

**Save the Children's Commitment to Children
and Families Affected by Japan's Massive Earthquake and Tsunami:
An Exclusive Executive Briefing Document**

March 17, 2011



Karen, 6, stands in a tsunami-ravaged street of Ishinomaki on March 16. Karen and her family took shelter in a primary school room after the tsunami. Photo by Jensen Walker/Getty Images for Save the Children



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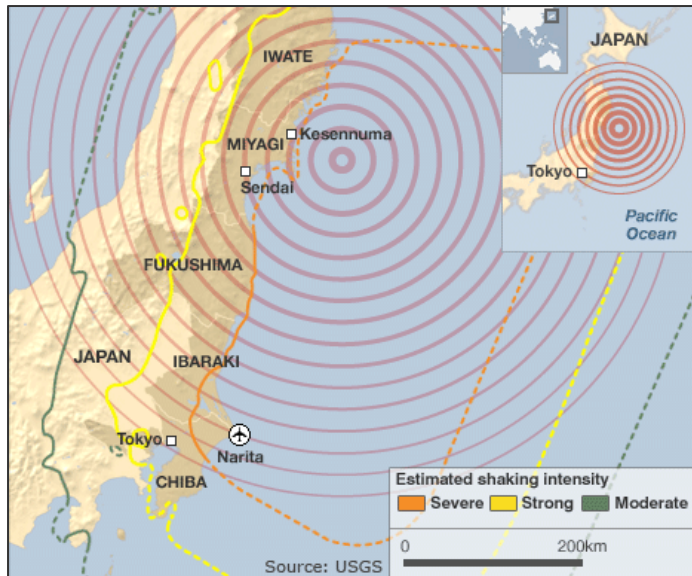
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Save the Children is the world's leading independent organization for children, working in more than 120 countries. Our mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Executive Summary

Coastal communities in Japan are still reeling from a massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake on March 11—the fifth-strongest earthquake in the world since 1900 and the largest on record in Japan—and a tsunami that created devastation on an unimaginable scale. The disasters are among the most severe ever facing Japan, and the crisis is compounded by damage to nuclear power plants that has resulted in large-scale evacuations and a state of atomic power emergency being declared by the Government of Japan.

The number of casualties from the earthquake and tsunami are still being determined. However, with whole coastal villages in ruins and many thousands reported missing, the number of those killed is expected to be far higher than the over 5,300 reported as of March 17. There is also a huge population displacement, with estimates of some 541,000 people out of their communities, tens of thousands of whom are children. Over 2,500 evacuation centers have been established, but many lack running water and electricity for heat – the latter of which is crucial as temperatures in the region are expected to drop below freezing at night for the near-term.



In addition, with damage to nuclear power plants in the in Fukushima Prefecture and reported releases of radiation into the environment, people from areas around several plants have been evacuated or ordered to remain indoors.

Save the Children has worked in Japan since 1986 and is estimating that at least 100,000 children have been affected by the disasters. We are mobilizing and initiating responses that will address the immediate and longer-term needs of children and their families, and have set a funding goal of \$20 million in new support for this work. Conditions facing children and families are so extreme that we are developing a three-year strategy—based on our initial on-scene assessments—to first help provide essential relief items and launch child protection activities, and then help restore children’s sense of security and normalcy and advocate for their inclusion in emergency preparedness planning.

Our humanitarian response teams in Sendai continue to assess children’s needs and initiate child protection work as conditions and movement in the areas surrounding the damaged nuclear power plants allow. We are coordinating activities with the Japanese Red Cross and several of our program partners; other regional Save the Children offices in Asia remain on alert to provide staff and materials.

Save the Children is also closely monitoring the atomic power emergency and is preparing contingency plans in case the situation worsens.

Part I: The Crisis and its Impact on Children

Children are always among the most vulnerable during emergencies. Save the Children estimates that at least 100,000 children have been affected by the disasters; many of whom have suffered profound losses. Children and their families are staying in over 2,500 evacuation centers, some of which have no electricity or running water. In the four worst-affected areas (Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima and Aomori Prefectures), hundreds of thousands of families are also without electricity, heat or running water.



