

P R E S S R E L E A S E**Indonesian earthquake: Fears grow for separated and unaccompanied children in the wake of tsunami**

Berlin, 01.10.2017. Save the Children and its local partner are warning of the huge psychological toll on children, particularly those that were orphaned or separated from their parents following Friday's devastating earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi.

More than 1.5 million people have been impacted by the disaster, including at least 600,000 children. About a third are seriously affected, losing their homes, livelihoods or loved ones.

"We are hearing more and more reports of children who've been separated from their parents in the chaos of escape, as buildings crumbled or tsunami waves tore through coastal homes and shops. Sadly, a number of children have lost parents in the disaster. It is heart wrenching," said Save the Children's Program Implementation Director Tom Howells from Jakarta.

"Many of these children will have experienced unimaginable trauma and distress, seeing things no child should ever have to see – losing their mother or father, and watching everything they have known washed away.

"These children have now spent three nights in makeshift shelters or even on the streets, with little access to any food, medication or emotional support.

"Often children are the most adversely affected by disasters like this and the chaotic aftermath which follows. In the wake of this terrible tragedy, the need for immediate physical and emotional support for children is critical."

As rescue efforts continue in Sulawesi, a team from Save the Children's local partner Yayasan Sayangi Tunas Cilik (YSTC) has arrived by a combination of air and sea in Palu, the capital of central Sulawesi and the epicenter of the crisis, after travelling some 800km from Makassar in the island's south.

The aid agency will set up what's known as 'child friendly spaces' in the coming days to provide children with a safe place and respite from the chaos outside. The centres also distribute vital items like plastic sheeting and ropes for temporary shelter, household items like pots, pans and, as well as hygiene items like soaps and cleaning products to prevent illness.

The team will also work with other agencies and the government to conduct a rapid assessment of the situation.

"Right now we're seeing an urgent need for basic supplies like shelter, food and water as people return to see what's left of their homes and begin what will no doubt be a long recovery process," Mr Howells said.

"Access continues to be a major challenge in the response, with key infrastructure like roads, bridges and airports suffering major damage, such that we still might not know the full scale of the crisis for some days. The death has risen beyond 1,000, and could continue to rise for some days.

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 has several spokespeople available. To set up interviews contact Davina Hagan in London on +44203 763 0840, Evan Schuurman in Melbourne on +61 406 117 937 or Fajar Jasmin on +62 811 881 9912.

Contact:

Save the Children Deutschland e.V.
Press office – Claudia Kepp
Tel.: +49 (30) 27 59 59 79 – 280
Mail: presse@savethechildren.de

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About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. 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.