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**Joint statement by CARE International and Save the Children
on the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza****Agencies Call for Immediate Open and Unhindered Access
for Aid and International Non-Governmental Organizations into Gaza**

JERUSALEM (January 21, 2009) – CARE and Save the Children today expressed concern about the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza, and announced that they are prevented from scaling up their emergency response because of restrictions on humanitarian access and movement of international non-governmental organizations into Gaza. The two global agencies are calling for immediate and unfettered access for humanitarian aid and staff into Gaza to meet the critical and growing needs of the population, more than half of whom are children.

Since the escalation of violence, the agencies have not been allowed to send any staff and have been limited in sending aid into Gaza. Additional humanitarian workers are required to support the aid workers already in Gaza, who have been working throughout the conflict under extremely difficult conditions. Most of the population has been without basic services and supplies for nearly a month. The agencies are stressing that the essential supplies needed to respond to the scale of the crisis, including food, water, medical supplies, hygiene kits and reconstruction materials, are not available in sufficient supply in Gaza's local markets.

The agencies applaud the statements of John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, regarding the urgent need for humanitarian access, and ask him to negotiate a removal of this barrier to effective humanitarian action during his visit to the region to assess the humanitarian situation on Thursday, January 22.

“Gaza's devastation has not only been caused by the recent three-week conflict. Humanitarian aid organizations have been denied access to the Gaza Strip since November 4, and this is utterly impeding our ability to respond to the humanitarian disaster we are faced with today,” said Martha Myers, Country Director for CARE International in the West Bank and Gaza. “The 18-month blockade of Gaza has left the population weakened and completely unprepared to recover from the current crisis without outside help.”

“The threat of violence may be diminished, but the children of Gaza are no less vulnerable. Indeed the health and well-being of an even greater number of children are at

risk,” said Annie Foster, Team Leader for Save the Children’s emergency response in Gaza. “We need to move quickly to get life-saving aid to babies, children and their families. Open access into Gaza will allow us to ramp up our relief operations.”

The organizations also renewed their call for a permanent and negotiated ceasefire, paving the way for a durable peace that will benefit all children and families both within Gaza and Israel.

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CARE is one of the world’s largest humanitarian aid agencies, providing assistance in nearly 70 countries. CARE has been working in Israel, West Bank and Gaza since 1948 (with a short break from 1984-1994), initially implementing programs to help refugees after the Holocaust. Since the conflict started Dec. 27, CARE has distributed fresh food, medical supplies, heaters, blankets and plastic sheeting to hospitals, families and feeding centres in Gaza, reaching 160,000 people.

Save the Children is the leading, independent organization creating real and lasting change for children in more than 100 countries around the world. The agency which has worked in Gaza since 1953, has reached nearly 40,000 Gazans, half of them children, with food parcels, hygiene kits, baby kits, plastic carpets (for under mattresses), and bottled water since the conflict started on Dec. 27.