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May 29, 2009

The Honorable Howard Berman
Chairman House Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Berman:

On behalf of CARE and its many supporters across the country, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for being an outstanding champion for girls around the world. Through your leadership, the United States has prioritized child marriage prevention as a foreign policy goal for the first time by including major provisions of the *International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage* legislation in the State Department Reauthorization, H.R. 2410, which recently passed through your Committee on May 20, 2009.

CARE, a leading humanitarian and development organization, serves individuals and families in the poorest communities in approximately 71 countries throughout the world. CARE seeks to empower women and girls as a means of ending cyclical poverty. The practice of child marriage has linkages with several issues where CARE is currently working in the field and advocating here in Washington, D.C. including: education and leadership opportunities for girls, maternal health, gender-based violence and access to financial services. Marrying at a young age means that girls are more likely to drop out of school and therefore have limited access to economic opportunities, and to develop to their full potential. Young brides also become young mothers who face significantly higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. Child brides are also more vulnerable to domestic violence and are at a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV. We welcome the leadership shown by the United States' willingness to address this harmful practice, which not only undermines our development assistance, but also presents a significant barrier to development.

On behalf of CARE and its many supporters, we once again express our profound appreciation and strong support of the child marriage prevention provisions included in the House State Department Reauthorization and look forward to working with you to ensure passage of these critical provisions in H.R. 2410.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JoDee Winterhof", written in a cursive style.

JoDee Winterhof
Vice-President of Policy and Advocacy
CARE