

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E****Mounting fear for children separated from their parents, says Save the Children**

MAPUTO, March 22, 2019 - Save the Children is receiving daily calls from desperate parents who have lost children in the south-east Africa floods.

The aid agency says it is vital to reunite unaccompanied children with their families and to give them the support they need to recover from the impact of the devastating storm.

There have been adverts on the radio in Mozambique encouraging parents who have lost their children to call the government or aid organisations, such as Save the Children.

“People have reached us through our special number, but we fear it’s just the tip of the iceberg”, said Machiel Pouw, Save the Children’s response team leader in Mozambique. “This storm has torn families apart. Many of the unaccompanied children will have gone through a traumatic situation – some have seen their mother or father being swept away by the floods, or have lost siblings.”

A Save the Children team came across four orphaned children in one of the camps. The team is determining if there are relatives to take care of the children.

Save the Children is working in coordination with the government and other organisations to reunite children with their parents through an online platform run by the Red Cross. On it, the names of missing children and parents are registered and matched if possible, after which they will be reunited. Save the Children is scaling up to help with the reunification and make sure the children are safe.

Save the Children also reports a growing number of missing and separated children in flood-devastated Zimbabwe. Some 250 people are said to be missing from Kopa township alone, and 39 of these are school children from Dzingire Primary school in the region.

“The people are traumatised, they are mourning and have not found the bodies of their loved ones,” reports Shepherd Zvidzai, an Education Programme Officer at Save the Children Zimbabwe.

Government officials in Kopa township report that 80 children have lost their parents. Forty of the children are now housed at a school and the other 40 are staying with neighbours from the community. Save the Children aims to set up family tracing systems to reunify children with their parents as soon as possible.

About 36 areas of Zimbabwe remain cut off completely. As of 21<sup>st</sup> March, more than 450 people are reported missing, 163 injured, 4,313 displaced with some of them now housed at temporary shelters, according to the Zimbabwe government.

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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.