S.

agencies engaged with Haiti respond in a coordinated and cohesive way to support Haiti's long-term development needs.

Some are questioning whether longer term aid will be well spent given the political instability and corruption that were wide spread prior to the earthquake. The answer, of course, depends on the Haitian people, but the U.S. government can do its part to move in the right direction. As the largest donor to Haiti in the past, the effectiveness of the U.S. government programs impacts the entire development enterprise in Haiti. Just a few donors, the U.S., Canada, France, the EC and the World Bank, contributed over 90 percent of the official development assistance in 2006 and 2007 with the U.S. and Canada alone providing almost half. Better and more strategic coordination amongst the international community is both possible and necessary.

Working with the Haitian government and civil society, the U.S. can make significant progress towards more effective reconstruction and development. The U.S., with NGO partners and other donors, should intensify its commitment to building the capacity and systems of the Haitian government and Haitian civil society to lead and manage their own development.

Rebuilding infrastructure is important; building institutions, as former USAID Administrator Natsios argued in a recent essay, is of even greater importance. In Haiti, Save the Children will continue to work with Haitian institutions and build Haitian systems. For instance, prior to the earthquake we were supporting 250 schools in Haiti – government, religious and private schools. Schools supported by the government are apparently the strongest, but the government did not, and certainly now does not, have the capacity to spend even the few funds that the international community provides to it. As schools reopen, we will continue to support school health and nutrition, and teacher training at these

schools, and work with these schools to go through the government certification process which ensures that the schools are aligned with government protocols. The U.S. and international partners must strengthen both government institutions to oversee and provide education, and the private and non-profit Haitian institutions to link with this system.

Drawing on Save the Children's previous experience, including lessons learned by the 2004-2005 Tsunami response in southeast Asia, we know that Haiti's effective long-term development will require putting Haitians at the center of their own development and recognizing the critical role of women and youth in the decision making process. In this regard, we believe the Administration and Congress should consider the following:

- ✓ Invest in participatory initiatives that engage women and children in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of reconstruction and development initiatives;
- ✓ Focus on rebuilding Haitian institutions and systems. Infrastructure matters a great deal, but promoting human development by equipping Haitians to deliver quality education, healthcare and other services themselves matters even more.
- ✓ Explore models for attracting back the Haitian diaspora into the government at reasonable salaries, as Liberia and Afghanistan have done with some success.
- ✓ View the Haitian government's recently completed development plan as the primary plan for Haiti's reconstruction and development.
- ✓ Strengthen USAID with more staff to properly plan, engage, leverage with others and monitor our assistance. Currently there too few staff and they spending 30 percent of their time on reports and planning documents for Washington DC.

Business as usual is not enough for Haiti. The international community, the U.S. and the NGOs must sharply expand our focus on human development, both skills and institutions.

Governments, NGOs, foundations and other stakeholders must help build the capacity of Haiti's civil society, private sector and national government from the very local to the national level to enable Haitians to lead their country into a brighter future.

Thank you.