



December 8, 2008

Dear President-Elect Obama:

Congratulations on your victory! Your election to the U.S. Presidency is an historic event in our nation's history. We, the undersigned non-governmental development, humanitarian and advocacy organizations dedicated to ending global suffering, believe that now is also the opportune time to take historic action on behalf of the world's children.

We are acutely aware that each day more than 25, 000 children worldwide die from mostly preventable diseases and malnutrition. Millions of other children face diminished lives, unable to develop to their full potential. Still others lose critical adult protection and support as their parents or caregivers fall ill or succumb to HIV/AIDS and other killers. We ask that you take urgent action on behalf of the 143 million orphans and millions more vulnerable children around the world by instituting an Emergency Presidential Initiative for the World's Children (EPIWC).

The United States provided hope to the world's children by pledging to contribute its fair share to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The U.S. also made a specific promise to support orphans and vulnerable children with the 2005 enactment of *the Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act* (Public Law 109-95), which authorized the first ever comprehensive strategy to address the challenges faced by the world's orphans and vulnerable children. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding and political will, these promises have not been fully honored by our country and vulnerable children worldwide have been left waiting.

An Emergency Presidential Initiative for the World's Children will finally deliver on the goals of P.L. 109-95 and provide a comprehensive package of assistance aimed at bringing lasting change and improvement to the lives of millions of children around the world through increased funding, program consolidation, and oversight of other key foreign aid programs that support vulnerable children. We propose that the EPIWC be headed by a high-level Children's Ambassador who



will report directly to the Secretary of State or to the Secretary of a new U.S. Department of Global Development, and who will be tasked with prioritizing children's programs within your administration and with Congress.

We recognize that you will face many costly demands on our federal dollars during extremely difficult economic times. We believe that investing in more robust and effective assistance for the world's children is both a moral and a national imperative. Funding these children's programs is not only the right thing to do, it is also effective public diplomacy. Foreign aid represents only 0.5% of the federal budget, but it is a critical element in helping create political stability and economic prosperity. Moreover, the United States consistently polls positively in countries that put to good use the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) dollars. An Emergency Presidential Initiative for the World's Children has the potential to be one of the United States' best ambassadors yet.

We strongly believe that investing in the world's children is essential in order to build a strong global economy. Children need education, food, nutrition, shelter, protection, health care, livelihood opportunities, and psychosocial support in order to grow into contributing members of society. Orphaned children are far more susceptible to a host of dangers than children with healthy parents and stable communities to care for them. In addition to malnutrition, lack of education, or neglect, these dangers include being forcibly recruited into a child sex trafficking ring, or child labor. If we invest in the future of these children now, we make the world a better place for all.

We, the undersigned organizations, ask you to initiate an Emergency Presidential Initiative for the World's Children. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you and your administration to make a difference for orphans and other vulnerable children around the world.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Delaney
Executive Director
Global Action for Children