Hirohiko and his son Suzunosuke, 6, walk through the rubble of Onigawa on March 16. They were returning to see the remains of their home after two tsunami waves. Hirohiko, his wife and Suzunosuke fled to high ground 20 minutes before the first tsunami struck. (Photo by Jensen Walker/Getty Images for Save the Children)

With continuing aftershocks, risks of further earthquakes and tsunamis and evacuations from areas around nuclear power plants, children are in urgent need of psychosocial support to deal with the tremendous fear and uncertainty they have and are continuing to experience. Children are also experiencing stresses because of the unfamiliar surroundings that they are in, and through witnessing the reactions of their parents to the disasters and the nature of the nuclear threat.

Poor weather is also worsening conditions for survivors, and unseasonably cold temperatures are compounding the crisis for homeless families and those in unheated evacuation centers. Children whose immune systems have been weakened by stress will be vulnerable to illnesses, especially infants and very young children.

Initial estimates put the number of schools damaged or destroyed at some 4,000, meaning that there will be major interruptions in children's education and return to a sense of normalcy that school provides.

Part II: Save the Children's Initial Response

Save the Children began mobilizing its response immediately. International relief experts and our in-country staff are now working nonstop in the disaster zone to assess children's needs and initiate child protection programs. We reached out to partner agencies with whom we have conducted children's programming in Japan, and are working with the Social Welfare Councils at the prefecture level, the Japanese Red Cross and Japanese nongovernmental organizations for joint emergency response. Other Save the Children country offices in the region remain on alert to provide staff and materials as needed.

We are also closely monitoring the situation of the nuclear plants and are developing a contingency plan if the situation worsens.

- Two assessment teams in Sendai in the Miyagi Prefecture set up an operational hub and a Child-Friendly Space for children. Sendai was close to the epicenter and was devastated by both the earthquake and tsunami. The first of a planned network of Child-Friendly Spaces in evacuation centers was opened March 16 at a primary school. Supervised by Save the Children staff, it contains toys and games for children ages 5-12. The reaction and feedback of the 33 children and their parents was overwhelmingly positive. We will also be providing parents and care-givers with materials they can use to support children's emotional well-being, including tips for talking to children about their experiences; and to work alongside local communities to train volunteers in counseling techniques to help children manage their great stress and feelings of loss and uncertainty.
- We are identifying partners, relief agencies, and authorities in and around the impact zone in order to assess the services available and to efficiently meet the needs of children and families.

Part III: Our Commitment to Children and Families

Given the scale of the disasters and the urgent needs they have created for tens of thousands of children, Save the Children has set an initial goal of \$20 million in new support for our responses now and continuing for a planned three-year period.

Our donors' support will be pooled to help us meet both immediate and longer-term needs of children and their families throughout the ravaged area. While this work will be informed by ongoing assessments and be flexible as conditions on the ground and the evolving needs of children and families dictate, Save the Children's initial program plans are focused on:

- Expanding child protection activities that our staff in the badly damaged city of Sendai have already initiated, with our disaster-tested Child-Friendly Spaces program as the key response;
- Providing non-food relief items to families;
- Supplying children with "back-to-school" kits of materials;
- Initiating a school-based psychosocial support program for children, their parents and other childcare providers to build resilience and coping;

- Supporting local and national groups working to help children and families recover over the longer term, with special emphasis on supporting groups addressing educational and child-care needs; and
- Advocacy to help ensure that the needs of Japan’s children are included in emergency preparedness planning at the prefecture and national levels.

Contributions will support direct program activities Save the Children is planning and quickly initiating as assessments are completed; help sustain and bring these vital activities to scale; and support our expert staff, collaborations with partner agencies, and other essential program services that a response of this magnitude will require.

Short-term Relief Strategy: Three Months

Save the Children plans to concentrate work in the Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures, two of the areas that were the worst affected by the earthquake and tsunami in terms of people displaced and the scale of destruction. We plan to conduct rapid assessments of need, distribute non-food relief supplies, and initiate child protection interventions that provide psychosocial support to children and families affected by the disasters.



