



Save the Children



World Vision®

## Nepal Earthquake: Listening to children's priorities and concerns

*As the Nepal Children's Earthquake Response Consultation Report is launched in Kathmandu on 25 July, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision International Nepal, are urging that in ongoing support for assistance, priority is accorded to:*

- **Shelter:** Scaling up both the funding and distribution of emergency and early recovery shelter support whilst, in parallel, providing support to the reconstruction and repair of damaged or destroyed homes in accordance with earthquake-resistant building standards.
- **Education:** Establishing adequate numbers of temporary learning centres pending the reconstruction of damaged and destroyed schools and retrofitting other schools with seismic-resistant construction techniques.
- **Health and sanitation:** Constructing durable earthquake-resistant health facilities and providing all communities with toilet facilities and safe water supplies.
- **Child protection and psychosocial support:** Responding to the increased risk to girls and boys of violence, exploitation and abuse by strengthening community and national-level child protection systems.
- **Disaster risk reduction:** Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction throughout the recovery and reconstruction effort to ensure that children and their communities are better prepared for future disasters.
- **Children's participation:** Strengthening and institutionalising existing national and local level planning processes to ensure children are consulted in recovery and reconstruction planning and implementation.

Over three million children are estimated to have been affected by the earthquakes in Nepal on 25 April and 12 May. Already suffering unimaginable trauma and loss, their challenging circumstances are being further compounded by the monsoon.

In late May and early June 2015, four leading children's agencies conducted a consultation with more than 1,800 children across 14 districts that were most severely-affected by the earthquakes. Girls and boys who participated told us their top priorities were for adequate shelter, to be able to return to school and to have access to safe water supplies, sanitation and health care. However, the consultations also revealed high levels of distress and anxiety among children as a result of deaths of families and friends, destruction of homes and communities and uncertainty about their futures, as well as fear for their security and protection.

Humanitarian aid has already reached hundreds of thousands of people but as the children in the consultation highlighted, many are still in need of emergency assistance to provide a roof over the heads and to ensure access to basic services and protection. The Government of Nepal has been quick to initiate planning for recovery and reconstruction but, given the scale of the destruction, rebuilding will take time. While this proceeds, arrangements must be put in place during the "transitional phase" to provide children and their families with durable temporary solutions whether for shelter, education, health care or other basic needs and services.

### **Shelter**

The earthquakes caused widespread destruction of housing and settlements. Hundreds of thousands of children and their families are now living in tents or other forms of temporary shelter constructed from tarpaulins and salvaged materials that are not sufficiently robust to withstand the monsoon

and will not be adequate in the harsh winter months. Unsurprisingly, children who participated in the consultation ranked the need for adequate shelter as their top priority.

- Urgently scale up both the funding and distribution of early recovery shelter support including basic materials, tools and training for temporary buildings.
- In parallel, provide cash, in-kind and technical support to enable damaged or destroyed homes to be repaired or rebuilt in accordance with safe building standards.

### ***Education***

Children told us they want to return to school and continue their studies, but they want to know that their school buildings are safe and able to withstand future earthquakes or aftershocks. As of 7 July, 1,793 Temporary Learning Centres (TLCs) had been set up but many more are needed to accommodate over one million boys and girls who remain out of school as a result of damage and destruction of schools by the earthquakes. In the meantime, the massive task of reconstruction and retrofitting of schools must begin.

- Ensure the swift return to school of all earthquake-affected children through the establishment of adequate numbers of temporary learning centres, provision of education materials and targeted support for families of girls and boys at risk of dropping out or withdrawal from school.
- Agree and implement nationally a coordinated, standardised approach to school safety based on the internationally agreed Comprehensive School Safety Framework that addresses safe school facilities, school disaster management and risk reduction and resilience in education.

### ***Health and sanitation***

Extensive damage to water supplies, health facilities and toilets has left many without access to safe drinking water and primary health care. Children told us they were worried about the risks to their health and that of their families from drinking contaminated water, of having to defecate in the open and of living in insanitary and overcrowded conditions.

- Construct semi-permanent earthquake-resistant health facilities which can last at least 2-3 years.
- Household toilets that were damaged or destroyed by the earthquake must be rebuilt as quickly as possible and new shelters should also include toilet facilities.

### ***Child protection and psychosocial support***

The consultation provided an insight into the high levels of distress and anxiety caused by the earthquakes and the disruption to children's lives. Children spoke of fears and insecurity, of increased burdens of domestic and other chores, and of heightened feelings of vulnerability, particularly among girls, to exploitation and abuse.

- Child protection should be prioritised both as an urgent and life-saving priority and as part of recovery and reconstruction planning and funding. Short-term needs include the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse, as well as psychosocial support to respond to stress and trauma.
- Longer-term, child protection systems must be strengthened so that they are sufficiently robust to respond in future emergencies.

### ***Disaster Risk Reduction***

The earthquakes revealed the need for far greater investment in disaster preparedness in Nepal and, in particular, the need to involve children in these processes: many children told us they had not known what an earthquake was or how to respond when it happened. However, earthquakes are

only one of many hazards in Nepal which is also vulnerable to landslides, severe flooding and other natural disasters for which children and their communities need to be better prepared.

- Building resilience against future disasters must be integrated into recovery and reconstruction across all sectors to protect lives, infrastructure and livelihoods.
- The particular vulnerabilities of children should be considered in all disaster preparedness planning and children should be consulted on and involved in the implementation of plans.

### ***Child participation***

The Nepal Children's Earthquake Recovery Consultation demonstrates that consulting with children brings unique perspectives and views that can enrich decision making and planning. The consultation was the first of its kind in the context of an emergency, but its replication as part of all national and local-level policy development and planning would help to ensure that the needs of girls and boys are adequately addressed in all phases of the earthquake response.

- Existing processes should be strengthened and institutionalised to ensure the full participation of and accountability to affected populations including children and young people in the planning, implementation and monitoring of recovery and reconstruction of their communities.