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CHILDREN AT RISK IN WAKE OF JAVA EARTHQUAKE

Save the Children is concerned at the increased risks to the safety of children as families try to recover in the areas of Java affected by the earthquake.

Around 40,000 children were affected by the earthquake and are coping with an enormous amount of stress and huge disruption to their lives.

"I'm sad to say the Save the Children workers in Yogyakarta have reported to me that significantly large numbers of children, from young children with their mothers to groups of teenagers, are begging on the streets for money or food. This is not something that traditionally happens in this area and it puts children in a very vulnerable position," said John Bowis, Executive Director of Save the Children New Zealand.

The charity is stressing the importance of getting children back to school as soon as possible to protect them from harm and help get their lives back to normal. Around 1,000 schools were destroyed or damaged in the earthquake.

"School helps children to recover emotionally. Games, art, singing and playing help relieve stress and trauma and getting together with friends, playmates and teachers gives them a sense of normality," said John Bowis.

Sinta, 11, was pulled out of bed by her parents during the earthquake. Her house is still standing but is too dangerous to enter. She's not going to school at the moment, as she is still waiting for an announcement when it's safe to go back. "I miss my things" she says "especially my dolls. But I know they're covered in dust. I want to get back to school as soon as possible, because I don't know if my school-friends are safe."

School can help on a practical level by giving children information on what to do if there are more aftershocks, and where to run to if another earthquake hits.

Save the Children is responding to this need for schooling by providing toys and games for children and education kits for teachers and pupils. The charity has a great deal of experience in providing education in emergency situations and will be working with teachers to show them how to help children suffering from trauma, giving them basic information on earthquakes and how to prepare for disasters.

Save the Children is accepting donations to fund our response for the children in Java who have been left homeless and scared following the earthquake. Donations should be made via our free phone on 0800 167 168 or on our website www.savethechildren.org.nz

This is how we will use your donations:

Hygiene kits for a family - \$75

Family household kits - \$225

Enough toys and games for 20 children in a "safe play area" - \$150

For more information contact:

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