Sakina, 2, plays at our first Child Friendly Space, inside an evacuation center in Sendai on March 17. The space allows children to play and interact with other children their age while parents take care of urgent relief and recovery needs. (Photo by Jensen Walker/Getty Images for Save the Children)

- **Assessments:** We have established an operational base in Sendai and assessments have begun in and around the city. A second operational base will be opened in the Iwate Prefecture. Assessment teams will work their way up the coast from Sendai and down the coast from Iwate Prefecture. The assessments will identify critical needs currently not being addressed by the Prefecture Government relief effort, and to secure suitable sites for Child-Friendly Spaces. Assessments will continue throughout the relief and recovery phases to inform planning and programming.
- **Targeted Distributions:** Save the Children will work closely with the Prefecture Government Emergency Response coordination teams to identify immediate needs of children and families that are not being met, and distribute basic non-food items to supplement the government's response.
- **Child Protection:** Child protection activities will focus on establishing Child-Friendly Spaces in evacuation centers in the disaster-affected areas of Miyagi and Iwate. At present we have one Child-Friendly Space operating in the Shichigo-Shogakko Primary school in Sendai City. It is expected that Child-Friendly Spaces will be available to children until school resumes or demand subsides. Child-Friendly Spaces are one of Save the Children's key emergency interventions, providing children with protected environments in which they participate in organized activities to play, socialize, learn, and express themselves as they rebuild their lives. Child-Friendly Spaces help protect children from physical harm and psychosocial distress; they also enable parents to concentrate on urgent recovery needs while knowing their children are safe.

Medium-term Recovery Strategy: Up to One Year

The focus for families in the first month of a disaster such as this is to ensure that their essential basic needs are being met. Readjusting to a "normal" life after such extraordinary disruption can also cause additional stress on children and their families. Initial assessments suggest that over 4,000 schools have been destroyed or damaged, and it is expected that this will delay the opening of schools for the official start of the new term on April 5.

- **School-based Psychosocial Support:** Save the Children will seek to organize a school-based psychosocial support program for children, their parents and other childcare providers. The program's goal is to provide structured activities that support the psychosocial recovery of children and their families, build resilience, help them to cope with the emotions they face and empower them to regain control of their lives.
- **Replacing School Materials:** We plan to provide "back-to-school" kits to children to replace items they have lost and their families may be unable to replace.

Towards the end of this phase, Save the Children plans to collect an evidence base to support an advocacy and policy strategy to ensure that the specific needs of Japan's children are considered in national and prefecture emergency planning.

Medium- to long-term Recovery Strategy: Up to Three Years

- **Grants for Recovery:** Save the Children plans to create a fund to provide community cash grants to institutions implementing projects that support children and their families over the long term as they recover and rebuild their lives. This fund will appeal for, assess and award grants to national and community groups involved in re-establishing child care and education, as well as to groups involved in the reconstruction effort, assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- **Advocacy for Children's Needs:** Save the Children also intends to advocate for the inclusion of children's needs in emergency planning in Japan. Using the evidence base we will collect during the immediate relief and early recovery phases, we will be well-positioned to advocate for an increased focus on children to be included in future prefecture and national government emergency planning. Our intent is that Child Friendly Spaces and childcare services are included in all prefecture planning, preparation and response operations.

Part IV: Save the Children's Emergency Response Capacity in Japan and Asia

Save the Children had been active in Japan since 1986 and supports children in difficult circumstances to ensure their survival, development, protection and participation. Save the Children Japan has also operated both development and emergency response programs across the Asian region including in the Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Mongolia, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

Our in-country staff in Japan is being bolstered by Save the Children's international relief experts, who are trained in all aspects of emergency programming (assessments, logistics, health, food, water/sanitation, nutrition, child protection, emergency education, and family livelihoods). As needed, these experts will be deployed to provide "surge support" to our country-level staff.

Save the Children has extensive experience in responding to children and families affected by other regional disasters. Our most recent emergency work has included relief and recovery programs after this year's earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, massive floods in Australia, earthquakes and floods in Indonesia, and typhoon relief in the Philippines and Vietnam. Between 2004 and 2009, we conducted our largest relief and recovery operation in our history following the epic December 2004 earthquake and tsunami in South Asia.