



Call to
Action

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A Letter from the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues

We are pleased to help introduce the *State of the World's Mothers 2002*. This report's findings clearly demonstrate the inextricable link between the health and well-being of mothers and their children, and document the great risks and responsibilities facing mothers and their families in war-torn countries. As part of the global family of nations, the United States can do much to protect and improve the lives of women and children in the developing world.

We support the critical, life-saving work of Save the Children and its partner humanitarian relief and development organizations, and look forward to helping ensure that the United States adequately addresses the care and protection needs of women and children in war and conflict. In addition, we recognize the vital role that women play in building stable societies in post-conflict communities, and pledge our support to these women so they can do more to create a peaceful and prosperous world for all children, and for us all.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Biggert".

Judy Biggert (R-IL)
Member of Congress
Co-Chair,
Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juanita Millender-McDonald".

Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA)
Member of Congress
Co-Chair,
Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues

Join Save the Children's Every Mother/Every Child Campaign

War and armed conflict exacerbate the challenges that confront mothers and children in poor countries. Mothers must assume greater responsibilities for the security and well-being of their families, often under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. During war-time, they may be forced to flee their homes and to struggle to protect their families under harsh conditions in refugee camps or other temporary living conditions. And after their return to their communities, mothers and children who have survived war and conflict are in even greater need of resources and tools to overcome their adversity, to achieve some stability in their lives and to start the long process of healing and rebuilding. The *Every Mother/Every Child* campaign seeks to ensure that every mother in the developing world has the tools she needs so she and her children can survive and thrive.

The campaign is based on the premise that women need three essential tools to overcome the cycle of illiteracy, poverty and inadequate health care. When women have access to these tools – education, economic opportunities and maternal and child health care, including family planning – they are able to take control of their own lives and to break this cycle for their children and their families.

The broad goals of the *Every Mother/Every Child* campaign are:

- To educate the American public about the need for improved health, education and economic opportunities for mothers in the developing world;
- To work with policymakers to improve US and international policies for mothers and children worldwide, including those affected by war and conflict; and
- To increase the amount of money available from individuals, corporations, foundations and the US government for programs that provide women and children with these essential tools.

Join this campaign and work with us to ensure that Every Mother and Every Child have the tools they need to survive and thrive. Our ability to reach the world's 2 billion mothers, including the millions affected by war and conflict, with education, critical health care services and economic opportunities will determine the quality of life for generations to come. Together, we have the power to put these three essential tools in the hands of every mother, for every child.

To join, complete and return the enclosed postcard, call 1-800-728-3843 or visit our website at www.savethechildren.org/mothers/

Take Action Now!

Save the Children calls on you to join the *Every Mother/Every Child* campaign. Work with us to ensure that women and children, particularly those who are victims of war and conflict, have the assistance they need to survive and thrive. Investing in mothers is also one of the most effective ways to help post-conflict societies achieve reconciliation, development and a better future for their children. **Take a few minutes today to:**

1. **Join the Campaign.** Complete and return the enclosed postcard or sign up online at www.savethechildren.org.
2. **Speak Out.**
 - Send a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell and urge the United States to put women and children first and to ensure that they receive the attention they need and deserve in each humanitarian crisis response.
 - Write to your two Senators and your Representative and encourage them to press for priority status for women and children in our country's humanitarian response.
 - Log on to www.savethechildren.org to send your letters through e-mail or photocopy, sign at the bottom, and mail the letters on the next two pages to:

Secretary of State Colin Powell
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520
(Your Senator)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(Your Representative)
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

3. **Learn More.** Visit our website to read the stories of the women and children in areas of conflict, and to find out more about Save the Children's programs around the world. www.savethechildren.org
4. **Donate.** Call 1-800-728-3843 or visit our website to make an online donation or to become a sponsor.

An Open Letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As we have seen in Afghanistan and other recent conflicts, war has a new face. This “new face of war” is particularly harsh on mothers and children who were already struggling to meet their basic needs. It seeks to destroy the very fabric of society by obliterating people’s way of life: destroying homes and communities, poisoning water supplies, forcing people to flee from their homes. Furthermore, the use of rape against women and girls is an increasingly common tactic further demoralizing individuals and destabilizing whole communities.

Today, women and children, once caught in the crossfire, have become the main targets of war. In addition, women and girls in refugee camps in countries of asylum are highly vulnerable to sexual assault and other forms of violence.

