

Save the Children's Response to Earthquake-affected Children in Haiti

Fact Sheet *January 20, 2010*

The Emergency: A 6.1 magnitude aftershock rocked Port-au-Prince, Haiti, early today, a week and a day after the epic January 12 earthquake leveled much of the capital and claimed what is feared to be in excess of 100,000 lives. Save the Children staff reported hearing already weakened structures collapsing – adding further strain as Save the Children and the international community continues to expand a massive humanitarian relief and recovery operation. The situation for children and families affected by the quake remains dire. Damage is also significant in the nearby communities of Jacmel, Leogane and Petite Goave.

The Impact on Children: Children are always among the most vulnerable during emergencies. The earthquake has forced untold numbers of families whose homes were damaged or destroyed into the streets and makeshift “camps” in open areas. Needs of children and families are enormous in all respects: food and water supplies are limited; hospitals and other medical facilities were damaged or destroyed and health care personnel are struggling to provide even the most basic medical care to the vast numbers of injured. The threat of disease and illness is constant for children. They are also at risk of family separation and abuse and exploitation, as well as psychosocial distress. While the Haitian people are extremely resilient and are exhibiting patience and generosity, their circumstances remain difficult.

Save the Children's Response: Save the Children has worked in Haiti continuously since 1978 and launches immediate relief for children affected by the island's frequent natural disasters. Local staff members in Port-au-Prince have been joined by our international disaster response experts and are working around the clock and in coordination with the Haitian government, donors, non-governmental organizations and communities to provide relief.



Two children at a Port-au-Prince shelter.

- On January 19, Save the Children began operating a mobile health clinic in Leogane to serve the basic health needs of children and families in their neighborhoods. The clinic is staffed by 14 expatriate doctors and saw 10 patients before darkness fell. They resumed activities today.
- On January 19, 16.5 tons of medical supplies donated to the agency by AmeriCares were distributed in Leogane and at the general hospital in Port-au-Prince.
- On January 18, we opened the first Child Friendly Space in a church in Carrefour Tefour serving as a temporary shelter. On the first day, 147 children were registered to take part in structured, supportive activities to help them recover from what they've experienced. Kits for us to open 70 other spaces arrived in Port-au-Prince; Save the Children plans to open hundreds of these essential sites for children.
- Supplies of water and other materials, including 1,000 family hygiene kits (including soaps, rubbing alcohol, baby wipes, diapers, hand sanitizers and bleach), arrived in Port-au-Prince on January 19.
- On January 16, Save the Children distributed food and water to the L'Hopital de l'Espoire (Hope Hospital), that focuses on pediatric medicine and helps support two orphanages. The food was enough for 2,000 people; 40 families taking refuge near the hospital also received hygiene kits.
- Medical supplies were distributed by Save the Children's response team and a partner agency on January 15 to 14 hospitals and clinics throughout the Port-au-Prince region.
- Staff continues to assess conditions in the communities of Jacmel, Leogane, and Petit Goave west of Port-au-Prince and initiate relief operations and local partnerships in these damaged places. Our initial focus will be on health, nutrition, and child protection programs.
- Based on other assessments in two locations, Save the Children plans to deliver clean water to residents by tank trucks, construct latrines to prevent water contamination, distribute hygiene kits and promote proper hygiene to prevent the spread of diseases.
- The agency has been requested by the UN to coordinate the reunification of separated children with their families, and to help lead the effort to rapidly restore education for children to provide them with a structured, secure environment.
- Save the Children has committed to a five-year "build back better" initiative, which will take us from the relief and recovery phase to working with families to rebuild their communities. The strategy is similar to the five-year rebuilding initiative Save the Children launched in Aceh Province, Indonesia following the epic December 2004 tsunami.

“Children and families are still sleeping in the open, among the rubble. They are very vulnerable – this aftershock would have terrified them. We are working flat out to assist them, bringing in supplies and rolling them out to the people who need them as fast as we can,” said Annie Foster, Save the Children’s team leader in Port-au-Prince.

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