

## Media Release

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### **SAVE THE CHILDREN TO RESPOND TO CATASTROPHIC DAM COLLAPSE IN LAOS**

Save the Children staff in Laos are preparing an emergency response after at least 10 people were killed and hundreds more left missing when a dam collapsed in the south of the country. Casualties are expected to rise in the coming days.

The saddle dam - part of a hydropower dam which is under construction – collapsed at 8pm local time on Monday after heavy rains, sending 5,000 million cubic metres of water crashing through eight villages in Sanamxay district in the southeast of the country.

So far around 1,300 families or roughly 4,400 people have been left homeless, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

Save the Children will respond to the catastrophic collapse, and plans to provide things like baby kits and household kits to affected families, as well as support to mothers. The NGO also plans to conduct a rapid assessment as soon as it is able to access the area to more accurately determine needs.

Save the Children's Deputy Country Director Vilasack Viraphanh has expressed grave concern for the missing children and their families.

"This is a terrible tragedy and we still don't have a clear picture of its scale. Hundreds or even thousands of families are likely to have been left homeless, while some have lost loved ones. Many children are still missing and we are gravely concerned for their wellbeing," he said.

"Children are particularly vulnerable in all emergencies and require specialist assistance to cope during and in the aftermath of such an event. We will work alongside the government to provide whatever assistance we can to families as they start trying to pick up the pieces of their lives."

Save the Children has been operating in Lao PDR since 1987 and works to ensure that children's rights to education, health, protection and participation are fulfilled at all times, including during disasters.

### **ENDS**

#### **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.

**Editor's note:** we have people on the ground available for interview please contact: Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email [ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz](mailto:ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz)