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Save the Children Issues One-Year Progress Report On Tsunami Relief and Recovery Efforts

Nearly one year after responding to one of the world's worst natural disasters, Save the Children reported today that its tsunami relief and recovery programme is helping hundreds of thousands of children and their families rebuild their lives after surviving the earthquake and sea surge that devastated south Asia on 26 December 2004.

"We now have entered the second phase of our response to bring lasting change to children impacted by the tsunami," said Liz Gibbs, acting Executive Director of Save the Children New Zealand, who called Save the Children's response over the past year highly successful.

"Save the Children's initial efforts saved thousands of children's lives," said Liz Gibbs, "Our two decades of experience in south Asia and our rapid response to this emergency helped avert a second wave of death from water-borne diseases and severe malnutrition that many health experts anticipated would follow the tsunami. During our initial response we provided food, clean water, shelter and health care to more than 625,000 survivors including 250,000 children, while also helping protect separated children from abuse and exploitation," she said.

In a report released today which is available online at www.savethechildren.org.nz from 2/12/05, Save the Children reported that its five-year, (US)\$261 million tsunami relief and recovery programme represents the largest emergency response in its 85-year history. Relief efforts have concentrated on three countries hardest hit by the tsunami – Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India – while the agency also has provided assistance to Thailand, Somalia and the Maldives. By the end of December 2005 Save the Children will have spent approximately \$90 million on programmes. The remaining funds will be spent over the next four years to provide long-term assistance to surviving children and their families in key areas including education, child protection, health care, the creation of new jobs and livelihoods, and the construction of new homes, health clinics, schools and child centres.

“While the emergency response phase is over, many challenges remain,” said Liz Gibbs “Coordinating our work with local partners who can sustain our efforts over the long term is a major focus. Some areas, such as Sri Lanka, are still affected by an uncertain political situation. In Indonesia, which took the largest blow from the disaster, earthquakes continue even now. And in remote islands of eastern India, travel and communications are problematic.”

Liz Gibbs added: “We take great pride in the strides we are making toward our five-year goal to help children and families rebuild their lives. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our supporters in New Zealand and around the world, we have been able to respond with the assurance there is ample support behind us. We are releasing this report to make sure our many thousands of contributors know that their dollars are being spent wisely.”

Liz Gibbs noted that the tsunami of December 26 was the first of a series of natural disasters over the last 12 months that have tested Save the Children’s capacity to respond to emergencies.

Since the tsunami, Save the Children has responded to a deadly earthquake that struck northern Pakistan in October, ongoing food crises in western and southern Africa and major storms in the Gulf of Mexico, including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the United States.

“This has been an unprecedented year for major disasters, causing hardship to millions of children,” said Liz Gibbs. “What makes the tsunami response so unusual,” she added, “is that we have received enough funding to achieve our goal of bringing lasting change to many children who survived the tsunami. Unfortunately, this is not the case for children impacted by other disasters to which we still need much more support.”

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Save the Children is the leading independent organization creating lasting change for children in need around the world. Save the Children is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, a global network of 27 independent Save the Children organizations working to ensure the well-being and protection of children in more than 110 countries. For more information, visit www.savethechildren.org.nz

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