



Statement on Identified Adoptable Children of Haiti, and Newly Orphaned Children of Haiti

16-Jan-2010

Identified Adoptable Children

PEAR understands that some Adoption Authority personnel in Haiti have been killed and records are likely lost. Many children have not only been declared to be adoptable, but in the eyes of the Haiti government are legally the children of foreign parents. We call upon the authorities of US, Canada, France and other countries who have families matched with adoptable children to unite the children with their new families as fast as possible.

For the US, the chances of issuing humanitarian parole appears to be increasing each day. If this is indeed the mechanism that the US will employ to unite the children and their families:

- 1) We call upon DOS to clarify the pathway to citizenship for these children immediately.
- 2) We call upon international adoption clinics and family physicians to assist families with extra screenings in addition to TB testing and current American Academy of Pediatrics' recommended testing. We recommend that they emphasize monitoring for malaria, intestinal worms and parasites, and other diseases that occur with a contaminated water supply.
- 3) We call upon adoption agencies to assist adoptive parents in finding legal and health resources and adjusting contractual payments such as offering to spread out payments or eliminate fees that may not be relevant due to this special circumstance. Additionally, we plead with agencies to not see this tragedy as a marketing opportunity for future business and to hold off on signing up new clients until circumstances in Haiti stabilize.

- 4) We call upon entities who are gathering contact information from pending adoption cases to instead direct prospective adoptive parents to the proper authority, the US Department of State, in compliance with the Adoption Alert issued January 18, 2010 <http://adoption.state.gov/news/Haiti.html>. If prospective adoptive parents encounter difficulties dealing with DOS or disagree with proposals to help, we suggest that they contact their US Congressmen for assistance (to locate your elected officials, please see: <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt>). PAPs should exercise extreme caution in providing information to any third party unless they know exactly what is going to be done with their information and they completely agree with the entity's proposals concerning their adoption cases. PAPs trusting third party entities may end up having viewpoints advocated that are not theirs, are not in the best interest of their child, or are not in the best interest of their family.

PEAR commits to

- 1) Continue to update our orphanage, hospital and contact status list. See our blog post <http://pear-now.blogspot.com/2010/01/updates-from-haiti.html>
- 2) pledging to assist families in finding resources as we are in the process of assembling state resource directories. Please contact PEAR at pveazie@pear-now.org.

Newly Orphaned Children/Babylift discussions in the Press

Crying children in rubble, hungry and injured. For many of us, watching the images from Haiti on our television screens from our comfortable safe homes, the first impulse is to somehow reach those little children and bring them to us to comfort, to shelter and protect.

And in doing so, we would be creating another quieter tragedy.

A mass evacuation of Haitian children right now is a huge mistake, distracting people from what will help them - sending help and care to Haiti and reuniting children with separated families.

For the children in orphanages not already legally determined to be RELINQUISHED - please for their sake do not send them away. They may have family in Haiti willing to care for them once the crisis is over.

The truth is: most children in orphanages are not orphans. Many have extended family that can't care for them physically, and an orphanage is really a foster home on a large scale.

Can you imagine surviving an earthquake and struggling to reach the orphanage where you left your daughter or nephew or grandchild - only to find that the people you hoped would care for your child when you couldn't had sent her far far away?

Right now, it's impossible to tell which child in a Haitian orphanage is eligible for an ethical and legal international adoption. Figuring out that answer pre-earthquake took time. Now - which child has family that survived the earthquake and are looking for her? In addition, there seems to be no reliable source as to the numbers of orphanages and children in care in Haiti prior to the earthquake. Without knowing how many children residing in orphanages or children newly orphaned would be in need of shelter and care makes the idea of a babylift a slippery slope. How are these children going to be tracked? What entity will ensure re-unification or re-patriation efforts? These important points seem to not have been considered.

While the recent press articles discussing a New Operation Babylift dubbed Pierre Pan Operation bring up memories of the Babylift in Vietnam and Operation Pedro Pan in Cuba where thousands of children were transferred during times of crisis, we want to emphasize that in the confusion of the crisis, many who weren't orphans were taken and placed, and the weight of that loss has to be carried by those children as adults. Many have spoken eloquently about the loss and confusion they felt. In addition, many families continued to search for their children after these events with little or no way of locating them. The heartbreak and grief this caused should not be forgotten.

After the 2004 tsunami, the same impulse to help by adoption came out and was gently but firmly turned down by most countries hit by the tragedy. Instead, aid was sent to help communities care for lost children, to reunite families separated and to bring aid directly to the children in need.

That was the right choice.

Let's support the children without reference to their status concerning adoption. They need to be given every opportunity to find their families and to see if they have relatives able to assume their care before adoption should be considered. We are sure if a similar disaster happened in the US, all efforts would be made to reunite displaced children with their immediate or extended families before any adoptions would be allowed. No one would want to see children further separated from their families by premature intercountry relocations and/or adoptions.