

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

Fact Sheet *January 15, 2010*

The Emergency: Shortly before 5 p.m. on January 12, an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter Scale struck Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. With widespread damage in the city, collapsed buildings and a death toll that is feared to be extremely high, the quake and the many strong aftershocks are together the worst disaster Haiti has experienced in over 200 years. Save the Children staff on the scene estimate that children may make up 2 million of the 3 million people affected in Port-au-Prince and surrounding communities. Staff also report that roughly 50 percent of all homes have been damaged or destroyed. Power is out, there is no running water, and streets are blocked by rubble. Reports also are being received of significant damage to the nearby communities of Jacmel, Leogane, Petite Goave and Grande Goave.



A group of men atop a collapsed building in Port-au-Prince. Save the Children photo.

The Impact on Children: Children are always among the most vulnerable during emergencies. The earthquake has forced untold numbers families whose homes were damaged or destroyed into the streets and makeshift “camps” in open areas. Initial reports indicate enormous needs for children and families in all respects: food and water supplies are limited and dwindling; 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 rising. Children are at risk of family separation and abuse and exploitation, as well as psychosocial distress. Schools are damaged or destroyed, and reports indicate that many children perished as schools collapsed.

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 in Port-au-Prince are conducting rapid assessments on foot and by motorcycle in and around hard-hit neighborhoods of the city; on January 14 our first international response team arrived in Port-au-Prince to begin response actions.

“When we spoke to children and families, it was clear that people are very much in shock. We saw a lot of people still crying. There were so many distressed people – some of them were wailing, trying to find loved ones under debris and rubble. I've worked in a lot of disaster areas all over the world – and it was incredibly eerie to see so many people in shock,” said Ian Rodgers, Save the Children's emergency response adviser in Haiti.

- During the night of January 14, Save the Children’s response team began distributing IV solutions and medicines to 14 hospitals and clinics throughout the Port-au-Prince region.
- The first kits of essential hygiene and family supplies arrived in Port-au-Prince today from Save the Children’s office in the Dominican Republic and are being distributed. Hygiene kits contain such items as toothbrushes, towels and soap, and family kits include blankets, mosquito nets, and cans for water.
- UNICEF has asked Save the Children to take the lead role in coordinating child protection activities for children who are vulnerable, unaccompanied, or in urgent need of psychosocial support.
- We plan to open Child Friendly Spaces in large camps of displaced families so children can take part in structured, supportive activities and recover from what they’ve experienced.
- Save the Children will partner with Supply Chain Management Systems, a Haitian nongovernmental organization, to distribute medical supplies to hospitals and clinics.
- Save the Children has identified these areas of immediate priority: addressing shelter, health, water, sanitation, and child protection needs and, as conditions allow, the restoration of education for children.
- Even as immediate relief begins, 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.

Given the expected great magnitude of need, Save the Children has issued an appeal for a minimum of \$20 million in support to initiate and sustain work that will focus on the immediate needs of children and their survival and rapid recovery. Please support our responses to affected children and families by visiting www.savethechildren.org to make a gift or learn more.



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