

Media Release

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SAVE THE CHILDREN LAUNCHES APPEAL TO HELP CHILDREN AFFECTED BY THE SULAWESI EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI

Save the Children New Zealand has launched an appeal to help the hundreds of children affected by Friday's magnitude 7.4 earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia's Sulawesi.

The organisation estimates that hundreds of thousands of children are likely to be significantly affected based on population data and calculations of impact. Save the Children's Program Implementation Director, Tom Howells said there were early reports of children being separated from their families, and warned that extra care and support would need to be paid to children going forward.

"Access is a huge issue in this humanitarian response. While we still don't know the full scale of the crisis yet, we know it is immense, with catastrophic damage occurring in many areas. Large buildings have collapsed; coastal dwellings have effectively been washed away. Hundreds have been killed and, sadly, we expect this to rise considerably," Mr Howells said from Jakarta.

Power remains out in areas around Palu, the capital of central Sulawesi, while landslides have blocked key roads. Other vital infrastructure including the airport in Palu have been badly damaged.

"Aid agencies and local authorities are struggling to reach several communities around Dongala, where we are expecting there to be major damage and potential large-scale loss of life. We hold grave fears for many of the towns in this area."

"Children have endured an incredibly distressing, and potentially traumatic event, and the emotional toll is made so much worse by the dozens of strong aftershocks that continue to occur. Children may have been separated from their families or they could have lost friends or family members or seen their homes and belongings destroyed. No doubt they'll be wondering if life will ever return to normal," Mr Howells said.

"It is absolutely critical that extra care and attention is paid to children in the coming days, weeks and months, while significant work is done to ensure children are reunited with their families. Children's emotional recovery will need to be an important part of this humanitarian response. It cannot be forgotten."

A team of humanitarian staff from Save the Children are currently travelling by boat from Makassar to the worst affected communities, some 800km away.

"Our staff are working with the government and other agencies to conduct an urgent assessment of affected communities and determine what kind of humanitarian assistance is needed," Mr Howells said.

"We have stockpiles of relief items available for distribution, including plastic sheeting and ropes for temporary shelter, hygiene kits and jerry cans, as well as education supplies to help get children back to school as quickly as possible. However, this response will be made more challenging by the fact

we are still responding in Lombok, which was hit by a magnitude 6.9 earthquake in August, as well as a series of strong aftershocks.”

Save the Children has been working in Indonesia since 1976, and has a long history responding to humanitarian disasters in the country, including the recent earthquakes in Lombok and the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

Save the Children NZ Chief Executive Heidi Coetzee said, “This tragedy has affected many lives, and as always, children are the most vulnerable in disaster situations. Our international staff will be working on the ground to assess what’s needed and how we can best assist. If the people of New Zealand would like to help those affected they can donate via following link www.savethechildren.org.nz.”

ENDS

Save the Children has several spokespeople available. To set up interviews contact Evan Schuurman in Melbourne on +61 406 117 937, Antonia Roupell in London on +44 787 988 5327 or Fandi Yusuf on +62 811 819 3976.

For more information please contact Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children’s unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.