Save the Children’s report on the *State of the World’s Mothers* outlines the horrific impact of conflict on women and children and celebrates the tremendous courage and leadership that women have demonstrated in overcoming these tragic circumstances. While the United States has sought to provide aid and support in many of these situations, it is clear that more can and must be done to better protect and assist children and women. We must increase the impact of the resources and support that we currently provide to these women and children. We therefore urge you to take the following steps:

1. **Ensure that the care and protection of women and children is *the humanitarian priority in ethnic and political conflicts*.** In every conflict situation there should be an informed analysis of the particular risks faced by women and children, accompanied by a doable plan of action to protect and assist women and children, including specific recommendations for redress.
2. **Ensure that all women and children are provided the tools they need so they and their children can survive during war and conflict:** food and basic shelter; childhood immunizations and curative care; and reproductive health care, including safe pregnancy care and voluntary family planning.
3. **Give special attention to the financial and security needs of women and children. Women are susceptible to exploitation and abuse during the chaos of conflict.** It is often difficult for them to provide for the material needs of their families without putting themselves at additional risk of exploitation.
4. **Invest in mothers as one of the most effective ways to help post-conflict societies achieve reconciliation, move forward and help rebuild communities.** Women and children must continue to be a priority during this phase, with access to essential health services, education and micro-credit – the tools they need to survive and thrive.
5. **Finally, in order to increase the effectiveness of emergency response and ensure that relief reaches those most in need, the US government should shift more resources to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are closest to the ground in emergency situations.** The government must also encourage greater coordination between NGOs, and the government agencies and other groups offering operational support in these situations. In partnership with others, NGOs can help identify the special needs of women and children in the community, support the development of the plan of action, use their contacts to disseminate the plan of action, and contribute to the implementation of the plan.

Americans want to see that the assistance our country provides gets to the people who really need it, especially to women and children. Implementing these steps will improve our nation’s crisis-response programs making them more accountable and effective. America can be made stronger and the world more stable through assistance programs with concrete, realistic goals and adequate funding to bring meaningful results for women and children everywhere.

Signed,

An Open Letter to Senators and Representatives

Dear _____:

As the recent conflict in Afghanistan has demonstrated, war and conflict exacerbate the challenges that confront women and children in developing countries. Violent conflict places additional responsibilities and burdens on women. Save the Children's *State of the World's Mothers* report outlines the horrific impact of conflict on women and children. While the United States has sought to provide aid and support in many of these situations, it is clear that more can be done to focus our resources to better protect and assist children and women.

We must ensure that the care and protection of women and children is *the humanitarian priority* in ethnic and political conflicts. In every conflict situation, Congress must ensure that everything possible is being done to protect women and children. And we need to guarantee that women and children have the tools they need to survive and thrive: education, economic opportunities and maternal and child health care, including safe pregnancy care and voluntary family planning.

Americans want to see that the assistance our country provides gets to the people who really need it, especially to women and children. Citizen-supported non-governmental organizations are efficient partners for the US government and careful stewards of women's and children's well-being. America can be made stronger and the world more stable through assistance programs with concrete, realistic goals and adequate funding to bring meaningful results for women and children everywhere.

Signed,

Sexual Exploitation of West African Refugee Children

According to a report released in February 2002 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children/United Kingdom, refugee children and internally displaced youth in West Africa suffer widespread sexual abuse at the hands of local aid workers, peacekeeping soldiers, refugee leaders, and sometimes their own families. The report, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone*, concludes that "sexual violence and exploitation of children appears to be extensive" among uprooted children. An estimated 1.1 million people in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea still live in refugee camps and displacement sites after 12 years of civil wars and insurgencies that have spilled back and forth across international borders and still rage today in some locations. The full report is available on the UNHCR web site: www.unhcr.ch

Save the Children/US considers the protection of women and children in conflict and crisis situations of the utmost priority. The organization has its own *Child Safety Policy*, a set of strict guidelines to help ensure the protection of children in the crisis situations where it works. At the time *State of the World's Mothers 2002* went to press, Save the Children/US had joined with other members of InterAction – a coalition of 160 US-based humanitarian and develop-



ment organizations – to look at the scope of this problem and issue a set of recommendations to combat and prevent sexual exploitation of highly vulnerable uprooted children. It is already clear that the international and donor communities will have to increase funds for protection of refugees – particularly children, girls and women.