

May 6, 2010

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Last year, World Vision called for the G8 to step up and take action to reduce the needless deaths of more than 8 million children around the world each year from preventable causes. We were very pleased when the G8, under the very strong leadership of the Canadian Government, worked together to develop the Muskoka Initiative.

In 2010, world leaders also placed a significant emphasis on becoming more accountable and effective in their development efforts. The high priority placed on accountability within the Summit and Development Minister's meeting agendas, as well as the release of the first G8 Accountability Report, were important steps to enhance tracking, monitoring and reporting of G8 commitments.

For 2011, the G8 has agreed to produce specific accountability reports in relation to its commitments on maternal and child health as part of the Muskoka Initiative, and food security as part of the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative.

World Vision welcomes the publicly stated intent of the G8 to support transparency and to track and follow up these commitments in an accurate and consistent manner, and we will be watching developments closely. To strengthen this work, we recommend that the G8 embrace a broader understanding of accountability than has been articulated to date, including:

- **Accountability for financial commitments** – Delivering on funding commitments is key to ensuring the G8's credibility and cementing its leadership role in global development, as well as ensuring progress in key areas. The G8 should, as part of its review of action to date under the Muskoka and L'Aquila Initiatives, provide a clear timetable and action plan for outstanding financial commitments for maternal and child health and food security. The G8 should also identify other sources of alternative development financing to ensure that adequate resources are available to help developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- **Accountability to deliver resources effectively** – World Vision welcomes the recent commitments from the G8 to support country-led development, especially relating to the Muskoka Initiative, but encourages the G8 to further harmonise and coordinate their support to countries, between G8 members and other donors or initiatives, particularly the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health

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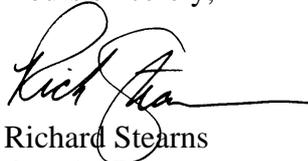
- **Accountability of governments to their citizens** – At the 2010 G8 Development Ministers meeting, Ministers “emphasised the importance of accountability to their own citizens for the effective use of international assistance” while also reinforcing “the ownership and accountability of partner countries to their citizens”. This latter part of the accountability chain must be strengthened to ensure that citizens in developing countries, who are often the intended beneficiaries of international development efforts, are also included in the accountability process in meaningful ways.

The forthcoming G8 meeting in Deauville has the potential to be a catalytic moment to stimulate immediate, effective and coordinated global action to address maternal and child health and food security and save the lives of millions of women and children.

As one of the world’s largest non-government organisations working directly in child health and development, we call on you and the United States Government to show leadership and act boldly now.

If you would like more information about World Vision, our work, or our policy positions please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Stearns
President

World Vision United States

cc: U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton
USAID Administrator, Dr. Rajiv Shah

Enclosure

BACKGROUND FACTS

Maternal and Child Health

- MDGs 4 and 5 remain among the most off-track MDGs with over 8 million under-five deaths annually.
- The health of mothers and their children are closely linked; this is especially true for newborns. More than 3 million children die each year in their first month of life (about half of these on the day of birth) and more than 350,000 women die from complications during pregnancy, childbirth or shortly after.
- Progress has been made towards MDG 4, with a reduction in global mortality of children under-five of almost one-third between 1990 and 2010. But this progress has been patchy. In most countries the poorest communities have not seen reductions in line with global aggregates, and in some countries the gap between child mortality in 'least poor' and 'most poor' sections of the population has increased.
- Deaths of children surviving *beyond* 28 days but failing to reach 5 years are mainly caused by diarrhoea, pneumonia, and malaria, with under-nutrition a major underlying factor in more than one third of all under-five deaths.
- Children will continue to die from preventable causes unless greater attention is given to resourcing interventions which target the main causes of under-five mortality. This will require giving particular attention to the wider determinants of health (including water, sanitation and nutrition) as the major root causes of these diseases.
- Increasing investment in prevention and care for mothers, newborns and children makes economic sense, as well as helping them realise their rights to the highest attainable standard of health. High maternal and under-five mortality and illness, along with high levels of malnutrition, have serious economic and development costs. Healthy mothers and children are at the core of the formation of human capital and governments must invest significantly increase resources to improve maternal, newborn and child health.

Nutrition and Food Security

- Every 6 seconds a child dies because of hunger and related causes
- 925 million people do not have enough to eat - more than the populations of USA, Canada and the European Union. An additional 44 million people have been pushed into poverty by current high food prices (World Bank). The majority of these are women and children.
- The number of undernourished people in the world increased by 75 million in 2007 and 40 million in 2008, largely due to higher food prices
- Under-nutrition is the underlying cause of almost 3 million under 5 child deaths each year, and is also responsible for 35% of the disease burden in children under 5. Globally, it is estimated that 200 million children under 5 are stunted and another 19 million are severely wasted. 20 million children under age five suffer from severe acute malnutrition.
- Adequate nutrition is not only important for the growth, development, and survival of children, it is central to community and national development.
- The current food insecurity situation is evolving rapidly; the prices of food in the global market are quite high, the market is volatile and the World Bank has recently estimated that another 44 million people have been pushed into poverty.
- The cost of under-nutrition to national economic development is estimated at US\$20-30 billion per annum (2006)